

# Teachers' Perception of Higher Diploma Program as Opportunity for Promoting Professional Development in Arba Minch University (Ethiopia): A Qualitative Inquiry

Zelalem Zekarias Oliso

(PhD Candidate @Addis Ababa University)

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences

Department of Educational Planning and Management

PhD Program in Educational Policy and Leadership

Addis Ababa University (AAU)

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**Abstract:** Professional teacher is the main factor contributing to educational quality development. The nation can be developed from the responsibility of teacher (Boonmak et.al,2015). However, teachers' in higher education institutions in Africa lack teaching skills, and those who have hardly updated their skills find it difficult to cope with the rapid changes in the education system. One mechanism put in place by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia is introducing a Higher Diploma Program (HDP), a licensing training Program that is aimed at developing the skills and professionalism of teacher educators (UNESCO,2007).However, the effectiveness of teachers' professional development is determined by the teachers' own belief and their motivation and commitment level to improve their practice (Aminudin,2012). The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to investigate teachers perception towards Higher Diploma Program (HDP) training as opportunity for promoting professional development. The data for this study were gathered via semi-structured interview and focus group discussion (FGD). The participants for this study were selected via purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview was conducted with eight (8) HDP candidates, eight (8) HDLs/ HDTs and two (2) HDP Coordinators totally eighteen (18) . Of these, fifteen were male participants and three of them were female ones. Focus group discussion was conducted with eight (8) HDP Candidates and eight (8) HDLs and HDTs in a segmented way to maintain their homogeneity. The gathered data was analyzed using case study design method. Major themes and sub themes are described by inductive process based on grounded theory method. The finding of this study revealed that teachers have positive perception towards HDP training program because it improves

teachers professional knowledge. However, the study participants throughout in the interview and focus group discussion session noticed that HDP training lacks incentive, follow up and support from the side of the university. In addition, the participants in this study reported that the HDP training module needs revision because the training module is below standard. Some contents in the module are written in the primary and secondary school context than higher education. It was therefore recommended that the university should improve the incentive mechanisms as well as follow up and support for the success of the program. It was also recommended that Ministry of Education (MoE) should revise the module because they have mandate to revise HDP module.

**Keywords:** Higher Diploma Program, Perception, Professional Development, Quality Teaching.

## 1. INTRODOCTION

Today, the effectiveness of the educational process depends on the professional skills of the teacher. Teachers' can take advantage of and linked with a variety of educational materials, teaching methods, and ways of organizing educational process. The ability to navigate among them indeed, is an important teacher competency. The new generation of educational standards in terms of its ideology (and, consequently, its specific goals and objectives) is focused on conceptual representations developed within the framework of the theory of developmental education. In other words, it proposes organizing an educational process in which the student is the subject of teaching activity. And this, in turn, requires teachers' to develop specific professional competencies that cannot be considered to be basic

in the context of traditional teacher training and skill improvement programs (Sobkin & Adamchuk,2015).

Teachers' are the most important factors affecting the educational outcomes of their students. They are the main drivers of successful teaching and learning. They are at the heart of teaching and learning activities in schools Duze,2011 (as cited in Mehreteab,2015). In relation to this, "School Improvement is not an isolated process administered by higher level administrators. Rather, teachers' are crucial to school improvement and are pivotal in promoting high levels of achievement in all their students" (Simpkins,2009). Hence, teachers' have professional competency, and participate in continuous professional development (CPD), in order to learn new knowledge to apply in the classroom (MoE,2010). Historically, professional development (PD) in teaching has not been seen as a priority for new academic staff in Higher Education. However, it is fact that the provision of high quality teaching and learning is a key responsibility of the professionals who aim to develop standards for academic practices and continuing (Yilfashewa,2016).

"Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Africa" seeks to make sense of the many changes that are taking place in learning and teaching in higher education in the continent and offers insights into where teaching and learning might be moving in the future. Concerns about the quality of education are on the rise as the phenomenon of the educated unemployed becomes a permanent feature of most African economies. While employers complain that graduates are poorly prepared for the workplace, the students on the other hand, point to their teachers' as the defective link in the teaching-learning continuum. This can be attributed to the fact that most teachers' in higher education institutions in Africa lack teaching skills, and those who have hardly updated their skills find it difficult to cope with the rapid changes in the education system. As a result, it has become necessary to seek ways of helping teachers' of higher education to feel greater confidence working with the full diversity of students those they constantly have to handle in their classrooms (UNESCO,2007).

One mechanism put in place by the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia is introducing a Higher Diploma Program (HDP), a licensing training Program that is aimed at developing the skills and professionalism of teacher educators. This Program was developed in

2003 to support the implementation of the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO). The MoE has now made it compulsory (UNESCO,2007).

Higher Diploma Program (HDP) has come into existence following extensive study of the Ministry of Education on the overall education system including teacher education system in 2002. Its objective, among others, was to better professionalize teacher educators in line with promoting student-centered approach as on-the-job training for one academic year (Demoze,2016).

### **1.1 Context of Higher Diploma Program in Ethiopia**

Higher Diploma Program (HDP) was introduced in Ethiopia since,2004 and is offered to graduate assistants, lecturers, and professors, all receiving the same kind of training. HDP was initiated, organized, and moderated by two volunteers from International Foundation for Education and Self Help in 2004. The volunteers have been assisted by experts at the Ministry of Education. Two Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) leaders and two- to three-national tutors run the program together. Two years later, Ethiopian leaders and tutors took over in leading the program. Two- to three-moderation workshops and experience sharing of leaders, tutors, and management that lasted for three days took place every year. Monitoring and support programs at each institution have been executed by moderators and experts from the Ministry of Education as well (Demoze,2016).

It came as a response to the quest for quality teacher education in higher education institutions. Its overall purpose was to improve the quality of teacher education by qualifying teachers'. This program was intended to develop the skills and professionalism of higher education teachers' regardless of qualification and academic rank. The program was designed for one academic year to be carried out in all government teacher education colleges and public universities. The objective of the program was to professionalize educators in line with promoting student-centered approaches MoE, 2006 (as stated in Demoze,2016). Furthermore, HDP was not merely to professionalize teacher educators in line with promoting student-centered approach but also emphasize the overall professional Development of teachers'. To this end, the training of HDP comprises the following four major themes: reflective teacher educator, managing learning, action research, and school placement. The

program is a government initiative and the control is highly centralized (Adula,2008).

### 1.2 Higher Diploma Program Training at Arba Minch University

The Higher Diploma Program was started at Arba Minch University since 1999E.C. It is a one year training program at Arba Minch University is underway for instructors with the intention of upgrading their pedagogical knowledge and skills which has have a paramount contribution to quality education. For the last ten years, there are a number of Higher Diploma Candidates were graduated from this program. The following table shows the number of graduates of HDP from 1999 E.C to 2008 E.C OR 2006/07 G.C to 2015/16 G.C.

**Table 1: HDP Graduates at AMU (1999E.C to 2008E.C OR 2006/07 G.C to 2015/16 G.C.**

Year E.C	Year G.C	Male	Female	Total
1999	2006/07	25	3	28
2000	2007/08	46	2	48
2001	2008/09	15	0	15
2002	2009/10	32	1	33
2003	2010/11	83	6	89
2004	2011/12	100	12	112
2005	2012/13	83	13	96
2006	2013/14	93	14	107
2007	2014/15	70	11	81
2008	2015/16	98	18	114
Grand Total		645	78	723

*Source: AMU, School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences Note: E.C =Ethiopian Calendar G.C=Gregorian Calendar*

Ministry of Education (MoE) has mandated AMU, with the responsibility of moderation for four cluster institutions i.e. Hosanna College of Teachers' Education, Arba Minch College of Teachers' Education, Wolaita Soddo University & Wachamo University.

The total duration of the training is 132 hours. Each week would have two sessions of two-hour each. And instructors are given 60 hours for independent study. As of now AMU has eight HDLs and one Higher Diploma Coordinator (HDC). Higher Diploma Program is being carried in four AMU campuses i.e. Chamo, Abaya, Nech Sar and Main campus. Currently, Higher Diploma Program is run by School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences. In under this School, there are two independent departments are found such as Department of Pedagogical Sciences and Psychology and another emerging departments are

Department of Educational Planning and Management, Adult Education and Community Development and Curriculum and Instruction (amu.edu.et).

### 1.3. Policy Issues

According to Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (1994),teachers' starting from kindergarten to higher education, was be required to have the necessary teaching qualification and competency in the media of instruction, through pre-service and in-service training. The criteria for the professional development of teachers' was be continuous education and training, professional ethics and teaching performance. A professional career structure was being developed in respect to professional development of teachers'.

In order to improve the qualifications of teachers' at primary, secondary as well as higher level various teacher support activities have been undertaken. The Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) Program is undertaking a thorough revision and modernization of the teacher education system in Ethiopia. Accordingly, a revision of the pre-service teacher education curricula has been undertaken. Furthermore, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has been introduced (MoE,2005).

In recent attempts, the series of Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP) [ESDP I, II, III and IV] of Ethiopia have created opportunities to produce trained and skilled human power at all levels as a driving force in the process of promoting culture, effecting social transformation and bringing economic development of the country (MoE,2005). More importantly, while all the policy documents contend the centrality of teachers' for promoting learning, the emphasis on improving teachers' quality and teachers' development is most stressed in the 2005, ESDP III (Yilfashewa,2016).

Keeping all the above discourse in mind, this study was aimed to examine teachers' perception of Higher Diploma Program in Arba Minch University. The study specifically was focus on discovering whether the teachers' felt Higher Diploma Program as opportunity for promoting professional development or not.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Teachers' are responsible for communicating effectively all curriculum content. Without high

levels of competency, transmission of knowledge, skills and values was being weak. The recent curriculum revision, with a move towards a student-centered approach to teaching and learning, requires active teaching methods and effective classroom management to maximize time on task. The new approaches were benefit all students when effectively applied, strengthening their confidence, leadership and innovation skills. It has been seen, however, that the largest barrier to effective implementation of the revised curriculum is lack of pedagogical skills amongst teachers'. This is unsurprising given the transition from traditional to modern methods for teachers' and teacher educators. The government was therefore provide support to better facilitate this transition by improving qualification processes and standards (pre-service training), enriching CPD and strengthening supervision processes (in-service training) (MoE,2005).

According to HERQA, 2007 (as stated in Yilfashewa,2011), in Ethiopia, the PDPs established at various higher education institutions was set to accomplish two major targets: improving academic staff professional competencies and supporting the academic programs for keeping quality of students learning. According to the need for high quality professional development has become a common emphasis for educational reform and educational institutions development of the day. Since teachers' are the most valuable resource available to both schools and higher education institutions in the realization of education/training goal, an investment in teacher quality and ongoing professionalism is vital. In the present view, this goal can only be realized by ensuring that teachers' are equipped with subject matter knowledge and an evidence- and standards-based repertoire of pedagogical skills that are demonstrably effective in meeting the developmental and learning needs of all students for whom they have responsibility—regardless of students' backgrounds, intake characteristics, and whether or not they experience learning difficulties Guskey,2000 (as cited in Yilfashewa,2011).

An extensive study was conducted by Ministry of Education in 2002 covering the overall education system of Ethiopia and teacher's education system in particular (Teacher Education System Overhaul [TESO],2003). The study revealed that Ethiopian Teachers' educators failed to form spearhead in educational development endeavor. The teaching learning process they were employing so far was teacher dominated talk and blackboard use. The study attributed the major cause of the problem to the fact that teacher

educators have received very little or no opportunity to undertake appropriate and necessary staff development that could enable them to perform their key roles in rendering pre-service and in-service education in line with a student-centered approach. Consequently, TESO was established under the ministry of education, with sub committees in order to tackle the underlying problems (Adula,2008).

Accordingly, the first action taken by TESO was designing curriculum material in modular approach following the educational policy of Ethiopia that aimed at developing the culture of active learning and problem-solving approach of instruction. In order to implement the material, Higher Diploma Program [HDP] was designed and is being provided to teacher educators (FDRE,2004). However, in Ethiopia, research outputs in relation to quality learning indicate that among factors affecting quality of teaching in higher education institutions is the fact that pedagogical training has not been a condition for teaching in higher education Daniel,2004 (as stated in Yilfashewa,2011).

In addition, the various studies in professional development practices signify that university instructors' are good in their academic knowledge and qualification and their weakness lie in their inability to employ the teaching approaches, classroom management and students assessment that are set in policies (Yilfashewa,2011). Experiences indicated that from time to time and year to year, although it seems that there was quantitative progress in PD deliberations, there was no recognized and context related implementation policy that guides and governs the activities of PD and there was no formalized, integrated and continuous system to check whether the quality of such training is up to the expected level or not Anto,2006 & Aytaged,2012 (as cited in Yilfashewa,2016).

Although the substantial amount of research that has been conducted on Higher Diploma Program, current literature discusses on the implementation, effectiveness of the program and application of the HDP training skills in the classroom instruction. This study was designed to provide insight into whether or not teachers' felt that HDP brought forth and substantiated ongoing and effective professional Development opportunities. Hence, the study may fill the research gap on teachers' perceptions of HDP as opportunity for promoting professional development. I am interested to conduct research on this area, because of two major reasons. First,



this training program is compulsory training for all university instructors according to MoE information. The Higher Diploma Program (HDP) was introduced in 2003 as a compulsory qualification for all teacher educators (MoE, 2003). In Arba Minch University, there are 1450 local and 96 expatriate instructors are teaching in the university

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ArbaMinchUniversity>). However, from the total of 1450 local instructors, only 723 licensed with HDP certificate in ten consecutive years (2006/07-2015/16) as information gained from School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences indicates. According to this information, the number of HDP graduates are few as compared to the total number of instructors in the university. Second, for the last two years, I was Higher Diploma Program Leader (HDL) in Arba Minch University. During my stay with instructors as HDL, I observed that teachers' were reluctant to involve in different group discussion issues and they raise the value of HDP training.

Accordingly, considering my first-hand experience as Higher Diploma Leader (HDL) at Arba Minch University and a few number of instructors graduated from HDP training as compared to number of instructors in AMU, the topic was identified as an important area of investigation for the clarification of teachers' perception, the opportunities of the program for their professional development and exploring the situation of HDP in the context of our education system in general and the university's academic development settings in particular. To provide focus for this research, the following questions were developed:

1. What are teachers' perceptions towards Higher Diploma Program (HDP)?
2. How Higher Diploma Program perceived by teachers' as opportunities for promoting professional development?
3. How participation in a Higher Diploma Program create continuous and relevant professional development?
4. What are the challenges that face the smooth running of the HDP training and how these challenges affect HDP candidates or teachers motivation towards HDP training?

### 3. Reflections on Literature

#### 3.1 Contribution of the Teacher

Teacher is the main factor contributing to educational quality development. The nation can be developed from the responsibility of teacher. As the Office of Educational Reform 2001, teacher has a crucial responsibility because this related to cultivation of students' knowledge, attitude, and morality. It can be said that students are one of the most contributors to the nation's future. In addition, the National Education Act 1999 foresees that teachers are the key factors in educational reform and development. It is suggested that teaching professional development requires systematic support and process to evaluate its effectiveness since it affects the excellence and standard of advance career (Boonmak et al.,2015).

#### 3.2 Professional Development Defined

The term professional development, in a broader sense refers to the development of being in his or her professional role. At more specified level, Teachers' professional development is the professional Development a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. This conception of professional development is, therefore, broader than career development, which is defined as the Development that occurs as the teacher moves through the professional career cycle and broader than staff development, which is the provision of organized in-service programs designed to foster the Development of groups of teachers'; it is only one of the systematic interventions that can be used for teacher development Glatthorn,1995 (as cited in Yifashewa,2011). Hence, Professional development (PD), an integral part of the life of schools and teachers', is an important mechanism to ensure educational reform and improvement in school settings (Hardy, 2016).

#### 3.3 Necessity of Teachers Professional Development (TDP)

Teacher development is the important strategy to enhance professional. Teacher will be able to perform tasks with effectiveness and create learning experience with efficiency. This impact will be resulted in fully developed students. It is needed that development of teacher professional should incorporate the process in enhancing of knowledge, ability, and attitude. All of these are the main contributions for teacher performance. Students are also benefit from developed teachers in terms of mind, body, and social interaction Udom,2013; Mongkolwanich,2012 (as cited in Boonmak et al.,2015).

Teacher development is crucial in the following aspects: social, knowledge, competency, cognitive, operation, outcome, research, and emotion. These elements responsible for teachers' performance to have attitude and behavior for their professional and students' development (Borich,1977; Hall & Jores,1976;Udom,2013). Professional teachers need to consider development of the learning management. They have to know how to manage problems occurred in the classroom. The challenge of classroom problems would be opportunity for teachers to develop their teaching (Pornkul,2008). Teachers are suggested to adopt appropriate strategy in their professional. Options for teaching strategy are included: theory, concept, idea, or strategic plan that appropriate with school context, students competency. Selected option will be able to operate effectively in well-designed lesson plan and teaching techniques Dechakup,2008 (as cited in Boonmak et.al,2015).

The professional development will have to model very clearly the kinds of activities we want teachers to carry forward and use in their classrooms." Standards do not ensure student achievement, teachers with strong knowledge and skill about how to help students reach the standards will impact achievement (Missouri Professional Learning Guidelines for Student Success,2013).

### **3.4 Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development**

It is frequently argued that professional development would have the potential to makes university instructors equip with the necessary pedagogical skills and keep them up-to-date to cope up with the current technology. Various studies in professional development practices signify that university instructors' are good in their academic knowledge and qualification and their weakness lie in their inability to employ the teaching approaches, classroom management and students assessment that are set in policies. Indeed instructors need to have a rich and flexible understanding of the subject matter in order to teach in ways that are responsive to students thinking and which foster learning with understanding. Anto,2006 (as cited in Yilfashewa,2011). In addition, content specific professional development enables teachers' to feel well-informed about curricular and instructional alternatives, learning styles, adolescent development, and assessments Robinson, 2011 (as stated in Blackmon, 2013).

According to Komba and Nkumbi,2008 ( cited in yifashewa,2016), in their research pointed

out that the academics should perceive professional development as being important for implementing innovations, as it improves them professionally, academically and technically to help them adjust to the new thinking. However, most respondents think that it is inadequately supported and motivated. At all levels (system, university, department), professional development is poorly coordinated and scarcely budgeted for. In the context of Ethiopia, the study conducted by Anto (2006) specifies that a great number of instructors do not have curiosity to participate in the highly relevant university professional development programs; because of lack of pedagogical competencies of the university instructors, lack of commitment from management and some academic staff, lack of transparent leadership, and resources to run the activities were some of the deficits for professional development trainings.

### **3.5 Variables that Influence the Success of Teachers' Professional Development**

Professional development, whatever its form and model can be aided or impeded by a variety of factors. These factors help or hinder the success of professional development programs. They classified these factors into four domains within which these supports or barriers influence teachers' professional development (1) people and interpersonal relationships, (2) institutional structures, (3) personal considerations and commitments, and (4) intellectual and psychosocial characteristics Zinn and Caffarella 1999 (as cited in Yilfashewa Seyoum,2011). As claimed by them these four domains are useful when thinking through supports and barriers to professional development and career success for higher education.

Describing each of the four domains these educators note that "people and interpersonal relationships," both within and outside the work environment, strongly influence teacher professional development. Such factors as personal support systems, positive working relationships with management and other administrators, and encouragement and support by family and friends are discussed as supporting environments. Barriers include, among other things, passive or active opposition to teachers' work by management bodies, tense relationships with colleagues, and other faculty leaders, and spoken and unspoken dissatisfaction by family and/or friends to the demands of the faculty role.

The domain of "institutional structures" as elaborated by the educators encompasses supports;

such as the provision of ongoing professional Development opportunities and the availability of necessary resources. Barriers include insufficient time within the daily demands of being a professor and lack of access to information or resources.

The domain of “personal considerations and commitments” focuses specifically on the personal side of teachers' lives-not only have the people, but also the circumstances or events in their private lives which affect their ability to focused emotional or physical energies on their professional endeavors. These factors include support and encouragement from family members and friends as well their willingness to provide tangible help with non-work tasks at particularly demanding times in one's professional life.

The final domain has to do with "intellectual and personal characteristics" and it incorporates our internal motivations and perceptions of ourselves as scholars and teachers'. On the support side are factors such as strong beliefs and values that demand excellence in our work, perceptions that we can make a difference in the lives of students and other educators, and self-confidence in our faculty roles and departments. These belief systems support teachers' to seek professional growth, for example, through constantly updating their course materials or ensuring their scholarship addresses substantive issues and ideas. On the other hand, barriers include feelings of discouragement or frustration, discomfort or burnout in faculty roles and department roles, and a reluctance to let go of comfortable routines when asked to change the way we do business.

## 4. Research Design and Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of Higher Diploma Program as opportunities for promoting professional development. With the intention of gaining an in-depth understanding of how teachers' perceive the use of Higher Diploma Program as a structure for promoting professional development, it is important to utilize a research design. To meet the proposed criteria and sufficiently address the research questions, a qualitative case study design was used. As cited in Bhattacharjee A. (2012), case study is an in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real-life settings (case sites) over an extended period of time. Data may be collected using a combination of interviews, personal observations, and internal or external documents.

The use of multiple sources of data collection will enable the researcher to triangulate the interpretations of the study generated.

### 4.2 Research Sites

The study site selected for the study was Arba Minch University. Arba Minch University in Ethiopia, located in the Gamo Gofa Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region about 500 kilometers south of Addis Ababa, at an elevation of 1285 meters above sea level. Before its inauguration as a University, it was known as Arba Minch Water Technology Institute (AWTI) offering a qualified course in water resources planning, design and development.

AWTI was established in September 1979 E.C (1986) with the objective of creating a skilled and qualified manpower vital for the effective utilization and exploitation of water resources for various aspects of national development. The institute was scaled up to the level of university as Arba Minch University in 2004. Now it is sited in five campuses based around Arba Minch town, with the Arba Minch Institute of Technology, and primary administrative units based on the Main Campus site, and the Colleges sited according to infrastructure and facilities, number of students, and proximity to field and institutional attachment and laboratories.

The university runs 39 undergraduate programs, 30 graduate programs, and a PhD program. The teaching is carried out by 1450 local instructors and 96 expatriate staff (86 Indians, 7 Filipinos, 1 German, 1 British and 1 Italian). In 1986 there were 1673 graduates (male 1626, 47 female), and after 18 years (2013–14) 23,329 students ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arba\\_Minch\\_University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arba_Minch_University)). Entry to the university gained after I was contacted with Academic Affairs Vice President of Arba Minch University. The Academic Affairs Vice President of Arba Minch University contact with Dean, School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences and acknowledged the appropriateness and importance of the study.

Fig.1. Skyline view of AMU



Source: (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/amu>)

### 4.3 Participants

According to School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences information, in four campuses, there are eight (8) Higher Diploma Program Leaders'(HDLs)and Higher Diploma Program Tutors (HDTs), One(1) Higher Diploma Program Coordinator (HDC) and one hundred seventy seven (177) HDP Candidates are now attending the training. Of these candidates, one hundred fifty nine (159) candidates are male candidates and eighteen (18) candidates are female candidates. The following tables summarizes the total number of candidates who are attending the HDP training at Arba Minch University in the 2009 E.C.

**Table 2: Higher Diploma Candidates who are attending the HDP training at Arba Minch University in the Year 2009 E.C or 2017 G.C.**

Campus	M	F	Total
Main Campus	65	8	73
Nech Sar Campus	29	7	36
Chamo Campus	27	1	28
Abaya Campus	38	2	40
Grand Total	159	18	177

Source: AMU, School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences Note: M=Male F=Female

### 4.4. Sampling Technique

The participants for this study were chosen via purposeful sampling technique from the identified university. In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Cresswell,2012).

### 4.5 Procedures of Participant Selection/Recruitment for the Study

The participants of this study were selected in the following criteria:

**Higher Diploma Candidates:** from four campuses, candidates were selected based on their interest and two and above years of teaching experience and currently involved in a Higher Diploma Program. Teachers' with two and above years of teaching experience in the selected university are assumed to have experience in the professional development programs.

**Higher Diploma Leaders (HDLs/HDTs):** All HDLs and HDTs were participant in this study, because they have frequent interaction with candidates at least two times in a week and they are assumed to have understanding about the perception of the candidate toward the program.

**Note: HDT=Higher Diploma Tutor**

**Facilitators' of the Program:** Such as Higher Diploma Coordinator (HDC), and Dean, School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences were selected. They have ample experience in teaching as well as coordinating and facilitating the program.

### 4.6 Methods of Data Collections &Procedures

In this study, two types data collection methods were employed to examine teachers' perception in Higher Diploma Program as professional development viz. interview and focus group. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interview was prepared. In semi-structured interview, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he/she thinks fit, to ask the questions he/she deems appropriate in the words he/she considers best, to give explanations and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation (Corbetta,2003).

The interviewees' were purposefully selected from Higher Diploma Candidates, Higher Diploma Program Tutors or Leaders' (/HDLs/HDTs). In four campuses, there are one hundred seventy seven (177) HDP Candidates are now attending the training. Of which one hundred fifty nine (159) candidates are male candidates and eighteen (18) candidates are female candidates. From the total of one hundred seventy seven (177)



Higher Diploma Program Candidates, eight candidates were selected purposefully. Of which six candidates are male candidates and two of them are female candidates. And all eight HDTs and HDLs were selected for interview. Of these, seven HDLs and HDTs are male and one of them is female. In addition, one (1) Higher Diploma Coordinator (HDC) and one (1) Dean, School of Pedagogical and behavioral sciences totally two were selected for interview. Both HDC and School Dean are male. Hence, I was conducted interview with ten (18) respondents in order to get valuable information about the study. And I was explained the purpose of the interview to the study participants within the broader context of the research study to make the interviewees' more confident enough and to gain consent from participants.

The interview was conducted in a private location with no outsiders present and where people feel that their confidentiality is completely protected. Finding such a location may be difficult in some settings, but every effort was made to protect participants' privacy to the greatest extent possible. During interview session, I was take note and record the interview response via tape recorder in order to reduce the loss of audio information and the interview information was be transcribed. And the interview session was last from one to two hours including break. As stated in Mack et.al, 2005, on average, in-depth interviews last from one to two hours.

Following interview, focus group interview was employed with the selected participants such as Higher Diploma Program Candidates and HDT/HDL'S. Focus groups are used for generating information on collective views, and the meanings that lie behind those views. They are also useful in generating a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs (Gill, 2008). For the purpose of focus group interview, I was selected eight (8) participants from Higher Diploma Candidates, and all eight HDLs/HDTs and totally sixteen (16) participants were selected. The participants were segmented in to two sub groups based on their status in order to maintain homogeneity among group and discuss on the question that was posed by the moderator. Segmenting the study population in this way is done to ensure homogeneity amongst participants within each group to encourage effective discussion, and to enable a comparison of the issues raised between various sub-groups of the study population (Hennink,2007). The qualitative work plan for each site was specify the approximate number of participants to be recruited

for each focus group, as well as the number of focus groups required for the project. Atypical number of participants is eight to ten people, with a maximum of 12 (Mack et.al, 2005).

Accordingly, Higher Diploma Program Candidates were seat separately as one sub group and Higher Diploma Leaders'(HDLs) were another sub group. And their seating arrangement was in a circular manner to face each other in discussion. Circular seating enables all group members to face each other, which is crucial for establishing the interactive group dynamics that are central to a focus group discussion (Hennink,2007). The discussion process was conducted for two sub groups in two different days. And the second group discussion was started after twenty four hours of the first focus group discussion. The note-takers should be encouraged to write these notes in full within twenty-four hours after the group discussion or certainly before the next group discussion, because longer the time between the group discussion and revising the notes was result in a loss of recall in the detail of the discussion, or if subsequent groups are held the information from different groups may become confused (Hennink,2007).

I was assigned two department heads from pedagogy and psychology as moderator and note-taker that who facilitate sub focus group. I was acting as assistant and took detail note in addition to note- taker information. The moderator was led the focus group discussion, posing all questions specified in the focus group question guide; keep the discussion on track, and encouraging all participants to contribute. And the note-taker was responsible for taking detailed notes of the discussion, even though focus group sessions are typically tape-recorded (Hennink,2007). Focus groups work best when conducted by two researchers, often called facilitators. These facilitators have both individual and shared responsibilities. One person acts as the moderator of the discussion and the other is the note-taker (Mack et.al, 2005).

In order to maintain confidentiality in focus group, I was implemented name substitution before the session begins. For example, I was assigned participants numbers, letters, or pseudo names for the moderator and note-taker to use on the seating charts and to identify speakers in their notes. To sum up, the focus group was last one to two hours including tea break. Focus group sessions usually last from one to two hours and should include time for participants to take a break. If possible, they should be scheduled no closer than 90 minutes

apart to allow time for each staff member to take a break, participate in a debriefing session, and prepare for the next focus group (Mack et.al, 2005).

#### 4.7 Method of Data Analysis

In this study, I was employed qualitative aspect of data analysis. The qualitative data were analyzed using the general inductive process which allowed the researchers to uncover the most dominant themes from the data as they related to the purpose (Thomas 2006 as cited in Benes et.al, 2016). Initially, I read the interview and focus group transcripts thoroughly to gain a sense of the data and to evaluate the data without bias. I continued this holistic evaluation of the data multiple times, and assigned labels for emerging themes that they then organized into the major themes and sub themes. Finally, summary of data from all sources and instruments was discussed all together. Then results and discussion was drawn.

#### 5. Results and Discussions

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of Higher Diploma Program as opportunities for promoting ongoing and effective professional development. The data was collected via focus group interviews and individual interviews transcripts. To provide focus for this research, the following questions were developed and explored:

1. What are teachers' perceptions towards Higher Diploma Program (HDP)?
2. How Higher Diploma Program perceived by teachers' as opportunities for promoting professional development?
3. How participation in a Higher Diploma Program create continuous and relevant professional development?
4. What are the challenges that face the smooth running of the HDP training and how these challenges affect HDP candidates or teachers motivation towards HDP training?

In this part, a brief overview of the results and discussions from this study are provided. The seven major themes that surfaced while analyzing the results using the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) serve as the framework for the discussion. A detailed discussion summarizes the results in relation to each of the

corresponding themes as they correlate with the research questions. An overview of the major themes and subthemes is provided below:

- (i) The Need For HDP Training
  - Teaching profession demands professional trainings
- (ii) Role of HDP Training for TDP
  - Improve teachers professional knowledge
- (iii) HDP candidates Perception
  - Positive attitude towards the HDP training
- (iv) Module Revision
  - Contextualizing the content of the module
  - Rigidity
  - Organizing Content
  - Including additional content in the HDP module
- (v) Challenges
  - Low regards from the side of University
  - Negative attitude towards HDP from the side of education graduates
  - Lack of inputs
  - Clashes between regular work and HDP training
- (vi) Quality Education
  - Improve Students' Academic Achievement
- (vii) Professional knowledge gained from HDP training
  - Experience sharing
  - Assessment methods
  - Action Research
  - Reflection

#### The Need for HDP Training

Many Participants in this study discussed that teaching demands professional knowledge to teach the learners, because teaching is a profession. All study participants reported that subject matter knowledge merely is not enough to impart the lesson. They felt that both professional knowledge and subject matter knowledge makes the teacher to be professional teacher.

One of the HDP candidate and participant of this study in the interview session has supported this: *Teaching is a profession and demands both professional and subject matter knowledge. It is complex task that all teachers need to understand. Some teachers consider teaching as simple task. That means, they consider it as merely talk and chalk activity. However, teaching profession by its nature is not simple. For example, imparting the lesson in the classroom according to learner interest is not simple*"(SSC, Participant 1). Teaching is a complex activity, requiring professional decisions in situations where there are

no 'right' answers (MoE 2011). Furthermore, as indicated in Education and Training (2013) information, teaching requires complex and dynamic combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes; their acquisition and development is a career-long endeavor that requires a reflexive, purposeful practice and high quality feedback .

Another HDL and participant of this study has shared similar thought in the FGD session: *"The problem in teaching and learning is how to teach? How to teach is not simple but it is a challenging task. Hence, teachers need to understand the way of teaching and learning"* (MSL, Participant 2). Teachers need a deep knowledge of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in how to teach their specific subject for effective practice in diverse, multicultural, inclusive learning environments (Hill et al., 2005). Therefore, professional development is the only way educators can learn so that they are able to better their performance and raise student achievement (Mizell, 2010).

On the other hand, one of HDP candidate and participant of this study in the interview session further explained and summarized this theme: *"Higher education is more complicated in instructional process than primary and secondary schools, because students are come from different socio-cultural backgrounds and this makes the instructional process much more complex. Hence, professional trainings like HDP training gives a direction in how to manage diversity during instructional session"* (MAC, Participant 8). Today teachers are expected to be knowledgeable of their profession, maintain high academic standards, teach all types of learners through a variety of teaching strategies, and be accountable for each student's academic progress (Barnard, 2004).

### **Role of HDP Training for TPD**

Many HDP Candidates, HDTs, HDLs, and Coordinators in this study described that HDP training improve Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) of the teacher. They felt that HDP training may fill the skill gap among teachers. They further explained that it may enhance the teachers skill in assessment methods, ways of conducting action research, and implementing active learning method in large class size etc.

One of the HDP Candidate and participant of this study has supported this and described how HDP training is important for teachers professional

knowledge in the FGD session: *"This training program is important for both teachers graduated from education as well as applied, because it improves teachers instructional skills of the teacher"* (MSC, Participant 3). Another HDL further explained similar belief in the interview session: *"most higher education teachers lack professional skills. Hence, it is vital for teachers to improve their professional knowledge"* (ASL, Participant 1). Teacher development is the important strategy to enhance professional. Teacher will be able to perform tasks with effectiveness and create learning experience with efficiency. This impact will be resulted in fully developed students (Boonmak et al., 2015).

Finally, HDC and participant of this study has also similar view in the interview session and summarized this theme: *"HDP is highly important for teachers to improve their professional knowledge by creating awareness in methodology of teaching, active learning method, conducting action research etc. On the other hand, the program is also important for accomplishment of our institutional goal. One of our institution goal is to produce highly skilled manpower who have necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes in their respective field of study. To produce these graduates, HDP training has its own contribution on institutional goal"* (ABC, Participant 2).

### **HDP Candidates Perception Towards HDP Training**

Many of the Higher Diploma Candidates in this study reported that they have positive attitude towards HDP training, because HDP training is an instrument to improve instructional skills of the teachers. According to Anderson (2004) as indicated in Addis Tsegeye (2008), whatever is done in terms of distributing new curriculum, educational effectiveness depends on teachers attitude.

One of the HDP Candidate and participant of this study in the interview session says : *"My perception towards HDP is positive because the program is a big tool for teachers to develop professional knowledge on how to teach the learners. After I participated in HDP training, even my students performed well than before. In HDP training program, we share experience with each other. In our group, for instance, there are experienced teachers and we share their experience during group discussion session and this experience has a great role in the classroom instruction"* (TGcan., Participant 1).

SSCan. (Participant 2), is another HDP candidate in the FGD session has further explained how HDP training changed his previous perception towards HDP training and summarized this theme: *"Before being I engaged in HDP training, am not that much more interested towards the training. Since am education graduate, I always ask myself what is new from this training? After I participated in HDP training, I developed positive attitude towards the HDP training because from this training, I acquired necessary practical professional knowledge like different methods of teaching, assessment methods, implementation of active learning methods in the large class size etc".* A successful innovation depends substantially on teachers' attitude towards proposed curriculum alternatives. Students with teachers of positive attitude towards teaching and the curriculum are found to be high-level achievers in learning Keynes(1986),Cooper(1986),Chalhan (1988) consider the teachers' attitude as a very important aspect in the teaching process and suggested that teachers' attitude towards the subject taught is one of the commonly studied teacher characteristics (Addis Tsegeye,2008).

### **Some HDP Candidates Perception Deference between Teachers/Candidates from Education and Applied Graduates**

A few HDP Candidates from education graduates reported that the perception of the candidates from applied graduates and education graduates are not similar, because they reported that applied graduates consider the content of HDP as vital for their professional development. Whereas, education graduates consider the contents of HDP module as repetition/redundancy of the undergraduate courses.

However, majority of Higher Diploma Program Candidates from both education graduates and applied graduates discussed that undergraduate pedagogical courses are more of theoretical. They discussed that undergraduate course provide theoretical information than practical knowledge. But HDP training contents are more of practical and engages teachers in practical activity that they apply in the classroom instruction.

One of the HDP candidate as well as education graduate has supported this idea by saying: *"The contents of undergraduate pedagogical courses and HDP contents are totally different. HDP module contents are more of practical and undergraduate pedagogical courses are more of theoretical. Furthermore, its principle*

*is Sharing, Discussing, and Practicing. HDP requires candidates effort and they have to practice again and again to improve their teaching methodology and assessment techniques"*(MKcan. Participant 8). The program has been assumed to provide teacher educators with a practical program to support their development as effective teachers and reflective practitioners with enhanced professional status (MoE, 2003). The HDP is skill-oriented training which each candidate tries to rest the lessons of each session in the classroom and reflects on his/her practice. The focus is on the learning process and relates directly to teaching methodology and practice (Addis Tsegeye,2008).

On the other hand, the HDLs and Tutors in group discussion explained that the opposite of learning is forgetting. Teaching is a profession. Hence, a profession always needs training. HDLs and HDTs felt that though HDP module content and undergraduate pedagogical course contents are different, the teacher needs to update his/her knowledge. As stated in OECD (2009), no matter how good pre-service training for teachers is, it cannot be expected to prepare teachers for all the challenges they will face throughout their careers. Education systems therefore seek to provide teachers with opportunities for in-service professional development in order to maintain a high standard of teaching and to retain a high-quality teacher workforce. Furthermore, teaching is a complex task. Even experienced teachers confront great challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, changed laws and procedures, and student learning needs. Educators who do not experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers (Mizell,2010).

### **Necessary Professional Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes Acquired from HDP Training**

HDP candidates were asked to describe and discuss the necessary professional knowledge, skills and attitude acquired from HDP training. Higher Diploma Program (HDP) Candidates reported that they have acquired professional knowledge from this training program. As they mentioned, they have developed necessary professional knowledge, skills and attitudes in the following major areas of instructional process: Instructional Phase, Managing Group, Reflection, Collaborative Work, and Action Research. These five aspects of professional knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired from HDP training are combined in the summary below.



## Instructional Phase

Many HDP Candidates in this study reflected that before HDP training they face challenges in the following instructional phases: introduction, presentation, conclusion and evaluation while teaching. HDP Candidates reported that after HDP training, they have improved this problem in instructional phase and teach the learners without confusion. One of HDP Candidate and participant of this study in interview session has explained his improvement in instructional phase after HDP training: *"Before being I engaged in HDP training, I face many challenges in applying instructional phases properly especially in introduction part. I start the session without introducing the instructional objectives. But after HDP training, I introduce the learners about instructional objectives that going to be dealt"* (ABcan., Participant 2).

MGcan. (Participant 8) is another HDP Candidate shared similar thought in FGD session on how HDP training improved instructional phase and summarized this sub theme: *"I have showed some improvements in raising discussion questions for the class. Before HDP training, I raise questions randomly which doesn't include the learner capacity and some students reflect their point of view for the raised questions. But after the HDP training, I intentionally prepare questions before class based on students achievement and contents. In this method, students are highly encouraged to participate in discussion part. Furthermore, according to my person observation, confidence of the learner enhanced in the classroom participation and low achiever students performance shown progress"*.

## Managing group

Many HDP candidates in this study discussed that they have acquired necessary professional knowledge on how to manage group and the role of collaborative work to improve students' academic performance. Learning is a complex activity and an innate part of human development (MoE,2011). Blyth (1984) as indicated in MoE (2011), describes learning as the product of continuous interaction between development and experience through life. Professional development for teachers is believed to be more effective in creating sustained change to teaching practice when it is designed to accommodate to the learning needs of the students as well as the teachers ( Aminudin,2012).

(TGcan. participant 9), one of HDP Candidate and participant of this study has explained in FGD concerning about the lesson that he learned in managing group: *"I have learned the way of grouping students and the way of managing the groups. For example, one day while I was teaching about the diversity of culture in the classroom. I was divided students according to their diversity of culture and I encouraged them to share their experience with each other. In this mechanism, students are highly engaged in the group discussion. Before HDP training, some students are idle in the classroom. But after HDP training, I assign tasks for each group members and observe group members in order to assure whether all participants are participated in group discussion or not. In addition, before HDP training, I perform all activities in the classroom. But now I employ active learning method in the classroom and students are active learner in the classroom"*.

## Reflection

Majority HDP Candidates in this study reported that they have acquired necessary professional knowledge on how to be a reflective teacher. They felt that reflective teacher play a significant role in improving instructional process in the classroom as well as out of classroom. The most effective teachers are those who think about their practice, those who try to improve their practice through careful planning and evaluation, and those who focus on the needs of the learners. They are committed to reflective practice, continuing professional development and constantly trying to improve (MoE,2011). According to Ebiy (1997) cited in Addis Tsegaye (2008), reflection is what a teacher does when he/she looks back to the teaching and learning processes that have occurred and reconstructs, reenacts, and /or recaptures the events, emotion, and accomplishments. He further explained that reflective teachers do not get bored easily and don't give up. Once they have identified a worthwhile goal for themselves and their students, they become very committed to achieve it. With limited time and resources available, teachers who use reflective actions are likely concentrate on those concerns until they consider them satisfactorily resolved.

MAcan.(participant 4), HDP Candidate in interview session explained how she improved her knowledge on the concept of reflection: *"I have acquired necessary professional knowledge on how to be reflective teacher. Instructional process need reflective teacher: what is the needs and interest of my students and how can I respond according their*

*needs. Reflection go together with planning. In planning period, I identify their needs, their background. Next, I evaluate myself: how I delivered the lesson and how my students understood the lesson. For example, in my self evaluation part, I identified my problem i.e. high speed in presentation session in the classroom. Speedy presentation didn't consider the learner understanding capability in learning process. I now improved this situation because female students asked me to reduce the speed during classroom presentation".*

### **Collaborative Work**

Many HDP Candidates explained that they share experience with each other in HDP training because HDP training encourages collaborative work. One of the HDP candidate in interview session explained how collaborative work improved his professional knowledge: "*Since HDP Candidates are from different backgrounds and field of specializations, this diversity of them gives an opportunity for candidates to share experience with each other. Candidates raise one issue from different perspectives or point of views. Too much time is late for candidates and candidates raise their own point of view. After a long period of debate, they come up with common agreement. This experience sharing has its own role in the improvement of classroom instruction" (SScan Participant 7).* Effective professional development is active when it engages teachers physically, cognitively, and emotionally through activities such as problem solving, sharing and discussion (Tate, 2009).

### **Action Research**

All HDP Candidates in this study reported that their knowledge of conducting action research is improved than before. HDP Candidates felt that conducting action research in teaching learning process is play a significant role for teachers to understand the challenges that they may face in the instructional process.

MAcan (Participant 5), in interview session explained this: "*Before HDP training, I have a little knowledge about the concept of action research. I have confusion on what approach that action research to be conducted. Many teachers follow similar approaches for action research like other research methods/procedures such as senior essay, thesis etc. However, after training of action research in HDP training session, I improved my understanding. Based on the knowledge that I*

*acquired from HDP training on how to conduct action research module, even I taught my PGDT students in a good manner. The knowledge that I gained from HDP training regarding action research is/are what makes action research differ from other form of research and procedures/approaches that we may fellow in conducting action research".* Action research is participatory research and usually involves collaboration between researchers. The evidence collected is qualitative and meaningful to those involved (MoE,2011).

### **Quality Education**

Many HDP Candidates, HDTs, HDLs, and Coordinators in this study discussed that HDP training contribute a lot for quality education because it improves professional knowledge of the teacher and this in turn improve students' academic performance. The aim of the Higher Diploma Programme for teacher educators is to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia (MoE,2011). Effective professional development affects students. Student learning and achievement increase when educators engage in effective professional development focused on the skills educators need in order to address students' major learning challenges (Mizell,2010). Furthermore, a quality teacher is one who has a positive effect on student learning and development through a combination of content mastery, command of a broad set of pedagogic skills, and communications/interpersonal skills. (Yoon et al., 2007). In fact, research has repeatedly shown that the most important variable in student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom (Block, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haycock, Jerald, & Huang,2001 ( as cited in Reading First Program Nootebook,2005).

One of the participant of this study and HDL has supported the above idea and explained how HDP training has impact on students performance: "*we informally check whether HDP candidates implement the professional knowledge that they have acquired from HDP training. As they told us, they apply the pedagogical knowledge that they have gained from HDP training and their students performance shown progress than before HDP training" (ASL, Participant 3).*

Research evidence shows that various kinds of teacher training, capacity building and work experience have positive effects on education quality. Having well-trained and experienced teachers in schools is just as important as good education materials and good relationships between

teachers and communities (Workneh Abebe and Tassew Woldehanna 2013). Similarly, according to Harris and Sass (2006); Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse (2008) as indicated in Workneh Abebe and Tassew Woldehanna (2013), assert that the availability of well-trained teachers, through pre-service teacher training, in-service professional development and the informal training obtained through on-the-job experience, is central to improving the quality of education.

### **HDP Module Content Revision**

Many HDP candidates, HDTs, HDLs, and Coordinators in this study reported that HDP training module needs revision. HDP was introduced in AMU since 2004 and the module revised only once in 2011 after the introduction of HDP in Ethiopia. Almost all participants in this study stressed that even though the contents of HDP modules are practical oriented, still some contents are below standard. The study participants explained that some contents in the HDP module are written in primary and secondary school context than higher education institutions. They discussed that the HDP module contents are not up to the standard of the higher education. But professional development is most effective when it occurs in the context of educators' daily work (Mizell,2010).

Majority of HDP candidates, HDTs, HDLs, and Coordinators discussed the parts of HDP module that needs modification. Study participants identified five parts of the HDP module that needs revision such as examples and case studies stated in the module, rigidity of the module, integrating the HDP module with ICT, including the concept of Educational Planning and Management, and Organizing the contents of the module again. Professional development will be more effective if its content is related to the needs of the instructors relative to their programs and learner populations. Content is often identified by both the instructor's self-determined needs and preferences and the program administrator's needs to improve instructional services, correct a program deficiency, implement a program change, and meet a Federal or State mandate. Content also must be aligned with national, State, or district standards in core content academic areas (Sherman et al.2003).

### **Examples and Case Studies**

Many participants of this study discussed that examples and case studies written in HDP modules are primary and secondary school context

but not in the higher education context. All the study participants suggested that examples and case studies should be written in the context of higher education and should be related to teachers daily work, because the teachers will understand the real challenges that they will face in the classroom as well as out of classroom; if the examples and case studies written in the context of higher education. Effective professional development for teachers is job-embedded, which makes it both relevant and authentic. Teachers deem professional development relevant when it directly addresses their specific needs and concerns, or when they see a connection between a learning experience and their daily responsibilities Guskey,1995( as stated in Tate, 2009).

One of HDL and participant of this study has supported this: *"HDP module contents demands revision, because some cases and examples written in the modules are not in the Higher Education context. Rather it is written in primary and secondary school context. First the module is prepared for college instructors and MoE copied these modules and forced university instructors to take the training. It is possible to construct cases as well as examples from higher education based on different higher education instructors' field of study/discipline. For instance, we have a number of cases from technology, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences etc. Therefore, it is better to consider cases and examples which are not written in higher education context"* (ASL, Participant 9). Professional development programs was more likely to be useful for teachers if it was sustained and intensive, connected to teachers' daily work, and coherent with other teaching and learning initiatives (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999 as cited in Walters,2016).

### **Conflict with Regular Module**

Majority of HDP candidates discussed that HDP training conflict with regular work. They reported that HDP session has been conducted two times in a week and took four hour in each week. This relatively affect the regular work. They felt that the HDP module has a nature of rigidity. For instance, candidates from health sciences are unable to attend the program/training. Since they have various field works, it is hardly possible for them to attend the training in such a way. Therefore,majority of HDP Candidates suggested that the module should be flexible according to the needs of participants. Many teachers either do not

find suitable professional development, or cannot attend because of conflicting work schedules (OECD,2009).To be most effective, teachers' professional learning should be based upon an assessment of their specific learning needs and feedback about their teaching (GTE,2005).

### Lesson Plan

Many HDP candidates, HDTs, and HDLs are discussed that the lesson plan components are not clear. The components of the lesson plan are not up to the standard. HDLs and HDTs are felt that the components of the lesson plan is too much. One of the HDT and participant of this study has supported this: *"Lesson plan format is designed for college instructors but not university instructors. As higher education institution, the phase should be three such as Introduction, Presentation and Stabilization"(TGT, Participant 10)*. ASL (Participant 2),another HDL further explained and summarized this sub theme: *"format of session plan has no directives, because its format is also designed for college instructors"*.

### Time Duration

Many HDP candidates in this study reflected that giving ample training time for HDP training is vital to acquire necessary professional knowledge. The participants of this study discussed that if the allocated time is not enough, we cannot easily understand pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Candidates felt that we need time to share, discuss, and practice the issues raised in the HDP session.

As OECD's comparative review on teachers noted (OECD, 2005):Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Time is key to success; used inefficiently, however, it will derail any new improvement effort (Hirsh,2014).

The time teachers spend in professional development makes a difference as well, but only when the activities focus on high-quality subject-matter content. Extended opportunities to better understand student learning, curriculum materials and instruction, and subject-matter content can boost the performance of both teachers and students (<http://www.tolerance.org/article/teaching-teachers>). However, some candidates felt that the training is a one year training and this makes the training boring. Candidates felt that the time duration should be reduced. AScan. (Participant 1), participant of this study and HDL has supported

this: It is a one year training and candidates expected to complete 132 hrs. This makes candidates get bored in the training.

### Organization of the Module

HDP candidates discussed that organization of the module should be revisited again. They reflected that in under module one (Reflective Teacher Educator Part), there should be an action research as sub content because training action research in first module is important to conduct action research in subsequent modules and other instructional problems. (MAcan., Participant 10): HDP Candidate and participant of this study has supported this: *"As to me action research part should not be as independent module/content because if we are trained action research in the first module, that may help us how to conduct action research in the rest modules/contents that we will train later. Therefore, the HDP training module should be reorganized"*.

### Module Preparation

HDP Candidates in FGD session discussed that module preparation should be included in the HDP Module as one content. They reported that the way of module preparation should be included in the module because many teachers have lack of professional knowledge in module preparation in our institution. HDP candidates felt that some teachers download some materials from the internet and give students without any edit. Not surprisingly, they gave that material including its web site, chrome picture etc. One of Higher Diploma Coordinator (HDC) and participant of this study has supported this in the interview session: *"as to me in HDP module there should be module preparation part in order to improve teachers professional knowledge on how to prepare modules because many teachers in our institution have lack of knowledge on module preparation" (ABcon., Participant 2)*.

### Integrating HDP module with ICT

Majority of HDP candidates discussed that the HDP module content should be integrated with ICT. They felt that using technology in the classroom instruction may enhance students academic performance. The study participants discussed that to use technology properly in instructional process, there should be training on ICT in education. (MGcan. Participant 9): HDP Candidate and participant of this study explained that: *"The module should be integrated with*



modern technology like ICT in education because instructional process that will be supported by technology may improve students' academic performance". Teachers need to be trained on how to operate instructional technology, but it can't stop there. They also need to be trained how to use that technology to promote student understanding—the ultimate goal (Walters,2016). In addition, when teachers are educated to employ technology effectively, they can develop lessons that strengthen student understanding, cooperative learning, and problem-solving skills across the curriculum (Kurt, 2010 as cited in Blackmon,2013).

### **Educational Planning and Management**

Many participants in this study discussed that the concept of Educational Planning and Management should be included in the module. Since candidates are teachers, department heads, college deans and other university officials, the knowledge of Educational Planning and Management is important to lead their respective departments, colleges etc in a proper manner. They felt that if the concept of Educational Planning and Management included in HDP module, the candidates will acquire professional knowledge on how to lead educational organization, because the concept of Educational Planning and Management is about how to manage and lead educational organizations.

One of the HDT and participant of this study has supported this idea: *"In the module, the concept of Educational Planning and Management should be included. Since candidates are teachers, department heads, college deans, directors etc, including/adding the content of Educational Planning and Management is important for/to them by creating awareness on how to lead and manage the educational organizations like university"* (SST. Participant 6).

### **Reference Books**

Majority of HDP Candidates, HDTs, and HDLs reported that HDP module is not organized from national and international experiences, because majority authors cited in the module are outside authors. They felt that almost all authors cited in HDP module are outside authors and this makes the module organization, writing style, and experiences merely from international perspective than national and international perspective. (ASL, Participant 7): HDL and participant in the study has supported this in interview session and explained:

*"references cited in HDP module are outside/abroad authors. There is a few authors from Ethiopia. As far as my knowledge concerned, there are many Ethiopian Scholars who have good background on pedagogy and publications on pedagogy. Why their findings and experiences are not included in the module"?*

### **Candidates Reactions Towards the Content of the HDP Module**

Majority of HDLs and HDTs in the FGD session reported that candidates are not interested in the some content of HDP module. They felt that most of the time, the candidates disregard the examples and cases written in the module by raising the value of cases/examples which are written in the HDP module for their professional development.

ASL (Participant 4): HDL and Participant of this study explained how the HDP Candidates disregard examples and case studies by substantiating the above idea with an example. *In social inclusion part, for instance says: Tamiru is in Grade7. He is good at Mathematics, but he can hardly read the simplest material. They say what is the importance of this example for my professional development? Due to this problem, we jump the case studies and examples part and proceed to the next part.* On the other hand, HDLs and HDTs felt that some parts of the contents description is shallow. They reported that descriptions are not supported by empirical studies. Due to this problem, teachers/candidates are reluctant to do the activities in the session. They get bored in the HDP session. And they say what is new information that I learn from this information. On the other hand, before starting the HDP session, candidates say the module needs revision even after looking at the date written on the HDP module (2011).

### **Challenges**

Majority participants were discussed in challenges of smooth running of the HDP training. Seven major challenges were discussed: Low incentive, follow up and support from the side of the university, low motivation and lack of experience from the side of the HDLs and HDTs, Low motivation from the side of HDP candidates, Low regard from the various Departments, Low value for HDP Certificate.

### **Low Incentive**

Many participants in this study felt that the university provide low incentive for HDP Leaders, Coordinators, and HDP candidates. They reported that the incentive mechanism of our university is very low as compared to other universities like Dilla University, Wachamo University ,Gondar University. For example, according to HDLs and Coordinators information, the Wachamo University incentive for HDL is 18,000 Ethiopian Birr (ETB) and use 6cr.hr for each candidate.

But our university incentive for HDP Candidates, HDP Leaders, and Coordinators is not that much more encouraging. The university use 3cr.hr for under loaded Higher Diploma Program Leaders and 6 ch.hr for overloaded Higher Diploma Program Leaders and 2ch.hr for HDP candidates as incentive. Higher Diploma Tutor (HDTs) have no payment and HDP Coordinators' incentive is similar with Department head position allowance. But according to the first hand information from HDLs and HDP Coordinator indicate that, Gondar University recruited foreign expert as HDP Coordinator and the salary is monthly based which is 30,000 Ethiopian Birr (ETB). One essential component in fulfilling that imperative is the strategic allocation of human, financial, and time resources to guarantee that all teachers have access to high-quality professional development (Archibald et al.,2011).

In addition, spending more may allow for greater intensity: higher quality, more time for learning, and more follow-up support as educators apply their learning (Mizell,2010). Professional learning is the most important investment school districts can make to help retain teachers, improve instructional skills, foster professional growth, and advance student achievement. While PD is often required and well funded, there is evidence that teachers often find little worth in the offerings available to them. Therefore, the most useful PD should be strategically structured for value to the teacher and efficiency in the classroom – with the ultimate goal of positively impacting student growth (<http://www.teachermatch.org/blog/> ).

### **Low Support and Follow Up**

Participants of this study discussed that there is lack of support and follow up for the smooth running of the HDP training from the side of the university. (MSL, Participant 3): HDL and Participant of this study Says: *"The university is half committed to run the program because there is shortage of inputs such as stationery materials, suitable HDP training rooms, giving low credit for HDP graduates. Besides, there is lack of support*

*and follow up from side of the university".* It is suggested that teaching professional development requires systematic support and process to evaluate its effectiveness since it affects the excellence and standard of advance career (Ministry of Education 2009 as cited in Boonmak et.al,2015). Professional development is only as effective as the outcomes it is intended to produce. Effective professional development is planned and managed by administrators and teacher leaders working together. It is driven by what students need rather than what adults think they want. A coherent plan with measures for success puts professional development on the correct track. Left to individual planning and selection, professional development becomes fragmented and its effect is limited (Hirsh).

In addition, effective professional development programs should be supported with strong leadership and appropriate resources; is drawn from and measured by data on students, educators, and systems; applies appropriate designs for learning; has substantive implementation support; and focuses on student and educator standards, Standards for Professional Learning Forward, 2011 (as cited in Missouri Professional Learning Guidelines for Student Success,2013).

### **Low Motivation from the Side of the HDP Candidates**

HDLs reported that HDP candidates have low motivation towards HDP training. The indicator of their low motivation towards for the training is discussed from three directions. First, the registration process for HDP training. The departments and colleges force the teachers to register in HDP in order to attend the HDP training. This implies that they have low motivation towards the HDP training. Second, high absentees and drop out from the training. *MK: Participant of this study explained that: " candidates absenteeism and drop out problem from his group. For example, initially, we have more than forty (40) candidates. But now we have only twenty three (23) candidates. Even from them, many candidates referred to next year".* According to HDP guideline one candidate should attend 80% i.e. more than 2 absent is impossible in each module. Third, majority of the candidates did not submit reflective activity on time to the HDLs/HDTs for comment.

The HDLs/HDTs and HDP Candidates discussed the reason why the candidates have low motivation towards the HDP training. They reported that the reason behind for low motivation

of candidates is there is low regard from academic management body of the university. They felt that we have positive attitude towards the program however, there poor commitment towards this training. That is why the HDP candidates, HDLs/HDTs, and HDP coordinators have low motivation towards the HDP training.

The incentive that the university provide for candidate as well as HDL is not that much more motivating the participants. Motivation is both intrinsic and extrinsic. The university consider ch.hr. as incentive for both candidates and HDP Leaders. How cr.hr can be an incentive? Why promotion? Research shows that effective professional development for teachers supports teacher motivation and commitment to the learning process. To this end, teachers' personal and professional needs are considered and their individual learning styles and preferences are accommodated (Tate, 2009).

### Low Motivation from the Side of the HDLs

HDP Candidates discussed that HDLs are not highly motivated to treat the candidates due to lack of incentives. The incentive that the university give for HDL is not attractive and encouraging them to do more. The university allocate 3cr.hr for under loaded leaders and 6 ch.hr for overloaded leaders. HDP Candidates reflected that HDLs and HDTs are not well prepared, because even they have no prepared slide.

In addition, they have knowledge gap for the questions raised by candidates and not summarize the main points at the end of the session. And simply reading the activity and assigning the groups to discuss without clarifying some points regarding the activity.

**ABCOR. (Participant 7):** HDC and participant of this study in the interview session says: *Some HDLs themselves reluctant to carry out the program. They are not committed to run the program. Due to that reason, some candidates are not attend the program regularly. To improve their attendance, some HDL's take the attendance seriously and take measures based on criteria set in module( <80% refer and >80% pass).*

### Higher Diploma Leaders Lacks Experience

HDP Candidates reported that some HDLs lack experience. They reported that the program demands professionals of pedagogy and experience related to the profession. For instance, there are

different theories of pedagogy. These theories are not simple to elaborate for HDLs from other field of study and they are unable to make the training concrete and the session more interesting for candidates.

For the last about seven years, the program was run by Institutional Quality Enhancement (IQE) Directorate Director Office and they assign Higher Diploma Leaders and Higher Diploma Program Coordinators from other field of study and the program faced a number of challenges. However, this year, there is some sort of improvement because now the HDP training has been run by the School of Pedagogical and Behavioral Sciences.

**MSL (Participant 3):** Higher Diploma Leader (HDL) and participant of this study has supported the above idea in interview session by saying: *HDP training program demand the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of pedagogy and a lot of preparation to train HDP candidates. As my first hand information from my colleagues, some HDP Leaders simply read the topic and sub topic in the HDP session. However, HDP training encourages to engage candidates to work collaboratively in group work in order to share their experience with each other and to understand the concept of the raised issue.*

### Low Regard from the side of the Departments

Majority HDP candidates discussed that the departments have low regard for this training program. The departments assign HDP candidates in the other department tasks in HDP session day. They force candidates to attend DC meetings, assign as invigilator and participant in different committee tasks. The department regard HDP training as secondary issue in their department.

### Low Value for HDP Certificate

Majority of HDP Candidates, Leaders as well as Coordinators said that there is no clear value/credit for HDP Certificate. The legislation of the university justified that the HDP Certificate will carry 5% in any position competition including scholarship. However, it is not still practical and there is no one who is rejected from competition. **ASL (Participant 1):** HDL and participant of this study says: *"In our university, there are different positions being posted for academic staff members*

including scholarship position. But HDP Certificate is not asked as a minimum requirement in any competition that the university post. Hence, the value of HDP is not clear for candidates as well as HDLs". Furthermore, **MSL (Participant 10)**: another HDL and Participant of this study says: "The value/credit for the program including license should be improved. Currently, HDP certificate has paper value though the university legislation says HDP certificate carries 5% for position competition because this 5% is not practical".

### **Absenteeism**

Majority of HDLs, HDTs, and HDC reported that there is high absenteeism of HDP candidates in each HDP session. They felt that some candidates have lack of interest toward the training. Even the candidates are forced to register in order to attend this training by college deans and department heads. They reported that HDP training demands university, college/institute/school, and department commitment.

Majority of HDLs and HDTs are reported that HDP Candidates usually ask permission. Candidates are primary beneficiary from this program. But they hear some misleading information from previous candidates and develop negative attitude towards the program. HDP Candidates reflected the reason for absenteeism is low incentive and commitment from the side of the university and HDP module organization. They felt that the university incentive, follow up and support for the success of the program is not encouraging. In addition, the HDP Candidates and participant of this study reported that the HDP training module below the standard. According to their response, these are the reasons for low participation in HDP training program in Arba Minch University.

## **6. Conclusions and Implications For Educational Policy and Further Research**

### **6.1. Conclusions**

Based on the above results and discussions, the following conclusion remarks were drawn:

Teaching is a profession and demands professional and subject matter knowledge. The professional knowledge will be acquired through professional development training programs like HDP. The HDP training can improve the professional knowledge of the teachers. It may

enhance the teachers skill in assessment methods, procedures of conducting action research, and ways of implementing active learning method in large class size etc. Therefore, HDP candidates or teachers have positive attitude towards HDP training, because HDP training is an instrument to improve instructional skills of the teachers.

Through HDP training, HDP candidates or teachers have acquired necessary professional knowledge. They have developed necessary professional knowledge, skills and attitudes in the following major areas of instructional process: Instructional Phase, Collaborative Work, Reflection, and Action Research. On the other hand, HDP training contribute a lot for quality education because it improves professional knowledge of the teacher and this in turn improve students' academic performance. However, HDP training module still needs revision, because some contents of HDP modules are below standard. That means some of contents of HDP module are written in the primary and secondary school context than higher education context.

Although the program is important for teachers to improve their professional knowledge, the program currently facing a number of challenges that affect the smooth running of the HDP training. The challenges are emanates mainly from four directions/sides such as university, departments, HDP candidates, HDLs and Coordinators. From the side of university, there is low incentive, lack of follow up and support and these challenges may impede the success of the program. On the other hand, HDLs, HDP Candidates as well as Coordinators have low motivation towards the program because of lack of follow up and support and low incentive from the side of university. The university follow up and support is not encouraging. Besides, there is low regard from the side of the department because the departments assign the teachers in various routine activities in the HDP session day. Finally, the value for HDP Certificate is unclear because there is low value for HDP Certificate.

### **6.2. Implications For Educational Policy (AMU, FDRE, Ministry of Education)**

Improving the quality of education should undoubtedly be a focus of attention. Continuing professional development such as in-service training is one of the most pressing of all the factors that affect quality of education (Bekalu Atnafu,2006). Professional development programs



are systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students (Guskey,2002). Participants in this discussed that HDP training is important training for teachers in order to improve their professional knowledge. Hence, HDP Candidates have positive attitude towards the HDP training. They believe that this training may enhance their instructional skill. However, HDP training is poorly coordinated and managed in Arba Minch University.

The Ethiopian Federal Ministry Education (MoE) has no clear structure regarding HDP training that govern all university. Due to that reason, the Ethiopian public universities run this training program as they like. Some universities incentive, follow up and support for the program is encouraging. In this study, HDP candidates, HDLs, HDTs, and Coordinators throughout interview as well as FGD session stressed that the Arba Minch University incentive, follow up and support is not encouraging. As a result, HDP Candidates, HDLs, HDTs, and Coordinators have lack of motivation towards the trainings. Therefore, it is better to consider/revisit the incentive mechanism that the university currently applying. Furthermore, the support and follow up for the success of the program should be improved. Professional development program requires systematic support and process to evaluate its effectiveness since it affects the excellence and standard of advance career ( MoE, 2009 as cited in Boonmak et.al,2015).

On the other hand, many participants in this study reported that the module organization is not up to the standard and needs revision. The HDP training was introduced in Ethiopian Higher Education since 2004 and revised only once in 2011. Study participants felt that the HDP module needs revision because some contents are not written in the higher education context. Consequently, HDLs and HDTs jump contents written in primary and secondary school context. Besides, HDP candidates in this suggested additional contents to be included in the HDP module. The current training module contents contains four modules viz. Reflective Teacher Educator, Managing Learning, Action Research and School/Organization Placement. The additional contents that they suggested to be included in the HDP Module are: ICT in Education, Module Preparation, and Educational Planning and Management. Therefore, by considering these findings, MoE should revise the HDP module again. Professional development requires thoughtful planning followed by careful

implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators' learning needs (Mizell,2010).

### 6.3. Implications For Future Research

Good teaching is not an accident. While some teachers are naturally more gifted than others, all effective teaching is a result of study, reflection, practice and hard work. A teacher can never know enough about how a student learns, what impedes the student's learning, and how the teacher's instruction can increase the student's learning. Professional development is the only means for teachers to gain such knowledge. Whether students are high, low or average achievers, they will learn more if their teachers regularly engage in high-quality professional development (Mizell,2010).

Educators who do not experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers (Mizell,2010). Effective professional development opportunities for educators is vital to the effective classroom implementation of new knowledge, skills and strategies that lead to increased learning for students (Missouri Professional Learning Guidelines for Student Success,2013).

The HDP Training is one of professional development program that aimed to improve quality education in Ethiopia. In this study, teachers perception towards HDP training as opportunity for promoting for professional development was ascertained. But the study merely assessed teachers perception towards the training but not its impact on students performance. In addition, the study didn't not investigate the role of university academic management body commitment towards the success of this training program.

Therefore, future researchers and scholars can conduct further study on HDP training and its impact on students academic performance to better understand the positive impact of this training program on quality education in general and students' academic performance in particular. Teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement. Educators learn to help students learn at the highest levels. Many people may not be aware of their local school system's methods for improving teaching and student learning.

Professional development is the only strategy school systems have to strengthen educators' performance levels. Professional development is

also the only way educators can learn so that they are able to better their performance and raise student achievement (Mizell,2010). In addition, future researchers and scholars can conduct their study on the role of university academic management body for the success of this training program to better understand their commitment towards the success of the program.

## 7. Study Limitations

The overall design of this qualitative study included certain limitations. One limitation may have been my knowledge and work with Higher Diploma Program. For the last few years, I have not only been an active member of a Higher Diploma Program training, but also the HDL in two Arba Minch University campuses viz. Nech Sar Campus and Main Campus. This level of previous involvement and knowledge of HDP could have ultimately skewed the interpretation of the data because of my biases and beliefs. Furthermore, the case study design of this research limits the overall application of the results to other settings. However, findings from this study, provide an in-depth understanding for university academic management body, HDP Coordinators and Leaders who are seeking to better understand the perceptions of teachers in regards to HDP. The findings provide for them with insight from the teachers' perspectives, which is a powerful tool when trying to gain support during the implementation phase. The information obtained during this study could be used to support the implementation of a HDP training for teachers in similar university settings.

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