



Continuous Professional Development Program for Higher Education Academics in Ethiopia. Views, Perceived Needed Competencies and Organization in Focus

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article No.: 08211249 Type: Research DOI: 10.15580/GJER.2012.3.08211249 Submitted: 21/08/2012 Accepted: 15/10/2012 Published: 22/10/2012 *Corresponding Author Aytaged Sisay Zeleke E-mail: aytagedz@yahoo.com Phone: 18484691574 Keywords: Professional development, training needs, higher education	This paper is aimed at describing and exploring staff development issues in Ethiopian higher education. The principal research question of the study reads as <i>how do the academic staff, view the need of short term continuous professional development trainings and how they prefer such trainings to be organized in Ethiopian higher education?</i> To respond to this question, open and close ended questionnaires, interviews, documents and literature review were used as data collection instruments. The data was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The findings of the study, has shown that academic staff have mixed opinions about the need for short term continuous professional development trainings. However, the study identified the perceived needs of academic staff that might be considered while organizing staff development programs that focus on teaching and research. It also revealed what competencies, academic staff need to develop continuously in their teaching and research roles .It has also identified, why academic staff prefer professional development trainings to be organized in terms of the structure, modes of delivery, training providers, site, time, follow up, reward and recognition, and necessary conditions. Besides, the paper has provided some suggestions that may sustain the existence and quality of staff development programs/trainings. The issues suggested are related to, giving due recognition to staff development activities, providing professional development for all, budget, inclusive of monitoring and evaluation. Comparative study and comprehensive needs assessment on a large scale on the issue under focus are identified, as possible future research agenda.

INTRODUCTION

The Higher education system is one of the most important knowledge, information and technology based service providers to the society. The quality of its services is highly influenced, by the quality of its human resources whose continuous professional development in terms of learning, teaching and research is mandatory to successfully address the growing challenges globalization and national contexts have brought to the sector.

Enhancing the required skills and knowledge of the staff, together with promoting their level of commitment to the successful accomplishment of their institutions' mission and goals, are unquestionably vital. Similarly, the realization of the Ethiopian higher education reform which could be related to what Carnoy (1999) called as competitiveness, finance and equity driven reforms, and which aims at alleviating poverty and improving the societal, political, and economical situations of the country (Yizengaw, 2005), is highly dependent on the quality and quantity of its human resources. Stressing on the need of quality staff, the World Bank document (1994) pointed out that, "a high quality and well motivated teaching staff and a supportive professional culture are essential in building excellence". However, there seems to be a pressing and timely concern regarding staff recruitment and staff development in the Ethiopian higher education to achieve its objectives.

To enhance and assure the quality of tertiary education, and to make it effectively and efficiently responsive to the society, the Ethiopian higher education sector has embarked on a number of professional development undertakings. The major initiatives along this line include organizing and offering short term trainings on management and leadership to high officials of HEIs, introducing a Higher Diploma Program (HDP) which is a licensing one year training program aimed at developing the skills and professionalism of teacher educators, and establishing a National Pedagogical and Resource Center (NPRC) in 2000. This center has organized and offered different trainings to the academic staff of the public universities. In addition to this an Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) which is responsible to offer trainings and other related services that focus on enhancing the pedagogical skills of instructors, has been established in all the established HEIs by the financial and technical support of the Netherlands Government. This center, though not very dynamic in some HEIs, has offered trainings to academic staff.

Statement of the Problem

Higher education is pressured to undergo changes, which is aimed at efficiency in its varied services and programs, and achieving higher level of quality in many aspects of its organization. The key actors of any change are the people in the system. Thus, failing to change these people is a major barrier to success.

To this end, the Ethiopian higher education, as one of its reform agenda, has embarked on different capacity building programs. Most of these programs are in their younger ages, which demand research based knowledge and information that appraise the current practice and shape the future activities.

According to a survey based catalogue compiled by the Institute of Educational Research of the Addis Ababa University (IER, AAU), researches conducted in the area of higher education (HE) in Ethiopia in general, and in the area of professional development in particular are not many. For instance, out of 1,250 published and unpublished research outputs between 1974 -1999, only 57 documents deal with issues related to higher education (Asgedom, 2007). A glance on other higher education publications like The Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education, IER, Flambeau, and Journal of Development Studies also indicates that little attention is paid to these areas in terms of research. Similarly, the publication database on Ethiopian higher education compiled by the Center for International Higher Education by Boston College and the quarterly publication of this center that dates from 1995-2008, revealed the availability of limited research based documents concerning staff development issues in the Ethiopian context.

Generally speaking, the researches undertaken on Ethiopian higher education, do not seem to indicate research based information that deals with staff/professional development issues in the sector. There are however many studies which focus on how and what instructors teach, assess, research etc, but there are scanty or no researches on how staff/professional development strategies are currently organized in the Ethiopian HE context. Focusing on continuous professional development for academic staff in Ethiopian HEIs is not only a little researched area but also a newly implemented plan in the sector.

What is more, most of the staff/ professional staff development programs which are in offer are commendable, but as observation informs us they do not seem to address what the staff lack, need and prefer. Who should take what trainings and how should they be organized, are eminently important questions that should be pondered over, if success in this endeavor is to be achieved. However, the current practice seems to indicate a gap along this line. A reflection by Berhanu (2007:9) a former head of the Foreign Languages Department at Addis Ababa University, can be taken as a case in point. Summarizing the mismatch between the staff development training given to teacher educators in Ethiopian higher education institutions and the profile of the academic staff taking the training, he said "as one of the trainees in the HDP at AAU, I witnessed that most of the instructors were quite familiar with most of the issues raised [but he implied that the content of this training package has more relevance and benefit to] "those who do not have their trainings as teacher educators and who are quite unfamiliar to most of the issues like active learning and reflective teaching". Another related concern is how could experienced instructors and professors be professionally

developed? Who is going to develop them and what strategy suits this group? Are important and sensitive questions when the contemporary universities worldwide are promoting 'the slogan learn or burn' (Tjeldvoll, 2004). The same author (2004:18) noted that "many professors are excellent researchers but poor pedagogues, and most of them not likely to be able to learn the art of teaching".

Objectives

The major objectives of this study are to explore:

- academic staffs' views and perceived needs about short term continuous professional development trainings, that may enhance their teaching and research roles in a higher education context and
- how could short term continuous professional development trainings be *organized* to enhance the teaching and research competencies of academic staff in Ethiopian HEIs.

Research Questions

The principal research question of the study reads as *how does the academic staff view the need of short term continuous professional development trainings and how do they prefer such trainings to be organized in Ethiopian higher education?* Specifically, the paper raises the following sub questions to respond them empirically.

- How do the academic staff, view the need of participating in short term continuous professional development trainings?
- What are the academic staffs' 'perceived', needed competencies for their teaching and research roles?
- How do the academic staff prefer staff development short term trainings related to teaching and research be organized in terms of structure, modes of delivery, training providers, site, time, follow up, reward and recognition ; and necessary conditions and support?

Review of Related Literature

Definition: Staff Development

Different writers have used different words and phrases to define the concept staff development. A review of literature in this area reveals a number of terms used synonymously in defining the concept under discussion. These include professional development, continuing teacher development, professional learning/ growth, in-service education /learning,/ training, ongoing assistance, human resource development, continuous career development, and lifelong learning (Woolfs, 1991; Turbill, 1993; Hoban, 1996; Anderson, 2000;

Reimers and Reimers, 2000; Chand, 2000; and George and Lubben, 2002). A closer look in to the concept presented depicts a common theme. That is enhancing students learning capabilities, by utilizing a continuously up graded performance of teachers. However, a closer look in to the ideas contained in defining the concept across different time line shows some kind of change in focus.

In 1980s, developing knowledge, skills and attitudes of individual teachers were the major focuses. In the 1990s, authors went on including students and schools or institutions in addition to emphasizing individual teachers' development. They contended that professional development is effective, when a holistic approach is considered. In 2000, writers about staff/professional development emphasized on competence development as a broad concept which included the notions held by writers both in the 1980s and 1990s. Specifically, the definitions in this decade considered skills, knowledge and attitude development as highly interwoven concepts with in an environment of teachers satisfaction and motivation.

Societal, Organizational and Students' Trends in Staff Development

Higher Education institutions, like many organizations, are staff dependent for the quality of services they provide to the society. Their effectiveness and efficiency partly rest on their staff active participation on continuous and deep professional learning. However, this learning should not be limited to particular group of staff if the desired change has to be seen in the entire system. Working conditions, needed skills and knowledge are continuously developing and changing dynamically. Catching up with these changes has become a need for all HEIs to remain in a job safely. "In some academic fields [as Fielden, (1998:1) puts it], the total of human knowledge is doubling every five or ten years". Similarly, a lot of change occur with regard to works performed by non teaching staff of HEIs' like librarians, administrators, secretaries, and other support staff. None of these staff will survive in their jobs by carrying out their jobs traditionally. Change in HE cannot be effective or efficient, if continuous professional development is only focused on particular group from the whole community. All must develop together if the institution system is wanted to function qualitatively. For some years now, the need for professional development is very much pronounced. This is mainly due to pressures from globalization.

As it has been mentioned above, higher education is confronted with a lot of challenges which necessitate, that academicians exert efforts that will improve learning. The trend shows that societal, organizational and students demand is changing.

For instance, the societal trend shows that there should be a change of direction from teaching to learning and a shift away from confining in a specific society to a more global society. Due to this, professional development should offer appropriate and up to date learning opportunities, which bring the globe

to the classroom (Smith, 1998, Patrick and Fletcher, 1998).

Similarly, organizational trend reveals that teachers are expected to be more accountable to students learning than ever. Moreover, their responsibility is also linked to the overall aims of their institutions. Accountability, productivity and efficiency are key demands of the day. Thus, professional development programs should find ways in which teachers adequately develop these constructs (Fulton and Licklider, 1998).

The other trend is related to students who join HEIs with varied ages, motivations, purposes, level of experiences and educational backgrounds. In this context, the students rather than institutions will have more say in devising the future higher education agenda. This clearly shows that professional development should equip teachers with adequate skills that enhance their management of students with diverse needs and interests (McGuire and Williams, 2002).

Paradigm Shift in Staff Development

As it has been indicated above the term staff development has many synonyms. In the past, the focus of many professional development activities was that teachers or educators passively attend, mostly in training rooms, while experts transmit new ideas. Active involvement of teachers that requires application and deep learning was seldom. The success of such professional development programs was usually measured by the level of satisfactions teachers have, while the program was undertaken. However, progress in the field suggests that there is a paradigm shift in the way professional development should be organized. Among others, Spark (1999) attributes this paradigm shift to three major forces namely result driven education, systems thinking and constructivism.

Result Driven Education:

The expectation behind this force is that students' success is determined by what they actually know and are able to do as a result of the time they spent in an educational institution. It should however be noted, that this is very different from determining their success on the number of courses they took and grades awarded. Added to this, is that the success of professional development participants like teachers,

and administrators is considered effective not necessarily by the large number of participants who take such programs and by the positive comments and values they give to such programs, but by assessing if the program brought a change in their instructional behavior which in turn positively improves students achievements.

Systems Thinking:

This conception assumes that different parts of an entire system have complex and interwoven relationships. When various parts join together they will have a minor or major effect on another part in which both parts, contribute towards the formation of the whole system which could consequently be affected negatively or positively. Under this thinking educational reform, including professional development, is better carried out systematically than in a piecemeal fashion. It should be stressed, here, policy makers and educators should be very careful when they implement reforms. This is because a reform in one area may bring about an unintended effect somewhere in the system. For example, increasing a cut of point for awarding grade in a course without improving the curriculum, assessment method and other important variables may enhance dropout rates which might not be the intended purpose. Thus, it is very important to think all possible effects a change in one element may have in another element of that system.

Constructivism:

The underlying assumption behind constructivism is that professional learning takes place when learners construct or build knowledge. In other words, constructivists hold that knowledge is something that can be constructed than received from somebody. "Staff development from a constructive perspective will include activities such as action research, conversations with peers about the beliefs, and assumptions that guide their instruction and reflective practices like journal keeping..." (Spark, 1994:1).

These three forces namely result driven education, system thinking and, constructivism have impacted the field of staff development to exhibit a paradigm shift. Spark (1994) has described the paradigm shift extensively and I have tabled that as follows.

Table 1: Paradigm Shift in Professional Development

FROM	TO
Individual development	Individual and organizational development
Fragmented, piecemeal improvement efforts	Clear, coherent, and strategically planned efforts
A focus on adult needs	A focus on students needs and learning out comes
Training that one attends away from the job as a primary delivery system in staff development	Multiple forms of job embedded learning
Orientation towards the transmission of knowledge and skills to teachers by experts	The study by teachers of the teaching and learning processes.
A focus on generic instructional skills	A combination of generic and content specific skills
Staff developers who function primary as trainers of training.	Those who provide consultation, planning, and facilitation services as well as trainings
Staff development provided by one or two departments.	Staff development as a critical function and major responsibility performed by all administrators and teacher leaders
Teachers as the primary recipients of staff development	continuous improvement in performance for everyone who affects student learning
Staff development as a 'frill' that can be cut during difficult financial times.	Staff development as an essential and indispensable process without which educational institutions cannot hope to prepare young people for citizenship and productive employment.

Academics' Attitudes on the Need of Short Term Continuous Teaching Enhancement Programs in Higher Education

Zuber (1992), characterized academics' attitudes on short term continuous teaching enhancement programs into four. A more general categorization of the attitudes may reveal two groups that consists of: those who acknowledge the need of participating and those who do not feel the need of such program at a higher education level. The first group wants to fully and actively participate in any kind of teaching enhancement programs organized. The second group includes those who feel the need of participating in teaching enhancement program, but differs on views of who should participate. Under this second group, there are those who do think participation in such program is not relevant for themselves but they think others who may benefit in participating in it could do so. Similarly, there are some academics who recognize the need of developing one's self continuously, by participating in short term trainings in theory but do not actually participate when such programs are organized.

Some Points to Ponder Over in Organizing Short Term Continuous Teaching Enhancement Programs

The literature in professional development programs suggests that a number of issues have to be clear before organizing short term continuous teaching enhancement programs. For example, What needs should professional development programs address? where can it be located? How could it be delivered? Who should provide a training? What are the roles of the training organizers?, Where is the training going to take place?, and what are the rewards after completing the training? These are some of the important questions that should be addressed.

Needs identification:

Continuous staff development programs could be organized to effectively and efficiently address varied needs that help to meet the mission of, objectives of, as well as changes or reforms introduced in an institution. Two most important areas of development concern for higher education institutions are to enhance the capacity of their academic staffs' teaching and research competencies. Unless a conscious effort is exerted to continuously develop the academic staff, the implication to make an institution competitive nationally and internationally as judged by the knowledge they produce using current teaching and learning contents and approaches, as well as educational technology gadgets seems to be questionable.

In an era when educational standard and quality assurance are becoming buzz concepts internationally, there is a little chance for an academic staff to boast as a competent and up to date instructor and researcher, by referring to his/her qualification awarded some years ago unless he/she has invested enough time for continuous scholarship and self tuition. Corroborating this assertion, John (1998) said "in some academic fields it is said that the total of human knowledge is doubling every five or ten years".

The demands imposed by the different stakeholders (policy makers, institutional leaders, families, students, donors and collaborating national and international higher education institutions, etc) of the higher education institutions portray not only varied needs and demands but also the use of appropriately tailored strategies to address them. To this end, understanding what the academic staff needs to develop in their teaching and research roles, will help to engage the staff in appropriate capacity development programs that will qualitatively address one of the great demands of the stakeholders i.e. quality teaching and research outputs. Some of the

major areas of competencies, which the academic staff need to develop for the said roles as outlined by John (1998:3) are presented below.

Some needs of academic staff for their teaching and research roles:

This include:

- awareness and understanding of the different ways in which students learn;
- knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to assessment and evaluation of students, in order to help students learn;
- commitment to scholarship in the discipline, maintaining professional standards and knowledge of current developments;
- awareness of IT applications to the discipline, both as regards access to materials and resources world-wide and as regards teaching technology;
- sensitivity to external "market" signals as regards the needs of those likely to employ graduates of the discipline;
- mastery of new developments in teaching and learning, including an awareness of the requirements of "dual mode" tuition with face to face and distance learning using similar materials;
- customer awareness, as regards the views and aspirations of stakeholders, including students;
- understanding of the impact that international and multi-cultural factors would have on the curricula;
- ability to teach a diverse range of students, from different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, races etc, throughout a longer day;
- skills in handling larger numbers of students in formal lectures, seminars or workshops than hitherto, without the loss of quality;
- development of personal and professional "coping strategies".

Similarly, the following areas are listed as needs to be addressed when capacity development programs for academic staff in their research role are organized. These are:

- proposal writing;
- networking and fund raising for projects;
- managing PhD students and researchers;
- project management, particularly relating to international partnership projects (Ibid)

Staff Development Models:

Different professionals need and prefer different paths to develop themselves. A consideration of such needs and interests can be reflected by using appropriate professional development models. Five of the major models noted by authors in the area include training,

observation, development/improvement process, inquiry and individually guided models.

Training is one of the oldest and well researched staff development model and its main objective is to improve thinking. To do this, a clear set of outcomes have to be targeted and met. The most frequent training aims include awareness raising, knowledge acquisition, skills development, and attitudinal change (Sparks, and Horsley, 1989). According to Joyce and Showers (1988) in Sparks, and Horsley (1989), the major components of a training model are theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching.

Observation model assumes that objective analysis of teaching behaviors could be carried out using systematic observation mechanisms. Then, the data obtained could be analyzed to guide interventions that enhance teachers learning and performance. Peer observation and coaching are essential components of this model and they are also used to offer constructive, critical and corrective feedback (Frey and Alman, 2003).

One of the underlying assumptions of development/ improvement process model is that adults learn best when they have a need to know and a problem to solve (Sparks, and Horsley, 1989). Adults are also goal and relevance oriented (Lieb, 1991). Thus, involving them in processes that are applicable to their contexts and also that directly improve the quality of their work would have a positive result.

One of the underlying assumptions of this model is that teachers are capable of posing good inquiries about their practice and finding out appropriate answers to these inquiries. The other underpinning assumption is that, teachers tend to embark on data collection to answer questions that have been challenging them. In this process, teachers are assumed to develop new understandings (Sparks, and Horsley, 1989).

Central to the individually guided model, is that teachers themselves could pursue their own learning by identifying what they need to learn and determining their own activities which help them meet their professional development needs (Sparks and Horsley, 1989 and Hall, 1997).

This, however, does not imply that these models are independent of one another. Rather they can be merged in a given professional development program. Understanding the culture of support, context, time, and financial resources are important factors that determine the success of planning and implementing professional development programs.

A survey conducted on professional developers in European higher education institutions revealed that training is the most common approach used to address the identified needs. Following this is reading, networking and on the job practice (Jenny and Paddy, 2005).

Location of Provision:

The provision of professional development programs can be at a university wide center or department level. Central provision is more relevant to engage staff on

developmental issues and activities which do have relevance across disciplines. It is also important to understand and implement central reforms and transformations. Even though central professional development providers may have some kind of orientations about other disciplines, their levels of understanding and abstraction of different disciplines may be challenged (Paul and Andrew, No date). Consequently, they may be perceived as having no or little skill and knowledge to advance department based needs. This drawback could be minimized if professional development programs are located at faculty or department level. This location can help to address departmental needs, since development facilitators possess appropriate disciplinary background to that of the participant which, in turn, helps them place issues in relevant contexts for enhanced understanding and increases their acceptability. Unlike the positive results to be achieved as a result of having similar disciplinary background and strong connection between developers and participating colleagues, local developers may not be well connected with other developers in the institution which questions the effectiveness of implementation of central initiatives (Ibid).

Role:

Professional development organizers may use one or more modes while organizing trainings. The decision to adopt a model takes into consideration, a number of factors such as the nature of the training to be provided, and the skills to be developed, as well as the available finance and in-house expertise. Trainings can be provided by internal experts whose roles "give continuity and build tacit knowledge, but may lack credibility and variety" (Paul and Andrew, No date). Professional development program organizers, can play a brokerage role in using external providers who may bring different useful experiences and variety as additional to the training. "They may also have higher credibility than internal providers" (Ibid). Internal and external providers, however, may not require the same pay.

On the other hand, professional development program experts may have a facilitation role. For instance, they can help group of staff to identify good practices and share experiences by organizing workshops, as well as coaching individual staff. Similar to facilitation, dissemination is another mode that can be used in professional development programs. It is a frequently used mode when participants of the development activities are equal partners in the process, "in engaging debate, adaptation and even transformation of the issues in question in their specific context" (Ibid).

Site:

Short term teaching enhancement trainings can take place in the campus where the staff teach and research. This arrangement is convenient to facilitate both formal and informal learning. Mostly, on the job trainings focus on specific needs and they are

conducted by qualified, experienced and respected in-house staff who know the participants, their work activities and understand the context and challenges. "Coaching, guided reading, involvement in quality circles, job/task/role development, peer observation, observing committees, and fact finding visit to other departments or institutions" (Ibid), are suitable models that benefit a lot from on-the-job professional development arrangements. On the other hand, short term professional trainings can be offered outside a university compound. Such off-the-job trainings help participants to give full attention and increase their attendance. They may also create opportunities to work and share ideas with other participants who are working in different contexts, and network with others. Instances of on-the-job development include, "courses, workshops, external and internal taught courses, conferencing, fact finding visits, networking and briefing" (Ibid). Difficulty to put knowledge and skills gained from off-the-job development when participants come back to their university is one of the limitations.

Reward and Recognition:

Rewarding and giving recognition to those who participated successfully in professional development programs, help to sustain the commitment institutions have towards such programs. Institutions use different forms of rewarding and recognition mechanisms. One is salary increment. Also, there are institutions which accredit many of these professional development programs (Ibid). This may encourage participants to be engaged in accredited programs which can make the gained skills and knowledge to be recognized for other relevant employment.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology used, to respond to the major research questions of the study. Specifically, it describes the research method, data collection instruments, participants, and setting of the study.

Research Method and Data Collection Instruments

Since the focus of the study was to describe the practice, views, perceptions, and preferences of academic staff concerning professional development issues, a descriptive method as suggested appropriate for this kind of study by Bryman (2004) was used. To gather adequate data and triangulate it, both quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches were employed.

Open and close ended questionnaires were distributed to and collected from academic staff. The close ended questionnaire has mainly elicited information on how academic staff prefer continuous short term staff development programs/trainings to be organized. The open ended items have given opportunities for the respondents to provide additional opinions on the related issues and to explore the need of organizing and providing short term continuous

professional development programs. In addition to this, open ended interviews were employed. The other source of data in this research was literature review such as documents and research reports on the issues under study.

Sampling the Setting of the Study

Higher education institutions, particularly universities, in Ethiopia are rapidly expanding. At present, there are about 30 universities. Among these, 9 of the relatively older Universities were included under the Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) which was aimed at organizing Academic Development Resource Centres in these universities. A considerable number of the staff in these institutions is believed to have some kind of direct or indirect experiences about short term continuous professional development programs/trainings, since EQUIP was helping them develop such a program. The universities participation in the short term continuous professional development programs/trainings organized and promoted by EQUIP, seemed to provide them direct or indirect opportunities and experiences to reflect on the need of such programs. Thus, their participation was purposely considered to serve as a background in put for the staff, while they respond to my questionnaire items and interview questions. The other rational to focus on these universities, is to build on the short term continuous professional development programs/ trainings that have been attempted to be established in these universities, by the financial and technical support secured from EQUIP. However, due to time and financial constraints, Addis Ababa, Mekele, and Bahirdar Universities were randomly selected and considered for the study

Sampling the Participants of the Study

Even though the plan was to consider 80 study participants, it was only possible to have a total of 60 academic staff that could provide complete data for the study. All of them participated in filling out the questionnaire while 12 of them participated both in filling out the questionnaire and taking part in the interview.

To sample the participants for the questionnaire, first the available departments in three of the universities were identified and those departments which exist in all of the institutions were then identified. From these departments, four departments namely English language, Computer/Information Science, Mathematics, and Physical Education were randomly selected. Following this, list of staff names was collected and 5 staff was randomly considered from each department of each university. This makes the participants of each university in the questionnaire to be 20 academic staff.

The interviews were conducted with 3 staff from each university or 12 purposely selected academic staff that could provide instances about the issues under study from the perspectives of beginning, intermediate, and advanced level instructors whose

experiences are determined by the number of services rendered in HEIs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study with their subsequent discussions. First, it presents the academic staffs' views on the importance of participation on continuous professional development programs/trainings. Then, it identifies the academic staffs' perceived needed competencies for their teaching and research roles. Following this is a presentation on how the academic staff prefer staff development programs/trainings to be organized, for their research and teaching roles. The exploration is made in terms of the structure, modes of delivery, training or workshop providers, site, time, follow up, reward and recognition, and necessary conditions and support they prefer.

Views of Academic Staff on the Need of Participating in Continuous Professional Development Programs/Trainings

Asked about the need of short term continuous professional development programs/trainings on research and pedagogical aspects for teaching in HE, some academic staff indicated the need as very important to enhance their competencies to function in a HE. Similarly, others acknowledged the need but they think it is relevant for new academic staff. These findings seem to go in line with what Zuber (1992) found out. However, the findings of this study which revealed opinions of staff who considered teaching as an art in which someone is born with and those who said they have already acquired the necessary teaching and research skills through their long years of experience in the sector, seem to come under Zuber's (1992) finding which generally characterized some staff as having no strong support on the need of continuous professional development programs/trainings in higher education. The opinions of some of the participants of this study as presented above could be taken as possible explanations why some feel reluctant to the said need.

I have learnt that the staffs have mixed opinions about the need of short term continuous professional development programs/trainings in HE. However, in the era of globalization and as a result of advancement and development, teaching, learning, and research are dynamically changing (Fielden, 1998). To this end, those opinions which limit the need of participation in short term continuous professional development to particular group of instructors, may slow down the total quality an institution wants to achieve since those who claim no need to continuously develop because they feel, they have already achieved the necessary knowledge and skills from their past trainings and experiences may lack the recently developed, discovered and innovated knowledge and skills which are timely and necessary to provide up to date, standard and quality education.

Staff should invest adequate time in scholarship and self tuition continuously since

research informed changes in knowledge double every five or ten years John (1998). What is more, two of the major competencies that instructors need to be adequately equipped with are subject matter knowledge, and teaching and learning methodology, among others. The background data collected from the questionnaire indicated that the majority of the research participants, however, are only trained as subject specialists who do not have any or little formal training on teaching and learning methodology or pedagogy. This data again seems to dispute those opinions which doubt the need of continuous professional development programs/trainings in higher education at least in the area of methodology/pedagogy.

As it is clearly pointed out in the review of the literature, higher education is under continuous reform to catch up with the changing trend in what is observed in the society, organizations and students. Since expectations of the stakeholders of the HEIs are very high, it is no longer possible to address their needs traditionally. Moreover, reforms or transformations introduced to address the stakeholders' needs, do not only require clear understandings of the intentions of the reforms or transformations but also appropriate skills and knowledge of the actors for effective and efficient implementation. The staffs' unfavorable attitudes regarding the need of continuous professional development programs/trainings do not only limit their individual capabilities to be part of innovations and to effectively address reform ambitions and needs, but also negatively contribute to the entire system since a failure in one part directly or indirectly affect another part in the system.

Perceived Needed Teaching and Research Competencies of Instructors for Consideration while Organizing Professional/Staff Development Programs/trainings

Instructors were asked about what teaching and research competencies they need to develop. The result of their listings seemed to generate five major areas. In the first group, which is teaching methodology and techniques, they needed professional development programs or trainings to focus on learning styles vs teaching styles, classroom management with varying class sizes, time management, students and teachers relationships, peer teaching and observation, developing teaching materials, questioning techniques, and team/group work skills. In the second group, which is research, they identified ethical issues in teaching and research, skills in linking research results in teaching, trends in researches in their respective fields, and evaluating research and projects. In the third group, they identified needed competencies related to IT. These include virtual teaching, and use of computer resources for teaching and research purposes. In the fourth group, they pointed out competencies regarding language skills. These are writing skills, class room language, analytical reading, and communication skills. In the fifth group, they identified assessment of students' projects, and thesis as areas they wanted to

develop. In addition to these, they indicated fundraising and financial issue handling strategies, mentoring junior staff, statistical packages for research and strategies to promote critical thinking as related to specific academic disciplines as topics to be pondered over. Most of the needed competencies identified in this study are congruent with what John (1998) suggested, as needed competencies the higher education teaching and research staff need to develop and posses, to effectively respond to the challenging demands imposed by the sector's stakeholders. Moreover, comparisons between the present findings and what have been found out by John (1998), seem to show some similarities in the language skills and some of the specific areas under the five groups presented above (see the review of the literature and the above description for detailed comparisons).

It was indicated earlier that different stakeholders are having new expectations from HEIs (John, 1998). All demand quality education even though what quality means may have various definitions for various stakeholders. Conducting best teaching is one of the cornerstones in meeting the expectations. The list of topics the respondents of this study provided on what teaching competence HE instructors need to develop show that best teaching is not only assuring that instructors have good mastery of their subject matter. Similarly, best teaching is not only limited to assure that students have understood the subject matter presented by their instructors, but also by considering whether or not students are equipped with non subject areas and skills like critical thinking, communication, IT, time management, and team work skills which are equally needed by employers. Being first equipped with these and other related skills and how they can be developed and integrated with contents of courses; instructors are accountable to help their students develop these constructs.

The five major areas identified for professional development on teaching and research competencies, should not be taken as final lists but the areas should periodically be reviewed. Other needs that may emerge as time goes on, may dictate changes in the different parts of the system and should also be considered to make the professional development programs/trainings relevant. These programs/trainings could be organized either at a university wide center or department level (Paul and Andrew, No date). Thus, the areas identified should be tailored further to meet the needs of specific departments and different groups of the academic staff, who have different levels of qualifications and experiences. This should be done together, with identifying those areas that could be organized by a university wide center for they have relevance for different disciplines.

Preferred Considerations while Organizing Professional Development Programs/trainings for Academic Staff

This part presents the ways in which academic staff prefer continuous short term professional development trainings related to teaching and research to be

organized in terms of the structure, modes of delivery, training or workshop providers, site, time, follow up, reward and recognition, and necessary conditions and support.

Structure

Participants indicated if they agree or disagree with the question items below. Staff development programs/trainings such as participating in short term continuous trainings and workshops related to teaching and learning should be:

Table 3: The Structure of Staff Development Program/Training

Item	Yes	No	Total number of responses
1. mandatory for junior academic staff	81%	19%	60
2. mandatory for senior academic staff	36%	64%	47
2. mandatory for newly employed academic staff	91%	9%	47

As seen from the table, (91%) of them indicated that academic staff must take professional development trainings or workshops when they are recruited. Similarly, large number of the respondents (81%) think that professional development trainings/workshops be mandatory for junior academic staff. On the other hand, 64% of the respondents think that participating in short term continuous professional development programs/trainings should not be mandatory for senior academic staff.

This finding shows the need of professional development programs/trainings to new and junior academic staff. However, the interview results and observation revealed that participation in the aforementioned programs/trainings in the Ethiopian higher education system is not mandatory even for fresh graduates who have been recruited as academic staff but have not taken any pedagogy course. The implication of this and the back ground data of the participants of this study, show that many of the staff do not have taken formal trainings on pedagogy and methodology even though their experiences as lecturers could be taken as school. Even then, it seems questionable to doubt the need of continuous

professional development programs/trainings to senior academic staff. Resisting this opinion, will be disregarding the notion that knowledge and skills in any field are dynamically developing and changing, as scientific researches, and innovations call for new understanding.

Moreover, the changes that have been introduced in the higher education sector worldwide are requiring the people in the institutions to change accordingly (John, 1998). Thus, professional development trainings, taking in to account the different parts of the whole system should be result driven (Spark, 1999). Thus, senior academic staffs, being one of the main actors in the system are expected to assume more challenging, and innovative roles compared to what their roles presently are.

Modes of Delivery

The subjects of the study were asked to indicate their preferences regarding which mode of short term continuous professional development training delivery could be used. They were informed that 1 means least preferred while 5 means the most preferred.

Table 4: Preferred Modes of Professional Development Program Delivery

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Total number of respondents
1 face to face i.e. workshops, seminars, courses		3%	15%	13%	69%	60
2 professional development through distance education	10%	22%	22%	32%	14%	59
3 electronically i.e. e-mail, class frontiers etc	3%	12%	24%	43%	18%	49

The above table portrays that the majority of the respondents (82%), as seen from who gave 4 and 5 points out of 5 seem to prefer face to face workshops, seminars and courses. The second preferred mode of delivery seems to be e-mail, class frontiers and other electronic mode of delivery in which the preference level is indicated by 61% of the respondents who gave it 4 and 5 points out of 5. Professional development through distance education was also considered as an

option by a reasonably good percentage of respondents (45%) as seen from those who gave it 4 and 5 points out of 5.

The training model which is a typical model in face to face education appears to be the most preferred mode of delivery as it has also been true in the study conducted by Jenny and Paddy (2005). However, the interview result on how the staff want to pursue their continuous development on

teaching and research seemed to indicate that training is a necessary but not a sufficient model to continuously update their skills and knowledge. This implication is possible, as they also have favorable attitudes towards the use of other models. For instance, many interviewees suggested reading as an important way to develop professionally. This is clearly implied when the respondents identified online professional journals and provision of materials, as important strategies and techniques to be used in professional development programs. Participating in international conferences and doing the same in continuous trainings have also been mentioned for the same purpose. Involvement in projects and organizing opportunities for instructors to observe industries and the business, so that they can link their observation results with their teaching and research are also mentioned. Moreover, using performance assessment data is also considered vital to make the program result driven.

As pointed out above, the preferences of the staff seem to suggest the possibility of using different modes of professional development delivery. Unlike the preferences identified, there could be different factors which dictate one modes of delivery over the other. For example, as one interviewee pointed out, skill of the staff to exploit, and access to internet

resources as well as the speed of internet connections seem to be unsatisfactory in Ethiopia to effectively and efficiently conduct professional development programs electronically though this mode of delivery is important.

Altbach (2004) has also stressed that the above and other related factors are making the developing countries to be at a disadvantage to benefit from the internet technology, as those in the developed countries do. This view adds an administrative engagement that professional development organizers need to work out in consultation with the concerned bodies in their respective universities. In addition to the electronic mode of delivery, the distance mode suggested either coupled with the face to face mode or alone could help to plan and implement intra university professional development programs. It is cheaper to share expertise among staff located in the different universities of the country but slower, more expensive and traditional than the electronic mode.

Training /workshop Providers

Respondents were asked whom they want short term continuous trainings to be facilitated by. They were informed that 1 means least preferred while 5 means the most preferred.

Table 5: Preferred Training/Workshop Providers

Items	1	2	3	4	5	Total number of respondents
1 the university staff who are experts and experienced in the field	2%	5%	10%	36%	47%	60
2 experts and experienced professionals from other universities or organizations in the country	5%	5%	16%	30%	44%	57
3 experts and experienced professionals from abroad	9%	5%	14%	21%	51%	51

The above table shows that the respondents preferred almost all the three options given regarding whom they want trainings to be facilitated by. About 83% of the respondents gave 4 and 5 out of 5 points to the option that the university staff who are experts and experienced in the field can give them trainings. About 74% of them gave 4 and 5 points out of 5 to the option that experts and experienced professionals from other universities or organizations in the country can provide them trainings or workshops while 72% of them gave 4 and 5 points out of 5 points to the option that experts and experienced professionals from abroad that can provide us with training.

The respondents' preferences that the first option could be used imply that, not only is the selection to be based on a cost efficient strategy but

also on the relevance of the trainers who know many things about institution specific issues. Their preferences to the second and third options also imply the need of outsiders who come with experiences that can be adopted or adapted. But cost efficiency could be a question in choice 3. Thus, decision makers should weigh cost and quality in selecting trainers. However, caution should be taken not to sacrifice quality for money.

Site

For the question on how many of the trainings they prefer to be organized outside the university campus, they responded as follows

Table 6: Preferred Sites of Professional Development Trainings

All of them	Most of them	Un decided	Few of them	None of them	Total number of responses
12%	42%	24%	17%	5%	58

A little less than half of them (42%) preferred trainings and workshops to be offered outside of the university campuses. About 24% of them were undecided which implies that the site /venue of trainings/workshops may not matter. On the other hand, 17%, 12% and 5% of the respondents said few, all and none of the professional development programs could be organized outside the university campus respectively.

Conducting trainings outside the university compound may have financial and logistic implications. It may also question which kind of trainings could be conducted outside the university campus. The preferences to run trainings outside the university campus seem to be feasible for trainings conducted during vacation time that can be organized in longer intervals. However, short interval and continuous

trainings do not seem to be convenient to be conducted outside the university compound since the trainings might be needed to be organized in a way that do not interfere the normal work schedule. Moreover, in house trainings may not require staff deployment if the trainings are facilitated by in house staffs that are qualified, experienced and know the work activities of the trainees and the challenges the institutions are facing.

Time

Asked about when they prefer staff development trainings to be organized, they said the following. They were informed that 1 means least preferred while 5 means the most preferred.

Table 7: Preferred Time for Professional Development Training

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Total number of responses
1 At the beginning of each semester	20%	12%	8%	17%	43%	49
2 In the middle of a semester	39%	19%	18%	14%	10%	55
3 At the end of each semester	19%	10%	22%	21%	28%	57
4 During the annual break	4%	6%	9%	21%	60%	47

As inferred from the above table, the majority of the subjects (81%) who gave 4 or 5 points out of 5 points preferred staff development trainings are organized during the annual break. The second choice is at the beginning of each semester which is indicated by 60% of the respondents who ranked it by giving 4 or 5 points out of 5 points. However, organizing staff development program in the middle of a semester does not seem to be popular. The most preferred time which is during the annual break seems to be very

convenient to conduct trainings, since it does not clash with other duties.

Follow up

Respondents were also asked about what kind of follow up activities to be used in professional development programs/trainings. They were informed that 1 means least preferred while 5 means the most preferred

Table 8:preferred Follow up Activities

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Total number of respondents
1 A series of several sessions with intervals between in which I have the chance to try things	4%	4%	20%	26%	46%	56
2 coaching by an expert	15%	12%	22%	27%	24%	59
3 peer observation with feedback	2%	14%	22%	35%	27	59
4 producing reflection paper in news letters or other forms of publication	4%	7%	25%	34%	30	56
5 presenting papers in departmental workshops and other similar forums	3%		19%	30%	48	54

The total percentage of respondents (78%) who gave 4 and 5 out of 5 points said presenting papers in departmental workshops and other similar forums while 72 % gave 4 and 5 out of 5 points to the choice which reads as series of several sessions with intervals between in which they have the chance to try things. The table seems to suggest that all the options could be used as follow up mechanisms since over 50% of the respondents in each option have responded favorably.

Reward and Recognition

Respondents were asked what form of reward and recognition they expect as a result of successfully completing professional development programs/trainings. Below is what they expect.

- Certificate or diploma ;
- It should count towards academic promotion ;
- Virtue is a reward; and

- Salary increment : this suggestion goes in line with what has been considered as an option to reward and recognition in the review of the literature.

Necessary Conditions Expected

The participants of this study were asked what necessary conditions should be fulfilled, to conduct professional development programs/ trainings in their respective universities. The majority of them mentioned points that are related to planning. These include planning ahead of time, conducting needs analysis so that programs are relevant, communicating clearly the need of trainings and workshops and the benefits attached to them, creating conducive environment, and appropriate timing of trainings like when there are no classes or grading duties.

They have also pointed out issues concerning the management of the professional development activities. Here, they identified good governance in departments, faculties, and university as well as professional development programs. Some have capitalized on the quality of trainers as important condition for professional development trainings. They said assessing potential and reputable trainers in the institution and exploiting them are crucial. Giving an example of a model trainer, one respondent stated that "training providers should be well qualified and their words and acts should go together."

It was also noted that equipment such as IT and instructional facilities should be available. It has also been indicated that financial incentives like par dim, and reduction of teaching or other related load should be considered, if staff can seriously participate in professional development programs. Organizing informal academic gatherings was also suggested as another way of sharing ideas. Finally, assuring the quality of professional development programs through various data collection tools is recommended.

CONCLUSION

Unlike the fact that academics need to be aware and be equipped with up to date knowledge and skills to conduct quality teaching and research in higher education, the tendency revealed by some of the respondents of this study to exempt senior and experienced instructors from continuous short term professional development trainings seems to be questionable. However, those who acknowledged the need of continuously participating in such trainings seem to understand what cannot be tolerated in the contemporary higher education institutions which only accommodate competent and up to date staff, who are ready and willing to change by continuously developing the needed skills and knowledge.

What is more, this study has managed to list academic staffs' perceived needs regarding staff development programs on teaching and research skills and knowledge enhancement. The identified perceived

needs could be considered as important menu which portray varied aspects to be used when short term continuous professional development programs/trainings are planned and organized. Similarly, the structure, modes of delivery, training or workshop providers, site, time, follow up, reward and recognition, and necessary conditions and support suggested could be used as spring board for the same purpose. However, it should be noted that the findings of the study are not conclusive but suggestive. Thus, they should be considered as indicators of academic staff perceived needs that should be continuously updated to effectively and efficiently cater for the different contexts, interests, competencies and needs academic staff may have.

SUGGESTIONS

Recognizing Professional Development Activities

Participation in continuous professional development activities should be taken as one of the major requirements for HE staff. The participation might be made using different models. But the concerned body should allocate some percentage of time from the total working hours for continuous professional development programs. Participation in such activities (in addition to degree awarding or qualification upgrading programs) should also be given value in determining staffs' promotion.

Budget

Organizing professional development programs/trainings require budget. Thus, policy makers and institutional leaders should find ways to fund such programs regularly. These programs which play significant roles in achieving the missions and objectives of HEIs should not neither be considered secondary when budget is allocated annually for the different activities of the institution nor they should not be considered primary, when a budget cut is made in the time when there is financial constraints.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Activities of professional development should be monitored and evaluated for various purposes. One of these purposes is to develop the quality of professional development practices while the other is to judge the efficiency and effectiveness of such programs. For both purposes, data should be collected from various sources. However, one key element in the assessment should be, to appraise whether or not participants performance is changed positively as a result of being engaged in professional learning. The positively changed performance should also be assessed if it has qualitatively improved students' learning.

Professional Development for all:

Organizing professional development programs only for academic staff may not be sufficient and organizing

such programs for this group should also focus both on pedagogy/ methodology aspects which are relevant to the higher education contexts as well as subject matter issues. Qualitative achievement of the overall mission and objectives of an institution depend on the qualitative performance of all participants. Failure or weakness in one part of the system may slow down the successful accomplishments made in other parts of the system. Thus, HEIs as learning organizations should be inclusive of all in their community in their continuous professional development activities (Spark,1999). Higher level managers, senior and junior instructors, administrative and support staffs, part timers, expatriate and virtual staffs should be developed continuously.

FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

A comparative Study:

Professional development centers in Ethiopian HE are new phenomenon. To this end, a large scale comparative study on different activities of professional development centers in other countries is crucial to draw lessons.

Needs Assessment: This study has come up with example of staff development program/training preferences of Ethiopian HE staff. It is however based on limited research participants. Moreover, the participants are only academic staffs. Besides, what is identified in this paper, is what staffs' want professional development trainings to focus on. This may be different from what they actually need to effectively and efficiently function in the system. To this end, a comprehensive professional development needs assessment which uses various methods

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