

Training and Development of University Teachers: Role of Academic Staff College

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has rightly placed Human Resources at the top and has proved that it only can give 'competitive edge' to the organizations. It is important that the human resources are put in use effectively. It is the only resource which gets depleted when not in use. Hence, it becomes mandatory to sharpen the skills to use it effectively. Training and development is a process by which teachers in various groups are helped to acquire a new set of competent skills continuously so as to make them more and more self-reliant and simultaneously develop a sense of pride in their community. It is a known fact that ASCs of various universities serve as a role model in every sphere of its activities. Training and Development is a life-long process for every human being, particularly for those in academia. University Grants Commission, AICTE and Ministry of Human Resource Development take primary responsibility in organizing various Orientation Programs, Principal Workshops and Refresher Courses recommended by the Expert Committee for Academic Staff Colleges, Technical institutes and colleges. There are quite literally hundreds of ASC's in existence around the various universities and hundreds more are being considered in new development plans. The question is not simply whether to leave ASC's in or out of development plans or to close or leave open existing ones, but how they might become more productive. There is no such thing as a 'model' teacher resource centre. Set in many different contexts, ASCs come in different forms, some more effective overall than others, some with particularly promising and/or unpromising features. A major function of the study, therefore, is to highlight possibilities for improving existing ASCs and to offer caution for what to avoid on new projects. Nadler, Carrol and Jones have used the term Human Resource Development mainly to refer to training, education and development. According to them, training is focused on the present job, education on the future job and development is concerned with providing learning experiences to teachers so that they may be ready to move to new directions and dimensions that the organizational change requires. The concepts of these thinkers are practical and pragmatic. The Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review introduced by the University Grants Committee in 1995 has stimulated an increase of activities in different institutions to promote teaching quality and monitor teaching effectiveness. Resources are given to teachers to conduct teaching projects; experts are invited to advise faculties on the evaluation of courses; formal procedures are developed for departments to appraise academic staff; structures are created for faculties to discuss teaching; and award systems are developed to reward outstanding teaching. At present, it is not clear how the developments are affecting teachers in different places. However, it would be of interest to the universities to know how colleagues are meeting the challenge. The UGC has urged universities to provide teachers with the necessary training for their continuous development. This is an area for which the universities have been designated some responsibility and consequently, it is necessary to acquire accurate information on colleagues' training or development needs and preferences. Since the professional status of university teaching is often questioned due to the lack of a recognized or required course of training, it would be worth considering how a program could be designed to further substantiate the professional identity of university teachers.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

A major aim of this study is to attempt to assess the effectiveness of teacher training programs and its centers as a strategy in helping to improve the quality of education in university education system in developing countries; the purpose being to assist policy makers in deciding whether or not to invest in teacher resource centers as part of new

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education development projects. The study was undertaken to evaluate the various methods applied by these training and development centers for the overall improvement in the academics. In this sense, the study is meant to be a summative evaluation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED

This study is based on the secondary data available with the various publications of the universities and published reports of AICTE and UGC with reference to the same. Descriptive research design has been used to minutely evaluate the problem of the study covering small and vital aspects of such training and development programs to come out with some valuable conclusions and implications, which may be considered for future policy framework.

TIME PERIOD OF THE STUDY

The time period of the study under consideration was for three years from 2005 to 2008. The researchers selected this study period because during this phase, it was noticed that all institutions, whether in private or public, universities and colleges started laying more emphasis on the development of its faculty staff by encouraging them to participate heavily in orientation programs, faculty & management development programs for quality updates among them. This aids in value addition for the faculty and helps in more reflective teaching and learning with the students. Overall, appraisal was also linked to this as a source of motivation. It created an urge and willingness for proper overall development within the teaching community.

OBJECTIVES OF ACADEMIC STAFF COLLEGE

- ✿ To organize programs that give an insight and develops technical knowledge of various faculty resources.
- ✿ To organize short term courses for developing professionalism in educators.
- ✿ To nurture wholesome personality of knowledge workers by providing positive attitude, ethics and moral value.
- ✿ To develop ASC as the centre for knowledge resources.
- ✿ To organize programs / consultancy services catering to the needs of the industry.
- ✿ To provide services for publications of various universities.
- ✿ To plan and arrange for curriculum and course material development.

ROLE OF UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

The University Grants Commission has been making proactive efforts to upgrade the knowledge and skills of faculty members in the institutions of higher education. For the purpose of organizing orientation and refresher courses for in service faculty members, the UGC has established and funds a network of 57 Academic Staff Colleges across the country. Besides, the UGC has also identified as many as 11 universities/institutions to organize and conduct refresher courses for faculty members in their chosen areas of specialization during the academic session.

THE CHANGING ROLES OF TEACHERS

Academic staff in universities is well recognized to have a role in research and a role in teaching. As far as their teaching role is concerned, academic staff is expected to perform certain maintenance functions, for example, facilitating learning, assessing students, advising students and managing courses. However, there are functions of a more developmental nature, which are less acted upon by teachers, for example, curriculum innovation, curriculum research, course evaluation and self-development. The latter are especially emphasized in the Institutions' response to UGC's recent enquiry into the quality of reaching. Teaching development has traditionally been considered an individual matter and academics are assumed to develop into their teaching roles through practice. The rapid development of teacher support programs around the world is indication that this laissez-faire approach may not be adequate. More systematic and structured approaches are clearly necessary to meet the increasing diversity and complexity of teaching. This view is supported by studies of teacher development programs across the different universities across India.

The programs are on and of organized to cover the areas such as technical education policy, programs, new concepts, methods and techniques, theory and skills enrichment and upgradation of pedagogy educational technology,

motivation, communication skills, management and other relevant issues to keep pace with the changing scenario in higher and technical education. The University Grants Commission, in pursuance of the National Policy on Education 1986 and its program of action, had set up 57 Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs) in different Universities/ Institutions in the country. The Academic Staff Colleges so established are conducting specially designed Academic Staff orientation programs for newly appointed lecturers and refresher courses for in service teachers.

The Orientation program is intended to inculcate in the young lecturers, the quality of self-reliance through awareness of the social, intellectual and moral environment as well as to discover self-potential and confidence.

The Refresher course provides opportunities for serving teachers to exchange experiences with their peers and mutually learn from each other. It will be a forum to keep the faculty abreast with the latest advances in the subjects, technological spin off etc. The result of an excessive theoretical training is that when students become teachers, these students know of no other teaching method themselves. They themselves use methods that kill innovation, make lessons dull and boring and evoke in children fear and hatred of learning.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

Training is the organized procedure by which people acquire knowledge and develop their skills, learn from the past experiences and develop proper attitude and ability to cope up with the pressure of changing environment in order to perform their tasks adequately and contribute to organizational effectiveness, survival and growth. It is the learning process that seeks to bring about a permanent improvement in the ability and behaviour of teachers by enabling them to acquire new skills for improved performance.

Training is kind of investment. However, most business enterprises in India consider resources spent on training and development as a current expenditure rather than investment, which will yield continuous results in the years to come. Training is a continuous process. The purpose of training according to Japanese approach is the continuous improvement in the performance of whatever one does, benefitting the workers as well as the organization concerned. The universities provide training facilities to its teachers through Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs). However, the facility is confined to one class of teachers (i.e. Lecturers) only. The other two classes of teachers necessarily do not need it, but they can opt for self development. Academic Staff Colleges arrange Orientation Programs and Refresher Courses for duration of about four weeks. All the teachers at lower levels have to attend a minimum of two such courses. The courses in most of the universities have been linked with career advancement schemes (senior scale/ selection grade) available to teachers. The question is whether training given to teachers through ASCs is really contributing to the development of faculty members of the various colleges approved by AICTE and of the Universities too.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Teaching support programs in local institutions typically take the form of training and discussion sessions focusing on particular skills or topics of general interest within the institution. The workshop programs offered by the various universities adopt a similar orientation. To meet the multiple role demands of teachers, the conventional method of giving sessions specific to each role may need to be reconsidered. The real challenge for teachers is not so much their mastery of the multiplying roles but rather, the integration of these roles into a coherent system that produces the most profitable learning experiences for students. In recent times to facilitate role integration, an increasing number of faculty development programs are fostering a reflective approach which emphasizes understanding, analysis and investigation of teaching by the teachers themselves. Teachers will begin with their own action, look back at what they did, ask questions about it and explore ways of improving effectiveness. Critical to the success of this process is the ability to contextualize action and its consequence. To do this, teachers need to pull together their knowledge of teaching, students, courses, other institutional variables, observation, evaluation and their experience with them. In many programs designed to foster continuous development, reflective practice is made a central theme of the curriculum. Mentoring and observation of teaching are incorporated in some programs to add perspectives and input to reflection. The teaching portfolio is also used in many places as course assignment to provide a medium for the integration of perceptions and feedback on teaching. An action-learning project is sometimes included as a course requirement in order to develop investigation, innovation and evaluation. The goal of teacher development in the current century, as suggested by these programs, seems to be 'teaching scholarship'. Academic Staff Colleges are

urged to approach teaching as creatively and rigorously as they approach research in their disciplines.

THE FOUNDATION OF FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While this discussion opened with a reference to some institutional reactions to a UGC initiative, which essentially is a call for accountability, the case for substantiating the professional preparation of teachers in higher education should really be made for educational reasons. More comprehensive and systematic support is proposed because staff have to respond to growing demands associated with increases in the heterogeneity of the student body, the emphasis on student-centered learning, the emphasis on student thinking and generic skills, and the variety and creativity of university curricula. A good faculty development program cannot thrive without the commitment of the administration. The three vital 'Rs' highlighted by Elton and Partington (1991) - Recognition for the teaching function, Resourcing for this function and Rewards for the outstanding work of teachers - must be clearly stated in the institution's mission and policy. Unless the program is placed high on the institution's priorities, cohesively linked to the academic structure and collectively owned by the faculties, it is not likely to gain the participation and appreciation of academic staff. In accordance with the concern for professionalizing university teaching, it should be noted that the providers of professional education are themselves legitimate objects for professional development. Suitable provisions will need to be made for the professional development of persons involved in teacher development. The demand for such provisions is going to rise when faculties and academic leaders become more involved in staff development. At present, a comprehensive range of reference materials are available from staff and educational development units in the various universities, a good collection of which can be found in the various universities' library. A central and state university offers a Fellowship Scheme, which provides accreditation opportunities for staff and educational developers in higher education. Similar schemes may be set up within individual institutions to support and encourage participation in the development of teachers.

STAFF PROMOTION & PROBATION SUPPORT/PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Involvement of ASCs in evaluation of the teaching of individual academics is often a part of performance review or support of applications for promotion. In supporting staff going for promotion, ASCs can also be called upon by academics to assist them with teaching strategies or with evidencing their performance, for example through the preparation of professional portfolios. ASCs may be called upon to undertake similar activities in support of staff going for teaching awards.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND UNIT DESIGN

ASCs are often called upon to assist with aspects of curriculum design including the preparation of unit outlines in the documentation of programs for accreditation. This can involve intense work with academics on expression of and alignment of learning objectives, content, teaching strategies and assessment items. This may also involve devising strategies for the teaching of generic graduate attributes and for evidencing attainment of graduate attributes.

OTHER FUNCTIONS OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT UNITS

There are several other functions in which many academic development units engage. These include: work with students on development of study skills; supporting online learning management systems; educational media production and support; provision of research training; design and provision of classroom equipment; supporting teaching offshore; providing for leadership and management development; and support of indigenous education support.

CONSEQUENCES OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

There are many approaches to academic development and many organizational arrangements for its provision. Organizational arrangements may be more or less centralized. They may be configured with a range of other activities such as educational media production and services, instructional design activities and general human resource development. Strategic approaches to academic development are driven by university mission statements and

detailed strategic planning, and evaluated against performance indicators. Strategic approaches may address educational processes, educational outcomes or both. They are likely to involve a wider compass than traditional approaches to educational development, which have focused on classroom and laboratory activities. They may address aspects of the learning environment ranging from online and library facilities, to student support, and for the management of learning resources, including the management of staff. They are likely to involve quality assurance and quality improvement measures. Teaching input-oriented measures may include a requirement that teaching staff hold formal qualifications in teaching in higher education. Strategies may include quality improvement incentives such as awards for good teaching.

Table 1: Approaches To Educational Development

Approach	Focus of Educational Development Activities
Teaching Orientation	Teaching strategies / Teaching tips
Learning Orientation	How students learn and what students learn
Strategic Orientation	Strategies to assure institutional objectives are met

APPROACHES TO EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the 1990's, educational reformers were seeking answers to two fundamental questions: **(1)** How well are students learning? and **(2)** How effectively are teachers teaching? Classroom Research and Classroom Assessment respond directly to concerns about better learning and more effective teaching. Classroom Research was developed to encourage college teachers to become more systematic and sensitive observers of learning as it takes place every day in their classrooms. Faculties have an exceptional opportunity to use their classrooms as laboratories for the study of learning and through such study, to develop a better understanding of the learning process and the impact of their teaching upon it. Classroom Assessment, a major component of Classroom Research, involves students and teachers in the continuous monitoring of students' learning. It provides faculty with feedback about their effectiveness as teachers, and it gives students a measure of their progress as learners. Most importantly, because Classroom Assessments are created, administered, and analyzed by teachers themselves on questions of teaching and learning that are important to them, the likelihood that instructors will apply the results of the assessment to their own teaching is greatly enhanced.

Through close observation of students in the process of learning, the collection of frequent feedback on students' learning, and the design of modest classroom experiments, teachers can learn much about how students learn and, more specifically, how students respond to particular teaching approaches. Classroom Assessment helps individual college teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective. Simply put, the central purpose of Classroom Assessment is to empower both teachers and their students to improve the quality of learning in the classroom. Classroom Assessment is an approach designed to help teachers find out what students are learning in the classroom and how well they are learning it. This approach has the following characteristics:

✿ **Learner-Centered** : Classroom Assessment focuses the primary attention of teachers and students on observing and improving learning, rather than on observing and improving teaching.

✿ **Teacher-Directed** : Classroom Assessment respects the autonomy, academic freedom, and professional judgment of college faculty. The individual teacher decides what to assess, how to assess, and how to respond to the information gained through the assessment.

✿ **Mutually Beneficial**: Because it is focused on learning, Classroom Assessment requires the active participation of students. By cooperating in assessment, students reinforce their grasp of the course content and strengthen their own skills at self-assessment. Their motivation is increased when they realize that faculty are interested and invested in their success as learners.

✿ **Formative** : Classroom Assessment's purpose is to improve the quality of student learning, not to provide evidence for evaluating or grading students. The assessments are almost never graded and are almost always anonymous.

✿ **Context-Specific** : Classroom Assessments have to respond to the particular needs and characteristics of the teachers, students, and disciplines to which they are applied. What works well in one class will not necessarily work in another.

✿ **Ongoing** : Classroom Assessment is an ongoing process, best thought of as the creating and maintenance of a classroom "feedback loop." By using a number of simple Classroom Assessment Techniques that are quick and easy to use, teachers get feedback from students on their learning.

✿ **Rooted in Good Teaching Practice**: Classroom Assessment is an attempt to build on existing good practice by making feedback on students' learning more systematic, more flexible, and more effective. Teachers already ask questions, react to students' questions, and monitor body language and facial expressions, read homework and tests, and so on. Classroom Assessment provides a way to integrate assessment systematically and seamlessly into the traditional classroom teaching and learning process

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON SEVEN ASSUMPTIONS

The quality of student learning is directly, although not exclusively, related to the quality of teaching.

✿ Therefore, one of the most promising ways to improve learning is to improve teaching.

✿ To improve their effectiveness, teachers need first to make their goals and objectives explicit and then to get specific, comprehensive feedback on the extent to which they are achieving those goals and objectives.

✿ To improve their learning, students need to receive appropriate and focused feedback early and often; they also need to learn how to assess their own learning. The process of critical thinking needs to be developed.

✿ The type of assessment most likely to improve teaching and learning is that conducted by faculty to answer questions they themselves have formulated in response to issues or problems in their own teaching.

✿ Systematic inquiry and intellectual challenge are powerful sources of motivation, growth, and renewal for college teachers, and Classroom Assessment can provide such a challenge.

✿ Classroom Assessment does not require specialized training; it can be carried out by dedicated teachers from all disciplines.

✿ By collaborating with colleagues and actively involving students in Classroom Assessment efforts, faculty (and students) enhances learning and personal satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Presently, activities of academic staff colleges are limited to organizing Orientation Programs for newly inducted teachers and Refresher Courses for experienced teachers (some staff colleges also publish newsletters). However, with a little initiative, imagination and small funds, the ASCs can be further exploited to become living centers of academic activity within their framework. By bringing little change, this could lead to an effective and long term positive impact on the teacher participants, which has a direct bearing on the enhanced teaching effectiveness. The suggestion for ASCs is to work as multidisciplinary organizations as **(1)** Educationist Society Interface. **(2)** Academic Activities Centre. **(3)** Bulletin Board for Career Opportunities. **(4)** Platform for issues of Social Concern and **(5)** Databank of service graph of all teachers working under affiliated colleges of different Universities. This will help the affiliated colleges and universities to coordinate effectively and contribute positively for better development of education and its fraternity.

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