Invigorating Quality through Professional Development Programs in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions: Implications for Curriculum Enactment at Haramaya University

By

Yilfashewa Seyoum

Faculty of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Haramaya University &
PhD Student, College of Education, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the views of staff members and staff training initiators on how the current staff trainings were conducted and contributed to quality training/ education at Haramaya University. In the process of this study, evidences were collected from academic staff members, center coordinators and professional development training facilitators. Data collecting instruments were questionnaires, interviews, and document studies including the day-to-day observation of colleagues and personal experiences. The findings of the given study assure that academic staff members have positive perceptions and have favorable attitudes toward professional development training offered by staff development centers. However, professional development coordinators and staff members felt that more effort has to be exerted to strengthen the staff training center in the future. Members of staff development centers and coordinators believe that the development of apposite professional development schemes that would assist the staff training program need to be carefully designed in coordination with concerned bodies.

Key words: Professional Development, Perceptions, Attitudes, Quality

Introduction

Background of the study

There has been greater attention on the indispensability of professional development practices in today's university teaching and learning milieu. The contemporary plan to reform, restructure, or transform educational institutions emphasizes professional development initiatives as a preeminent means to bring about needed change. This is because the demands government and society inflict on university graduates are changing every time as life and technology advanced to the most. As a consequence of these, the curriculum incorporates new course of studies addressing social and technical competencies. Moreover, development of higher-order thinking skills and learning how to learn have been clearly defined as important educational goals for students (Ganser, 2000; Gordon, 2004; Minale, 2006). Consequently, the professional development initiative have been found to be the best option to bring

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improvement on instructors professional competencies to be able to adjust to existing changes and restructuring of the educational environment.

It is frequently argued that professional development would have the potential to makes university instructors equip with the necessary pedagogical skills and keep them up-to-date to cope up with the current technology. Bearing this mind, the New Education-Training Policy of Ethiopia provided the structure for reform and transformation of education and training. Among the other, the policy stresses on issues of quality and relevance in educational programs; quality of teaching staff and facilities; improvement of the learning process towards a focus on students; improvement of management and leadership (TGE, 1994). By and large the policy has given due emphasis to quality of students learning.

According to Guskey (2000), the need for high quality professional development has become a common emphasis for educational reform and educational institutions development of the day. Since teachers are the most valuable resource available to both schools and higher education institutions in the realization of education/training goal, an investment in teacher quality and ongoing professionalism is vital. In the present view, this goal can only be realized by ensuring that teachers are equipped with subject matter knowledge and an evidence- and standards-based repertoire of pedagogical skills that are demonstrably effective in meeting the developmental and learning needs of all students for whom they have responsibility—regardless of students' backgrounds, intake characteristics, and whether or not they experience learning difficulties(Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Farkota, 2005; Westwood, 2006; Wheldall, 2006; Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

With this increased recognition of the professional development activities, however, has come increased scrutiny. Questions are being raised about the effectiveness of all forms of professional development in educational institutions. And with these questions have come increased demands for demonstrable results. Legislators, policy makers, funding agencies, and the general public all want to know if professional development programs really make a difference (Sparks, 2002; Putnam & Borko, 2000). If they do, what evidence is there to show they are effective? To address these questions professional developers are taking on new roles and new responsibilities. It is recognized that professional development must include organizational development as well as individual development (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). They also see that professional development must be job embedded as well as programmatic, and must not be only for teachers but for everyone who affects student learning. In addition, professional developers are becoming more serious about the issues of program evaluation, especially the importance of gathering information on the outcomes of all forms of professional development. And the information they gather is also no longer limited to surveys of teachers' attitudes and practices. Since the goal of most modern professional development efforts is improved performance by the organization, staff, and ultimately students (Sparks, 2002), information on crucial measures of student learning increasingly is

being considered (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). As a result, the need to constantly explore, review and follow the activities of professional development programs has given enormous place.

Keeping all the above discourse in mind, this study is aimed at investigating the existing and the potential problems of staff training and exploring the opportunities and prospects of professional development programs. The study specifically focused on discovering whether the current staff development initiatives have been on the right track or not and the link they have to quality education. Taking into account the above argument in mind, and the researcher first-hand experience in coordinating Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) in the university, the research topic was well thought-out as an important area of investigation for the illumination of weak spots, the identification of opportunities and outlining of prospects for teachers professional development in Ethiopian higher education institutions in general and to Haramaya University in particular.

Statement of the problem

This topic was initiated taking into account the investigator professional revelation as instructors in the delivery of pedagogical courses, organization of various professional trainings and the opportunity that researcher have served as a coordinator of Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) at Haramaya University for about a decade. The government commitment in striving for improving quality of education/training through designing different professional development programs was also another momentous opportunity that inspires and encourages me to focus on the topic under consideration.

In Ethiopia, research outputs in relation to quality learning indicate that among factors affecting quality of teaching in higher education institutions is the fact that pedagogical training has not been a condition for teaching in higher education (Daniel, 2004). Abyot (2001) in his study found that professors in higher education institutions in the country did not have instructional skills training. According to this study, university instructors are said to be:

> *Male dominant (97%), had little or no staff development either before or after assignment as an instructor. They were assigned rather than being selected following competition to enter into the profession. It is accepted fact that teachers have a strong desire for staff development, but enriching professionalism has never had a significant place through out the life span of modern education in Ethiopia (Abyot, 2001).*

Again, the various studies in professional development practices signify that university instructors' are good in their academic knowledge and qualification and their weakness lie in their inability to employ the teaching approaches, classroom management and students assessment that are set in policies(Anto, 2006; Minale, 2006; Aster, 2007& Fekadu, 2007). Indeed instructors need to have a rich and flexible understanding of the subject matter in order to teach in ways that are responsive to students thinking and which foster learning with understanding.

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Meanwhile, considering the importance of professional development programs in attaining quality in the system of higher education, Ministry of Education has included academic and professional development programs in its higher education reform (World Bank, 2003).In the last few years, in relation to the improvement of instructors' professional competence, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with donors has embarked different programs. Among these are:

- The Higher Diploma Program (HDP), proposed to improve professional competence of teacher educators.
- The English Language Improvement Program (ELIP), planned to improve English language proficiency of university instructors.
- Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) is instituted to function at the institutional level and provide professional trainings, quality care services to faculties and expected to loan supports to instructors.

This study, however, limits itself to ADRC considering that the ADRC as an independent center was officially recognized by Ministry of Education with aim of improving the quality of education. Moreover, there is no institutionalized structure for organizing continuing professional development programs in HEIs except ADRC, which nationally mandated to coordinates pedagogical skills training for academic staff (Tesfaye, 2010). Thus, since the establishment of ADRC in Ethiopian university is the latest phenomenon, exploring its actual role in improving professional development (with the aim of securing quality education in Ethiopian universities) need to be the actual question to be taken into account. This study is, therefore, designed to focus on the problem entitled *Invigorating Quality through Professional Development Programs in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions: Implications for Curriculum Enactment at Haramaya University*. In an endeavor to investigate the problem, some variables like sex, service years, faculty, etc. were treated and the effect of these variables on current staff training initiatives was also scrutinized. And, in order to carry this out, the following leading questions were formulated:

1) *What is the state of professional development practice at Haramaya University?*
2) *What are the perceptions and attitudes of university instructors towards the current professional training initiatives?*
3) *Are there any significant differences and relationship in perceptions and attitudes among different groups of instructors regarding to the current professional development activities?*
4) *Do we have best and appropriate teachers' professional development program that would support the various academic programs to secure quality students learning?*

The researcher believes that answers to one or two or all of the questions would lead to an exploration and assessment of the present direction of staff development programs. Above all, it would have significant value to suggest relevant and appropriate teachers' professional development programs in the future.

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Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to explore the implementation of existing professional development practices at Haramaya University. More specifically, the study has the following specific objectives:

- Investigate the extent to which professional development practices are well implemented in the university;
- Assess whether or not there are positive perceptions towards professional development initiatives among beneficiaries and staff development initiators
- Examine the differences in perceptions and attitudes toward staff training initiatives in the university with respect to certain variable as sex, qualification, service years, etc.
- Provide practical and possible frameworks and strategies to eliminate or reduce problems related to current instructors' professional development practices at HU.

Context of Haramaya University

After three decades of functioning as Alemaya Agricultural College (Under Addis Ababa University), the present Haramaya University was then elevated to university status in 1985. Up to the early 2006, only nine universities were available in Ethiopia, situated in different part of the country. Today, Ethiopian universities could be categorized into two major groups, new and relatively old universities. The new universities about thirteen in number were opened towards the end of 2006 and at the beginning of the 2007 academic year respectively. The major characteristics of these universities are less organization, poor resources and facilities as well as a focus on specific levels and field of study**.** The other nine universities are relatively old as compared to the new universities**.** Two universities, Haramaya and Addis Ababa Universities have more than twenty years of experience in teaching, research and outreach programs.

At the moment, in Haramaya University (the former Alemaya University), several units are in operation to strengthen the dimensions of professional development practices very enthusiastically. One of the practical evidence for this can be the Ministry of Education strategy to launch different programs in some of the existing universities. The ADRC, one of the professional development programs in the university, has been offering courses such as instructional skills, ICT in education, course & program design and review as well as assessment and quality issues in higher education for more than 200 staff members in the past 5 years. This study, therefore, focuses specifically on Haramaya University, due to considering the experience and the location of the researcher. The author of this study had been worked as a lecturer in the Faculty of Education and coordinator of ADRC at Haramaya University for last ten years.

There are substantially many factors that would contribute towards quality education. Out of the various factors that have a significant consequence on quality education, staff training is

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considered as the major theme of this study. Currently, the new staff training initiative has been undertaken by nine state universities through the center known as ADRC. Thus, the study focuses on one of them, Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) considering the exposure and experience of the researcher in coordinating the activities of ADRC. Meanwhile, although there are various frameworks for teachers' professional development, only the activity of staff training (INSET) is considered for the moment.

This study confined to Haramaya University owing to the interest and the logistical predilection of the investigator. Although various means of collecting data are possible, only questionnaire, document study and interview were considered for the time being. In this study only the variables sex, teaching experience, and faculty were treated, when in fact other variables could have impact on findings related to the given study.

Review of Related Literature

Conception of professional development

The term professional development, in a broader sense refers to the development of being in his or her professional role. At more specified level, *Teachers professional development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically* (Glatthorn, 1995). Professional development includes formal experiences such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc. and informal experiences such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline, etc.(Ganser, 2000). This conception of professional development is, therefore, broader than career development, which is defined as *the growth that occurs as the teacher moves through the professional career cycle* (Glatthorn, 1995), and broader than staff development, which is *the provision of organized in-service programs designed to foster the growth of groups of teachers; it is only one of the systematic interventions that can be used for teacher development* (Ibid). However, in looking at professional development, one must examine the content of the experiences, the processes by which the professional development will occur, and the contexts in which it will take place (Ganser, 2000).

For years the only form of 'professional development' available to teachers was 'in-service training', usually consisting of workshops or short-term courses that would offer teachers new information on a particular aspect of their work. This was often the only type of training teachers would receive and was usually unrelated to the teachers' work (Gordon, 2004). Only in the past few years has the professional development of teachers been considered a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession. This shift has been so dramatic that many have referred to it as a 'new image' of teacher learning, a 'new model' of teacher education, a 'revolution' in education, and even a 'new paradigm' of professional development (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2001).

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As discussed by Hargreaves (2003), successful implementation of innovations and program improvement consists of alterations in curriculum materials, instructional practices and behaviour, and beliefs and understandings on the part of teachers involved in a given innovation. Hence, as the implementation of innovation is a learning process, and when linked to specific innovations, teacher development and implementation go side by side. Teacher development should be innovation related, continuous during the course of implementation, and involve a variety of formal and informal components. In highlighting the importance of teacher professional development to relate with implementation of innovations, Huberman and Miles (1984) cited in Hargreaves(2003), reported the following from their twelve case studies of school districts.

> *Large-scale, change-bearing innovations lived or died by the amount and quality of assistance that their users received once the change process was underway...The forms of assistance were various. The high assistance sites set up external conferences, in-service training sessions, visits, committee structures, and team meetings. They also furnished ongoing assistance in the form of materials, peer consultation, access to external consultants, and rapid access to central office personnel … Although strong assistance did not usually succeed in smoothing the way in early implementations, especially for the more demanding innovations, it paid good dividends later on substantially increasing the levels of commitment and practice mastery(Huberman and Miles, 1984).*

In general, when teachers are more prone to try-out and implement innovative pedagogic practices, student learning, curriculum operation and experience process, and program quality will exhibit differences. To this end, the existence of well-established teachers' professional development program is highly valued.

Professional development initiatives in Ethiopian universities

The study conducted by Anto(2006) in Arbaminch University indicated that the professional development practices were bound with multiple problems. In the first place, more than forty percent of the university instructors do not have any pedagogical training at all. The problem is more critical in the Water Technology Institute and the Engineering Faculty in which more than two-third of the instructors in these two faculties lacks such training. A great number of instructors do not participate in the highly relevant professional development models at the university. The limited numbers of professional development formats in which the instructors participate at university, however, were found to be helpful to execute their professional responsibilities. Similarly, Fekadu (2007) on his findings concluded that the majority of the instructors at Adama University have positive attitudes towards professional development initiatives. However, little commitment and support was devoted by the university management to facilitate the activities of the exiting professional development programs.

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Minale(2006) after conducting a study on Higher Diploma Program(HDP) at AAU arrived at the following major findings:

Instructors claimed they have acquired new knowledge and skills as well as behavioral changes as a result of the training. Above all they claim that the training has enhanced their knowledge about learning styles, student centered teaching, continuous assessment, and collaborative learning. However, participant noted that HDP as an ambitious reform initiative that did not consider actual classroom situations & problems. However, they reported that they are satisfied with the content, methods of training and knowledge and skills of HDP leaders. Participants specifically found the parts on active learning; continuous assessment and action research as very helpful to their profession. Nevertheless, the level of organizational support to the training and mainly the implementation appears to be not so much appreciated by participants. Instructors were downhearted with the absence of follow up of implementation, lack of reward, scarcity of resources, problem of classroom lay out. Though participants self report data show some how good practice, interviews, focus group discussion and data collected from students show that the level of implementation is low. Several factors hindering the implementation of what is learned in the HDP are attributed to problems of, large class size, shortage of resources, lack of facilities, absence of incentives, lack of teachers' motivation to shoulder the demanding jobs of active learning and continuous assessment.

In the same vein, Aster (2007) in Bahir Dar University (BDU) conducted a study to investigate the current situation of women academics supports and explore their professional development needs. The finding disclosed that beside all the challenges and problems, there were no special, systematic support mechanisms to assist the women academic staff members. Cantrell (2009) on his own part conducted a study on the activities of ADRCs and found that various factors to jeopardize the long-term future of ADRCs. Chief amongst these were staff mobility, lack of career and incentive structures, lack of physical facilities for staff development centers and insufficient recognition for those actually attending ADRC courses. Last but not least, Wossenu (2009) concluded that teaching personnel, as most of them acquired their teaching skills just from experience, the Education Faculties and Colleges of various universities have been arranging for formal pedagogical training to their academic staff through such bodies as the National Pedagogical Center and Academic Development and Resource Centers. While such training was found to be useful for ensuring quality, its sustainability and effectiveness are hampered by limitations of coverage, organizational capacity, resources and leadership.

In the meantime, the Professional Development Practices of Ethiopian Universities (as studied from HERQA Institutional Audit Report) is also specified varying findings. For example, in Haramaya University HERQA realized that the ADRC had no recognized status in the organizational structure of the university and did not appear on the oragnogram. It is the view of the HERQA team that the relationship of the ADRC with the departments and colleges

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needs to be well established so that there is good awareness of its functions and enabling faculties, departments and individual instructors to take advantage of its services. The HERQA team learned that the ADRC has provided staff development courses on instructional skills and assessment. They also learned that members of staff were initially reluctant to attend training sessions but were required to do so by the university. However, once they were participating, they found it interesting and satisfying as it equipped them with important knowledge and skills (HERQA June, 2008).

In Mekelle University, HERQA realized that the university is aware of the need for staff development and has provided several opportunities. The Higher Diploma Program (HDP) for staff in the Faculty of Education is well established. Importantly, the ADRC has organized training on instructional skills and in other areas. These courses have been aimed at new staff but it was learned that the numbers of new staff requiring training means that all newcomers have not been able to be accommodated on courses. The ADRC in the university is established and, as indicated above, is running staff development courses. The ADRC has a master plan to guide its future development. The HERQA team realized that while it was learned that the ADRC is planning to provide courses, it has yet secured a budget from the university. (HERQA October, 2008).

Last but not least, during the quality audit at Bahir Dar University, The HERQA team confirmed that with the overall intention of improving the quality of instruction and assessment, the university has established a professional development centers, ADRC and the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) and the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP). The HERQA team learned from the meetings with Heads of Faculty and Head of Department that all the new members of the academic staff are invited to attend an induction program organized by ADRC.

The HERQA team was informed that the HDP provides a well organized 10-month training program to all members of the academic staff of the faculty of Education. Every member of the academic staff in the faculty is required to take the HDP. Success is rewarded by certificate recognizing the holder as a professional teacher educator. The HERQA team learned that members of staff of the faculty are very satisfied with effectiveness and efficiency of the training provided by HDP. Meetings with representatives of staff from other faculties indicated that they too needed HDP-type training but could not get it (HERQA October, 2008).

In nutshell, it can be concluded that the professional development program established at various higher education institutions is likely to accomplish two major targets: securing staff professional competencies and supporting the academic programs for keeping quality education by enhancing students learning. The lack of the services or in appropriate functioning of it would downgrade teachers' professional competencies and impede innovation that might result into low achievement and dissatisfaction on the part of student

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which ultimately lead to educational crisis. As a result, an appropriate support (emotional and material) from all concerned parties is highly valued.

Variables that influence the success of teachers' professional development

According to Zinn and Caffarela (1999), Professional development, whatever its form and model can be aided or impeded by a variety of factors. These factors help or hinder the success of professional development programs. They classified these factors into four domains within which these supports or barriers influence teachers' professional development (1) people and interpersonal relationships, (2) institutional structures, (3) personal considerations and commitments, and (4) intellectual and psychosocial characteristics. As claimed by Zinn, and Caffarela, (1999) these four domains are useful when thinking through supports and barriers to professional development and career success for higher education.

Describing each of the four domains these educators note that "people and interpersonal relationships," both within and outside the work environment, strongly influence teacher professional development. Such factors as personal support systems, positive working relationships with management and other administrators, and encouragement and support by family and friends are discussed as supporting environments. Barriers include, among other things, passive or active opposition to teachers work by management bodies, tense relationships with colleagues, and other faculty leaders, and spoken and unspoken dissatisfaction by family and/or friends to the demands of the faculty role.

The domain of "institutional structures" as elaborated by the educators encompasses supports such as the provision of ongoing professional growth opportunities and the availability of necessary resources. Barriers include insufficient time within the daily demands of being a professor and lack of access to information or resources.

Wade (1995) distinguished factors within the domain of personal considerations and commitments from those in the domain of people and interpersonal relationships. The domain of "personal considerations and commitments" focuses specifically on the personal side of teachers' lives—not only have the people, but also the circumstances or events in their private lives which affect their ability to focused emotional or physical energies on their professional endeavors. These factors include support and encouragement from family members and friends as well their willingness to provide tangible help with non-work tasks at particularly demanding times in one's professional life.

The final domain has to do with "intellectual and personal characteristics" and it incorporates our internal motivations and perceptions of ourselves as scholars and teachers. On the support side are factors such as strong beliefs and values that demand excellence in our work, perceptions that we can make a difference in the lives of students and other educators, and self-confidence in our faculty roles and departments. These belief systems support teachers to seek professional growth, for example, through constantly updating their course materials or

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ensuring their scholarship addresses substantive issues and ideas. On the other hand, barriers include feelings of discouragement or frustration, discomfort or burnout in faculty roles and department roles, and a reluctance to let go of comfortable routines when asked to change the way we do business.

Loucks-Horsley (1998) also discusses different contextual factors that influence professional development designs. Students; teachers; classroom practice (curriculum, instruction, assessment and the learning environment); policies; resources; organizational structures and culture; parents and the community; and history of professional development are factors that are considered as determinant for carrying out a professional development practices. Similarly, in a recent longitudinal study (Bahr et al, 2007), it was found that in developing a practical, effective alternative to current practice; the following key themes are very much significant:

Time
By far the most criticized characteristic of professional development involves adequate time. Bahr et al. (2007) noted that successful professional development is "a process, not an event" and reported considerable evidence that one-off professional development events seldom have any impact on teachers or their practice. This is because of the considerable time required to understand an innovation and to then reflect on and change teaching practice (Peers, Diezmann, & Watters, 2003). Professional development planners need to consider longer-term processes of change, thinking in terms of sequences and combinations of activities rather than isolated courses or events (Lederman & Lederman, 2004). Having done a substantial review of professional development programs (over 1000 surveys as well as 16 case studies) Brennen(2001)argued that unless adequate time can be given for meaningful change, it would be better not to provide the program at all.

Individual needs
The importance of addressing individual needs is also highlighted in the research. Guskey found that teachers engaging in professional development programs hoped to gain specific, concrete and practical ideas directly related to the daily operation of their classrooms, and that this did not happen if there was a "production line" approach to the mass rollout of an innovation. Two decades later, Bahr et al. (2007) found teachers still reporting that their time is wasted by 'sheep-dip' seminars that ignore prior expertise. Wade (1995) identified the need for program designs to reflect local needs and concerns and take a longer-term view of the change process, thus enabling professional development activities to adapt over time to match specific needs of the institution and its individual teachers.

Classroom context
Linking professional development to the classroom context is a related issue that is proven to be essential. Programs undertaken in isolation from teachers' ongoing classroom responsibilities have little impact on teaching practices or student learning (Collopy, 2003;

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Guskey, 2000). The importance of a close linkage between professional development and classroom contexts was further elaborated by Appleton and Asoko‟s (1996) call for professional development facilitators to "practice what they preach" by using constructivist pedagogies, because many teachers had not experienced that kind of learning in their own schooling.

Teachers, their commitment and attitudes, competences, and interaction patterns make up another crucial group of factors affecting the implementation of a professional development programs. Teachers are a constant factor in the education system and thus have a key role for classroom innovation (Havelock, 1970 cited in Pearson, 2008). Certainly, every real innovation will involve some aspects which are new for teachers and which will encounter some skeptical reaction. Such discrepancies between claims of the innovation and acceptance of teachers may be important starting points for further development.

In relation to teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward professional development practices, Komba and Nkumbi (2008) found that teachers perceived Teacher Professional Development as being important because it improves the teacher professionally, academically and technically. However, most respondents think that it is inadequately supported and motivated. At all levels (national, university, faculty and department levels), teacher professional development is poorly coordinated and rarely budgeted for. The findings on practices indicate a conception of Teacher Professional Development which combines both the raising of teacher academic qualifications and professional growth.

Similarly, in the study conducted by Lessing & De Witt (2007) entitled as "The value of continuous professional development: teachers' perceptions." The results revealed a great measure of satisfaction as well as a change to more positive attitudes about professional development. Teachers indicated that the workshop had had personal value for them. It had helped to improve their work lives, provided knowledge, developed excellence and efficiency and could contribute to a change in existing teaching habits. They indicated that the workshop had enhanced their critical thinking about their teaching methods, developed competence and made them aware of whole school development. The workshop was also valued as a tool to upgrade their knowledge, address specific needs and inspire them in their teaching practice. The majority of teachers acknowledged the importance of professional development program and felt that the sacrifices they had made were worth it.

Methods and Procedures

Since the research was aimed to examine perceptions, attitudes and performance of the various colleges/faculties and departments using simple random sampling, it can be considered as a survey. On the other hand, out of the existing university since it was confined to Haramaya University, it can also be considered as a case study. On the top of this, in an

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effort to have a through exploration of the problem both quantitative and qualitative approaches were found an appropriate approach to this study.

Subjects

The audiences for the given study were groups representing university instructors, and Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) staff members who have involved in the professional training programs at Haramaya University between 2005/06 and 2009/10. To select respondents, a simple random sampling technique was adapted, and 40 respondents (out of the staff members who were involved in series of professional training) were considered. In the case of trainers, eight training facilitators and staff members of ADRC were considered purposely. It means that both probability and non probability sampling techniques were employed to get the required respondents.

Instruments

Although various means of data collecting instruments are possible, only questionnaire, interview and document study were considered. The questionnaire was intended to secure data from academic staff members on their perceptions and attitudes toward professional development trainings. The questionnaire was field tested and has reliability indices of 0.78. As to the face validity, language teachers, senior professional course instructors and teachers' professional development coordinators and facilitators had participated to examine the content validity of the instrument. And on the bases of their suggestions appropriate modification had been conducted. Furthermore, practical and personal observations of the investigator were also employed as additional input to consolidate and make a crosscheck of the data obtained through the aforementioned tools.

Data Collection

The data collection process was employed directly and indirectly. Interview was conducted in face to face meeting between the researcher and the interviewee. The questionnaire was distributed and collected through department heads of the respective staff members. Out of 55 copies distributed only 40 were properly filled in and returned. Four of them, however, were discarded for different reasons: two were not filled in at all; and five were partially, but improperly filled. The remainders were not returned at all.

Method of data analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data were employed. For qualitative data the preferred way to assure the dependability of the information was triangulation. The triangulation method used to show the credibility of data through collection of the same information by different mechanisms (e. g. interview with document study). Depending on information obtained, the quantitative data were analyzed by means of parametric test, ANOVA and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. These statistical methods were preferred

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assuming the use of interval scale and the selection of relatively large sample using probability sampling techniques.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Biographical data of respondents

Qualification						Sex				Service years				Professional courses in pre-service training			
B.A/B.c		MA/M.Sc		PhD		Male		Female		10 &less yrs		Above10 yrs		Yes		No	
No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
26	65	10	25	4	10	32	80	8	20	24	60	16	40	0	0	40	100

Table one shows that the majority of the respondents 26 (65%) has bachelor degree, followed by 10 (25%) respondents who had a masters' degree. Only 4 (10%) of the respondents had a doctorate degree. Again, the information obtained from personnel administration office of the university revealed that the university is more staffed with instructors who have a bachelor degree (52.2%). This means there is a critical shortage of highly qualified instructors in the university which may have negative consequence on the quality of teaching and learning being undertaken in the university.

According to the results shown in the table, only20 percent of the staff members were females, which again could evidence for low participation of female in higher education sector. From these, the majority possess a bachelor degree.

It can also be portrayed in Table one that 24 (60 %) of the respondents has less than or equal to 10 years of experience. As indicated in the table, only 16 (20.4%) have more than 10 years of experiences in teaching in the higher education institutions. It can be inferred from this that the University is staffed more by less experienced staff. This fact calls for continuous professional development initiative to promote their professional knowledge and proficiencies so as to make them confident and efficient in teaching (Fullan, 2001, & Guskey, 2000). Although the intention of this study was not to exclude the experienced instructors from professional development training programs, it seems vital to focus on beginners particularly those who have less than five years of teaching experiences.

The table also revealed that almost all the respondent had no any professional training in their undergraduate courses. This clearly shows the need to have in-service training in more aggressively so as to offer quality education. The various studies in the field indicated that one of the crucial factors that threatened the quality of education is the lack of professional

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training of instructors. Thus the current attempt in organizing professional training by ADRC and HDP should be continued to get better the quality of students learning.

Table 2: The contribution of professional development practice to instructors' professional competencies as perceived by staff members

Contributions of PD	Frequencies									
	Not at all		A little bit		Much		Very much		M	SD
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
	0	0	5	12.5	25	62.5	10	25	2.9	.85

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of the respondents (62.5) and 25% of them opted for 'much' and 'very much' respectively. Only 12.5% claimed that the contribution is minimal. It can, therefore, be generalized that instructors' perceptions on the present professional initiative is optimistic. Similarly, the weighted mean score is 2.9, which again refers to the value almost close to 3 that is falling in 'much' category. The standard deviation of the total score is 0.85. This indicates how the magnitude of the score spread in the distribution. Too much variation in perceptions of the current professional development initiatives was not the feature of the research findings observed herein. As a whole, it can be concluded that professional development practices that have been under way in Haramaya University is some how helping instructors to do their job in an improved manner.

A related question was also raised during an informal discussion with department heads and faculty deans. It was reported that the contribution of professional development to improve the quality of instructors is automatic and unquestionable. It would allow the instructors to promote his/her performance and to update him/her to current development in the profession. The majority expressed their strong beliefs that professional development is important to improve professional practice and consequently help students learn better. Respondents further confirmed that it is through professional development that sustainable improvement in the quality of education can be realized (Teclai, A. 2006 & Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Table 3: Summary of the score of staff members' attitudes

Unfavorable Attitude		Indifferent Attitude		Favorable Attitude	
In No.	In %	In No.	In %	In No.	In %
3	7.5	3	7.5 %	34	85%

As Table 4 depicts, a big majority of the respondents, that is 85 percent, confirmed that they have favorable attitude to the course of action undertaken by the PD coordinating bodies. Similarly, the weighted mean score is 3.2, which again refers to the value coincides to the

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score value which has favorable attitudes toward professional training under discussion. Hence, the average trainees have positive attitudes toward professional development practices. The standard deviation of the score of the attitudes of staff members is 1.58. This indicates that there is a little gap among the respondents' inclinations on the current staff training initiatives. Generally, from the responses gathered and tabulated it could be claimed that instructors have positive attitudes toward professional development practices of the university. It can also be said that the respondents offer their response in a relatively uniform and constant manner.

Respondents were also asked to suggest possible ways to improve the ongoing professional development practices. They suggest that professional development program should be relevant to instructors' professional day to day activities and need to be related to their field of studies. It should be based on the willingness of instructors and need not be an imposed program for the sake of its own. A professional development program should rather be planned, organized and implemented with the direct participation of the beneficiaries. Respondents also suggested that professional development should be attached to change of status, salary increment and some sort of promotion upon completion of the program.

Respondents have the view that creating awareness on the advantages of professional development for instructors could improve their participation in professional development. Sometimes instructors may resist change and innovation like professional training programs. As a result, orientations and discussions can play the crucial role of making them persuaded. This could be realized by faculty deans, university management and other concerned parties. The workload of instructors who are participating in professional development courses need to be reduced. Besides, sufficient resources and facilities that are required for professional development practices should be fulfilled.

Table 4: The relationship between attitude score and performance evaluation result

N	X	Y	R
40	Attitude Score	Performance evaluation result	0.54

The table above reveals the correlation between attitudes scores and performance evaluation of those instructors who have undertaken professional training through ADRC. It was found that there is a moderate correlation between the variables considered in this table. To confirm the dependability of this result, the significance of the given correlation was checked and found to be significant at 0.01 level with degree of freedom equal to 38. This in ordinary meaning refers to when the attitude score increase in positive direction, the performance evaluation of staff members who participated in professional training is also increase in the same direction and vice-versa. This significant relationship also indicates that those who performed well in teaching have better attitudes than those who didn't. The reason behind here is quite clear. Attitude facilitates knowing and individual involvement in an activity. If

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an environment for knowing something is created, and individual involvement is encouraged, then the development of favorable attitude is obvious and remarkable performance is certain (Peter, 1982).

Table 5: Summary of ANOVA with reference to sex and years of experience

Source of Variation	Df.	F
Sex	2-1=1	<1
Service years	2-1=1	8.431
Interaction	1x1=1	<1
With in	N-k=36	
Total	N-1=39	

The above table shows that the F- value for sex is not significant at 0.05 levels. However, F-value is significant for years of experience in the university. It can further be enunciated that the service year has significant bearing in perceiving professional development training of the current practice. The interaction is not significant at the specified level of significance. It means that even if we mix up less experienced females with high experienced male and vice versa, the difference in mean score is insignificant at 0.05 levels with degree of freedom equal to 1/36. As a whole, we can infer that more experienced staff members have optimistic perceptions than less experienced staff members. This clearly shows us more experienced staff members already know the advantages of professional training.

Table 6: Summary of ANOVA: The significance of mean difference of the perception score of staff members among the different faculties

F	Source of variation	df.
	Between	k-1=4
F=34.345	Within	N-k=36
	Total	N-1=39

The above table shows that F- value is significant at 0.01 levels with degree of freedom 2/37. This leads to the conclusion that there is a significant mean difference in the perceptions of staff members among different faculties (Faculty of Health, Faculty of Business& Economics, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and College of Agriculture). The post-hoc Analysis of variance (Tukey Test) indicates that staff members in College of Agriculture have significantly better perceptions. The possible reason for this could be that College of Agriculture is the oldest and the most experienced faculty that has experience for many kinds of training in general and teaching professional training practices in particular.

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Table7: Summary of ANOVA (The significance of mean difference on the perception score of staff members with different qualification (BA, MA, PhD)

Source of variation	Df	F
Between Groups	k-1=2	
Within Groups	N-k=37	F=23.26
Total	N-1=39	

According to the result depicted in the table, it can be concluded that there is a significant mean difference in the perceptions score of staff members depending on the level of professional qualification. Moreover, the post-hoc Analysis of variance reveals that staff members with BA/BSc degree seem to appreciate the current professional practices employed by the university ADRC more. It is assumed that these instructors are relatively young as well as having less experienced for teaching and do have needs such trainings.

Research in the field of professional development specified that amount of formal education and teaching experience may also be related to teacher change. In their study of 100 teachers and the change they demonstrated after participating in different types of professional development, Smith and Hofer (2003) identified the following individual characteristics as influencing how much, and in what ways, teachers changed after participating in professional development: Those teachers with fewer years of experience changed more and teachers with low level of education (e.g. a bachelor's degree or less) changed more.

Analysis of responses of ADRC staff members

Interviews have been conducted with training facilitators and coordinators of ADRC concerning the existing practices of professional development programs in Haramaya University. Interview questions were mainly focused on pulling and pushing factors in terms of resources, facilities, attitude of instructors, management support, workload and other related issues in professional development milieu. The responses were organized as in the following:

What factors are responsible to promote ADRC premises?

It is assumed that a basic premise of professional development Program (PDP) is to equip the academic staff with the necessary professional knowledge, skills and predisposing for bringing improvement in student learning and secure quality education/training in general. From the interview it was drawn that facilities, trainers' commitment& enthusiasm, trainees' curiosity and attitudes, as well as top managers' recognition and dedication were among few variable to facilitate the way teachers change. Most respondents believed that content areas that are relevant and essential in improving the existing knowledge and practices of new instructors should be given due attention, if one wants to enhance quality in students learning. My personal observation revealed that it seems that there is a high commitment on the part

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staff members of PDP. However, even though these promoting factors are encouraging to conduct professional development activities, there are critical problems as reported by the coordinator that the centre is currently facing.

There was a critical shortage of resources and facilities such as training rooms, furniture's, qualified and experienced trainers/facilitators, and reading materials, like books, professional journals, articles etc;. There is no formal budget allocated to run professional development programs sufficiently. Although the university management seems supportive for professional development activities, immediate and timely responses were not given to the coordinators day to day requests. There were no opportunities for all instructors to participate in professional development programs due to high workloads, lack of well trained experts, and shortage of time on the part of attendants. There is no system for continuous monitoring of the implementation of professional development programs. It was also very difficult to provide area specific trainings due to lack of experts and training manuals on the part professional development coordinating office.

Suggestions by professional development training facilitators and coordinators to improve the existing problems of the program

University professor/instructors have to take self initiative to be accountable for their own learning. They should plan to learn from colleagues and develop fortitude of collaboration to work with other academic staffs and trainers with a commitment. Creating awareness and sensitization arrangements is so important to make instructors understand the benefit of professional development in their day to day practices. It is vital to arrange a follow-up system on the implementation of the professional development program. This can be carried out by university management and/ or faculty deans. Minimizing the workload of instructors who are participating in professional development programs would have the potential to motivate staff to involve in different professional development practices. It is very essential to allocate sufficient budget and resources (human and material) for effective implementation of professional development programs. In addition to the training conducted on the general pedagogical knowledge and skills, the professional development centers have to consider training programs that can address area specific training. Strong teamwork among university management, faculties, departments and the centers working on professional development is essential for the smooth running and effective functioning of professional development programs. The management of the university has to be committed to organize experience sharing programs for instructors with similar universities practicing professional development activities. The university management has to search a means where by professional development is attached to certain values either for promotion or for salary increment for those who successfully completed the program.

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Conclusion

This study was designed to address basic research questions raised at the preamble of this paper. It is based on the exploration of these research questions that the following concluding remarks were drawn.

- The overall belief and practices by the University in delivering professional training is encouraging. It is assumed that if necessary assistance is given by the concerned bodies, the PDP will make noticeable differences in the near future.
- As a whole, the perceptions of instructors on the contribution of Professional development are encouraging.
- The attitudes of the instructors toward professional development appear to be promising.
- A significant relationship between attitudes score and performance evaluation result of staff members has been found, which values the significance of professional development trainings.
- The university management seems to posses encouraging attitudes toward professional development programs and activities of the university but it is weak in assisting the implementation of PDP continuously. The top management seems to be ready to support and improve the professional development practices of the university at least theoretically.
- Although there is a common understanding about the contributions of professional development across significant number of instructors, department heads, and faculty deans, the support given by the management bodies is inadequate to realize the full potential of the existing professional development programs.
- The strategies and plans devised by university management combined with the needs and positive attitudes of the instructors toward staff professional development programs provide promising prospects for the future improvement of quality learning.
- If one synthesized the various suggestions upon the current practice of PDP, he/she could arrive at the following procedures in the process of professional development, that is, need assessment, planning, implementation, feedback/follow up and revision of the approach as major activities in PDP.

In general, while there are encouraging initiatives to improve the existing practices by establishing different centers for professional development activities, the prevailing condition has not been promising and convenient for instructors to participate fully in sustainable professional development. Very little conscious efforts and commitment have been made by the University management to build better working environment. Therefore, the university is expected to create more enabling environment so as to engage instructors abundantly in different professional development activities. In this regard, Amare et al. (2005) cited in Fekadu(2007) contend that 'probably nothing within an educational institution has more impact on students in terms of skill development, self-confidence, or classroom behavior than

the personal and professional growth of their teachers…when teachers stop growing, so do their students'. The statement clearly underpins that professional development training is very significant in the improvement of instructors' professional competencies and students' learning.

Implications for Future Practices

Relying on the findings secured and the conclusion drawn, the following pertinent points are suggested so as to be implemented by instructors, management bodies, professional development program coordinators and government in order to improve the existing professional development practices of the university. Most of the recommended remarks, the researcher believes, are within the capacity framework of the university.

- First and foremost teachers self determination and commitment (intrinsic motivation) is very much essential in the activities of professional development. One motivation theory that explains teachers' motivation to implement professional development is Self-Determination Theory developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) Cited in Elliot, et al (2000). Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) states that autonomy (e.g., choice), competence (e.g., skills), and relatedness (e.g., collegiality) influence one's intrinsic motivation (i.e., being motivated to perform a task due to an internal desire to carry out the task, not for any external reward).
- New instructors, particularly those who graduated from non-teacher education faculties and colleges should receive induction and trainings on basic teaching skills such as teaching methods, classroom management, assessment of students' learning, course design and review etc as a basic requirement before they are engaged in the actual teaching activities. A system whereby professional development trainings become a criterion for subsequent career promotions of instructors must also be in place. Since the professional development needs of beginners and experienced instructors vary with respect to their experiences in teaching, the need for having alternative types of professional development programs is highly recommended.
- Teacher professional development has to be considered as one of the essential agendas of the university operations. Every party of management body particularly top managements, faculties and departments should give due attention and wide space to it in their formal plans. They must also follow up and monitor its proper implementation. Instructors should also realize that professional development is an important input that provides them with necessary professional knowledge, skills and attitudes to improve their professional performances and the quality of education they deliver.
- The management has to allocate adequate time, recognize successful efforts of committed instructors, take risks of new approaches of working, and exercise

supportive and transparent leadership etc. Just 'moral support' - in the sense of being given good words without any concrete implementation follow through - will no be enough.

- The coordinating office of PDP should devise a system by which it controls and monitors the professional development works of faculties. It should give responsibilities to the faculties themselves to care about professional development issues of their own instructors. Depending on the status of the report, ADRC should take appropriate measures in the forms of training, consultancy or approval for subsequent improvement.

- The frameworks for PDP are various in kind and magnitudes, an appropriate mode that fit to the contextual situation of the university need to be properly selected/designed and employed accordingly.

- It is suggested that the following procedures in the process of professional development program, that is, need assessment, planning, implementation, feedback/follow up, and decision making/ redesigning(which is likely to be operated in cyclical manner) need to be taken into account for better accomplishment of the various professional development initiatives in the future.

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