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Social work as a scarce skill: exploring the views of social workers regarding the retention strategies used by the human resource managers to retain social workers within the Department of Social Development

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report entitled *"Social work as a scarce skill: Exploring the views of social workers regarding the retention strategies used by the human resource managers to retain social workers within the Department of Social Development"*, is my own original and unaided work. The research report was compiled under the supervision of Mrs. Roshini Pillay. In addition to that I declare that all references to other sources and other author's work have been properly cited and referenced. Furthermore, this report has not been submitted previously for any other degree or examination.

_____

Jabulile Mavimbela

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ABSTRACT

Social work has been declared as a scarce skill in South Africa in 2008 and the need to recruit and retain social workers in the work place and in the country was identified as a pressing issue that required urgent attention. The problem came to the attention of the researcher through observing that even though social work has been declared a scarce skill, newly qualified social workers are still leaving the Department of Social Development for employment opportunities outside the DSD. The aim of the study was to explore the views of social workers regarding the retention strategies used to retain social workers at the DSD. The researcher has investigated the views of social workers employed at DSD Germiston office and former DSD employees (who are also social workers), regarding the retention strategies used by the human resource managers to retain social workers within the Department of Social Development. The research involved an exploratory-descriptive qualitative approach. Purposive non-probability sampling was used to select 20 participants, comprised of 10 social workers who had left the DSD to work in other departments or private companies and 10 social workers who are currently working for the DSD Germiston office. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and analyzed through thematic content analysis. The results showed that current DSD interviewees saw the strategies used at DSD as not effective in retaining social workers as compared to former DSD interviewees who saw the strategies as contributing towards retaining social workers. Both current and former DSD interviewees were of the opinion that social workers can be retained at the department if the remuneration packages for social workers, working conditions and resource allocation are improved. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that the strategies used at DSD to retain social workers need to be reviewed and social workers need to be consulted and be involved in the process of developing new strategies to retain social workers.

Key words: Social work, scarce skill, retention strategies.

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