

Continuous Professional Development in Higher Education: A Systematic Review of its Conceptualizations, Trends and Challenges (2011- 2020)

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Abstract

The purpose of this systematic review is twofold. On the one hand, the authors investigate the conceptualizations and associated trends in staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in higher education. On the other hand, they explore the challenges that hinder academic staff from engaging in CPD in higher education. To this end, the authors employ Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses-PRISMA. The findings reveal that there are varied conceptualizations of CPD in higher education which include: activities and interventions taken aimed at improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes of academics. Likewise, the trends of CPD in higher education vary in form, focus area/content, strategy, and expected outcomes. The challenges hindering academics range from individual academics' attitude to their respective institution to the national policies that govern higher education. Finally, we argue that effective CPD in higher education requires a systematic, comprehensive, and well-established policy-led approach to staff development.

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Introduction

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for academics in higher education has been recognized as a necessary condition for the competitiveness of the individuals and the respective institutions in which they are working. This is because higher education institutions face global challenges and are required to cope with and be responsive to fast-changing societal, cultural, and technological demands. The dynamic nature of our world at large and higher education in

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particular inevitably necessitates the need for staff to engage with CPD that can enable them to be proficient and competent in their teaching, research and community engagement. Continuous professional development is; therefore, a vital component of what governments, institutions and professionals need to do to operate efficiently in responding to contingencies and build platforms for sustainable growth in the face of continuous change.

Higher education institutions - most prominently universities - have three major pillars: education, research and contribution to society. These services can be rendered effectively and efficiently by equipping academics with subject matter knowledge and standard-based repertoires of pedagogical skills (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Dereje, 2022; Gosha et al., 2010; Guskey, 2000; Stefani, 2005).

Continuous Professional Development in higher education is important for a number of reasons. It is a significant issue in all workplaces for dealing effectively with the complexity of modern society (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Loughran & Hamilton 2016; Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2015). It is also a means for academics to stay up-to-date with their content field i.e. revitalize their work with fresh ideas and the required pedagogical competence, i.e. transformative approaches to teaching which help develop students' competencies and 21st century skills such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015). Despite these benefits, issues that are related to professional development of academics are an under-researched (Santos et al., 2019). It is our contention that this study contributes to the prevailing knowledge gap in the field.

In this Systematic Review (SR), the authors (we, henceforth) engage with exploring: the conceptualization of CPD, the trends around it and pertinent challenges that hinder academics from engaging with CPD in higher education globally. Due to the global nature of the topic, we chose to utilize publications both in Ethiopia and beyond. Moreover, earlier research on CPD in Ethiopia is quite sparse (Zelege, 2012) and hence a mere focus on Ethiopia will not offer a comprehensive picture of the scenario.

To this end, this review study is framed around these three key questions: (1) How is CPD conceptualized in higher education context? (2) What are the trends of CPD in the higher education context? (3) What are the challenges that hinder academic staffs' engagement with CPD in higher education?

Literature Review

The notion of continuous professional development in higher education is attributed with a number of contestable meanings. There are several terms used internationally to define the professionalization of academics which include: teacher development programs, in-service education and training, staff development, career development, human resource development, professional development, continuing education and lifelong learning (Day & Sachs, 2004). However, even though each of these terms refers to aspects of teacher professionalization, they do have subtle differences. Avalos (2011) defines CPD as "... teachers' learning, learning how to learn and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth" (p.

10). Teacher professional learning is thus a complex process, requiring cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers both individually and collectively as a learning community. This teacher professional learning elicits a capacity and willingness to examine where each one stands in terms of convictions and beliefs and the critical examination and enactment of appropriate alternatives for improvement or change. Researches show that teachers' knowledge, skills and practice grow when they receive professional development that is coherent, focused on content knowledge, and involves active learning, integrated with school context and practiced in a collaborative way (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Desimone, 2009; Garet, et, al., 2001).

There is a variety of CPD trends across the world including formal training courses, coaching and mentoring and informal learning which takes place in work contexts, that relates to an individual's performance of their job and/or their employability, and that is not organized formally into a program or curriculum by the employer (Ercan & Ivanova, 2020; Harpe & Mason, 2014; Masoumi et al., 2019). Examples of informal learning might include the reading of professional journals in order to keep up to date with technical developments and the selection and attendance of short courses which meet the training needs that the professional himself or herself has identified (Hasan & Parvez, 2017).

In most African countries, continuous professional development is a fundamental prerequisite requirement to transform the education system. Advancing teachers' professional development is one of four outputs envisaged by UNESCO's (2006) Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa, and is widely regarded as one means of leveraging systemic improvements in the education system (Ruszayak, 2018). For instance, in South Africa, promoting teacher professionalism is regarded as a strategy to address the disparate quality of learning in the classrooms (Ruszayak, 2018).

In the same vein, in Ethiopia, one of the policy measures undertaken by the Ministry of Education to enhance the quality of education in higher education institutions is the professional development of academics through the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) (Dereje, 2022; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2018). This Higher Diploma Program came into existence in 2002 following extensive research by the Ministry of Education into the overall system of education including the teacher education system (Gebru, 2016). It is licensing the teachers through a one-year training program aimed at developing the skills and professionalism of teacher educators by organizing and offering short term training in research and technology.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses adult learning theory as a theoretical lens for studying conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context. Adult learning theory was initially developed in the 1920s and more recently has been formulated as 'Andragogy' by Knowles as the science that underpins the design and implementation of adult education programs (Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2015).

Traditionally, continuous professional development has depended on external sources as agents of change and providers of solutions. These sources usually apply 'top-down' models which adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to workplace learning, ignoring the expertise and specific needs

that workers bring to a learning situation. Terms such as ‘training’ or ‘development’ suggest the worker is a passive recipient of learning programs. However, recent advances in learning theory highlight the limits of a top-down imposed training program in changing practices and improving outcomes. Consequently, the reform agenda that has driven change and innovation internationally has emphasized the need to provide professional development that is grounded in an understanding of adult learning principles (Hargreaves, 1994; Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2015). Therefore, a theoretically grounded understanding of what constitutes effective adult learning must underpin the conceptualization, design and implementation of successful adult learning programs like continuous professional development programs for academic staff. Knowles (1978) proposes a set of principles founded on a view of adult learners as self-directed and responsible for making independent decisions about their own learning. The principles of adult learning theory include the following: adults are independent, self-directed and responsible for their own learning; they possess a range of experiences that provide a rich resource for learning; adults have specific learning needs that relate to their own learning context; they focus on problem solving, and they are intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated to learn.

More recently, Knowles et al., (2005) defined andragogy as ‘any intentionally and professionally guided activity that aims at a change in adult persons and they are built on the above original principles to include individual differences, meta-learning and developmental influences on adult learning .In fact, this theory is at the heart of continuous professional development practice in which academic staffs take control of their learning, including what, when and how in relation to their teaching experience and their needs. As such, it is essential to recognize their preferences in continuous professional development programs.

Methods

A systematic review is a complete search for relevant literatures on a specific topic, and those identified are then appraised and synthesized according to a predetermined and explicit method (Klassen et al., 1998; Munn et al., 2018). This paper uses a specific systematic review methodology namely the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, PRISMA. It is a way of synthesizing scientific evidence to answer a particular research question that is transparent and reproducible, while seeking to include all published evidence on the topic and appraising the quality of this evidence (Liberati et al., 2009; Munn et al., 2018; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). This review methodology can be distinguished from the traditional narrative review of the literature through its emphasis on transparent, structured and comprehensive approaches to searching the literature and its requirement for formal synthesis of research findings (Sharif et al., 2019).

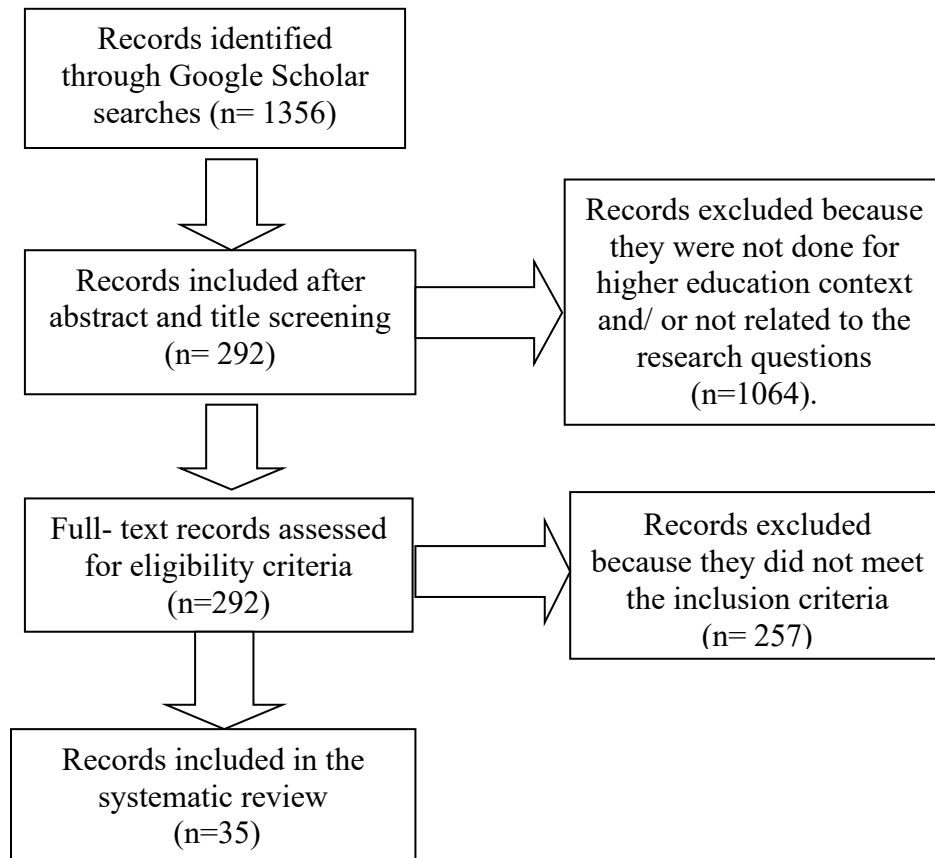
Literature Search

This study is aimed at carrying out a meta- analysis of conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context. In order to achieve this purpose, the study was

undertaken in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Sharif et al., 2019). We systematically searched for researches conducted on CPD in higher education studied by scholars in other countries that are published in different journals and accessed from the ERIC database and found in Google Scholars in ERIC. The following search terms were employed: ((higher education) AND (continuous professional development, OR professional learning community, OR reflective practice, OR self-learning)). Ethiopian published works were searched from Google by consulting Google Scholar and Web of <http://libcat.aau.edu.et> with important link AAU-ETD (Addis Ababa university website) using the following search terms: ((higher education) AND (Ethiopia) AND (continuous professional development, OR professional learning community, OR reflective practice, OR self-learning)). The researchers used the terminologies self-learning, reflective practice, and professional learning community because they are considered as effective models of professional development for academics (Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015). The search was conducted on February 18, 2022.

To create the main dataset inclusion criteria were developed. The search covered national (Ethiopian) and other countries research articles written in English and published in peer-reviewed reputable scientific journals and book chapters. We confined our search to the period 2011-2020 so that we can build our systematic review of the recent literature. The title, abstract, keywords, authors' names and affiliations, journal name, and years of publication of the identified records were exported to an MS Excel spreadsheet. Then, the full texts of the remaining papers were assessed based on the inclusion criteria (papers written in English and published in peer-reviewed reputable scientific journals and book chapters in the period 2011-2020). After the screening of the titles and year of publication, a total of 35 that is, 29 articles from other countries (nine articles from Asia, 12 articles from Europe, three articles from Africa, three articles from North America, and two articles from Australia) and six articles from Ethiopia were included for this systematic review. Subsequently, all included papers were carefully reviewed to extract code and analyze the data.

In the first search of the electronic databases 1356 records were retrieved, and 1064 were excluded because they had not been carried out within the higher education context and/ or they were not sufficiently related to the research questions. The remaining 292 records were evaluated in more detail on the basis of their full texts. Of these, 257 records were discarded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thus, in total, after appropriate sifting, 35 reviews were included in this systematic review. The study selection process is illustrated as follows in Figure 1.

Figure 1*Flowchart of Study Selection and Inclusion Process*

Results

Conceptualization of CPD in the Higher Education Context

The conceptualization of CPD varies across time and space. As defined by (Zelege, 2012), the concept of CPD in different timelines shows a distinct change in focus. In the 1980s, developing knowledge, skills and attitudes of individual teachers were the major focuses. In the 1990s, authors expanded these to including students and schools or institutions in addition to emphasizing individual teachers' development. They contended that professional development is most effective, when a holistic approach is considered. From around 2000, writers about staff/professional development emphasized competence development as a broad concept which included the notions held by writers both in the 1980s and 1990s. Specifically, the definitions in this decade considered skills, knowledge and attitude development as highly interwoven concepts with in an environment of teachers' satisfaction and motivation.

In the reviewed studies, CPD encompasses a wide range of conceptualizations. These include activities and interventions taken aimed at: improving knowledge, skills and attitudes of academics (Zelege, 2012; Yilfashewa, 2012); improving academics performance (Ercan &

Ivanova, 2020; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015); meeting the needs of academics to be lifelong learners (Qader, 2019); helping academics in fulfilling their expected role in dynamic working situation and globalization (Hasan & Parvez, 2017; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Yaqub et al., 2020); improving academics career competencies (Bachelier, 2015) developing skills of academics in technology application (Yue et al., 2016). CPD is also conceptualized as enhancing academics ability to reflect and analyze their experience in-depth, to develop and substantiate knowledge and to refresh and re- evaluate it (Colomer et al., 2020; Malik et al., 2015).

Besides, CPD is conceptualized as both product and process. It is conceived as a product because it includes activities like documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that academics gain both formally and informally as they work beyond their initial training (Shah & Mangrola, 2015). Scholars like Suwaed and Rahouma (2015) are against this conceptualization. They argue that CPD is not a discrete one-off event but rather an ongoing opportunity to discuss the challenges a professional community face and engage in a continuing reflective practice for every academic to learn throughout their career. Malik et al. (2015) also supported the conceptualization of CPD as a process rather than a product. They define it in the university context as a process of improving and increasing capability of academics to upgrade their content knowledge and educational skills. Based on this definition, it is expected that academics' skills will be strengthened during the process. The conceptualizations of CPD are reviewed in Table 1.

Table 1

Conceptualization of Continuous professional development

Descriptions	Study
Traditional conceptualization of CPD includes activities like short term intensive in-house trainings that are often ad hoc and disjointed with the classroom context.	(Harpe & Mason, 2014; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017)
Contemporary conceptions of CPD give due emphasis to the dynamic nature of academics' learning within a community of professionals, which has resulted in workplace learning and strategies that include reflective practice, professional learning community, individualized professional growth plans, action research and inquiry, customized online learning and communities of practice.	(Agsonsual & Prasertphornl, 2020; Colomer et al., 2020; Jayatilleke & Mackie, 2012; Nair, 2015; Vanasschea & Kelchtermansa, 2015)
Conceptions of CPD as product includes activities like documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that academics gain both formally and informally as they work beyond their initial training.	(Shah & Mangrola, 2015).
Conceptions of CPD as process entail every opportunity of academics learning throughout their career through which they develop new knowledge, skills, abilities & strategies in competences areas & technology applications.	(Shibankova et. al, 2019; Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015; Yilfashewa, 2013; Yue et al., 2016)

Trends of CPD in Higher Education Context

The role of academics is shifting due to the theories and concepts about teaching and learning in higher education created at a specific period. So does the form, content focus, strategy and intended outcomes of professional development of academics. CPD encompasses a wide range of interventions and activities aimed at improving academics competency in their changing and different roles as scholars, advisors, designers and evaluators of academic programs, course academic leaders and contributors to public service, and participants in institutional decisions. And, it is utilized as a means to keep pace with the changing role of academics, to cope up with challenges that have resulted from high competition of attracting and retaining students in Western and Eastern countries; increased use of technology, and globalization (Bachelier, 2015; Lam, 2010). In order to accommodate the competency required for this changing role of academics, there is a growing body of literature which point out the fact that professional development needs to become more sophisticated (Harpe & Mason, 2014). Some contemporary trends, like the mass expansion of higher education, the spread of student-centered approaches and the growing importance of modern digital technologies also affect the conceptualization and trend of CPD (Santos et al., 2019).

Just like that of conceptualization of CPD, trends of CPD also entail using both traditional and newer or contemporary approaches. In the reviewed papers, CPD trends like intensive training that emphasize episodic events and certification are considered as traditional (Harpe & Mason, 2014). These traditional trends are viewed as insufficient in developing the professional teaching expertise of academics. On the other hand, contemporary trends entail activities that are continuous and situated in work: self- evaluated, self- managed and self- organized; learner centered; and if it provides opportunities to learn from others in a professional learning community (Harpe & Mason, 2014). The trends of CPD can be reviewed by their forms, content focus, strategies and intended outcomes as follows.

Table 2

Trends of Continuous Professional Development

Change in	Descriptions	Study
Form	Formal training like Induction and Higher Diploma program in Ethiopia or experiences such as attending workshops, refresher courses, professional meeting and mentoring etc.	(Biftu, 2017; Gebru, 2016; Fossøy & Haara1, 2016; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017; Yilfashewa, 2012; 2013).
There is a growing body of literature that CPD should use different forms to develop academics' competency that playing their role requires.	Informal professional learning that constitutes the learning undertaken on a daily basis embedded within the remit of fulfilling their role in the learning community. This includes, reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline etc.	(Evans et al., 2020; Hasan & Parvez, 2017; MacPhail et al., 2018).

Change in	Descriptions	Study
Content focus There is a change in content focus-knowledge about the actual issue to be addressed via CPD.	Content knowledge refers knowledge about the actual subject matter that is to be taught.	(Berry, 2018; Fabriz et al., 2020; Hasan & Parvez, 2017; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Sadovets, 2017).
	Pedagogical knowledge is about the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning and it encompasses overall educational purposes, values, and aims. For instance: lesson planning, effective classroom communication skills, practices and management, exposure to various contemporary effective teaching methods and techniques, and leadership Training.	(Berry, 2018; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Sadovets, 2017).
	Technological knowledge is about academics' knowledge of, and ability to use, various technologies, technological tools, and associated resources such as the Internet and digital video.	(Berry, 2018; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Riviou et al., 2014).
Strategy There is change in strategies that are used as an approach to achieve the purpose of CPD.	Institutionalized activity like in- house training (induction and Higher Diploma program), workshops, conferences and seminars.	(Biftu, 2017; Gebru, 2016; Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015; Yilfashewa, 2012).
	Institutionalized activity like lesson study	(Yadeta & Assefa, 2017).
	Institutionalized activity like feedback mechanism.	(Shah & Mangrola, 2015).
Intended outcome There is also a change in goals of CPD that are intended to be achieved upon engagement of CPD.	Application of technology (e- learning) to academics CPD enhances teachers' quality by contributing to their training.	(Berry, 2018; Yue et al., 2016).
	Blended learning is mix or blend of face-to-face, real-time learning and the use of online digital resources.	(Bacheler, 2015; Evans et al., 2020; Harpe & Mason, 2014; Masoumi et al., 2019; Shah & Mangrola, 2015).
Intended outcome There is also a change in goals of CPD that are intended to be achieved upon engagement of CPD.	Enhancing competency of academics that enables them to survive in the current changing situation/environment demands accountability.	(Agsonsual & Prasertphorn1, 2020; Bacheler, 2015; Fabriz et al., 2020; Harpe & Mason, 2014; Masoumi et al., 2019; Yilfashewa, 2012; 2013).
	Enhancing the integration of technology in teaching and learning in educational setting is a means to enhance and ensure quality in higher education.	(Riviou et al., 2014; Yue et al., 2016). (Biftu, 2017; Zeleke, 2012; Gebru, 2016)

Challenges

The challenges that inhibit academics from participating in CPD exist on various levels ranging from individual academics' attitude to their respective institution and to the national policies that govern higher education. Based on this review, three main challenges have been

identified: 1) individual academic related challenges, 2) institutional related challenges and 3) policy related challenges. We have also made attempts to identify the underlying reasons for the prevalence of these challenges and to explain why they exist and bring in some possible solutions suggested in the literature. The challenges are summarized thematically as follows in Table 3.

Table 3*Challenges of Continuous Professional Development*

Challenges	Description	Examples of Description
Individual academics related challenges	Lack of time for CPD endeavors.	(Bacheler, 2015; Berry, 2018; MacPhail et al., 2018; Mchete & Shayo, 2020).
	Mismatch between academics' need and CPD endeavors.	(Baker et al., 2018; Jayatilleke & Mackie, 2012; Qader, 2019; Yaqub et al., 2020; Yilfashewa, 2012)
Institutional related challenges	Lack of institutional support (follow up).	(Gebru., 2016; Malik et al., 2015; Mchete & Shayo, 2020; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017; Yilfashewa, 2013)
	Demands of CPD are imposed by the different stakeholders (being donor- driven) like policy makers, institutions or institutional leaders.	(Zelege, 2012; Gebru,2016)
	Lack of financial support.	(Bacheler, 2015; Masoumi et al., 2019; Mchete & Shayo, 2020; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015)
	Absence of infrastructures required, resources, accountability and incentives for CPD endeavors.	(Jaramillo-Baquerizo et al., 2018; MacPhail et.al, 2018; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Suwaed, & Rahouma, 2015; Yilfashewa, 2012).
	Inability of institutions to make CPD relevant to academics work life and higher education context and the training lacks content knowledge.	(Biftu., 2017; Berry, 2018; Gebru,2016; Nair, 2015).
	Absence of organizational culture to learn together.	(Bacheler, 2015; MacPhail et.al, 2018; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017; Vanasschea & Kelchtermansa, 2015)
Policy related challenges	Absence of well-articulated policy.	(Masoumi et al., 2019; Yilfashewa, 2012)
	Lack of policy provision support for CPD endeavors. That is lack of financial, organizational, and institutional capacity to plan and implement, evaluate effective CPD at higher education context.	(MacPhail et al., 2018; Masoumi et al., 2019; Qader, 2019).
	Absence of well-established system for academics CPD.	

Discussion

The purpose of this systematic review is to investigate and map out the conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in the higher education context. This review work considers varied conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context.

Conceptualization of CPD as processes is highly advocated by scholars like Guskey (2000) and Steward (2009). They note that in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, professional development should be ongoing workplace learning which is long-term in focus and is practice-oriented and work-based to improve future practice and thus needs to be embedded in the process of critical reflection and evaluation of workloads (Guskey, 2000; Steward, 2009).

Conceptualizations of CPD in Ethiopia published works tend towards the traditional aspects. But, regarding professional development as restricted to special event like trainings or credits each year like induction and higher diploma programs, is a narrow view of professional development (Guskey, 2000). When educators view their task as meeting these time-based mandates, they tend to think of professional development in terms of “How can I get in my hours?” rather than, “What do I need to improve my practice, and how can I get it?” (Guskey, 2000, p.15).

The findings of this review paper illuminate the changing nature of form, content focus, strategy and intended outcomes of CPD. In the reviewed papers, the trends of CPD in relation to the content of CPD give due emphasis for cognitive and psychomotor domains (like content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills, and technological knowledge and skills). This implies that skills that are necessitated in 21st century are less emphasized. Twenty-first-century skills are conceptualized as abilities and attributes that can be taught or learned in order to enhance ways of thinking, learning, working and living in the world. The skills include creativity and innovation, critical thinking/problem solving/decision making, learning to learn/meta-cognition, communication, collaboration (teamwork), information literacy, ICT literacy, citizenship (local and global), life and career skills and personal and social responsibility (including cultural awareness and competence) (Binkley, 2012). In line with this, scholars like Hasan and Parvez (2017) support the inclusion of 21st century skills in professional development of academics in higher education. Furthermore, the affective domain which is concerned with the attitude and interest of academics about their professional role is also less emphasized.

The trend of CPD in relation to its strategies encompasses its multi-modal nature. In current trends, there is a break away from linear and time-constrained delivery or a solely face to face strategy. This is the main reason technological knowledge is included in the content of CPD and online and/or virtual modality is used as an alternative strategy. This is underpinned by the theoretical framework called Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Berry, 2018; Koehler & Mishra, 2009). Berry (2018) claims that quality professional development can help build instructors’ technological, pedagogical and content knowledge.

The trend of CPD in relation to its outcomes include transmission of knowledge and skills to support specific educational practice, enhancing the integration of technology in teaching and learning, developing the competency of academics, and a means to ensure quality in higher education. This implies that continuous professional development is seen as "a service industry"

(Lovat, 2020, p. 1). It uses only instrumentalist approaches to professional learning of academics often serving the agendas of reformers, governments and policy makers, rather than preparing academics to develop holistically. Lovat (2020) provides systematic evidence that supports such holism. Emotionality, sociality, morality, spirituality and the aesthetic senses are not detachments from the learning experience of any learner: rather integral. Scholars, like Sutherland (2018) support this idea and attempt to inform academic developers to broaden their focus thereby take on a more holistic approach. In doing so, she urges academic developers to better understand and support the development of the whole of the academic role, which includes not only teaching duties, but also research, service, administration, and leadership.

Mismatch between academics' need and CPD endeavors is similarly an issue identified by this review. This finding agrees with adult learning theory that provides insights into how adults learn. Adults are motivated to learn from being in situations where they see a need to learn (Knowles, 2005). Since academics are self-directed adults, their learning settings should begin with topics that address their current learning needs.

All reviewed papers in common highlight that lack of time for CPD endeavors is the major challenge of academics to engage themselves in CPD endeavors. It will be valuable for future research to investigate what activities academics prioritize to the expense of their professional development and why academics are committed to these prioritized activities.

Besides, the analysis of this review revealed that there are also institution related challenges like lack of institutional support, infrastructure requirements, accountability and incentives for CPD endeavors. From these findings a clear suggestion emerges that there is a need for systems that plan, provide resources, implement and follow up CPD activities in higher education. In addition, policy related challenges like lack of policy provision support for CPD endeavors inhibit academics from engaging in CPD endeavors. This fact is highlighted by the study conducted across six national jurisdictions including England, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Scotland and The Netherlands (MacPhail et al., 2018). It is therefore imperative that ways of facilitating and incentivizing CPD are pursued. This could include making more time available; linking CPD to career progression; exploring ways to use CPD to work more efficiently and effectively so as to make it seem a worthwhile investment of time and focus and improving overall performance also led to career progression and extra opportunities.

Conclusion and Implications

The analysis of this systematic review has provided valuable insights into the conceptualizations, trends and challenges of continuous professional development in higher education context. This review reveals that there are varied conceptualizations of CPD in higher education context. The trends of CPD in higher education therefore vary in form, content focus, strategy and expected outcomes. The challenges that hinder academics from engaging in CPD seem to exist on various levels: from individual academics' attitudes to their respective institution and to the national policies that govern higher education.

This study has far-reaching implications for future actions on the CPD of academics in higher education context. For instance, in those countries where CPD is conceptualized traditionally, the emphasis is only on formal training; there is a need to re-conceptualize it again as an iterative cumulative continuous process of reflective praxis by self-directed learners in dynamic learning communities. Since academics are adults, continuous professional development of academics should be governed by principles of adult learning theory. This andragogic approach positions learners as self-directed and continually reflective practitioners who see CPD and other learning not just as discrete courses or hours to be undertaken (CPD as product), but as applications to real world deeply embedded scenarios in the contexts of learning institutions. They can not only apply this learning but adapt it in dialogue with other professionals, learners and communities they serve, thus setting up a continuous dialogue of learning and development.

In relation to content of CPD, the topics need to be in line with academics' current learning needs. In this regard, it should include 21st century skills and should aim to bring about holistic development of academics. Normally, this will initially involve dedicated time and discrete modules, but with a culture of change that sees these discrete hours as the launch pad for lifelong continuous learning from the beginning. In realizing this culture change itself must be explicitly taught, debated, discussed, honed and improved upon.

Due emphasis should also be given to outcomes related to the affective domain which is concerned with the attitude and interest of academics about their professional role. As argued above in the final paragraph of the discussion section, this should include both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation including possible links to pay, time off and career progression. Furthermore, policy makers and institutional managers should provide adequate resources to CPD endeavors. Well established systems that plan, implement and follow up CPD activities of academics in higher education should be developed.

In our view, CPD shouldn't be confined to a discrete course for a particular form of training but rather be 'continuous' as its name implies, embedded in and reflect up on practice across various sectors and across careers and geared towards developing the professionals as better enablers of learning for the students and the communities they serve. This act moves CPD from a product model of hours completed to a process model of practice improved. This will of course increase buy-in for teachers as they see their students' grades improve, but it is also an essential component of cultural change and capacity building. In this sense, it is a paradigm shift to seeing teachers and educators as well as the learners they serve as active knowledge creators involved in a dialogic process of imaginative production.

Furthermore, the researchers believe that with regards to conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context this study provides some useful evidence and ways forward, whilst acknowledging that further and more detailed studies in relation to its practices and effects on higher education competitiveness, academics competitiveness and students learning are necessary.

Finally, the Ethiopian reviewed papers appear to be limited to the Higher Diploma Program (HDP), which seems to be a narrow view of professional development (Guskey, 2000). The

practices and challenge of continuous professional development for academics in the Ethiopian context beyond the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) needs further research.

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