

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF TEACHERS AND ACADEMIC STAFF COLLEGE-AN IMPACT STUDY

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The present study was conducted to see the impact of Academic Staff college programmes on professional growth of teachers. The sample comprised of 550 teachers (400 who attended the orientation programme and 150 who attended the refresher course). Being a qualitative data, only percentage (%) from the collected data, based on 3-point scale developed by the investigator herself, was calculated. The findings clearly indicated a high level of satisfaction towards the performance of Academic Staff College in imparting knowledge. There was a positive response by the teacher participants regarding “brushing up of their teaching skills” and “inclination towards learning”. Undoubtedly The programs was found to be helpful in promoting professional growth of teachers, yet some suggestions were made to make the courses more meaningful.

Today, in this new millennium, everyone is experiencing unprecedented changes in world economy due to new developments in science and technology, media revolution and internationalization. All these have revolutionized the education sector also. These rapid advances in technology brought about a knowledge explosion and knowledge revolution. In the present scenario, importance of the role of the teachers as catalyst agent has become more critical. In the context of rapid changes, it is imperative that teachers must update their knowledge and skills and be conversant with the latest developments in the field. It is mentioned in National Education Policy 1986 document that teachers have multiple roles to perform like teaching, research, development of learning and coordinated programmes for professional development of teachers. The Professional Development of Teachers implies his growth in knowledge of his subject, in pedagogy and training techniques, in his love for students and for his institution, in moral and ethical values and growth of his desire to give his best to the world of learning and society. No profession can grow unless its members are prepared to grow professionally and are prepared to undergo sacrifices. Accordingly, U.G.C. formulated the Academic Staff Orientation Scheme for inservice teachers and established initially 48 Academic Staff Colleges in various Universities in 1987 which have immensely helped in the professional growth of teachers all over the country. But how far these Academic Staff Colleges has been a great success? And how far the designed goals have been achieved? All such questions still need to answer. It was in this context “An impact study of the Academic Staff Colleges on Professional development of teachers” had been conducted so that deterrents in the developments of teachers could be weeded out and suggestions could be made to take remedial steps for desirable improvement in orientation and refresher programmes. Studies based on empirical work on Academic Staff Colleges are very less. Studies like Chalam (1991, 1994,1999,2003), Dutta (1993), Kapur (1993), Pal (1993), Passi and Pal (1994), Rao and Palsane (1994), Mavi (1995), Rai and Rai (1995), Gupta (1995), Yadav and Panda (1996), Sisodia (1997), Mohanty (1997), Verma (1998), Kundu (1999), Sail (1999), Dutta (2000), Joshi (2000), Dhawan (2000), Trivedi (2000), Das and Gogio (2001), Jyoti (2001), Kem and Mishra (2002). Jayanti(2006), Sharma and Jain (2006), Pawar and Mouli (2008), Ramalingam(2009), Behera (2009), Goswami (2010) having same relevance are available and found that orientation programs conducted by Academic Staff Colleges designed to improve the skills, the methods of teaching, broadening the attitude, personality and horizon of the young teachers are found to be useful. But, still there is an immediate need to study the impact of courses conducted by Academic Staff Colleges on the professional growth of teachers. The present venture is an attempt in this direction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study 400 teachers-male and female- who had attended the orientation course organized by UGC-Academic Staff College, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra were taken. Besides these, 150 teachers male and female were taken who have attended the refresher course in disciplines viz. English, Physical

Education, Education and Computer Science. In order to study the impact on professional growth of teachers, a three point scale (Not, to some extent, Yes) was drafted and standardized by the investigator herself based on course component of orientation programme and refresher programmes. The questionnaire was developed after carefully studying the existing model of refresher course also which is perhaps being followed uniformly throughout the country as per the guidelines of the UGC, New Delhi.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Being a qualitative data, only percentage (%) from the collected data based on 3-point scale was calculated. The findings and interpretation of the studies are as follows:

As per the duration of time, maximum participants (60%) objected to the present duration of 28 days of the course. As far as working hours was concerned 85.18% were in favor of contact hours 4-5 hours per day and number of technical sessions should be 3 to 4 per week according to 65% teachers and so far as duration of each session should be one and half an hour (45 minutes for lectures and 45 minutes for discussion) according to 70.73% teachers participants. In response to the items concerning with feelings about orientation programmes and refresher programmes, most of the participants (44.28%) felt enthusiastic to attend the orientation programme. Very few teachers (7.14%) indicated that they wanted to attend the course just for formality. The courses were taken seriously by 67.14% of teacher participants. Most of the teachers considered all the given objectives valid at certain level in their priorities. Though most of the candidates (70.15%) considered attaining knowledge as their prime objective but at the same time "attaining certificate" also was one of the main objectives for very few participants (8%). In response to the Awareness of linkages between the society and environment, the teacher participants agreed that orientation programmes helped in understanding linkages between education and socio cultural developments of India. In this regard 94.21% teacher participants showed that orientation programmes helped in understanding the significance of higher education in society and 80% agreed that these helped in understanding their roles and responsibilities as a teacher better. 62% teacher participants were of the view that these programmes helped in developing more secular feeling in them. Besides this 34.28% teacher participants accepted that programme helped them in learning new techniques for the development of values and enabled them to hold their students to appreciate those values related to democracy (64.25%). 75% teacher participants agreed that they became aware of environmental and women issues after attending the programme. In the response of the participants regarding philosophy of education, Indian education system and pedagogy (component-B), 62.45% teachers agreed that Academic Staff College helped in increasing their knowledge about innovative techniques like Brain Storming, Synectics, Bionics, Six Thinking Hats, Provocative Operation (PO), Panel discussion, buzz session Group Discussion etc. for developing creativity and these techniques also helped in developing independent and logical thinking. 51.42% teachers opined that orientation programmes helped in improving their basic skills for class-room teaching, in updating their knowledge of subject (37.14%). Moreover, their skills to use the reference material (42%) and use of library and documents service (40.18%) also improved a lot. Teachers (68.25%) were of view that they learnt the art of maintaining discipline in the class-room. Moreover 68% teachers opined that orientation programme enabled the teachers to make more use of teaching aids while teaching nearly 75% of the teacher participants found that Micro teaching sessions helped a lot in improving these teaching skills. There is great need to pay more attention in this regard. Orientation Programmes also helped in making student teacher relationship (50.42%) and in transmitting the knowledge of subjects to the students (58.50%) in a better way. Besides this, their ability to develop self-learning materials (52.65%) also increased to some extent. Majority of the participants also agreed that these courses are helpful in improving their communication skill (68.25%) and enabled them to provide variety of situations in the class-room (62.5%). They were of the view that the course helped them in preparation of research proposals (75%). Most of the participants reported that Academic Staff College helped them in developing the personality traits (55.71%) e.g. self confidence in public speaking (40.12%) in taking initiative (38.27%) and in getting ability to work in a team (61.42%). 40% of the participants wanted paper presentation and book review mandatory and 70% wanted panel discussion mandatory during the course. The teacher

participants were asked to indicate the activities organized during the course. These were : seminars, paper reading, open discussion, panel discussion, counseling session, brain storming session, micro teaching session, project work, presentation of book review, showing educational films, field visits, preparation of research proposals, tutorials, problem solving sessions, review session, case studies, writing of assignment by participants, recreational activities etc. When they were asked about the resource persons who came for delivering the lecture they told that most of the resource persons (65%) were according to their expectations and topics covered by them were relevant and able to provide further knowledge to the participants. Resource persons(80%) were able to communicate effectively and involved the participants during the lecture session and most of the resource persons were able to satisfy the queries raised by the participants. However, a vast majority of teacher participants (75%) opined that participants should be encouraged to ask more questions during the course. Regarding the evaluation system/grading system, the participating teachers were almost equally divided in their opinion. Most of the teachers (60%) favoured the evaluation system but others expressed their reservations against it.

CONCLUSION:

The findings clearly indicate a high level of satisfaction towards the over all performance of the Academic Staff Colleges in imparting knowledge through the orientation and refresher programmes. Undoubtedly the efforts made by the Academic Staff Colleges were highly appreciated and found to be inspiring, yet as mentioned by great scholars. “There is always a scope of improvement in better to be turned into the best”.

SUGGESTIONS FOR QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PROGRAMME

After a careful and scientific analysis of the data collected from the teacher participants and the conclusion drawn there from, further suggestions are presented for modifying the existing model of courses to make it participant-oriented and meaningful. The finding of the present research revealed that the modus operandi of the programmes was highly acknowledged and appreciated. However, the findings of the research suggested that there should be a need of more class-room activities as against the so called “Lectures.” It was seen that most of the participants developed more interest in panel discussion, group discussion and micro-teaching. Hence efforts should be made to develop more strategies for mental participation instead of physical participation only. During the course, enough scope should be provided for interactive sessions among the participants for exchanging their experiences on curriculum construction, teaching methodology, evaluation system etc. Secondly, for effective interaction, participants should stay together in reasonably good accommodation. UGC may provide sufficient funds for the purpose. The programmes should contain field trips and frequent visits to library and provision for INTERNET browsing to search the latest relevant literature so as to break monotony and leading towards creativity and maintain interest. Academic Staff College should orient teachers in the use of computers for preparing reading materials, creating and using database on reference material and lectures. Academic Staff College should orient teachers in using new information and communication technology like INTERNET AND INTERNET networking for information retrieval not only for research but also for class-room teaching. Organization of seminars on Educational Technology, Communication Technology, Innovate Techniques and Methods of organization of courses should form an integral component of the academic programmes of Academic Staff Colleges. The findings also revealed that the newly appointed lectures should be required to undergo Induction Training Programme before joining their teaching profession as per other professions. This will enable them to learn some fundamental skills and dispositions for becoming effective teachers. Assessment of the performance of teacher participants should be seriously considered by the Academic Staff Colleges taking into account their performance in seminars, discussions the assignments and project work. If the same teachers fail to display good performance, they should not be awarded certificates. The role of the resource persons should be such that apart from information which would be disseminated to the participants he/she should be able to refresh their knowledge based on changing technologies (collecting, formatting, browsing the information and made presentation via new technologies), diagnose participant’s need and prescribing individual course of

study .This will help them to learn in a more individualized way. He must play the role of manager of a small education system, using hardware and course wares (Audio cassettes, pen drives, C.D., slides etc.) to meet the changing academic goals. Regarding the seminar room it is suggested to install air conditioners in the hall to take place of noisy air coolers. This would result in a comfortable stay in the hall and a better learning. Secondly, the seminar room should be equipped with the latest electrical and educational electronics gadgets like sound system overhead projector, slide projector, T.V., VCR, multimedia projector like LCD, computer, and magnetic board. In addition to the academicians, people may be called from diversified streams and professions, probably, from various NGO's and people with vast administrative experience.

As far as the refresher courses are concerned, besides above suggestions, many participants have expressed their views which are as follows: Movies on literacy works and linguistic skills should be shown during the course. More project work should be undertaken by the participants. Focus should be on development of communication skills. More focus should be on arranging workshops, group discussion, research work and book review. Thrust areas should be announced well in advance and efforts should be made to focus on the thrust area only. Some source material or reference material related to the thrust area should be provided to the participants beforehand. During the refresher course, enough scope should be provided for interactive sessions among the participants for exchanging their experiences on teaching methodology, drafting of syllabi, evaluation etc. The follow up activity of the courses from time to time is one of the suggestions of teacher participants. For this very purpose, strengthen the Academic Staff College with adequate staff and resources for effective follow up is very necessary. Well equipped research cell should be established so that impact of innovative techniques for development of creativity and values can be seen during the course. In short, as far as impact of Academic Staff Colleges is concerned, certainly there is a positive response by the teacher participants regarding "Brushing up of their teaching skills" and "Inclination towards learning". These courses enhance their personality. They also become an integral part of their memory. It goes without saying that the participants enter the college with reluctance but leave the college with the hope to come back soon to relive their thrilling experiences.

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