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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN HIGHER EDUCATION RECIPIENTS

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Abstract

The main goal of this study was to establish professional experiences of a census sample of ninety recipients of the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education from Chinhoyi University of Technology. This case study adopted a qualitative approach to collect data using an open ended questionnaire. Findings from the study indicate that participants had positive experiences from the programme. The relevance of the programme to professional development was central to the participants' experiences. The significance of the programme was also noted in regards to enhanced students' learning approaches, enhanced soft skills, quality of learning outcomes and the requisite teaching qualification. However, the programme was noted to lack adequate experiential practice. There was a general appeal to increase the duration of the whole programme. In conclusion the programme enhances professional development, by providing a foundation in teaching and learning theory and practice for University and tertiary institution lecturers. The study recommends that the programme can introduce post training follow-up to monitor post qualification practice. Furthermore, the study recommends more a more practical approach to lecture execution.
Key terms: Professional **e**xperiences, Recipients, Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, Professional development, Academic/educational development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Teichler (1998), Stefani and Elton (2002), Mohamedbhai, (2008) and Akalu, (2016), higher education teachers who have undergone some form of professional development in their teaching role do a better job than those who have not. Driven by the quest for quality teaching and learning, professional development programmes have become

an important focus for Zimbabwean universities. For instance, ZIMCHE as the governing body which is given the mandate to ensure Quality University programmes and lecturers, tasked universities to initiate strategies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning experience for lecturers who have no andragogical training. Such professional development interventions for academics ultimately lead to improved learning (Eley, 2006; 2008; Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; Gosling, 2001). There is also general agreement that university professional development programmes such as a postgraduate diploma in education have a positive impact on academics' pedagogical practices and students' learning outcomes (Shava, 2016). Hence, in Zimbabwe, universities such as the University of Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe Open University and the National University of Science and Technology have established professional development programmes through their faculties of education.

The Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) programme offered by Chinhoyi University of Technology is a two semester programme which started in January 2016. The programme aims to develop the necessary practical teaching skills and expertise in higher education practitioners. The PGDHE programme is an intellectually stimulating programme guaranteed to offer opportunities for practitioners to reflect and gain the theoretical and critical perspective for teaching as well as how to better support students in their learning. It equips academics, who have no prior training as teachers, with the skills required for university-level teaching in order to improve the quality of the graduates.

According to SARUA (2009), Zimbabwe State Universities experience quality challenges resulting from shortage of reference materials and severe brain drain leading to the juniorisation of staff. The question of quality higher education should be taken seriously in higher education institutions (Mangaleswarasharma and Sathiaseelan, 2015). In pursuit of this goal, the Zimbabwe Council of Higher Education was established through an act of parliament in 1990 as a National Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education. In the quest for inculcating professional development, the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education programme that was introduced by the Academy of Teaching and Learning of Chinhoyi University of Technology is one such basic professional qualification that can lecturers' professional knowledge, skills and attitudes to improve the quality of teaching and learning.. The Graduate Diploma in Higher Education at the Chinhoyi University of Technology, which commenced in 2016, has never been evaluated.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the inception of the PGDHE programme at Chinhoyi University of Technology in 2016 professional experiences of its recipients have not been established. Four cohorts of conventional PGDHE have gone through the programme since 2016 with no research carried out to establish post experiences of this programme to its graduates. Nkonki, *et al.,* (2014) opine that questions have to be asked about university teachers' experiences regarding their teaching development interventions to determine whether the diploma has achieved its outcomes. Otherwise the relevant training school may continue to train devoid of the imperatives such as the concern for academic standards, quality of module offerings and the effectiveness of teaching which students consider when choosing institutions and programmes. Framed in the interpretive paradigm, the study adopted a case study design to explore the professional experiences of PGDHE recipients at the Chinhoyi University of Technology.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:-

- What was the perceived significance of undertaking the PGDHE programme?
- What were the professional experiences of PGDHE recipients at the Chinhoyi University of Technology?
- What strategies can be implemented to increase the significance of the PGDHE at Chinhoyi University of Technology?

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Significance of the Graduate Diploma in Education

Studies carried out by several authors (Abejehu, 2017; Mangaleswarasharma and. Sathiaseelan, 2014; Shava 2016; Chabaya, 2016; Bukaliya and Muyengwa, 2016; Gibbs and Coffey, 2000) concur that the Post graduate professional training in education has numerous benefits. According to Butcher and Stoncel (2012), such programmes are related to change in the conceptions of teaching and learning, enhancing dialogue among colleagues and increased alignment towards innovative teaching strategies are documented. Other scholars acknowledge that these professional programmes are where all the prospective lecturers are trained the foundations of knowledge about pedagogy and module design (Mangaleswarasharma and. Sathiaseelan, 2014; Shava, 2016; Chabaya, 2016; Bukaliya and Muyengwa, 2016; Abejehu, 2017). They are also exposed to a practical classroom experience

by way of micro-teaching (Feuer *et al*., 2013). These are just some of the many outcomes of the programmes that are equivalent to the PGDHE. Furthermore, from a university perspective to achieve any socio-political, economic and scientific development for the industry there is dire need to equip lecturers with the requisite knowledge, skills, competence and commitment, to empower them to perform their tasks professionally (Koye, 2014). Hence, the PGDHE programme offers lecturers a wide spectrum of knowledge base that can be used to benefit the individual lecturer, his students, faculty, university and the country. Some of these benefits that were most common amongst many authors will be alluded to in the following discussion.

There is importance in having basic classroom teaching skills, especially for those teachers who do not have responsibility for course design and improvement and who do not yet perform other academic roles (Moeti; Mgawi and Moalosi, 2017; Shava, 2016; Lai, 2011). Basic teachers' classroom behaviour and skill is very crucial. The PGDHE is designed to meet the immediate needs to get the job done competently. Lecturers' skills and competencies are enhanced and critical thinking capabilities are also achieved to provide the required quality learning for students (Moeti, *et al*., 2017; Shava, 2016). Furthermore, Shava (2016) from his study discovered that most lecturers teaching methods and approaches had improved significantly. Thus the PGDHE improves the lecturer's teaching, and learning, their ability to design and develop curriculum and conduct research for effective teaching and learning.

Programmes that are equivalent to the PGDHE have been noted to increase the level of knowledge and understanding regards curriculum design (Nkonki *et a.l*, 2014). Many of the modules that lecturers are assessed require demonstration of abilities to design modules for degree programmes. To do this effectively they must show how to articulate appropriate collection of course module content in tandem with expected learning outcomes. The design of modules also includes the use of learnt teaching philosophies, teaching practices, and assessment schemes and (evidence based teaching), and use of a different approaches. In simple terms, the programme enables lecturers to reflect on what they do by using theory that they acquired to implement into their own modules for quality teaching practices. Thus they will become effective teaching and learning practitioners (Abejehu, 2017; Shava, 2016; Nkonki *et al*., 2014).

From a study conducted by Shava (2016) at NUST in Zimbabwe, he noted that apart from developing skills and competencies, the PGDHE has the potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The program instils not only quality in teaching, but also creating powerful learning, by ensuring that the lecturer is able to apply, learning theories in ways that purposefully shape their teaching. Not only do the lecturers become professionals in knowledge but also become experts that are skilful, articulate and capable educators in teaching and learning (Loughran, 2018). Quality in teaching and learning can be seen through the knowledge, skills and ability employed by the teacher to develop meaningful pedagogic experiences for students (Abejehu, 2017; Shava, 2016; Nkonki *et al*., 2014). These experiences are only evident when teaching impacts learning and learning influences teaching. According to Loughran (2018), that dynamic relationship is dramatically different to the singular, one-way events of 'telling' and 'listening'. Quality of learning involves lecturers to invite students' to actively engage in learning. Students are able to interact, share ideas and innovate (Shava 2016; Chabaya, 2016; Bukaliya and Muyengwa, 2016; Mangaleswarasharma and Sathiaseelan, 2014). Lectures are also taught the various methods of managing students and the numerous assessment methods to engage in, to monitor and evaluate students (Abejehu, 2017; Shava, 2016; Nkonki *et al*., 2014). The programme allows for an exploration of a range of considered 'best practices', trying out new things, and documenting experiences (Nkonki, 2014; Mangaleswarasharma and Sathiaseelan, 2014). This exploration assists lecturers to have a wider knowledge base on better and more engaging methods of facilitation and assessment.

The programme teaches lecturers to have the introspective ability to critically assess themselves and their current teaching methods. At the same time lecturers become more flexible in various ways which in-turn improves their teaching enabling lecturers to break away from the conventional 'chalk and talk' methods. When the lecturer adopts the reflective mode they become more confident as well in active interactive approaches that enhance teaching. This change is what Butcher and Stoncel (2012) views as the development of a pedagogic identity as a result of the PGDHE. Thus, the PGDHE provides participants with a teaching voice (Nkonki, 2014; Butcher and Stoncel, 2012).The next significance looks at focusing on the student more than on the lecturer for interactive teaching methods.

The Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education has the ability to change teachers' conceptions, from focusing on themselves in the lecture room to become more interactive with the students through student-centred approaches (Butcher and Stoncel, 2012; Dixon and Scott, 2003). In their study, Butcher and Stoncel (2012) underscore that lecturers were willing to adopt new approaches to teaching, planning and assessment. Lecturers realised that the students they teach are not tabula rasa; they come with prior knowledge that enhances teaching. Lecturers also develop a clear focus on student learning outcomes in the preparation of lectures, with less prescriptive teaching approaches (Shava, 2016). Therefore, the programme assists in redirecting lecturers to utilise prior knowledge form students for a more effective teaching and learning platform. It was one of the objects of this study to determine the perceived significance of undertaking a Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education.

4.2 Professional experiences of recipients of the Graduate Diploma in Education

The University of Auckland Faculty of Education and Social Work, (2016) noted that the most important aspects required in higher education programmes is to develop graduates who are able to demonstrate an evidence-informed, outcomes-focused, inquiry-based approach to teaching. This is the most widely used approach by international universities that offer programmes that are equivalent to the PGDHE. Many countries around the world encourage graduates to complete a postgraduate qualification once they are in employment or just as soon as they have graduated from their undergraduate or postgraduate degree (Education Council, ND).

The most popular education programme is found in Finland wherein the country's well-established system requires educators to hold a postgraduate qualification (Education Council, ND). According to a review by Sahlberg (2010: 4),

> *Finland's commitment to research-based teacher education means that educational theories, research methodologies and practice all play an important part in preparation programs. Their higher education programme is designed to mentor lecturers from the foundations of educational thinking to educational research methodologies and then on to more advanced fields of the educational sciences.*

The programme increases effectiveness of among educators thereby promoting quality education. The educators acquire an ''… in-depth understanding of student's development, pedagogical content, curriculum, assessment, school improvement, and leadership than from other countries (Sahlberg, 2013:38).''

In New Zealand the Graduate Diploma in Education is offered to all educators that have attained both the undergraduate and masters' level (Programme Handbook, 2016). The programme is premised on the notion that the graduate has developed a high level of knowledge and understanding in an academic discipline for the purpose of adding requisite knowledge, skills and an understanding of student learning approaches (Programme Handbook, 2016). Educators are also required to go for a practicum or micro- teaching. This assists educators in the professional development that is required for a trained lectured in higher education systems. The educators are taught to apply their knowledge and skills for the particular area of expertise. They are trained in and develop their teaching competencies in a variety of instructional contexts and at different levels under guidance and supervision of mentors and university lecturers. Other countries like India, Sri Lanka, and United Kingdom also offer the same programme to educators. They all seek to develop the professional competencies of the educators, it was also noted that the programme is compulsory for educators before they enter the classroom to teach students.

In Africa, there are several universities that offer the PGDHE as a professional development programme for lecturers. South Africa is a host to several universities that offer this professional development. Their main thrust for enrolment is on condition of possession of an undergraduate degree, be currently employed in the field of lecturing and also in possession of at least a year of lecturing experience. Thus, as noted by (Abejehu, 2017), there seem inconsistencies between perceived professional importance of PGDT programme and academic achievement of the graduates of the programme. The study then focused on review of literature surrounding professional development research carried out in Zimbabwe so far. The majority of Lecturers in universities and colleges do not have teaching qualifications, so they need to learn on the job. According to Scott (1998), academic development practitioners have been found to be ill qualified. Thus, the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education PGDHE was introduced in an attempt to empower educational development practitioners with relevant higher qualifications (Kifoil, 2012). This PGDHE gave lecturers recognition as

qualified higher education teachers. These efforts, to enhance the lecturers' capabilities, tend to give academic development practitioners credibility and status. This is how ZIMCHE, in line with quality assurance and standards recommended that all lecturers with no teaching education at least get professionally developed. The PGDHE provides academics who have no prior training as teachers with the skills required for university-level teaching. The PGDHE offers lecturers opportunities for enhanced professional development. Mukeredzi (2013), Gosling and O'Connor (2006), Guskey (2002) and Candy (1996) underscore that this professional development is taken to mean practices designed to enhance the academic performance of an institution of higher education. This professional development for most academic institutions generally focuses on enhancing the professional competence of the school members. Shava (2016) views the professional development as concerned with educational development to include curriculum development and instructional design. For higher education institutions more formal, comprehensive and integrated models of professional development, like the PGDHE have been shown to have a greater influence on developing pedagogical skills for lecturers (Mukeredzi, 2013). Professional development programmes such as the PGDHE provide lecturers with job satisfaction (Guskey, 2002) and help to build the competencies and motivation of lecturers to teach, conduct research and engage in community service. Professional development is imperative as a tool to maintain the quality of teaching (Higgins and Harreveld, 2013; Abejehu, (2017) Chabaya, (2015) and Shava, (2016) note that lecturers must have this professional training. Its importance lies in meeting the many challenges and changes that constantly face lecturers in institutions of higher education (Moeti, Mgawi and Moalosi, 2017).

At the same time professional development is noted as a strategy which can play a role in promoting the scholarship of teaching as well as developing pedagogical skills required to promote quality (Moeti *et al.*, 2017; Chabaya, 2015). Some of the strategies involve adaptation to the continual changes in subject content, the emergence of new instructional methods, advances in technology and changing laws and procedures. The quality agenda by all universities has also necessitated the increased professional development activity. Hence, professional development drives change for quality (Chabaya, 2015). Not only is professional development a strategy for quality, but it has increasingly been noted to change the attitudes of lecturers from being unconcerned and uncaring towards students, to showing concern and care (Abejehu, 2017; Moeti *et al.*, 2017; Shava, 2016; Chalmers and Gardiner, 2015;

Chabaya, 2015). In addition Mundy, Kupczynski, Ellis, and Salgado (2012) argue that professional development should be embedded in lifelong learning to institutionalise it as a culture. This in turn means as each lecturer is employed by the institution they have to attain professional development if they do not already have it. Recent studies have also established a direct relationship exists between professional development programmes for academics and students' learning outcomes (Chalmers and Gardiner, 2015; Hunzicker, 2011; Doherty, 2010; Hossain, 2010). Therefore, the most significant role of professional development programme for academics is that it develops skills, knowledge and attitudes within their respective teaching areas.

However, most institutions have not carried out tracer studies to investigate the graduate experiences towards the PGDHE as an important programme for professional development for Zimbabwean Universities. To date only two Zimbabwe universities, Zimbabwe Open (ZOU) and National University of Science and Technology (NUST) have carried out this research. The study carried out at ZOU, sought to establish new PGDE students' perceptions on teacher education online distance learning platform (ODL). The experiences were directed toward use of technology interface. The research noted the effectiveness of the post graduate diploma in teacher development, despite it lacking face to face tutorial and interactions. The experiences of the participants to the programme itself were not conducted, rather experiences using ODL. The other study by Shava (2016) was conducted at NUST. Shava (2016) examined the perceptions of academics participating in professional development, and the effects of their learning on their teaching practice and on their students' learning. The researcher aimed at the post effects of the PGDHE. Conclusions from Shava, (2016) assert that the PGDHE enabled academics to improve their teaching strategies. Both studies tried to illicit information form recipients of the PGDHE, however they looked at post effects and user interface. This study will not only establish post but pre recipient experiences of the PGDHE. The study will be on CUT. Understanding lecturers' experiences and perceived significance of PGDHE practices may be helpful to improve the outcomes and success of the PGDHE. These experiences and perceived significance of lecturers towards the PGDHE have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of the programme. Hence, this study seeks to establish the professional experiences of PGDHE recipients at the Chinhoyi University of Technology.

4.3 Strategies to increase the significance of the Graduate Diploma in Education

Parsons, *et al.,* (2013) note that there are limited impact studies on teaching development programmes, with more studies focusing on programme development and programme delivery. Where studies of impact have been conducted, there is seemingly inconclusive evidence about the positive effects of PGDHE programmes owing to fragmented evidence base and lack of coherence (McAlpine, 2003). Gray and Radloff (2008) posit that impact is often associated with a variety of qualitatively nuanced words for evaluating academic development, namely: achievement, accomplishment, change, consequence, contribution, difference, effect, impression, influence, outcome, output, results, success, et cetera. The impact determinants gleaned from studies of impact of teaching development programmes are classified by Parsons, *et al.,* (2013) into six areas, namely: impact on teachers' attitudes, knowledge and skills, impact on teachers' behaviour and practice, effects on disciplinary or generic programme focus, effects of compulsory and/or voluntary participation, impact on the students' learning experience and other impacts. These areas can best be studied from the recipients of the PGDHE, the students, quality assurance officials, the university human resources and industry stakeholders.

5.0 METHODS

This phenomenological study adopted the interpretivist approach to understand and describe experiences of recipients of the PGDHE programme. This research adopted the qualitative approach since it explored individual recipient experiences of the PGDHE programme. The study sample comprised all the 90 PGDHE recipients since its inception in 2016. The research, thus, used census sampling to determine the study sample. Hence, all the 90 graduates participated in the study. Table 1.1 shows the distribution of the PGDHE recipients by numbers.

Table 5.1: Distribution of the PGDHE recipients by numbers

COHORT	YEAR	GRADUATES
1	2016	43
2	2017	23
3	2018	12
4	2019	12
TOTAL		**90**

Hence, 90 questionnaires were self-administered to the purposively sampled participants which had been pilot tested on the current PGDHE group. The questionnaire comprised both closed and open-ended questions. The collected data were processed and analysed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The themes were then selected to provide reliable and accurate information concerning the issues that arose pertaining to the research questions. The themes thus, formed the basis of the analysis of this research.

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
5.1 BIOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

Only 78 out of 90 recipients of the PGDHE certificate participated in the study yielding an 86.7% questionnaire return rate. Response rates which approximate or surpass 80% should be the goal of every survey (Fincham, 2008).

The majority of the participants had attained at least an undergraduate degree and a Master's degree before enrolling for the PGDHE programme. The minimum requirement for the PGDHE programme at CUT is an undergraduate degree. This ensures that the PGDHE recipients have the prerequisite grounding in their specialist areas attained at a higher education institution. This basic requirement is an internationally accepted prerequisite (Programme Handbook, 2016). The PGDHE programme is premised on cementing knowledge and understanding of skills required for the field of lecturing. All the recipients of the PGDHE had been lecturing for more than five years without the requisite professional training. Findings also indicated that seventy- seven per cent of the participants who had enrolled for the programme were lecturing staff and the rest were working as part time lecturers in private institutions. Apparently, this experience is important for the theoretical and practical training that the programme requires. Bukaliya and Muyengwa (2016), Shava (2016) and Scott (1998) noted lack of professional development for university lecturers across the entire SADCC region. The inception of the programme at CUT seemed to have been long overdue. In Zimbabwe many of the institutions were noted to have recently introduced the PGDHE after ZIMCHE had identified the quality gaps that were inherent in the graduates.

5.2. PERCEIVED REASONS FOR ENROLLING FOR THE PROGRAMME

When the participants were asked why they had enrolled for the PGDHE, a lot of reasons were put forward. There were generally four (4) themes that emerged from the questionnaires.

5.2.1 Professional development offered by the PGDHE

Research participants indicated that they enrolled in the programme to acquire the necessary professional skills offered by the PGDHE. The PGDHE's role of professional development is captured in the following comments of the participants:

- *To possess a relevant teaching qualification*
- *I did not have an education background, so I enrolled for the programme to acquire skills in pedagogy.*
- *To enhance my skills in higher education teaching*
- *In order to acquaint myself with instructional skills relevant for higher education tuition*
- *To get a professional qualification*
- *Always wanted to do a teaching qualification*

Chabaya (2015) and Moeti *et al*., (2017) posit that professional development plays an important role in promoting and developing skills required by university teachers.

5.2.2 Enhanced students' learning

Participants stated that PGDHE programme empowered them to enhance students' learning. Some of the participants made the following remarks:

- *To apply different teaching methods and how best to assess students' performance and lecture delivery*
- *To learn how to teach and assess students*
- *To help me to become a better classroom practitioner*
- *To improve my content creation and delivery*
- *To broaden any skills and abilities in university teaching*
- *Also wanted to learn how to teach adult learners*

From the above, it can be deduced that the programme also aimed to equip the lecturers with the necessary skills and competencies required for adult education. The PGDHE mandate of professional development places students at the fore-front of teaching and learning to ensure quality products. Therefore, through exposure to the various teaching and learning methods, approaches and strategies the PGDHE, recipients would be capacitated to manage and assess student   learning.

The comments from the participants indicate that the programme offered them skills in student management and training in higher and tertiary teaching and learning. The programme itself was implemented to ensure that lecturers get the requisite skills to handle diverse students. Lecturers posited that they joined this programme to adopt innovative teaching methods probably as a result of their reflection of products of the programme modules. Hence, the programme instilled, in the lecturers, an introspective ability to critically assess themselves and their current teaching methods to suit the current adult learners. The numerous interactive methods taught during the programme also assist lecturers to choose the best methods for their students. Hence, these findings are in tandem with Abejehu (2017), Shava (2016) and Nkonki *et al.,* (2014) who noted that the PGDHE programme is not only about professional development, but to also educate lecturers in the various methods of managing students, assessment methods that they can adopt and to monitor and evaluate students.

5.2.3 Enhanced soft skills
Apart from enhanced student teaching and learning approaches, the theme of soft skills was mentioned by some of the participants. Some of the participants remarked the following:

- *To improve on my soft skills when dealing with adult students*
- *The diversity of students require understanding to best assist students, I needed to learn how to approach students better*
- *The students need to be understood, soft skills can only assist in that regard*

From the participants' comments above, lecturers noted that the programme's modules allowed them to constantly reflect on how they conducted themselves in the presence of students. This shows that the programme draws lecturers to see students as adults that require some attention and empathy. These changes in attitudes and improved soft skills were also noted by many scholars as central to the programme since lecturers changed from being unconcerned and uncaring towards students, to show concern and care (Abejehu, 2017; Moeti *et al.*, 2017; Shava, 2016; Chabaya, 2015; Chalmers and Gardiner, 2015).

5.2.4 Requisite teaching qualification

The last pertinent reason that came from the participants was related to higher qualification requirements. For instance, the PGDHE graduates purported that they had enrolled for the PGDHE mainly because:

- *It was sort of a requirement to do so from authorities*
- *Requirements from the university*
- *I was told that it was a requirement necessary to teach at the university*
- *Was directly encouraged to enrol by the school , thus it was not all by choice*

The comments above show that it was a university requirement for the lecturers to enrol for the PGDHE programme. Hence the initial review by Bukaliya and Muyengwa (2016) and Shava (2016) that in the SADC region the majority of lecturers in universities and colleges do not have basic teaching qualifications, they have been found to be ill qualified. However, on completion of the programme, the same lecturers realised that it was an eye opener as deduced from their comments:

- *Improved my teaching, presentation and assessment skills*
- *New set of skills in lecturing*
- *I acquired the basic skills of andragogy*
- *More equipped with modern teaching methods of the 21st century*

- *Have sharpened my teaching skills and in a better position to handle students from diverse backgrounds*
- *This programme initiated me into lecturing*

The comments above clearly indicate that the recipients had appositive feelings and thoughts towards the programme. The lecturers had changed their attitudes as reflected by their appreciation the programme. This is echoed by Kifoil, (2012) who noted that the PGDHE is an attempt to empower educational practitioners by enhancing their capabilities and changing the attitudes of lecturers within their respective teaching areas.

However, one lecturer indicated that he had enrolled for the programme out of interest as he appreciated his teaching weaknesses. His comment was:

- *To upgrade myself in the conduct of my lectures through acquiring the relevant and current skills*

Despite the fact that lecturers had mentioned that the reason for enrolment was a university and school requirement almost all the participants reported that their departments were supportive of their participation in the PGDHE. When asked to expand on the levels of this support participants got from their leadership, the participants indicated that the PGDHE was well supported by the University management and this was in the form of free tuition funding that was made available to all the CUT lecturers who had enrolled for the programme. In particular, participants mentioned the following indications of support:

- *Funding was available, CUT also assisted in paying for my tuition fees*
- *Waiver on tuition fees*
- *Because I would receive financial support*
- *Convenience of proximity to my work place, it was funded by a staff development program*
- *Part of the fees were paid by the university*

The participants later acknowledged and appreciated that the university is offering a lot of support for the PGDHE recipients. The convenience of the location, the university, and

payment of academic fees by the university were mentioned by the entire participants. The assumption was that if the programme had been offered at a fee or elsewhere the probability of the same participants attending the programme would be poor. Worse still if some programme participants had not been chosen by their schools and departments, enrolment might have been low. This may mean that the programme was set up for CUT lecturers to improve their teaching and learning skills. Or again the university had noted a general gap in teacher education training coupled with ZIMCHE call for quality education to meet general industry requirements. Therefore the majority of the programme students came from CUT.

Generally, participants indicated that the provision of such a programme by the University was a platform to attain the basic pedagogical and andragogical competencies among academics, which will ultimately benefit student learning. Generally, the PGDHE programme at CUT has positive support from management of the University.

Participants, who hailed from other institutions, commented on the convenience of the venue, change of environment and proximity as the main reason for enrolling with CUT. However, there were few participants from other private institutions and from their responses the location of the programme was quite comfortable with them. Even though the same programme is being offered within their institutions most preferred to go elsewhere.

5.3 PARTICIPANTS' EXPECTATIONS FROM THE PGDHE PROGRAMME.

It was important to note the significant and insignificant programme attributes that the recipients expected to attain from the programme modules. From the varied comments, all the programme recipients indicated the benefit of the programme was the acquisition and application of new skills to become effective lecturers and good classroom managers.

- *'To learn 21st century teaching and learning skills in andragogy'*
- *'I expected to be guided in understanding and applying concepts of teaching at higher education level'*
- *'Skilled in content creation and delivery'*
- *'To be a better evaluator of student learning'*
- *'To get knowledge on managing a class'*

These outcomes focused on professional development for academics that enabled the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes within their respective teaching areas. Abejehu, (2017), Shava, (2016), Chabaya, (2016), Bukaliya and Muyengwa, (2016) and Mangaleswarasharma and Sathiaseelan, (2014) note the same impact of the PGDHE; that this programme has a positive impact on academics' pedagogical practices and students' learning outcomes, it develops skills, knowledge and attitudes. Generally the PGDHE programme offers lecturers a wide spectrum of knowledge base that is beneficial to the students, faculty, university and the country.

The desire of the participants was to attain a good overall mark and probably for self-actualisation purposes. This response was made by the participant who might have expected the programme to be harder than what they had initially heard. Although two of the participants had different expectations from the programme the majority noted that they all enrolled expecting to attain professional development. The study went further to seek individual benefits accrued from the same programme. The study was interested in getting feedback on whether the programme had changed the recipients in some way from what they were initially.

5.4 INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS

Apart from expectations the participants had individual benefits that they accrued from the programme modules. Most of these individual benefits obtained from the PGDHE qualification were grouped into four (4) themes. These will be discussed in detail.

5.4.1 Diversity of teaching approaches

The PGDHE widened the repertoire of teaching strategies for some. Some of the recipients commented:

- *Have sharpened my teaching skills*
- *Knowledge of relevant instructional approaches*
- *Improved my teaching and presentation skills*
- *More equipped with modern teaching methods of 21st century*
- *Having a better understanding of appropriate teaching methods*

Lecturers teaching and learning approaches were expanded to appreciate the diversity of active teaching. As such the diverse teaching and learning approaches try to embrace all the various stakeholder interests. ZIMCHE, the students and the wider community embrace quality, skills and competencies as important learning outcomes that they must see to confirm that learning has taken place. This can only be noticed through the students who have been taught using diverse teaching and learning approaches. This development is in agreement with Shava (2016), who noted that the programme enhances lecturers teaching methods and approaches to become more learner- oriented.

5.4.2 Enhanced lecturer confidence and management of learners.

The other individual benefits noted were enhanced confidence, professional identity, and self-belief of teachers. These attributes were attained as a result of having gone through the PGDHE programme. This is evidenced by the following sentiments:

- *Invest on my personal development*
- *Teaching is all about transforming students through easy presentation of what I know*
- *Confidence in teaching*
- *I am now motivated more for classroom delivery*
- *Empowered to perform better in the classroom*

The above comments show that lectures developed self-belief and were motivated to teach in the classroom. These findings are similar to Butcher and Stoncel (2012) who argued that a sense of confidence and self-belief when teaching is a result of lecturers' changes in conceptual understanding, sense of professional identity, the use of pedagogic approaches and engagement with wider teaching community.

5.4.3 Empathy towards students

Participants generally lacked student- centred focus before attaining the PGDHE. One of the programme's emphases was to educate lecturers in the art of teaching and interacting with adult learners. Lecturers appreciated the modules from the programme that developed in them more understanding of their students. Hence some of the many comments of appreciation from the programme recipients were:

- *Better student communication*
- *There's improved relations with my students*
- *Understanding of students and curriculum development*
- *I am now able to appreciate individual dynamics among learners and I am able to assess students*

Participants' ability to treat students as adult learners can be noticed from the above comments. The lecturers realized from the programme that students are individuals who come from diverse backgrounds and need to be heard. The students are the consumers of the various teaching and learning strategies implemented by the recipients. Hence their involvement in and consideration of quality learning outcomes becomes a prominent feature of the PGDHE programme. Lecturers who attained the PGDHE all improved their communication skills and interaction with the students. Their comment was:

- *Time and again I assist my fellow academic staff members on how best to engage the students*

The programme has made other lecturers share the skills that they were taught in the PGDHE programme. Therefore, it can be concluded that the programme was not beneficial to the individual recipients only but to their respective departmental colleagues. The lecturers also realized that they should not communicate to students but rather with students to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

In teaching and learning educators are custodians of varying class size and type. These classes can be large or small. Types of students in the class can be by culture, race, slow and fast paced learners. All these students are normally found as part of the class. These classes need competent educators who have the skills and knowledge to manage, innovate and assign activities to students to ensure that learners are grasping the necessary concepts. Hence class management is important for the individuals as they teach adults.

The next theme emerged from individual benefits that the recipients had attained as individuals as related to lecturers' improved skill to management of classes. The most

important benefit identified by participants was the innovations in curriculum or classroom-focused changes.

5.4.4 Management of classes

The PGHDE programme equips recipients with the diverse methods, skills and competencies of teaching and learning depending on class sizes and group dynamics. Some recipients made the following indications:

- *'Can now manage my classes properly'*
- *'Got more insight on how to deal with adult learners'*
- *'I feel I am now empowered to perform better in the classroom'*
- *'Better ability to manage mass classes'*

This is an important benefit not only to the individual but the department, school, university and the community. The management of classes is not only about making sure the students are attentive but the task involves a lot of interactive methods to assist students remain engaged and active. Apart from individual benefits the questionnaire sought to determine whether the PGDHE had also made any noticeable benefit to the recipient's participation in departmental and school activities.

5.4.5 Increased competency in curriculum design, delivery and assessment methods

Generally recipients responded positively to their participation in the PGDHE programme. The common responses were:

- *It managed to boost pass rate in my courses and it also managed to encourage others to use my skills and expertise in teaching*
- *'I have helped in peer reviewing exam questions*
- *It has indeed helped the department as I am now able to clearly articulate the vision of the department*
- *Now I can correct other lecturers during peer evaluations and setting of exams, tests and assignments*
- *Improvement in quality of examination items and assessment instrument used for students on industrial attachment*

The above comments indicate that participants of the PGDHE had increased their opportunities to undertake other responsibilities in their respective departments and the University. The PGDHE programme had also increased their ability to communicate with colleagues on issues related to teaching and learning, and also to make meaningful contributions for the good of the department, school and university. The same results from recipients regarding confidence in engagements with staff on teaching, advisory, and departmental matters, personal growth of academic development practitioners, are consistent with Sadler's (2013) findings that lecturers gain confidence not only in teaching approaches but in building the necessary professional identities There is also support from the departments and university, as literature also shows that with good supportive leadership, professional development of lecturers is enhanced and they resultantly increase their participation (Blanton and Styhanon, 2009). The most common comments that emanated from the recipients were:

- *It improves someone's research skills*
- *Addresses one of the pillars which is teaching excellence*
- *It empowers and educates people on what learning, classroom management and assessment is for quality improvement*
- *It broadens the scope of the university lecturer in many facets*

Generally the recipients' comments indicate that there was an improved teaching and learning environment as a result of attaining the PGDHE. Hence the initiative to introduce the PGDHE programme for its lecturers has significantly assisted in curriculum design, quality teaching, quality assessments, and new teaching approaches for the 21st century. The university's drive to increase quality through its lecturing staff can also be confirmed by Nkonki, (2014) and Koye, (2014) who aver that universities are trying to increase lecturer acquisition of a repertoire of teaching strategies, quality education offered and foster a set standard for the country.

When the participants were asked to comment on their levels of satisfaction with the structure of the programme, its teaching, delivery methods and content there were a lot of practitioner reflective comments. Some of them mentioned the following indications of satisfaction:

- *All the modules were helpful and very satisfactory*

- *They were good*
- *Very satisfied*
- *They were satisfactory. But micro-teaching and educational foundations were the best*
- *Full of relevant experience…. Lecturers are very competent in their disciplines*

Given the responses from participants, the PGDHE programme is very relevant for professional development and has gathered a lot of support, in particular from lecturers at CUT and from other universities. The programme was noted as meeting the needs and demands of ZIMCHE and the University in ensuring quality standards and professional development. Responses from the programme recipients suggest that the programme's broad goal of providing a foundation in teaching and learning theory and practice for University and tertiary institution lecturers in any discipline is being executed by the PGDHE programme. However, twenty-six per cent (26%) of the participants believed that whilst the programme was relevant, they had a few misgivings about the programme. Their views were centred on lecturer teaching methods, programme duration that compromised on teaching and teaching strategies. The main remarks that were noted are that:

- *'Satisfactory, however some components of the programme were rushed'*
- *'These guys did not practice what they taught. What they taught made a lot of sense but they did not practice it'*
- *'Satisfactory, however most lecturers then came to the lectures ill-prepared.'*
- *'I was quite disappointed in how some lecturers did not seem to have much knowledge on their content.'*
- *'While helpful, I do not think their strategies were on point'*

There was a general consensus that the programme had significantly improved their teaching and learning strategies. From the comments there was a general view that the module delivery by the resource persons needed more sprucing up and extra time. The most important factor coming out from this discourse was the effectiveness of the programme in professional

development on the part of the recipients. Generally, the PGDHE programme was found to provide the requisite teaching and learning competencies for higher education. The last section from the research study sought to determine any other areas of improvement to make the programme more relevant and effective.

5.4.6 Suggestions to improve the PGDHE at CUT

For the programme to remain current, more effective, more consistent with the needs of academics, and more integrated with their work, there was need to solicit suggestions for improving the PGDHE from the recipients. Three themes came out from this objective. The first theme related to lack of adequate skills and knowledge on the part of resource persons.

5.4.6.1 Resource person's inadequacies in teaching and learning skills

The following insightful suggestions were made:

- *'The trainers need to consider andragogical principles themselves. They need to have better delivery skills.'*
- *'Also employ qualified lecturers who know what they have to teach'*
- *'Improve the teaching'*

On the same note two recipients also remarked that:

- *'Hire of resource persons and guest lecturers to improve teaching of certain key aspects'*
- *'There is need to have part-time lecturers or lecturer's independent/ neutral from CUT'*

This could assist the programme co-coordinators with the inadequacies that were noted by the recipients and, at the same time, practice active teaching methods that the resource persons had also taught in the modules. Another suggestion from the recipients was:

'Lecturers should employ teaching strategies which they teach'

This suggestion implies that the resource persons are not practising what they teach. Recipients learnt a lot from the resource persons in theory and lamented lack of implementation of the same teaching skills by the same resource persons. For the recipients this implementation was significant.

The other suggestion that was made concerned an increase in experiential learning. Experiential learning is the introduction of more practical oriented activities within the modules to increase participation and foster skills and competencies in the recipients. This theme is expounded more in the ensuing section.

5.4.6.2 More practical training (experiential learning)

Recipients wanted the programme to increase the experiential learning component with more practical exposure. From the comments there was a desire to have practicals in the modules that are taught in the PGDHE programme. The recipients remarked:

- *'More practicality… for such modules like e- learning, item writing'*
- *'Adopt more practical and experiential methods of teaching and learning e.g. to learn about managing big classes, take students to a big class not just talking.'*
- *'More practical approaches, not just group discussions and peer to peer'*
- *'Hold more seminars like presentations to learn through micro- teaching.'*

Recipients of the PGDHE were all interested in experiential learning. The only practical learning with the environment in the whole programme was during micro- teaching. The programme has modules that can incorporate some experiential learning.

5.4.6.3 Duration of programme and project

The PGDHE is a one year programme split between two semesters see (appendix 1). From the suggestions made by the participants, the duration of the programme was too short for the content that it carried within the various modules. Both the programme and the modules were allocated a short period within which recipients had to grasp all the important skills, knowledge and competencies. Some of the suggestions regarding the duration of the programme and the modules are:

- *'Increase the time. The time is very short'*

- *'Modules should be given or allocated more time. Experience was that a lot of stuff had to be covered within one week'*
- *'Too much work on a short period of time'*

The time factor was every recipients' compliant with the suggestion that the programme had a lot   of   content.

The other area noted to make the programme more effective concerned with lecturer post training follow-up. This strategy assists both resource persons and the recipients of the PGDHE programme to remain abreast with changes in teaching and learning by implementing the changes into their lecture methods. At the same time lecturers needed to improve on their lecture deliveries in their specific modules. One of the recipients was quick to note this and commented that:

- *'Project should be afforded more time'*

This remark was made in consideration of the limited period given to the research project and its submission. The recipients noted that for the research project to be more thorough it may require more time.

The other area noted to make the programme more effective was concerned with lecturer post training follow-up.

5.4.6.4 Post training follow-up

The other area noted to make the programme more effective was concerned with lecturer post training follow-up. This strategy assists both resource persons and the recipients of the PGDHE programme to remain abreast with changes in teaching and learning by implementing the changes into their lecture methods. At the same time lecturers needed to improve on their lecture deliveries in their specific modules. One of the recipients was quick to note this and commented that:

- *'There is need to follow-up on lecturers in order to maintain quality'*

This strategy is an important finding from this study which can assist in monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the PGDHE. At the same time it is an important measure that can assist both the facilitators and the recipients in mastery of skills and maintaining

quality through implementation and diversification in student centred teaching and learning approaches.

In the following last but not least section, recipients noted various areas that needed improvement and noted other areas concerned with the programme that may have been left unnoticed.

5.4.6.5 Additional comments to improve the PGDHE at CUT

The participants were all asked to comment on any other issues that would assist in the effectiveness of the programme, delivery, timing and any other related areas of concern. Generally all the recipients indicated that the programme was very good. There were a lot of positive comments about the whole programme as a very educative programme that is worth supporting and encouraging others who had not yet attained the PGDHE qualification. The following comments were made:

- *'It is a good programme. I learnt a lot about education.'*
- *'It is a good programme that should be done by all lecturers'*
- *'The programme is quite important and relevant. It equips the lecturers with the right skills for them to effectively teach and manage their classrooms.'*

Thus it can be concluded that the programme is relevant for higher education practitioners and is pivotal for ensuring quality products. All lecturers were being encouraged to enrol for the programme by all the recipients who had seen the relevance of the programme for adult education. However, some saw the programme as a means of advancing their career opportunities. One recipient noted that:

'The programme is a good opportunity to advance one's career path'

Another recipient commented that it was a qualification that needed to be given incentives to lure more lecturers to enrol for the same programme. Their comment was:

'The university should give incentives to lecturers with that qualification – to motivate them'

However this comment applied only to CUT lecturers as the other recipients of the same programme came from other sister universities and private organizations. Accordingly from another perspective learning is voluntary and needs no incentive to advance one's career. The last comment was more critical of the duration of the PGDHE. The recipient remarked:

'I think one and a half years duration is best'

This observation was earlier mentioned by other recipients as a measure to make the programme content fit all the relevant lecture materials from the modules. The participant noted that there was need to add just another six months to make the programme material and research all fit in. There is therefore need to revisit the duration of the whole PGDHE programme.

Given the above comments, the PGDHE programme should focus on encouraging other lecturers to attain the diploma. The relevance of the PGDHE cannot be over-emphasized. The programme is well supported by the management and this has assisted in the enrolment of the lecturers. The programme is essential for teaching in higher education.

5.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The main purpose of the research was to establish the professional experiences of PGDHE recipients from the Chinhoyi University of Technology.

From the findings it was noted that the PGDHE programme was very relevant to the lecturers that had enrolled for it. The recipients perceived that the programme would equip them with professional development, enhanced students' learning and enhanced soft skills which present the recipients with the requisite teaching qualification.

The second research question was on the recipient's professional experiences from PGDHE at the Chinhoyi University of Technology The recipient's experiences were that the programme had taught them acquisition and application of new skills for teaching and learning. The programme had overall increased recipient competency in curriculum design, delivery and assessment methods.

The third and last research question was, 'What strategies can be implemented to increase the significance of the PGDHE at Chinhoyi University of Technology?' Several strategies were mentioned that could be used to improve the effectiveness of the programme. The recipients opined that the duration of the programme could be increased to one and half years and that more time was needed for the project. There was also need for post training follow- up to ensure that recipients were still practicing what they had been taught so as to improve on better teaching and learning. However, all the recipients were satisfied with the programme as it was relevant for their advancement in teaching and learning.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section draws conclusions, from the research findings, from which recommendations were made.

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, the study makes the following conclusions:

- The PGDHE programme is a relevant programme as it enhances professional development. The programme equips lecturers with professional development for enhanced students' learning and soft skills development. Chinhoyi University of Technology should continue to support the PGDHE programme to ensure quality graduates.
- The recipients were generally satisfied with the programme modules, content delivery and learning outcomes. However, it was noted that the duration of the programme be increased to one and half years for the benefit of the effective teaching and learning to take place.
- It can also be concluded that the programme's main goal of providing a foundation in teaching and learning theory and practice for University and tertiary institution lecturers in any discipline was being fulfilled by the programme.
- Post training follow-ups were an important strategy.
- There is need to have a more practical approach to teaching and learning top improve the quality of the graduates.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations:

- The programme must be mandatory for all practising lecturers as it was noted to enhance professional development and to increase the quality for both the institution, schools and the products.
- A more practical approach be utilised for the benefit of programme.
- Facilitators from other institutions should be hired to add value to the programme through sharing cross fertilization of ideas.
- The university should conduct post training follow-ups to monitor professional expertise.
- The programme needs to employ a more practical approach to teaching and learning.

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