

The Effect of Implementation of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programs at Colleges of Afar Region on Teachers' Decision to Continue in Teaching Profession

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Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating the role of stakeholders' seniority, perception and attitude on the implementation of collaborative learning. It was carried out at Samara University from September 2015 to March 2016. A total of 300 (100 teachers and 200 students) were included in the study considering their seniority and the where colleges they were hired and enrolled. The result has pointed out that though seniority of students had nothing to do with implementation of collaborative learning, teachers' seniority was affecting it significantly. The stakeholders' perception and attitude towards collaborative learning were found to be significantly affecting implementation of collaborative learning. The correlation between attitude of students and teachers with implementation of collaborative learning was found to be ($r=0.337$, $p < 0.01$), that of their perception ($r=0.250$, $p < 0.01$) and teachers' seniority was ($r=0.232$, $p < 0.01$); whereas, students' seniority had nothing to do with collaborative learning.

From both teacher and student respondents, various problems were illuminated and promising directions have been forwarded. Avoiding perception that collaborative learning has political orientation, openly sharing idea among themselves, avoidance of

reluctance, stopping class tasks for only one or two students were some of the points suggested for student.

Keywords: *seniority, perception, attitude, collaborative learning*

1. Introduction

Education involves a mean of acquiring newly emerging innovative ideas as well as transferring societal based native knowledge and skills from generation to generation within a society. It plays a key role in improving overall living standards and eliminating the social evils of the citizens in a certain nation. Moreover, with the absence of education, particularly that of quality education, it is unthinkable to attain various developmental programs for which all concerned bodies are striving, on which huge amount of valuable resources are invested and for which massive amount of capital is being invested.

Nowadays, the transformation of developing nations in to industrialized societies is determined by the role technical and vocational education and training colleges play in producing middle level professionals.

Educational institutions at all levels need experienced teachers who also are pedagogically well skilled and passionate to render what they were endowed with in a full-fledged manner; thereby boosting their academic standard as well as building their patriotic stance effectively. Hence, teachers' sustainability and persistence in teaching profession is found to be vital. However, teachers' sustainability remains the main threat throughout general education, TVETs and health science colleges of countries like Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, the problem becomes worst in the case of TVETs because many programs in these institutions are new and institutions are struggling with shortage of teachers, which has resulted in importing expatriates (MOE, 2008).

The Human capital theory of occupational choice provides a theoretical frame for the reason why someone else decides to become a teacher, and then, to remain in or leave teaching. Here, the theory states that individuals make systematic assessment of the net monetary and non-monetary benefits of other jobs and make systematic decisions throughout their career to enter, stay, or leave an occupation (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). It further illuminates the education and training, migration and the search for a new job in terms of investment (cited in Hilina, 2014).

CPD (continuous professional development programs) provided for staffs in a certain organization involve all programs arranged for them encompassing various activities such as workshops, conferences, on-site and offsite trainings...etc which are geared towards upgrading the knowledge and skills of the target group thereby increasing their efficiency. These programs are very vital to employees for number of reasons. The programs have superior role to play in promoting the continuous improvement of the professional staffs, eliminating deficiencies in the pre-service preparation of professional workers, keeping the professional abreast of new knowledge, releasing creative activities, giving the much needed support to the professionals who are entering a responsibility (Factoran, 2009).

Research works in Ethiopia have revealed that lack of provision and effective implementation of Continuous Professional Development Programs (CPD) has hindered teachers' continuity in the teaching profession. Befekadu (2012) has pointed out the reasons of teachers' attrition as lack of professional career development, difficulties of living conditions, overloaded work, limited chance for further education and lack of instructional support. CPD programs, when implemented properly, positively contribute to students' school

success. Gemechu(2014), had came up with findings that implementation of CPD had a meaningful contribution to students' success.

This study, thus, was aimed at investigating the effect of implementation of the CPD programs at colleges of Afar region on teachers' decision to continue in the teaching profession.

To this end, in course of the research, answers were sought to:

- What are the CPD programs under implementation in public colleges of Afar region?
- Do CPD programs affect teachers' continuity in teaching profession at public colleges of Afar region?
- Do CPD programs in public colleges of Afar region support the training process?

2. Materials and Methods

Design: in this study, mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative) was used.

Population and sampling techniques

The target populations of this study were teachers in colleges of Afar regional state (Ethiopia), namely, Awash private technical and vocational training college, Gewane agricultural vocational training college, Samara health science and Aysaita teacher education training. This region is purposively selected because it is one of relatively low in all development indexes among regions in Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which was perceived to have severe delay in the implementation of packages designed to assure education quality; among which, one is CPD.

Due to the manageable size of academic staffs of the above four colleges under study, we used comprehensive sampling. Accordingly, a total of 105 staffs (94 males and 11 females) were included in the study.

The sample size was determined using online sample size estimating techniques; which has yielded 79 participants to be included in the study. After determining the total size, participants were proportionally classified to their percentage share of total population. Then after, lottery method was employed to select individual participants from the group. After checking for outliers and hastily rated responses which could have affected reliability, 8 papers were discarded.

Instruments: All data for this study was gathered using questionnaire of closed and open-ended types, which were developed by researchers.

3. Results and Discussion

CPD programs undertaken in colleges

The participants in these different colleges have two broad views regarding the presence or absence of continuous professional development activities in their colleges. 48% of the teachers indicated that there are no CPD training activities whereas 52% of them indicated the presence of professional development activities/ trainings. In such colleges, it has been pointed out by respondents that three kinds of trainings that support the profession of the staff. One kind of training pertains to the training or teaching methodologies such as professional development trainings and/or activities on “Higher Diploma Program (HDP), trainings on active learning methods, assessment, action research, preparation and utilization of learning resources, pedagogy, cooperative learning, etc. The second kind pertains to the development of subject matter knowledge and competence such as scholarships (in almost all sampled colleges), EGRA, Farm management, Integrated bio-farm management, PRA, Soil analysis (in agricultural TVET college) etc. Thirdly, there are trainings on cross cutting issues that need consideration in planning, executing (in all sampled colleges) and evaluation trainings to address trainee’s diverse needs such as Gender, HIV/AIDS (in all sampled colleges but emphasized at health science colleges).

Thus, in some colleges in the region, there are no training activities arranged regardless of the continuity of the training. The participants indicated that “no such trainings have been arranged for the college is still new, and we tied to find our own ways of improving teaching performance, for example taking training on assessment on my effort we didn’t get not only continuous but also any form of random training; not at all.”

However, in some colleges, there are professional trainings with different forms of arrangements. One is that the professional trainings being rendered are not continuous. They said “... trainings that support the teaching/training profession may be arranged but are haphazard.” The other is that the trainings offered are not centrally managed. This indicates the absence of a responsible body that organizes and manages such trainings. The third form of arrangement is the way trainings are organized. In few colleges

trainings are poorly organized and in others lack of organization is evident.

How CPD programs are being undertaken?

Some continuing professional development activities offered in some colleges to the staff appear to be not continuous and ongoing. Participants said that “trainings are arranged on the basis and interest of stakeholders external to the college and we usually are called to attend trainings where there are no preparations on our side and ... they will not come back...”

King (2004:28) argued that “ongoing development should be a key feature of all professionals’ work, not just those who are formally required to evidence it. With the introduction of professional standards for teaching in higher education, the challenge for HEIs will be to ensure that their CPD support is fully inclusive and that ongoing professional learning is something that everyone should be engaged in.

There are no “professional development offices” within colleges

Some colleges did not open CPD offices as a responsible organ for managing and organizing learning events. According to (MoE, 2010), the responsibility for the management of CPD will be a senior manager, who should assign a CPD Coordinator, with the necessary qualifications and experience, produce a CPD strategy, allocate a CPD budget, allocate time for CPD for staff, and provide administrative support.

The Degree of organization of CPD

CPD trainings in all colleges are not planned and not based on identified needs of teachers and personnel in actual settings. Thus, there will be a little probability of getting the most out of such trainings to improve real work contexts. King (2004:29) emphasizes the need for targeting professional development activities in light of realities by saying “Professional development needs to be self-directed and planned within the relevant context (institutional, disciplinary and personal). Staff should be supported in enhancing their understanding of their own preferred learning styles and needs in order to make the most of available opportunities for developing their practice”.

The Ministry (MoE, 2010) argues that the needs assessment identified and put in the framework imply such areas for CPD activity as learning problems, cooperative learning, action research, working with diversity, group dynamics/organization, assessment methods, counseling and mentoring, self reflection/evaluation, and making/using resource materials. However, some of the areas of training significantly vary from such identified needs of educators.

The other point indicating poor organization of CPD activities is that there is no as such identified method of implementing the activities. Though there are many methods of running CPD suggested in the literature, Ethiopian ministry of Education (2010) suggests a range of methods. These are planning sessions together, observation of sessions and feedback, observation of students, problem solving with students, assessment of students' work, giving feedback and advice for development, professional conversation, researching, action learning sets, action research, professional reading and research, visiting other institutions/organizations, sharing best practice, taking on professional roles, team teaching, workshops, contacting experts, mentoring, coaching, module development etc.. The usual way of offering training is in place in colleges where there are few CPD activities, and almost all of the methods are not attempted.

The Effect of CPD on career continuity

Table 1: linear regressions of the effect of CPD trainings on teachers' career continuity

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	62.69	1	62.69	1.12	.292
Residual	3893.7	70	55.62		
Total	3956.4	71			

Employing enter method, the regression model yielded statistically not significant ($F(1,71) = 1.127, p=0.292$) effect of CPD activities on teachers stay on the job.

However, the results from qualitative data have revealed somewhat different results. Some of the respondents have argued that CPD programs, particularly that of long term off-site educational opportunities keeps them sustained in their job while waiting for it.

"...it motivates me to continue in my career, it upgrades my level; I will love my profession more due to such CPD trainings" (one male teacher in agricultural college).

".....It is the only reason why I can prolong in this profession. In the absence of CPD programs, there is no reason to stay here " (a male respondent from Aysaita CET).

"scholarship will improve work skills and has economic return; I will wait for these opportunities;

no leave" (female participant from agricultural college).

...."CPD can improve my attitude and lets me love the profession; improves professional ethics; leads to better payment; improves and deepens my subject knowledge thereby improve serves delivery and its quality...if there is CPD, why must I change my job?" (male participant from Awash TVET college).

Here, it can be inferred from this that long term off-site CPD programs, like scholarship opportunities and hopes for these affects academic staffs' decision to continue in the profession.

The Contribution of CPD to teaching

The respondents have specified that induction trainings for new recruits are hardly arranged. This will affect their performance as they will take time to understand the contextual and work related realities within the colleges. "... we are new to the college and yet there are no introductions and scaffolding made to the real work that we are going to do..." participants said.

Nevertheless, to continuously update the skills of academicians so as they can and render quality education to and effectively nurture their students the provision of CPD programs is vital.

4. Conclusion

We have raised three leading questions and have came up with the following respective conclusions.

- *What are the CPD programs under implementation in public colleges of Afar region?*

Though about half of respondent deny it, about 52% of our respondents have indicated that there was some provision of CPD programs on their respective colleges. We could understand that there are three kinds of trainings that are being rendered in these colleges.

- ☞ That related to the training or teaching methodologies such as professional development trainings and/or activities on "Higher Diploma Program (HDP), trainings on active learning methods, assessment, action research, preparation and utilization of learning resources, pedagogy, Cooperative learning, etc.
- ☞ That focusing on upgrading subject matter knowledge and competence such as scholarships (in almost all sampled colleges), EGRA, Farm management, Integrated bio-farm management, PRA, Soil analysis (in agricultural TVET college) etc.

- ☞ On cross cutting issues that need consideration in planning, executing and evaluation trainings (in all sampled colleges) to address trainee’s diverse needs, such as Gender, HIV/AIDS (in all sampled colleges but emphasized at health science colleges).
- ☞ *Do CPD programs affect teachers’ continuity in teaching profession at public colleges of Afar region?*

The linear regression has yielded that the effect is not statistically significant ($F(1,71) = 1.127, p=0.292$).

However, qualitative results have indicated that long term off-site CPD programs, like scholarship opportunities and hopes for these affects academic staffs’ decision to continue in the profession.

- ☞ *Do CPD programs in public colleges of Afar region support the training process?*

It had been inferred from the findings that some CPD programs provided to staffs support their teaching process.

5. Recommendations

- The TVETs colleges follow C-flooding strategy of hiring academic staffs, where better performed graduates at each of level 1-4 are recruited as instructors. Hence, we strongly recommend the induction training for them.
- Making strong linkage with nearby universities where there are better trained agricultural, pedagogical, engineering and health science professionals that the colleges need.
- Since CPD is one of areas of special emphasis, there must be a responsible body in colleges for provision of CPD.
- Least cost CPD methods such as Coaching and mentoring must be affordably conceptualized and practiced in colleges.
- We also recommend regular training on “positive thinking towards the work and organization” because there observed high attrition of academic staffs from colleges, particularly from TVETs after promoted to level-B.
- Inter-college links among the colleges of Afar region also will be vital.

- Those training under implementation must be based on the need assessment of staffs and organized.
- Long term off site trainings, like educational opportunities must be based on the rigorous criteria and on the staff development plan of each units of colleges.

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