

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN UGANDAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A CASE OF MAKERERE AND KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITIES.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Organisational commitment of university academic staff has and is still a challenge of public universities in Uganda. This study attributes organisational commitment to low professional development practices of university academic staff at Makerere and Kyambogo universities. The study utilised a cross-sectional survey design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and selected a study sample of 320 Academic staffs from both Makerere and Kyambogo universities using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The study data was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis, while qualitative data was thematically analysed. The study discovered that organisational commitment of staffs at both Makerere and Kyambogo universities significantly correlates with professional development practices of academic staffs. The study concluded that, the two practices – informal learning opportunities and formal training opportunities predict the level of organizational commitment of academic staff at Makerere and Kyambogo universities. The study recommended that, university Councils in conjunction with management in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities should create policies that ensure that all academic staffs are involved in informal learning activities and support accorded to formal training

**Introduction**

Professional development of university staff has been viewed as a continuous concern by several stakeholders, (Richards and Farrell, 2005). Scholars have contended that professional development is the engine that keeps universities true to their mandate as centers of ideas and innovation, (UNESCO, 1998; Plater, 1995). On the same wavelength universities as centers of ideas have acted as a ground for organizational commitment. It follows that high organizational commitment of academic staff, as the backbone of universities is critical for the survival of these institutions (Fako, *et al...*, 2018). The nature of staffs' commitment has an influence on organizational effectiveness and behavior of employees. However, studies point to low organizational commitment of academic staff in Ugandan universities (Mugizi *et al...*, 2015). This state of affairs would slow down progress and effectiveness in these universities; yet, The Public Service Standing Orders (2010) stipulate that

the aim of staff training and development is to make the public service an effective and efficient Government organ that is capable of initiating and executing appropriate public policies for rapid, balanced and sustainable economic and social development. It was in this vein that the study set out to examine the influence of professional development practices on organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo universities.

## **Background**

Makerere and Kyambogo Universities are the leading public universities in Uganda formed in 1922 and 1928 respectively as technical schools until they were elevated to full university status in 1970 for Makerere University, and 2001 for Kyambogo University. Professional development has been conceptualised differently by different scholars. For example, Rafael, (2013) defined professional development as the process whereby an individual acquires or enhances the skills, knowledge and/or attitudes for improved practice. Jacobs and Washington, (2003) referred to employee professional development as an integrated set of planned programs, provided over a period of time, to help assure that all individuals have the competence necessary to perform to their fullest potential in support of organizations goals. Professional development practices include, formal training opportunities involving the available opportunities such as - study leaves, in-service training, conferences, seminars and workshops. In this study, formal training opportunities were taken to mean off-the-job training opportunities available to the academic staff of Makerere and Kyambogo universities. On the other hand, organizational commitment was conceptualised as a sense of loyalty of employees to organizations, Silva, (2016). It is also a dynamic action posture where employees seek in an active way to contribute to the common good of the organization. Abouraiia and Othman (2017) viewed organizational commitment to be comprised of three systems, namely; compliance in regard to rewards, identification in reference to appreciating and respecting milestones reached, while internalisation connotes indebtedness to the organization. Using similar arguments, Spanuth and Wald (2017) described the three components of Organisational Commitment as; affective commitment – reflecting the emotional linkage between the individual employees and the organization, continuance commitment which informs about an employee's organizational involvement considering what is at stake and normative commitment which connotes one's perceived feeling of obligation towards the organization. However, for this study, organizational commitment was viewed as the degree to which academic staffs at both Makerere and Kyambogo Universities are related to normative, continuance and affective commitment.

Professional development has been a fundamental force in attaining organizational commitment. Therefore, policy makers, administrators, managers, students, academicians and all stakeholders in university education, should make use of the professional competencies to enhance organizational commitment of the academic staff for better service delivery. Consequently, universities with committed academic staff would easily achieve their vision, mission, goals and objectives. In fact, Olurotimi *et al.*, (2015) asserted that the overall success of an educational institution depends on teachers' commitment. In the process, different scholars have investigated what might influence employee organizational commitment; however, Professional Development Practices used in regard to academic staff have not been given the due in-depth scrutiny.

Professional Development Practices have been viewed in different perspectives, Mizell, (2010) for example considered professional development practices as 'many types of educational experiences related to individual's work'. In addition, Postholm, (2012) argued that both individual and organizational factors impact teachers' learning. Indeed, organizational commitment is one of these factors since it has a bearing on the individual's attitude to participate in professional development activities. Accordingly, this study hypothesized that professional development practices are to help participating employees to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that would enhance their

performance on the job, which in turn has a bearing on their organizational commitment. In this perspective, teacher education has been the fastest expanding sector of the Chinese higher education system. For instance, in 1977, there were only 59 tertiary teacher education institutions, with a total enrollment of 165,105 students (Liu, 1993). However, by 1988, the number of tertiary teacher education institutions rose to a record 262, and the total enrolment tripled that of 1977 (Hu, G., 2005). The level of enrollment in the institutions has a resultant effect on the rate of professional development growth and varies in different parts of the world.

In the Middle East, Hişmanoglu *et al.* (2010) explored effective professional development strategies in Cyprus and findings showed that only 30% of the participants gave importance to their on-going professional development practices by using mainly such strategies as participatory practitioners' research, professional development portfolios and study groups. This low percentage of interested participants in professional development affects organizational commitment across different countries on the globe. In the United States of America (US) and Japan, Astakhova (2016), investigated how organizational commitment was influenced by person – supervisor fit and person – organizational fit. Astakhova found that perceived person – supervisor fit had an effect on organizational commitment in the US and Japan, while person – organizational fit had a positive relationship in both countries. Kim *et al.* (2018) concluded that employee voice had a greater effect on organizational commitment in China than in the US, while high-quality team member exchange elicited greater organizational commitment in the US than in China. Liggins, *et al.* (2019) studied a number of predictors of organizational commitment among veterans and non-veterans in federal agencies in the US, revealing that organizational inclusion and human resource practices impacted positively on organizational commitment. Still in the US, Buttner and Low (2017) found out that perceived pay equity had a direct influence on organizational commitment. This report meant that organizational commitment is affected by practices that the organization adopts.

Ingersoll (1999) reported that in United States teaching has a higher turnover rate than comparable professionals and as consequence one-third of the teaching force was in some sort of transition. While Bowen and Schuster (1986) argued that “the excellence of higher education is a function of the people it is able to enlist and retain on its faculties.” Hence going by Ingersoll and Bowen *et al.*, the present study considered turnover rates to translate into low continuance commitment and a hindrance to the effective operations of the university.

Recent perspectives on PDPs and organizational commitment revealed that in Saudi Arabia, Al Doghan, (2019) who studied antecedents of employee engagement with particular attention to training and development found that informal learning is an important predictor of how people feel about their jobs and subsequently their commitment to the organization. He argued that when organizations provide informal learning opportunities to the employees so as to be effective on their jobs, employees feel that their organizations care for them which contributes to their normative organizational commitment.

Globally, Bashir and Long, (2015) argued that among academicians in Malaysia there was a significant and positive relationship between training related variables (availability of training, motivation to learn, co-worker support for training, benefits of training) with affective and normative components of organizational commitment while there was a non-significant relationship with continuance commitment. In India, Absar and Swain (2010) reported that organizational commitment of university teachers across three disciplines; social science, basic science and professional science do not differ significantly across disciplines. Similarly, in Turkey, Saygan (2011) argued that employees with high level of organizational commitment were likely to be highly attached to their job. While, Omar *et al.* (2012) reported that among nurses, organizational commitment was a key determinant to their intention to leave. However, Sangperm (2017) averred that in Thailand the degree of organizational commitment of employees in an autonomous

university was high. The present study however, considered the historical perspectives just discussed, presenting scenarios in developed countries, hence the need to investigate the Professional Development Practices and organizational commitment of academics in the African context.

Retaining valuable and skilled employees is a major challenge faced by South African Universities, and they are particularly vulnerable to losing their highly qualified staff to lucrative offers from private sector and 'poaching' from other universities (Ngobeni and Bezuidenhout, 2011). This challenge of staff retention which manifests as low continuance commitment in the present study impedes university effectiveness. Some of the scholars who have emphasized the importance of professional development in the African context include, Pieters and Kapenda (2017) who argued that in Namibia training programs irrespective of their scope and time frames, aim to enrich skills, knowledge level and attitude of participants so that they eventually enhance their organizational performance and organizational commitment.

Mushemeza (2016) while discussing opportunities and challenges of academic staff in higher education in Africa- posted that promotion in African universities is delayed as a consequence of long procedures and high demands on productivity of the individual academic staff. He further argued that though there are reported cases of lack of transparency in some universities, it is also true that some academic staff would like to be promoted on the basis of teaching and assessing students only; yet the academic staff are required also to do research, supervise students' research and be consulted by students as well. Mushemeza's arguments stress the need of offering informal learning and formal training as preparation for promotion subsequently raising their organizational commitment.

In Ugandan public universities, academic staffs rarely participate in professional development activities. Thus, there is a need to make participation in formal and informal professional development activities mandatory for university teachers, (Kasule *et al.*..., 2016). Therefore, the present study focused on investigating the influence professional development practices have on organizational commitment of academic staffs in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. However, Mugizi *et al.*..., (2015) indicated that organizational commitment of academic staff in universities in Uganda is not yet to the desired level. Olum, (2004) traced the foundation of Makerere University from 1922 when it was established as a technical college. While Rwendeire (2017) reported that Makerere University began as a humble institute in 1922 in temporary buildings with 14 boy students who were day scholars and four instructors. In 1937, it evolved into an institution offering post school certificate courses (Olum 2004). In 1949, it became a University College having special relationship with the College of London, soon it became a college for the whole of Eastern Africa. In 1963, it transformed into the University of East Africa gaining independence from the University of London. On July 1, 1970, Makerere University became an independent national university of the Republic of Uganda. Currently, Makerere University is the leading higher education institution of learning in Uganda running by the college system.

On the other hand, Kasozi, (2009) reported that Kyambogo University is a public university that was established in 2001 under the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001. And Nkonge, (2012) observed that Kyambogo University was a merger of the Uganda Polytechnic Kyambogo (UPK), Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo (ITEK) and Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE). UPK developed as a small technical school in 1928. Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo started as a government teacher training college in 1948 at Nyakasura in Kabarole District and in 1954 it was transferred to Kyambogo Hill. It became the National Teachers' College, Kyambogo, UNISE was affiliated to the Department of Special Education at the Faculty of Education in Makerere, (Nkonge, 2012). However, it became

autonomous under the Act of Parliament in 1998. While, Mayega (2015) reported that academic staffs are disgruntled in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities and not committed as available statistics suggest.

The Ministerial Policy Statement to parliament for 2014/2015 indicated that, of the 1,073 established positions for academic staff in Kyambogo University, only 391, (36%) were filled. The rest of the 64 percent was covered by 700 part time lecturers who were not committed to achieving organizational goals set by the university, (The Inspectorate of Government, 2015). Going by this percentage, the overall commitment of the academic staff would be affected. The same report indicated that academic staffs were not involved in serious research projects which are one of the core activities of the university. This meant that the academic staffs for some reason were not committed to executing key responsibilities. This challenge goes beyond understaffing and extends to staff retention, or continuance commitment. For instance, Oyat and Aleni (2015), identified that between 2010 and 2012, Kyambogo University lost over 25 top academic staff. According to the Inspectorate of Government report 2015, from June 2014 to May 2015, the university had lost 43 faculty members. Four years down the road, the trend has not changed, as indicated in Table 1, which indicates the numbers of academic staff at the given ranks in the respective years.

**Table 1: Teaching staff employed at given ranks in Kyambogo University.**

	Professor/ Associate Prof.	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	Total	Percentage drop
2015	15	37	203	255	
2019	17	56	167	240	6.3

Source: Directorate of Human Resources Kyambogo University – October 2019

Table 1, shows that from the rank of lecturer to professor/ associate professor, the overall drop in the numbers was 15 and yet one would have expected an increase to match the rising student numbers. These statistics are supported by recent studies which all question the continuance commitment of the academic staff. Onen (2017), reported that Makerere and Kyambogo Universities were losing high caliber staff at a worrying rate. Similarly, Ssali, Onen and Musoke (2019), asserted that Makerere University is losing senior academic staff at rates that raise concern, adding that Kyambogo University has not been spared as well. These reported high attrition rates have a bearing on OC especially continuance commitment and affective commitment.

Tracing organizational commitment in Makerere University over the same period indicates similar trends as exhibited in Table 2, showing reasons of exit from the university.

**Table 2: Reasons for exit of academic staff from Makerere University**

Year	Natural reasons for exit				Organizational commitment reasons				Grand Total
	Retired	Contract expired	Death	Sub total	Affective/ Continuance	Normative commitment	Dismissed	abscondment	
2014	15	45	06	66	22	03	03	28	94

2015	16	16	14	46	14	02	00	16	62
2016	19	49	04	72	13	00	00	13	85
2017	20	27	02	49	11	03	02	16	65
2018	18	18	01	37	12	10	00	22	59
2019	24	13	00	37	07	00	00	7	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>409</b>
	<b>(36.5%)</b>	<b>(54.7%)</b>	<b>(8.8%)</b>	<b>(75%)</b>	<b>(77.5%)</b>	<b>(22.5%)</b>		<b>(25%)</b>	

Source: Directorate of Human Resources – Makerere University August 2019

Table 2 indicates that the total number of staff leaving the university per year is fluctuating. However, academic staff who left the university because of organizational commitment reasons, including; resignation, dismissal and abscondment were 102 representing 25 percent of the total number that exited. These causes indicate low Organisational Commitment since for one to resign, either; someone is going for greener pastures (affective commitment), forced resignation (normative commitment) or career adventure (Continuance commitment). Similarly, abscondment and absenteeism also connote low normative commitment. These statistics are corroborated by recent studies which support the arguments. For example, Rwendeire, (2017) and Ddungu (2014), reported low organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere University. The present study therefore was carried out to investigate how informal learning opportunities, formal training opportunities and promotion relate with organizational commitment in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

This section reviewed literature based on informal learning opportunities and formal training opportunities. Informal learning or on-the-job training is an important component of continuous professional development. Hence there is a growing body of literature that recognizes contributions of informal learning elements on continuous professional development. Under this section review of the relationship between informal learning opportunities and Organizational Commitment was based on the general aspects of informal learning, the availability and influence of forms of informal learning like - coaching, mentoring, on-line learning, induction and action research.

Among the scholars that have had interest in informal learning, Rawashdeh and Tamimi, (2019) who studied the impact of employee perception of training on organizational commitment using a quantitative research design revealed that there exists a strong relationship between perceived availability of training and perceived supervisor support and organizational commitment. They further reported that perceived benefits of training are negatively related to organizational commitment. They also revealed that there is no association between organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Rawashdeh and Tamimi focused their study on perception of employees about training. However, the present study recognized that besides perceptions, other facets of training like availability and types of training also need investigation as these may also have an

influence on organization commitment. The present study also considered that the hospital context which Rawashdeh and Tamimi probed, presented different scenarios of employee commitment from that of the academic staffs in a university as the learning, training and promotions for both contexts have different demands and expectations.

On the other hand, Mansour and Naji (2017) studied the relationship between training satisfaction and readiness to transfer learning following the mediating role of normative commitment and the findings first revealed a positive significant relationship between, training satisfaction and normative commitment. Mansoor *et al...*, (2017) also reported that through training forms of coaching, mentoring and monitoring – there was a high possibility to have normative commitment improving among employees. Although Mansoor *et al...* investigated certain components of informal learning predictors of normative commitment, the present study considered to include other components of informal learning, like online learning and action research. These two components were added as predictors of organizational commitment in agreement with Hathorn and Dillon (2018), who underscored the components' role in education reform, but also with the present research keeping in mind that Makerere and Kyambogo Universities are academic institutions where research is a core activity.

Khandaker and Pangil (2017), in an empirical study on assessing the relationship between affective commitment and informal work place learning with help of descriptive and partial least structural equation modeling (PLS- SEM), revealed that affective commitment has significant and positive relationship with informal workplace learning. Although they endeavored to establish the relationship between affective commitment and training, however, the present research finds a gap created in their content scope which leaves out normative and continuance commitment and yet they are also critical in a university setting. For instance, low continuance commitment was reported in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities as Ssali, *et al...*, (2019) reported issues of retention of key academic staff.

Similarly, Timsal, Awais and Shoaib (2016), investigated factors associated with on-the- job training and its effectiveness, using qualitative approach with semi structured questionnaires, and results indicated that when employees have job satisfaction as a consequence of on-the-job training they are more committed to their jobs. These scholars used a qualitative approach to carry out their study, though this approach may be vulnerable to subjectivity from both the researcher and the participants. Accordingly, this research was anchored by a post – positivism research paradigm as supported by Sarantakos (1998), hence a quantitative method supplemented by qualitative method to a small extent for deeper insights about the study variables.

In yet another empirical study, using a research design different from Timsal, *et al...*, (2016), Selemogwe, *et al...*, (2013) considered the role of mentoring, individual innovativeness and perceived organizational policies as predictors of organizational commitment among non- academic staff of Ibadan University with cross- sectional survey design, revealed that mentoring significantly influenced organizational commitment. Selemogwe *et al...*, found that gender had no influence on organizational commitment, but educational qualifications never, jointly or independently significantly influenced organizational qualification. However, the present study argued that Selemogwe *et al.* left out the academic staff from their study, yet they are a core segment in any university population without which the university would not be. Hence this study's main participants were the academic staff from Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

### **Induction**

Bjorck, (2011), Byrne (2010) and Krasnoff (2014) studied induction in relation to employee commitment, however their studies left gaps that called for present study. For instance, Bjorck, Dermot (2011) studied induction programs of Nynas' Corporate Group Induction and its influence

on commitment of employees, using a pedagogical perspective focusing on impact processes, findings revealed that induction had a strengthening effect on employees' commitment. Along the same lines, Byrne (2010) investigated the relationship between induction and employee commitment using a positivism approach to research and findings revealed that there was a positive correlation between induction and employee commitment. Meanwhile Krasnoff, (2014) extensively reviewed recent literature on class size professional development and recruitment, induction and retention of highly qualified teachers showing that investing in induction programs provides a pipeline of effective and satisfied teachers who are prepared to stay in high need schools. In the present study context readiness to stay is indicative of continuance organizational commitment. Hence from Krasnoff's findings, investment in induction programs can as well positively influence continuance organizational commitment. Nevertheless, the present study recognized that the content scope for Bjorck, (2011), Byrne (2010) and Krasnoff (2014) was narrow as far as professional development is concerned hence the inclusion of mentoring, coaching, action research and online learning in order to explore better organizational commitment in an academic context.

Similarly, Salau, Falola and Akinbode (2014) studied induction and staff attitude towards retention and organizational effectiveness with the use of simple linear regression analysis revealed that induction as a form of informal learning significantly influences staff attitude towards retention. Since retention imbeds continuance commitment and affective commitment it implied that induction impacts organizational commitment. However, induction is only a single aspect of informal learning leaving a gap to ascertain how the other forms of informal learning influence organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. But, Usha and Pious (2017) investigated induction as a tool to gain employee commitment with special reference to IT industry and with the use of multiple linear regression analysis revealed that induction program was positively correlated with all types of employee commitment. Though, affective commitment posted the highest positive correlation amongst the three constructs of organizational commitment. However, Usha and Pious acknowledged a limitation that their study was only focused on the IT industry hence creating a gap which this study purposed to close by instead targeting a population of academic staff in two public universities of Makerere and Kyambogo. The choice of the academic staff was based on Fako *et al...* (2018)'s reporting that organizational commitment of academic staff is a prerequisite for any university's effectiveness.

In the meantime, Thao Le Phuong (2015) when investigating induction programs and associated difficulties, impacts and solutions using qualitative methods, asserted that induction significantly influences retention of employees. Though, the present study recognized a gap that required closing in Thao's study in that the nature of the population – a large scale customer-service based company and the qualitative approach used, warranted another study with an entity with a differing organizational mission. For example, the mission of Makerere University is to provide innovative teaching, learning, research and services responsive to national and global needs (Makerere University Annual report, 2017). This study was certain that an organization with such a mission deserved investigation to ascertain what predicts organizational commitment of its employees in contrast to a customer - service focused company. Moreover, the quantitative method used in the present study minimized subjectivity from participants.

### **Mentoring**

Available literature has identified mentoring as one of the informal learning methods used in continuous professional development of employees. For example, Greeley, (2018) probed how mentoring relationships relate to organizational levels of affective commitment and project success in an expatriate population, using quantitative methods findings showed that there was no positive association between mentor relationships and affective commitment. However, Greeley could not



generalize these results because only 23 respondents – 33.5 percent of the participants – reported having mentors. Hence the 23 respondents could not give statistically significant results using regression. This gap was overcome by the present study by use of a large sample and with 85 percent response rate findings were generalizable. This study further noted that the target population of expatriates which Greeley used had different characteristics from those of the academics in public universities, hence the need to investigate and test whether the relationship Greeley established also applied to the academics. Nevertheless, findings for Stallworth (2004) were not in agreement with Greeley.

Stallworth (2004) studied the influence of multidimensional understanding of organizational commitment in public accounting environment and investigated the influence of mentoring on each of the three dimensions of organizational commitment using descriptive methods and regression analysis; results revealed that of all dimensions of organizational commitment mentoring most significantly influenced affective commitment. Though, the response rate for this study was only 11 percent smaller than the 31.5 percent of Greeley. Moreover, the present study found the content scope of Stallworth and Greeley rather not sufficient to explore the relationship between informal learning and organizational commitment. Meanwhile Mercurio, (2015) contended that mentoring is an essential variable in creating conditions necessary to support the affective commitment of employees in organizations. Further reporting that, mentees who had mentors in supervisory capacity reported higher levels of affective commitment to the organizations. Nonetheless, Mercurio's study was based on literature review findings while the current study was empirical with field study findings considering that the target population was readily accessible. Thus methodological choices were different as the current study tested hypotheses basing on field results. Similarly, Aremu & Adeyoju (2003) and Quagraine *et al.* (2019) studied mentoring in relation to commitment in the police force reporting similar results. Aremu & Adeyoju (2003) explored the effect of mentoring on commitment to job in Nigerian police using cluster random sampling method and analysis of variance technique statistics, and findings indicated that mentored male police are more committed to their job and mentoring was found to significantly influence the commitment of police officers and men to their job. Though, the study contexts pose a study gap. Quagraine *et al.* (2019) posted from their study of the police force in Ghana, that organizational learning such as mentoring influences organizational commitment. However, the present study noted that the nature and demands of police officers whom Aremu & Adeyoju (2003) and Quagraine, *et al.* (2019) investigated were different from work demands of academic public universities like Makerere and Kyambogo Universities in Uganda, hence the purpose of this study.

On the other hand, Hong and Matsko, (2019) assessed the effects of teacher mentoring on interaction between formal mentors and novice teachers using a multilevel propensity score weighting approach. Hong and Matsko's results indicated that the combination of stronger leadership and high-quality biweekly mentor- mentee interaction, comprehensive content and opportunities to engage with teaching practice, as the most effective in building teacher organizational commitment. However, Hong and Matsko reported limitations of survey data, as they never had sufficient information on the survey process and did not consider the other aspects of organizational commitment which the present study investigated. Accordingly the present study collected qualitative to capture vital information which may have been left out by quantitative data.

Like Hong and Matsko (2019), and Tansel Cetin *et al.* (2013) also studied mentoring effects but in a different context. Tansel Cetin *et al.* were interested in the impact of mentoring on organizational commitment of Accounting – Finance academicians employed in Turkey using survey method, regressions run indicated that mentoring had positive significant effect on continuance commitment. They also reported that gender and age had a significant effect on continuance commitment, while mentoring was significantly affecting normative commitment, age

and gender. They further that, mentoring did not have a significant effect on affective commitment. Meanwhile, Tansel Cetin *et al* did not considered other components of informal learning like coaching, which the present study considered to, be supplementary to mentoring hence the need to probe them together.

Unlike Tansel Cetin *et al* who studied all the three components of organizational commitment, Reid, *et al...* (2008) only considered the affective component. Reid *et al...* assessed effects of psycho – social and career mentoring, and gender on affective organizational commitment of information technology employees working in one state government using hierarchical regression analysis, findings indicated that psycho- social mentoring significantly predicts affective organizational commitment of the employees. While, Reid *et al...* further report that, career mentoring had no significant effects on affective organizational commitment. But gender did not have any difference on affective organization commitment. Though Reid *et al.* ignored continuance and normative organization commitment which the present study considered necessary for probing as well for a fuller understanding of academic staff organizational commitment.

In another related exploration, Craig, *et al...*, (2013) were interested in the impact of career mentoring and psycho- social mentoring on affective organizational commitment, job involvement and turnover intentions using linear regression, findings indicated a significant relationship between psychosocial mentoring and affective organizational commitment and turnover intentions. The turnover intentions by Creig *et al...*, were conceptualized as continuance commitment in the present study. They further reported that affective organizational commitment was found to mediate the relationship between psychosocial mentoring and turn over intentions. In contrast to the affective events theory that guided their study, the current study used equity theory and human capital theory as these better explained the linkages and interaction between the variables of study, isolating promotions as the moderating variable.

Meanwhile Gettings and Wilson (2014), probed mentors' reported commitment and relational maintenance in formal youth mentoring relationships using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, findings showed that commitment predicated stay or leave behaviors of the mentors. Gettings and Wilson were guided by The Investment Model to relate mentoring to organizational commitment, while the current study, based on the input /output ratio considerations of employees - as argued by the equity theory and human capital theory, to establish the interactions in the variables of study. But, Baxter (2015) deviated from Gettings and Wilson's approach to mentoring by emphasizing the level of mentoring. Baxter studied the levels of mentoring received and employee commitment within the inside sales function of a technology organization by use of an exploratory approach and a quantitative design. Baxter found positive significant but weak correlation between mentoring employee commitment factors. His findings also revealed that career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring had a very strong and positive relationship between them. Nevertheless, this study recognized that Baxter and Gettings & Wilson did not probe academic environments and yet Hanaysha, (2016) asserted that a review of literature indicates that there is limited data on organizational commitment in the education sector.

Further investigation on mentoring was done by Sebastian and Zacharias (2016) who considered the effect of mentoring on affective commitment of employees towards the organization in new generation sector banks in Kerala and with by use of pretested questionnaires and Correlational analysis, results showed that there is neither correlation between psychosocial mentoring and affective organizational commitment, nor career mentoring and affective organizational commitment. Though Sebastian and Zacharius, did not establish the magnitude of magnitude of the variation contributed, thus this study used multiple regression analysis to mitigate this gap. In the same way, Fountain (2018) investigated mentoring elements that influence employee engagement,

using surveys and questionnaires, Pearson's correlation, linear and stepwise regression analysis, findings indicated that each element of mentoring had an independent impact on work engagement. In the present study context, the employee engagement connotes the degree to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to their organization and put their discretionary efforts in to their work, hence can represent organizational commitment. However, whereas Fountain, used Blau's 1964 Social Exchange Theory, the current study was inclined to apply the human capital theory in order to study the relationship between mentoring and commitment.

In the meantime, Woo (2017) opted to explore mentoring using a differing theory from Fountain (2018). Woo probed the joint impact of mentoring and managerial coaching on organizational commitment using survey method and findings indicated that mentoring moderated the positive relationship between managerial coaching and organizational commitment. Woo added that, the moderating effect depended on the homogeneity of the coach and mentor. Meanwhile, Woo's study created a gap in that it was guided by the social support resource theory in contrast to the human capital theory that anchored the present study, instead focusing on the indebtedness the beneficially of mentoring and coaching feels to the organization.

But, Hartmann, *et al.*, (2012) probed the effects of mentoring on sales person's affective, normative and continuance commitment using one-way ANOVA tests, seven-point Likert type scale and confirmatory factor analysis, findings revealed that having a mentor is positively and significantly related with affective and normative organizational commitment of the mentoree. Hartman *et al.* also established that organizational mentors as opposed to external mentors are more strongly significantly associated affective and normative organizational commitment. These findings were critical though the content scope of Hartman *et al.* left out the other aspects of professional development which this study added for an in-depth understanding of organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

On their part, Weng, *et al.*, (2010) considered the impact of mentoring functions on organizational commitment of new staff nurses and results showed that career development and role modeling functions of mentoring have positive effects on organizational commitment of new nurses. Meanwhile the current study recognized a contextual gap in that the nurses and the work dynamics which Weng *et al.*, studied present differently for academics hence the need for this study to contrast the two scenarios.

### **On-line learning**

On-line learning also plays a pivotal role in addressing the issue of continuous professional development. Accordingly, recent investigators have examined the effect of on-line learning on organizational commitment in several contexts. For instance, Larkin, Brantly – Dias and Lokey – Vega (2016), studied organizational commitment and turnover intentions of online teachers in the K- 12 setting, guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs in a setting of public, private, charter, for profit and not- for profit K- 12 online schools. Larkin, *et al.* established that K – 12 online teachers have a moderate to high level of affective and continuance commitment (their intent to continue teaching in the online setting in the mediate, intermediate and long term future) to their organization. However, the findings could not be generalized due to the convenience sample of 108, as Larkin *et al.* reported. In contrast, the present study sample of 320 with the use of survey method, allowing for generalisation of findings to academic staff in public universities. Larkin *et al.* used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to explain the interaction between variables, however the current study having expanded the content scope, found the HCT more appropriate in linking the variables at hand.

In the same vein, Ellis, and Kuznia, (2014) examined the impact of corporate e-learning on employee organizational commitment using an on-line survey and findings indicated that there is a

very strong correlation between employee satisfaction with e-learning and organizational commitment. Ellis and Kuznia arrived at their findings using Pearson correlation analysis, however the present study considered it vital to ascertain the magnitude of influence hence the use of simple and multiple linear regression while analyzing data from Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

### **Coaching**

Coaching is another important element in informal learning as a practice of professional development. As a consequence, previous research has established the relationship between coaching and organizational commitment. Among other scholars, Gan and Chong (2015) investigated the association between coaching relationship which constitutes rapport, trust and commitment and coaching effectiveness in Malaysia, and findings indicated that commitment significantly influenced coaching effectiveness. Gan and Chong were guided by Objective –driven model which focuses on the extent to which to which coaching objective have been met. However, that approach holds with the assumption that the coaching is already available, hence the present study's focus was on first and foremost the availability of the coaching practice, how coaching is practiced and then how ultimately the two relate to organizational commitment through promotions as guided by the Equity Theory and the human capital theory.

On the other hand, Kalkavan and Katrinli (2014) deviated from Gan & Chong and the current study and instead focused on how managerial coaching affected the perception of the employees. Hence, Kalkavan and Katrinli assessed the effects of managerial coaching behaviors on employees' perception of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance in insurance industry in Turkey using quantitative methods and linear regression, results showed that managerial coaching behavior in the insurance sector had a positive effect on organizational commitment. However, Kalkavan and Katrinli are silent about the correlational technique used, thus the this study used Pearson correction coefficient to form the basis for regressions.

Meanwhile, Park, Yang and McLean (2008) probed the relationship among managerial coaching and employees' personal learning, organizational commitment and turnover intentions using correlational research design with use of descriptive and inferential data analyses. Park *et al.*'s results indicated that managers' utilization of managerial coaching skills was significantly related to employees' learning, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Though the context of the study by Park *et al.* was a technological organization in the US in which coaching may be presented differently, hence prompting an investigation of the same in an academic context in an third world country. In the same vein, Har (2008), studied the impact of managerial coaching on employees' organizational commitment in Malasia using Pearson correlation coefficient results showed that managerial coaching positively and significantly correlated with organizational commitment. However, Har (2008), having established the relationship between variables, did not proceed to perform regressions in order to establish the extent of the influence. In that regard, the hypotheses in the present study were tested by use of regressions.

In another related study, Ombasyi (2019), investigated the effect of mental wellness on performance of employees in Brand Design Development Limited in Kenya using census survey techniques, correlational and regression analysis, and concluded that coaching and mentoring are associated with higher levels of organizational commitment which ultimately contributes to mental wellness. Nevertheless, the present study recognized that Ombasyi had small a small number of 50 participants. To overcome the issues that come with small number of participants, especially generalizability of results, the current study used a large sample of 320 participants.

On the other hand, the study also examined formal training opportunities, or off – the-job training on organizational commitment. A number of researchers have demonstrated that formal training has an impact on organizational commitment. Among recent investigators of this subject, Hanaysha

(2016), examined the effects of training on organizational commitment in Malaysian higher education context collecting data using online survey and analysis by structural equation modeling, findings indicated that employee has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment. However, Hanaysha does not indicate the statistics that lead to the structural equation modeling, besides using only qualitative data. Against this background the present study calculated the Pearson correlation coefficients for all the relationships in the study which provided the basis for the regressions. Further, the nature of Hanshya's study would fit the post-positivism research paradigm which would then call for quantitative methods but supplemented by qualitative methods on a smaller scale as was the case for the present study (Baskerville, 1999). However, Adere (2019), took it a step higher by using mixed methods.

Other studies included, Adere (2019), who studied effects of internal marketing on organizational commitment of employees in Awash bank in Ethiopia with use of mixed methods, descriptive methods and inferential statistics, established that training had a significant and positive influence on organizational commitment of employees. Adere's findings were however limited because they could not be generalized to other banks in Ethiopia in contrast to the study at hand which was designed in such way to allow findings from Makerere and Kyambogo Universities to apply to other public universities in Uganda.

On their part, Sitienei, Egessa and Awano (2015) and Castro-Casal *et al...* (2019) also had studies related to training, but with similar methodological gaps. For instance, Sitienei *et al...* (2015) assessed the impact of training and development on employee commitment at the department of children's services in Kenya use of Pearson's moment correlation coefficient test established that training and development had a significant effect on employee commitment in the department of children's services. In addition, they also reported that frequent training offered to employees was significantly linked to the commitment of employees. They further reported that, the constant training ensures continued and adequate supply of relevant knowledge and skills. Similarly, Castro-Casal, *et al...*, (2019) investigated the direct effect of empowerment via affective commitment on the extra- role service, and the moderating effect of service training on the empowerment – affective commitment extra- role relationship. Castro-Casal, *et al.*'s findings revealed that for empowerment to lead to greater affective commitment to the organization and extra – role customer service, it is important for employees to perceive that they have received a moderated high level training in customer service. The implications of the findings by Castro-Casal, *et al...*, to managers at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities, is that once the academic staffs feel that they have received sufficient training, they will handle students with more commitment. Nevertheless, the present study noted that Castro-Casal, *et al.* and Sitienei, *et al...*, only report analysis of results using Pearson correlation coefficient which analysis is considered to be at lower lever. Thus, this study and Adere (2019), studies went around this by also using regressions.

Meanwhile Karimi (2016), investigated the relationship between employee training and organizational commitment in the ministry of Energy and Petroleum in Kenya and with use of Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient established that employee training equips employees with knowledge and skills and that are significantly and positively related with organizational commitment of employees. However, whereas Karimi's study was guided by the Social Exchange Theory by Blau (1964), the current study explained the relationship between training and commitment basing on the human capital theory proposed by Gary (1964), as it explained training as an investment from the perspectives of both the trainee and the organization. Besides, the energy sector which Karimi studied, slightly different from the tertiary institutions sector where the current study was centered, with the argument that the training implications in the two sectors may be different.

But Hadeel *et al...*, (2018) used a different methodology from Karim (2016). Hadeel, *et al...*, examined the impact of diversity training on organizational commitment using job satisfaction as a moderating variable, adopting a comprehensive survey design and analyzing data with descriptive statistics and the hierarchical multiple regression test, results showed that diversity training had a positive impact on organizational commitment. However, Hadeel and Rokoya's conceptualization of training does not segregate informal learning or on – the – job training and off- the- job training or formal training, yet the two have different influencing effects on organizational commitment. Hence the, this study split training into the two predictors of organizational commitment in order to ascertain the individual effect separately. On the other hand, Grund and Titz, (2018) studied further training and affective commitment paying particular attention on support effect and participation effect and using regression analysis technique revealed that employees' participation in further training is positively related to affective commitment. Grund and Titz established that a general firm's support for personal development mediates the positive relationship of participation in further training and individual affective commitment. The present study found the result for Grund and Titz relevant but the researchers ignored the normative and continuance aspects of commitment in their scope, yet the components are key in studying the for academic staff. Therefore, the current study broke organizational commitment in to three components namely; affective, normative and continuance commitment in order to fully understand the situation pertaining in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

### **Methodology**

The study used a cross-sectional survey design. The study selected a sample of 320 using simple random and purposive sampling techniques from the accessible population of 1916 as Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) study stipulates. The respondents include senior academic staffs and administrators of both Makerere and Kyambogo universities. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Numerical data was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient and regression analysis, while qualitative data was thematically analysed.

### **Findings**

To test the hypothesis, Pearson correlations and simple linear regression analysis was employed. Results are given in Tables 3 and Table 4

**Table 3: Pearson Correlational Results on Relationship between Professional Development Practices and Organizational Commitment**

		Correlations				
		Informal	Formal	Affective	Normative	Continuance
Informal	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	279				
Formal	Pearson Correlation	.649**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	279	279			
Affective	Pearson Correlation	.363**	.464**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	279	279	279		
Normative	Pearson Correlation	.458**	.503**	.676**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	279	279	279	279	
Continuance	Pearson Correlation	.094	.015	.215**	.294**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.117	.804	.000	.000	
	N	279	279	279	279	279

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between organizational commitment (as measured Affective, Normative and Continuance commitment) and professional development practices (as measured by Informal and Formal) was investigated using Pearson product – moment Correlational coefficient. Table 3 shows that there was a medium positive correlation between Informal Learning Opportunities and Affective Commitment ( $r = 0.363$ ,  $n = 279$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), with high levels of informal learning associated with high levels of affective commitment. Further, there was a medium, positive correlation between Informal Learning Opportunities and Normative Commitment ( $r = 0.458$ ,  $n = 279$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), with high levels of informal learning associated with high levels of normative commitment. Table 3 also indicates that there was a weak positive relationship between Informal Learning Opportunities and continuance commitment ( $r = 0.094$ ,  $n = 279$ ,  $p = 0.117 > 0.05$ ) with high levels of informal learning associated with high levels of continuance commitment.

Table 3 also shows that there is a medium positive correlation between Formal Training Opportunities and Affective Commitment ( $r = 0.46$ ,  $n = 279$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) with high levels of formal training associated with high levels of Affective Commitment. It is also shown that there was a strong correlation between Formal Training Opportunities and Normative Commitment ( $r = 0.503$ ,  $n = 279$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) with high levels of Formal Training associated with high levels of Normative Commitment. Table 5.6 also indicates that there is a very weak positive correlation between Formal Training and Continuance Commitment ( $r = 0.015$ ,  $n = 279$ ,  $p = 0.804 > 0.05$ ) with high levels of Formal Training associated with high levels of Continuance Commitment.

These findings imply that continuance commitment reduces the overall influence of professional development practices on organizational commitment of the academic staff. Therefore, Kyambogo

and Makerere Universities should devise means of raising the continuance commitment. On the basis of these results, regressions were performed as indicated in Table 3 to get a deeper analysis of the influencing relationships between professional development practices and organizational commitment.

**Table 4: Regression Results on the Influence of Professional Development Practices on organizational Commitment**

Variables	Coefficient	S.E.	p-value	95% C.I	
				Lower	Upper
<b>Professional Development Practices</b>					
Informal	.151	.052	0.004	.047	.254
Formal	.186	.053	0.000	.082	.289
	$R^2 = 0.175$				
	$Adj R^2 = 0.169$				
	$F = 29.260$				
	$Sig. = 0.000$				
<b>a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment</b>					

Table 4 shows that Professional Development Practices constituting both informal learning and formal training explain 16.9% of the variation in Organizational Commitment of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.169$ ). Informal learning as a professional development practice has got a positive significant influence on the level of organizational commitment among academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities ( $\beta = 0.151$ ,  $p = 0.004 < 0.05$ ). This result shows that a unit increase in the level of informal learning opportunities to academic staff contributes 15.1% improvement in the level of organizational commitment demonstrated. It also means that that 84.9 % of the variation in organizational commitment was accounted for by other factors some of which were not considered in this study. Such factors may include formal training, staff promotions, bias in either arts or sciences, teaching load and rewards. Similarly, formal training as a professional development practice has got a positive significant influence on the level of organizational commitment among academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities ( $\beta = 0.186$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). This result indicates that a unit increase in the level of formal training opportunities to academic staff contributes 18.6 % improvement in the level of organizational commitment demonstrated. This means that 81.4 % of the variation was accounted for by other factors some of which were not considered in this study.

On the overall informal learning opportunities ( $p = 0.004 < 0.05$ ) and formal training opportunities ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) investigated in this study as combined professional development practices, predict the level of Organizational Commitment amongst the academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities ( $F = 29.260$ ,  $Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Hence, based on p-values the hypothesis that professional development practices have an influence on organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities was accepted.

In conclusion, there is sufficient evidence that professional development practices significantly influence organizational commitment of academic staff.

These findings were also supported by respondents on interview guides as follows;

A senior administrative staff from Makerere University revealed that,



*“Informal learning improves organizational commitment of the academic staff to the university and it is mainly the newly recruited staff who are more interested in the informal learning programs” (DHR, MAK, 28/08/2019)*

While another senior academic staff member interviewed from Kyambogo University had a similar view on the same question and replied;

*‘Informal learning brings confidence and assurance, and impacts organizational commitment positively especially if it is initiated by seniors and not juniors. It improves commitment for juniors, colleagues and seniors. Actually the people who benefit more are the senior members because it gives them more time for strategic issues.’ (KYU, 04/09/2019)*

On the hand, the first senior academic staff interviewed from Makerere opined that,

*‘I think that informal learning opportunities have an influence on OC of academic staff because the senior members give a smooth entry to the new members into the system without having shocks’ (MAK, 06/09/2019)*

However, the second senior academic staff member interviewed from Kyambogo University, had a slightly different opinion;

*‘I would not really think that that kind of relationship exists. Informal learning may not have an influence on organizational commitment of academic staff. It is a free labour market and we are not bonded. So informal learning may not influence organizational commitment.’ (KYU, 31/10/2019)*

On the other hand a female senior academic staff from Makerere University was not sure on this relationship. In a nutshell there were varied opinions as far as the influence of informal learning on organizational commitment of academic staff is concerned in both universities. Though majority were inclined to state that there exists a relationship between the two variables.

On staff commitment, staffs from both universities were not contented with the study leave conditions at their universities. An officer interviewed from the directorate of human resources in Makerere University said,

*‘Academic staffs are more contented with study leaves which give an opportunity to study elsewhere apart from Makerere University. They love it because they continue to receive their full salary while on study leave. I think that formal training opportunities improve organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere university because they have the opportunity to concentrate since they are off station.’ (DHR, MAK, 28/08/2019)*

## **Conclusion**

The study concluded that professional development practices significantly influence organizational commitment of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. Thus the two practices – informal learning opportunities and formal training opportunities predict the level of organizational commitment of academic staff. Of the two practices, formal training is the most important in explaining organizational commitment in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. Recognizing that both informal learning and formal training positively influence organizational commitment and staff promotions, University Councils in conjunction with management in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities should ensure that all academic staffs are involved in informal learning activities and support accorded to formal training.

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