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IN-SERVICE TRAININGS CONTINUED TO BE OPTIONS FOR SUSTAINING ACADEMICS PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES: EVIDENCES IN ADAMA AND HARAMAYA UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The article targeted to investigate whether the present mode of professional development, INSET continued to be an effective means for shaping instructors' way of thinking as well as a way augmenting professional competencies of practitioners or not. A case study and quasi-experimental designs were combined as preferred approaches for a critical examination of the problem. Using purposive sampling about 59 academics and program leaders were taken part as a means for sources of information. The result revealed that INSET was the unwavering main gateway for the present professional development initiatives. Academics who took part in professional development training had shown more consideration about the importance of professional development program than those who have no experience in professional development initiatives. Academic staff members assured that they need more time to assimilate trainings and implement new theories into their classroom practices and to share good practices with colleagues. Suggestions for improving professional development focused on the necessity to prioritize individual needs, decreasing the duration of the training and improving the quality of the training manuals. More importantly, time to reflect, follow up on the outcome of the trainings and resources for implementation of the professional development trainings found to be in short supply and in need of systematic attention.

Key terms: INSET (In-service Training), Professional development, Perceptions, Competencies, Academics/Faculties

I. Introduction

Investments in research and innovation are to a considerable extent moderated by the prestige and quality of higher education. Higher education is an important aspect of the 'absorptive capacity' of societies, the degree to which new knowledge is accessed, comprehended and exploited, reserved, and a crucial means of realizing the ambition of making our country, Ethiopia more innovative. As one of the main 'outlets' for research, higher education is the most imperative routes along which research has an impact on society, knowledge flowing via the heads of people into applications in daily life. State-of-the-art insights on teaching scientists how to teach, thus leveraging the knowledge embedded in their research, can be expected to increase the return on investment in science and technology.

As means for bolstering research and academic excellences in higher education, educational institutions should strive for quality of student learning. And, to help all students to learn in and for changing the environment, academics in the university need a better understanding of teaching and learning issues as well as to advance their pedagogic competences. Many current methods, such as widespread lecturing to students, relegate students to passivity, tend to focus narrowly on subject knowledge, and, thus, are derisory. Instead, effective teaching needs to put student learning at the centre of the teaching process.

Meanwhile, in this new millennium, everyone is experiencing unprecedented changes in world economy due to new developments in science and technology, media revolution and internationalization. All these have revolutionized the education sector too. These rapid advances in technology brought about knowledge explosion and knowledge revolution. In the context of rapid changes, it is imperative that academics must update their knowledge and skills and be conversant with the latest developments in the field. It is mentioned in National Academics Professional Development Guideline (MOE, 2009) document that academics have multiple roles to perform like teaching, research, development of learning and coordinated programs for professional development. The Professional Development of academics implies his/her growth in knowledge of his subject, in pedagogy and training techniques, in his love for students and for his institution, in moral and ethical values and growth of his desire to give his best to the world of learning and society. No profession can grow and be productive unless its members are cultivated professionally and are prepared to undergo sacrifices.

Meanwhile, in a recent massification of higher education institutions, the number of universities reaches from two to nine up to 2006, and from nine to thirty three in late 2012. This dramatic change in number of universities has been a driving force to increase the population of students and academic staff members in the country system of higher education. In this condition, the possibility of getting trained academic staffs that are equipped with pedagogical and subject knowledge has been a great challenge. And, in order to fill this deficiency, the establishment of academic staff professional development should be emphasized thoughtfully. Thus, since professional development is fundamental to the survival and growth of higher education, institutions must vigilantly plan, implement and follow up them to ensure their sustainability in the changing demands and accountability (Daniel, 2004 & Milligan, 1999). It was in this context "**In-Service Trainings Continued to be an Options for Sustaining Academics Professional Competencies in Adama and Haramaya Universities**" conducted so that deterrents in the developments of academics could be weeded out and suggestions could be made to take remedial steps for desirable improvement in orientation and refresher programs. Studies based on empirical work on Academic Professional Development are very less. Studies like Anto (2006), Aster (2007), Fekadu(2007), Minale(2006), Temesgen (2006), Tektle (2007), (Asgedom, 2007), Yilfashewa(2011, 2012), (Aytaged, 2012) having same relevance are available and found that orientation programs conducted by Academic Staff Colleges/ schools designed to improve the skills, the methods of teaching, broadening the attitude, personality and horizon of the young

faculties are found to be useful. But, still there is an immediate need to study the impact of courses conducted by researchers on the professional growth of university instructors. The present venture is an attempt in this direction.

Objectives of the study

The overall aim of this investigation was to understand and make analysis on how the present framework of professional development, training secured the anticipated effect on practitioners thinking and professional practices. Specifically, it is intended to:

- Recognize in what way and by what means professional development training is conducted in Adama and Haramaya universities
- Determine the effect of specific professional development training on trainees practices
- Identify whether there is/are significant difference in practitioners practices before and after training along certain respondents attributes.

II. Review of Related Literature

Conception of professional development

Fook & Sidhu (2010) suggests that the term faculty development and professional development is used interchangeably to explain the same phenomenon. Nichols (1999), associate both elements of personal development and institutionally led activities in his definition of professional development that is continuous throughout one's professional career. From the view point of the European Quality Assurance Division literature on quality assurance code of practice, discussion of professional development are concentrated on the systematic institutional provision and recognition of academic staff development including mentoring and training to upgrade academic skills identified as teaching, research and provision of expert consultation services (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, EAQAHE, 2005).

According to Grundy and Robison (2004), professional development serves three functions (extension, renewal and growth) and is usually initiated through two drivers (systemic and personal). Systemic professional development is typically associated with renewal whereas personal professional development may serve all three functions. Exploring the reasons for a "personal desire and motivation by academics to sustain and enhance their professional lives" (Grundy & Robison, 2004, p. 147), particularly in higher education where there is a shortage of qualified faculties, may help providers to plan appropriate content and knowledge building experiences to enrich and retain more academic staff in the profession (Martinez, 2004).

Mode of Professional Development

In an attempt to elucidate the mode of professional development programs, scholars use different terms to explain the perception of professional development models. Some use the term "type", others prefer the term "framework", and still others insist to use the term "strategy" to elaborate the term mode/type of professional development program. In this context, however, an attempt was made to consider the first two approaches, type and frameworks of professional development. In an endeavor to have better understanding of the mode of professional development, an attempt was made to discuss under the following major themes.

A. Type of Professional Development Programs

In one way or another literature has been discussing various modes of professional development activities. For example, Sparks & Loucks-Horsley (1989) believe that professional development opportunities must provide variety in focus, duration, and intensity. Accordingly, they describe five models of professional development:

a) *Individually guided staff development:* Academics read professional publications, discuss practices with colleagues, and experiment with new strategies on their own initiative. This model may be used with or without a formal goal-setting process that is part of the institution's supervision or evaluation plan. An underlying assumption of this model is that individuals can best judge their own learning needs and act on them. The professional development needs of a mechanical physics veteran nearing retirement are different from those of a novice academic, so professional development experiences must be varied.
b) *Observation/assessment:* Academics serve as mentors to novice academic, or engage in collegial observation (peer coaching) programs, in order to provide feedback on classroom behaviors consistent with individual or school goals. Underlying assumptions are that reflection and analysis as a means to professional growth and that reflection can be enhanced by outside observation. When academics have opportunities to get practical feedback from other academics and can see positive classroom changes as a result of taking new approaches, they are more appropriate to continue to improve. Research by Joyce and Showers (1988) showed that significant classroom change was associated with academic training followed by peer coaching and feedback.
c) *Involvement in a development/improvement process:* Academics are asked to develop or adapt curriculum, design new programs, or engage in systematic improvement processes. One assumption underlying this model is that adults learn most effectively when they have a need to know or a problem to solve. Another is that through the process of joint involvement, academics will be more likely to share ideas about teaching and learning in general. Statewide, all-school, and district-level efforts illustrate the variety of ways academics are involved in development and improvement processes. Many involve shared decision making and projects designed to improve the school as a whole. Research suggests that these efforts are most successful when participants identify a limited number of "ideal practices" around which to focus their initiatives.
d) *Training:* Traditional staff development programs include formal presentations, lectures, demonstrations, role playing, and/or small-group activities that are based on a clear set of objectives. A significant assumption underlying this model is that traditional staff development (one-shot, large-group, expert-presented) adequately prepares academics to change present practices and replicate new ones in their classrooms. Research suggests that the training component works most effectively when followed up by classroom coaching, personal feedback, and troubleshooting meetings.
e) *Continuous inquiry:* Academic inquiry is gaining acceptance as a legitimate form of staff development. Research has shown that academics who have studied their own classrooms make more informed decisions about when and how to apply research; develop more supportive and collegial relationships with one another, and develop a broader perspective. Teacher inquiry may be an individual or a collaborative activity. Sometimes labeled "action research" or "quality improvement," the process starts by asking questions, followed by developing a plan, collecting data, and analyzing the data in order to detect patterns and draw conclusions. Finally, findings are used to drive decisions and adjust practices. An important assumption underlying this model is that academics will develop new understandings as they formulate their own questions and collect their own data to answer them.

B. Frameworks of Professional Development Programs

Given the nature of the academic profession, any Professional Development (PD) framework must take into account the cultural and political realities of how universities work. Moreover, so far as it is appropriate for the university environment and culture, a PD framework has to accommodate discussion of national, institutional and departmental requirements, as well as those of the individual. For instance, the framework should acknowledge that PD has many purposes, including support for achieving the individual's career goals, and for employers to update staff knowledge (Rothwell & Arnold, 2006). At the national level, attempts at homogenizing PD arrangements for new lecturers have met with varied levels of success (Prosser et al, 2006), but there is no reason to abandon the attempt, and so national standards should also be in the frame. The framework should also acknowledge the importance of the student learning experience, and of scholarship. Meanwhile, it has already been acknowledged that academics very often develop themselves using non-formal learning, and yet PD schemes in different professions often do not even mention "workplace learning" (Roscoe, 2002,). In fact, this non-formal, non-accredited, often unacknowledged activity could be termed the 'invisible curriculum' in an academic's learning. It includes all those professional activities, many of which are visible but not conceived of as PD, but which contribute to the academic becoming a more competent professional. This non-formal learning is difficult to measure; but, again, there is no reason to ignore it.

Gordon (2004) in his book entitled "Professional Development for School Improvement", and Glickman, et al. (2007), have given the following frameworks for Professional Development: Training, Collegial Support, Reflective Inquiry Frameworks, Teacher Leadership, and External Support Frameworks.

Historically, the primary framework for the professional development of in-service educators has been training. The first systematic form of in-service training in the United States was the teacher institutes of the mid-eighteenth century, which had as their purpose the transmission to academics of subject area knowledge and "moral character" (spring, 1994 cited in Gordon, 2004). Eventually, the institutes changed their focus to training in the method of teaching. Throughout most of the twentieth century, training remained the corner stone of professional development (Stanford- Blair, 2000 cited in Bamber, 2009)

A variety of training formats have been used over the years, including institutes, clinics, seminars, workshops, courses, academics, and individual training. Theoretically each of these formats is defined differently. *Institutes* are intensive learning experiences in a specific area of study. They often take place in a period of one to three weeks. *Clinics* focus on analyzing and solving specific problems or learning specific techniques through expert demonstration or coaching under authentic or simulated conditions. *Seminars* are small groups working people closely with acknowledged experts in their fields. Participants meet regularly to receive training, hold discussions, and share information, and they may be involved in individual projects assisted by the seminar leader and other participants. *Workshops* are flexible structures that focus on the discussion, demonstration, and application of skills and strategies. Training programs often involve a series of workshops spaced several weeks apart, with the application of skills in the work setting between workshops (Gordon, 2004).

Courses are usually highly systematized, with standardized learning outcomes, a required amount of instructional time, the completion of outside assignments, and a minimum standard of performance, usually in exchange for credit hours from a college or university or approved continuing education units. *Academies* are continuing or recurring programs, usually receiving long-term support from government agencies, professional associations, an institution, higher education, or other institutions. They tend to focus on a particular area of study, and may serve as organizational umbrella offering training in the focus area through a variety of other formats. For example, an academy might periodically offer institutes, seminars, workshops, courses, and so on. Finally, *individualized training* allows the participants to complete a

program that assess individual learning needs, allow the participants to complete learning activities at his/her own pace, and provides for individual assessment of the participant progress (Glickman, et al, 2007).

In general, as emphasized by Loucks-Horsley (1998), consideration to the need to match the professional development strategies to the purpose of the professional learning program has to be given. The appropriateness of any particular type varies depending on the goals, the content and the context of implementation. Moreover, as other writers (Guskey, 2000, & Sparks, D. & Loucks-Horsley, S., 1989) also put it, given the diversity of academics' needs and interests, a differentiated approach to professional development has to be prioritized. Professional development program need to be designed to address these diverse needs, skills, and knowledge of the beneficiaries.

III. Methods of the study

The design of this study can be categorized under case study design. And as the investigation deals with two study sites, Adama and Haramaya universities, it can also be referred as a multiple case study design. Case studies focus on individual actors or groups of actors, and seek to understand their perceptions of events (Yin, 2009). It can establish cause and effect, indeed one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects. They are descriptive and detailed, with a narrow focus, combining subjective and objective data (Dyer 1995: 48–9 cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Furthermore, as a pre-test and posttest treatment was done before and after training, it can also be said that an experimental design particularly quasi-experimental designs. Kerlinger (1986) refers to quasi-experimental situations as 'compromise designs', an apt description when applied to much educational research where the random selection or random assignment of schools and classrooms is quite impracticable. Quasi-experiments are the stuff of field experimentation, i.e. outside the laboratory. At best, they may be able to employ something approaching a true experimental design in which they have control over what Campbell and Stanley (1963) cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007) refer to as 'the who and to whom of measurement' but lack control over 'the when and to whom of exposure', or the randomization of exposures – essential if true experimentation is to take place. Quasi-experiments come in several forms, but the present study is pre-experimental designs that specifically relied on the one group pretest-post-test design. Accordingly, one group pretest-post-test design was employed in order to collect relevant and specific information from those selected staff members on the occasion of the annual pre-arranged short-term academics' professional development training. To examine the impact of such a specific training, questionnaire was dispatched and collected before and after training workshops. The intention was clear, it was to examine the extent to which particular professional development training brought on academics comprehension, proficiencies and professional attitudes. Considering its suitability (in terms of duration and follow up), this process was conducted in Adama University study site. In this regard, out of thirty-six questionnaires distributed to the sample of the respondents (who had participated in specific professional development training) only forty-five of them were appropriately and clearly filled.

Moreover, for better understanding on the nature the professional development training, careful document analyses were done in both study sites. Overall, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, a mixed approach was used to get a richer understanding of the professional development training under implementation.

IV. Results

1. The professional development training modules

In order to understand the condition (Mode, training materials, duration, etc.) of professional development training in both study sites, a document studies and interviews were conducted. Consequently, the following table was constructed for clear examination of the data.

Table 1: Training modules of the professional development programs

	Adama university		Haramaya University	
Module	Module title	Hours	Module title	Hours
Module 1	Reflective teacher	8	Reflective instructors	22
Module 2	English for Communicative Skills	18	Teaching with ALMS	24
Module 3	Information Technology	24	Program designing	18
Module 4	Developing Active Learning	16	Assessment	20
Module 5	Improving Assessment	14	Special needs	8
Module 6	Action/ Applied Research	10	IT	8
Module 7	Industry and TVET School Placement	16		
	Total	106	Total	100
Duration of the training program- 6 months			Duration of the training- one year	
Visit to school and industries		Yes	Visit to school and industries	No

In Adama University, the type of professional development coordinating center has been referred as Pedagogical Skills Improvement and Support Center (PSISC). The center is responsible to organize and/or give support in various training. In document studies and interview conducted with center coordinator this program meant for all academic staff members. The Pedagogical Skills Improvement and Support Center Training lasts for six months and provides time for attending observations, feedbacks, interviews with candidates, visits to schools and industries, action research, and professional meetings.

On the other hand, to the Haramaya University, the professional development coordinating unit in place is known as Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education Teaching (PGDHET). Similarly, the center is responsible to organize and/or give support in various professional development training. Training in this program lasts for one academic year and target to all academic staff in the university. However, in this program, visit to schools and industries were not integrated.

When one examines the types of training materials included across the study sites, more courses seem to be considered in Adama University (AU) than Haramaya University (HU). Courses such as English for communication and action/applied research were unique to AU. On the other hand, courses as special needs education and program and course design were unique to HU. On top of this, more credit hours were considered in AU than HU. Meanwhile, in an interview conducted with center coordinators in both study sites, it was realized that the training modules in AU were designed on the bases of discussions among school representatives while these were collected from other experiences for HU. Briefly this means, modules for AU were designed in the form of workshop that include representatives from each school to minimize generality to be able to approach the training contextually. On the other hand, the training modules incorporated in the current HU training program were adapted either from the old program of HDP/ADRC or from the experience of other sister universities. From this, it can be concluded that future intention and delivery of professional development training need modification and contextualization to fit the need and curiosity of beneficiaries. Rivero (2006) cited in Price (2008) refers to this type of professional

development as “one size fits all courses” and warns that these parameters for professional development are no longer effective.

In general, as can be understood from the respondents’ responses, the foremost professional development framework implemented by universities was training. And, the most active centers or programs for these were dominantly two, ADRC and HDP. However, this document defined professional development as activities that increase the skills, knowledge and understanding of academics, and their effectiveness in the institutions and also promotes continuous reflection and re-examination of professional learning (Ganser, 2000*).* This includes, but goes well beyond, training courses and a wide variety of other on and off the job activities.

On the other hand, professional development training through PGDHET, the center responsible to organize and/or give support for various professional development activities in Haramaya University, lasted only for one academic year and targeted all academic staff in university. However, in this program, visit to schools and industries were not integrated. In general, it was found that INSET was the unwavering main gateway for the present professional development activities.

2. Effect of a specific professional development training program on academics practices as perceived by participants in Adama University

To examine a specific professional development training effect on academics’ perceptions on the importance of the existing academic program implementation, a rating scale that serves to assess the perceptions at the beginning and at the end of the training session was provided to the subjects of the study and the result organized as indicated the following table:

Table 2: The significance mean difference in trainees’ behavior before and after a specific professional development practices (Paired Sample test)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
Sum1	45	176.4	248.4	217.008	8.85	5.054
Sum2	45	201.6	268.2	242.14	9.87	

The above table indicates that the calculated value of t was exceeding the table value at 0.01 level of significance. This result contends that the perceptions of academics at the beginning and at the end of a given professional development training program vary significantly. Meaning, a particular professional development training of such form has impact on the trainees’ perceptions regarding its contribution to improve their professional competencies. In more elucidated manner, academics who took part in professional development training had shown more consideration about the importance of professional development program than those who have no experience in professional development initiatives. Hence, this specific event also support the idea that a professional development environment (e.g. training) is indeed very indispensable and has to be practiced continuously with commitment. It is believed that every proposal to reform, restructure, or transform educational institutions emphasizes professional development as the primary vehicle to bring needed change. Guskey (2000) in his recent study claimed that *never before in the history of education has there been a greater recognition of the importance of professional development trainings*. In his explanation there are three major outcomes of staff development initiatives. These are change in the classroom practice of academics (by widening and deepening subject matter knowledge and teaching, coaching, managing and other skills), change in the learning outcomes of students, and change in academics’ beliefs and attitudes. To achieve these ends, it is understood that academics need to continuously get involved in activities that potentially improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes like the professional development practices mentioned in the above.

Substantiating the above assertions, a study conducted by Minale (2006) assured that academics have acquired new knowledge and skills as well as behavioral changes as a result of the training. More importantly, they claimed that the training has enhanced their knowledge about learning styles, student centered teaching, continuous assessment, and collaborative learning. Although participants revealed that HDP was an ambitious reform initiative that did not consider actual classroom situations & problems, they reported that they were 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.

To conclude, it was inferred from this case study report that the dominant mode of professional development was training. For this series of training modules were prepared. Meanwhile, in the implementation of this training as sole means of professional development program, it was assured that certain input as provision of enough time, support from colleagues and management bodies as well as other resources was not satisfactory provided.

Academics' Self-reflections after a Specific Training in Haramaya University

The researcher believed that it is helpful to examine some of the reflections of PGDHET candidates (of Haramaya University) on their level of satisfaction at the conclusion of the professional development training program. After participating for some period of time, 14 trainees in a professional training were asked to state the level of satisfaction they had as a result of the training. On the basis of the respondents' reflection, the following major points were drawn:

1. The professional development training sessions: The training programs as perceived by many of the participants were relevant to improve effectively their classroom teaching. However, the trainees were incredulous about the transferability of the majority of the lessons they have acquired in the training sessions. For example, the large-class size, the congested and at times fixed nature of the sitting arrangement, absence of different teaching aids and inherent nature of the students to expect every thing from the academic inhibits the applicability of the professional development training. In this regard, one trainee reflected:

> *I found the program the best avenue to share experiences not only with the facilitators but also among ourselves. I learned that there are certain challenges in the program scheduling, in carrying out all the required assignments and project works such as observation in the classroom and action research. Despite the inconveniencies, I would say that the program achieved its objectives. One likely obstacle from implementing what I have learned could be the large class size we have per class, the crowded and at times fixed nature of the sitting arrangement, absence of diverse teaching aids and entrenched nature of the students to expect every thing from the academic (SM: March, 2011).*

2. *Module delivery*: Trainees reflected that they are satisfied with the way the training was organized and delivered. It was very much interactive, participatory, variety with the use of different techniques. They concluded that it was value adding, interesting and pleasing to participate in the training. As one trainee reflected on module delivery:

> *I have got a lot of new information about what a reflective academic would mean within the first module and this helped me to become a more committed and more expressive academic. I have also learned about the different kinds of active learning methods (2nd module). The information I got from ICT in education module showed me the different possibilities of communication technology to conduct the lesson effectively to my students. Moreover, the other major area which I usually presume as having difficulty was student assessment; in this regard, I have got a very helpful lessons from this module (DG: March, 2011).*

3. *Trainers.* The trainees confidently expressed that facilitators have ample experiences in the delivery of lessons with various experience of teaching in higher learning institutions. The trainees' reflections stressed the important directions received from their moderators that were on the spot and noteworthy. In this regard, one reflector coined:

> *I personally would like to acknowledge all the facilitators who offered the sessions as well as prepared the teaching materials of this training program. I have a general impression that the contents of the modules are very informative which helped me to be active learners. Of course, minor editorial problems were observed in the modules which might need slight revision before next time duplication. It would also be good if management of large classes treated since it is the major challenge of almost all academics of these days (DZ: March, 2011).*

4. *Time allotted*. Many trainees reflected that the time given for the training should be reduced considering to the contextual condition of the university. In this regard, as one trainee put it shortly:

> *With respect to the name of the certificate "Post Graduate Diploma", I believe an appropriate time has been allotted to the training. However, when I consider the different curricular and extra curricular assignments for most of the trainees, one year, four hours every week seems a little bit too long and I would suggest if there is a way to reduce it to 6 months and delivered once in a week(DT: March, 2011).*

5. *General.* In general, participants unanimously acknowledged the importance and continuation of the training program to augment teaching proficiency and the condition of students learning. Regarding this, one of the trainees clarified:

> *The training was extremely valuable for all academics who have deficiencies in pedagogical courses, and I believe it would contribute a lot toward the delivery of quality education and creation of knowledgeable, skillful and responsible citizens. However, issues related to the number of students assigned per-class and associated facilities in every class should be fulfilled and must be given attention by the concerned bodies. For this, the department/college which is advocating the paradigm shift toward active learning methods is expected to exert maximum effort in fulfilling the same (FL: March, 2011).*

As a whole, the professional development training participants in Haramaya University realized that they have acquired a lot of pedagogical and ICT knowledge and skills through PGDHET program. They specifically hoped that in the future, it would be helpful for them to apply the skills and knowledge to their teaching-learning milieu and daily activities. Meanwhile, after they have been involved in the professional development training they identified the following pros and cons of the training experiences. In connection to this, one of the trainees pointed out the following:

Strong points:

> *The professional development initiatives were vital for academics who have no background on professional courses. The modules were carefully selected and well organized. Moderators of the training were also well prepared and confident with all commitments to support the leading team in professional development (Lk: March, 2011)*

Weak points:

> *The schedule to the training on the proposed time was difficult and need further rearrangement. In the training, it was found that inadequate list of references from which the modules were developed and used for further reading. Some materials particularly module six (ICT) should be re-printed and distributed for the candidates since we use them as a reference in the future (GL: March, 2011).*

In general, from the above trainees' reflection of the professional development training conducted at HU, it can be learned that the majority of staff members felt positively about the benefits of the training. In an informal discussion with some of the trainees, they need more time to assimilate initiatives and implement new theories into their classroom practices and to share good practices with colleagues. Suggestions for improving professional development focused on the necessity to prioritize individual needs, decreasing the duration of the training and improving quality of the training manuals. More importantly, time to reflect, follow up on the outcome of the training and resources for implementation of the professional development trainings found to be in short supply and in need of systematic attention.

Meanwhile, from critical investigation of trainees' background, the above reflections were the views of candidates who had taken part in the first round of PGDHET training. In a discussion conducted with center coordinators and with an examination of archival records, it was realized that most of the trainees who took part in the training were academic program leaders with additional university responsibilities other than the normal teaching loads. In more explicit statement, many of the participants were HoDs, Deans, Directors, and Top managers. As a result, as these were individuals who in one way or another make decisions on the plan and operational deliberation of university wide academic programs including PGDHET, this opportunity might have created for them to include their need and interest including in the professional development training. Accordingly, the positive outlook and great satisfaction of the training might have been rooted in this particular incident.

V. Conclusions

In general, it was found that INSET was the unwavering main gateway for the present professional development activities. The results in quantitative and qualitative analyses assured that the perceptions of instructors at the beginning and at the end of a given professional development training program vary significantly. Meaning, although it is argued that PD trainings have limitations to take grant for improving instructors' competencies, a particular professional development training of such form has impact on the trainees' perceptions regarding its contribution to improve their professional skills and knowledge. In more elucidated manner, academics who took part in professional development training had shown more consideration about the importance of professional development program than those who have no experience in professional development initiatives. Hence, this specific event also support the idea that a professional development environment (e.g. training) is indeed very indispensable and has to be practiced continuously with commitment.

In general, from the above trainees' reflection of the professional development training conducted at HU, it can also be learned that the majority of staff members felt positively about the benefits of training. In an informal discussion with some of the trainees, they need more time to assimilate initiatives and implement new theories into their classroom practices and to share good practices with colleagues. Suggestions for improving professional development focused on the necessity to prioritize individual needs, decreasing the duration of the training and improving quality of the training manuals. More importantly, time to reflect, follow up on the outcome of the training and resources for implementation of the professional development trainings found to be in short supply and in need of systematic attention.

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