

Professional Development Practices and Teaching Service Delivery of Academic Staff at Kampala International University, Uganda

By

Kulthum Nabunya

Abstract

The study sought to establish the relationship between professional development practices and service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University. The specific objective of the study was to establish the relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff in the university. The study was informed by Suzan Dorling's theory of customer service delivery and the human capital theory developed by Adam Smith. The insights of the study were gathered through a survey method that involved the use of self-administered questionnaire and an interview guide a total of 291 respondents were involved in the study and data was analyzed using simple linear regression. The findings showed that in Kampala International University professional development practices were not significantly related with teaching. This implied that whereas academic staff were professionally developed through training, seminars, workshops, conferences, study leaves, mentoring and monitoring, their competencies in effective teaching service delivery were not positively affected because of an insufficiency in the professional development programs on offer. These findings negate the Human Capital Theory that states that for human beings in the society to be more productive, they must fully be developed through training. It however concludes that for teaching service delivery of academic staff in KIU to improve, more professional development practices that are tailored to the needs of the academic staff, be put into place so as to enhance teaching service delivery in Kampala International University. Thus, policy makers in Kampala International University particularly University Council should come up with policies restructuring the manner in which professional development opportunities are given to academic staff in form of content so as to enhance their teaching service delivery.

Key words: Uganda, Professional Development Practices, Service Delivery, Training, Teaching service

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Introduction

Conventionally, universities the role of academic staff has been defined to include the domains of teaching, research and service to the society (Luzecky and Badger, 2009). This points toward the fact that the effectiveness of academic staff is principally outlined in terms of delivering on the teaching, research and community service sphere. Isolation of one pillar suggests that academic staff were not fully serving as expected in universities. Such is that academic staff are expected to be effective in teaching students' content relevant to market demands, preparing before teaching, using appropriate teaching methods assessing learners with specific resources and research. Even the more, teaching service delivery of academic staff has been documented as essential in the fulfilment of university core objectives (Amadi, 2016).

From the above, inference can be drawn to explain the performance of academic staff in Sub Saharan African universities which has been affected by several challenges not limited to inadequate government funding, lack of competent personnel and failure to evaluate individual works. An illustration of these circumstances is drawn by Akpoiroro and Okon (2015) who in a study about students' satisfaction with service delivery in federal universities in Nigeria showed that students were not satisfied with academic staff service delivery in terms of teaching. Furthermore, Khan, Khan and Khan (2011) studied the impact of training and development on organizational performance and with use of a comprehensive literature review, they established that training and development significantly affect organizational performance and postulate that once academic staff are developed through training their teaching service performance would be enhanced.

Suzan Dorling's Theory of Customer Service Delivery (Dorling, 2000) accords that service delivery in organizations be directed towards meeting customer's needs. The theory further states that an organization is expected to aim at consistently delivering high standards of service to retain customer loyalty by meeting and exceeding expectations. This implies that while at work academic staff ought to be cognizant of their students' academic needs and acknowledge them as the guiding principle in whatsoever they do. Accordingly, they ought to further embrace professional development to update their teaching skills to suit the competitive market demands. Similarly, in a university environment like that of Kampala International University, academic staff ought to be enthusiastic about high quality teaching so as to satisfy their primary customers (students). If professional development practices were offered to academic staff with due consideration of their students' needs, there is a possibility that academic staff would acquire competencies required for their jobs (Dorling, 2000). Furthermore, their teaching service delivery would be substantially enhanced particularly in regard to effective teaching which would enable academic staff formulate relevant programs matching with global students' needs. Nevertheless, with the setting of this study, failure to observe the theory's demand that customer needs (students and lecturers needs) must be satisfied through offering professional development opportunities, would imply low academic staff service delivery in terms of teaching leading to loss of students and reputation of the institutions.

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Adam Smith's Human Capital Theory also resonated well with the study. The theory states that human beings in the society to be more productive must fully be developed through training. Alawamleh, Ismail, Ageel and Alawamleh (2019) studied the bilateral relationship between human capital investment innovation in Jordan and with use of the human capital theory with revealed a highly significant relationship between human capital investments. Alawamleh et al. (2019) identified that investing in human capital through education, training and skills was valuable because people cannot be separated from their knowledge and skills. It is prudent that once academic staff as human capital of the university is developed on the job through offering them opportunities to attend conferences, seminars, study leaves, mentoring, and coaching aspects of professional development, their level of service delivery enhances in form of academic staff acquiring modern teaching skills, high competencies in research publications and supervision. Furthermore, once they are developed they are more likely to acquire skills to help the community get out of challenges they are likely to encounter when delivering their services.

Statement of the Problem

It is well documented that academic staff are pivotal in their support and preservation of a university's institutional, national and international academic reputation through excellence in their service delivery in teaching service in fulfillment of a university's statutory obligation (Crawford, 2009). At Kampala International University in particular, teaching and research had been reported as being inappropriately done, with low publication rates of academic staff, inappropriate supervision of students' research projects especially at postgraduate level (NCHE, 2017; Edabu & Anumaka, 2014; Kasozi, 2019). Kasozi (2019) revealed that there were weakness and gaps raised over the issue of Kampala International University giving out over 60 PhDs with inappropriate supervision on one graduation. Low academic staff service delivery in this university was manifested in low innovativeness of teaching whereas there were constant reports of performance failures to complete targets like setting exams, marking and grading of students on time (Kasozi, 2019). Although several factors like rewards, policies at work place and work environment were found to be related to academic staff service delivery in earlier studies, gaps in academic staff teaching service delivery were still recurring. This study sought to contribute by establishing how professional development practices related with academic staff teaching service delivery in Kampala International University.

Professional Development Practices

Professional development practices are defined as the process of improving and increasing the capacity of staff through access to education and training opportunities within or outside the workplace (Ofojebe and Chukwuma, 2015). Villegas-Reimers (2010) further points out that teacher professional development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining various teaching systematically. Professional development includes formal experiences (such as attending workshops, professional meetings mentioning's) informal experiences (such as reading professional publications; watching television documentaries related to academic disciplines (Villegas-Reimers, 2010). Furthermore, knowledge and wisdom are acquired through observation, experimentation, and research and learning as such, every university educator must be given the opportunity to improve academically (NCHE, 2014). Therefore, each institution is required to inform the National Council for Higher Education annually of mechanisms it has put in place for staff development and the number of beneficiaries from each program.

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In education, professional development has been used to mean a wider variety of specialized training, formal education or advanced learning intended to help employees improve professional knowledge, skills and effectiveness (McGregor, 2007). Professional development also refers to the systematic maintenance improvement and broadening of knowledge, skills and the development of personal qualities necessary for execution of professional and technical duties throughout the individuals working life (Crawford, 2009). In this study, professional development was defined as a process of improving both the instructor's academic standing as well as acquisition of greater competence and efficiency in discharging of professional obligations in and outside the university working environment. From the above conceptualization, professional development practices in Kampala International University involved senior academic staff mentoring, monitoring, inductions, coaching junior academic staff. It further meant offering professional learning, conferences, seminars and orientations to junior academic staff in Kampala International University.

Service Delivery

Service delivery is the process of providing a service to customers or the internal clients of an organization. It typically includes processes taken to design, develop, deploy and operate services (Spacey, 2016). In the context of this study, service delivery was used in specific reference to academic staff's discharge of professional duties including teaching, research and community service delivery in Kampala International University. Teaching service delivery of academic staff in this study was defined as preparing teaching, student assessment, update of teaching programmes, offering guidance to students, giving students feedback, providing students with study materials, regularity at work, compensating for lost time and setting course works in time. Service delivery of academic staff at Kampala International University was showed to be low with over 70% of the academic staff showing low performance (Edabu & Anumaka 2014; Kasule, Wesselink, Naroozi & Mulder, 2016).

Professional Development Practices and Teaching Service Delivery.

NCHE defines quality teaching as the process of transmitting knowledge basing on the prescribed pedagogical techniques, in a conducive environment that will help learners acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them be productive in the working environment (NCHE 2014). Venerable professional development practices are strongly linked with both subject based teaching practices and investigative classroom culture which imply that professional development enhance teaching in a positive direction. Caena (2011) observed that high quality teaching is a key requisite for high education quality and training as such it is the duty of institutions to provide young staff with competencies and skills needed to adapt to globalized and complex environments where innovation, creativity, initiative and commitment to continuous learning are important in knowledge dissemination and transmission. Villegas-Reimers (2010) further asserts that learning how to teach and working to become an excellent teacher is a long-term process that requires not only the development of very practical and complex skills under the guidance and supervision of experts but also the acquisition of specific knowledge and the promotion of certain ethical values and attitudes.

Dawo, Enose and Tonny (2012) recognized that in-service training courses are crucial in the drive to enable teachers suit the ever-changing environment which renders obsolete some of their original professional skills and knowledge. In-service training courses as a professional development practices help to build competences such as work planning, curriculum practices, curriculum management and personal view points which help to improve on performance in teaching processes. However, McWilliam (2002) retaliates that

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much more training, professional development should be geared up to improving an individual's ability to adapt to the widely changing educational technologies. With the growing need for academic work to be converted to various computerized forms like power point for lecture presentation and the application of modern teaching technologies in teaching being fronted. The consequence of this is that academic staff must be kept well-informed with the ever-changing technological developments and advancements in the teaching and learning process. And this could be achieved through professional development offered to academic staff.

Ddungu (2014) acknowledged that the impact of professional development is replicated by the scale of efforts put to design teachers' capacity enhancement and improvement policies and the degree to which these policies are implemented to create an environment that permits teachers to participate in activities that augment their teaching, research, innovative abilities, skills, knowledge, expertise and attitudes. Ddungu (2014) further put emphasis on the need to use professional development to enable teachers realize and utilize their experience, initiative, knowledge and wisdom. The process involves actions and programs which build teachers' capacity to improve their own proficiency and outcomes as well as efficiency and effectiveness of their institutions at large. Such programs include training through internal workshops, tutorials, case studies, seminars and apprenticeship. However, Ddungu (2014)'s study did not broadly investigate the impact of professional development practices on academic staff teaching effectiveness which this study covered.

Similarly, Kasozi (2009) contended that the foremost role of the professor in teaching is creating, disseminating, publishing knowledge and public service. Besides involvement in teaching, doing research and community service, academic staff are called upon to advise students, manage projects involving personnel and budgets, raise funds, recruit students, represent universities in various forums, engage in local and international debates and act as role models. The extent to which these are influenced by professional development practices is not yet empirically established which this study did in the context of Kampala International University.

Furthermore, Murphy (2014) noted that the tension between dual academic roles of teaching and research is an issue of professional development. The dualism between the research and teaching forms of academic identity of academic staff, organization of activities like workshops, seminars, symposia on various topics, conducting teaching consultations within teaching teams and engaging in institutional research and evaluation projects related to academic development improved on teaching service delivery of staff. As a result, Azikuru, Onen and Ezati (2017) established that university managers should invest more resources in training and developing staff to ensure that academic staff perform as expected. Similarly, Odinga (2010) revealed that the more training programs one attended the more likely that lecturer acquires teaching competences on the job.

Likewise, Atwebembeire, Musaazi, Sentamu and Mulinda (2018) studied performance monitoring and quality of teaching and research in private Universities in Uganda and with use of descriptive results and regression analysis together with thematic analysis technique established that there was a positive contribution of performance monitoring on quality of teaching. This may suggest that as academic staff in private Universities are monitored there are higher chances of improving on their teaching. However, this current study had other dimensions of professional development practices like coaching, monitoring and formal training which were related with teaching service delivery and how they were related to teaching service delivery.

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In the same vein, Crawford (2009) added that offering professional development opportunities allows teachers to prioritize and concentrate on their subject areas, where they acquire interest confidence, skills and knowledge that improves on the quality of their teaching. Teaching in this study was commonly the flows of centrally-driven development opportunities of staff. Although these findings were not arrived at with use of Pearson correlation and regression analysis technique the current study adopted. Azikuru, Onen and Ezati (2017) empirically studied staffing and the quality of teaching in Universities and with use of regression analysis revealed that staff training and development had a statistically significant influence on the quality of teaching. As staff are trained using formal and informal trainings while on the job, the quality of their teaching surges. However, this study was mainly on one aspect of academic staff service delivery which was teaching ignoring research and community service delivery which are vital in academia and are a central focus in this current study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between professional development practices and service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University. Specifically, the objective of this study was to establish the relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff of Kampala International University.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

H1: There is a positive relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University.

H0: There is no relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University.

Methodology

The study was largely guided by Auguste Comte post-positivism philosophy, which ontologically argues that the nature of reality about professional development practices and academic staff service delivery is objective. Objective reality demands use of quantitative techniques of data collection and analysis in order to arrive at truth and epistemologically, one has to use objective methods to arrive at the truth. Thus, the study was majorly quantitative in approach with embedded qualitative approaches for triangulation purposes. It was guided by both the Cross Sectional and Correlational survey designs. The use of Cross-Sectional Survey meant that data was collected from the target population at one point in time. The survey method allowed generalization of the study findings to the rest of the study population. Hence, the survey allowed handling a wide population of academic staff from Kampala International University within a limited time frame.

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Findings

To test the hypothesis, Pearson's correlation coefficient was first applied and the results are offered in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Pearson's correlation coefficient index between professional development practices (PDP) and teaching service delivery (TSD) of academic staff in KIU

		PDP	TSD
PDP	Pearson correlation	1	0.024
	Sig.2 tailed		0.805
	N	107	107
TSD	Pearson correlation	0.024	1
	Sig.2 tailed	0.805	
	N	107	107

Source: Field Data 2019

Table 1 shows Pearson's correlation coefficient index between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University $r = 0.024$ and $\text{sig} = 0.805$. Since this P value was greater than the significance critical value 0.05. It implied that there was an insignificant correlation between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University. These findings meant that professional development practices, mentoring, coaching, seminars and workshops did not positively relate with the teaching service delivery of academic staff. Further, a simple regression analysis on the relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff was done. Findings from Kampala International University are offered in Tables 2-4.

Table 2: Model summary on professional development practice and teaching service delivery in KIU

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.024 ^a	.001	-.009	1.13170

a. Predictors: (Constant), LSDKYU

Source: Field Data 2019

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Table 3: ANOVA on professional development practice and teaching service delivery in KIU

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.079	1	.079	.061	.805 ^b
	Residual	134.478	105	1.281		
	Total	134.556	106			

a. Dependent Variable: PDP2

b. Predictors: (Constant), LSDKYU

Source: Field Data 2019

Table 4: Correlation coefficient index on professional development practice and teaching service delivery in KIU

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.745	.974		2.818	.006
	Lsdkyu	.052	.209	.024	.248	.805

a. Dependent Variable: pdp2

Source: Field Data 2019

The findings offered in Tables 2-4 revealed adjusted $r^2 = -0.009$ which meant that professional development practice predicted only 0.9% of the change in teaching service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University. The regression model was bad $F = 0.061$ and $\text{sig} = 0.805$ since the sig value was greater than the critical value of 0.05, it implies that professional development practices did not predict teaching service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University. This is concretized by Beta 0.024 with a corresponding sig value = 0.805 greater than 0.05. Thus, teaching service delivery was not predicted by professional development practices in Kampala International University.

Discussion

Generally, the findings of this study revealed an insignificant relationship between professional development practices and academic staff teaching service delivery. The main objective of this study was to establish the relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff in Kampala International University. These findings revealed an insignificant relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff.

The findings of the study showed that professional training did not improve teaching quality. This disagreed with Caena (2011) who noted that high quality teaching is a key requisite for high education quality and training. It is the institution's duty to provide young staff with competencies and skills needed to adapt to globalized and complex environments where innovation, creativity, initiative and commitment to continuous learning are important in knowledge dissemination and transmission. This dissemination of knowledge is an aspect of research.

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The findings of this study in KIU were dissimilar to Turkich, Greive and Cozens (2014) study about transferring educational theories and knowledge using a co-teaching mentor model in discipline-based approaches who showed that applying the mentor-based approach in the teaching learning process allows relevant transfer of ideas that can be demonstrated in reflections of participating staff through pedagogical analysis of the before and after changes in their teaching practices.

In line with this study's objective, Luzecky and Badger (2008) stated that appropriate faculty sponsorship improves the quality of teaching in higher education. It also enables academic staff to engage in critical reflexive pedagogy. However, the findings in this study were divergent from those of Luzecky and Badger (2008). The study findings further disagreed with Barifaijo et al. (2015) findings who stated that teaching consists of far more than what takes place during the few hours a week that academicians and students actually spend in their classrooms. Many other tasks such as class design, preparation, grading and meeting students make teaching a more complex process.

In contradiction with the study findings, Ddungu (2014) identified that the level of professional development, empowerment is reflected by the scale of efforts put to design teacher's capacity enhancement policies and the degree to which these policies are implemented to create an environment that enables teachers to engage in activities that enhance their teaching research, innovative abilities skills, knowledge, expertise and attitude. As the findings of this study revealed an insignificant positive relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery, they were inconsistent with Atwebembeire, Musaaazi, Sentamu and Mulunda (2018) who studied performance monitoring and quality of teaching and research in private Universities in Uganda and established that there was a positive contribution of performance monitoring on quality of teaching.

The study findings were incongruent with Azikuru, Onen and Ezati (2017) who revealed that staff training and development had statistically significant influences on the quality of teaching. As staff are trained using formal and informal trainings while on the job, the quality of their teaching enhances. This was not the case with KIU in the study where the findings showed an insignificant relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery.

In conclusion, findings of the study revealed an insignificant relationship between professional development practices and teaching service delivery of academic staff were differing from all the studies referred to in the afore mentioned discussion.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Kampala International University, professional development practices insignificantly relate with teaching service delivery of academic staff. From the study findings and conclusions, it was recommended that since professional development practices and teaching service delivery were insignificantly related unlike in other studies, other mechanisms to improve on teaching service delivery like remuneration and motivation of staff be used. Furthermore, rather than emphasize the creation of such policies in favor of academic staff professional development practices as a strategy to boost on teaching service delivery, Kampala International University council should explore other means like improved supervision and remuneration so as to improve on their academic staff's teaching service delivery. This is based on the insignificant relationship between teaching and academic teaching service delivery.

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