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Higher Diploma Program in Eitiopian Higher Education: Instructors' Perception and Perceived Practices in Jimma University and Jimma College of Teachers Education

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

The study investigates the perception and perceived practices of Higher Diploma program (HDP) in the Jimma University and Jimma College of teachers' education using a cross-sectional survey design comprised of questionnaire and interviews. The data were collected from 91 instructors, and 3 higher diploma leaders (HDLs) who were selected through lottery sampling and 2 higher diploma coordinators (HDCs) who were selected using availability sampling methods. The finding revealed the importance of the HDP (M=4.3, SD=0.91) though the perception of the HEI instructors differ before coming, and after coming to the HDP. Though the study indicated as the trained instructors are applying the knowledge and skill, which they have acquired from the HDP training, the HEIs are not following the actual practices of the training. The study found out that the HE instructors' perception had a significant correlation with the practices of HDP (r=.694, p=0.00<0.01) having a moderate effect size (δ=0.48). The findings call for the proper implementation of the HDP for the betterment of the program and to achieve the intentions of the HDP.

1. Introduction

Teaching profession is one of the essential professions through which all other professions are made possible. It is therefore of vital importance what teachers know and can do (Genet et al., 2013).[18] In this sense, the task of preparing and supporting the in-service development of teachers' knowledge, attitudes and skills for the professional development of teachers are a very important issue (Walsh & Gamage, 2003;[33] Villegas-Reimers, 2003).[32] As we know professional development (PD) is a complex process that requires the cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers individually and collectively, the ability

and willingness to examine where each individual stands to beliefs, and the review and implementation of suitable alternatives for improvement or change (Avalos, 2011).[7] It is sustainable, intense, and content-oriented to have a positive and lasting impact on teaching, and teacher performance. It improves and increases teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach and practice, and improves students learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).[12]

As a result, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MOE, 2011)[25] paid more attention to provide high-quality education at all levels. Among the proposed quality indicators, the availability of qualified teachers influences the

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quality of education (MOE, 2011). [25] To do so, the Ethiopian MOE designed the higher diploma program (HDP) for higher education institutions (HEIs) in 2002 (MOE, 2003) [27] to improve and upgrade the quality of teachers through in-service training. The intention was to improve the quality of the higher education instructors and, ultimately to improve the achievement of students.

The HDP is continually evolving in line with government policies and strategies to support teacher educators qualified with a minimum standard of Bachelor of Arts' (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) degrees (Abdissa, 2017).[2] The program focuses on developing the skill and professionalism of teacher educators of higher institution who can produce skilled work forces with the intentions of improving the quality of education in Ethiopia through a licensing program (Mengistu, 2017)[22] aimed at creating a reflective teacher who can use active learning, and student centered teaching methods (Monroe, Kumar & Aklilu, n.d; [28] MOE, 2003) [27]. It provides teacher educators with a practical program to support their development as effective teachers and reflective practitioners with enhanced professional status, able to model continuous assessment and active learning, manage change and make a difference in the education system (MOE, 2018) [24]. The Program gives room for discussing and reflecting on recent significant changes in the teaching-learning processes of higher education. The significant expansion of tertiary education has also led to the need for more trained teacher educators to ensure quality and meet sector objectives and meet demand for the HDP (MOE, 2011). [25] As college teacher educators, they themselves need to be of high quality to be competent and trained for the specifics of their role in order to produce better teachers and improve student learning (Abdissa, 2017).[2]

The HDP is one of the in-service teachers training designed for the HE educators to support and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge of teaching which is required in the 21st century, which is different from the BA, BSC or PhD degrees. The training is given by the higher education educators who have master's degree or Doctoral degree in education (specialized with Curriculum and Instruction) and, certified with the HDP after they receive their Master's degree or Doctoral degree. It takes one year duration. Now a day innovative teaching practices are required to develop student competencies such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication, collaboration, and self-direction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).[12] Therefore, HE educators should update their skill, knowledge and attitude by engaging in such (HDP) professional training programs (MOE, 2003)[27].

As stated in the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), one of the main objectives of the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) was to ensure quality education (FDRE, 2015). [16] Quality education require quality instruction that use a certain kind of pedagogical techniques such as teaching methodology, assessment skill, classroom management, skill of conducting an action research, etc. The use of educational techniques also includes the effective design of curricula, and course content, a variety of learning contexts, use of feedback, and the effective assessment of learning outcomes (Henard & Roseveare, 2012;[19] Ashenafi, 2017).[5] Due to the fact that the MOE paid due attention to pedagogical methods in the teaching-learning competence of university instructors and included the HDP in teacher education system overhaul (TESO) in 2003. TESO is an extensive study conducted by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2002 covering the overall education system of Ethiopia and teacher's education system in particular (MOE, 2003).[27] The TESO study revealed that Ethiopian teachers educators failed to form a spearhead in the educational development endeavor (Adula, 2008).[3] Therefore, the MOE designed the HDP with the intention of improving the teaching practice of the staff, which in turn results in the provision of high quality education to students (MOE, 2018).[24] This is in line with the goals of the university program, which trains knowledgeable, qualified graduates who are ready for employment in a needs-based, proportional balance of subjects and disciplines for international competitiveness (FDRE, Higher Education Proclamation /2019).[15]

The university instructors were very weak in applying the training from the HDP and it was poorly practiced in their actual teaching. Supporting this the MOE (2005) [26] in its Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) III reported that teachers do not constantly update their competences and skills. From this we can understand that with the pre-service training it is impossible to cope with the changing and dynamic environment without constantly updating ourselves. In Ethiopia, one way of updating ourselves in the HE is through participating in the HDP training.

Though the skills acquired through the HDP training were not fully practiced (Adula, 2008) [3] in the teaching-learning process, a significant number of university instructors have positive perception for HDP training (Zelalem, 2017;[35] Abdissa, 2017).[2] A study conducted by Mengistu (2017)[22] at Ambo University showed that those who were certified in HDP implement predominantly modern student-centered pedagogy, while teachers who were not certified in HDP used predominantly conventional teacher-centered methods

(Jula and Shielis, 2018).[20] On the contrary, the study of Adula (2008),[3] indicated that the HDP graduates did not apply the competencies set in the HDP curriculum to the expected level. The study of Yilfashewa (2016) [34] also showed that many lecturers in the Ethiopian HE did not have the curiosity to participate in the highly relevant university PD programs such as HDP.

The above studies did not address questions related to the perception and perceived practices of the HDP in depth. For example, Abayneh, et al. (2019) [1] focus on the implementation of HDP, Adula (2008)[3] focuses on the application of HDP training skills in the classroom, Abdissa (2017),[2] Robsan (2020) [30] as well as Mengistu (2017) [22] focus on the role of HDP. On the other hand, Atnafu (2020) [6] focuses on assessing the impact of HDP training on the teaching-learning process, Bekalu (2006) [8] focuses on reflections on HDP, Bekalu (2009) [9] focuses on teacher PD in Ethiopia through HDP and Jula and Shimelis (2018) [20] focus on assessing the effects of HDP.

None of them paid detailed attention to the perception and perceived practices of HDP. To the knowledge of the researchers, very few things have been said about the perception and perceived practices of HDP in the HE of Ethiopia. In addition, assessing the perception and perceived practices of HDP is of paramount importance in order to improve the implementation of the HDP for the better because ones perception towards HDP will lead to the proper implementation of the HDP. For example, as the finding of Dos Santos, (2019)[13] indicated teachers' beliefs about teaching strategies and methodologies about teaching and learning impacts their classroom management, curriculum and instruction planning. Learning in any teaching is influenced by different factors or elements. These elements include teachers' beliefs, teachers' professional development through training, as well as their teaching and learning style (Dos Santos, 2018). [14] As a result, the information generated through this study can give some insight on the perception and perceived practices of HDP. Therefore, this study will attempt to fill this gap in the literature guided by the following research questions.

1. To what extent do instructors perceive the importance of HDP?
2. How do instructors perceive the actual practice of the HDP training?·
3. Do the HDP trained instructors' perceptions of the importance and actual practices of the HDP differ across colleges, departments, ages, educational levels, academic rank, and teaching experiences?
4. Do the perceptions of the HE instructors have some relationship with the perceived practices of the HDP?

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Research Design and Methods

A cross-sectional survey design was used to examine the perception and perceived practices of HDP in Ethiopian Higher education (JU, and JCTE) in the year 2021. This study collected quantitative (a questionnaire) and qualitative (open-ended questions and interviews) data. The study adapted the questionnaire developed by Monroe, Kumar and Aklilu (n.d.)[28] and Robsan (2020)[30] to measure teachers' attitudes towards the importance of HDP and the practices of HDP, respectively. In addition, the suitability of the instrument was checked using pilot test to check the consistency of the questionnaire to apply in the study area and being used with some improvements in order to answer the research questions. Accordingly, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire were checked and found that convincing to conduct the study. The reliability check was found satisfactory, having the alpha level of 0.86, and 0.87 for the perception and perceived practices of HDP, respectively. The study used questionnaire to collect data from 91 instructors and interview for 5 participants (2 HDP Coordinators and 3 HDP leaders). The interviewees' selected had in depth knowledge with respect to the research question.

2.2 Sampling Procedure

According to the data obtained from the two public institutions of the town of Jimma, around 898 teachers a total of 2,251 academic staff at the universities (2,187 from JU and 64 from JCTE) completed their HDP training in 2021. From the HDP trained teachers, 59 instructors were found in JU and 839 were found in JCTE. The researchers selected the study participants by using proportional sampling.

The researchers determined the sample size following Yount (Cited in Gay, 2009) [17] sample size determination. According to him taking 100%, 10%, 5%, 3% and 1% were recommended for the populations of 0-100, 101-1000, 1001-5000, 5001-10,000 and over 10,000, respectively. Accordingly, the researchers used this suggestion and took 10% from each sampled university (84 from JU and 7 from JCTE, a total of 91 instructors) from 898 target populations who had completed the HDP training using simple random (lottery) sampling method to give them equal chance of being selected. Table 1 summarizes the total sample size and its distribution among the categories of participants.

The other groups of study participants were HDP leaders (tutors) and HDP coordinators. In this regard, each

institution has one HDP coordinator. With respect to the HDP leader, the JU has 12 HDP leaders, and the JCTE has one HDP leader. From this target group, the researchers took both HDP coordinators (one from each institution) and one HDP leader from JCTE with availability sampling because they were important to give data and few in number. Two HDP leaders from JU were selected with simple random (lottery) sampling since 12 of them have the equal probability of being selected from the population, which has a total of three HDP leaders. In general, 96 participants took part in the study (87 from JU and 9 from JCTE). Table 2 summarizes the data collection instruments and the sampling techniques.

2.3 Procedures of Data Collection

After making an agreement with the concerned participants, the researchers introduced the objective of the study and administered the questionnaire to the sampled instructors of the selected institutions by allowing them to give their own answers to each item independently and the data collectors closely assisted and supervised the participants based on the training obtained from the researchers. In addition, interviews were conducted in a free and calm environment to minimize communication barriers after obtaining the participants' individual consent.

2.4 Method of Data Analysis

For quantitative analysis the researchers employed both descriptive and inferential statistics and the questionnaire, which has a five-point scale was reduced to a three-point scale in order to make the process of data tabulation easi-er. Hence, the values of the alternatives 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were combined together, similarly, the values of the alternatives 'agree' and 'strongly agree' were combined whereas the values of the alternative 'neutral' were treated separately. Therefore, the tabulation, analyses, and interpretations of the quantitative data were made based on the three-point scale.

The first and the second research question was analyzed using descriptive analysis. The third research question was analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the fourth research question was analyzed using bivariate correlation. Furthermore, the quantitative data displayed first and then corroborated by the qualitative data analysis.

The data gathered through open-ended questions and interview was analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis in the form of texts and quotes for the purpose of triangulation.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The researchers took into account the voluntary and informed consent before administering the questionnaires and conducting interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the execution of the study to obtain reliable information from the participants on the questionnaire and interview. Codes were given for the participants of the interviewee to make the analysis easier and to keep the confidentiality of the participants' information and ethical clearance was received from the research ethical review and publication committee of Jimma University.

Table 1: Sample Size and its Distribution

No	Sampled Schools	HDP trained Instructors		HDP coordinators		HDP Leaders		Total sample size	
		Popn	Samp	Popn	Samp	Popn	Samp	Popn	Sampl
1	Jimma University	839	84	1	1	12	2	839	87
2	Jimma College of Teachers Education	59	7	1	1	1	1	59	9
	Total	898	91	2	2	12	3	898	96

Table 2: The Data Collection Instruments and the Sampling Techniques

No.	Respondents	Method of sampling	Instruments		Total
			Questionnaire	Interview	
1	Participants of HEIs	Quota sampling	-	-	-
2	Instructors	Simple random (Lottery) sampling	91	-	91
3	HDP coordinators	Availability sampling	-	2	2
4	HDP leaders	Simple random (lottery) sampling	-	3	3
1-4		Total	91	5	96

3. Results

3.1 The Higher Education Instructors' Perception on the Importance of HDP

In order to know the extent to which HE instructors' perceive the importance of HDP, HDP trained instructors were asked to forward their ideas using a questionnaire designed on a Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). Table 3 presents the summary of the results.

As it is shown in Table 3, fourteen items were prepared for the instructors who trained HDP and the respondents of the questionnaire completely agreed with the importance of HDP having the grand mean value of 4.3 and the standard deviation of 0.91, which is similar with the findings of Zelalem (2017) [35] and Abdissa (2017).[2] However, as the finding of open ended analysis and interview revealed, the perception of the HE instructors' differ before starting to attend the HDP training and after starting the training. Before coming to the program majority of teachers perceive HDP as a waste of time; nevertheless, after they started the training, the perceptions of the majority of those teachers were changed because of the participatory nature of the HDP.

Data collected from interviewees' also supported the above idea. The results of the interview conducted with the HDP coordinators and HDP leaders indicated the importance of HDP for all instructors who engaged in the teaching and learning process and interviewee HDL 2 said, "HDP training is very useful since the teacher shares experience from each other during the discussion". Especially, interviewee code 1 stated that

…My perception differs before attending and after attending the HDP. Before I came to the program I perceive HDP as wastage of time. So that I try to defend that the HDP is a meaningless program and it has nothing to do with me as personal development program or as PD program. I feel that this is non-value adding program but after I came here (to the HDP training) and start the training, my perception has been changed because of the participatory nature of this HDP. So, I am interested and developed a good attitude and perception towards this program. After … attending three to five HDP sessions, I do not want to miss it.

In similar way, the results of the open-ended items of the respondents indicated the importance of the HDP too. For example, one of the respondents said that

I found the HDP training very interesting in changing my whole life that is to say: it made me to be reflective teacher educator, reflective writer, reflective oral writer; it made me to be motivated teacher educator who can publish four article of my own in reputable journals. In

Table 3: The HE Instructors' Perception on the Importance of HDP

N.	Questionnaire Item on HE instructors' perception of the importance of HDP	M	SD
1.	The HDP training has improved my relationship with my students.	4.35	0.99
2.	The HDP training has helped me to apply an active learning method.	4.48	0.89
3.	The HDP training has helped me to apply a student centered teaching approach	4.53	0.77
4.	The HDP training has helped me to improve my assessment skills.	4.44	0.82
5.	The HDP training has helped me to improve my action research skills.	4.18	0.94
6.	The HDP training has motivated me to seek a teaching career.	4.11	0.97
7.	The HDP training has motivated me to improve my teaching performance.	4.43	0.81
8.	The HDP training has motivated me to implement new teaching methods.	4.24	0.87
9.	The HDP observation feedback helped me to improve my teaching methods.	4.24	0.86
10.	The HDP 80% attendance requirement motivated me to be in class.	4.11	1.1
11.	HDP certification is a positive motivation for me to complete the course.	4.24	1.01
12.	The HDP training improves my awareness on the teaching and learning process	4.42	0.82
13.	I have the knowledge and skill of linking the HDP training to quality teaching and learning	4.35	0.78
14.	The HDP training is an entertaining program, which helped me to get an important lesson	4.00	1.16
1-14	***Grand value for the positive items***	**4.3**	**0.91**

Note. M=below 1.49-strongly disagree, M= 1.5-2.49-disagree, M= 2.5-3.49-neutral, M=3.5-4. 49 agree, M=4.5-5-strongly agree

this regard, it led me to improve my professional career to the rank of assistant professor.

The others said

HDP changed my traditional ways of teaching to reflective teacher educator who can always give information to the students to seek knowledge.

I have learned a lot from the program. When I say this, I have learned from my classmates through discussion and participating in-group activities but the way the trainers/leaders communicate the material was boring, and it is not as much expected from them.

Though most of the respondents agreed with the importance of HDP, they recommend the HDP to be applied for undergraduates and those who did not have the teaching background and did not have the pedagogical knowledge and skills. Supporting this idea, the following respondents of the open-ended item said that:

"The HDP training has a significant value for BSc students and I think better if the program focuses on BSc graduates, as well as, better if they take it before starting of their teaching."

"I think the HDP training should be given more for those graduate of applied degree."

"The HDP training is helpful especially for those who graduate with non-teaching discipline and became a teacher."

"HDP is not important for experienced staff"

"HDP training is not important for those who took pedagogical courses in undergraduate   and postgraduate courses."

Some of the respondents also said that the instructors of educational and behavioral college should offer the program and the HDP training needs improvement in its method of delivery by incorporating graduates (trained instructors) feedback where as one of the respondents said, "*I only attend the training for the sake of certification. The program needs more consideration and practical activity*".

The above qualitative analysis also go with the finding of the quantitative analysis and it showed the importance of HDP though the HDP training needs some improvements with respect to the delivery of the training, selections of the trainers, and the HDP curriculum needs to have a discipline specific approach.

3.2 The Perceived Practices of the HDP Training

In order to know whether the HDP trained instructors of HE apply the knowledge and skill that they have acquired from the HDP, the trained instructors were asked to forward their ideas using a questionnaire designed on a Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). Table 4 presents the summary of the results.

Reflective teachers employ active learning and student-centered teaching methods. Those who have attended the HDP education are of high quality, high competence and efficiency for their specific role in producing better and better students in Ethiopia (MOE, 2018).[24] In a similar way, as it is presented in table 5, 92.3% of the trained instructors use reflection to improve their teaching and learning process. 84.7% of the respondents try to identify their strengths and limitation on their instructional process and 83.6% of the respondents discuss with their colleagues improving their mode of lesson deliveries.

Active learning accommodates a variety of learning styles, enhances student performance, increases learner motivation, changes student attitudes, and induces learners to learn more. It also leads the individual to his or her full potential. It involves developing a variety of skills - critical thinking, independent inquiry, and group participatory skills (Silberman, 2006)[31] In the same way, 86 (94.5%), as well as 81 (891%) of the respondents of the questionnaire, indicated as they apply the active learning approach and use the student-centered method respectively. Despite the fact, 59 (64.9%) of the respondents often use a lecture method in their classroom, which contradicts with their use of active learning/student-centered method of teaching-learning approach.

In addition, 66 (72.6%), 82 (90.2%), 81 (89.1%), and 45 (49.5%) of the respondents of the questionnaire revealed that as they encourage students to make their own notes rather than taking notes, use students diverse backgrounds as an input to enrich the lessons they teach, revise their teaching methods in order to help students to develop a critical literacy that involves the development of analytic abilities and try to make a good relationship with their students respectively. These finding contradicts with the finding of Robsan (2020).[30]

Moreover, research on assessment revealed that the right kinds of formative assessment activities and the right uses of data generated by those activities contribute to better learning (Clarke, 2011).[10] It is true that more than 85% of the respondents support this idea. As the data obtained from 80 (87.9%) of the respondents indicated the HDP trained instructors often use different assessment techniques to evaluate the performances of their students instead of using only mid-term and final examinations. They (82 or 90.2%) regularly assess whether their students really understood the lessons or not using different techniques and 78 (85.8%) of the respondents use the assessment result as an input to improve their teaching duties.

Table 4: HE Instructors Perceived Practices of HDP

N	Items	M	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	I often use reflection as a means to improve my teaching practices	4.1	5	5.5	2	2.2	84	92.3
2.	I very often try to identify my strengths and limitations with respect to my day-to-day instructional practices	4.1	6	6.6	8	8.8	77	84.7
3.	I usually discuss with my colleagues about on how to improve our mode of lessons deliveries	4.1	7	7.7	8	8.8	76	83.6
4.	I apply an active learning method/participatory approach in my class	4.4	4	4.4	1	1.1	86	94.5
5.	I often use a student centered teaching and learning method in my class-room	4.3	6	6.6	4	4.4	81	89.1
6.	I often use a lecture method in my classroom	3.7	21	23.1	11	12.1	59	64.9
7.	I usually encourage my students to make their own notes rather than tak-ing notes	3.8	13	14.3	12	13.2	66	72.6
8.	I often attempt to use students' diverse backgrounds as inputs to enrich the lessons I teach	4.3	5	5.5	4	4.4	82	90.2
9.	I often revise my teaching methods in order to help the students to develop a critical literacy that involves the development of analytic abilities.	4.2	6	6.6	4	4.4	81	89.1
10.	I usually try to make a good relationship/rapport with my student	4.4	4	4.4	42	46.2	45	49.5
11.	I very often use different assessment techniques to evaluate the perfor-mances of my students instead of using only mid-term and final examina-tions	4.3	6	6.6	5	5.5	80	87.9
12.	I regularly assess whether my students really understood my lessons or not.	4.2	6	6.6	3	3.3	82	90.2
13.	I use the assessment result or marks as inputs to improve my teaching duties	4.1	9	9.9	4	4.4	78	85.8
14.	I often conduct action research in order to solve the problems I encounter in day-to-day teaching practices	3.5	23	25.3	21	23	47	51.7
15.	I often encourage students to engage in problem-solving techniques through the application of action research.	3.9	12	13.2	10	11	69	75.9
16.	I often encourage students to engage in critical thinking techniques through the teaching and learning process	4.3	3	3.3	6	6.6	82	90.2
	Grand value	**4.1**	**8.5**	**9.34%**	**8.8**	**9.7%**	**73.7**	**81%**

Note. M=below 2.49-disagree, M= 2.5-3.49-neutral, M=above 3.5 agree

With respect to the research-related activities, half of the HDP trained instructors of the respondents (51.7%) conduct action research in order to solve the problems they encounter in day-to-day teaching practices and 74 (81.4%) of the respondents engage in research activities. As their response indicated, 69 (75.9%) of the respondents encourage students to engage in problem-solving tech-niques through the application of action research and 82 (90.2%) of the respondents encourage students to engage in critical thinking techniques through the teaching and learning process. In general, as the grand mean value in-dicated the perceived practice of the trained instructors of the HE is in a better way having the mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 0.97.

Despite the fact, the qualitative finding revealed that the HEIs are not following whether the theoretical knowl-edge achieved from the training was actually being prac-ticed in the instructors' teaching classroom or not, which is similar with the finding of Miressa (2019).[23] According to his finding the actual classroom practice of teachers are different from what is required from them. Similarly, the interviewee HDC1 said that:

One of the problem in the HDP is that you just train them (the trainees) and let them go ... There is no any kind of monitoring and evaluation whether they have applying the pedagogical skill that they have achieved in their classroom or not. After certification there is no way to check how they are applying the achieved skills and knowledge from the HDP. There is no any way to monitor and then to evaluate the implementation of the program, the impact of the program…

One of the respondents of the open-ended item also

said, "*The goal of HDP and the situation in the ground are contradictory.*"

From the interview conducted we can understand that the HEIs are not following whether the theoretical knowledge achieved from the training is actually being practiced by the instructors' in their classroom teaching.

3.3 The Difference in Perception and Perceived Practices of HDP

With respect to the difference in perception and perceived practices of HDP, before conducting the analysis of variance (ANOVA) the variance in each condition is checked and it became similar, the normality is also checked and the distributions within groups are normally distributed and it is therefore robust to conduct one-way ANOVA. Accordingly, One way ANOVA was conducted and found that no perception difference towards HDP across the respondents' age, education level, academic rank, teaching experience, educational career, departments, and colleges that the p-values were greater than the pre-set level of significance (P>0.05). However, as the computed one-way ANOVA indicated the perceived prac-

tices of the HDP have a statistically significant difference due to experience of teaching (F=1.727, p=0.036<0.05), which has a moderate effect size (δ=0.48). Table 5 presents the summery results.

3.4 The Relationship between HE Instructors Perception of HDP with the Practices of HDP

The study used bivariate correlation to see the extent of the relationship between HE instructors' perception of HDP with the perceived practices of HDP, age, education level, academic rank, and teaching experiences of HE Instructors. Table 6 presents the summery of the results.

As shown in Table 6, HE instructors perception was found a significant correlate with the practices of HDP (r=.694, p=0.00<0.01) than any other variables, which indicated substantial correlation. HE teaching experience and educational level had also a significant correlate with age (r ranging from .560 to .234, p ranging from .000 to .026<.05). In addition, instructors academic rank had also a significant correlate with educational level (r=.373, p= .000 < .05).

Table 5: Differences in Perceived Practices of HDP among HE Instructors Experience of Teaching in HE of Jimma town

EXPERIENCE	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Effect size (δ)
Between Groups	1217.003	31	39.258	1.727	.036	0.48
Within Groups	1341.437	59	22.736			
Total	2558.440	90				

Table 6: Total Group Inter-correlations for the Variables Used in Quantitative Study

No	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Perception	—						
2	Age	-.052	—					
3	Edn. Level	-.003	.234*	—				
4	Academ.Rank	-.012	.192	.373**	—			
5	Experience	-.093	.560**	.035	.098	—		
6	Practice	.694**	.025	-.024	-.142	-.088	—	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4. Discussions

According to Zhao et al. (2019)[36] active participation in professional development (PD) enhances teachers' knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. To enhance these knowledge, skill, and attitudes of teachers towards their PD in-service PD training is an important issue for instructors (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018;[11] Ajani, 2019).[4] Similarly, the HEIs of Jimma town showed the importance of the HDP (M=4.3, SD=0.91), which is similar with the findings of Zelalem (2017)[35] and Abdissa (2017).[2] Nevertheless, the HE instructors' perception differs before coming to the HDP and after coming to the program. Before coming to the program majority of teachers perceive HDP as a waste of time and after they start the training the perception of the majority of those teachers will be changed because of the participatory nature of the HDP. Therefore, they will be interested and then they will develop a good attitude and perception towards the HDP after they joined or attend three to five HDP sessions and they do not want to miss it.

According to Ajani (2019)[4] one of the aim of teachers PD is to improve the attitudes and teaching strategies of classroom practices that would affect the quality of instruction the learners will receive. It is complex process that involves teachers to share their concepts, beliefs, resources, practices, and support (Kruse et al., 2018).[21] It also requires training, practice, feedback and provides adequate time and follow-up support (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018).[29] Reflective teachers employ active learning and student-centered teaching methods. Those who have attended the HDP education are of high quality, high competence and efficiency for their specific role in producing better and better students in Ethiopia (MOE, 2018).[24]

Similarly, as this study revealed, the HE instructors have a better perception towards the actual practices of the HDP, which have the mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 0.97. However, the HDP office did not follow, monitor and support instructors' actual practices of HDP when they engaged in their actual teaching-learning process after completing the HDP training. From these we can understand the prevailing difference between the intention of the HDP training and actual classroom teaching practices. The HDP training was designed to improve the classroom teaching skill of the instructors but what actually teachers perceive to practice is different from the intention of the training.

With respect to the difference in perception and perceived practices of HDP, the computed one-way ANOVA indicated that the perceived practices of the HDP have a statistically significant difference due to experience of teaching (F=1.727, p=0.036<0.05), which has a moderate effect size (δ=0.48). From this we can understand that as the level of teaching experience increases the perceived practices of the HDP will also increase. Therefore, the teaching experience matters the perceived practices of the HDP in the HEIs.

As we know the perception of teachers can affect the classroom practices of a given instructor. To improve teachers' perception, teachers training and seminars play an important role and improve teachers' effectiveness in their teaching profession (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).[11] Teachers' professional development aims to improve teaching strategies and perceptions towards classroom practices that would affect the quality of instruction the learners will receive (Ajani, 2019).[4] Similarly, to see the relationship between the HE instructors perception on the importance of HDP with the perceived practice of HDP, the study used bivariate correlation and the study depicted that the HE instructors' perception was found a significant correlate with the practices of HDP (r=.694, p=0.00<0.01) than any other variables, which indicated a substantial correlation.

5. Conclusions

The HDP help teachers to develop the experience of identifying their limitations and strengths for improving the teaching-learning process. It promotes active learning, opening free interactions between learners and trainers followed by reflections and feedbacks. So that developing a positive attitude towards the HDP and trying to apply the experiences achieved in the training plays a great role for the PD of the HE instructors, to improve students' learning and ultimately to bring about quality education. The effectiveness of the HDP lies in the proper application of the HDP. Without proper implementation of the HDP, it is difficult to talk about the PD of HE instructors of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, rather than giving the training, the HEIs are not following whether the theoretical knowledge achieved from the training was actually being practiced in the instructors' when teaching in their classrooms. The HE instructors' perception of HDP has also a high relationship with the practices of HDP. This indicates that instructors' perception of HDP will be improved as the practices of HDP improved. Therefore, improving the perception of instructors is essential for the betterment of the program and to achieve the intentions of the HDP. Generally, this study help to see the perception of HE instructors on the importance of the HDP, perceived practices of HDP for the actual work and it indicates the relationship between instructors perception and its perceived practice of the HDP. Therefore, the paper will contribute to identify the

gap, which manifests in the professional development activities in the HEIs of Ethiopia.

6. Limitations

Although the data was obtained from university instructors in the HEIs of Jimma town, the results may not necessarily reflect the rest universities across the country since it needs to increase the sample of the study. Though the study considered the primary data, the HDP session was not observed to further substantiate the study results, as the program was not running during the study period. Hence, it needs further study to generalize the results of the study and the other researchers may study on the actual relationship between the HDP training and classroom practice, the impact of HDP on teachers' professional development and students' achievement.

7. Recommendations

The HDP office should work towards creating awareness on the importance of the program in collaboration with colleges and higher officials. It should establish a follow-up and monitoring mechanism, as well as, need to develop a short-term training to solve the problems associated with the perceptions of the instructors towards the HDP. The HDP coordinating office is expected to conduct an impact assessment to see the effectiveness of the program too.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Contributors/Acknowledgement

Contribution/Originality

This study contributes to the existing literature about higher education instructors perception of the importance of higher diploma program (HDP) and their perceived practices of the program.

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Appendixes

Appendix I: Interview Guide Designed for HDC and HDLs

Part I. General information

Gender_____ Age _____ Level of education _____Academic rank _____ Experience of teaching in HE _____

Part II. Main data information

1. How do HE instructors' perceive the HDP?
2. Do you believe that the HD training is relevant for the PD of HE instructors'? How?
3. Do you think that the HDP can make HE instructors' to rethink about the nature of their teaching and learning or changed the way they teach? If yes, how? If no, how? why?
4. How do you perceive the actual practice of the HDP
5. How do the HD trained instructors' practice the knowledge and skills that they have got from the training in their actual classroom?
6. How do you monitor and evaluate the achievement of the HD training?

Appendix II: Codes Given for Interviewee

Code	Date E.C	Duration of interview	Responsibilities
HDC1	2021-10-03	00:36:38	Higher Diploma (HD) Coordinator
HDC2	2021-10-03	00:12:00	HD Coordinator
HDL1	2021-10-04	00:09:41	HD Leader
HDL2	2021-10-04	00:18:38	HD Leader
HDL3	2021-10-05	00:12:00	HD Leader