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THE PRACTICE OF TEACHERS PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AT ADAMA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the practice of teachers' participation in pedagogical skills improvement program at Adama Science and Technology University. It was intended to examine the contributions that teachers have gained as a result of their participation in this professional development practices. Currently over two hundred fifty instructors have completed the course designed for pedagogical skills improvement training program. The methodological approach of this study is qualitative research which tries to explore in depth practices and perceptions of small group of instructors (ten) who successfully completed this pedagogical skills improvement training program. Focus group discussion was employed to gather information from the group. For this case, purposive sampling was used to include those who already involved in the training program. Using the same sampling technique three tutors/facilitators were interviewed to obtain information regarding the training program. The evidence shows that instructors benefited so much from this pedagogical skills training program. They have gained good insights and skills from the training programs to improve their professional practices. In general, the findings of the study provide relevant information on the strengths and weaknesses of the practices in the training program.

KEYWORDS

Pedagogical skills, Professional Development, Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

In Ethiopia, higher education institutions are expanding rapidly than ever before. Students' enrollments in private and public institutions are dramatically increasing year after year. Expanding all these has compromised quality especially in the contexts of severely limited resources. The quality of education has become the issue of debate among the stakeholders and the community at large. In this regard, the former deputy minister in the Ministry of Education, Teshome (2003: 8) states that "the standard of education in Ethiopia at all levels was declining greatly and the entire education system was at stake in the early 1990s..." Particularly, the writer indicated that the quality of instructors and their practices at higher education institutions are critical agenda that require immediate improvement through all possible interventions. One of the strategies devised by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to improve the quality of instructors in their professional practices at higher education institutions was establishing continuous professional development program through PSIP (Pedagogical Skills Improvement Program), HDP (Higher Diploma Program), and ADRC (Academic Development and Resource Center).

Adama Science and Technology University has given priority to improving instructors' professional knowledge and skills in recognition of the roles that they play in education. In line with this, Pedagogical Skills Improvement Training Center was established in September 2009. The main purpose of the center is to provide training for the academic staff so as to promote their pedagogical knowledge and skills and other related issues. Since its establishment over 250 instructors have completed the training program. Thus, this research is aimed at evaluating the successes and challenges in the implementation of the pedagogical skills improvement training program at this University. In particular, the intention of the research is to investigate the attitude of instructors toward the training program and to pin point some factors inhibiting the ongoing process of the professional development practices.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

These days the world at large has been under a dramatically growing process of change and reform in education. Teachers professional development has become one of the key elements in the rapid process of educational reforms. This is because teachers in educational reforms are the main executors of any changes and plans. In this regard, Villegas-Reimers (2003: 7) noted that, teachers are not only one of the variables that need to be changed in order to improve the education system, but they are also the most considerable change agents in these reforms. Supporting this view OECD (1994) described that, teachers are at the centre of educational improvement. Any benefits that accrue to students as a result of education policies require the enabling actions of teachers. Fullan (2001) also places teachers at the heart of the success or failure of educational change by saying that if change is to happen, it requires teachers to understand themselves and to be understood by others. No matter how well defined education may be, it is the quality of teachers that makes a difference. Without effective teachers, their confidence and competence it is difficult to attain the desired objectives. Particular to higher education, Blair and Jordan (1994) noted that central to the realization of the higher education goals and objectives are the academic staff whose roles are diverse and decisive. Academic staff their quality and their effectiveness make the difference in the higher education. In general, as many literatures revealed the teacher is the most decisive factor in student learning. Student learning will undoubtedly be determined by teachers' effectiveness. The quality of a teacher is affected by his/her **knowledge of content** and by his/her knowledge of **how to teach**. It is through professional development efforts that knowledge of content and knowledge of strategies can be improved and promoted.

Levin (2003) also put a summarized report regarding teachers' quality and qualifications as keys to improving students learning. The writer elaborated that teachers preparation is a major component of teacher quality, along with ongoing opportunities for teachers' development. Effective teachers know their content, understand how their students learn, are able to develop and teach curriculum and also know to determine and support their students' needs. To discharge all these responsibilities, continuous professional developments are compulsory for teachers at all levels. Supporting Levin's idea, Guskey (2000) asserts that professional development is an extremely important component which is central to all educational programs. Without effective professional knowledge and skills, educators can not make strong contributions to the implementation of proper classroom activities and to the establishment of positive view of education.

In general, professional development can be summarized as a planned, ongoing and systematic processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of educators for the improvement of students' learning. In other words, it is a program that intends to promote the professional knowledge (insights), skills and attitudes of teachers through formal and informal activities which are carried out on a continuous basis, from the pre-service teacher education through the whole remaining life span of the individual teacher.

IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

According to Little (1997) what teachers know, do and believe has a major influence on students learning. If we are to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, we must invest in the learning of teachers. This learning should support the growth of the individual as well as contribute to the realization of the goals and priorities of the school and the system. Supporting this idea, Fullan (2001) noted that effective staff development is an essential and indispensable process without which schools and programs can not hope to achieve their desired goals to students' achievement. Having this in mind, literature has several justifications for teacher's professional development. Some rationale behind its necessity is discussed as follows.

Guskey (2000) relates the importance of teachers PD to the growing width and depth of human knowledge base that in turn requires new types of expertise. Educators have to keep up with the new intellectual and skill challenges to refine them and refine their own conceptual and craft skills. Educators need to update themselves to keep abreast of emerging knowledge and need to prepare themselves to use it. After all it could not be otherwise for them to survive safe in the profession that they have to develop professionally. According to this scholar, if teachers' lag behind, the rapidity of change to which the society at large and their students from all walks of life and who are in the waves of dramatic changes could not accommodate them.

The other reason which is described by Guskey (2000) as the worth of professional development is related to the educational reforms that require teachers to transform their roles and take on new responsibilities. According to the writer, structural changes in the way schools are organized, shared decision making, and alternative school governance policies, and efforts to persuade greater parent and community participation all require educators to change the way they go about their jobs and redesign the culture in which they work.

More specifically, (Kwakman, 2003; Hord, 2004; and Freier, 1995) also described the importance of teachers' professional development from the view point of educational reform. According to these educators, many countries of the world are undertaking educational reforms that aim at major changes in: curriculum design, development, implementation and evaluation and methodology of teaching such as from the traditional teacher centered to the more students centered one. Methods of classroom or student assessment have been also shifting from the old written examination of a summative nature towards continuous or formative assessment that has a developmental value for students. The democratization process in education system including decentralization of decision making is also a new challenge of the changing trends in education. What is more reforms in curriculum are intending to achieve new levels of competencies like critical thinking, problem solving, and new cultures of teaching and learning like collaborative learning. Promoting these cultures of teaching and learning all require teachers to adapt new pedagogical approaches. Indeed against the traditional teachers' self-image as transmitters of knowledge, the constructivist view led teachers to see themselves as creators of opportunities and incentives that support learning (Loucks-Horseley et.al, 1998). It follows that for teachers to be up to date and in line with a prevailing viewpoint and approaches of teaching and learning, professional development plays a role of paramount importance. Hence a change driven, accountability based staff development is highly supported.

In sum, continuous professional development is a means for successful execution of educational reforms and has an immense benefit in promoting teachers knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that they can effectively discharge their duties and responsibilities in their professional career. Moreover, it enables teachers to go inline with the new emerging technological and pedagogical concepts that lead to quality of students learning

FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Concerning teachers and their professional practices, Borko and Putnam(1996) suggest five features that boost teacher learning in professional development opportunities. These five features are further stretched from current research report on professional development (Hawley & Valli, 1999, 2000; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998; Putnam & Borko, 1996, 2000) as cited in Teclai (2006). These features involve: 1.Addressing teachers pre-existing knowledge and beliefs; 2.Enhancing teachers' subject matter and pedagogical knowledge and skills; 3.Grounding teacher learning and reflection in classroom practice; 4. treating teachers as adult learners; 5.Time and support. Although all these elements are essential, for the purpose of this study attention is given to the first three as follows.

1. Addressing teachers pre-existing knowledge and beliefs. It is believed that no one can exert an effort without benefit. Teachers come to PD opportunities with the number of expectations, knowledge, beliefs that serve them in their professional practices. Therefore, it is decisive that professional development opportunities explicitly address teachers pre-existing knowledge and beliefs. Borko and Putnam (1996) noted that one way to address teachers knowledge and beliefs is to enable teachers to reflect upon and make explicit their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and concerns about teaching, learning, and the subject matter. It is also equally important to assist teachers as they make their knowledge and beliefs explicit. This can be done by creating contexts in which they could examine and change their knowledge and beliefs.

2. Enhancing teachers' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills. In their wide-ranging analysis of literature on learning to teach the writers described that, professional learning must make teachers 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 facilitate learning with understanding. In addition to subject matter knowledge, effective teachers need a pedagogical knowledge and skills that guides their actions in highly contextualized classroom setting. Moreover, many educators (Hawley and Valli, 2000; Loucks-Horsley et al. (1998) described the pedagogical knowledge and skills as a way of representing and formulating the subject that makes it comprehensible to others, and includes among other things knowledge of how to represent and formulate content for student learning, knowledge of common conceptions and difficulties students encounter when learning a particular content and knowledge of specific strategies and representations that can be used to address students learning needs in particular classroom situations.

3. Grounding teacher learning and reflection in classroom practice. With respect to this Putnam and Borko (2000) described the principle which is based on the premise that knowledge is situated in a particular context where it is acquired and used. The writers argued that professional development programs can successfully address a systematically incorporating multiple contexts for teacher learning. Although the most appropriate context for professional development depends on the specific goals for teachers learning, Putnam & Borko (2000) suggest that a combination of approaches in a variety of contexts holds the best promise for facilitating powerful, multidimensional changes in teachers thinking and practices.

Overall, the above mentioned points are some of the critical features of effective professional development that should be acknowledged by program designers and implementers. As to effective professional development activities, Sparks (2002) indicated seven elements that are basic for high-quality professional development programs. These include:

- 1) **Ongoing learning and training**-this is to give emphasis to the need for continuous learning of new knowledge and skills so that teachers would cope up with changes in education.
- 2) **Institutional support**-this refers to support in terms of coordination, money, time, incentive and building a culture of collegiality among teachers.
- 3) **Hands-on and classroom-based experiences**- i.e. training through practice
- 4) **Individualized training.** This is because instructors vary in their levels of expertise at the time of their training. The context, which surrounds their professional development, must provide no threatening environment, that is, it should be sensitive to the individual instructor's level of expertise and experiences
- 5) **Follow-up training,** this refers to creating opportunities for teachers to work with mentors and colleagues. Perhaps the greatest challenge for instructors is putting newly gained knowledge and skills into action and to reinforce new knowledge, skills, and techniques because that will augments both what has been learned and the confidence to use it
- 6) **Mentoring,** Perhaps the greatest challenge for instructors is putting newly gained knowledge and skills into action. Therefore, it is helpful to arrange mentorship for teachers that play advisory roles.
- 7) **Train-the-trainers approaches to continuing education.** This also refers to providing opportunities in which teachers learn from each other in practice.

In general, effective professional development accomplishes variety of goals. It enriches teaching and improves learning for all students and an essential link to higher student achievement. It is considered as an ongoing process and is conducted in a long-term, sustained manner and also job-embedded and inquiry-based which focuses on practical activities. Effective professional development has a wide ranging positive impact in building learning community in educational institutions

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODALITIES

In many literatures there are various strategies of professional development activities. As described by Guskey (2000), some of these involve: Training, Observation/ Assessment, Involvement in a development/improvement process, Study groups, Inquiry, Individual guided activities, Mentoring/ peer coaching

1. Training: As explained by Guskey (2000), training is the most common form and most frequently conducted strategy of professional development and the one with which educators most experience. According to Joyce and Showers (2002), effective training includes an exploration of theory, demonstrations or modeling of skills, simulated practices, feedback about performance, and coaching in the workplace. The advantage of training in professional development practices

involve awareness creation, knowledge acquisition, sharing ideas and information with large group of educators and skill development and sometimes change in attitude and transfer of training.

2. Study Groups: Study groups engage in regular collaborative interactions around topics identified by the group. This provides opportunities to reflect on classroom practice and analyze student learning data. Groups can also read and discuss educational research publications in a collaborative and supportive environment, over an extended period of time. The study group model can include the entire staff of a school in finding solutions to common problems. Opportunities are then provided for groups to share their findings and recommendations with other staff members Guskey (2000). Collegiality, cooperation, and communication among teachers are valued by the school community.

3. Observation: According to Guskey (2000) one of the most effective ways to learn is by observing others, or being observed and receiving specific feedback from that observation. Analyzing and reflecting on this information can be a valuable means of professional growth. The most effective observations are well planned, focused on specific issues and with follow-up to document improvements. Peer observation promotes an open environment where public discussion of teaching is encouraged and supported. Peer coaching and clinical supervision are typical examples of observation. Observations of classroom teachers may focus on lesson design, instructional practices and classroom management or other issues related to teachers' roles.

The advantages indicated by scholars for observation is that it provides important benefits to both the observer and the being observed. The observer gains professional expertise by watching a colleague, preparing the feedback, and discussing common experiences. In the same vein the one being observed also benefits from another point of view, gain new insights, and receive helpful feedback. It also helps to break down the isolation of teaching and school administration by having colleagues work together on shared improvement goals.

4. Involvement in a development/improvement process: Most of the time educators come together to develop or review a curriculum, design a new program, plan strategies to improve instruction or solve a particular educational problem. Doing these professional activities may need participants to acquire new knowledge, through reading, research, discussion or observation. Through these design/development processes, they can improve their theoretical knowledge, practical skills and professional attitudes (Guskey, 2000).

5. Inquiry/ Action Research: Action research is a strategy for learning more about the teaching and learning process. Teachers decide what questions are important to examine in order for them to gain insight into what is happening in their classroom. It involves selecting a focus, collecting, analyzing and interpreting data and then taking action. The model is based on the belief that teachers have the ability to formulate valid questions about their own practice and pursue objective answers to these questions.

In so doing, it is quite evident that teachers' participation in action research improves their professional practices.

6. Mentoring/ peer coaching: Mentoring/or peer coaching is another effective model of teacher professional development in the workplace context. This type of professional development is conducted by creating a form of relationship between professional colleagues working together to reflect on their teaching and share ideas in order to improve their knowledge and professional skills. It applies by pairing a less experienced/beginning teacher with a well experienced and competent teacher. Discussions are held between the two in setting professional goals, ideas and strategies, class observations, exemplary practices, and ways of improving the mentoring teachers' practice.

7. Individual guided activities: Current theories of learning propose students active involvement in the learning to construct their own knowledge and skill. In order to realize this, the emerging teacher has to apply innovative methods to address the needs of students. To promote student active learning, teachers are required to adopt new pedagogical approaches (Kwakman, 2003). Individual guided activity helps teachers to keep up gaining new insights and developments that improve their practice, carry out readings on new subject matter, new teaching and pedagogical methods to affect student learning improvement and school change. According to Guskey (2000) this type of professional development model provides an opportunity for teachers to promote flexibility and individualization in making choice, decision making, personal reflection, and self-analysis..

In general, each of these types of professional development practices has an immense contribution in promoting teachers knowledge, skills and attitudes. Therefore, PD designers should consider the diversified and flexible approaches of these professional development practices that enhance the quality of teachers and there by improves the learning outcomes of students which are the ultimate beneficiaries of professional development programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the establishment of the Pedagogical Skills Improvement Center, the researcher has been working as the coordinator for the overall activities of the training program. It is this experience that initiates the researcher to carry out this study through qualitative design to evaluate the implementation of the training program. In order to search answers to the questions posed, the researcher conducted a focus group discussion with ten instructors who already completed the pedagogical skills training program to obtain information as to how the training program is relevant and pertinent to their daily teaching practices. The researcher also interviewed three tutors/facilitators to get in-depth and detailed information about the training program. The total sample of informants, therefore, was made up of ten instructors and three trainers' /facilitators/. All together thirteen instructors were purposefully selected. Furthermore, observation was carried out to examine the participation of trainees during the training session. It is believed that gathering information from these potential groups will contribute to the validity and reliability of the information related to the pedagogical skills improvement training program at the University. The data gathered from the research respondents through focus group discussion and interview briefly analyzed and interpreted as follows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part presents the findings of the study and discusses the outcomes of the major results that might have a considerable value for future improvement of pedagogical skills training program at Adama Science and Technology University. The findings were presented in three major parts. In the first part, the attitude and perception of instructors towards pedagogical skills improvement program was briefly discussed. The second part narrates the contributions of this pedagogical skills improvement training program for instructors' professional development. Finally, the factors influencing the implementation of this training program was presented and discussed.

A. THE ATTITUDE OF INSTRUCTORS TOWARDS PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The key issues raised by the researcher to understand instructors attitude towards this training were focusing on: how the training program is useful to make teachers knowledge up-to-date, how do they perceive that the training improves the quality of their performance, how the training encourages collaboration among themselves, to what extent they were satisfied with the training program, and how the contents of the training program are relevant to their classroom teaching. These were among the major points posed for the discussion with instructors. The results of the discussion are presented here under:

All teachers who participated in the study reported that the pedagogical skills improvement training program is so essential and useful to make teachers knowledge up-to-date. Education is dynamic by its very nature, what is true yesterday might not be true today and what is true today might be obsolete by tomorrow. So, to cope up with this rapidly changing situation it is vital to provide timely and relevant training for executors of the education i.e. for the teachers. They indicated that the PSI enables them to refresh their mind and examine the old fashioned approach of their teaching. They believe that the quality of teaching entirely depends on teachers' mastery of the subject matter and the pedagogical skills of how the subject matter knowledge is transferred to the students. In this regard, they indicated that the "how" is equally important to the "what" aspect of delivering and improving the quality of teaching. They thought that continuous on job training enables instructors to promote their knowledge and skills and also helps to maximize students learning. *"children can not be effective in tomorrow's world if they are trained in yesterday's skills" (watson, 2001)*

These respondents who completed the pedagogical skills improvement training program strongly believe that the training also encourages collaboration and intimacy among instructors of the same or different field of specialization. As indicated by the instructors, the opportunities to share experiences among themselves during the training have paramount importance to improve their knowledge and skills. Especially, the novice teachers were more benefited to acquire the good practices of relatively better qualified and experienced instructors. They also indicated that effective teaching takes place if the social components of the work environment are strong, smooth and attractive. They stressed that it is the pedagogical skills improvement training program that would

create the opportunity to work together, to conduct peer observation and peer assessment among each other which helps them to improve their professional practices.

PIC. 1: PICTURE DURING THE TRAINING SESSION



The above picture shows how instructors were actively participating and share experiences during the training. The researcher has conducted observation in the training session to get first hand information about the training program and how every member of the group was actively participating in the lesson. From the observation the researcher understood that the trainees were very much enthusiastic to the training program and there was high participation from every individual on the discussion points.

The other issue was as to how the training contents are relevant to their professional practices in general and classroom teaching in particular. They indicated that the training package in general is relevant to their professional exercise. These contents involve:

- The Reflective Teacher Educator
- English for Effective Communication
- Information and Communication Technology in Education
- Active Learning
- Student Assessment
- Research Methodology

The duration for completing the whole package of the training manual lasts six months. As pin pointed out by some instructors, few contents are not considering the particular nature of their field of studies. They said that the contents are too general not specific to their areas. Exercises given, questions raised and terminologies used in the modules are far from their area of specialization. Instructors pointed out that the contents of the training materials have to be polished and adapted to the different field of studies and needs and interests of the schools. They believe that revising the training manual would improve the quality of the PSI training program and allow the trainees to apply what they have learned to their daily professional practices.

In general, the participants described that although there are some problems related to contents, they were very much satisfied with the training program. This program enables them to develop confidence in their teaching duties. It is after the training that they feel optimistic attitude towards the teaching profession. They asserted by giving suggestion that this training program should be compulsory to all instructors including professionals, para-professionals and novice instructors. It is through such type of effort that the institutions can maintain and improve the quality of students learning. The interview results with the tutors/facilitators regarding the attitude of instructors to the PSI training show that trainees have positive impression towards the program. From their daily interaction with the trainees they understand that this training program allows instructors to develop confidence in their teaching profession, enables them to discharge their duties and responsibilities, pave a good opportunity for instructors to work in collaboration among themselves and share experiences across all disciplines, departments and schools.

In general, the response of both trainees and trainers is consistent regarding the outlook of instructors towards the pedagogical skills improvement training program undertaking in Adama Science and Technology University.

B. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR INSTRUCTORS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES.

Here instructors are requested to indicate the extent to which the pedagogical skills training program enabled them to carry out their professional activities. Almost all of them have remarked the contributions of the training as follows: it helps to use a variety of teaching methods and techniques, to prepare instructional plan and use it accordingly, to use time effectively and efficiently, to improve the techniques of classroom management, to promote the knowledge and skills of conducting research, to regularly evaluate the strength and weaknesses of their courses and to address the needs and interests of the different learning styles of students. The instructors further noted that this training program motivated them to use student centered pedagogical approaches such as active-learning method, problem-solving method, project method and experiential learning method. They stressed that the use of these methods do not only improve the quality of teaching but also promotes students learning by minimizing the gap observed between students in classroom teaching,

On the other hand, the target population of this study explained that the training program enhances their efficiency in presenting the contents of their courses i.e. it initiates them to use varieties of instructional materials that support the lesson topic for better understanding of students. Moreover, during the discussion teachers reported that the training program permits to understand and use their time effectively and efficiently to achieve the intended purpose. As one of the participant reported regarding time utilization, I was very poor in time management before I had taken the pedagogical training. But, after the training I have made significant improvement in the use of time. As a whole, they reported that the PSI training allow them to know even more about their field of specialization.

The instructors and facilitators also explained that the participation to the PSI training program make them possible to use continuous assessment of students learning. According to the respondents, conducting continuous assessment enables them to monitor and follow-up student progress and create opportunity to address the needs and interests of the different learning styles of students. This continuous assessment also stretched to regularly evaluating the strength and weakness of the course they are assigned to teach.

It was reported by the instructors that attending this training program encourages them to conduct research on the daily practices of classroom problems. This is because one of the modules in the training package of pedagogical skills improvement is action research which is intended to develop the research capacity of instructors for immediate problem solving of classroom situations. Instructors also indicated that the PSI training inspire them not only to conduct research but also to seek further information and training to their profession development.

Instructors also emphasized on the importance of PSI training in introducing the use of IT in education in general and in the teaching learning process in particular. These days the global trends move towards the use of electronic support teaching method (e-teaching/learning) which might seem compulsory and essential. In this regard, all instructors said that the incorporation of introductory IT contents in the training modules of the PSI encourages them to use

computer and other instructional Medias for different purposes in the teaching – learning process. ICTs enable new ways of teaching and learning rather than simply allow teachers and students to do what they have done before.

C. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PSI TRAINING PROGRAM

Although PSI (Pedagogical Skill Improvement) training has impressive contributions for instructors, there are various problems observed during the implementation. The researcher requested both instructors and facilitators to explain the major problems related to this program. The major problems that are frequently described by the majority of group members include shortage of resources and facilities like computes, LCD (Projector), well organized training rooms, qualified and experienced tutors/facilitators, shortage of additional reading materials like books, professional journals etc in the center. The inadequacy of these essential resources has a negative effect on the ongoing training program. The budget allocated for the training program was also not sufficient to buy stationeries and other necessary materials for the training program. The top management of the University is promising to allocate necessary budget for the training program every year, but still the problem was not profoundly solved.

Most instructors in the school of Engineering and Information Technology need greater assistance from the PSI facilitators to promote their teaching skills since a great deal of them lack pre-service pedagogical training. However, due to shortage of qualified facilitators, instructors are not getting appropriate advisory services regarding their problems.

The respondents indicated that the expansion program going on in the university and high student population per class make them busy and overloaded with classroom activities. They are under time pressure to effectively participate in PSI training program. Implementation of the knowledge and skills acquired in practical classroom situation is so challenging due to high student population per class.

So far, no salary increment or incentives for those who successfully completed the nine months training program. Only certificate is given for the instructors who have completed the program. As they said, this is not enough. The University has to give due attention to the benefits and advantages of participation in PSI training program. For instance, the university has to find ways and possibilities in which the certificated individuals get fringe benefits, career development, or any form of incentives after completing the program.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As a whole the perceptions of instructors and facilitators towards pedagogical skills improvement training program is very much positive. They have motioned their agreements by confirming that PSI training contributes to a great extent to promote instructors knowledge and skills which by implications leads to improve the quality of students learning. The strategies and plans devised by the University management to establish pedagogical skills improvement center at Adama Science and Technology University is sounding and encouraging. Practically this helps all the academic staff to improve and promote their professional development in general and helps to alleviate the pedagogical deficiency of instructors who were not trained for the teaching profession in particular.

The needs and positive attitudes of the instructors towards PSI training combined by the strategies and plans designed by the university management to promote and strengthen the PSI, provide promising prospects for future improvement of pedagogical skills training program at Adama Science and Technology University.

In general, PSI is accepted as an inevitable device in implementing the recent educational reforms that consider interactive student-centered teaching and learning approaches as an integral element. It enables teachers to keep abreast of the current educational trends and new theories. It renews teachers' repertoires of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It also upgrades the research skills of the teachers. Moreover, it has potentials of strengthening friendship and collaborative works and develops the spirit of team work among the staff members. Therefore, it is a must to strengthen the training center to improve the quality of students learning.

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