

## Prevalence of Employee Recognition as a Driver of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Institutional Performance: A Case Study of Open University

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**Article History**

*Received: 23.07.2017*

*Accepted: 29.07.2017*

*Published: 30.09.2017*

**DOI:**

10.36347/sjebm.2017.v04i09.001



**Abstract:** This present study analyses the significance of employee recognition as a driver of efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of employees or workers in organizations with special reference to an open university. The study employed the qualitative paradigm with an interpretivist approach to interpret data that was accessed from the participants. The interview and document analysis were the selected tools for data generation. The findings of the study revealed that lack of employee recognition affected the performance of the concerned employees. Employees also felt that senior management did not appreciate the work of employees because they themselves (management) were not recognised. The study recommends that the employer should have a given programme of employee recognition.

**Keywords:** Prevalence, employee recognition, efficiency, effectiveness, performance, Open University

### INTRODUCTION

Employee recognition refers to the appreciation rendered to an employee for their work and letting an employee know that their work is valued. It is the acknowledgement of an individual or team's behaviour, effort and accomplishment in support of an organisation's goals and values. Employee recognition realises that motivation goes beyond financial gain and provides the positive feedback that employees crave for. Recognition is an

acknowledgement by leadership and peers; it is the glow that an employee gets with the knowledge that an achievement has been seen, appreciated and celebrated; and an achievement that is a result of extra effort. Employee recognition is capped by ongoing, meaningful rewards for the recognition that provides an effective, low cost way of raising morale and encouraging higher levels of industry. An Amazon research team called Snacknation shows that firms that have a solid strategy to recognise employees who achieve the intended results enjoy stronger worker engagement, increased productivity, a devoted spirit of customer service and lower turnover rates. Woods [1] says that recognised employees feel valued, respected and loved by the recognising company. Employee recognition assists in developing happier, healthier, and better performing employees so that organizations could realise their missions faster and make a larger impact in their communities. Institutions desire to through a spotlight on employees who create everlasting experiences to build a culture that thrives on delighting students; they inspire enthusiasm. The researcher's concern was that employee recognition continued to sit at the bottom of many organisations' priority lists. Employee recognition is all about the leadership and workers building relationships through the construction

of thoughtful messages that establish and strengthen the relationships. The relationships create memorable moments that show meaningful appreciation and gratitude to employees.

### Background to the Study

There is a misconception in human resource management and in business management practice that tends to relate outstanding employee performance and productivity to a number of performance determinants mechanisms except employee recognition [1]. Motivation principles clearly go beyond money and gravitate towards the field of employee recognition; workers crave positive feedback, they desire to be acknowledged for a job well done by both their leaders and peers. Workers glow with jubilation when they know that their achievement has been recognised, appreciated and celebrated. Financial reward is a great motivator but it falls far short of recognition. It is the considered opinion of the researcher that no matter how knowledgeable a worker could be they need recognition for them to perform exceptionally well, and this paper was aimed at establishing the supremacy of employee recognition as a performance and productivity mechanism, against all the other practices.

Worldat Work [2] carried out a survey among its more than five thousand members to gather information on trends in recognition programmes. The findings were that 88% of organisations recognised their employees by instituting employee recognition programmes; there was a marked increase in the prevalence of employee recognition and recognition programmes, from 86% in 2011. The top five percent was occupied by organisations whose programmes were broken down into: length of service programme; an above-and-beyond performance programme and a peer-to-peer programme. The conclusion was that organisations were moving away from legacy recognition programmes towards. In a separate research by Alexander [3] the finding was that 82% of the employees who felt motivated in 2015 received a reward. In the same research 38% of those who received rewards felt valued and 26% felt motivated by the recognition that they received, even though 16% claimed they felt nothing after receiving a reward.

Giuliani [4] says that appreciation is the heart of recognition and it is a very powerful driver of human behaviour. Recognition reinforces competence, builds networks, promotes a sense of meaning, and addresses a deep psychological need that each worker brings to the workplace. The absence of appreciation can have a devastating effect on workers; it undermines confidence, diminishes workers' contribution, extinguishes passion and widens the distance between workers and the organisation's mission. According to Giuliani [4], recognition can be divided into 'business recognition' and 'human recognition', but whichever it is, the need for recognition can never be over-emphasised. Genuinely appreciated people strive hard and bring into an organisation a little more creativity, attention and effort than they would if they were not appreciated. Giuliani [4] gives a few tips on how to show appreciation: the expression of appreciation should be brief and to the point; the message should be concrete and specific, without embellishments; appreciation should state what is being appreciated and why it is appreciated; and the appreciation and recognition should be expressed immediately after the good deed has been done, when it is still relevant. Feys, Anseel and Wille [5] concluded, from their study, that managers should reduce negative emotions and counterproductive behaviour in the workplace and increase the desired emotions and productive behaviour through recognising and appreciating the achievements of workers. They cautioned that the recognition of employees who performed well could have a negative effect on the emotions of others, especially those who did not receive recognition, for one reason or another, and this could affect interpersonal behaviour.

Silvera [6] refers to the need to enhance performance through a variety of mechanisms, including the power of social recognition that relies on

the verdict of the crowd to enhance a worker's performance. For the moment, peers are consulted because they are always together with the worker throughout the year. Peers see the great work that people do and they are better judges than periodic visits by supervisors and management. The institution would be required to find a way of accessing feedback from the peers. Silvera [6] cites an employee recognition survey that polled 800 human resource professionals and found that 90% of the respondents said that feedback from peers was more accurate than that of supervisors and managers. In the same survey, 80% of respondents indicated they had adopted social, or were adopting social, recognition because it enables workers to recognise each other's great work. The advantage of social or peer recognition was that fellow workers were able to nominate their colleagues for rewards, and they were given an opportunity to justify their choice. Social or peer recognition enables employees to motivate and inspire each other. According to Turner, Waterfield, Quest and Cates [7] the other persuasion for peer recognition was that peers were better placed to see who, among themselves, was 'living' the values of their employer. They contend that a few institutions have adopted employee recognition programmes in which the recipients choose their own rewards.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Worker productivity was generally low and the mechanisms that many employers used did not result in the level of productivity that was expected from fully motivated and satisfied workers; recognised and appreciated employees were motivated, satisfied and their level of productivity was high.

#### **Research Questions**

Main research question

- How did employee recognition affect employee performance in the institution?

Secondary research questions

- Why did workers feel unappreciated by the employer?
- How could employers show their appreciation for the work that their employees did for the institution?
- How prevalent was employee recognition in institutions of higher learning?

#### **Purpose of the study**

The study sought to establish the relationship between employee recognition and employee performance

#### **Significance of the study**

The Open University was the first and primary beneficiary of the study; senior management was able to determine the perceptions of its people in relation to

recognition. The institution would then be in a position to implement or improve on its recognition initiatives in order to fully harness and tie its recognition programme to employee performance.

The academic fraternity would benefit from increased knowledge concerning the status of employee recognition in relation to employee performance. The connection between employee recognition and employee performance should be established or strengthened through the study. There has been latent belief that recognised workers performed better and this study should validate, or negate, the belief.

Employees themselves would benefit a lot by having their perceptions on the matter recorded for posterity. Where their perception was that they performed better when recognised they would benefit from the recognition.

#### **Delimitations**

The study covered the area of employee recognition as it pertains to the performance of the institutions of higher learning. The Open University was singled out for data generation.

#### **Ethical considerations**

The researcher exercised confidentiality and transparency during the process of data generation. Participants were requested to voluntarily participate in the research and were free to leave at any time they felt they were no longer comfortable to continue. The participants chose not to answer certain questions, if they felt they did not want to share their perceptions on a specific item in the discussion.

Participants were forwarded a transcript of their interview or discussion to validate, and they were free to change parts or sections of the transcript, until they submitted the version they were satisfied reflected their perceptions accurately.

#### **Review of related literature**

A review of related literature was undertaken in order for the researcher to be familiar with the aspect of employee recognition and what other researchers found in their studies in the area. The researcher desired to establish the areas of theoretical consensus among other researchers, areas of differences and to establish gaps that need to be closed through the current study. Employee recognition was a new area of interest in these parts of the world and very little seemed to have been covered, which meant that the theoretical approach to the area needed to be explored and to be related to the local situation. Preliminary research done in the area by this researcher indicated that, although a lot has been covered in the area of worker recognition, a lot more needed to be done because what worked well for one situation did not work well with another situation, so

institutional leadership needed to try many mechanisms until they settled for that which was appropriate in their peculiar situation, in as far as employee recognition was concerned.

#### **Objectives of employee recognition**

The objectives of employee recognition are many and varied to indicate that organisations can innovate and structure their recognition differently. Some of the objectives for employee recognition are cited below, but the list is not exhaustive WorldatWork [2].

- Recognise years of service
- Support a culture change
- Provide line of sight to company goals
- Support becoming/remaining an employer of choice
- Increase retention or decrease turnover
- Encourage loyalty
- Support organisational mission/values
- Increase morale
- Reinforce desired behaviour
- Motivate high performance
- Create a culture of recognition
- Create a positive work environment

These objectives indicate that employee recognition does not have one individual who is responsible for driving it; no one position/person is responsible for the programme, the responsibility is shared among departments and units. WorldatWork [2] indicates that employee recognition could be a function centralised for the whole organisation, or a specific department could drive their own recognition programme.

#### **Importance of employee recognition**

Institutions should be guided in their performance by the imperative to retain top talent and maintain standards of service because these are critical to business success. There may be other compelling reasons for instituting employee recognition and a few of these many reasons are listed hereunder. Employee recognition:

- Lets employees know that their work is valued and appreciated
- Gives employees a sense of ownership and belonging in their place of work
- Improves morale
- Enhances loyalty
- Helps build a supportive work environment
- Increases employee motivation
- Improves employee retention

The reasons for recognizing employees stem from five goals, which are: to recognise years of service; create a positive work environment; create a culture of

recognition; motivate high performance; and, reinforce desired behaviour. Turner, *et al.* [7] emphasize the importance of aligning employee recognition to the core values of an institution, which should deliver truly quantifiable results.

American Psychological Association [8] carried out a research on employee recognition and the findings were that 51% of employees felt valued by their employer; 36% denied ever receiving any form of recognition and 47% had not received any form of recognition in the previous year. And 47% feel recognition is provided fairly. Overall, 81% of respondents reported that their employer provided some form of recognition and 46% say their organisations recognise employees for individual job performance. At team work level, 29% say that team work or work-unit performance is recognised, a paltry 21% say their employers provide company-wide recognition and only 18% say recognition is provided for specific behaviour, like being consistent with the organisation's values. These results indicate how critical it is to recognise the effort and industry of workers in an organisation; recognition is not for individual effort only, but for team, unit and at company level.

In the same study discussed above, further findings were that workers who were recognised by their supervisors exhibited higher levels of job satisfaction, a greater likelihood of working harder after the recognition, stronger motivation to perform better and a greater sense of feeling that they were valued. In direct contrast, employees who did not feel recognised were most likely to plan to leave their employer in less than a year after feeling undervalued, suffered lower perceptions of fairness in the company's recognition practices and experienced lower overall job satisfaction compared to their recognised counterparts; they performed poorly.

The writer failed to access local equivalent studies on employee recognition and, because of that, relied on the American studies to argue that recognition is a critical component of strategies to enhance employee performance, satisfaction and to cut down on high employee retention.

### **Guidelines on employee recognition**

Employee recognition should be a deliberate and planned practice, with measurable objectives and a work plan. It should be practised on a daily basis and should drive the nature of relationships in an organisation. The recognition should be for both individual and team achievement, but even in team effort workers want to be recognised as individuals. Group recognition greatly contributes to team building and is a clear message that the individuals, as members of a group, are valuable to the company. Employees need to be recognised in a sincere and heartfelt manner

for the recognition to be effective. The recognition should be timely; otherwise it may not sound sincere if it is given a long time after the accomplishment. However, management should realise that each employee has a way of being recognised that they prefer; a caring management should create a database on how their workforce, as individuals, prefer to be recognised.

Harrison [9] states that any form of recognition is fundamental although formal recognition is better appreciated. Employees feel their work is valued through recognition, because when their work is valued their satisfaction and productivity rises and they are motivated to maintain or even improve the appreciated work.

### **Important tips for effective recognition**

The institution needs to establish criteria for what performance or contribution constitutes recognisable or rewardable behaviour or action. However, the following suggestions could prove invaluable when considering how to implement the practice of employee recognition:

- Employees are all eligible for recognition.
- The recognition must be accompanied with specific information about what behaviour or action is being rewarded and recognised.
- Anyone who performs at the level or standard stated in the criteria receives the reward.
- The recognition should occur as close to the performance of the action or behaviour as possible, so that the recognition reinforces behaviour or action the employer wants to encourage.
- Employees must be involved in the process of selecting employees to recognise, based on agreed criteria, drawn up by both parties.

Turner, *et al.* [7] advocated for the adoption of employee recognition programmes that are designed to recognise and reward individuals and teams. These teams and individuals should demonstrate truly outstanding performance in accordance with an institution's core values and objectives.

### **Typology of recognition**

According to Worldat Work [2] there are many types of employee recognition programmes: length of service programme; an above-and-beyond performance programme; a peer-to-peer programme; programmes to motivate specific behaviour; employee of the year; safety performance; retirement and, suggestions/ideas.

There are two broad categories of employee recognition; informal and formal recognition.

### **Informal recognition**



Worldat Work [2] says an informal recognition programme represents a spontaneous gesture of appreciation. In this category recognition is not planned and actioned according to some specific ritual; recognition is given on the spot to individuals, teams or to the whole company.

### **Formal recognition**

A formal recognition programme is a structured or planned recognition programme that is devised and adhered to, accompanied by a formal ritual or ceremony. This can be done per unit, department or at company level.

The formal employee recognition ceremony can be an award giving ceremony or an event to reward or honour individuals or teams of employees, in public.

### **Employee recognition guiding principles**

The following principles guide the demonstration and provision of recognition in an organisation. They show when a manager or supervisor should recognise a worker.

#### **A Simple 'Thank You'**

It only takes a moment (less than 60 seconds) to recognize the efforts of a co-worker. It could be called a "fly-by appreciation".

#### **Pay Attention**

Noticing when people are doing the right thing increases the probability they would repeat it.

#### **Inspire Effort**

People who feel appreciated give more to the job than what is merely required. They are ready to give the "discretionary effort" necessary to a healthy organization.

#### **Reward the right things**

One get what one pays attention to. If one positively comments on how an effort helps maintain our core values, or facilitates customer service, or helps new staff orient, or cross-trains staff, or builds teamwork, etc. staff will know what is important around here.

#### **Personalized Approach**

One size does not fit all. Members of staff are individuals and respond differently to the same strategy/stimulus. Staff should be asked how they want to be recognised.

#### **Equal Opportunity**

There should be opportunity for all staff to receive recognition; whether for improving performance, for extra effort, for creativity, or for reliably doing their job each day.

#### **Keep it Positive**

To have the greatest impact, the recognition message needs to be completely positive, specific, sincere, and given soon after the effort.

#### **Enjoy!**

"Fun, joy and sharing go hand-in glove with world class quality."- Tom Peters. Celebrate individual and unit accomplishments in a planned manner, or spontaneously!

#### **Recognize Leadership**

Give recognition to staff that support a "recognition culture" with their actions and words. Publicly note their contribution, including it in their performance appraisal and inviting them to attend recognition celebrations.

#### **Recognise Teamwork**

When the relationship among co-workers is good, recognition enhances work performance. When the relationship is troubled, it usually doesn't matter how workers are rewarded or recognised.

#### **Informal recognition ideas**

- A simple "hello" at the start of the day and "goodbye" at the end of the day is an obvious but sometimes overlooked form of recognition. Spending just a few minutes chatting can open lines of communication and can set a positive tone for the day
- Say a sincere thank you for a job well done. This should be done often and in a specific way. For example, "You handled that client well, thank you" or "Thanks, those were some really good ideas that you provided at the staff meeting. They should move us forward to solve the problem"
- A personal note can be very meaningful. Keep a pack of note cards in the desk for convenience. Send an e-mail to acknowledge work well done, with a copy to the Executive Director
- Tell employee about positive comments that are heard from others
- Use the organization's newsletter as a way of acknowledging an employee or thanking staff for a job well done
- Acknowledge individuals or teams at a staff meeting, management meeting, board meeting, or special event. This is often meaningful for the recipient and can be a source of inspiration for others
- Organise celebrations at the end of a project, after the quarterly review, individual milestones, team milestones or just because performance is improving.
- Food is important. Reward achievement with a box of chocolates, or bring in ice cream on a

hot Monday morning or Friday afternoon. It does not have to be all of the time, keep it spontaneous

- Acknowledge birthdays, work anniversaries, new babies and other significant life events. Gone are the days when work and the rest of life remain separate
- Give out hour-off certificates for exceptional achievement. Let employees accumulate them for up to one day off
- Have a team meeting outside the office at the local coffee shop or restaurant
- Create a recognition bulletin board to post 'Thank you' notes from clients
- Give an employee a day off for a job well done
- Ask an employee to represent you at a meeting outside the organisation
- Take an employee out to lunch
- Write down three things a manager appreciates about a direct report and give it to subordinates.

#### **Formal recognition ideas**

- Write a letter of praise recognising specific contributions and accomplishments. Send a copy to senior management and the employee's personnel file.
- When a manager hears a positive remark about someone, they should repeat it to that person as soon as possible: Face-to-face is best, e-mail or voice mail are good in a pinch.
- Call an employee to your office to thank them, but don't discuss any other issue.
- Publish a "kudos" column of a department newsletter and ask for nominations throughout the department.
- Publicly recognize the positive impact on operations of the solutions employees devise for problems.
- Acknowledge individual achievement by using employee names in status reports.
- Express an interest in employee's career development goals.
- Post a large "celebration calendar" in the work area. Tack on notes of recognition to specific dates.
- Greet employees by name.
- Practice positive non-verbal behaviour that demonstrates appreciation, such as smiles, or a handshake.
- Encourage employees to identify specific areas of interest in job-related skills. Then arrange for them to spend a day with an in-house "expert" to learn more about the topic.
- Encourage employees to participate in community volunteer efforts.

- Share verbal accolades and forward positive voice mail messages.
- Actively listen to co-workers, especially when discussing their accomplishments and contributions.
- Use 3x5 cards to write "You're special because..." statements. People can collect the cards and refer to them when things aren't going perfectly.
- Have a recognition event created by a peer group that decides what they will give and why they will give it.
- Keep a supply of appropriately funny notes that can be given as immediate rewards. Keep the supply visible, in a basket or box in your office.
- Widely publicize suggestions used and their positive impact on the department.
- When someone has spent long hours at work, send a letter of thanks to his/her home.
- Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays.
- Arrange for an outstanding employee to have lunch with a dean or director.
- Allow an employee to choose his/her next assignment.
- Recognise a team accomplishment by designating that team as consultants to other teams.
- Recognise those committed to personal health and wellness.
- Smile. It's contagious.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher's conceived reality as the result of the interacting between and among social actors, in any given situation. When individuals participate in social activity they share ideas, argue over others and generally agree on issues discussed and the agreement results in what the social players view as reality. The interaction also results in the creation of knowledge and new insights by social players as they interact and disagree and agree on given issues. In other words, knowledge and reality are not given but are a result of social creation.

The researcher adopted a qualitative paradigm, or worldview, with an interpretivist approach to interpret the data that was accessed from the participants. The case study was the method of data generation which made it possible for the researcher to sub-merge into a community and 'go native' in an effort to live the experiences of the participants, go through their experiences and share their beliefs.

#### **Population**

The study’s population was composed of open and distance learning institutions in the Southern African Development (SADC) region, taking the Open University as a case study. The focus was on the perceptions of the employees of the institution on how their work was recognised and the manner of employee recognition adopted by the institution.

**Sample and sampling technique**

The researcher interviewed a small group of participants, which was selected on their basis of their proximity to senior management. These were managers at middle management level, who were delegated responsibilities by senior managers. These were the most likely employees to receive appreciation and recognition, which they were likely to pass on to their subordinates. Since the number of middle managers was small they were all considered to be a sample; they were all selected for data generation until a point of saturation was reached, to leave out a few.

The researcher carried out in-depth interviews with each of the managers, concentrating on the commendations, praises and other forms of appreciation and recognition that senior management used to show that their work was valued. Document analysis involved reading through copies of their personal files kept by Human Resources to establish the type of

written forms of formal recognition that employees received.

**Instrumentation**

The interview and document analysis were the selected tools for data generation; the in-depth interview was employed to access the perceptions and experiences of participants concerning their perceptions on the recognition they received from senior leaders. The same was true of document analysis. The interview was guided by an interview guide.

**Interview**

The interview is an essential tool in qualitative research, especially interpretive ethnography because they give valuable data in the form of perceptions of participants concerning the recognition of employees in institutions of higher learning.

The interview provided some background information that is crucial in ensuring the reliability of data. Interviews also provided access to information that could not be easily accessed through document study, for example, feelings and intentions. The researcher interviewed individuals in formal conversations. The author used an interview guide structured, as shown in table 1 below.

**Table-1: Interview guide**

1. How did employee recognition affect employee performance in the institution?	2. Why did workers feel unappreciated by the employer?
3. How prevalent was employee recognition in institutions of higher learning?	4. How could employers show their appreciation for the work that their employees did for the institution?

The number of questions allowed participants some time to talk about their perceptions and experiences on how senior management recognised their employees. By relating the perceptions and experiences of the employees to the results of document analysis, the researcher avoided a scenario where his personal views could interfere with the perceptions of the participants. This approach ensured that the findings of the research would emerge from the data of the research.

All the participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and they gave the researcher permission to take notes during interview. The researcher deemed it necessary to write detailed notes as field notes are also important in qualitative research because they can be useful to resort to when the transcribed messages are not clear.

**Document analysis**

The Human Resources section of the institution kept files of their workers in which a record

of everything that happened to the employee was entered. The researcher read through the file noting the letters of commendation, awards and any document that related to a recognition that was accorded to an employee for some work that was done well. The researcher did not consider reprimands, warnings or letters of a disciplinary nature.

The written letters or notes of recognition represented the formal forms of employee recognition, unlike those that were given by word of mouth or those that were not recorded in the employee’s personal file.

**Data analysis and interpretation**

Data that were generated through interviews and document analysis were analysed and interpreted to give meaning to it. The researcher was guided by the themes that emerged from the data generating process, which were an indicator to the perceptions and experiences of employee recognition by participants.

Themes built from the data that were generated from in-depth interviews and document analyses were tabulated as follows:

- -verbal comments like “thank you, well done, you did well”, were common
- are no written comments or reports on good achievement
- bosses don’t thank workers
- Who has ever been given a prize, for what?
- no awards are given at this university
- awards were suggested in 1012 but never implemented
- plans are there, no action
- no motivation because there is no thank you
- the programme to award workers suffered still birth
- only award is renewal of contract, for contract workers
- Why work hard when the effort is not seen?
- this is Open University, there is no recognition
- nothing is written, even spoken to say well done
- we are zombie workers, not thanked
- Work hard when I am not recognised for work I am supposed to do?
- no one recognises senior managers so they don’t recognise us
- there is no file with letter of commendation
- just a thank note would be fine
- the culture of recognition is not there
- I have never seen a document to recognise a worker here
- leaders say we are supposed to do the work that we want to be recognised for
- recognition should start at the top then comes down

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings show that the lack of employee recognition affected the performance of the concerned employees. Participants claimed that there was “no motivation because there is no thank you” and some questioned “why work hard when the effort is not seen?” Participants saw themselves as “we are zombie workers, not thanked” and this caused them to slacken in their performance. Employees asked why they should “work hard when I am not recognised for work I am supposed to do?” They thought that “just a thank note would be fine” for them to work hard. Participants were discouraged because their “leaders say we are supposed to do the work that we want to be recognised for” and do not deserve recognition. In a derisive response, one participant dismissed the question by asking, “who has ever been given a prize, for what?”

The findings clearly indicated the absence of any prevalence or form of formal employee recognition,

except for a programme that seemed to have been crafted in 2012 but was never implemented, “the programme to award workers suffered still birth”, it was clear that at “this is Open University, there is no recognition”. The intention of senior management was noble but the programme should have been translated into practical implementation in order for employees to be motivated. Participants said “an award was suggested in 1012 but never implemented” and others said “plans are there, no action”. A few participants said “nothing is written, even spoken to say well done”, indicating they may be unaware of the 2012 plan that was suggested. Apart from a formal programme to recognise workers, some participants said “I have never seen a document to recognise a worker here” and “there is no file with letter of commendation”. Employee recognition was not prevalent at Open University. Participants said “there are no written comments or reports on good achievement” and some participants claimed that “nothing is written, even spoken to say well done”.

However, there was a modicum of informal employee recognition in the form of verbal compliments; there were “verbal comments like “thank you, well done, you did well”, were common”.

Employees felt unappreciated because the institution did not have a functioning programme of employee recognition. Participants felt senior management did not appreciate the work of employees because they themselves were not recognised; if senior management were recognised in their individual and collective capacity, as evidenced by the theme, “no one recognises senior managers so they don’t recognise us”. If senior managers were recognised they could have devised means of recognising their subordinates. This was why “bosses don’t thank workers”, because they themselves were not thanked

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion was that there was no formal employee recognition programme at Open University. There seemed to be reluctance by senior management to recognise employees who performed above the call of duty, and this was on the basis that they were not recognised which meant that they could not recognise subordinates. The performance of the employees was negatively affected by the lack of appreciation and recognition for outstanding work. The performance and productivity of employees who receive recognition for their effort and industry are much higher than that of their counterparts who are not recognised. Recognised employees experience greater worker engagement, increased productivity, a devoted spirit of customer service and they stay with the organisation for a long period. Those employees who do not get recognised do not feel valued, respected and loved; these employees exhibit the lowest level of engagement because they



don't feel loved neither do they feel valued. A company that does not recognise its employees experiences a high level of staff turnover. Employee recognition sits at the heart of a company's financial sustainability, and positions people at the heart of business.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The employer should have a given programme of employee recognition, which was followed and workers knew that outstanding work was formally recognised. A programme of recognition should start "the culture of recognition" was not there. The culture of employee recognition would counter claims, like "there are no awards are given at this university". Because there was no recognition meant that the "only award is renewal of contract, for contract workers" and the belief was that any employee "recognition should start at the top then comes down".

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