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Professional Development for Faculty and Staff in Ras Al Khaimah's Higher Education Institutions

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report and the supporting research is to examine the status of professional development priorities, policies, and practices in Ras Al Khaimah higher education institutions and to identify areas of strength and improvement. Three different institutions participated in the project, and 100 academic faculty and administrative staff were interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to determine staff's professional development needs and understanding of policies and practices and to raise their awareness of the nature of continuous learning for an academic professional. The three top training priorities as identified by academic faculty were 1) research, 2) teaching and learning, and 3) subject specialization followed by career development, leadership skills, and language training. Worth noting is that there was a difference among top priorities of faculty at the three institutions. For the administrative staff, there was also a slight difference regarding professional development priorities. Overall, the three chief priorities of administrative staff were 1) specific job related training, 2) leadership skills, and 3) career development—followed by higher education management and language training.

An analysis of the existing professional development policies and practices reveals that, while Ras Al Khaimah institutions believe in the importance of supporting further training among both academic and administrative staff, their policies are, in general, underdeveloped and underperforming. Furthermore, there is no emirate-level governmental or non-governmental body that addresses these institutions' professional development needs. There are specific professional training areas that can be customized according to disciplinary focus (i.e., health, engineering, business, architecture), but there are also important generic areas such as teaching/learning processes, leadership skills, research design, and research analysis in which Ras Al Khaimah institutions could collaborate in a mutually beneficial and cost-effective manner. Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions need to explore opportunities for sharing good practices in professional development and to cooperate on providing some generic professional training for staff of all institutions. The benefits of exchanging ideas, sharing external professional development training experts, and establishing networks for ongoing training and policy development have not been realized in Ras Al Khaimah.

Introduction

Importance of Professional Development in Higher Education

Human resources are the backbone of any university, college, or specialized institution. Qualified and dedicated staff are key to ensuring that higher education institutions fulfill their mission of teaching/learning, research, and service to society (Haskins & Shaffer, 2011). To ensure that academic and management staff are prepared for the evolving challenges facing higher education today and are continually expanding their knowledge and skills sets, it is important that professional development opportunities are available. This accessibility is central to ensuring and improving the quality of higher education (Crawford, 2008).

The focus of this report is the professional development policies and practices of the higher education institutions in Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The main objectives of the report are to increase the awareness and understanding of the importance of professional development for teaching, research, and administrative staff; report on the findings of a

research project supported by the Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research; identify the training needs and priorities of higher education academic and administrative/management staff; and to stimulate information exchange, collaboration, and capacity building among the local higher education institutions in terms of professional development training and the development of related policies and programs.

Changes in Higher Education and Implications for Professional Development

The changes and challenges facing higher education are enormous in scope and substance. Several of the major changes that are relevant to the higher education institutions in Ras Al Khaimah include the following:

- 1) Given that the vast majority of the students and university staff are expatriates, the multi-cultural diversity of the classroom, campus, and community is a key issue. Professional development initiatives related to teaching and advising students from different cultures and educational backgrounds can benefit faculty and administrative staff.
- 2) New developments in information/communication technologies (ICTs) as well as social media impact students and staff both in the teaching/learning process and in university management. Further training can help academic and administrative personnel take advantage of the advances in ICTs and develop new knowledge and skills.
- 3) Currently, the pressure on higher education institutions to ensure that their graduates meet the needs of the local labor market is acute. This is especially true in Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates where there are concentrated efforts to diversify industrial sectors and decrease dependency on oil. Professional development workshops focused on revising curriculum with a focus on learning outcomes and competencies can help ensure that academic programs are more relevant to needs of the workplace.
- 4) The increased emphasis on faculty members' undertaking more research in addition to their teaching responsibilities is prevalent among all universities, and Ras Al Khaimah is no exception. The role of universities in contributing to the knowledge economy is directly related to the applied research and innovation work done by the faculty members.
- 5) Lastly, the international dimension of higher education is increasingly important as evidenced by the growing number of branch campuses, bi-national universities, and new varieties of private commercial providers. In fact, the United Arab Emirates is home to the largest number of international branch campuses in the world. Ras Al Khaimah is actively attracting more branch campuses to its free zones, which means that the number of academic and administrative staff may increase substantially. Workshops for all staff on a diversity of topics such as quality assurance procedures, enrollment requirements, advising, teaching in the Ras Al Khaimah context, and the nature of the relationships with the parent campuses are especially important for branch campus situations. These new challenges and changes in the higher education sector have multiple implications for universities, one of which is the impact on professional development policies and programs.

Multicultural campus.

The multicultural make up of both students and staff in Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions present opportunities and challenges. Instructors' teaching/research styles can offer rich opportunities for exchange even while creating misunderstandings and conflicts. Additionally, interaction among instructors and students who bring different expectations and classroom styles to campus life and education can also be challenging. The role of professional development in helping to address such issues deserves further attention.

Impact of technology on teaching and learning.

The use of information and communication technology in the delivery and management of education is one of the more important trends in higher education. While there continues to be much debate about the pros and cons of using technology, the fast pace of technological change is likely to continue. Thus, it is paramount that higher education staff be up-to-date on technological innovations so that they can apply best practices in different educational contexts. Professional development can play a central role in equipping educational staff with knowledge of the benefits, risks, and consequences of technology (Munger, et al, 2014). Technology training can cover a wide spectrum of topics including technology as teaching and learning aids in the classroom, as research tools, as ways to undertake collaborative curriculum design and delivery with partners near and far, as alternative ways to expand the number of courses offered to students from different providers and as a means of reaching new students who want access to higher education (Rienties et al, 2013).

Using technology for professional development.

More and more academic and administrative staff are interested in having some kind of formal recognition of their professional development activities. Although this can be documented through certificates of participation, there is growing interest in recognized diplomas and degrees for completed professional development activities. In response to this interest, institutions that offer specialized higher education courses are providing online diplomas as well as undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Such programs address a variety of themes such as instructional design, higher education administration, and student affairs. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) offer opportunities for faculty and staff to take specialized courses in their disciplines or job areas. New technologies are providing ways for individual or collaborative, short-term or long-term, and non-credit or credit professional development opportunities to take shape (Leslie & Johnson-Leslie, 2014).

Customized institutional-based professional development opportunities.

As important as these new online opportunities are, they do not negate the importance of institutions' providing their own professional development activities on site. The benefits of institution-based professional development programs include their relevance to the institutions' particular priorities, their facilitating networking and collaboration across the institution, their sensitivity to institutional culture, and finally their ability to customize training to the expressed needs of the institution and local labor force (Zuber-Skerritt & Cendon, 2014). Additionally, the demand for job-ready graduates requires further training in curriculum design and career counseling.

Professional development for administrative staff and faculty.

Professional development opportunities for administrative staff are often overlooked or given low priority in higher education institutions. No one would disagree about the critical role that administrative staff plays in operating these institutions, but, in general, the challenge of making professional development a priority for academic staff has meant that administrative staff have had fewer training opportunities. The most common form of professional development for administrative staff is membership in professional associations, which often provide workshops, webinars, and conferences.

Career planning and development.

Another increasingly important area of professional development for higher education staff is career planning and development. This issue is relevant to Ras Al Khaimah because many of the staff in non-federal higher education institutions are expatriates working on contract and are often internationally mobile. In such situations, career development involves more than following the academic hierarchy from assistant, to associate, to full professor or—for administrators—from staff, to officer, to assistant director, to director.

Design, Scope, and Limitations of Research Project

The focus of the research project was the professional development policies and practices of higher education institutions in Ras Al Khaimah. It did not include other emirates in the UAE. The main purpose involves assessing the policies and activities that currently exist in Ras Al Khaimah's universities and institutes and to identify the staff training and development needs and priorities. The specific research objectives were as follows:

- to map and analyze existing policies and strategies that address the professional training and development needs of academic administrative staff in Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions;
- to identify good practice in professional development policies as well as those areas that need to be strengthened; and
- to undertake an assessment of faculty and staff development priorities as articulated by the staff themselves and to raise staff's awareness of the importance and practicality of continuing professional development.

The research project focused solely on the issues related to professional development for academic and administrative staff. The research did not address the broader issues in human resource management (HRM) related to staff performance, review, hiring, or promotion. A key element of the study was the inclusion of policies, practices, and training priorities for both staff and faculty. There are a number of very different higher education institutions in Ras Al Khaimah, and their differences relate to the institutions' sponsorship (private or government), disciplinary foci, number of programs, date of establishment, and location in or outside a free zone. The selection of institutions was based on representing the diversity of Ras Al Khaimah and also on the institutions' availability. This last criterion was especially important as the research was undertaken during the end-of-semester exams and several institutions were on winter break. In an attempt to include different types and ages of institutions, as well as

disciplinary foci, three institutions were included:

The American University of Ras Al Khaimah (AURAK) is a relatively new emirate-level university and is growing quickly. It provides an integrated American-style, undergraduate and graduate education with a strong focus on local cultures. The number of faculty, staff, and academic programs is substantially increasing each year. AURAK has four schools: the School of Arts and Science, School of Business, School of Engineering, and School of Graduate Studies and Research, which collectively offer 24 programs.

The Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) is a private institution that is also relatively new and serves as a branch campus of its parent university (Birla Institute of Technology, Ranchi) in India. It is operated/owned by CORE International Institute of Higher Education of Ras Al Khaimah and is located in a free zone. Its three schools (Architecture, Business, and Engineering) offer a total of nine programs and qualifications.

The Ras Al Khaimah Medical and Health Sciences University (RAKMHSU) is a mature and larger institution owned and managed by the Government of Ras Al Khaimah. It is comprised of four colleges, Medical, Dental, Nursing, and Pharmacy. Together the four colleges offer five undergraduate degrees and five graduate level programs.

The federal-level Higher Colleges of Technology located in Ras Al Khaimah were not included in the study due to timing and access considerations.

Terminology

Professional development, human resource development, and management are widely used terms in private and public sectors. For the purposes of this report, professional development refers to "the process of improving and increasing the capabilities of staff through access to a variety of short-term and long-term education and training opportunities." Human resource development and management is a broader term and includes personnel management issues that are not addressed in this report. The term "faculty" is used to include academic staff who are involved in teaching, research, and service. The term "staff" covers all those who have administrative and management responsibilities in the institution in departments such as student affairs, finance, admissions, human resources, public relations, and institutional effectiveness.

Methodology

Interviews and document (policy) review were the primary ways of gathering information and also raising awareness among the interviewees about the issues related to professional development. The study did not use a survey, but the interviews followed a pre-determined set of open-ended questions. The interviews were customized to the interviewee's level of understanding and involvement in professional development work. Pilot interviews established the major categories of professional development activities.

Each institution's employees received an email from a senior leader in the institution giving a short description of the research project that outlined the purpose, scope, and meaning of professional development. A deliberate attempt was made to interview a cross-section of academic and administrative staff at each institution. Each interview was approximately 30 to 40 minutes in length and started with a general discussion of the meaning, importance, and benefits of professional development. This helped to ensure that there was a common understanding among interviewees before policies, practices, and priorities were discussed. It also served to raise awareness among staff about the critical role that professional development plays in their own work and in the overall quality of their respective institution. At the end of each discussion, interviewees were asked to rank their top three priority categories for further training and to give examples of what specific topics would be most helpful. The professional development categories were developed from the information gleaned from the pilot interviews and common practice themes for higher education professional development. The categories for academic staff including instructors and researchers are described in Table 1 and those for administrative staff are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Professional Development Categories for Academic Staff

Category	Description
Discipline/Subject Specific	Addresses the specific disciplinary or research interests of the academic
Leadership	Includes generic leadership or soft skills training in areas such as interpersonal communication, time management, working in groups, problem solving, and cross-cultural communication
Teaching and Learning	Focuses on topics such as teaching/learning effectiveness, curriculum design, student evaluation, motivating students, technology-enabled learning, and problem-based learning
Research	Relates to all aspects of improving research skills including writing funding proposals, design, data analysis, and writing journal articles
Career Development	Addresses how to strategically plan for career development beyond simple progression through the ranks of professorship or administration
Language	Includes desire to learn Arabic to better serve and interact with students as well as to improve English proficiency and accent

Table 2. Professional Development Categories for Administrative Staff

Category	Description
Job Specific	Relates to specific job role and its associated responsibilities
Leadership	Includes generic leadership or soft skills training in areas such as interpersonal communication, time management, working in groups, problem solving, and cross-cultural communication
Higher Education Management	Focuses on knowledge and skills related to organization development and management in an academic institution
Career Development	Addresses how to strategically plan for and implement career development paths
Language	Includes desire to learn Arabic to better serve and interact with students and/or improve English proficiency and accent

A total of 120 interviews were completed, which included 100 with faculty members and administrative staff. The remaining 20 interviews were divided into two categories. There were 10 pilot interviews—five with faculty and five with administrative staff—and the remaining 10 were done with senior leaders of the three institutions and higher education experts in Ras Al Khaimah. The purpose of the interviews with the senior leaders was to better understand the context of the university and to learn about formal policies and practices from leadership's perspective. Discussions with higher education experts in Ras Al Khaimah provided the opportunity to obtain further information and insights on the local context and government policies. The anonymity of the interviewees was a condition set by the participating institutions.

Over 85% of the interviews with faculty and administrative staff were on a one-to-one basis. Of the 100 interviews, 61 were with academic faculty and 39 with administrative staff. Anonymity was promised for every interviewee, as this report's focus was on the collective meaning and significance of the data rather than on individual opinions. To ensure anonymity, no demographic or personal information was taken on the interviewees. The number of interviews by institution and category of job responsibility is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of Interviews by Institution and Job Responsibility

	AURAK	BIRLA	RAKMHSU	Total
Academic Faculty	24	10	27	61
Administrative Staff	15	8	16	39
Total	39	18	43	100

Findings Regarding Professional Development Priorities in Ras Al Khaimah

The analysis of the findings regarding policies and practices was done at the aggregate level to ensure the anonymity of each institution's staff. However, the analysis of the professional development and training needs and priorities for administrative staff and faculty was done at both aggregate and institutional levels for comparison.

Each of the 100 interviewees ranked his/her top three priorities for professional development. Their responses were analyzed in terms of frequency of response and in terms of the weight of the priority. Thus, the first priority had a weight of three points, the second priority had a weight of two points, and the third priority had a weight of one point. An overall score based on frequency and weighting was calculated and resulted in the ranking of importance of the categories from one to six. The calculations were done for each institution individually and then on an aggregate basis.

Table 4 shows that that on an aggregate basis "research" was the top priority for further professional development; "teaching and learning" development ranked second; and "subject specific" development was third. "Career development" ranked fourth, followed by "generic leadership skills," and, finally, "language training." Responses varied across the three individual institutions. However, with the exception of the academics from AURAK's ranking "career development" as their third priority, the top three priorities were consistent across the three institutions. The differences across the institutional rankings reflect their staff's priorities and culture, as well as the maturity of the institution and the qualifications of its faculty.

The similarities across these institutions could open up the opportunity for some collaborative research and teaching training among them. The subject specialization is not as conducive to either collaborative or generic training as the niche areas of subject specialization differ considerably across the three universities.

Table 4. Faculty Priorities for Professional Development

Category	Overall Ranking	AURAK	BIRLA	RAKMHSU
Research	1	2	3	1
Teaching and Learning	2	1	2	3
Subject Specialization	3		1	2
Career Development	4	3		
Leadership Skills	5			
Language Training	6			
Total Interviews	61	24	10	27

The same analysis was conducted regarding the priorities of the administrative staff. On the aggregate level, the top three priorities for professional development were 1) job specific training; 2) leadership skills; and 3) career development. "Knowledge and skills related to higher education management" ranked fourth, and "language training" fifth. Even though language training ranked last for both faculty and staff, the expressed need for and interest in improving language skills deserves attention.

Table 5. Staff Professional Development Priorities

Category	Overall Ranking	AURAK	BIRLA	RAKMHSU
Job Specific	1	2	1	1
Leadership Skills	2	1	2	3
Career Development	3	3	3	2
Higher Ed Management	4			
Language Training	5			
Total Interviews	39	15	8	16

Discussion, Good Practice, and Recommendations

The previous section presented the results of the faculty and administrative priorities for professional development. This section looks at the presence or absence of professional development policies and practices in Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions. The discussion also includes examples of good practices that would be appropriate for adapting to Ras Al Khaimah's institutions.

Professional Development Policies

A major objective of the research project was the identification of existing professional development policies in Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions and how they are implemented through formally organized events or by more informal means.

The review of policies showed that staff handbooks included information on faculty and administrative staff's professional development policies. The substance and level of details in these guidelines differed significantly among the institutions. Some were general statements of intention and required the individual to discuss anything specific with his/her department head while others provided detailed information and guidance. This report suggests that staff handbooks have clearly articulated and well-developed policies for academic and administrative staff professional development opportunities. This would include criteria for supporting professional development training, what funding is available, the frequency of application deadlines, required reporting procedures, and the evaluation of how the professional development goals were met.

Staff appraisals including professional development.

Significantly, professional development policies were not directly linked to staff appraisal procedures in any of three institutions. Examples of good practice shows that the annual staff appraisal forms and processes consist of two parts. The first part consists of identifying a staff member's individual objectives and plans for achieving professional and personal development goals during the year, and the second part is dedicated to the actual review of the employee's performance. In this way, professional development activities are linked to strengthening performance areas and pursuing personal and professional development. This example of good practice encourages higher education institutions to institutionalize an annual appraisal system for all staff that links performance review with professional development goals and activities. The professional development part would identify specific objectives for further training, identify which strategies would help to achieve the objectives, and evaluate whether and how the goals were met.

Pursuing further degree education.

Some respondents identified pursuing a higher degree in job-specific or discipline-specific areas as a priority. At this point in time, none of the Ras Al Khaimah institutions have explicit policies supporting formal degree-upgrading opportunities for their faculty or staff. Nevertheless, there were instances in which teaching and administrative staff independently pursued further formal studies on their own time. Examples of self-initiated pursuits of further education include taking a master's program through online or part-time academic programs, following Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that related to their discipline and research interests, or taking unpaid leaves of absence to complete PhD programs. While the number of staff and faculty who have undertaken this further education is small, it illustrates staff's deep commitment to improving their qualifications. Therefore, the development of policies and programs to promote further education relevant to staff members' jobs or academic disciplines warrants consideration.

Staff exchanges in international institutional agreements.

As the internationalization of higher education grows, international institutional agreements among higher education are expanding both in number and type. Student exchanges are often the first activity among institutions, and once the cross-institutional relationship is established, other joint activities develop. Faculty and staff exchanges are examples of second-stage collaboration. Faculty exchange is an attractive and useful form of professional development that supports joint curriculum development, teaching effectiveness, and collaborative research (Friedman et al, 2014). At the current time, none of Ras Al Khaimah's institutions that currently have bilateral agreement with partner universities in other countries have included opportunities for faculty or administrative staff exchange. As Ras Al Khaimah institutions review their international institutional agreements, it is worth exploring whether staff and faculty exchanges for professional development purposes could be included as future activities.

Staff awareness of professional development policies.

The existence of professional development policies does not necessarily mean that faculty and staff are aware of them. Faculty and staff at the Ras Al Khaimah institutions demonstrated varying degrees of awareness concerning professional development policies at their institutions. Overall, academic staff were more aware of the policies than were administrative staff. In many cases, even if staff knew that such a policy existed, they did not know the contents of the policy. In two institutions, a minority of academic staff believed that professional development policies were more rhetoric than practice; they believed that any funds for professional development had been earmarked for other priorities.

Professional Development Practices

Ras Al Khaimah needs to address staff development and training in a way that reflects its own priorities, interests, and context. The purpose of this section is to look at several of the professional development practices that exist in the three higher education institutions studied in Ras Al Khaimah. The following discussion will not link practices to a specific institution in light of anonymity concerns; instead, the paper will discuss these practices generically so that all institutions can benefit from the examples of good practice and innovation.

Induction and orientation programs.

Many faculty and staff general induction or orientation sessions include a module on the institution's commitment to, policies regarding, and practices relevant to professional development. Rather than covering too much information at once, staff orientations can include a series of meetings to allow staff to effectively understand professional development policies. An introduction to professional development issues and opportunities is also worth including in the staff orientation program for each academic year. Staff who have participated in professional development opportunities in the past can also motivate their colleagues to pursue similar activities.

Internal and external guest speakers, seminars, workshops, and conferences.

The most common way to reach a larger group of staff for training is to hold professional development events on campus. This has many advantages in terms of access but has some disadvantages as well. Interviewees frequently suggested that internal training be accessible and customizable; however, having staff from other institutions participating in professional development activities can bring different perspectives to professional dialogues and can stimulate thinking outside of institutional norms.

Guest lectures and internal workshops/seminars were the most common form of professional development activities offered at Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions. These initiatives are open to all, usually focused on gaining new knowledge about a discipline or subject area, and are the most efficient way to involve a large number of staff in professional development activities.

External professional development experts or speakers can also be beneficial. While an institution's own trainers know the organization well and can ensure that the training is relevant to its context, external workshop leaders can bring different expertise. Experience shows that, for job-specific training (for administrative staff), it is better to have a leader familiar with the administration processes and organizational culture of the institution. On the other hand, generic training related to leadership skills, teaching/learning practices, first-level research, and writing skills is often effectively communicated through an outside trainer who is partnered with an internal person.

Participation in external conferences is the second most common form of professional development for academic staff in Ras Al Khaimah. If a professor has a paper accepted by a conference organizing committee, it is usually possible for him or her to get financial support to cover travel expenses from his or her institution. If a faculty member's paper is not being presented, it his or her institution will often provide leave time for the faculty member to participate in the conference. Professors need to attend academic conferences to maintain their knowledge of their disciplines and their colleagues' work. In light of this, future professional development policies could consider funding even those faculty members who are not presenting papers to attend relevant conferences and seminars.

Mentoring.

Connecting senior academic staff with more junior faculty members is also an effective way of acquainting new staff with the institution's processes as well as its professional development interests (Bean et al, 2014). The same is true for matching experienced administrative/management staff with newer counterparts. Such mentoring programs, when carefully designed and supported, provide on-the-job advice and may highlight external professional development opportunities (Hameed & Qazi, 2011). Effective mentoring depends on a number of factors—the appropriate matching of individuals; the individuals' enduring commitment to the professional relationship; the institution's support of the mentoring relationship; and the individuals' confidence that the mentoring program meets their goals. Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions support the idea of mentoring, but to date there are no formal opportunities or programs available. Ras Al Khaimah's institutions are encouraged to establish a formal mechanism to facilitate and support mentor/mentoree relationships.

Designated center for teaching and research effectiveness.

It is common practice for universities and colleges to have specialized centers dedicated to teaching effectiveness. These centers are important to higher education institutions, as few higher education instructors have had pedagogical training (Grabovem et al, 2012). There are also centers that focus on research training, but these usually have a broader mandate that includes information on funding sources, assistance in preparing grant applications, and monitoring funded research projects.

In Ras Al Khaimah, there is one institution that has an active training center dedicated to strengthening teaching and research competencies. Faculty like to attend the workshops because the training is directly relevant to their disciplines and is offered at convenient times. The institution's strong commitment to increasing teaching effectiveness is attributed to the work of the center. Another institution in Ras Al Khaimah is planning to develop such a

professional development center focused on both teaching and research. In the beginning, the focus on research appears to be on finding sources for funding research more than on training for the development of research competencies. Given the growing emphasis on faculty's research output, it is very promising that Ras Al Khaimah institutions are also planning to offer workshops to develop faculty's ability to prepare grant applications, design research projects, improve quantitative and qualitative research analysis techniques, and produce academic articles for publication.

On-the-job training.

In particular, administrative staff expressed a need for more on-the-job training through mentoring programs, specialized hands-on workshops, or one-on-one training. Ras Al Khaimah's institutions, in general, gave low priority to the professional development needs of their administrative staff and, thus, are encouraged to make this a higher priority going forward.

Developing critical mass for a master's in higher education management.

An interesting trend in professional development for higher education administrative and management staff is enrollment in executive MBAs on a part-time basis. This is evident in the United Arab Emirates in general and particularly in Ras Al Khaimah. The number of executive MBA programs is increasing, though the quality of the programs differs greatly. Both administrative and academic staff chose MBA programs because there are no other options for formal graduate studies in higher education management. The clear challenge is ensuring that the MBA coursework is actually relevant to work in higher education institutions, but this is often not the case. In the absence of any other option, those who are motivated to undertake further education pursue MBAs.

Emirate-level Policy and Programs and Collaboration Across Ras Al Khaimah's Institutions

At the current time, it appears that policies for professional development are at the institutional level only and in many cases are underdeveloped and underperforming. Furthermore, there is no emirate-level governmental or non-governmental body that addresses the issues and needs related to professional development in Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions. Given the diversity of types, sponsorships, sizes, and specialities of higher education institutions, it is clear that some of the training needs to be customized to each institution. However, this does not negate the importance of emirate-level initiatives that emphasize the benefits of faculty and staff development to ensure and improve the quality of higher education in Ras Al Khaimah. Given the lack of any senior-level higher education policymaking body in Ras Al Khaimah, it may be appropriate to assume that any steps to develop academic and administrative staff will need to be done by the institutions themselves rather than by a government entity.

Nevertheless, professional development training need not be limited to individual institutions. Collaboration among Ras Al Khaimah's institutions for training related to teaching effectiveness, the use of ICT, leadership skills, career development, and language training is possible and desirable. Ras Al Khaimah's higher education institutions are encouraged to explore opportunities for sharing good practice in professional development and to cooperate

on providing some generic training for staff of all institutions. The benefits of exchanging ideas, sharing external professional development training experts, and establishing networks for ongoing training and policy development have not been realized in Ras Al Khaimah.

Resources Related to Professional Development for Faculty and Staff

The following list includes a variety of resources related to specific topics regarding professional development programs and policies. The first group includes web-based resources on issues that are discussed in the report, such as orientation of new faculty, technology, and career development. The second group lists a number of online graduate level programs in different aspects of higher education. They serve as examples for continuing education for faculty and administrative staff. The third group lists academic articles and book chapters that address a specific theme relevant to this report.

Topic-based Web Resources

Career Development.

Office of Academic Career Development, Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh:
<http://www.oacd.health.pitt.edu/>

Developing your academic career at the University of Technology Sydney:
<http://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/teaching-and-learning/developing-your-academic-career/developing-your-career>

Orientation/Induction for New Faculty.

Survival Guide for New academics at the University of Technology Sydney:
www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/teaching-and-learning/developing-your-academic-career/survival-guide-new

Research Training.

Higher Education Development Centre at Otago University:
<http://hedc.otago.ac.nz/hedc/researching/>

Research on Teaching and Learning.

Centre for Teaching and Learning at University of Stellenbosch:
<http://stbweb02.stb.sun.ac.za/ctl/research.html>

Technology.

Professional Development and higher education IT at Educause:
<http://www.educause.edu/blogs/shannon-d-smith/professional-development-and-higher-education-it>

Online Graduate Programs in Higher Education

Master of Science in Student Affairs in Higher Education at Colorado State University:

<http://www.online.colostate.edu/degrees/student-affairs/>

PhD Education Studies: Specialization in Educational Leadership and Higher Education at University of Nebraska Lincoln:

<http://online.unl.edu/programs-and-courses/graduate-doctorate-programs/educational-studies-leadership-higher-education.aspx>

Master of Education in Higher Education (for administrators) at Central Washington University:

<https://www.cwu.edu/online-learning/online-graduate-programs>

Post Graduate Certificate in higher Education at Middlesex University Dubai:

<http://www.mdx.ac/prospective-students/postgraduate-studies/pgche/>

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