

A STUDY ON THE VARIOUS FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRIVATE ENGINEERING INSTITUTIONS OF JODHPUR CITY, RAJASTHAN)

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Abstract—Faculty development programmes have become popular in all streams of education and holds immense importance and relevance with respect to technical education since technology is continuously evolving. Hence, it become extremely important for the educators of technical institution to keep themselves updated of the latest technological developments. The faculty development programmes not just aim at the development of technical skills but can be designed to address multiple issues and concerns of the educators. Faculty development programmes thus play a major role in enhancing the abilities of the faculty members to impart high quality education and develop their interpersonal and intra personal skills to be able to perform various other roles like that of a : counselor, guide, administrator, etc. This paper discusses various factors that relatively impact the faculty development programmes which in turn leads to the success or failure of such programmes. The objective of this paper is to understand various factors that influence the success of a faculty development programme. This paper also discusses some challenges that are faced by the institutions and the educators in organizing and participating in these programmes respectively. The paper also contributes suggestions to improve the design of such programmes so that they become more useful.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term “Faculty Development Programme” generally brings to our mind a scenario of classroom training imparted to the educators to improve the content or instruction. It is generally understood (or rather misunderstood) to be a programme designed to improve the instructional capabilities of the educator. However, it is not so. The gambit of faculty development programme is much wider than ordinarily perceived by most of us. 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 educators so that they fulfill their multiple roles of teaching, research, and service).

Faculty development programmes are influenced by a lot of factors which need to be kept in mind while organizing and designing such programmes. A programme discussing about the latest trends and technologies may not be a successful one if it does not cater to the needs of the target audience. Let’s say that the participants are early career educators hoping to understand the fundamentals, but instead are made to participate in programmes of advanced level by highly qualified trainers. Such programmes may also be a failure given that it was not planned as per the need of the target audience. Hence it becomes very important that the factors that may impact the success/ failure of such programmes are understood.

2. OBJECTIVES OF PAPERS

The basic objective of the paper is to highlight the various factors relatively impacting the progress of faculty development programmes. The paper also takes in to consideration the various challenges faced while organizing FDP by engineering institutions of Jodhpur city. The paper concludes with some suggestions to improve the design of faculty development programmes.

3. FACTORS RELATIVELY IMPACTING THE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Faculty development programmes have gained immense importance lately and more and more stress is laid on overall development of the educators. Hence we can say that FDP aims at a holistic development of an individual. It is development of all aspects of an educator’s personality and his capabilities as a teacher, as a mentor, as a researcher, as a counselor or as an administrator, etc. However, we first need to understand the factors that have an impact on the success/ failure of such programmes. Without an understanding of these factors a programme cannot bring about the desired change or effect on the educators.

1. *Vision and commitment of the institution*

The management of an institution may feel the need and importance of faculty development programmes but only “in letter” and not in “spirit”. In such cases the planners of such programmes will translate the same and hence, such programmes may not be successful, i.e. they may not be addressing the fundamental issues and developmental needs of the educators and hence may not be beneficial at all, neither to the educators nor to the institution. Whereas, if an institution really understands and addresses the issues of the educators and addresses them accordingly, the programmes would be of great help.

The commitment of the management is reflected by the way they plan or motivate their educators to participate in developmental programmes/ activities. The institution can arrange for “in-house” programmes or it can either sponsor or allow the educators to go ahead with development programmes conducted outside the premises of the institution. Educators can thus be motivated to take up such programmes internally or externally.

2. *Planning of the Faculty Development Programme*

Success of any programme is primarily dependent on its planning. If planned in a proper fashion keeping the right focus, the programme can be a real successful one. The primary issue to be addressed here is to understand the training or developmental needs of the target educators. So, while the institution may want to organize a programme with the objective to improve demonstration skills, but if the educator feels that he needs to improve on classroom management skills instead, he/ she may not be willing to participate in such programme, thus making it a futile one.

3. *Involvement of educators at the time of planning*

Another factor which would directly have an impact on the success of a faculty development programme is the involvement of the educators at the time of planning the programme. It is important to understand the needs and address the issues of the educators in order to get the direction in which the programme needs to be formulated or organised. It is critical to find out the problem areas of the educators at large (even though issues pertaining to a smaller group or individual cannot be addressed) as this would ascertain that the educators would be interested in participating in such programmes. Identifying the issues of the educators would imply involving them by either having discussions with them or by conducting a survey at the departmental level to gather the requisite information.

4. *Duration of the programme*

Duration of any programme has to be such that the educators are able to assimilate maximum information shared with them without losing focus and without letting boredom creep in. The duration of the programme must be based on the objectives and content of the programme and should ensure that the educators are able to perceive benefits in participating in the programme. Too long programmes may lead to loss of focus and attention while too short programmes may not be able to achieve their objectives. But whatever the objective of a programme are, it must be ensured that planning is done in such a way that the educators are able to gain maximum benefit in minimum duration of time.

5. *Design of the programme*

It can be said that educators when go out of the same old institution’s premises for a development programme, they take it more seriously. Even though it might be a very costly affair and may not be affordable for institutions on a regular basis to send the educators to other locations for participating in such programmes. Also, programmes based on hands on learning or performing activities (rather than just listening to lectures or watching demonstrations) are more effective. Hence, one of the most important factor impacting the effectiveness of any programme is its design. First, it needs to be decided whether it would be an in house programme (designed and implemented in the premises) or the educators will participate in a programme conducted by some other organization outside the institution’s premises. It would also depend on identifying the right resources for planning the programme.

6. *Resource person or Trainer’s capabilities and expertise*

The commitment of the participants would depend upon the trainer’s expertise. For a programme to have a desired impact, it is necessary to rope in the trainer with the required expertise. A resource person may be someone who has the required knowledge, skill or experience from within the institution or he may be someone who is invited from other organisations/ institutions. But whatever the case may be, he/ she should be someone who is regarded in his field. If the resource person is capable and experienced, he will be able to bring out the best from the educators and in the process motivate them (and others) to participate in such programmes and directly impacting the educators. A lot depends on the caliber and credibility of the resource person. Even if he/ she may have great knowledge and experience, but if he/ she fails to keep the attention of the educators the effectiveness of the programme will be negatively impacted.

7. *Format of the programme*

The format of the programme also plays a part in increasing or decreasing the effectiveness of any programme. The programmes must be designed as per the principles of learning. An ideal pattern of a programme would be based on the objectives of the programme and varying the stimulus. The programme should be designed in a way that keeps the audience attentive and active and hence the effectiveness of the programme would depend on the format of the programme.

8. *Time given for interaction with the senior educators*

Interaction with senior educators leads to gaining and sharing insights with each other based on their experience. Educator's development also happens in casual and controlled discussions with senior educators. It should be noted that the junior educators learn and develop tremendously just by holding (worthwhile) discussions with senior educators. Programmes which allow time for such discussions generally would increase the effectiveness of the programmes and of the educators as such.

9. *Time for self-learning*

It is not just the learning provided by external agents or stimulus that impacts a programme but also the time allowed to assimilate the knowledge gained in such sessions. Time for self-learning would ensure that the educators are able to delve deeper into the content and hence ensure better comprehending of the topic of discussion. In contrast, if there is no time allowed for self-learning it may be difficult for the educators to learn completely and implement the learning in their teaching behavior as the educator would be engaged in learning more and more without thoroughly understanding what he has learnt. Say for example there is a five day faculty development programme about a new technology introduced in their field. New content is being introduced to the educators every day. However, if he/ she is not allowed some time for self-study, he/ she may or may not remember completely what he/ she read on the first day and even though, it may be an excellent programme, but not much is gained out of it as the educator was not able to assimilate maximum out of it. This may lead to a decrease in the effectiveness of the programme no matter how well it may be planned and implemented.

10. *Periodic evaluation and improvement*

In order to have a long term and sustained impact on the effectiveness of educators, it is important to have a periodic evaluation of the programme. The evaluation of the programme would be in terms of the change the educators may observe in themselves or their teaching styles, i.e. say if the developmental programme discussed about the teaching methodology to be used, then evaluation of the impact of the programme would depend upon how much the educator has been able to implement the new or changed teaching methodology. This would then help in making required changes and supporting the educators in case they are unable to implement it in the right way. Hence, periodic evaluation of the programme content would impact the effectiveness of the educators and lead to their development by addressing their issues in time and thereby making the developmental changes in time and permanent.

4. CHALLENGES FACED IN ORGANISING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Faculty development programmes have become an integral part of any professional institution. This is because of the very fact that quality education can be provided by quality educators. The educator should himself be aware and be an expert in order to groom his/ her students to excellence. Since the reputation of an institution is in quality of the students that graduate and in turn in the hands of the educators who shape the mind and personality of its students, it becomes imperative to constantly improve the quality of its educators in terms of their knowledge, pedagogy, inter personal and intra personal skills, etc. Even though the importance of the faculty development programmes is immense, still there are quite a few issues in conducting such programmes. Some issues have been discussed below:

1. General programmes organised for all, ignoring the needs of the target participants.

The biggest challenge is to plan the programme, i.e. to ensure that the content, design, etc. is exciting enough for the targeted educators. However, implementing this is a big challenge as the participants may have different needs, backgrounds, and interest, experience levels, etc. Hence, organizing a development programme is in itself a big challenge.

2. Teachers are not good listeners.

Teachers generally have their own opinion and believe that they know most of the things. They also lack patience, especially this is the case with senior educators who have been teaching the same subject matter for years. They feel they already know everything and don't require anyone else to tell them how to do things. Hence, they are not motivated enough to listen during the programme. This directly decreases the effectiveness of the programme.

3. Perception of educators about development programmes

It can be said that most of the teachers either believe or refuse to accept that there are things that they don't know or may need to know. Also, participating in development programmes may be perceived as and linked to poor performance in the eyes of some educators. This is one main reason why the educators may not be motivated to participate in development programmes.

4. Time constraints.

This is a challenge faced by both the educator and the institution. The educators, especially in self-financed institutions are involved in multiple activities apart from the instructions that they don't have time to involve themselves in such programmes. They may look at it as an additional work load rather than a programme for their development.

Also, the same is true in the case of the management of the institution. The institution has to ensure that the educators are made available for the development programmes. This may be also mean that other activities that may suffer.

5. Financial constraints.

The institution needs to not just make efforts by devoting time for the development of its educators but also needs to make financial arrangements for the same. Designing and implementing any programme involves cost. This cost would be

dependent on the format of the programme, ie. If the educators are sent to other institutions for attending programmes or if an external resource person is invited to conduct the programme, direct cost would be involved. Other indirect cost that the institute bears is the opportunity cost by involving the educators in development programmes at the cost of some other activity that the educator could have been involved in.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

1. Need based FDP: It can be said that the developmental needs of educators at different level of experience and stage of career are different and hence need to be dealt with separately. While some faculty members need training on content and pedagogy, most would need training on inter personal or intra personal skills or life skills as such. Hence, the developmental programmes should be devised as per the training or developmental needs of different set of educator separately, instead of treating them all equally in the same class room situation. This would lead to more chaos than learning. 2. Time management: the development programmes must be planned and delivered at that time of the year when the faculty members are relatively available for a longer time and with least involvement in other activities so that they can focus on developmental activities rather than being preoccupied with other work. 3. Design and content to be very lucrative and attractive: a faculty development programme should be designed in a manner that it becomes very attractive to the participant so that he is motivated intrinsically. This can happen if the content addresses his training needs. 4. Flexible programmes: the online development programmes have been much appreciated as they provide flexibility. The educators have the flexibility of going through the content as and when they have time to focus on the same. Any programme which offers flexibility are much appreciated and should be encouraged.

6. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there is no doubt that the faculty development programmes are an important aspect which cannot be ignored by any technical institution. However, it is equally important to ensure that these programmes hold some value and utility and are not just programmes with fancy names. The programmes need to be effective in letter and spirit. Hence, we first need to understand the factors which impact these programmes and would also ensure the success or failure of such programmes. Any programme designed without the understanding of these factors would not bring about the desired change or effect in the educator's performance. Also, the challenges associated with organizing a development programme need to be addressed and programmes designed in a way that they are exciting and motivating enough for the educators to participate. Longer duration programmes may lead to boredom for the educators and shorter programmes may have too much packed in too little time. Hence, duration should be appropriate to the content of the programme. Any programme designed keeping in mind the factors that can impact the effectiveness of the programme and the challenges that can arise, will surely be a successful one.

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