Relevance of Staff Development Courses in Addressing Pedagogical Needs of University Academic Staff in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study investigated the relevance of staff development courses offered in two Tanzanian universities to establish whether or not they respond to the lecturers' pedagogical needs. Three objectives guided this study, which were to: (a) Examine the staff development courses offered in the two universities; (b) explore academic members of staff's pedagogical needs; and (c) examine the views of academic members of staff on the relevance of development courses offered in meeting their pedagogical needs. The study employed a qualitative research approach, with multiple case study designs. A total of 38 participants were studied. Semi-structured interviews and documentary review were the main data collection tools. The study findings indicate that the two universities offered several staff development courses mainly in teaching and research. Teaching courses included teaching how to teach large classes and integrating technology in teaching. Moreover, the study found that academic members of staff had varied staff development needs based on the respective university's core functions, especially research and teaching. However majority of academics viewed the courses offered as not relevant enough to meet their pedagogical needs. Based on the study findings, it is apparent that, unless universities offer courses that cater for academic staff's actual needs, the efforts and resources invested in providing staff development courses would be more of a waste than an investment. The study therefore, recommends for universities to offer up-to-date and relevant knowledge that caters for academic staff needs to realise their core functions.

Keywords: Higher education, pedagogical needs, staff professional development programmes

1.   Introduction

Universities spearhead development and equip students with advanced knowledge and skills for different posts in government, business and various professions (Isani & Virk, 2001). Thus, universities need academics, who are properly trained to accomplish core university functions. Although teaching is one of the core functions of universities, many academic members of staff lack pedagogical skills despite being well-prepared in research (Pleschová, Simon, Quinlan, Murphy, Roxa, & Szabs, 2012). They only learn to teach informally by trial-and-error or simply learn from their former teachers (Evers & Hall, 2010). Therefore, a staff development programme is an important source of pedagogical skill acquisition.

In addition, technology has changed the terrain of teaching in universities and society at large. In consequence, academic members of staff need to be kept abreast of the new innovations such as the use multi-media and on-line resources (Dearn, Fraser, & Ryan, 2002). Teaching skills are necessary to accommodate the new model of teaching, especially the electronic-learning programmes. Apparently, the expansion of the students' enrolment in many universities has forced many academic staff to deal with heterogeneous students, which suggest the need for sound pedagogical preparation of university academic staff (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011).

2. Background to the problem
a. Professional Development Practices Worldwide

Many universities worldwide provide academic staff with pedagogical development programmes. For instance, universities in the United States introduced in-service training after realising incompetence and inefficiency among university instructors (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004). In the United Kingdom, university academic members of staff pursue development courses for reasons such as intellectual growth, career promotion and personal interests (Green, 2010). At Ontario University in Canada, staff development courses are offered to improve teaching skills of newly-recruited staff (Miles & Polovina, 2012). In Finland, staff development efforts are noticeable at Helsinki University where academic members of staff are provided with pedagogical skills (Postarreff, Ylanne & Nergi, 2007). Other staff development efforts are evident in Sweden (Ahlber, 2008) and New Zealand (Tynan & Gabrbett, 2007). Similarly, Goody (2007), reports that universities in Australia have instituted formal programmes that induct academic staff into teaching. These efforts indicate that, worldwide, various efforts are invested to improve university academics' pedagogical skills.

b. Staff Development Programmes in Tanzania

In Tanzania, staff development courses are apparent at all education levels (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). In universities, the efforts have been evident since 1978 when the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) established a University Teaching and Improvement Teaching Programme (UTILP) that organised workshops to assist academic staff (Pendaeli, 1990). Also, the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) that absorbed UTLIP was introduced in 2002, and has been conducting seminars and workshops to assist academic staff improve teaching skills. It was projected that "50% of the academic staff would be trained in pedagogical skills through quarterly training programmes by December, 2009" (UDSM, 2009, p. 26). However, Matiba's (2016) study found that the projected number was not reached due to lack of funds to run these programmes. Initiatives to offer staff development courses are also evident at Mzumbe University, where the Institute of Continuing Education designs workshops to promote competencies of faculty. Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) also provides development programmes aimed to improve teaching and research skills of academic members of staff (SAUT, 2010).

c. Pedagogical Training Needs of Staff in Universities

Teaching in universities differs from other levels of education because academic members of staff in institutions of higher learning develop their own courses and control their examination as well as assessment methods, however, majority lack skills on how to perform these roles. As Mosha (1986) puts it, it has often been taken for granted that simply acquiring a master's or doctoral degree and some competence in research equips anyone for effective transmission of knowledge in teaching in universities without any further facilitation. This assumption has led to university academics being the only practitioners who do not feel the need for organised training to qualify them as teaching professionals, because majority in their ranks assume the new role of teaching at this higher level of education without any formal 'professional' training (Mosha, 2006). In addition, studies on the competency of academic staff to work in universities reveal that university academic members of staff are good in their academic areas and possess impeccable qualifications; however, they largely remain weak in employing a variety of teaching approaches, classroom management methods and student assessment (Anto, 2006; Fedaku, 2007). In this regard, staff development courses are imperative.

d. The Problem

Many universities in Tanzania are staffed with young scholars who, in a number of cases, lack skills to handle university functions, with some even lacking confidence because of their position and limited experience (Mosha, 2012). According to Hassan (2011), majority of the newly-recruited academic staff in universities comes with problems pertaining to how to cope with the demand of providing high university education. Apparently, some universities provide staff development programmes to assist academic members of staff to acquire pertinent skills in performing their duties. These efforts notwithstanding, little has been researched on academic staff training, particularly on the adequacy and relevance of staff development programmes in Tanzania's universities. Previous studies on the subject, including those by Kaponda (2007), Kabanga (2007), Shaban, (2007), Marwa (2009), and Komba and Nkumbi (2008) were conducted at the primary and secondary school levels, with no reference to and little insight into the complex subject of staff development at the university level. Yet, there is evident lack of data on academic staff training needs, which serve as an important starting point in better understanding how to improve the existing courses to meet academic staff's pedagogical needs. This article is a reflection on the study that was conducted in 2016 in an attempt to fill this knowledge gap.

2.1   Research objectives

The study was guided by three objectives, which were to:

(a) Examine the staff development courses offered in the two universities;
(b) Examine academic members of staff pedagogical needs in Tanzanian universities; and
(c) Evaluate the views of academic staff on the relevance of the offered staff development courses

3. Research Methodology
3.1 Research approach and design

The study adopted the qualitative research approach because of its usefulness in providing an in-depth understanding of research issues in addition to accommodating the participants' perspectives in the context in which they live (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). In addition, the nature of the required information for this study dictated the use of a qualitative research approach such as a listing and understanding the courses on offer, pedagogical training needs and relevance of the courses to

the actual training needs. Also, the study employed a multiple-case study design because its focus was on investigating professional development courses at two universities and their constituent academic units (faculties/schools and colleges) as separate cases. According to Sarantakos (2005), multiple-case study designs allow for the use of multiple sources of evidence as well as for flexibility in data collection methods, thereby increasing the credibility of research findings.

3.2 Study area
The study was conducted in two universities in Tanzania, here referred to as University A, a public university and University B, a private university. The interest of the researcher was not so much to compare and contrast the two institutions but to paint a composite picture on how staff development courses were practised in the two universities. These universities were purposively selected. University A was selected because it had well-established structures, policies and traditions that could influence the provision of staff development programmes. University B was a private university with a substantially high student enrolment, an aspect that is crucial for a situation of being served by a variety of academic staff and specialisations that create the need for staff development programmes.

3.3 Sample size and sampling procedures
This study investigated the relevance of staff development courses offered in the two universities under study, hence only academic members of staff who had attended staff development programmes and staff development directors were relevant for the investigation. In all, 38 participants were involved in the study. Of these, two were directors in charge of staff development programmes, one from each university. These were purposively selected on account of their strategic positions.

In addition, 36 academic staff, 18 from each university were involved in the study. Quota and snowballing sampling techniques were employed to sample academic staff at University A. The researcher accessed attendance sheets with names of academics that had benefited from professional development courses offered by the centre in charge of these programmes. The attendance sheets had participants' names, academic units of affiliation, level of education, gender and contacts (mobile phone numbers and e-mails). The 18 academic members of staff were selected from four academic units. However, when accessed by mobile phone, only 12 participants accepted to participate in the study. The researcher felt that she had not reached an adequate saturation level. To address this problem, snowballing

was employed to generate an adequate sample of participants for interviews. These were staff members recommended as participants who had attended one or another of the previous staff development programmes. At University B, the researcher failed to get attendance sheets and, thus, a convenience sampling was employed as an alternative to get participants. This was possible because all the academic staff at University B attended staff development training programme annually. With permission from the management, the researcher approached academic staff and interviewed those willing to participate in the study. When identifying academic staff, the researcher inquired about their disciplines to ensure that she included academic staff from various academic units of the institution.

3.4 Methods of data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews and documentary review were the main data collection techniques. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provided an opportunity to probe further into issues related to the objectives of the study. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to construct 'their own world' of perception, evaluation and interpretation of the situations as confronted or experienced. The interview was conducted in the participants' natural settings. The researcher had made appointments beforehand with the participants who were free to choose the places where they were comfortable for the interview. Interview sessions lasted from 50 minutes to one hour, depending on the participants' willingness to respond to questions posed by the researcher. With respect to ethical issues, a research clearance was obtained before embarking on data collection. To ensure informed consent, the researcher explained to the prospective participants the purpose of the study and participants were accordingly informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. Furthermore, the researcher requested the participants to give their consent for conversations to be recorded. To ensure confidentiality, the study did not identify participants by names or their actual institutional affiliation. In addition, letters A and B were assigned to the universities studied instead of their actual names. Participants' responses were kept confidential. Data were subjected to content analysis so as to extract important information presented in narrative form. On the other hand, statistical data were presented in tables and figures (e.g. histograms) and others were presented as direct quotations.

4. Findings

4.1 Staff development courses offered in the two universities

The study identified staff development courses offered in the two universities. Findings revealed teaching as the most offered course. Interview with academic members of staff at University A revealed that the university offered two teaching methodology courses these were: "Basic teaching methodology course" which preceded "Advanced teaching methodology course". Analysis of the results reveals several topics such as "teaching in universities", "teaching large classes" and "students' assessment" as stand-out topics in the two methodology courses. The findings further revealed that majority of participants involved in this study had attended the two teaching methodology courses. In this regard, one academic staff reported:

> The university offers different staff development courses in one of the courses, we were offered a number of topics and some of them were about teaching in higher learning institutions and handling large classes. We were informed that the university is the higher level of learning and, thus, a lot was expected from a university lecturer (Academic staff at University A).

In other words, University A offered course to assist academic staff in undertaking their teaching role. This signifies that the academic members of staff have an opportunity to acquire skills that would help them to perform their roles much more effectively.

Similar findings were shared during interviews with the director in-charge of staff development programmes at University A who reported that, teaching courses were presented to junior academic staff upon their recruitment at the university, with the intention to equip them with basic skills needed to undertake their new roles, including teaching large classes. Findings revealed that due to changes in technology, the need for skills has resulted to a high demand in learning, which, in turn, has resulted to universities having large numbers of students, with some classes having more than one thousand students, creating a need for staff to learn how to handle them.

Participants at University B reported "problem-based teaching" as the only teaching course offered at the university. They informed that the course demanded them to have a problem which students were to suggest alternative solutions to solve

it. Similar findings were shared by the director in charge of staff development programmes who had this to say:

> The university offers several courses. For example, last year we had a course on problem-based teaching approach, such that academic staff gained information on how to teach using such approach. Once we had another course on the use of the Internet and research proposal writing (Director at University B).

The foregoing quotation implies that University B has some efforts to assist academic members of staff in different course materials.

Moreover, the study found that research was the second most offered course in the two universities. Majority of participating academic staff at University A reported to have attended training on writing academic and project research proposals. As one of the participants confirmed:

> I once attended a course on how to conduct research. In such training, we were introduced to qualitative and quantitative research approaches. We also had an opportunity to learn different data gathering techniques (Academic staff at University, A).

This statement confirms that universities offer research courses in a bid to equip academic staff with skills to undertake research as a core university function. Academic members of staff are also expected to conduct research and publish papers in peer-reviewed, reputable journals as a pre-requisite for staff promotion in the academic ladder. Few academic staff members in the two universities reported to have been offered psychology courses which have to do with knowledge of students' behaviour. Moreover, Internet use emerged as another course offered at University B. On the other hand, ethics and on-line teaching courses were offered at University A.

Generally, findings on this objective indicate that several courses were offered in the two universities under study. Moreover, the courses were fairly aligned with the university's core functions, particularly teaching and research. However, both universities only offered a limited number of such courses, which denied other academic members of staff opportunities to attend the otherwise useful and skill-building courses.

4.2 Academic Staff Training Needs

This study also sought to determine academic staff training needs in the participating universities. Responses from interview revealed that academic staff had numerous staff development needs built around core university functions, particularly teaching and research. Summary of the findings are presented in Figure 1:
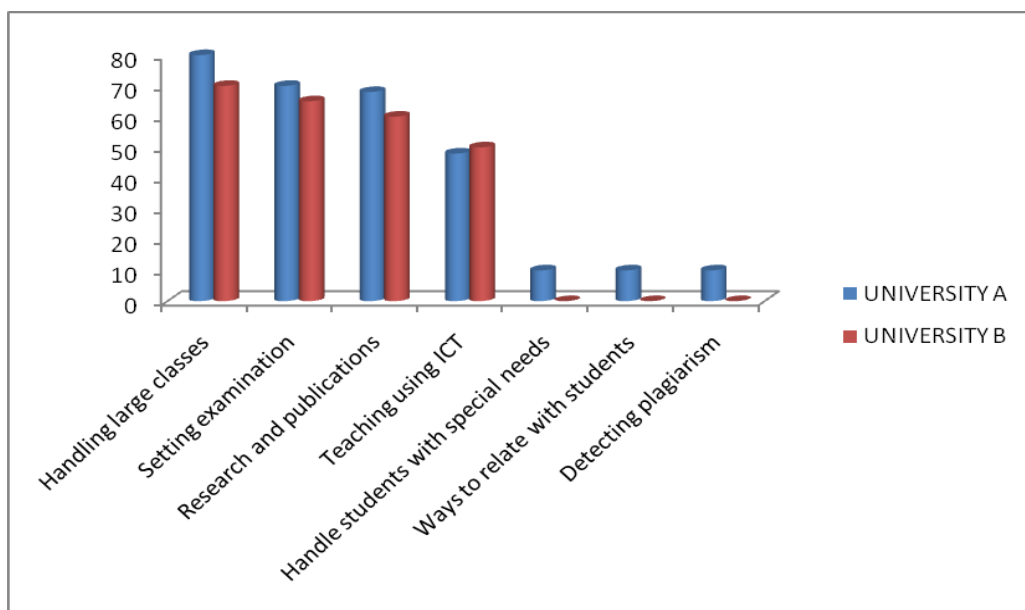
Figure 1: Academic member of staff pedagogical training needs

Need for skills to handle big classes

Figure 1 shows that majority of academic members of staff at the two universities under study mentioned handling big classes as a significant need among staff in participating universities. Findings revealed that due to the expansion of higher education, the two universities had big classes which made it difficult for most academic members of staff to manage them. As a result, there was an urgent need for courses to help them manage such large classes effectively and efficiently. The following views from academic members of staff justify the argument:

> At the time I was employed at the university, we had small classes. Currently, we have large classes. For example, this semester I have a class of 1,500 students; standing before this group is not an easy task. So, I need to attend courses on how to handle such large classes and teach them effectively (Academic staff at University A).

Similarly, a faculty member at University B added that:

> The university has enrolled large numbers of students and, currently, some classes have more than 800 students. This is a challenge to a person like me who has never gone through any teaching course. So, I need skills on how to teach big classes without compromising the quality of education (Academic staff at University B).

These statements demonstrate that handling of big classes was one of the pressing pedagogical training needs among academic staff. Apparently, academic staff began their duties without any orientation on how to handle the tasks assigned to them by the employer, including teaching.

Need for skills on students' assessment and evaluation

Findings from interview revealed that academic staff lacked skills on assessing and evaluating students. Figure 1 indicates that more than half of participating academic staff at University A and University B, respectively, mentioned setting and marking examination as another pressing need for university academic staff. The findings further indicate that students' assessment was a pressing need because university by its nature is high level learning institution, which demands high examination setting skills. Interview findings revealed further that the majority of academic staff who had not gone through any teaching course lacked skills on how to set valid examinations. In this regard, one of the participating academic staff at University A said:

> For me, I think I need more skills on assessing students. Previously in the College of Engineering and Technology, we had small classes, so we used to set objective and essay-type questions. Currently, the increased enrolments, exacerbated by lack of teaching skills, have necessitated the need to get such skills on how to set valid examination and mark examinations of big classes (Academic staff at University A).

One member of the academic staff from University B shared his concern that:

> I would prefer to have training on how to set valid and reliable examinations. As a university, we send examinations to moderators, who often challenge the quality of our examinations. Of particular interest is lack of coverage on the different levels of the Bloom's taxonomy. Since I do not have any background in teaching, training

on how to set examinations is very crucial and of great interest to me (Academic staff at University B.

Implicit in these quotations is that academic members of staff in the two universities needed training on effective assessment of students at this lofty level of education. The need was exacerbated by their lack of formal teaching training. The study further found that even those who had teaching background needed skills on examination setting, because university is a high level of education, whose examination has to incorporate higher levels of difficulty to develop and test the learners' critical thinking.

Need for research and article publication skills

Figure 1 indicates that research and article publication constitute another staff development need mentioned by majority of academic staff in the two universities. Participating academic staff in the two universities maintained that since their promotions depend on publications in peer-reviewed and reputable journals as well as scholarly publishing houses, they would prefer to be trained on how to write publishable articles that could be accepted in international journals. One academic staff contended that there is a common saying that "*Publish or perish*". This forced him to desire more training on how to publish research-based scholarly articles for his academic survival and promotion purposes. At University B, another faculty member insisted on the need for training on writing academic and fundable research proposals:

> For me, training on how to write a research proposal so as to win consultancies is crucial. Moreover, I would desire to spend my time on training that is related to research because research output is one of the sole criteria for promotion at this university (Academic staff at University B).

These quotations demonstrate clearly that, some of members of academic staff had training need on how to write publishable articles and funding proposals. The implication of this finding is for universities to offer courses that are relevant to academic staff career development.

Need for skills to integrate information and communication technology in teaching

Interview findings further revealed that academic staff needed training on how to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching. Participants desired using ICT devices such as projectors or video-conferencing.

One participant pointed that this was because technological changes have affected every sphere of life, including universities. Supporting this finding, one participant stated:

> I prefer a course on how to apply ICT in teaching. I would appreciate if I am trained on how to use ICT to communicate with students, especially to send assignments or to provide feedback (Academic staff at University A)

This finding implies that lack of skills in integrating ICT in teaching was a pressing need including the use of technology in teaching, marking as well as sending feedback to students.

Need for skills to handle students with special needs

Findings further indicate that, academics needed skills for handling students with special needs. This need was brought out by academic staff at University A, who reported that, the university has increased number of students with special needs. Yet, many academic members of staff have no knowledge on how to handle such students. It was further noted that though both universities had students with special needs, the faculty members were not specifically trained on how to handle them.

Generally, findings revealed that academic members of staff have a spectrum of training needs aligned with university core functions. This finding call on universities to plan relevant development courses tailored to meet academic staff desires.

4.3 Views of Academics on Relevance of Courses to Meet their Pedagogical Needs

This study sought important to find out the opinions of participating academic staff on the relevance of the courses offered to meet their pedagogical needs. Thus the participants were asked a question to that effect. Their responses reveal that the courses on offer were not relevant enough to accommodate their pedagogical needs. A follow-up question was posed to establish why academic staff viewed the existing courses as irrelevant. The reasons are as summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: *Reasons for the offered courses being perceived irrelevant by academic members of staff*

S/N	Reasons for dissatisfaction	University A		University B		Grand Total
		n=18	%	n=18	%	N= 36 (%)
1	Out-dated materials	12	67	11	61	23 (64)
2	Superficial courses	10	56	9	50	19 (53)
3	The use of 'one size fits all approach'	7	39	8	44	15 (42)
4	Engagement of less informed facilitators	7	35	8	44	15(42)

Out-dated materials: Table 1 illustrates that some of the courses offered in the two universities under study were reported by the respondents to be out-dated, hence irrelevant to meet academic staff's actual needs. Findings from interview revealed that, despite changes brought about by advances in science and technology which has affected all spheres of life including education, the participating universities had made little effort to offer courses with contemporary materials. In addition, interview analysis revealed that staff development courses were offered without needs assessment, hence their failure to meet academic members of staff actual pedagogical needs. On this aspect, one participant asserted:

> The biggest problem of the courses offered at this university is lack of relevance because they are out-dated and do not merge with the participants' needs because no needs assessment is conducted before the provision of these courses (Academic at University A).

Implicitly, courses offered were largely incongruent with the academic members of staff's real needs. Thus, they were perceived as irrelevant or out-dated by academic staff who participated in this study.

Similarly, findings from documentary review revealed that the training manuals did not contain courses with up-to-date materials that were likely to be useful in the world characterised by science and technology such as the use of multimedia in teaching, video-conferencing or power-point presentations. Further analysis from documentary review revealed that, despite the availability of several new research data analysis software such as ATLAS.ti and NVIVO, none of these featured in the courses offered at the two universities. These findings suggest that the universities relied on the old materials without taking into account changes of time and, hence, lacking relevance to academic staff's needs. The implication of these findings is

that universities have to take advantage of contemporary materials to ensure the courses offered are relevant and useful to current needs of their faculty members.

Superficial programmes*:* The findings from interview further revealed that some of the courses offered at both universities were superficial when it came to the crucial issue of sharpening pedagogical skills at the university. This was reported by some participating academic staff at both University A and University B (see Table 1). Interviews with participating academic staff at University B, for example, reported to have attended a workshop titled "The Internet Use". Based on that title participants expected to be trained on advanced use of the Internet such as surfing materials for teaching or research purposes. On the contrary, the workshop turned out to be an introduction to opening and using e-mail accounts, as reported by one participant, who said:

> These courses are irrelevant because some of them are very shallow for one to master useful skills. For example, at one course, we had a topic on the Internet use. I expected such training to introduce us to advanced use of the Internet in relation to teaching or research but, to my surprise, the training ended up introducing us to opening and managing email accounts. I do not think such training can improve our teaching skills (Academic staff at University B).

This statement implies that courses offered were perceived to be irrelevant by academic staff because they were far-below the faculty's expectations and actual needs. As such, there was a need for the university management to offer courses which cater for academic needs.

Similar findings were shared by another participating academic staff at University A, who reported to have attended training titled "Integrating ICT in Teaching". The participating academic staff members reported that after spotting that course in the time-table, they anticipated gaining useful knowledge on the use of ICT, especially when teaching large classes. However, their expectations were shuttered because the content presented did not reflect the theme of the course, as confirmed by one junior staff member:

> Once I attended a workshop on 'Integration ICT in Teaching', but during the presentation there was nothing on integrating ICT in teaching, rather, it was on Microsoft Windows 2007; I was disheartened because, as a junior staff member, I assumed the

> courses would be useful to my teaching profession. I do not think learning Window 2007 is the same as integration of ICT in teaching (Academic staff at University B).

What this statement reveals is the incongruence between titles of some of the staff development courses, which were attractive titles but without being reflected in their content. Indeed, such courses were irrelevant to recipients as they fell far below their teaching and research needs. The findings imply that universities should ensure that the course contents they offer align with the titles indicated in the workshop timetable.

Incompatible courses due to the use of "one-size- fits-all" approach

In addition, the use of "one-size-fits-all approach" sprang out to be another factor for academic staff to perceive the courses on offer to be irrelevant to meet their needs. This concern was reported by a few participating academic staff in the two universities (see Table 1). The findings revealed that at both universities staff development courses were offered to academic staff regardless of one's discipline. During interviews, participating academic staff argued that some courses were applicable to some disciplines but not to others. Sharing his experience, one participating academic staff at University B said:

> We attended a course on problem-based teaching approach after which we were urged to apply the knowledge in the class. However, I could not use such knowledge because I was unable to get a topic in my course that could be taught using that approach. So, I think it is unfair to combine all academic staff from different disciplines and expect them to benefit equally from the staff development courses (Academic staff at University B).

These findings imply that the use of "one-size-fits-all approach" denied some academic staff opportunities to enjoy the courses offered as they lacked specificities that their specialisations demanded. Indeed, the participants reported that some of the course contents were inapplicable in some of their disciplines. Based on these findings, one can argue that planning of staff development courses should consider the needs and subject specialisations, so as to enable participants to benefit and, thus, improve their teaching efficiency as well as effectiveness.

Engagement of less informed facilitators: Interview findings revealed the presence of less informed facilitators who did not take advantage of developments in information technology. This was cited as another reason, which made participating academic staff to dismiss the courses offered as irrelevant. The study established that little efforts were made by the two universities under study to update facilitators' skills and knowledge to ensure that they were in tandem with changes that have impact(s) on university lecturers. One participant at University A said:

> I do not think if the relevance of these courses is evident, because the centre in charge of training has not adapted to the new insights brought by advances in technology. The university has been using the same facilitators since time immemorial and some of them rely on old delivery methods that are the reasons there is no even use of forums among participants. Some of the facilitators are also computer illiterate, with no efforts made to adapt new insights (Academic staff at University A).

The use of less informed facilitators denied academic staff relevant knowledge. It appears these facilitators were incompetent/not conversant enough with change in knowledge. Thus, the university should appoint and /or rotate facilitators based on needs as well as respective specialisation. In addition, facilitators should be trained to keep them abreast of the changes taking place in knowledge and ICT application in teaching.

On the other hand, findings indicate that very few academic members of staff found the programmes on offer to be relevant to their pedagogical needs. One participant reported to have gained skills on how to use the lecture-citation method in combination with some elements of the participatory approach. In course of interview this faculty maintained that:

> These training programmes have significantly impacted my teaching. Formerly, I used to speak throughout the teaching session. But in the training, I attended; I learnt to combine the lecture-citation method with some discussion. Since then, I do not talk alone throughout the period (Academic staff at University A).

Notably, some of the academic members of staff, who acknowledged the course to be relevant, were those who lacked background in teaching. For example, one academic member of staff from engineering admitted that the training had equipped him with skills on how to set examinations. During the interviews, he asserted:

> I think there is value in the training. As an engineer, I have never undergone any formal teaching course. One time I attended training on how to set examinations based on the Bloom's taxonomy, which I found useful (Academic staff at University A).

This statement implies that some academic members of staff attach some value to the courses offered, especially those without a teaching background.

5. **Discussion of Findings**

The study investigated the relevance of staff development courses to establish whether or not they addressed academic staff pedagogical needs. It specifically examined the short-time staff development courses offered to academic members of staff. Moreover, it ascertained academic members of staff pedagogical needs necessary for many of the academic members of staff in universities, who taught while lacking requisite pedagogical skills. Finally, it explored the views of academic staff on the relevance of the courses on offer in meeting their pedagogical needs.

The findings indicate that numerous development courses were offered, including teaching in higher education institutions, teaching large classes, carrying out research, integrating ICT in teaching, psychology of teaching as well as Internet use. The findings are similar to those of a study by Mohammedbhai (1992), which found that courses such as teaching methods, teaching evaluation, educational psychology, programme development, staff appraisal and department administration were offered in staff development programmes.

The findings on the relevance of the staff development courses on offer at the two universities revealed that majority of academic members of staff found the courses irrelevant and, as such, unable to enhance the pedagogical skills they required. This finding is in line with a study by Ezati and Mugimu (2010) that found that some academics at Makerere University were dissatisfied with the staff development courses offered and found them irrelevant because they failed to help them solve the problems they were facing in teaching and, as a result, some refused to participate in the scheduled training programmes. The finding shows that when academic members of staff were not provided with relevant courses, they ended up disappointed and were reluctant to take part in such staff development training sessions. However, this finding is contrary to Minale's (2006) study that found out that faculty attended staff development programme where

materials were carefully selected and well-organised. In that study, facilitators applied active learning approach due to the availability of time that allowed for discussions among participants. Moreover, the presence of effective follow-up as well as support from colleagues and management contributed significantly to the course offered and made it relevant.

The findings from the current study, on the other hand, further revealed that courses were deemed to be irrelevant because they failed to capture and reflect contemporary issues that could otherwise be useful to solve academic staff pedagogical needs. According to the theory of adult learning, people with multiple roles such university academic staff would not waste their time to partake learning programmes that are unlikely to contribute meaningfully towards solving their immediate problems (Knowles, 1990). This finding is similar to what the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005) reported to the effect that some teachers dodged participating in staff development programmes because they were not suitable for their activities. Cercone (2008) also states that adult learners such as university lecturers have many responsibilities and, thus, entities should organise programmes that are relevant to their lives. In this regard, the adult learning theory developed by Knowles in 1970 works on the assumption that university academic staff, as adults, are relevancy-oriented and, thus, want to know the relevance of what they are learning in addition to knowing what they would achieve after undergoing such learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Thus, they normally appreciated courses that have immediate application and value in their living. To meet this demand, staff development organisers in universities need to be aware of what academic members of staff find to be relevant in relation to changes in time. This entails designing courses that address academic members of staff's actual needs.

It was also established that there was use of "one-size-fits-all" approach with very little utilisation of "in-house trainings". As a result, some of the academics were discouraged when presented with materials that were irrelevant to their disciplines. In other words, this approach neglected the specific needs of the faculty members, particularly those aspects relating to their specialisations. It is against this backdrop that Bumen (2012) cautions that the effectiveness of staff development models need to avoid the "one-size-fits-all" models. To avoid this pitfall, he insists on determining the participants' current need and accordingly implement staff development courses, which are aligned with their pre-existing knowledge.

6.   Conclusion and recommendations

This study has revealed the following. To begin with, the two universities offer several staff development courses in line with teaching and research. Second, academic staff members have numerous training needs which have not been addressed by the existing staff development courses. In addition, out-dated materials, superficial programmes, less informed facilitators as well as incompatible courses were the main reasons behind the academic staff views of the course lacking relevance to addressing their specific pedagogical needs. This finding implies that there was a discrepancy between the staff development courses on offer and academic staff's pedagogical needs.

This discrepancy calls for universities to strike a balance between what they offer and the academic members of staff's actual needs in developing as well as implementing staff development programmes. Preparedness of university management to meet academic staff development needs is also crucial in ensuring that universities provide relevant staff development programmes that will attract more staff to attend and, thus, improve their competencies so as to meet universities mission and vision in fostering the triad of teaching, research and community services.

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