PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEACHERS' ON THE ICDL TRAINING (A STUDY BASED ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BADULLA DISTRICT)

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Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) can provide more flexible and effective ways for professional development for teachers, improve pre- and in-service teacher training, and connect teachers to the global teacher community. Thus, the Sri Lankan education system has adopted several ICT training courses aiming to improve their use of ICT in the classroom, including: International Computer Driving Licensee (ICDL/CAL). The ICDL, which is known as the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) within the European Union, is a certification attesting to basic proficiency in the use of certain types of software or computer systems (Csapo, 2002).

The ICDL/ECDL Foundations responsible for oversight of the programme recommend that individuals take specific training prior to certification testing. Developed by private organizations and delivered through courseware that is often combined with tutorial services, the training consists of seven modules.

These modules include: 1) basic concepts of information technology; 2) using the computer and managing files; 3) word processing; 4) spreadsheets; 5) database; 6) presentation; and 7) information and communication.

In Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Education urges all teachers to receive ICDL training and to apply for certification regardless of the subject they teach. The Ministry of Education recognizes the need to ensure teachers have fundamental ICT skills in order to facilitate integrating ICT into classroom teaching.

Accordingly, many Sri Lankan schools today are provided with computer resources and teachers are given training in International Computer Driving License was particularly significant investment in building the capacity of teachers to use computer technology in teaching learning process. The purpose of this survey study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers on ICDL training.

The research questions were as follows

01. How do participants perceive the course content?
02. How do participants perceive the instructional procedure?
03. How do participants perceive the facilities provided during the course?
04. What problems did the participants encounter in following the course?

Methodology

The study followed Quantitative research technique including questionnaire and interviews. Purposive sampling method will be used to select the teacher sample for this study. From 866 Secondary school teachers who followed ICDL training in Badulla district, a sample of 85 teachers selected representing 10% each Sinhala, Tamil and English medium teachers. Quantitative techniques such as percentages, tables and charts were used to analyse data.

Results and discussion

Majority of teachers (65%) had stated that the contents were appropriate for their current teaching learning process. It indicates a positive perception from the general sample and especially from the Tamil and Sinhala medium sub-samples.

It was revealed that 60% of participants agreed that the course content is relevant to a large extent for achieve the goal of the course. Majority of teachers (83%) stated that the Trainers were very concerned about student participants and purpose and majority of teachers (66%) stated that the ICDL trainer provided adequate guidance and assistance to learn the applications required for ICDL certification.

It was revealed that 74% of participants agreed that the ICDL trainer used teaching methods that were helpful to them and 71% of teachers stated that the ICDL trainer was well prepared for conduct workshops. It was revealed that 69% of participants agreed that the trainers were fully conversant with the subject matter. This indicates that only minority of teachers felt that instructors are not did better a job in instructional activities. However in the interview sessions most participants concerns about language, pedagogical skills of trainers and numbers of instructors.

However, minority of teachers (48%) stated that Hardware and software facilities were adequate and also minority of teachers (42%) stated that Computer usage facilities were adequate while majority of teachers responded negatively (56%). This indicates that more than 50% of participants were not satisfied with computer facilities given by authorities during training period.

It was revealed that majority of participants (67%) agreed that the ICDL Training Lecture room facilities were adequate while only 33% of teachers negatively responded to this. And also majority of participants (62%) agreed that Support and guidance for lab sessions was adequate. This indicates that the facilities given by authority in a satisfactory manner.

But, vast majority of participants (81%) stated that the duration for teachers' computer training should be expanded while minority of responds negatively. And also majority of participants (66%) agreed that the

workload for this ICDL Training course is too heavy. It was revealed that minority of participants (30%) agreed that the ICDL training provided adequate time to thoroughly learn the information about the software, however majority responded negatively (60%) for this statement. This indicates that duration for ICDL training is not enough.

And it was revealed that minority of participants (35%) agreed that the ICDL training taught them the full range of capabilities of the software applications covered by the ICDL certification. On the other hand, majority of participants responded negatively (59%) for this.

However a majority of participants (71%) agreed that the ICDL training increased their understanding of the importance of ICT in the educational system. Only a minority of participants responded negatively (18%) for this. These indicate that ICDL training positively affected to increase participants understanding of the importance of ICT in the educational system.

And also very high majority of teachers (88%) agreed that in general, the ICDL training was useful for them as teachers.

All the interviewees noted a shortcoming in the ICDL modules of insufficient instructional time to learn the applications.
At the interview most participants suggested to expand the duration of the course.
"It is not enough because we need more practical sessions"

"Should extend the duration of the course at least one month"
At the interview Tamil medium participants are concerned about language.

"As Instructor conducted the session in English Medium and they are Sinhala speaking we couldn't understand some theoretical parts"

"We couldn't understand the language English and Sinhala used by Instructor"

At the interview most participants concerns about pedagogical skills of Instructor.
"Even though trainers were fully conversant with the subject matter, they didn't know how to facilitate us"
"Trainers must know how to facilitate us"

At the interview almost all participants concerns about long distance of daily travelling to the centre.
"I have to spend more than four hours every eighteen days for travelling to complete, it is lead me to tired, so it effected my learning"
"We have to spend more time for travelling rather than following course"

They also mentioned some problems. The course was too overload, most of them were unable to gain all points, and the duration of the course was not sufficient to get a satisfactory knowledge of ICT were some of these concerns

Conclusions and recommendations
The overall perceptions of the participants were very positive towards the Computer Driving Licensee (ICDL/CAL).

- Practical sessions should be expanded in the course and course duration should be expanded.
- The amount of time for the training in each module should be increased.
- As new software introducing day by day course modules should be updated accordingly without delay as suggested by the participants.
- Workload shroud be minimized.
- ICDL training centers expanded in every Zone.

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