

# Principals' Perception of Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership Program as Opportunity Promoting Educational Leadership Improvement in Madda Walabu University (Ethiopia): A Qualitative Inquiry

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## Abstract

As in General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP) document set by Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, professional leader is the main factor contributing to educational quality improvement. One mechanism put in place by the Ministry of Education to improve leadership skills of principals' in Ethiopia is introducing a postgraduate diploma in school leaderships program. To this effect, qualitative research approach and case study design were used for the study. The data for this study were gathered in semi-structured interview and focus group discussion. The participants for this study were selected by purposive sampling technique and total population of sixteen (16) participant were participate in this study out of these, 13 were male participants and 3 of them were female. The gathered data were analyzed using case study design. Major themes and sub-themes are described by inductive process based on grounded theory method. The finding of this study revealed that principals of postgraduate diploma in school leaders have positive perception towards the program because it improves principal's professional knowledge and quality education. However, the study participants throughout in the interview and focus group discussion session noticed that PGDSL training lacks follow up and support from the side of the university and accreditation given by education office. Inviting scholars to review the training modules, and reconsidering the relevance of the program were recommended.

## Keywords

PGDSL, Perception, Professional Development, Quality Education

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## 1. Introduction

In today's schools, strong and effective leadership is considered to be the critical ingredient in driving change and strategic innovation. Leadership is seen to be at the hub of transforming: values into actions, visions into realities, ob-

stacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards (Kouzes & Postner, 2007). The quality of educational leaders and their management skills have a profound impact on the education system. It is therefore important for the country to prepare a cadre of leaders for the education sector who have the leadership and management competencies that regional education systems require in order to produce a workforce that can meet the demands of the 21st Century.

In this situation of high expectations of each country's educational provision, those leading schools have an enormous responsibility. It is no wonder that the "school improvement movement of the past 20 years has put a great emphasis on the role of leaders (OECD, 2001). Fullan (2002) has gone as far to conclude that, effective school leaders are key to large-scale, sustainable education reform. Not only are school leaders important but also they are generally seen to be taking on more and more roles. Leithwood et al's (2002) review of the empirical literature on effective leadership in accountable school contexts identifies 121 school leadership practices. Competency lists for school leader professional development programmes or school leader standards can be just as long. These ever longer lists of practices, competencies or standards prompt a concern that school leaders are not only being pulled in many different directions simultaneously but that they may be being asked to do too much.

In the case of Ethiopian context, the study finding of Tekleselassie (2002), on the de-professionalization of school principals revealed that, "irrelevant and repetition of curriculum, unresponsive and ill- prepared trainees, incompetent trainers, lack of nexus between the training and the kind of profile the ministry of education seeks and short duration of training are the limitations of principal training in the country". With regard to the current PGDSL training problems as clearly stated in analysis of educational management and leadership training practices in Ethiopia (MoE, 2016).

### **1.1. Context of Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership Program**

One mechanism put in place by the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education leadership in Ethiopia is introducing a postgraduate Diploma in school leadership program (PGDSL), a licensing training Program that is aimed at developing the skills and professionalism of Educational leaders. The Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership is an innovative program which aims to support Ethiopia's principals and other school leaders in improving their practice and bringing about real change in their schools. More specifically, and in complementarily with the national standards for principals, the PGDSL program aims to empower school leader school leadership has emerged as a key policy priority in line with the new vision for education articulated in the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The concept of school leadership, in contrast, implies influence, dynamism, empowerment and pro-activity for school reform and improved performance, particularly in terms of better learning outcomes (MoE, 2013).

Postgraduate Diploma Program in school leadership Training at Madda walabu University starts since 2016, it is two summer training program all around the countries and underway for principals with the intention of developing capacity of leading schools in leadership to sustain quality education however, there is challenges for the smooth success of the program this qualitative study is to identify the challenges and suggest solution for the identified problems.

### **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership Program (PGDSL) is capacity building program Designed by MOE in Ethiopia to develop quality school leadership and to sustain and keep quality education. Quality education and leadership effectiveness are related strongly. The Ministry of Education in Ethiopia designed program GEQIP. The aim of this program is improve quality education by providing training for school management this component supports the Government's initiatives to strengthen the planning, management, and monitoring capacity of MOE, REBs, and WEOs to implement system-wide primary and secondary education programs effectively and efficiently by capacitating school principals. However, leaders in primary as well as in secondary schools of Ethiopia lack leadership skills and those who have hardly updated their skills find it difficult to cope with the rapid changes in the education system. One mechanism put in place by the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia is introducing Postgraduate diploma in school leaderships (PGDSL).

Studies on school leadership, Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) made seven claims on school leadership. One of these seven claims refers to one of the most debated issues on the effect of school leadership on students' learning. They claim that "School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning". Yet, the question as to how this influence happens remains a focus of educational leadership research and debate. After reviewing studies on the principal's role on school effectiveness, Hallinger and Heck (2012) concluded that "although at the hortatory

level there, is little disagreement concerning the belief that principals have an impact on the lives of teachers and students, both the nature and degree of that effect continues to be open to debate". What seems to enjoy common agreement among many educational leadership writers and researchers on effective schools is that the principal's effect on students' learning and teachers' practices mainly stems from his/her instructional leadership behaviors (O'Donnell & White, 2005). Kearns as cited in O'Donnell and White (2005, p. 57) further stated that "although educational leaders previously focused on resource allocation and process requirements, today's leaders have additional responsibilities related to student achievement and the skills necessary to motivate and lead all people who influence student learning". Although debates on the effects of schools leaders and the type of school leadership programs that contribute to better student learning is still going on, a synthesis of studies on school leadership mainly indicates that principals' contribution to students' learning may come through the direct and indirect effects that school leaders have on communicating the school vision, instructional time utilization and curriculum management, teachers' practices, commitment to and improvement of school climate (Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003). In a meta-analysis study on the effect of educational leadership on student achievement, the above authors concluded that the direct effect of school leadership on students' learning is small. Similarly, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) reported that a quantitative review of studies on the effect of school leadership on student outcomes showed that both the direct and indirect effects are educationally significant.

A study conducted at Ambo University Ethiopia shows that the historical development of the Ethiopian school leadership development process in different stages were examined the development of the school leadership of a nation that lasted over a century has many challenges from different angles. This study identified the ups and down of school leadership development process starting from evolution to current time was political command. Unfortunately, those decisions did not involve educational stakeholders and most often, it did not incorporate the will and concerns of the leaders'. Furthermore, evolution of the school leadership was changeable in that it fluctuated back and forth rather than consistently advancing forward. Hence, school leadership development of the nation could not contribute what it must contribute to the Ethiopian school leadership in development (Tsfaye, 2018).

Study conducted by Serawit (2017) "Practices and Challenges of School Leadership Training in Some Selected Primary Schools of Oromiya Regional State, Ethiopia" also identifies that majority of school leaders become school leaders without the necessary development in school leadership. The majority of the leaders lack experience both in teaching and school leadership. But they are engaged both in leading schools and classroom teaching. They lacked confidence and consistency in decision-making pertaining to school issues. Serawit's study was concerned with primary schools' leaders' training practices and challenges but did not concern with Principals' Perception of Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership program as Opportunity Promoting Educational Leadership Improvement. This is the emphasis of the present study.

Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership designed for principals of primary schools and secondary schools. However the program designed to capacitate school leaders with knowledge of leading the school effectively and efficiently. To identify the existing gap more there is no more local study conduct regarding Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership but from the researchers work experience as Lecturer and leaders of PGDSL in the past two years the program has many problems.

Some of the gap motivated was there is no full course materials organized at national level, the trainers lack of interest and motivation, the training university instructors is not trained to provide the training. The above problems motivated the researchers to give attention in this program. Keeping all the above discourse in mind, this study was aimed to examine principals' perception of postgraduate Diploma school leadership Program in Madda walabu University. The study specifically focuses on discovering whether the principals' felt Postgraduate Diploma in school leadership Program as opportunity for promoting leadership Knowledge development.

### 1.3. Research Questions

- 1) What are principals' perceptions towards postgraduate Diploma school leaders Program (PGDSL) in Madda Walabu University?
- 2) How postgraduate Diploma in school leadership school leaders perceived as opportunities for promoting leaders knowledge in improving quality education in Madda Walabu University?
- 3) How participation in postgraduate Diploma school leadership Program create continuous and relevant professional development in Madda Walabu University?
- 4) What are the challenges that face the smooth running of the PGDSL training and how these challenges affect PGDSL principals' motivation towards PGDSL training in Madda Walabu University?

## 1.4. Objectives

### 1.4.1 General objective

Investigate principals' perceptions towards PGDSL Program as opportunities promoting ongoing effective professional development of school leaders in Madda Walabu University.

### 1.4.2. Specific objectives

- 1) To identify principals perceptions towards postgraduate Diploma school leaders Program (PGDSL) in Madda Walabu University.
- 2) To find out Postgraduate Diploma in school leadership perceived by school leaders as opportunities for promoting leaders knowledge and improving quality education in Madda Walabu University.
- 3) To find out participation in a postgraduate Diploma school leadership Program create continuous and relevant professional development in Madda Walabu University.
- 4) To suggest remedial solutions for challenges affect PGDSL training in Madda Walabu University.

## 1.5. Significance of the study

Results of this study are very important to create awareness for policy makers, Researches, NGOs. Hence, the researcher believed that this research report and recommendations would present the following significant contribution: It gives highlight for those who may develop interests to make further study on similar topic as a spring board. It encourages school leaders to review their practices and helps them to improve their knowledge and skill base on leadership practices adversely working factors, so that they could respond appropriately. It can serve as a valuable document for policy makers in the national, Region Education Bureau by giving insight about the issues in addition it create awareness for Governmental and Non-Governmental organization those interested to understand the issues and needs to support.

## 1.6. Definition of key Terms

**Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PGDSL):** is core program of study for leaders and managers in education. It is designed to meet the interests of leaders at all levels who are keen to improve their leadership and management understanding and practices (MoE, 2013).

**Quality Education:** Ministry of Education in Ethiopia defines quality based on the four key elements of GEQIP: teacher development' curriculum improvement, leadership and management and school improvement (MoE, 2008).

**Professional Development:** Any processes consisting of unconscious natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in general and the practice in classroom in particular" (Day, 1999).

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Leadership

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Without influence, leadership does not exist. Leadership occurs in groups. Groups are the context in which leadership takes place. Leadership involves influencing a group of individuals who have Leadership includes attention to common goals. Leaders direct their energies toward individuals who are trying to achieve something together. By common, we mean that the leaders and followers have a mutual purpose. Attention to common goals gives leadership an ethical overtone because it stresses the need for leaders to work with followers to achieve selected goals. Stressing mutuality lessens the possibility that leaders might act toward followers in ways that are forced or unethical. It also increases the possibility that leaders and followers will work together toward a common good (Rost, 1991).

### 2.2. Concept of Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership

Postgraduate diploma in school leadership is a core program of study for leaders and managers in education. It is designed to meet the interests of leaders at all levels who are keen to improve their leadership and management understanding and practices. Postgraduate school leadership is the principals, a leader achieves a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her leadership systematically. The education and training policy also identified change

in educational organization and management as one of the three priority areas. Furthermore, the policy stated that educational management will be ‘professional’ (MoE, 1994).

The program aims to strengthen leadership and management skills, and to enable to apply theory and ideas within workplace and utilize existing and emerging research-informed knowledge of educational leadership internationally. It will enable to develop, broaden and deepen critical understanding of educational organization and the environment in which operate, manage change and promote the development, and organization. MoE (2013) document on principals’ standards identifies five standards/ competences which should serve as a basis in preparation, certification and licensing, and professional development

### **2.3. Necessity of Postgraduate school leadership (PGDSL)**

Postgraduate diploma in school leadership development is the important strategy to enhance professional. Leadership will be able to perform tasks with effectiveness and create leading experience with efficiency. The necessity of program has many some of them, develop educational leadership professionals who are committed to manage and lead schools, aspire to serve in various educational leadership positions, and engage in researching and teaching on school leadership in higher learning institutes (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007). The program provides opportunities for those teachers who have the potential to lead and manage schools rather than indefinite inclusion of teachers in the program. As meritocracy is the foundation for this program, it needs to develop professional school leaders who are competent and committed enough to lead and manage schools so that they could develop their leadership skills by staying in school leadership positions.

Teachers and principals admitted to the program shall be committed and competent enough to serve in school leadership and aspire for educational leadership roles at district, regional and federal levels. Promote reflective and inquiry learning practices so as to lay the foundation for continuous professional development in school leadership. The principal preparation program should provide school leaders not only with the skills and knowledge to lead and manage schools but also with learning skills that help principals to reflect on their practices and develop their leadership and managerial capacities through personal and organizational learning.

### **2.4. Policy Issues**

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

### **2.5. Principals’ Perceptions of Professional Development**

It is frequently argued that professional development would have the potential to makes leaders equip with the necessary leadership skills and keep them up-to-date to cope up with the current technology. Various studies in professional development practices signify that educational leaders’ are good in their leading knowledge and qualification and their weakness lie in their inability to employ the teaching approaches management and students assessment that are set in policies. In addition, leadership professional development enables principals to feel well-informed about curricular and instructional alternatives, learning styles, adolescent development, and assessments Robinson, 2011 (as stated in Blackmon, 2013).

According to Komba and Nkumbi (2008) (as cited in Yifashewa, 2016), in their research pointed out that the academics should perceive professional development as being important for implementing innovations, as it improves them professionally, academically and technically to help them adjust to the new thinking. At all levels (system, primary, secondary and even tertiary), professional development is poorly coordinated and scarcely budgeted. In the context of Mada walabu, a great number of school leaders do not have curiosity to train in the postgraduate diploma in school leadership programs because of lack of leadership commitment of the university instructors, lack of commitment from Education office and lack of transparent leadership at woreda levels and scarcity of resources in university to run the program were some of the deficits for postgraduate diploma in School Leadership trainings of principals. In order to improve the qualifications of principals at primary, secondary as well as higher level various leadership support activities have been undertaken. The Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) Program is undertaking a thorough revision and modernization of the principal education system in Ethiopia. Accordingly, a revision of the pre-service leadership education curricula has been undertaken. Furthermore, PGDSL has been introduced (MoE, 2013).

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

## 2.6. Challenges Influence the Success of PGDLS

School leadership development, can be aided or impeded by a variety of factors. These factors hinder the success of Post Graduate Diploma in School leadership development programs. Some of the factors were:

### A. PGDSL Trainees Related Factors

Commitment of trainees and motivation, absence from training are some trainees' related factors.

### B. Trainees University Related Factor

Adequate learning support during training and follow up, scarcity resources base to support teaching and learning on this program.

### C. Education Office Related Factor

PGDSL training selection and accreditation after certification were some of the factors related to education sector.

## 3. Research Design and Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

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

### 3.2. Study Area

The site selected for the study was Madda Walabu University, Madda Walabu University is one of the university in Ethiopia, located in the Bale Zone south eastern part of Ethiopia, at about 430 km away from Addis Ababa. MWU was founded in February 1997 E.C/2005 by MOE and commenced its teaching-learning process in 1999 E.C/ 2006. The name is given to the university based on the historical place Madda Walabu, 227 km away from the Zonal town Robe in south east. The place is closely related to the origin of Oromo people and the origin of the culture of the "Gada system", the university is found in the zone that holds different tourist attraction centers, some of them are The Bale Mountain National Parks, The Sofumer Cave, Dire Sheik Hussein Shrines which make it more attractive. The Bale Mountain National Parks considered as one of the richest biodiversity area and hot spot areas in the world containing a unique endemic plant and animals. The teaching is carried out by 711 Ethiopian and Expatriate teachers from this 216 first degree, 430 second degree, 55PhD and 10 specialists. Now MWU in its three sited campuses around Robe town Robe, Goba healthy science and shashamane town in Wesr Arsi Zone in Faculty of Business and Economics. Primary administrative units based on the main campus site and the colleges sited according to infrastructure and facilities. The university runs 39 undergraduate and 30 graduate program in the teaching.

### 3.3. Sampling and Sampling Size

The participants for this study were chosen via purposeful sampling technique from the Identified University. In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Cresswell, 2012). The participants for this study were selected purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview was conducted with eight (8) PGDSL trainees, eight (8) Trainees of PGDSL representative from each section and two (2) PGDSL Coordinators totally eighteen (18) of these, fifteen were male participants and three of them were female ones. Focus group discussion was conducted with ten (10) PGDSL trainees and five (5) of PGDSL instructors in segmented way to maintain their homogeneity.

### 3.4. Source of Data

Primary and secondary school principals of postgraduate diploma in school leadership of summer trainees and PGDSL coordinators and instructors of PGDSL in Madda Walabu University were primary sources of the study.

### 3.5. Methods of Data Collections Procedures

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

The interviewees were purposefully selected from post graduate diploma in school leadership trainees of summer, post graduate diploma in school leaders instructors or (PGDSL) program leaders in MWU Robe campus there are one hundred seventy seven (177) PGDSL trainees are now attending the training in summer 2010 of which one hundred fifty nine (159) candidates are male candidates and eighteen (18) candidates are female candidates.

### 3.6. Method of Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative aspect of data analysis was employed. The qualitative data were analyzed using the general inductive process which allowed the researchers to uncover the most dominant themes from the data as they related to the purpose (Thomas, 2006 as cited in Benes et al, 2016). Interviews and focus groups were transcripts thoroughly to evaluate the data without bias. This holistic evaluation of the data multiple times, and assigned labels for emerging themes that they then organized into the major, themes and sub-themes. Finally, summary of data from all sources and instruments was discussed all together. Then results and discussion were drawn from 2008, 2009, and 2010 registrar students of post-graduate diploma in school leadership.

## 4. Result and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate principals' perceptions of PGDSL Program as opportunities for promoting ongoing and effective professional development. The data were collected via focus group interviews and individual interviews transcripts.

In this part, a brief overview of the results and discussions from this study are provided. The major themes that surfaced while analyzing the results using the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) serve as the framework for the discussion. An overview of the major themes and subthemes is provided below:

- (1) The need for PGDSL Training Teaching profession demands professional trainings;
- (2) Role of PGDSL Training for Principals in improving principals' professional knowledge;
- (3) Perception of PGDSL candidates, attitude towards the PGDSL training;
- (4) Module of PGDSL training including additional content in the PGDSL module;
- (5) Challenges of PGDSL training;
- (6) PGDSL training and Quality Education.

### 4.1. The Need for PGDSL Training

Most of the trainee's believed that leading school needs professional knowledge and skill since leadership is profession. All study participants reported that leadership skill makes the principal to be effective and efficient. Leadership is not an easy work in every day of activity leader face challenging situation that needs critical thinking. In addition to this, Blanchard et al. (1985) situational leadership focuses on leadership in situations. The premise of the theory is that different situations demand different kinds of leadership. From this perspective, to be an effective leader requires that a person adapt his or her style to the demands of different situations.

As one of the postgraduate diploma in school leadership trainees and participant of this study in interview time explained and summarized.

*"Leadership needs different skills of teaching technical skill and needs to know behavior of workers and their level of abilities. This makes leadership more difficult task. Training like this gives to understand different skills how to accommodate with complex task" (pri.tr1).*

In 21st century, leading educational organization principal needs to have technical skill, conceptual skill and humanistic skill to lead education organization. A revitalized interest in the skills approach has emerged. Beginning in the early 1990s, a multitude of studies has been published that contend that a leader's effectiveness depends on the leader's ability to solve complex organizational problems (Connelly et al., 2000).

## 4.2. Role of PGDSL Training for Principals Professional Development

Majority of PGDSL trainees, postgraduate diploma in school leadership coordinators, and most instructors of PGDSL in this day explained PGDSL training has great advantage in improving leaders' capacity, professional growth of school principals and for effective school improvement. One PGDSL trainee and participant of this study agree with the above by describing

*"Like CPD use for teachers' professional growth PGDSL is advantages for principals' career structure after completing the training and certified" (pri.tr2)*

Generally, PGDSL coordinators and instructors of PGDSL of this study participant have also similar view during interview time and summarized this theme.

*"Post graduate diploma in school leadership has great merit for principals' professional development, to understand special characteristics of educational organization and it can develop leaders' ability in capacity building also" (Pri.C Participant 2).*

## 4.3. Perception of Principals' Trainees towards PGDSL

Many of the postgraduate diploma school leadership training candidates in this study reported that they have positive attitude towards PGDSL training, because PGDSL training is an instrument to improve leadership skills of principals. According to MoE (2013) in national curriculum Frame work for the postgraduate diploma in school leadership professionalize school leadership and enhance schools' capacity to properly manage and lead various school activities and enhance students' learning. One of the PGDSL candidates and participants of this study in the interview session says:

*"My perception towards PGDSL is positive because the program can develop professional knowledge on how to lead school, know school community relation and know how to improve students' learning in school" (Pri.tr3).*

Some PGDSL trainees' participant of this study perception towards postgraduate diploma in school leadership is not similar. The training given is important but the challenging thing is the accreditation given by education office at district level is none. During practical work attention given from the training institution to know the theoretical applicability in real situation is low. One of the PGDSL candidate and participant of this study respond during interview.

*"After completing training the education office can't give value immediately for the certificate obtained, in addition during practical work the training university attention to understand progress of trainees' is not satisfactory" ( Pri.tr4).*

The program designed need practical applicability and follow up after theoretical training by providing assignment and project work related to their work area. In addition, the education office for the certificate obtained should give Value since the PGDSL program designed to license and for professional development of principals as the blueprint identified profile of leadership for school principals (Peterson, 2002).

### 4.3.1. Professional Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes Acquired from PGDSL Training

Postgraduate Diploma in School leaders (PGDSL) trainees asked to describe and discuss knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired from training in the following major Areas.

#### (1) Instructional leadership

Majority of PGDSL trainee principals when they assigned as leadership of the school they counteract with the following difficulties: Creating an environment conducive to learning, Complying with policy and law, Delegation, Leading teams and Decision-making and conflict resolution. Before taking this training as one of the PGDSL representative and participant of the study explained.

*"I am confused when there is conflict in my working school and I am ready to left leadership tasks I Don't use different mechanisms to resolve conflict in addition I afraid to make any decision I fear of mistakes" (Pri.rep1).*

During FGD discussion time, majority of principals' trainees and the participants of this study fear conflict because they respond that *"conflict harm their relation and sometimes destruct their working atmosphere" (prin.triG1)*. Early organizational theorists viewed conflict as detrimental to organizations. Now conflict is considered a natural phenomenon, "a normal human condition that is always present to some degree" (Schein, 2010), in organization conflict is inevitable and if it handled accordingly it has merit for organizational progress.

## (2) Leading continuous professional development (CPD)

Majority PGDSL trainees and participant in this study reported that they have acquired necessary professional knowledge on how to be a reflective teacher and leaders. The most effective school principals are those who try to improve their practice through careful leading. Continuous professional development for leaders was important issue which performed in the school continuing professional development and constantly trying to improve professional competence (MoE, 2011). Continuous professional development helps continuous interaction between development and experience through life (Addis, 2008).

As one of post graduate diploma representative and participant of study in school leadership respond during interview time.

*“Continuous professional development program planned at the beginning of every year of schooling but during implementation or actual work principals as well as the teacher in my school faced difficulties because of each of us lacks abilities how to put in to action” (pri.rep2).*

## (3) Education policy and contemporary issues

Many PGDSL instructors and trainees explained that training of PGDSL helps to understand education policy of the country Education Policy and Contemporary Issues and helps to relate the national policy and the school also helps to fill the gap how to formulating school specific policies TGE (1994). During FGD with PGDSL, trainees and participant of one group discussed and they agreed that

*“Training contents like Education policy and contemporary issues help us to understand Educational programmes and helps to formulate school specific polices” (Pri.tr.G2).*

## (4) Management of educational change

Many PGDSL trainees explained that they share experience with each other in PGDSL training because PGDSL training encourages principals to improve management styles and how to manage organization change from different school climate. One of the PGDSL trainees and participant in interview session explained how Management of Educational Change improved his knowledge of managing and leading organization: *“PGDSL training more than the class course training share practice to each other ways how to manage different school climate because of this understand different change types in school and improve ways how to manage resistance in” (pri tr Participant 5).*

Change management is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and schools from a current state to a desired future state, to fulfill or implement vision and strategy. It is an organizational process aimed at empowering employees to accept and embrace changes in their current environment. There are several different streams of thoughts that have shaped the practice of change management. Change is a phenomenon that is inevitable in the schools, which are faced with new demands and circumstances of the changing education system. It also refers to the new ways of organizing and working school arrangements involving relationships, understandings and processes in which people are employed. Change is the observation of difference over time in one or more dimensions of the school. It refers to alterations at the broadest level among individuals, groups, and at the collective level across the entire school (Kezar, 2001).

## 4.4. Challenges of PGDSL Training

Most PGDSL trainees and participant of this study agreed that the factors that hinder the success of PGDSL are related to university, education office, and PGDSL trainees. The program was launched without adequate preparations and the fulfillment of the necessary preconditions and infrastructures. The findings also show that the selections of trainees were not made as per the guidelines of the MoE. The national professional standards for school principals are very general. The PGDSL curriculum, courses, contents and objectives are aligned with the generic standards. The coordination among different stakeholders in the process to run the programs both in campus and out of campus is not adequate and the PGDSL training programs in school Leadership is held during the summer programs which may compromise the quality of education.

Majority of PGDSL Coordinators and PGDSL instructors reported that there is high absence of PGDSL trainees in each PGDSL session. They felt that some trainees have lack of interest toward the training they believe the advantages get from the training but think the program as workshop and recreation time.

Majority of PGDSL instructors and PGDSL representative are reported that PGDSL Trainees usually ask permission. Trainees are primary beneficiary from this program. But they hear some misleading information from previous trainees of PGDSL and develop negative attitude towards the program. PGDSL Candidates reflected the reason for absenteeism is low follow up from the side of the university and PGDSL module organization. Follow up and support for the success of the program is not encouraging. In addition, PGDSL trainees by holding responsibility of school and others assume the program is simply given them for a moment they fear that they may not continue with principals. According to their response, these are the reasons for low participation in PGDSL training in at Mada Walabu University

The PGDSL trainees' representative confirmed the above during FGD *"the education office and Ministry of Education placed us to train for two summer seasons but we take responsibility of school during the summer season and enter the training without fully completing the training time most of us absent from the training and asked to perform other activities of school, furthermore there is great turnover of principals leadership with different issues without full reason so we are not interested to devote fully with interest"* (PGD participant G1).

#### 4.5. PGDSL Training and Quality Education

Many PGDSL trainees, PGDSL coordinators, PGDSL instructors and representatives in this study discussed that PGDSL training contribute a lot for quality education because it improves professional knowledge of the principals and this in turn improve students' academic performance. The aim of the Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership is by improving leadership competence bringing improves the quality of education in Ethiopia (MoE, 2011).

Effective professional development affects students. Student learning and achievement increase when educators engage in effective professional development focused on the skills principals need in order to address students' major learning challenges (Mizell, 2010). In fact, research has repeatedly shown that the most important variable in student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haycock, Jerald, & Huang, 2001, as cited in Reading First Program Nootobook, 2005).

One of the participant of this study and PGDSL instructor has supported the above idea and explained how PGDSL training has impact on students' performance: *"We informally check whether PGDSL trainees' implement the professional knowledge that they have acquired from PGDSL training. As they told us, they apply the leadership knowledge that they have gained from PGDSL trainings and their students' performance shown progress than before PGDSL training"* (PGD.IN1, Participant).

Research evidence shows that various kinds of leader ship training, capacity building and work experience have positive effects on education quality. Having well-trained and experienced principals in schools is just as important as good education materials and good relationships between principals and communities (Workneh Abebe & Tassew Woldehanna, 2013). Abebe and Tassew Woldehanna assert that the availability of well-trained teachers, through pre-service teacher training, in-service professional development and the informal training obtained through on the job experience, is central to improving the quality of education. The third component of quality which is capacity development for education sector planning and management, aims at building the capacity of federal and regional level strategic planning by increasing human and financial resources (MoE, 2008).

##### 4.5.1 Improve school effectiveness

Many PGDSL trainees, coordinators and instructors of PGDSL agreed that trained and qualified principals support the implementation of quality and relevant instruction that results in higher levels of achievement for all students and Improve Students' Academic Achievement. School effectiveness is not the beautiful building but the performance of its student. PGDSL training program helps school principals with knowledge to build effective school.

As FGD trainees and participant of the study explained *"Leadership courses as well as the professional courses like CPD help Principals create a nurturing learning environment that addresses the physical and mental health needs of all students and staff"* (Pri.C Participant 1).

Effective school is the trained, qualified and principals report to the community and stakeholders on effective and efficient use and management of school resources, the importance of involving all stakeholders throughout the process school vision, mission and values project preparation for (SIP). The role of planning in school improvement Strategic and action plans, the importance of relevant data (qualitative and quantitative) in (SIP) process (MoE, 2013).

#### 4.6. Postgraduate Diploma Module Content

Many PGDSL trainees, PGDSL coordinators, PGDSL instructors, and representatives in this study reported that PGDSL training module needs revision. PGDSL was introduced in MWU since 2008 and the module not revised from the introduction of PGDSL in Ethiopia. Almost all participants in this study stressed that even though the contents of PGDSL modules are theoretical oriented, some contents are below standard. The study participants explained that some contents in the PGDSL module are written in primary school context than secondary. They discussed that the PGDSL module contents are not up to the standard of the secondary education. But professional development is most effective when it occurs in the context of educators' daily work (Mizell, 2010).

Majority of PGDSL trainees, PGDSL coordinators, PGDSL instructors, and representatives discussed the parts of PGDSL module that needs modification. Study participants identified two parts of the PGDSL module that needs revi-

sion leading continuous professional development, school improvement planning principals' knowledge, skills and attitude will be more effective if its content is related to the needs of the students, teachers and principals relative to their programs and learner populations. Content is often identified by both the instructor's self-determined needs and preferences and the program administrator's needs to improve instructional services, correct a program deficiency, implement a program change, and meet a Federal or State mandate. Content also must be aligned with national, State, or district standards in core content academic areas (Sherman et al., 2003).

#### 4.6.1 Module Preparation of Postgraduate Diploma

PGDSL Trainees and instructors in interview session explain that module preparation in some case is not related the real situation of educational organization not give due attention to technologies. Many teachers have lack of sources for preparation of module in our institution. PGDSL candidates felt that some teachers download some materials from the internet and give to students without any edit. One of PGDSL Coordinators and participants of this study has supported this in the interview session:

*"As to me in PGDSL module preparation in side of instructors there should be less commitment for preparation because in side of the university the payment for module preparation and the tax difficultness is not match" (PGD CO, Participant 2).*

#### 4.6.2 Postgraduate Diploma Module Reference Books

Majority of PGDSL Instructors reported that PGDSL module is not organized from national and international experiences, because majority authors cited in the module are outside authors. They felt that almost all authors cited in PGDSL module are outside authors and this makes the module organization, and experiences merely from international perspective than national (PGD, IN 5Participant):

PGDSL coordinators and participant in the study has supported this in interview session and explained:

*"most of the time searching for reference in library of the university but we can't find because we are forced to search for outside authors those related, in addition trainees of PGDSL searching for reference and raise complain" (PGD, C2participant).*

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the above results and discussions, the following conclusion remarks were drawn: School leader is a profession that demands different skills, knowledge and attitudes. The professional knowledge acquired through professional development training programs like PGDSL. The PGDSL training can improve the professional knowledge of the principals. It may enhance the principals with lead teaching and learning activities in schools through proper implementation of school curricula, manage effectively and efficiently various school resources, supervise and support curriculum implementation, manage educational innovations and change, engage in continuous improvement and professional development activities and Ensure that that school leadership practices and any school-specific policies are in line with national policy.

Therefore, PGDSL trainee principals, PGDSL instructors have positive attitude towards PGDSL training, because PGDSL training is an instrument to improve leaders' ship skills, knowledge and attitude of the principals. Although the program is important for principals to improve their professional knowledge, the program currently facing a number of challenges that affect the smooth running of the PGDSL training. The challenges are emanates mainly from three directions/sides such as university, Education offices, PGDSL trainee principals. Trainees related factor: Commitment and motivation, Absence during training time, University related factor: Adequate learning support during training and the work place based, Resources to support the program, Assessment Method. Education sector related factor: PGDSL training selection accreditation (value) given after certified, finally, the value for PGDSL Certificate is unclear because there is low value for PGDSL Certificate.

### 5.1. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

- Education office at different levels had better to give concerning during selection for principals of sponsorship and accreditation after certified.
- Madda Walabu University prefers to continue the PGDSL training in strengthened manner manageable class size not more than 30 students.
- Quality Assurance and Auditing Directorate has to follow the training of PGDSL and Assessment techniques.
- Ministry of Education needs to prepare well-organized and quality PGDSL training materials at national level.

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- PGDSL leaders and college of education and behavioral sciences had better focus more on areas where the graduates have gaps.

## 5.2. Future Research Implication

Postgraduate diploma in school leadership training is one of professional development program that aimed to improve quality education in Ethiopia by improving school principals by improving leadership skills. In this study, school principals' perception towards PGDSL training as opportunity for promoting for professional development was ascertained. But the study merely assessed principals' perception towards the training but not its impact on leaders' performance. Therefore, future researchers and scholars can conduct further study on PGDSL training and its impact on teachers and principals' performance to better understand the positive impact of this training program on quality education in general and principals' performance in particular.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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