

OP3: Sources of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the Higher Education System: A Study among Academics in State Universities in Sri Lanka

P. Wijewantha

Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

Email: prabha2274@gmail.com

With the evolving nature of Higher Education (HE), the teaching and learning processes are changing rapidly. Consequently, the focus on CPD of academics (e.g., teachers, lecturers, trainers etc.) is gaining attention of the human capital development projects in HE world over. However, despite CPD in HE becoming an upcoming research area, so far only a limited amount of studies have been undertaken in the world. Considering this void in literature, this study reports the results of a survey conducted with the aim of ascertaining the sources used by academics for their CPD. Data was collected from academics in Management and Arts disciplines (n=102), selected based on convenience to access; and the responses indicated that CPD can be achieved through a wide array of sources, some of which are not in the limelight of the discussion. According to the findings, the most common source of CPD is the quality time spent with senior or parallel colleagues engaging in formal and informal intellectual discussions or debates. However, it was perceived by many that the main barrier for CPD is, the low time availability to engage in the same due to ceremonial and administrative activities popularizing in universities these days, and organizational politics. This finding contradicts with literature coming from the West, where the main barrier for CPD, is the demand for greater focus on research. Based on findings, it could be stated that both the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the academics need to pay attention on creating synergies on both formal and informal sources of CPD, rather than depending on only one source. It could be recommended that, there is great need for improving widened communication systems/networks engaging cross disciplinary academics from across institutions which create platforms that enable them to share their teaching practices and other activities. Finally, the most important conclusion of the study is that, it is much needed to inculcate the insight, that CPD should be part and partial of the life of an academic rather than focussing on it, only during one stage of the career.

Keywords: Academics, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), Intellectual discussions, Survey, Sources and Barriers