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## **Establishing Instructors' Teaching Support Center in Ethiopian Higher Education: International Experience, Quality Assurance and Factors Affecting Planning and Implementation in Focus**

Aytaged Sisay\*

### **Introduction**

The focus of instructors teaching enhancement program has varied across different time lines. For instance, in 1980s, developing knowledge, skills and attitudes of individual teachers were the major focuses (Bolan, 1982; Duttweiler, 1989; Harris, 1989; Holly and McLaughlin, 1989). In the 1990s, authors went on including students and schools or institutions in addition to emphasizing individual teachers' development (Burden, 1990; Johnson, 1991; Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1991). They contended that teachers' teaching support improvement program is effective when a holistic approach is used. Authors in 2000s, emphasized on competence development as a broad concept which included the notions hold by writers both in the 1980s and 1990s (Guskey and Sparks, 2001; and Steffy, 1999). Specifically, the definitions in this decade consider skills', knowledge and attitudes' development as highly interwoven concepts with in an environment of teachers' satisfaction and motivation. It should be underlined that the central gist in the majority of the definitions is enhancing students' learning capabilities by utilizing a lifelong learning that upgrades performance of teachers.

If a coherent and unified change has to occur in higher education, every personnel in the system should participate in life long learning. The quality of higher education is a function of every body in the system. Thus, teachers,

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\* Lecturer and Researcher, Institute of Educational Research, Addis Ababa University

administrators, librarians, technical and support staff should continuously develop themselves.

Globalization has come up with challenging trends in terms of societal and organizational (Patrick and Fletcher, 1998; Fulton and Licklider, 1998; McGuire and Williams, 2002). For instance, the societal trend shows that there should be a change of direction from teaching to learning and a shift away from confining in a specific society to a more global society (Patrick and Fletcher, 1998). Due to this, instructors teaching enhancement programs should offer appropriate and up to date learning opportunities which bring the globe to the classroom. Similarly, organizational trend reveals that instructors are expected to be more accountable to students learning than ever (Fulton and Licklider, 1998). Moreover, their responsibility is also linked to the over all aims of their institutions. Accountability, productivity and efficiency are key demands of the day. Thus, instructors' teaching support programs should find ways in which instructors adequately develop these constructs.

Different professionals need and prefer different paths to develop themselves. A consideration of such needs and interests should be reflected in any instructors' teaching enhancement program. These programs should adhere to some quality assurance standards if the program has to achieve the intended objective qualitatively. Moreover, the quality of such programs might be compromised due to some factors. Thus, it seems cogent for Instructors' Teaching Support Center to understand some of the major quality affecting factors and minimize their negative effects.

### **An Overview of Instructors' Teaching Support Centres in Ethiopian Higher Education**

Instructors' teaching support centre in Ethiopian higher education is a recent phenomenon. Experiences and observations show that there has been a National Pedagogical Resource Centre (NPRC) established by Ethiopian universities in 2000. This centre has delivered different short term courses to junior and senior instructors of the government universities. It has also

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prepared different modules and materials on various issues on teaching and learning in higher education (IER, 2004). However, this centre has not been as dynamic as it should be to accomplish its mission and objectives (Saint, 2004). The grand reasons for this include having no budget, lack of full time staff and high turn over rate of Ministry of Education and Universities' senior officials who mostly need to be informed and convinced to buy the idea that supporting and strengthening this centre is a crucial measure to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and research in Ethiopian higher education (Aytaged and Laurina, 2006 and EQUIP News Letter, 2007).

More or less having the same objectives but at an institution level, an Academic Development and Resource Centre (ADRC) has been established in the relatively older universities by the support of the Netherlands government. In some of the universities, this centre has offered courses on teaching, learning and assessment issues, but in others it did very little, except storing some of the educational materials, aids, machines donated under the Educational Quality Improvement Program(EQUIP) which attempted to establish the centre (EQUIP News Letter, 2007). Again, priority of universities, budget, and staffing are some of the sundry challenges which made this centre not to function well (*Ibid*).

### **Objectives and Research Questions of the Study**

Even though the experiences of both the NPRC and ADRC may bring important local experiences, it is also equally important to draw lessons on the area from foreign universities which have proved to have well organized instructors' teaching support centres if our universities plan to strengthen Instructors' Teaching Support Centre, or establish it afresh. This paper, therefore, attempts to briefly describe the experiences of Honk Kong Polytechnic and Cape Town Universities which have instructors' teaching support centres and points out some lessons similar centres in Ethiopian higher education may draw. Using secondary sources as data collection tools, attempt has been made to respond to the following questions:

- What can be understood from Hong Kong Polytechnic and Cap Town Universities experiences with regard to some of the preliminary tasks that should be considered in establishing Instructors' Teaching Support Center in Ethiopian higher education? And what lessons might be drawn from these institutions?
- What are some of the basic quality assurance standards a center that run instructors' teaching enhancement programs need to consider?
- What are some of the factors that influence the planning and implementation of instructors' teaching enhancement programs?

### **Some Priliminary Considerations in Establishing Instructors' Teaching Support Center:Cases from Hong Kong Polytechnic and Cape Town Universities**

While establishing a centre that aims at proving support to instructors' teaching, learning and research competencies, there should be sufficient preparation and commitment at various levels to achieve the desired objectives effectively and efficiently. The provision of the academic support given by such a centre is expected to be quality and relevant. In achieving this, a centre under establishment should ponder over some fundamental issues like being clear with its mission, identifying its core activities, staffing and how it should be organized, among others.

In the next part, I will attempt to describe centres whose main aim is to offer academic support to instructors in Honk Kong Polytechnic and Cap Town Universities. The focus of the description is going to be on the aforementioned fundamental issues. The description may provide some ideas and insights which may be considered in establishing or strengthening instructors' teaching support centres in Ethiopian higher education.

**Mission:** One of the prerequisite areas Instructors' Teaching Support Centre should consider is to have a clear mission which is in line with the over all mission of the university. Consistent with their respective universities missions,

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Hong Kong Polytechnic and Cap Town Universities mission statements focus on the following areas.

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University centre's mission is striving to equip its staff with the necessary competence that causes not only improvement on teaching and learning but also support the university's strategic plan. Similarly, the Cape Town center's mission reads as follows:

A cross-faculty unit that contributes to continual improvement in the quality of higher education through widening access, promoting excellence through equity, developing the curriculum in partnership with faculties, enhancing the competence of graduates by ensuring the provision of key skills and abilities, and enabling systemic improvement through the research-led development of informed policy options (CTU)

As it can be understood from the Hong Kong Polytechnic Centre's mission statement, the centre aims at enhancing the quality of education by focusing not only on instructors but also on students. This implies that the centre has different programs that develop the competence of both teachers and students. It also tailors its programs to meet the strategic plan of the University. In collaboration with departments and faculties, the centre in the Cap Town University identifies areas and competencies that should be developed to bring about excellence in the university. Research based activities are main strategies used to reach the competence development goals.

### **Core Services**

To reach to its mission, the Hong Kong Polytechnic instructors' teaching support center carries out the following core activities. (1) It offers support both at professional and executive levels. It usually does this when the University's Learning and Teaching Committee which aims at enhancing excellence in learning and teaching, formulates, implements and disseminates policies, guidelines, and strategies; (2) Proactive and professional participation in the major teaching and learning committees of

the university is another area of the center's engagement; (3) To enhance the quality of students' learning, it cooperates with faculties and departments; (4) Using professional development activities like extended courses, workshops, consultations and participation in development projects, the centre enhances the novice and experienced instructors' teaching competences; (5) It promotes systematic gathering of feedback from different sources and critical reflection so that instructors can get valuable information and knowledge that help them develop as instructors; (6) Sharing of good practices with in the different departments in the university and with institutions out side the country is also the other core activity of the centre; (7) Disseminating local and international developments with regard to teaching; and (8) Promoting student centered learning, teaching and assessment; (9) encouraging the use of technological advances such as web based initiatives for teaching and learning are included in the center's effort to meet its mission and goals. Support to the university's strategic initiatives, teaching development programs and projects and workshops, institutional learning outcomes assessments and teaching evaluation-learning development; and consultancy on learning and teaching are some of the center's core services (HKPU).

The other major area of service is institutional learning out comes assessment and teaching evaluation. The major activities under this include:

- developing a learning out comes assessment plan at department, program or subject levels;
- evaluating students' experiences or learning outcomes;
- evaluating programs or teaching development projects;
- interpret students' feed back questionnaire ;
- using alternative ways to collect feedback from students to improve their learning; and
- developing teaching portfolio for improvement or appraisal purposes (Ibid)

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The centre is also responsible to coordinate the campus wide students' feedback questionnaire and interpretation of the results of the questionnaire for the enhancement of teaching and learning. In its e learning support group, professional assistance is offered at all levels; i.e., faculty, department and individual staff. Similarly, support and consultancy are given for every one who is engaged in teaching and learning enhancement programs. What is more, it offers technical advice and secretarial services on project development on teaching and learning issues and administers the project management system as well as offers professional assistance to departments or faculties in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of a project.

Similarly, the Cap Town University's centre closely works with faculties who are engaged with curriculum development, teaching methodology, and life long learning. Besides, it emphasizes on creating awareness both to students and staff concerning career development and management that prepares them for the world of work. Activities such as promoting, using, evaluating ICT for teaching and learning are some of its tasks. In addition, it makes an effort to make learning accessible to the wider community and makes the institution responsive to the society and promotes students mobility. Moreover, it deals with language policy of the institution and thus promotes and conducts activities concerning multilingualism. It also supports academically disadvantaged students.

The centre in the Cap Town University is responsible for providing services to the higher education staff and the adult education practitioners at large. To do this, it mainly uses courses and projects. The courses under offer are designed in a way that helps practitioners develop their reflection and innovation abilities by combining theory, practice and skills. For instance, the 2008 projects that this center carried out were the following (CTU).

Citation Awareness project was aimed at developing resources in connection with citation and helping the students community to develop good academic practices with regard to acknowledging sources. The second project in the list was Clinicians Educators Course. This was a project run in conjunction

with the Staff Development Unit of the Health Science Faculty. The program which provided opportunities to develop teaching skills was specifically geared towards clinical contexts for clinical educators. The third project was Collaborative Teaching Award. Here, the purpose was to promote and recognize collaborative approaches by awarding staff. Two or more instructors could collaborate in various forms such as team teaching, and curriculum development in group/ pair etc. The fourth project was aimed at heads of departments. Its aim was to develop department heads managerial and leadership capabilities. The fifth project which was in its infancy stage is chaired by the vice chancellor while the members are drawn from chair of departments. The sixth project which is relatively older is focused on training new academic staff in collaboration with the human resource department of the university. This program is mainly focused on providing resources and trainings to newly recruited academic staff. The seventh project was carried out in collaboration with the Centre for Open Learning and it was concerned with issues such as accreditation of short term courses and recognition of professional development courses. The eight projects dealt with quality development issues. Together with the department of institutional planning, it reviewed policies, monitored and evaluated curriculum, and programs. It also focused on training stakeholders who take part in internal review process. The ninth project was on service learning or accredited community based learning. This was a kind of learning and teaching approach where by students were engaged in community based services as part of their formal studies. This approach is the call of globalization which demands universities' teaching, learning and research to be responsive to the society. The tenth project was aimed at preparing senior graduate students as tutors for undergraduate courses. This program is believed to enhance the quality of the undergraduate learning and also to prepare a good pool of graduates who could be recruited as higher education academic staff.

To support the university's strategic initiatives, this centre also actively participates in some of the following activities.



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- development of curriculum;
  - outcome-based education;
  - development and assessment of students' generic competencies;
  - criterion-referenced assessment;
  - work integrated education;
  - promoting students' academic integrity ;and
  - Preparation for quality assurance exercise.

Added to the aforementioned responsibilities, the staff of the center shares their expertise, and experiences in the form of publications in journals and presentations in local and international conferences.

### **Staffing, Qualification and Responsibility**

To accomplish its mission and objectives, the centre in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University has organized its staff in to 5 responsibility service areas. There are 15 staff that make up the professional staff category. In this group there is a director, personal secretary to the director, an associate director, 2 senior educational officers, 6 educational officers, 1 evaluation officer teaching technologist, 1 senior project officer, and 1 project officer. The other is the administrative support group which consists of 2 executive officers and 1 assistant officer. The third group is technical support staff which comprises 1 technical officer, 1 technician and 6 technical assistants. Their general support staff is composed of 3 clerical officers, 1 technical assistant, 1 office assistant and 2 clerks. It also has 1 principal project fellow, 1 project fellow, 8 project associates and 1 part timer who is a senior project fellow. This centre has also representatives in the various departments of the university. The number of staff assigned in this centre reveals the value given to the role of professional development to accomplish the university's mission (HKPU)

The center in the Cape Town University has nine staff that have some form of training in the area of higher education and do conduct research in that area too. Some of their research interests include assessment, curriculum

study, evaluation research, higher education policy analyses, staff development, and adult learning in side and outside of the academy, gender, diversity and equity (CTU)

### **Support to Faculties/Departments**

Faculties, departments, and schools in both of the universities are serviced by their respective staff development centers when they implement and evaluate their university's strategy. Customized supports with regard to such initiatives are offered to them. Besides, the web sites of the centers which contain various helpful and relevant inputs in different areas can also assist to meet the different objectives individual instructors, faculties, departments, and the universities have. These centers also create opportunities like organizing mini workshops to disseminate good practices in teaching and learning.

### **Some Courses on Offer /Themes of Seminars, Workshops and Projects**

In developing instructors' teaching skills and knowledge, the centers provide short and long term programs and workshops. Participants include full time teachers who are new to teaching, research staff and students who have teaching as part of their duty, and part time teachers who are new to teaching.

Courses in offer include Introduction to University Teaching, the Teaching and Learning Process, Basic Teaching Techniques for Research Staff and Research Students, and Becoming a Skilful Teacher. The centers conduct workshop through out the academic year on various topics such as sharing experiences and ideas on what is actually done in the classes of the university. Assessment of students learning, promoting critical thinking, problem solving, reforming professional education for the knowledge society and technology in education are some examples of the thematic workshops the centers organize (CTU and HKPU)

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## **Community Development**

The centers also engage themselves with different relevant activities to impact their community development. They actively contribute towards the development of the profession of professional development. For instance, offering post graduate level programs to the community at a postgraduate certificate and diploma levels as well as masters' level in different professional development areas is a case in point. Conducting teaching in professional, vocational and higher education program is another example.

## **Organization**

The center in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University is accountable to the University's vice chancellor and works closely with departments and faculties. Similarly, the centre in the Cape Town University is one of the six centers that are accountable to the Higher Education and Development Center of the University which is led by a Dean. The other five centers that work closely with this center on issues related to higher education include Academic Program Development Unit (APDU), Career Development Program(CDP), Centre for Educational Technology(CET), Centre for Information Literacy(CIL), Centre for Open Learning(COL), and Multilingualism and Education Project(MEP) (CTU).

## **Lessons to be Drawn From the Experiences of Hong Kong Polytechnic and Cape Town Universities**

Having in mind the experiences of ADRC and NPRC, attempt is made to draw lessons from the experiences of Hong Kong Polytechnic and Cap Town Universities.

Focusing attention on developing the competence of academic staff is important but not sufficient. Every one should develop together. One lesson we can draw from the Hong Kong polytechnic University (HKPU) is offering professional development programs that help various groups of staff not necessarily limited to academic staff and also support the university's strategic planning.

ADRC or similar center in HE could play important roles if it participates in advising senior management team in policy formulation and dissemination. It can also contribute professionally if it participates in major teaching and learning university wide committees as the case is in HKPU. Unlike the plan of ADRC, HKPU is also actively supporting students learning. It does this in collaboration with departments and faculties. An extension of this for ADRC's or similar center's in HE consideration could be supporting disadvantaged students.

Observation informs us that the currently used teaching effectiveness assessment practice in Ethiopia higher education is questionable in many aspects. Students assess instructors but feedbacks to instructors are not usually given. If it is given, the feedback is unclear to provide indication of strengths and weaknesses. It is reported in terms of numbers like one has scored 3.5 out of 5 or the like which really means very little. Thus, as HKPU does, ADRC could promote systematic gathering of feedback from different sources and arrange opportunities to critically reflect on the collected data so that instructors can get valuable information and knowledge that help them develop as teachers. Again the practice of HKPU in organizing events that help different departments and institutions to share good practices is commendable. Unlike ADRC and NPRC which are run by one or two individuals, the five responsible units and the 15 staff of the Center of HKPU has show not only the big responsibility the center has but also the value the university has given to staff development programs.

In addition to face to face short term trainings, HKPU effectively exploits the internet for those staff who wants to develop themselves and get access to information on various teaching, learning and research topics. Unlike ADRC which only focuses on full time academic staff, HKPU also considers part timers and graduate students who have teaching or assistantship duties in its short term professional development programs. Another area of involvement of HKPU is offering advice to academics when they prepare instructional materials. As a community service, the center in HKPU works towards the development of professional development as a field and offers postgraduate programs in areas related to teaching and learning in HE.

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Professional development activities in Cap Town University (CTU) are organized under a Center for Higher Education and Development. This organization seems important to coherently implement HE initiatives centrally by delegating responsibilities to different units accountable to this center. This is an option Ethiopian HE may consider.

Unlike ADRC and NPRC which only use training as a model of professional development for academic staff, CTU uses projects as a principal model together with training. Their projects do not only involve teaching and research staff but also educational managers. An example of a project CTU uses is collaborative teaching award which promotes and recognizes collaborative approaches by awarding staff. Another is geared towards students. One of this kind is community based learning for students. The other is for graduate students who have tutoring responsibilities. It is observed that many of the Ethiopian HEIs are recruiting B.A/B.Sc graduates who have not taken pedagogy courses. In this context, ADRC could play a role by offering pedagogy courses to those B.A/B.Sc graduating students who have the capacity and willingness to teach in HE.

A closer look at the qualifications and experiences of the staff of both HKPU and CTU shows that all have some kind of formal trainings in issues related to HE and are actively publishing in the area. This is also a lesson to be adopted by staff of such a center in Ethiopian HE.

### **Some Standards to Assure the Quality of Teaching Enhancement Programs**

A closer look into the related literature shows that there is a paradigm shift in teaching and learning enhancement programs from one shot workshop and in-service training to life long professional learning. This shift, as it is true to other educational reforms, needs proper planning, implementation and evaluation. Identifying standards for such programs and using them to review and evaluate implementation against the set standards help to identify weaknesses and strengths of the teaching and learning enhancement programming which have implications to assuring quality.

Quality assurance standards might be developed based on the available best practices (Beall, 1999). These standards usually are result driven and they value the end product. This consideration is very vital in the context when accountability has become the slogan of the day locally, nationally and internationally.

For this paper, I would take only three key standards and try to conceptualize how quality of programs might be maintained by Instructors' Teaching Support Center in Ethiopian higher education.

It is assumed that effective teaching and learning enhancement program achieves its intended purpose or brings about its intended product when there is a relevant content, well thought process and conducive and appropriate organizational context (Duttweiler, 1989). Each of these three standards contains specific connected criteria that can serve as lenses to evaluate the quality of programs run by Instructors Teaching Support Center. Below is a description of the quality assurance standards.

**The Content of Professional Learning:** This standard addresses if the content selected is relevant and appropriate. Specifically, it helps to assure if the teaching and learning enhancement programs' contents have considered quality teaching, equity and stakeholders involvement.

*Quality Teaching:* This focuses if the programs foster instructors' mastery of the subject matter they teach and if it acquaints them with up to date development in their field. Degree earned some years ago should not be considered as a terminal certification to function in a higher education. Since knowledge and information emerge in every field continuously, instructors and professors need to have some formal ways to continuously up date themselves in their specialization. It also goes to considering if research based instructional and students' assessment are included.

*Equity:* Here, the degree to which professional development promotes the learning of all the students will be taken in to account. Thus, it assesses if the program improves instructors understanding and appreciation of all

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students and if it helps them create safety, orderly and supportive learning environment. It is research supported that teachers' knowledge of their students is very important to enhance the teaching and learning process. Instructors' teaching enhancement programs can play great role in helping teachers understand the cognitive, social and emotional characteristics of their students. This helps instructors to offer developmentally proper curriculum and instruction which are significantly crucial when teachers handle students from different background.

*Stakeholders Involvement:* Education can be seen as a partnership among different people and organizations that have a stake. Thus, it is proper to find ways that enhance the necessary skills and knowledge of teachers that help them involve the relevant stakeholders in to their teaching and learning practices.

**The Process of Professional Learning:** An evaluation of the process of teaching enhancement program informs if every thing needed in processing the content and evaluation of the program is in place so that the process leads to achieving the desired improvement in skills, knowledge and attitudes. Some of the elements that come under this standard are data driven, evaluation, research based decision, learning, and collaboration.

*Data Driven:* Data collected regarding students learning from various sources is a valuable informant when teaching enhancement goals are set for both instructors and leaders. Both of these parties need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to collect and analyze data. When instructors, institutional leaders and policy makers are able to exploit data in their design and evaluation of learning, it will be a possibility to have a data driven reform. It can also be used to evaluate the impact of the program on instructors' performance and students' learning. In short, we can assess if data driven decision making is made to plan the content and evaluate the impact of the professional development endeavor.

*Evaluation:* Does the teaching enhancement program makes a difference is an important question policy makers and educators need an answer for? The response provides guidance such as which aspects of the program content, and process should be maintained and removed. It also evaluates if the professional learning which is expected to bring about new skills and knowledge to the instructors lead to higher level of students learning. In sum, it is vital that evaluation is an integral part of program design so that instructors clearly know the impact of the professional learning they undertake and know how to evaluate it.

*Research Based Decision:* Instructors need to be effective consumers of educational research and they should use results for various academic purposes. To this end, it should be evaluated if instructors' teaching programs prepared them to apply research to decision making.

*Design:* Part of the success of professional learning is determined by what planners selected the learning strategies. These strategies and other situational factors should contribute to bring about the desired outcome. This demands the planners to be aware of and skilful to employ appropriate adult learning strategies.

*Learning:* Does the teaching enhancement program provide what methods instructors should use with their students? An assessment can be carried out if the program helps instructors procure deeper and complete understanding as opposed to surface level understanding of new ideas and innovation. It could also be done the same if the program helps them to understand the purpose, be critical and make connections with other learning's and approaches. To make an increased achievement on students, professional learning of instructors must provide opportunity to teachers and administrators until the new innovation, skill or knowledge became automatic and habitual.

*Collaboration:* One important aspect of professional learning is collaboration which is a vital way to solve common problems, enhance social interactions that deepen understanding, shoulder and discharge collective responsibility



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and result synergy that handles complex issues in teaching and learning. Thus, assessing whether or not professional learning provided instructors with skills and knowledge regarding what collaboration takes into is very important.

**The Context of Professional Learning:** Under this standard, the emphasis is placed on contextual issues like to what degree the organizational support and structure contribute to successful 'operationalization' of professional learning. For teaching enhancement programs to be effective and efficient, the over all structure and context should have positive and desirable change seeking learning community, skilled leadership and supportive and appropriate resources. This standard has other sub-standards such as learning community, leadership, and resources (*ibid*).

*Learning Community:* The core question, here, is does the teaching enhancement program organize adult learning community whose goals are aligned with those of the institution? This is helpful for active, collegial and inquiry based learning. Learning communities are groups organized at a course, department, faculty, and institution levels that come together to improve their learning and teaching and to learn from one another.

*Leadership:* Institutional leaders who participate in crafting continuous professional learning policies and structures play a significant role in professional learning. Like instructors, institutional leaders need to be armed with appropriate and new skills and knowledge continuously.

*Resources:* Traditionally, in times of financial constraints one of the first area from which budget is cut is professional development. For instance, Academic Development and Resource Center has been established in relatively older Ethiopian higher education institutions by financial and technical support obtained from the Netherlands government. Even though the service of this center is very much important to enhance the teaching and learning skills and knowledge of the higher education staff ,most universities have not allocated budget and given due attention to the center. To this end, most of them do not seem to function after the Netherlands

project ceased. However, the universities should be decried for giving no or little attention for such programs. For instance, the National Staff Development Council suggests 10% of the total over all budget of an institution to be allocated on staff development while 25% of the teachers time for the said purpose. It asserts that time and money as well as out side resources like consultants, instructors' coaches and conferences are important elements of professional learning.

### **Some Factors Affecting Instructors' Teaching Enhancement Programs**

There are different factors that affect the planning, implementation, and the assessment of professional development programs. Some of these factors include culture of support, understanding context, time, and financial resources (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

**A culture of support** is a very important factor that determines the success of teachers teaching enhancement programs. To achieve this, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and leaders must work together to create conducive environment for the success of professional development programs. It is also valuable to include other stakeholders like local and international associations, and professionals and experts in the field of education (Burget, 2000). Lieberman (1994)) listed five factors that are necessary to build such a culture for the purpose under focus.

These are:

- developing norms of collegiality, openness and trust;
- creating opportunities and time for disciplined inquiry;
- providing opportunities for teachers' learning content in context;
- rethinking the functions of leadership and re defining leadership to include teachers;
- creating and supporting network, collaborations and coalitions; and
- preparing teachers to become leaders of their own professional development. (Bush, 1999)

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Clement and Vandenberghe (2001) reported that, among others, the most important areas in which leaders' involvement produced effective result is their cooperation to arrange good working conditions and provision of space to enable teachers learn. It was further commented that if such conditions exist teachers are able to take care of their own professional development by designing, organizing and implementing different kinds of activities.

Moore (2000) in Villegas-Reimers (2003, p.117) advised institutional leaders to consider "planning ahead, starting early, establishing a routine, tapping internal resources, establishing a mentoring program, holding staff meetings for staff development, and observing and guiding change" while they are supporting staff development activities.

**Context** is another factor that plays a considerable role in influencing the effectiveness of teaching development activity. Both teaching and professional development occur in multiple settings and contexts. To this end, it is hard to assume that a given model of teachers teaching enhancement can be adopted in every context and brings about successful results everywhere. For instance, historical, social, cultural and economical contexts influence the effectiveness of transferring teachers teaching enhancement models designed in one country to another country. In connection to this, Monk and Hodges (2000, p. 179) said, "Northern/western ideas about teachers change and development are poorly suited to modeling practices and challenges for that were historically disadvantaged". They have also gone to point out that there are some African countries, which showed successful results in using teachers teaching enhancement models that consider contextual factors. Similarly, Villegas-Reimers (2003) discussed the effect of context, he exemplified that Egyptian teachers who received professional development trainings in London have been unable to implement the new teaching strategies unlike their intentions to do so. This is mainly due to the fact that the "system, [the institution], the curriculum, the expectations of colleagues, administrators could not accommodate the new teachings" (*Ibid*). What is more, a certain model could be preferred over the other just because it is compatible with the culture and society where the staff teaching enhancement activities are taking place. Another contextual

factor is the socio economic status of the institution. This influences both the planning and implementation of teachers teaching enhancement activities. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge contextual differences by using appropriately tailored models. Johnson et al (2000) and Johnson et al (2000) contend that the developmental stage of the system of an institution and even the education system of the country should be considered when programs on teaching and learning for higher education faculty are designed.

The third factor is **time**. Teachers' learning needs time. The depth and amount of learning required increase as time goes. Time is a crucial factor to engage teachers in teaching and learning activities continuously and to achieve fruitful results. All of such undertakings like trainings, observation, involvement in improvement /development processes, action research and also other related activities require time. Many researchers, policy makers, and also teachers have pointed out that lack of time is the biggest problem that affects the implementation of teachers teaching enhancement programs (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

The other key factor is **financial resource**. Quality implementation of teaching enhancement activities requires adequate funding. Sources could be both internal and external to the institution. Government, internal income of institutions, donor agencies, private organizations, NGOs and governmental organizations that have stake with higher education might be used to obtain funding to implement different staff development activities. Now a days, local, national, and international organizations offer funding to different professional development activities (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). On the other hand, the same author reports that the time taken to obtain funding for professional development in USA is long because the budget requested for that purpose is the first one to be cut when resources are limited. It should be noted that it is very much arguable to justify that allocating budget to professional development attracts less attention than other areas if quality of education is a concern. To keep the cost of professional development down, Geiger (1996:127) suggests some strategies such as "developing research teams or study groups; assigning teachers as coaches; having

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teachers [train] other teachers in particular aspect of teaching; looking for competitive contracts from consultants when needed.”

### **Final Remark**

Higher education is undertaking changes in various areas world wide. One of the major changes is directed towards the ways teaching and research are carried out and conceptualized in a higher education. This calls for a change of attitude, practice, and a change in curriculum innovation, modes of delivery and assessment methods, among others. Unless these change ambitions are accompanied by changes in people, the success of the institutional change would be questionable.

Establishing professional development center, for instance, like Instructors' Teaching Support Center may play an important role by planning, designing and implementing different programs that enhance the capacities of both junior and senior staff who contribute their share towards achieving excellence in teaching, learning and research in higher education. Thus, such establishment is a commendable measure. Identifying mission of the center which is consistent with the university mission, and identifying strategies and core activities to address its mission and objectives, defining standards to assure the quality of the programs and understanding the major factors that affect the quality of the programs of the center are part of the preliminary tasks the founding members of this center should embark on.

When such a center is established, it is also very crucial to explore the experiences and practices of other similar centers. This will help to understand and predict possible challenges that should be addressed as well as opportunities that would be used to offer quality professional development programs.

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