

Editorial

Staff Development

In my recent visit to U. K. I thought I should find out how staff development of the higher education is taken care of, I visited a few universities and I was told to visit their staff development units. On visiting these and as a result of discussion with the Professors in charge of these, I noted the following:

Based on the recommendations of Green Paper No. 8, issued by the University Staff Development Unit – USDU – which was published in 1993, these Staff Development Units were created in almost every University. There are now more than 200 universities in U. K. In U.K. they consider that the staff development is the responsibility of the individual staff member, of the Department / the School and of the University. This staff development is in the context of “Teaching” which is one of the three main functions of a university / or that of any Educational Institute, the other two being “Research and Extension”. “Teaching” here encompasses “teaching methods, other learning opportunities, student learning assessment and feedback of student, course design, course management, course reviews and the evaluation of teaching”. The staff development units have a facilitating function within the university. The process of staff development are the responsibilities of the individual, the department and the university. The main task/function of a staff development unit is the formulation of training schemes concerned with all staff involved in teaching; here all staff include full and part time teachers, supporting staff, the technicians, the administrators involved in delivery of teaching.

The staff development unit is in charge of a what may be called an educational / academic developer supported by a small office staff. It is a sort of a training center, provided with adequate physical infrastructure within the University campus itself. The training needs of all the staff are ascertained, a list of these training programs is prepared, the duration of each is worked out in consultation with the HODs, and experts and the programs are conducted enlisting the services of the concerned experts which may be drawn from the university and even outside. About 150 + such programs are run in each semester in each University. This is being done for the last decade or more and every university has now an adequately trained staff. And, consequently, in U.K. there is no complaint of low standards of Higher Education. It is, in short, like an in-house training center, on the same lines as that of an industrial house. (In U.K. Engineering Education is considered as a part of Higher Education & is not treated separately as in India).

What is the scenario in our country? We have the AICTE which has allotted this task to ISTE which runs programs for the entire country with a population of 100 crores with 1200 + engineering colleges and 3000 + polytechnics. Besides, we have the four TTIs now called the NITTTR's. What has been the impact of these training programs? What penetration has

taken place? We have no authentic data. However, one can safely infer that there has been no appreciable impact on the system on account of the training programs being conducted either by the ISTE or the NITTTR's.

The main reason could be that there is no arrangement within the Institution to ascertain the training needs and that the training is available at a place far away from the institution and also there is no urge either in the teachers or the Institutions to get their staff trained as they can get on, even without it. The complaint of untrained staff and consequent low standard of the system as a whole, is the result. How can we rectify the situation?

Why not integrate the Staff Development Units – as being practiced in U.K. – in our system? Let the training schemes of the ISTE and the NITTTR's continue, as they are, and to supplement these efforts, let us have, in addition, the staff development unit in each Engineering College and in each Polytechnic. We can work out a coordinating mechanism for all the programs in the country. With these changes, we can be sure, nay certain that the scenario of staff development will change and make way for better system with a higher degree of quality, in not a distant a future. After all we have to work for our dream of a “Developed India by 2020”.

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Editor
