



# **Professional development practices in public universities and organizational commitment of academic staff in Uganda: a case of Makerere and Kyambogo Universities**

by


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## **Introduction**

Several stakeholders (Richards & Farrell, 2005) have viewed the professional development of university staff as a continuous concern. Scholars contend that professional development is the engine that keeps universities true to their mandate as centers of ideas and innovation (UNESCO, 1998; Plater, 1995). Similarly, any organization's success would be jeopardized if its employees had low organisational commitment because they would fail to accept the firm's mission, goals, and objectives (Unzicker, Clow & Babakus, 2000) and to believe what the company stands for (Boshoff & Allen, 2000).

It follows that the high organisational commitment of academic staff, as the backbone of universities, is critical for their survival (Fako, Nkhukhu-Orlando, Wilson, Forcheh & Linn, 2018). The nature of staff commitment influences organizational effectiveness and behavior of employees. Mugizi, Bakkabulindi & Bisaso (2015) have



suggested that there is a low organizational commitment of academic staff in Ugandan universities. This state of affairs would slow down progress and effectiveness in these universities. Yet, the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders (2010) emphasise the critical role played by training and development of staff in creating efficiency and effectiveness in government institutions. Hence, there was a need to establish the influence of Professional Development Practices (PDPs) involving training and development, in public universities, on academic staffs' organizational commitment.


### **Study objectives**

The study was based on the following objectives:

1. to examine the degree to which professional development practices influenced organizational commitment of academic staff at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities,
2. to establish the extent to which professional development practices influenced the promotion of academic staff at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities, and
3. to ascertain the extent to which promotion influenced organizational commitment of academic staff at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

### **Methodology**

The study used the descriptive, cross-sectional survey design. The study selected a sample of 320 respondents using simple random and purposive sampling techniques from the accessible population of 1916 academic staff of




academic staff at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities, based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. The respondents to the interview guide that contributed to qualitative findings, included senior academic staff members and administrators in the directorates of human resources at both Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Numerical data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient and regression analysis, while qualitative data were thematically analysed. Structural Equation Modeling(SEM) was used in the process of developing the Professional Integration Interaction Practices (PIIP) model. While means and the independent sample t-test were used on the testability of the PIIP model.

### **Key findings**

The study findings revealed that: PDPs as measured by informal learning opportunities(ILOs) and formal training opportunities (FTOs), [ILOs ( $r = 0.363$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.458$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.094$ ,  $p = 0.117 > 0.05$ ), and FTOs ( $r = 0.464$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.503$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.015$ ,  $p = 0.804 > 0.05$ ),  $F = 29.260$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$ ] and Staff promotions as measured by upward and horizontal promotions [upward ( $r = 0.501$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.555$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.148$ ,  $p = 0.013 > 0.05$ ), horizontal ( $r = 0.417$ ,  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.458$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.109$ ,  $p = 0.069 > 0.05$ ),  $F = 44.528$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$ ;] had a positive significant influence on organizational commitment of academic staff as measured by affective, normative and continuance



commitment. This means that PDPs and staff promotions were important factors that influence organizational commitment of academic staff.

Findings also indicated that professional development practices as measured by informal learning opportunities and formal training opportunities [ILOs ( $r = 0.638$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), FTOs ( $r = 0.592$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ),  $F = 118.258$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.005$ ] had a positive significant influence on staff promotion. This means that PDPs had crucial inputs in preparing academic staff for promotion.

The overall indicators for the goodness of fit revealed that the model fitted perfectly well: Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.000. This result shows a good fit for the reduced model compared to the full model since RMSEA was less than 0.10. Furthermore, results show a Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMSR) = 0.006 is less than 0.05, which is equally a good fit, indicating that the reduced path analysis model predicts organizational commitment of academic staff better than the full model. Further, a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 1.000 > 0.9 is indicative of an acceptable fit of the model in predicting organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

### **Key recommendations**

The study recommended that Councils of Makerere and Kyambogo Universities should ensure that all academic staff members take part in informal learning activities



while formal training should have a budget to support activities like attending conferences and seminars.

Besides, the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) together with the Councils of Kyambogo and Makerere Universities should address reported concerns about the upward promotion by reviewing the bureaucracy in promotion processes and abuse of office and power by the authorities concerned.

It was also recommended that the Uganda government through the Ministry of Education and Sports, in conjunction with the NCHE should implement The Professional Integration Interaction Practices (PIIP), model. Further research should be carried out to establish why informal learning and horizontal promotion had weak loadings on organizational commitment.

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