



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION: IMPACT OF ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

The present paper emphasizes on the impact of the orientation programmes conducted by UGC-Human Resource Development Centres (Academic Staff Colleges) on professional development of the Academic Staff in higher education. The study focuses on finding out whether the orientation programmes have been successful in helping teachers in improving their professional skills and makes them a better teacher.



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INTRODUCTION:

About the professional development of teachers in higher education, the Kothari Commission report (in the year 1984-86), states that that, "A lecturer neither receives orientation to his profession, nor is given time for adaptation to his job. He/she is satisfied or perhaps, influentially satisfied to copy the methods adapted by his/her own teachers or senior colleagues. The main resource of the colleges / university teacher has always been the inspired lecture. it is wrong to expect a freshly appointed teacher to gain the art of teaching, by merely emulating the superiors or by trial and error method. This has resulted in to immense losses, eroding the academic standards both amongst the teaching community and the students at large."

The requirement for a suitable form of training and orientation to professionalize a lecturer (Assistant Professor), thus became evident.

The National Policy on Education (1986), while dealing with reforms in the higher education system, has stressed the requirement for improving status of the University and College teachers in all the aspects. The National Policy on Education announced by the Central Government in the year 1986 turned out to be a benchmark for quality improvement in education. Therefore, it recognized the requirement for improving professional competence as well as the communication skills of the teachers.

The national policy on education (1986) in its Programme of Action highlighted the important link between the motivation of the teacher and the quality of education. The national policy on education acknowledged the need for improving the status of the teacher and suggested to provide opportunities for their professional as well as their career development, so that they could fulfill their role and responsibility within the educational system in an effective manner.

The National Policy on education recommended the following for building the motivation level of teachers:-

1. Design orientation programmes in teaching methodologies, pedagogy, and educational psychology for all new candidates at the level of lectures. Implement these programmes.
2. Arrange for the refresher courses for serving teachers. It should be ensured that all the teachers are covered once within a time span of 5 years.
3. Arrange orientation programmes by using the internal resources of universities and by bringing a number of colleges together.
4. To encourage teachers to participate in seminar, symposia etc.

It was considered necessary to acquaint the teachers both at university and college, with the modern developments and take care of their academic requirements, so that they discharge their roles and responsibilities in most meaningful and remarkable manner for maintaining high standard of higher education in India. For this, the Academic Staff Orientations Scheme was introduced by University Grants Commission.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

The Indian higher education system has grown and developed significantly after the independence. This period witnessed enormous expansion of the system. From 20 plus Universities, around 450 plus colleges, 15000 plus teachers and 9500 plus students in year 1951, the number has amplified to 677 plus Universities and university level institutions, more than 35000 colleges, 13,90,000 plus teachers and 30 million plus students at the end of 2014.

We have seen that a newly appointed teacher doesn't get any professional or induction training while entering the teaching profession in higher education. He/she is simply expected to go the classroom and start delivering. To be an effective teacher one needs to possess several skills apart from the subject knowledge and also needs to keep himself/herself updated from time to time. Considering this, the University Grants Commission introduced Academic Staff Orientations Scheme, under which Academic Staff Colleges (presently Human Resource Development Centre) were established in 1987-88. These centres were

expected to organise in service staff training programmes mainly for the academic staff of higher education.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:-

a. Academic Staff

Faculty or **academicians** are the academic staff of a university or college. Professors of various ranks, lecturers and/or researchers are covered under this term. The term faculty in this sense is most commonly used in this context in the United States and Canada and generally includes professors of various ranks: adjunct, assistant, associate etc.

The term 'faculty development' is commonly used to describe activities and programmes designed to improve instructions. More recently, the term 'academic development' has been used in some of the literature to refer to development activities and programmes that more fully address the multiple roles of faculty (instructor, researcher, citizen and scholar within departments, faculties and the wider university community). This definition is based on a more holistic view of the higher education faculty member within his or her institution. Centra (1989) has proposed four possible types of development: personal (interpersonal skills, career development, and life planning issues); instructional (course design and development, instructional technology); organizational (ways to improve the institutional environment to better support teaching); and professional (ways to support faculty members so that they fulfill their multiple roles of teaching, research, and service).

b. Orientation Programme

The Orientation programme conducted by the UGC-Academic Staff Colleges is an in-service training programme offered to new entrants of the teaching profession, with the objective to help them to understand their role and discharge their duties in more efficient manner. These programmes are funded by University Grants Commission and are designed and run through the various Academic Staff Colleges all over the country. These are inter-disciplinary programmes offered to teachers of all subjects and faculties. Broad outline for contents of the programme are provided by University Grants Commission.

c. Professional Development of academic staff

In education, the term **professional development** may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their

professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. When the term is used in education contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, however, it may be difficult to determine precisely what “professional development” is referring to.

“Professional development is defined as development in an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics to perform the professional duties in a better manner. For a teacher or academic staff, the definition recognises that development can be provided in many ways, ranging from the formal to the informal. It can be made available through external expertise in the form of courses, workshops or formal qualification programmes, through collaboration between institutions or teachers.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE:

The teacher plays a key role in the development of the education system as a whole. The number of graduates, post graduates and research degree holders coming out of the institutions of higher learning have not only contributed to development in the industrial and service sector but also have been critical inputs for education itself by providing teaching and other academic personnel essential for it.

While the significance of these contributions and responsibilities cannot be doubted, a lot of questions are being raised with regards to relevance and quality of higher education in colleges and universities. A lot of issues pertaining to performance of teachers in the colleges and universities are also being brought up. The in-service programmes offered by UGC are the only opportunities for the teachers to improve themselves. Thus, it is necessary to study the impact of orientation programmes offered by Academic Staff Colleges on professional development of the academic staff. Hence, researcher has divided the importance of the study into the elements like relevance, applicability and methods etc. which are as follows -

A) Relevance

The phenomenal growth in higher education has led to noteworthy changes in educational patterns. As the need of higher education is constantly increasing, it becomes unavoidable to study the changing patterns in educational system. Thus, it is felt relevant to assess the impact the Orientation Programmes are having on the professional development of academic staff to anticipate future challenges.

B) Applicability

Considering the above, it becomes imperative to have an exclusive analysis of the Impact of Orientation Programmes conducted by UGC-Academic Staff Colleges on the professional

development of the academic staff. The present study is undertaken with the very purpose of studying the impact of orientation programme on professional development of academic staff in higher education.

OBJECTIVES:

Even though, the University Grants commission has provided broad outline for the orientation programme, it is essential to understand the practices adopted by Academic Staff Colleges in organising the orientation programmes, which are offered to the teachers who have recently entered the teaching profession, with a view to improve their contribution to teaching learning process.

At the same time, considering the changes and developments in the higher education system as well as to tackle the changing demands of the students and society, it is felt that an Impact Analysis of the orientation programmes conducted by Academic Staff Colleges needs to be done in order:

1. To understand the topics offered, pertaining to various components of the Orientation Programmes covered by Academic Staff Colleges and critically analyse them for further improvement to help professional development;
2. To Analyze the personal and professional impact of the Orientation Programme on the teachers;

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The quantitative data were captured via surveys. Data were collected by questionnaires. For study, researcher used developed self-administered instruments via an iterative process based on the experiential learning, a review of the extensive literature on faculty development, training analysis, training evaluation and staff development initiatives considered by Academic Staff Colleges.

1) Population:

Teachers who have completed orientation programmes conducted by different Academic Staff Colleges from three states i.e. Maharashtra, Gujarat & Goa. Total 9 Academic Staff Colleges are there in the area, 5 in Maharashtra, 3 in Gujarat and 1 in Goa. Total number of teachers attending the orientation is huge.

2) Sample size:

Interviews of 300 faculties are taken for the study. 35 samples from each Academic Staff College from Gujarat and Goa and 32 participants from each Academic Staff College from Maharashtra are considered for the study. Thus total sample size becomes 300.

3) Type of sampling:

Considering the sample size Purposeful random sampling method was chosen. For this particular target groups like faculties, purposive random sampling, will substantially increase the credibility of the results. Only purposefully full time permanent faculties from various institutes are taken for the study.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Data was collected through specially designed self-administered instrument (questionnaire), which is designed using several questioning techniques.

DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS

Qualitative analysis was done on data generated through questionnaires.

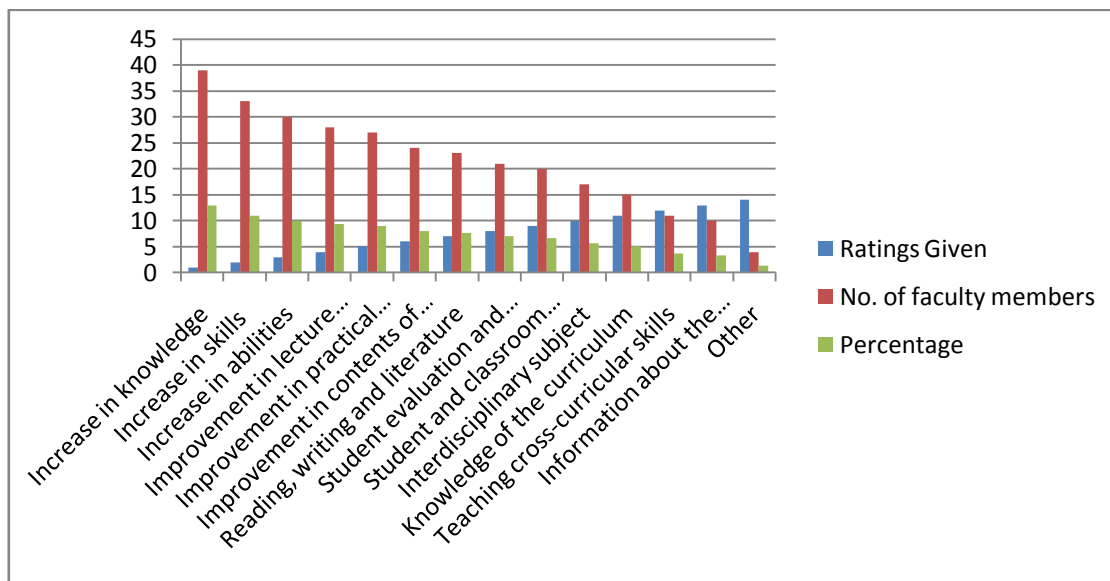
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table showing the ratings by the participating teachers about the contents covered during the orientation programmes that helped them for professional development.

Sr. No.	Points	Ratings Given	No. of faculty members	Percentage
1	Increase in knowledge	1	39	13
2	Increase in skills	2	33	11
3	Increase in abilities	3	30	10
4	Improvement in lecture delivery	4	28	9.33
5	Improvement in practical and vocational skills	5	27	9
6	Improvement in contents of teaching	6	24	8
7	Reading, writing and literature	7	23	7.67
8	Student evaluation and assessment practice	8	21	7
9	Student and classroom management	9	20	6.67
10	Interdisciplinary subject	10	17	5.67
11	Knowledge of the curriculum	11	15	5
12	Teaching cross-curricular skills	12	11	3.67
13	Information about the pedagogy's	13	10	3.33

14	Other	14	4	1.33
Total			300	100

Graphical Representation



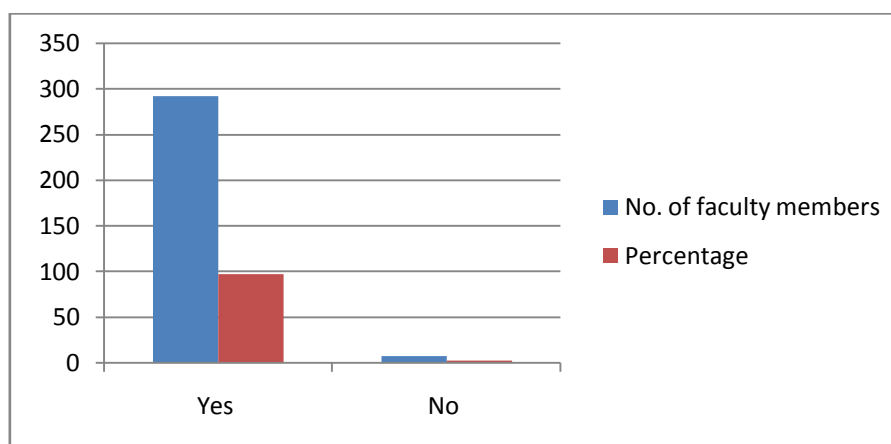
Out of total sampled participating teachers 13% have agreed that the Orientation Program helped them in increasing their knowledge level. 11% of the faculty members agreed that increase in skills through the Orientation was achieved, 10% of the faculty members agreed to the statement that the Orientation helped them to increase their abilities as a teacher, 9.33% of the faculty members agreed to the statement that the Orientation helped them to improve their lecture delivery skills, 9% of the faculty members agreed to the statement that Orientation helped them to achieve improvement in practical and vocational skills, 8% of the faculty members were positive about the statement that the Orientation helped them in improving their contents of teaching, 7.67% of the faculty members agreed to the statement that the Orientation helped them to increase their awareness about Reading, writing and literature, 7% of the faculty members positively agreed that they could improve their skills regarding Student evaluation and assessment practice through Orientation, 6.67% of the faculty members agreed the statement that the Orientation helped them in improving their Student and classroom management skills, 5.67% of the faculty members were positive about the statement that the orientation helped them in improving the interdisciplinary subject knowledge, 5% of the faculty members agreed that increase in the knowledge of the curriculum happened through Orientation, 3.67% of the faculty members agreed to the statement that the Orientation helped them in improving their skills of teaching cross-curricular activities, 3.33% of the faculty members were positive about the statement that Orientation provided them information about the pedagogy, and only 1.33% of the faculty

members submitted that the Orientation helped them to improve other skills (not mentioned above)through Orientation programme.

Table showing opinions of the faculty member about whether the orientation programme helped them in improving mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching skills.

Sr. No.	Options	No. of faculty members	Percentage
1	Yes	292	97.33
2	No	8	2.66
Total		300	100

Graphical Representation



Out of total sampled teachers 97.33% teachers agreed to the statement that the orientation programme helped them in improving mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching skills.

CONCLUSION

- The contents and organisation of the Orientation Programmes is of good standards and the participating teachers have shown happiness about it.
- It can be concluded from responses of the participating teachers that attending the orientation programme does have a positive impact on the teachers with regards to their professional development as it caters to the various needs and skills required to be an effective teacher.
- Faculty development through orientation programmes is an initiative designed to improve faculty performance or enhance the quality of duties discharged by the participating teachers as well as their own development and growth.
- We can conclude that the Orientation Programmes conducted by different Academic Staff Colleges are catering to the professional development needs of the academic staff.

- It can also be seen that the Orientation Programmes are also helping the teachers to improve their personality which intern helps their professional development also.
- Thus, it can be concluded that the orientation programme makes a difference not only to the participating teacher, but also to the education system at large and of course to the most important component of the education system, i.e. students.
- Thus, it can be concluded that participation in orientation programme is having positive impact on professional development of academic staff at large.