
Academic Staff Professional Development at Kyambogo University

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Abstract

This study endeavoured to establish the extent to which academic staff advance professional goals. It was informed mainly by Vroom's Expectancy Theory, and it employed a cross-section sample survey research design. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were utilized to select a sample that consisted of one hundred and ninety (190) respondents, These were served with a close-ended questionnaire whose Content Validity Index (CVI) had been established at 0.87. Reliability was measured at 0.87, by us of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α). A superlative number of respondents (98.2%) mutually consented that there was need for academic staff to prepare for future job demands and opportunities through pursuing higher education. The paper advances that change induced by business and industry demands rapid and social adjustments so that the labour market gets practical and competent graduates able to solve contemporary societal problems and challenges. Concluded was that the way the academic staff prioritise the career goals from the university service to a considerable extent determines the level of professional development reached; and hence their contribution to society. The paper recommended, among others, that University management should endeavour to ever provide social services to her members of staff.

Key Words: Academic staff, Professional development, Universities

The Intuition

The existential need for professional development is a sublime concern in organisations; including educational institutions. Within the ambit of the foregoing Lynton and Parsec (1990) maintain that no one can doubt the contribution that higher education and training can make to professional and academic development of an individual. Adjacently, Sparks and Hirth (1999) rule that the management of academic staff development programmes is central to the performance of lecturers in institutions of higher learning. It is therefore incumbent on every university to build a formidable work force, especially in the realm of the academic staff. Moreover, universities are the main environment in which education, in its highest form, is facilitated for national and sustainable development.

While education focuses on intermediate changes in individual capabilities, training gears upon immediate changes in job performance. Garvin (1993) states that further education, training and learning are essential ingredients if organisations are to thrive and not merely survive. This perception is reinforced in Neema-Abooki (2004b) who subscribes that education must be conceived as the process of enabling people to change their lives for the better. It must equip them with skills, knowledge and attitudes which are relevant for development.

The success of any organisation is therefore closely related to the quality of the staff that performs tasks necessary to enable the achievement of organisational goals and objectives (Castetter, 1986; Katz and Kahn, 1978). Moreover, human capital constitutes the single most important factor which combines other factors to create wealth for a particular organisation or nation (Ankoma and Onyame, 2004). And the realisation that the accomplishment of organisational goals and objectives depends mainly on people has led to a high premium being placed on the human resource in the organisation. Implied herewith is that organisations, be they public or private, should seek not only to be able to attract competent personnel but more importantly to retain such a desirable caliber of human resource. The education realm and the university in particular, can hardly be an exception to the foregoing truism.

It is debatable as to what extent universities in Africa, especially in the sub-Saharan countries, are capable of and indeed are already functioning as instruments of national development as the case is with their counterparts in the developed countries. Since education and training is the source for sustainable competitive advantage in a Post-Industrial Revolution and Information Age (Walton, 1999), university top management has a vital role in championing further education and training process of every university staff, especially the academic staff. In spite of the realisation that people are the most valuable of the resources available to organisations, a good many academic staff in Ugandan Universities have not attained Doctoral Degrees and Professorial levels. Notwithstanding, the Government of Uganda (2007), in conjunction

with NICHE (2007), maintains that a university should have at least 60% of the academic staff with Doctoral degrees and 70% Masters degree holders. Ahimbisibwe (2007) registers in the New Vision Newspaper that Kyambogo University, the focus of this paper, registers only 17% of the academic staff with doctoral qualifications. This percentage is too small and the scenario may take several years before being substantially bridged. It was thus pertinent to delve into the stance of academic staff and their professional development in Ugandan Public Universities, with specific reference to Kyambogo University.

Objective of the Study

The sole objective of this study was to establish the extent to which academic staff advance professional goals particularly in the realm of attainment of higher academic qualifications.

Research Question

To what extent do the academic staff endeavour to attain higher academic qualifications?

Theories

The study based on the motivational theories in general and Vroom (1964) Expectancy Theory in particular. Other that complemented the study include: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Clayton Adlerfer's Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) Theory, and Douglas McGregor Theory X and Y Theory.

The Hierarchy of Needs Theory combines two notions, namely, that of acting to satisfy deficiencies with that of moving towards personal growth after basic needs have been satisfied. According to this theory each 'level' of need (see Figure 1) is dominant and not until it is satisfied does the next level become a motivating factor. Hence, a need which has been satisfied no longer motivates an individual's behaviour.

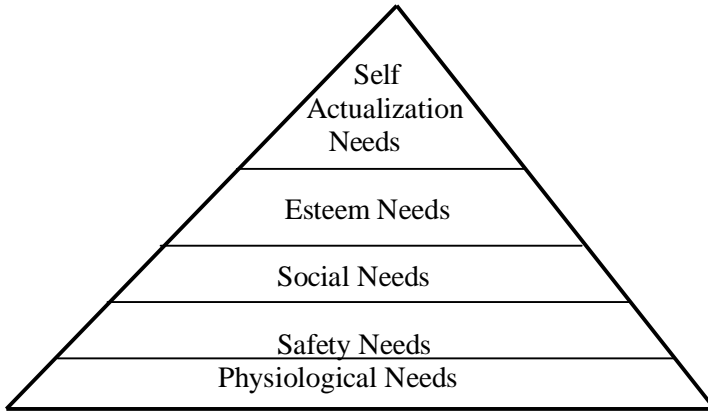


Figure 1: Maslow's Pyramidal-Motivation Theory

Source: Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson (2001). Management of organizational behaviour: Leading human resources. p. 40

While the application of theory in work contexts might present various difficulties, the implication of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory to this study is however that academic staff under normal circumstances are first concerned with satisfying their basic needs in life before thinking of career advancement through further education and training. All notwithstanding, this paper refutes Maslow's rationalization basing on the phenomenon that some academic staff may look beyond the physiological, safety, social, and esteem needs and pursue self-actualisation needs, such as higher education and training, even before satisfying the lower needs.

Realigned to the foregoing is Clayton Aldelfer's theory which suggests three core needs: Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG). "Existence" generally corresponds to Maslow's basic physiological and safety needs, "Relatedness" corresponds to social needs and "Growth" to esteem and self-actualization needs. For instance, safety and social needs of an individual may operate at the same time. The ERG Theory on its part postulates that a person frustrated or blocked at a level of need will regress to a lower level, unlike Maslow's theory which asserts that a person will remain at a need level until it is adequately satisfied.

The implication of ERG Theory to this study is that academic staff are equally concerned about their present and future needs. To this effect, a reasonable number of university academic staff have enrolled to pursue higher academic qualifications at various universities both within their home country, Uganda, and abroad.

Regarding McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y and Workers' Personal Goals, the impression that one might get is that managers who accept Theory X assumptions

about human nature usually direct, control and closely supervise people, whereas Theory Y managers are supportive and facilitating. In contemporary people management practices there is need to triangulate both Theory X and Theory Y assumptions (see Table 1) depending on the prevailing circumstances.

Table 1: Assumptions about Human Nature that Underlie Theory X and Theory Y

THEORY X	THEORY Y
1. Work is inherently distasteful to most people.	1. Work is as natural as play, if the conditions are favorable.
2. Most people are not ambitious, have little desire for responsibility and prefer to be directed.	2. Self control is often indispensable in achieving organizational goals.
3. Most people have little capacity for creativity in solving organizational problems.	3. The capacity for creativity in solving organizational problems is widely distributed in individuals.
4. Motivation occurs only at the physiological and security levels.	4. Motivation occurs at the social, esteem, and self – actualization levels, as well as at the physiological and security levels.
5. Most people must be controlled and often coerced to achieve organizational objectives.	5. People can be self-directed and creative at work if properly motivated.

Source: Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson (2001). Management of organizational behaviour: Leading human resources. p. 60

The implication of McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y to this study is that just as in the context of work, some members of the academic staff might regard it a burden to pursue higher academic qualifications even when the environment is conducive and funds are available. On the other hand, there are others that yearn to enroll for higher education. University managers ought to in this case, study the nature of each in order to make informed decisions regarding career advancement of the academic staff in question.

The Intuition

As mentioned above, the main theory underpinning this study is Vroom's Expectancy Theory. The theory states that the strength of an individual's motivation to do something will depend on the extent to which he/she expects the results of his/her efforts to contribute towards his/her personal needs or goals, to reward him/her or to punish him/her. In other words, Expectancy Theory asserts that people decide how much they intend to put into their work or aspirations depending on the value or benefits they are likely to get from such endeavours. In a simple form, the Expectancy Theory can be represented in the equation (see Figure 2) below.

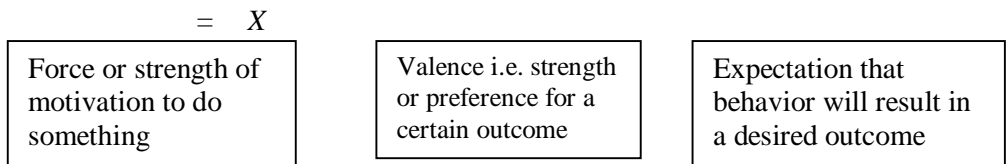


Figure 2: Vroom's Expectancy Equation

Source: Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson (2001). Management of organizational behaviour: Leading human resources. p. 30

This theory takes preference in this study over others owing to the fact that academic staff career goals do not necessarily take a hierarchical dimension where gratification of one goal leads to another as, for instance, Maslow (1954) would have us believe. This paper holds that the greater the academic staff desires to meet professional goals the higher the desire to attain higher academic qualifications or vice versa.

Design and Procedure

The study was geographically confined to Kyambogo University, one of the now five public universities in Uganda. Data were provided by academic staff including Faculty Deans and Heads of Departments. Covered were six (6) Faculties namely; Engineering, Art and Social Sciences, Science, Education, Vocational Studies, and Special Education and Rehabilitation. The content scope was limited to academic staff's professional development.

A cross-section sample survey research design was employed, the reason being it helps gather data from a sample of a population at a particular time in order to obtain information about preferences, attitudes, practices, concerns or interests of a group of people. The sample consisted of one hundred and ninety (190) respondents selected, in accordance with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table presented by Amin (2005), from a parent-population of three hundred and forty five (345) academic staff. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were utilized to select the respondents. The former technique was apt to according equal chance to the participants in the study.

Meanwhile, purposive sampling technique was used in selecting Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments. These Officers are believed to have a general understanding of the academic staff activities, motives and aspirations within the relevant faculties and / or departments.

All respondents were subjected to a close-ended questionnaire whose Content Validity Index (CVI) had earlier on been established at 0.87. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α) and was found to be 0.86 computed from the results of University.

Statistical Package for Social Science Research (SPSS) Computer Programme was used to analyze the data.

Findings and Proposed Solutions

The findings of the study revealed a high percentage of the respondents (86.1%) spelt out that the rationale for their joining the university service was due to the prospective opportunities for professional and academic development. Adjacent to the status quo, majority of the respondents (98.2%) consented that there was need for academic staff to prepare for future job demands and opportunities through pursuing higher education. Their perception as it were matched the adage "*Nemo dat quod non habet*": No one gives what one does not have.

It is therefore follows that if a university is full of low-level teaching staff her outputs in the labour market will be but low-level graduates. This is in consonance with Deming (1986), as cited by Neema-Abooki (2004b), that higher educational institutions need people that are improving with education. Accordingly, Neema-Abooki (2004b) rationalises the need for people with higher levels of knowledge and skills; pointing out that institutions need to provide opportunities for individuals to acquire multi disciplinary skills in order to build and maintain an environment for quality excellence that encourages full participation and personal growth. The conviction of the foregoing scholar is based on the assumption that high caliber people are very much demanded of in institutions of higher learning as they are seen as the pillars of the country's sustainable development.

Nevertheless, despite the rationale that institutions ought to provide opportunities, Steve (1998) categorizes opportunities for professional growth and development, thus:

Learning deliberately initiated by some one else to develop the individual. This mainly involves: coaching, mentoring, counseling, training, planned experience, projects and committees.

- a) Learning that occurs as a consequence of the demands that the job makes. This involves: covering, crisis, and organisational growth.

- b) Learning deliberately initiated by the individual. This involves: volunteering, reading, education, and outside activities.

Dransfield, Howkins, Hudson and Wendy (1996:6) voice in adjacent terms that: In recent years the responsibility for preparing for the future has increasingly been placed on individuals. People are the heart of the organisation's competitiveness and future prosperity; but for too long many have seen education and training as something, which just happens to them, yet a person is supposed to be responsible for his future. The concept of job security has increasingly been replaced by that of employability where individuals have to continually prove their worth to an organisation and this calls for one to pursue higher education and training. The idea of employability is central to the future prospects of individual employees, as they need to have all kinds of skills, which are required of a modern work force.

In consonance with the above, Everad and Morris (1990) point out that due to the Technological Changes there is a great need for staff in institutions to up-grade and up-date their knowledge and skills in order to cope with the rapid changes in the world. Similarly, Senge (1990) advances that the organisations that will truly excel in future will be those that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels.

This paper subscribes to the above notions since – due to the globalisation effect – today's knowledge, skills and values may not necessarily be of much utility tomorrow. Heightened hereby is the view that professional development of staff through pursuing further education and training is the only way to ensure that institutions keep abreast with the changing needs of the society (Everad and Morris, 1990). Teachers at any level should therefore have professional status characterised by highly trained skills and qualities founded on a recognised body of knowledge (Alan and Verma, 1996).

The study results indicate yet another superlative percentage (87.8%) of respondents testifying that their prime concern in the university service is none other than professional and academic development. In a related vein, 60% of the respondents pointed out that, to a great extent, academic staff yearn for the pursuit of higher education. This is in agreement with Mutyalu and Venugopal (1998) that education and training is the most important aspect in all types of organisations. The foregoing scholars, having postulated that no organisation can choose not to educate and train its employees, point out that education and training help staff develop such values as self-reliance, dignity and self-esteem. This paper shares similar sentiments and advances that further education and training lead staff in institutions to improve their performance in the current jobs besides preparing them for their future job demands in prospective positions.

Important to note herewith is the fact that academic and professional development “does” not just happen to people. Several scholars such as: Kemp and Marilyn (1995), Beardwell and Holden (1997), Rudrabasavara (2000), and Turner (2002), rule that the cost of higher education and training should be shared between the individual staff and the institution. This paper upholds suit and implores university managers in Uganda to meaningfully allocate a reasonable amount of money to address staffs’ academic and professional development needs. On their part, individual academic staff in various universities should take personal initiative towards their own academic and professional development. Moreover, it has been argued that the benefit accrued from this endeavour is long life and, to a considerable extent, benefit the very individual in question more than the public (Mahmood, 2007).

One of the central and legitimate purposes of modern management and business is the development of people by providing the right environment where the individual may grow to full stature and realise full potential (Rudrabasavara, 1996). In fact, the commonplace understanding is that in the development and growth of people lies the organisational growth and progress. This paper espouses that combating and adapting to the problem of change ought to be the prime concern of thinking individuals. Therefore, academics must be in the know that change induced by business and industry, through science and technology, demands rapid and social adjustments and renders obsolete products and processes, and skills and attitudes, so that the labour market gets practical and competent graduates able to solve contemporary societal problems and challenges.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

In accordance with the Ontological Principle of individuation everyone is unique; hence, no member of staff can have exactly the same amount, in degree and essence, of the needs and wants in life as another. To this effect, some people are driven mainly by achievement or recognition while others are concerned primarily with money or security; for instance. The way the academic staff in question prioritise the career goals from the university service to a considerable extent determines the level of professional development reached. Members of academic staff have needs and wants (personal goals) which are continuously competing with the institution’s expectations and demands. The way the institution addresses such well-deserved needs and concerns has an effect and therefore determines how far the former can progress in their career.

Basing on the overall findings, this paper ultimately recommends thus:

1. University management should endeavour to put in place attractive incentives and rewards to academic staff that make effort to pursue higher qualifications and especially those who do so in their early years of university service. Rewards such as a plot of land, house, or a car could be slotted in such regard.

2. University management should endeavour to ever provide social services to her members of staff. One adjacent example in this regard is the provision of education to the siblings of the university staff through setting up university-schools at the level of pre-primary, primary, and secondary. Members of staff may be charged a small fee to cover the operational costs; and if this is done in even other areas like medical-care the yoke of the academic staff would be lessened thus facilitating dons in their sublime pursuit of academic and professional development.

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