

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, A MAJOR STRATEGY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT SUCCESS, EXPERIENCES FROM A UNIVERSITY IN ZIMBABWE.

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Abstract

In the academic circuit, Professional Development (PD) has proved a vital source for quality and success in teaching and learning in Universities. PD provides academics with job satisfaction and in the process helping to build better universities with competent lecturers. The key personnel in universities who play an important role to bring about transformation and quality products are the lecturers. The academic staff is a crucial element in any university educational program. Academic staff is mainly responsible for the implementation of all educational processes in a university set up. Effective PD in universities has become more crucial in this rapidly changing teaching and learning environments. Significant PD is required in universities to provide academics with the skills to use current methods and will enhance their pedagogical skills. The development of pedagogical skills in university academics in Zimbabwe and the entire Sub Sahara region cannot be addressed simply by running workshops at university level, more sophisticated integrated models like PD are most appropriate. PD is therefore imperative for the currency and relevance of a professional teaching force and in turn the quality of programs delivered in the university. The changing context of higher education in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole presents new challenges for academics which should be addressed through effective PD. Consequently the goal of this study was to explore challenges faced by university academics in their participation in PD at a university in Zimbabwe which is currently offering a Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) to higher education academic staff. The program for PD at the university covered by this study seeks to enhance the professional skills set as well as the overall experiences that can position academics for greater academic success in teaching, research and community services. The qualitative study which was framed within a Realist philosophy of culture, structure and agency by Roy Bhaskar and Margaret Archer was used. In this article I argue that academics in universities are overwhelmed by the demands of PD innovations which are also associated with university quality assurance processes but they face challenges in participating in the programs.

Key Words: Professional Development, Higher Education, Quality Higher Education, Culture, Structure and Agency, Teaching and Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The changing context of higher education teaching and learning in Zimbabwe and the Southern African Region as a whole presents new challenges for academic members of staff. These challenges can be addressed through PD programs to enhance the competencies of academics. The development of pedagogical skills and other competencies required for quality teaching and learning cannot be addressed simply by running short courses at university level, more sophisticated and integrated models like PD should be

considered most appropriate for the development of pedagogical skills especially for academic staff. Improved teaching and learning in higher education has generally become associated with the engagement of PD activities that will raise academic effectiveness by increasing the desired outcomes for learners. There is a rapid growing international focus upon PD as an important component of student success. PD should be considered in higher education as it has effects on the university teaching staff since most of university teaching staff do not have teaching qualifications and they tend to teach the

way they were taught. Academics need to be trained for working within an organization such as a university.

PD is imperative for the currency and relevancy of a proficient teaching workforce in higher education and in turn the quality of programs delivered (Guskey, 2000). In Zimbabwe there is limited research examining PD experiences in higher education contexts. Consequently my qualitative study was timely which examined structural, cultural and agential challenges for developing academic staff at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Zimbabwe. The PD program offered at NUST in the newly established Faculty of Science and Technology Education is crucial to ensure the replenishment and vivacity of the university academic staff. The university offers a Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) to academics in higher education institutions.

The focus of this study was to analyse structural, cultural and agential challenges that affect the implementation of a PD through a PGDHE at the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe, which is the first step towards a comprehensive coordinated academic staff development strategy for the university. The study also examined the key benefits of participating in this program. While some proposed PD programs may vary widely in their context, format, content and structure, most share a common purpose that is, “to alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of academics towards an articulated end” (Griffin, 1983, p2). The purpose of PD is the improvement of student learning. In this article I argue that PD programs are crucial and systematic efforts to bring about change in the

classroom practices of academics, in their attitudes, and in the learning outcomes of students. Drawing from the realist critical theory of structure, culture and agency by Archer (1995; 1996; and 2003), this paper is presented in four sections. The first section provides a brief theoretical framework and literature review on PD and the second presents the research design. The third section presents the findings from the study. The fourth section presents recommendations to enhance PD for the provision of effective programs that increases knowledge and skills for academics in higher education institutions.

1.1 Theoretical Frameworks

This study uses Margaret Archer (1995; 1996; 2003) social realist theory of structure, culture and agency to analyze the challenges of implementing PD through the PGDHE course at NUST. Archer has made a significant contribution to the development of critical realism and more strongly to the structure and agency debate in developing the morphogenetic approach. She regards structure and agency as both ontologically and analytically distinct and, as such, they have independent causal powers (Archer 2003). People in organizations do not have direct access to reality, but can only know things through fallible human knowledge (Basker 1975; 1979; 1989). On the other hand Archer (1995); Giddens (1984) and Blackmore (2009) advocate a dialectical approach to structure and agency, where both have autonomy in interaction. The central tenant of social realism is a philosophical stance which posits that there are real and unseen mechanisms in the natural and social world which help shape social events and peoples' lives (Basker, 1975). These will act as constrainers and enablers.

Archer (2003) distinguishes between people (agents) and the parts (structure and culture). The structural domain in Archer's theory comprises things which exist in the institution such as policies, committees and sub structures within the centers such as specialized units. Archer's work is based on Baskar's critical realism which accepts that there exists a reality independent of our representation of activities but acknowledges that our knowledge of reality is subject to all kinds of historical and other influences. Archer holds it that social structures exert causal influences on social interactions while the actions of individuals and groups affect social structures by modifying them. Archer (2003) shows that, "Morphogenetically understood, structure pre-dates action which in turn reproduces or transforms the structure and therefore pre-dates that particular form of structure in the production of what it participates." From an educational development point of view Quinn (20012) shows that, agents can have causal influences through the effects of the social groups to which they belong.

On the other hand Archer (2003) argues that the influence of structure on agency is mediated through a process that involves three stages: (i) Structural and cultural factors objectively shape the situations which agents confront involuntarily, and possess generative powers of constraint and enablement. (ii) Agents own configurations of concerns, as subjectively defined in relation to the three orders of natural reality, nature, practice and society. (iii) Courses of action are produced through the reflexive deliberation of agents who subjectively determine their practical projects in relation to their objective circumstance. Archer's account stresses the role of subjective and objective dimensions

by which cultural and structural factors shape both the concerns that individuals hold and the possibilities for action in relation to these concerns.

Examining the PGDHE course which is a PD program, a social realist perspective as will be seen in the results section of structure, culture and agency plays a pivotal role in shaping the successful implementation of an educational program. The program is run in the faculty of Science and Technology Education, Department of Technical and Engineering Education and Training which has a structure, culture and staff from the faculty. Looking at the PGDHE at NUST from the domain of culture and agency, a new culture needs to prevail given the condition that the program which only used to enroll participants from NUST now enrolls students from all interested higher education institutions in Zimbabwe and the Southern African Region. This therefore means that some new culture has emerged and new structures created with new members of staff. Gijssels (2003) show that, "social structures emerge from the work of agents, and the work of agents is enabled and constrained by existing social structures that are themselves elaborations of previous structures, mediated by human agents". That being the case, challenges affecting PD are mainly emanating from inherited structures, cultural and agential entrenchments in the university.

1.2 Overview

PD programs of academics that are focused on teaching and learning in higher education are a central component in nearly every modern proposal for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Griffin (1983) argues that, while proposed PD

programs vary widely in their content and format, most share a common purpose, “to alter the professional practices, beliefs and understanding of academics towards an articulated end”. Guskey (2002) assert that, PD programs are systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students. What seems to attract academics to PD programs is the belief that it will expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and enhance their effectiveness in teaching students (Holland, 2005). According to Mizell (2010) PD of academics include both formal and informal processes and activities that are carried out within and outside an organization to improve the teaching practices, knowledge and skills of participants. The assumption of PD is that enhanced knowledge and skills can improve teaching quality and to a great extent learners success (Helleve, 2010; Mizell, 2010 and Hossain 2010).

In the knowledge based global economy of coming decades, quality higher education will be the cornerstone of broad-based economic growth. That being the case, there is need to improve the knowledge, competencies and skills of academics who are at the center of teaching and learning in higher education institutions. Hunzicker (2010) contend that, to guarantee superior education for the generation the world over which is entirely going to depend on knowledge generated through Information Communication Technology (ICT), PD is required for the constant challenges and changes facing higher education institutions. The changes that are taking place in subject content, development of new instructional methods, advances in teaching technology in areas such as

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) need to be addressed by up to date academics. In order to enable the production of the next generation of innovators and critical thinkers, academic staff in higher education learning and teaching institutions need to be developed to ensure the transfer of relevant and current knowledge to the learners. The requirements by higher education to ensure both Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) in teaching and learning using face to face and on line delivery environments have caused considerable tension but all these challenges and changes in delivery strategies can effectively be addressed through PD. Blackmore (2009), argue that as higher education becomes more comodified, technologised and internationalized, these pressures have converged to focus on quality issues in teaching and learning and research as a marker of distinction. To achieve this distinction and also achieve high quality higher education, there is need for effective PD that would provide skills to academics to cope with technological changes in teaching and learning environments. PD has become more crucial in this rapidly changing learning and teaching environment. Significant PD is required to provide academics with the skills to improve teaching in higher education. In the academic field, PD has proved a vital source for quality and student success. According to Pitsoe and Maile (2012) PD plays an important role in changing teachers’ teaching methods and assisting teachers to move beyond a comprehension of the surface features of a new idea or innovation to a deeper understanding of a topic. For Komba and Nkumbi (2008) PD provides academics with opportunities to explore new roles, develop new instructional

techniques, refine their practice and broaden themselves, both as higher education educators and as individuals. However PD programs need to be designed in a systematic manner with a basic structure for implementation and also with effective personnel (agents). While there is an assumption that teaching and learning processes and students' learning outcomes may be improved if academics spend more time engaging in PD activities, both

Hunzicker (2010) and Yoon (2007) suggest that further research is still needed to substantiate any causal links in this area. It should however be noted that PD programs require careful planning and implementation considering the structures, culture and agency, it should also be targeted at individual needs with built in, tailored feedback processes (Mizell, 2010). The process should be systematic and result in change as shown on the Figure 1.

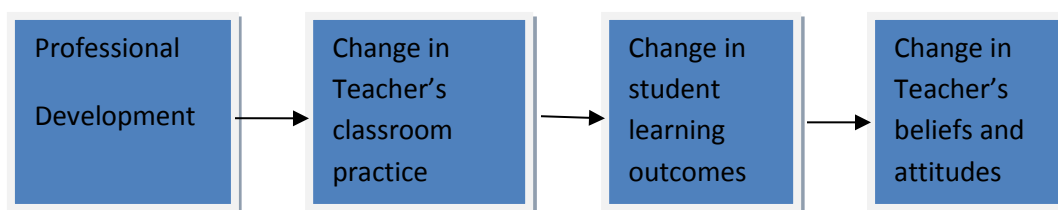


Figure 1: The stages of Professional Development (Source: Guskey 2002).

As shown on the Figure 1 PD should follow a systematic way which results in change in teachers' classroom practice and change in student learning outcome and finally change in teachers' beliefs, attitudes and knowledge.

1.3 Challenges facing professional development: a global overview

Kriek and Grayson (2009) show that, theory and practice dilemma has caused concern in professional PD programs. There is no consensus on how much practice the academics require and how much theory is required for effective PD programs. In recent years and in most developed countries, PD has been affected by the way it has been structured and delivered (Kriek and Grayson, 2009). The traditional "one-shot" approach to PD are inadequate and inappropriate in the context of current higher education reform efforts (Darling-Hammond 2010). On the other hand Guskey (2000) maintain that, the development of academics in many countries is intellectually

superficial, disconnected from deep issues of teaching and learning, where most PD programs are fragmented and non-cumulative. In some cases the structures and cultures adopted in presenting PD programs are not systematic and have to a great extent impacted on successful implementation. The traditional systematic view point such as one size fits all PD approach has affected successful implementation in universities (Hunzicker 2010). Where PD programs are offered at faculty and unit level in a university there is no standard practice across the university resulting in the program losing its value.

Purpose of the study

The purpose in this study was to understand structural, cultural and agential challenges

affecting the implementation of a PD program through a PGDHE offered at (NUST). The study was specifically designed to determine whether or not participants believe that PD was crucial for improving teaching and learning in higher education.

2. METHODOLOGY

To further explore the experiences of academic staff in PD program offered at NUST, a qualitative research design was used to capture the richness of the lived experiences of current and past participants of the PGDHE offered at the university. The research design chosen uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in a context specific setting. The design conceived involves a clear focus on the research questions. Shava and Ndebele (2014) affirm that, qualitative research methods are used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known since they use a naturalistic approach.

This study used a constructivist grounded theoretical methodology to develop an emergent theory from the data which is a key characteristic of qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Goulding (1998).

2.1 Population and sample for the study

A study population is the entire set of objects and events or groups which is the subject about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristic. (Creswell, 2007; Silverman, 2014). A sample according to Patton (2001) is a group chosen from the population with the aim of yielding information about the population as a whole. My study population was made up of all groups of people at the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe and the study sample was drawn purposively from academics who had participated and completed the PGDHE course and those who were still enrolled for the program. Table 1 shows the population for the study.

Table 1: Population for the Study

Faculty	Professors		Assoc. Professor		Senior Lecturer		Lecturer		Research Fellow		Teaching Assistant		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Applied Sciences	2	0	2	1	5	1	50	24	7	3	16	6	117
Built Environment	0	0	1	0	0	0	8	5	2	1	11	2	30
Commerce	1	0	0	0	4	0	69	21	2	3	7	5	112
Communication & Information Science	1	0	0	0	0	0	24	12	0	2	5	6	50
Industrial Technology	1	0	0	1	5	0	30	12	0	0	10	3	62
Medicine	1	0	4	0	4	2	11	6	0	0	0	0	28
Total	6	0	7	2	18	3	192	80	11	9	49	22	399

Source: Human Resources Department (2014).

2.2 Sampling procedures

Purposive sampling with maximum variation was used in selecting participants for the study. Patton (2001) asserts that purposive sampling seeks information rich cases that can be studied in depth. My study sample

consisted of academics that had completed the PGDHE and also academics that were currently registered for the course. Also two lectures who teach in the program were interviewed. The table below shows the sample for the study.

Table 2: Sample for the Study

Faculty	Participants currently enrolled for the PGDHE		Participants who completed PGDHE	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Applied Sciences	1	1	1	0
Medicine	1	1	1	0
Commerce	1	1	1	1
Built Environment	1	0	0	0
Communication Information Sciences	1	1	0	1
Industrial Technology	1	1	1	1
Science and Technology Education	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	6	5	5	4

The sample for the study was drawn from current participants of the PGDHE and academics who completed the course in the newly established faculty of Science and Technology Education.

2.3 Data collection

In this study data were collected from 20 participants using semi structured interviews. The semi structured interview was used as the primary data collection method because it captures the experiences of participants in their own words an approach highly consistent with the constructivist position (Patton, 2001). The semi structured interviews were conducted face to face since all participants were centrally located on one campus. All interviews were audio recorded. Six prepared questions were used with the semi structured interviews. Multiple sources of evidence were used in this study in order to

enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. An interview guide with the following six questions was eventually used:

- How important is the PGDHE offered as a professional development course by the faculty of Science and Technology Education?
- What is your perception on the PD and academic teaching improvement?
- In what ways, if at all do structural factors constrain the implementation of PGDHE at the university?
- In what ways, if at all do cultural factors constrain the implementation

of the PGDHE program at the university?

- In what ways, if at all do agential discourses affect the implementation of the PGDHE at NUST?
- Suggest ways to improve the PGDHE at NUST.

The qualitative study involved the researcher spending one hour with each of the participants. During this time, the participants (referred to as CRP 1 to CRP 11) for current registered participants for the PGDHE and (CP1 to CP9) for lecturers or participants who completed the program and two purposively selected lecturers teaching the program referred to as (L1 and L2) were requested to participate in individual, open ended interviews with the researcher. Coding was done to protect the identity of participants. Lecturers who teach the PGDHE were purposively selected according to their willingness to participate in this study.

Following the period spent with each of the participants from their various work places the interview notes were subjected to a data analysis process that relied on various analytical strategies as suggested by Patton (2001).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.

The analysis of qualitative data was conducted using a coding framework which is consistent with a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, the open coding of data commenced. The process of open coding involved intensive reading of each transcript and the identification of key themes that connected the participants' account of their experiences (Holton 2010).

While evidence from the interview data indicated that induction programs and other professional development courses offered at faculty and departmental levels were effective, the results of this study suggested this was not a standard practice across the university. Participants indicated that they have benefitted much from the PGDHE offered by the department of Technical and Engineering Education and Training at NUST. In response to the question that sought to establish whether academics found the PGDHE program important to them, all participants who completed the PGDHE and those currently enrolled for the program, noted that the program was important and significant to them given the fact that it provided them the opportunity to interact with other university members of staff drawn from different faculties and departments. One of the Engineers from the Department of Industrial Manufacturing had this to say: *"For me as an Engineer the course was very important given the fact that I was able to interact with colleagues and sharing ideas on teaching and learning. I benefitted much from the group discussions that we held with colleagues and our mentors.* One of the participants in this study (CP2) supported the Engineer by indicating that: *"little did he know about Bloom's Taxonomy in setting examination questions. She had this to say, Before participating in this course all my examination questions were discuss, discuss but I have realized that in setting examinations I should have questions that seek for understanding, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. I am now able to vary my questions and have low and high order questions which challenge my learners. Little did I know that my questions were not provoking critical thinking to the learners"*

He went on to state that: *“I see myself as a specialist in teaching Engineering courses. The pleasure i got out of PD contact with colleagues and engaging with others in other fields was excellent. I am able to teach in a highly focused way.”* All participants interviewed indicated that they valued PD programs provided at NUST and this view is supported by (Guskey,2000; Hossain, 2010; Hunziker, 2010 and Mizell, 2010

All participants noted the complex formal nature of the program as being significant among their experiences within the university. For the larger part the PGDHE appeared to be heavily embedded within the relationships and interactions of academics from different faculties with intensive interactions which should be adopted in teaching their courses. Two participants indicated that they liked the whole program since it was consistent and well programmed in such a way that faculty needs could be addressed. *“I am using strategies taught in the course”* (CP3). They reported that the PGDHE offered as a PD course was a standard practice in the university which is benefiting academic staff (CP3; CP5). One participant spoke of her own experiences of the program (CP6: *“...when I completed the first core modules like, Student Assessment in Higher Education, Program Planning and Development, Educational Information Technology, Research for Publication and Scholarship in Higher Education, I discovered that I was more knowledgeable in my teaching and research activities.* The same experience was shared by one of the participants from the department of Banking (CP4) who had this to say: *“I had minimal knowledge in research for publication and also issues relating to student assessment,*

that is examining student, but now I am capable of preparing my abstracts and present my research papers at International Conferences. I am also able to set standard challenging questions for the courses I teach”. Eight participants from different departments, who completed the PGDHE program, indicated that participating in the PGDHE course was crucial to their role as university lecturers and suggested that more time should be given rather than the one year period. However one of the participants was of a different opinion, she argued that one year period for the study was enough to cover key issues in teaching and learning. She had this to say: *“The course is clashing with my teaching sessions and i suggest something should be done, the program is good for me but i am also required to teach my class”* (CP9)

Responses from all participants suggested that the PGDHE at NUST which is a professional development course allowed the maintenance and currency of their teaching and researching skills and knowledge within their respective teaching areas. A teaching assistant from the department of Chemical Engineering remarked that, *“The PGDHE offered by the faculty of Science and Technology Education which I participated in is important and significant to me as a lecturer. I benefited in participating in the program, given the fact that my classroom questioning techniques were rather confusing learners and I was blaming the students yet it was my fault. I did not have strategies to motivate my learners. Having participated in the PGDHE I have discovered many things including my weaknesses in teaching. Most of the group discussions and demonstrations we had equipped me with the necessary skills to*

deliver effective lessons to my learners resulting in my students performing well in the courses I offer in the university". Two participants from the faculty of Communication and Information Sciences (CP1; CP4) indicated that their skills in teaching and research have greatly improved as a result of the knowledge they gained from the PGDHE program. One of them (CP2) noted that the program has had a positive impact on the quality of the content that she delivers to her students. Noted in this study was University Lecturers were overwhelmed by the program and all those who did not have teaching qualifications were keen to join. This was established when one participant (CP2) noted that: *"all academics in our department especially those without teaching qualification have indicated a keen interest in the program only that they are hindered by administrative structural arrangements in the University."*

On the question that sought to establish what participants suggest should be done to improve the quality of the program, the following responses were given.

- More time should be allocated to modules on Student Assessment and Evaluation since this is crucial for the lecturer.
- New technologies such as Moodle and Black board need more time as most participants could not catch up.
- Mentors should share modules rather than having one mentor for a module. Variety in terms of module content is crucial.
- More work needs to be covered on practical lesson delivery and more exercise on setting of examinations.

- Participants should be observed by mentors while practically teaching in a class set up to establish if participants have mastered.
- The course should have an examination component to assess participants whether they have grasped the concepts. One of the program participants from Records and Archives had this to say: *"I suggest that at the end of the semester participants should sit for examinations to assess whether they have grasped the concepts or continuous ongoing assessments should be put in place for program participants to demonstrate their understanding."* This is in line with my study literature review which established that PD is vital for the growth of academics and the students they teach.
- *It is suggested that the university should provide enough time or arrange to have the course taught after our normal lectures to avoid disrupting lectures (L1)*
- *Something should be done about the timing of the program, this program is crucial for the academic staff. (L2)*
- *Participants for the PGDHE have no time to write their assignments. When a lecturer is registered for the program his or her lecturing load should be reduced to allow them to fully participate and benefit (L1)*

One major contribution from the participants (CP1) was that efforts should be made to attract candidates from universities in the Southern African Region. *"This will increase*

the pool of knowledge in group discussions and a cross pollination of ideas will be shared with ideas from other SADC countries. Under such programs participants would share their learning and teaching experiences in universities in the process identifying challenges and possible solutions". It was of interest to note that almost participants interviewed, indicated that they liked and benefited from the program. A lecturer in the department of Library and Information Science who was a distinction student (CP3) had this to say: *"for me in particular the PGDHE was highly relevant and significant since it equipped me with teaching and examining techniques that I apply in my teaching today. The quality of my teaching has greatly improved. Little did I know on how to examine the learners and also how to present on e-learning".* All these sentiments and positive effects of PD are supported by Helleve (2010) who noted that, enhanced knowledge and skills can result in improved teaching quality.

The fact that the course was designed for lecturers who did not have a teaching qualification, most of the participants indicated that they are now qualified lecturers in terms of what they are able to do in their lecture rooms. One of the participants (CP2) indicated that he is now a qualified Engineering teacher. In his remarks he said: *"I used to teach the Engineering way/approach which lacked teaching strategies like problem based learning and experimental group work to discover new ideas".* He noted that his participation in the PGDHE has equipped him with teaching methods that would enhance the understanding of concepts. Basically all the interviewed candidates of the PGDHE at NUST indicated that the

program was crucial especially for lecturers who did not undergo teacher education program at college or university. The PD program introduces participants to basic strategies of teaching and learning. It focuses on developing the competencies of lecturers and preparing them for the changes that are taking place in higher education teaching and learning. Participants of such PD programs will be able to deal with students with learning challenges. The findings revealed that academics benefited from the PGDHE as shown by their excitement and enthusiasm during the interviews, they highly valued the program. One participant (CP4) identified links between the currency of her own skills and knowledge she gained through her participation in the PGDHE and the impact this has on the quality of the content she delivers as she teaches at the university. Based on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that, the PGDHE offered at NUST provides a crucial service to lecturers since it provides updates on their teaching content in line with best international standards. Academics who completed the PGDHE gained a lot especially on issues relating to online delivery presentations. The majority of participants also noted that they placed relevance on the module presenters. Most of them liked the collegial interactions or one-on-one assistance from the members or module presenters. The module presenters were said to be active in advising and assisting the participants of the program. Most presenters were described by the participants as being very active and knowledgeable in their roles which they could provide on a voluntary basis in some cases. Another participant (CRL1) acknowledged how important the presenters were to her. *"I had a good module presenter who showed me the ropes and tactics of*

teaching. He presented the pedagogy of online learning that was really made clear and really to me". Most participants if not all acknowledged the positive association between the PGDHE course and teaching quality. The majority of participants indicated that participating in the PGDHE was crucial to their role in higher education teaching and learning. Responses from participants suggested that the PGDHE allowed the maintenance and currency of their skills and knowledge within their respective teaching areas, this is in line with my study literature review which emphasized systematic change on the attitudes, skills and competencies of academics (Griffin, 1983; Mizell, 2010; Helleve, 2010 and Hossain, 2010).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings from and the suggested benefits of PD for academics it is recommended that, there is need for a strategic approach to PD for academics reinforcing a need for all universities to invest in quality teaching and learning through PD of teaching workforces. Teaching and research should be used as a vehicle for integrating PD into support strategies for academics. As an integral part of the PD course, should be the inclusion of academics to engage in academically significant PD which should extend to engagement in research conversations and establishment of research theory which are developed from the PD courses. The rise of ever-changing information technology like e-learning and the profound shift in teaching and learning requires ongoing support through PD and also through such programs as PGDHE offered at NUST. A more integrated and supportive approach requires consideration from the university management, time

should be made available for academics to participate in PD programs that increase their capacities. It is recommended that all academics in universities who do not have teaching qualifications participate in this PGDHE which is a PD and members of staff should be actively engaged. Infrastructures should be resourced for PD programs to enable academics to learn and achieve. That being the case further investment needs to be made for effective PGDHE in higher learning institutions. It is through this investment that quality teaching and learning and student success can be achieved. It is only through investment in PD especially for academics who are not qualified teachers that quality in terms of teaching and student outcomes and ultimately improved graduate outcomes can be achieved. The trend towards systematic PD programs for academics should be seen to be a common practice in higher education institutions and this should be a common practice to be widely accepted

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