



Teaching Beyond Today: Identifying Faculty Development Needs at Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2025/v51i82232>

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://pr.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/140278>

Original Research Article

Received: 10/05/2025
Published: 17/07/2025

ABSTRACT

This article is part of an Action Research conducted to establish factors impeding the quality of teaching and learning at Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University (EAST). The article is directly drawn from the third objective of the Study aimed at assessing the professional development needs of faculty members that should be addressed to enhance instructional effectiveness, improving student preparedness, and strengthening the University's academic standing. The study adopted a descriptive research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The return rate of study tool was 67 out of 75, selected through convenience sampling. Using convenience sampling

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Cite as: Kinuva, Wanjiru, Isaac Kasili, and Nicolous Kalerwa. 2025. "Teaching Beyond Today: Identifying Faculty Development Needs at Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University". *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 51 (8):168-76. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2025/v51i82232>.

limited generalizability. However, it was appropriate for this context-specific action research at EAST University. Validity was enhanced by experts reviewing the tool and triangulation by using diverse questionnaire items, and transparent, reflective data analysis. One questionnaire for the following category of participants was used: 19 faculty members, 27 students; 13 administrators and 8 alumni including the non-identified. Data from the online survey was analyzed using Google Sheets, which enabled basic statistical analysis of trends and patterns. The researcher found out that on the overall, EAST exhibits a solid foundation in some aspects of teaching and learning. However, Faculty have professional needs that should be met. These areas included firstly, additional workshops on instructional technologies to improve their teaching effectiveness at 60.3%. Secondly, is focused trainings on active learning strategies and student engagement (57.8%). The third area of need is regular training in curriculum design and assessment methods to enhance EAST Faculty's teaching skills (55.4%). Further, training the faculty in understanding and incorporating inclusive teaching practices for diverse student populations was selected (49.2%); at the same percentage as training of EAST Faculty in research, innovation, community outreach and publishing. Lastly, the study established that EAST Faculty can use training on peer mentoring or collaborative learning opportunities with colleagues to enhance teaching methods (40%).

Keywords: Action research; EAST; Kenya Assemblies of God University; teaching and learning; Instruction, institutional self-assessment; quality education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University (EAST), recognizes the critical role that faculty development plays in advancing the Institution's Mission and educational mandate. The complexity and dynamism of today's higher education environment necessitate a strategic approach to faculty support; one that is evidence-based, contextually grounded, and responsive to the evolving demands of teaching and learning. Conducting a rigorous assessment of faculty professional needs provided invaluable insights into existing gaps in pedagogical skills, content delivery, technological integration, and instructional design. Furthermore, this assessment informs the design of relevant, targeted, and sustainable professional development programs.

One of the objectives of the Action Research on 'Factors Impeding the Quality of Teaching and Learning at Kenya Assemblies of God East University' was aimed at assessing the professional development needs of faculty members that needed to be addressed for the enhancement of teaching and learning. The Study situated itself within the broader discourse on academic quality and institutional effectiveness, drawing on both global literature and local institutional imperatives. It sought to explore and analyze the professional development needs of faculty at EAST, with the goal of identifying key areas for capacity building and program enhancement. The findings were intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of how strategic faculty development should

foster innovation, improve student learning outcomes, and reinforce EAST's commitment to academic excellence. In doing so, the research aimed to inform policy, shape future development initiatives, and support ongoing efforts to improve teaching and learning quality within the University.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The quality of instruction in university education plays a crucial role in determining student outcomes and academic success. This teaching and learning is ordinarily expected to equip learners with the relevant knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities needed to succeed in their professional and personal lives. Additionally, it should foster innovation, encourage lifelong learning, and contribute to the development of a knowledgeable and capable workforce (Altbach, et al., 2009 & Teichler, 2014). Also, high-quality education should promote social mobility and economic development within the communities these learners are drawn from (Trust, 2025). Further, high quality education should enhance student gratification, perceptions about the institutional and measure up to international standards (Kalam, 2023). Consequently, it is of paramount importance that a broad understanding of the existing state of instruction in an institution of higher learning be evidence-based. This can be achieved by examining various elements of education such as curriculum delivery, faculty commitment, student involvement, and the institutional environment among other important aspects (Pattison, 2024). Faculty members are

the cornerstone of teaching and learning quality in institutions of higher learning. Due to the crucial role they play in teaching and learning, a comprehensive and continuous evaluation of their evolving professional needs is as vital. This is done in order to aid in putting in place training and development initiatives which help faculty to remain relevant and effective. Recent studies emphasize the significance of identifying specific gaps in knowledge, pedagogical approaches, research competencies, and leadership skills. For instance, a 2024 study by Kulal et al. highlighted the positive impact of faculty development programs on teachers' competencies and their adoption of modern pedagogical approaches, emphasizing the importance of aligning development initiatives with faculty needs to nurture quality education (Kulal, et al., 2024). This Study identified substantial gaps between existing development offerings and faculty expectations, underscoring the need for more personalized and stage-sensitive initiatives. It stressed the significance of systematically appraising faculty development needs in nurturing a culture of continuous improvement and professional engagement. When institutions prioritize faculty input and tailor programs accordingly, it not only improves instructional effectiveness but also boosts morale and faculty retention. A 2024 study conducted in South Korea to identify needs and gaps of faculty development for medical schools by Im, et al., (2024) emphasized the necessity of expanding programs to meet individual and institutional needs, advocating for comprehensive and responsive programs that consider faculty roles and career stages. Additionally, a 2023 review of faculty development programs carried out in Iran suggested adopting competency-based frameworks and broadening the scope beyond traditional roles to enhance professional identity and organizational impact (Keshmiri & Parsa, 2023). This assertion buttressed the requirement for needs assessments not merely as administrative tools but strategic instruments that drive meaningful educational reforms and faculty satisfaction. Besides, needs assessments are not merely procedural but form the foundation for designing impactful and sustainable faculty development strategies that enhance both individual and organizational performance (Keshmiri & Parsa (2023); Kulal, et al., (2024).

As the educational landscape continues to evolve, there is a growing need for universities to provide faculty with professional development opportunities that enhance their teaching skills

and pedagogical knowledge. According to McDougall and Johnston-Wilder (2024) effective professional development programs should be ongoing, focused on content knowledge, and linked to students' learning outcomes. In a study conducted by Al Lily, et al., (2022) it was found that faculty members who received regular training in modern teaching strategies were better equipped to engage students, adapt to changing classroom environments, and incorporate technology into their teaching. Similarly, a report by the American Council on Education (2017) suggests that faculty development programs that focus on both teaching skills and subject-specific expertise improve faculty effectiveness and student learning outcomes. As Bailey and Jaggars (2023) emphasize, evidence-based evaluation contributes significantly to improving student success. Moreover, as noted by Leibowitz and Bozalek (2023) assessment practices are influenced by and can shape institutional culture, making them a powerful tool for educational transformation. Tight (2023) further highlights the global importance of regularly examining teaching and learning to ensure universities remain responsive to evolving educational needs. These reasons make the current Action Research very timely.

At Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University, understanding the specific professional development needs of faculty members was crucial. This included identifying areas where faculty feel underprepared and providing them with the tools and resources they needed to implement innovative teaching strategies. For instance, workshops on active learning techniques, the integration of technology into the classroom, and instructional design could play a key role in enhancing faculty competencies. A self-assessment of the current status of teaching and learning at EAST was found essential for maintaining academic quality, promoting continuous improvement, and aligning institutional strategic goals with educational objectives and practices. This assessment was expected to provide critical insights for strategic planning, help refine teaching methods, and enhance student learning outcomes; as it supports accreditation processes and demonstrate institutional accountability. It was for these very reasons that the 2025 Action Research on 'Factors Impeding the Quality of Teaching and Learning at Kenya Assemblies of God East University' was conducted.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main Study from which this article is drawn was an Action Research aimed at determining factors impeding the quality of teaching and learning at EAST. The third task of the study was to assess the professional development needs of faculty members that should be addressed to enhance their teaching skills and knowledge at EAST. The study adopted a qualitative and quantitative descriptive research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2014). This mixed-methods design was selected because it allowed for the researcher to gather both numerical data (quantitative) and in-depth insights (qualitative) regarding the teaching and learning practices at EAST (Creswell & Plano, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2010). The Quantitative Approach was employed in pulling together data linked to the current state of teaching and learning, faculty development, and technology integration through structured questions/items. On the other hand, the Qualitative Approach comprised of gathering opinions and dialogues by means of open ended questions from faculty members, administrators, alumni and students. This helped to garner detailed perceptions into the obstacles of quality education and prospects for improving instructional quality (Amberscript, 2023; Xiao, et al., 2019).

The sample of a total of 75 participants was found sufficient considering that the study tool was one questionnaire for all the categories of respondents; 20 faculty members, 30 students, 13 administrators and 12 alumni were expected to participate in the study. However, 19 faculty members, 27 students, 13 administrators and 8 others including alumni and those who did not indicate their roles at EAST. The return rate of 67 out of 75 is 89%. Convenience sampling, also known as availability or accidental sampling; which is a non-probability sampling method was engaged in assembling data from members of the EAST Fraternity who were willing to participate in the Study. While this non-probability sampling method limits the generalizability of the findings, it was appropriate given that the study being carried out was an Action Research contextualized to EAST. The data collection tool was aligned closely with the research objectives and subjected to expert review. Triangulation was also employed through multiple questionnaire items; with some items being open in order to collect views, opinions and discourse from the respondents. The aim was to

enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Furthermore, transparency in data analysis and reflective interpretation helped mitigate bias and strengthen the integrity of the results within the specific context of Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University.

The age clusters were classified into 6: Under 20, 21–25, 26–30, 31–35, 36–40, and Over 40. Out of the 67 respondents of the study, the majority were aged over 40 years (47.7%), followed by the age bracket made up of respondents between the age of 21 and 25 (20%). Those aged 26-30 were third (15.4%) and 7.7% were respondents aged 35-40. The under 20s and those aged 31-35 combined composed of 9.2% of the study sample. As indicated by the Study participants 52.3% were male, 46.2% female while 1.5% were other. The analysis was done using the Google form utilized for data collection.

The data collected through the online survey, administered via Google Forms, was automatically compiled into Google Sheets for analysis. Google Sheets was used due to its seamless integration with the survey tool, its accessibility, and its capacity to support basic statistical analysis for informed interpretation. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were generated to identify trends and patterns in participant responses. The analysis focused on summarizing key insights related to the assessment of status quo of instruction at EAST, barriers to effective and quality instruction, faculty development needs, the impact of technology on pedagogy and recommendations for enhancement of quality in teaching and learning at EAST.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The third objective of the Study was meant to assess the professional development needs of faculty members which need to be addressed and the results are indicated on Table 1. According to McDougall and Johnston-Wilder (2024) effective professional development programs should be ongoing, focused on content knowledge, and linked to students' learning outcomes. In a study conducted by Al Lily, et al., (2022) it was found that faculty members who received regular training in modern teaching strategies were better equipped to engage students, adapt to changing classroom environments, and incorporate technology into their teaching. Similarly, a report by the American

Council on Education (2017) suggests that faculty development programs that focus on both teaching skills and subject-specific expertise improve faculty effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

In order to improve faculty support in professional development, it was imperative to first determine their needs. In conducting this assessment, five general areas of professional development need for EAST Faculty were evaluated. The first one was additional workshops on instructional technologies to improve their teaching effectiveness. Out of the 64 responses, 60.3% is a strong indication that EAST Faculty would benefit from additional workshops on instructional technologies to improve our teaching effectiveness. A further 34.9% agreed while 4.8% were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed. The second need is professional development programs focused on active learning strategies and student engagement. These programs may comprise but not limited to Inclusive teaching, Collaborative learning, Inquiry-based learning, reflective journaling, peer observations, and student feedback analysis. Student Engagement through Technology Integration such as Gamification in learning, Live polls, backchanneling, interactive tools (like Kahoot, Mentimeter, Padlet). Also, more effective use of Learning Management System (LMS) for the enhancements of interactivity. Course Redesign for Active Learning (CRAL) can be very useful. This includes Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Backward design with student-centered objectives and Formative feedback loops. Majority of the study respondents (57.8%) though slightly fewer than in the first developmental need, strongly agreed to prioritizing this area of growth. Besides, 35.9% agreed that this is an area of need, while only 6.3% were of the opinion that this area should not be prioritized. The third area of need is regular training in curriculum design and assessment methods would enhance KAG-EU Faculty's teaching skills. Those who strongly

agreed made up 55.4%, those who agreed were 40% and the remaining 4.6% composed of the neutral, disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respondents.

There is need to also further train EAST Faculty in understanding and incorporating inclusive teaching practices for diverse student populations. This means using instructional methods which address the needs of students from different cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, ability, or learning backgrounds, equity gaps while making classrooms welcoming and responsive. The strategies encompass Culturally responsive pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Flexible assessment and learning pathways and Trauma-informed and anti-bias teaching. Again most respondents (49.2%) strongly agreed to this suggestion, 36.9% agreed while 13.9% were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed. This need was rated the same as further training of EAST Faculty in research, innovation, community outreach and publishing. This would mean building faculty capacity in designing and conducting rigorous, context-responsive research; strengthening skills in innovation, problem-solving, and applied knowledge creation; promoting meaningful community engagement aligned with EAST's mission; and empowering faculty to publish in credible academic journals and contribute to scholarly discourse. The mainstream opinion on this need was strongly in agreement (49.2%) with this need being met; 41.5% agreed with the need being met whereas 9.3% were non-committal on this being a priority. Lastly, the study sought to establish if EAST Faculty can use training on peer mentoring or collaborative learning opportunities with colleagues to enhance my teaching methods. Forty percent (40%) strongly agreed, 47.7% agreed as the rest (12.3%). Despite the rating being slightly different for the six need displayed on Table 1, training EAST Faculty in all of them (by priority of rating) will definitely enhance their growth in being better trainers/facilitators.

Table 1. Professional development needs of EAST faculty members

Developmental need	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral / disagree / strongly disagree
Instructional technologies workshops	60.3%	34.9%	4.8%
Active learning & student engagement	57.8%	35.9%	6.3%
Curriculum design & assessment training	55.4%	40.0%	4.6%
Inclusive learning practices	49.2%	36.9%	13.9%
Peer mentoring & collaboration	40.0%	47.7%	12.3%
Research & innovation	49.2%	41.5%	9.3%

5. SUMMARY

In order to improve faculty support in professional development, it was imperative to first determine their needs. In conducting this assessment, five general areas of professional development need for EAST Faculty were evaluated. For additional workshops on instructional technologies to improve faculty teaching effectiveness; 60.3% strongly agreed 34.9% agreed while 4.8% were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed. In focus on active learning strategies and student engagement. 57.8%, 35.9%, while only 6.3% were of the opinion that this area should not be prioritized. As far as regular training in curriculum design and assessment methods in enhancing EAST Faculty's teaching skills was concerned, 55.4% strongly agreed, 40% agreed and the remaining 4.6% composed of the neutral, disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respondents. There is need also to further train EAST Faculty in understanding and incorporating inclusive teaching practices for diverse student populations. Again most respondents (49.2%) strongly agreed, 36.9% agreed while 13.9% were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed. This need was rated the same as further training of EAST Faculty in research, innovation, community outreach and publishing. The mainstream opinion on this need was strongly in agreement (49.2%) with this need being met; 41.5% agreed with the need being met whereas 9.3% were non-committal on this being a priority. Lastly, training on peer mentoring or collaborative learning opportunities with colleagues to enhance my teaching methods drew 40% responses on those who strongly agreed, 47.7% agreed as the rest (12.3%) did not think that this need should take precedence. Despite the rating being slightly different for the six needs displayed on Table 1, training EAST Faculty in all of them (by priority of rating) will definitely enhance their growth in being better trainers/facilitators.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings on assessment of the professional development needs of faculty members that should be addressed to enhance teaching skills and knowledge at EAST clearly indicate that EAST faculty members have a solid and consistent yearning for professional development across multiple domains of instruction. The highest priorities identified included training in

instructional technologies, active learning strategies, curriculum design and assessment methods, and inclusive teaching practices. Moreover, there is significant support for augmenting faculty competencies in research, innovation, besides community engagement, as well as promoting peer mentoring and collaborative learning. While the levels of agreement varied slightly across the six areas, the overall consensus affirms that comprehensive and targeted professional development in these domains will significantly strengthen the faculty's capacity to deliver high-quality, student-centered education. The findings from this assessment underscore the critical importance of aligning faculty professional development initiatives with the expressed needs of Faculty at Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University. By prioritizing targeted training in instructional technologies, active learning, curriculum design, inclusive practices, research, and student support, EAST should significantly enhance teaching effectiveness and overall academic quality. Implementing these recommendations will not only foster faculty growth and engagement but also contribute meaningfully to improved student outcomes and institutional excellence. It is therefore, important to implement a structured and prioritized professional development plan based on these identified needs is both timely and essential for improving teaching effectiveness at EAST.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance Faculty Development Programs: This involves the Organization of regular, targeted workshops and training sessions focused on instructional technologies, inclusive teaching practices, curriculum design, and active learning strategies to build faculty capacity.
2. Promote Competency in Active and Experiential Learning Approaches: Comprises of the prioritization of equipping instructors with the skills and strategies necessary to implement active and experiential learning methodologies. This includes training on the effective use of flipped classrooms, project-based learning, service learning, and community-engaged pedagogies. These student-centered approaches have been shown to enhance learner engagement, deepen conceptual understanding, and promote critical thinking. Professional development

initiatives should therefore include practical workshops, peer mentoring, and curriculum redesign support to help faculty integrate these methods into their teaching practice effectively. Empowering faculty with these competencies not only improves instructional effectiveness but also aligns teaching practices with contemporary educational standards and student expectations.

3. **Improve the Integration of Technology into Teaching and Learning:** This critical area of faculty professional development is the effective integration of educational technology into teaching and learning. This includes expanding access to, and proficiency in, Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital collaboration tools, virtual classrooms, and multimedia teaching aids. Faculty should be trained not only in the technical use of these tools but also in pedagogically sound strategies for leveraging them to create interactive, engaging, and inclusive learning environments. Development programs should offer hands-on training, ongoing technical support, and peer-led sessions to build confidence and foster innovation in digital instruction. Strengthening technological competence among faculty is essential for enhancing student engagement, supporting diverse learning styles, and keeping pace with global trends in higher education.
4. **Implement a structured faculty development program that promotes peer mentoring and collaborative learning opportunities among lecturers:** Having peer observation and feedback cycles (Faculty members observe each other's classes and offer constructive feedback); Co-teaching or team teaching pilots (Faculty collaborate to plan and deliver selected lessons or modules); Teaching circles or communities of practice (Small groups of faculty meet regularly to discuss teaching challenges, share strategies, and review current pedagogical research); Mentorship pairings (Experienced faculty mentor early-career or struggling colleagues in areas like lesson planning, student engagement, and assessment design).
5. **Organize a series of professional development workshops focused on inclusive pedagogy:** The emphasis should be made on strategies that address the diverse learning needs of students based on race, ethnicity, ability, gender, language, and socio-economic background. The series should include interactive sessions on Culturally responsive teaching methods; Universal Design for Learning (UDL); Addressing unconscious bias in classroom interactions; Designing inclusive assessments and learning activities and creating a classroom culture of belonging and respect.
6. **Foster a Culture of Innovation and Research Excellence:** This means actively supporting the cultivation of innovative thinking and robust research capacity. This involves providing faculty with access to research mentorship, grant writing workshops, interdisciplinary collaboration opportunities, and training in research methodologies and emerging technologies. Institutions should also encourage innovation in both pedagogy and scholarly output by recognizing and rewarding creative approaches to teaching, curriculum design, and problem-solving. Development programs must aim to strengthen research productivity, promote publication in high-impact journals, and support faculty in translating research into practice and policy. By investing in faculty research capabilities and innovative competencies, universities enhance their academic reputation, contribute to knowledge generation, and create solutions to real-world challenges.
7. **Strengthen Faculty Capacity for Student Support and Mentorship:** Faculty professional development should include focused training on effective strategies for academic advising, mentoring, and psychosocial support to better address the diverse needs of students. As front-line educators, faculty play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive, supportive learning environments where students feel valued and empowered. Development programs should cover areas such as student mental health awareness, inclusive teaching practices, early identification of at-risk students, and culturally responsive engagement. Equipping faculty with these skills not only enhances student retention and success but also contributes to building a positive institutional culture where every learner has the opportunity to thrive.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative AI technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology.

Details of the AI usage are given below:

ChatGPT was utilized to:

1. Convert the Objective Number 3 of the Action Research 'Assess the professional development needs of faculty members that should be addressed to enhance their teaching skills and knowledge at EAST' a catchy title for the paper (Teaching Beyond Today: Identifying Faculty Development Needs at Kenya Assemblies of God EAST University).
2. Conduct Literature Review.
3. Abridge research findings.
4. Conclude.
5. Create recommendations.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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