

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO FACULTY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT - A CASE STUDY

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Synopsis

Shortage of good faculty in most of the technical institutions has become a major factor affecting the quality of education and training offered by these institutions. Efforts are being made by AICTE to create training facilities for the teachers at different locations. However, there has been low internal motivation in the management of most of the institutions towards faculty training. The training programmes conducted by various training institutions have also their limitations in respect of their duration, lack of follow up of training at institution level, no objective evaluation of outcome of training, etc.

This paper highlights the initiatives taken by the Management of a Progressive Technical and other Professional Education group towards Faculty Training and Development by allocating a certain percentage of their revenue, with a view to provide quality assurance to the stake holders as also create examples for others to follow.

1. Introduction

For qualitative improvement of the technical education system the focus has now to change from infrastructure development to training of teachers. It is now being realized by the promoters of technical education that unless they improve the quality they will not be able to attract students and many of their seats will remain unutilized. In addition only the quality institutions will be able to attract good students. There are various approaches to training of faculty. The effectiveness of a particular model would depend upon a number of factors. Progressive institutions, particularly the management of some

progressive group of institutions are taking initiatives in faculty training to the extent that they are spending money on faculty training fully realizing that the return in training cannot be seen immediately. A long term view has to be taken on such training and developmental programmes. However, Benefit-cost analysis can be undertaken to establish that the investment on faculty is more than rewarding on a long term perspective.

2. Earlier Initiatives

In early sixties where there were sudden expansion in technical education facilities in the country. A

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similar situation of shortage of faculty, as of now, were felt at that point of time. A well thought out Technical Teacher Training Programme was introduced by the Ministry of Education (now MHRD) in IITs and other renowned institutions. In this scheme a first class B.Tech candidate, through a selection process, could become a Senior Fellow of Govt. of India and acquire an M.Tech degree and also acquire teaching experience under the guidance of a very senior professor as an Apprentice Teacher for a period of three years. Persons with M.Tech degree could also enter the scheme as a Teacher Trainee for one year. This was indeed a good scheme and many of the outcomes of this scheme, later, became renowned professors in prestigious institutions because of the guidance and inspiration they received from their teachers in the early stage of their teaching profession. The Teacher Trainees used to receive a fellowship equal to the basic pay of a lecturer. The scheme was well appreciated by all and served the purpose i.e. supply of quality teachers to the technical education system at that time. The scheme was discontinued by Govt. of India after continuing for 10 years or so.

3. Expansion of Technical Education Facilities During the Past Decade and Implications

During the later half of nineties a massive expansion of Technical Education facilities has occurred due to private initiatives. This rate of growth trend, however, is showing a tendency towards saturation. Quantitatively, during the last decade, there has been five fold increase in the number of technical institutions at degree level.

Along with the increase of technical education facilities, the job market has also become attractive because of boom in the IT market, as also due to liberalization of Indian economy. Good pass outs of professional institutions are, therefore, not attracted towards teaching profession. The institutions are running their programmes mostly with junior and untrained faculty, thus adversely effecting the quality.

4. Faculty Training Needs to be a Priority

Faculty is the backbone of any institution. The quality of a programme is directly related to the quality of faculty offering the programme and their level of motivation. Most often it is observed that the system is suffering from both the above two aspects i.e. the competency and motivation of faculty. Further, the newly recruited teachers are expected to start teaching from the very first day of their joining. Training programmes in the name of Induction Training are being organized in certain locations from time to time. These are mainly funded by AICTE. Teachers having teaching experience ranging from 1 to 5 years attend such programmes. The input is mostly pedagogical and these programmes have their own merits and limitations. The follow up of these programmes are not done by the training institutions and are left to the individual institutions where from the teachers come. Further, internal motivation for sponsoring the teachers for training is low. It is the external pressure from AICTE and others that teachers are sent for off- the- job training.

Induction training of faculty and their follow up is essential with a view to orient the teachers to the teaching

profession, provide on the job guidance, carry out formative evaluation for continuous improvement for the initial period of their teaching engagement.

5. Need for an Integrated Approach

A fresh graduate or a post graduate entering a teaching profession should be provided training in teaching methods considering the Principles of Learning and Motivation; in industry to see for himself the relevance of teaching the subject; and in preparing all the required teaching and learning material. Such an integrated approach will call for initial pre-placement training followed by On-the-job guidance, monitoring, and evaluation for a period of two to three years. During this period the teachers should be exposed to relevant industry for short duration of time.

6. A Welcome Initiative

The author is aware of one of the welcome initiatives taken by a progressive group of institutions of North India by setting up a Faculty Training Institute (FTI) in one of their Campuses. The group, at present, has more than half a dozen institutions and recruits around 60 teachers every year (due to increase in seats, starting of new branches, starting of new institutions, vacancy created due to some of the faculty leaving their institutions, etc.)

As an experiment the group selected prospective faculty in batches of 30 to 40 through open advertisement and interview in two categories i.e. some with stipend during an initial eight weeks training programme and some without stipend. This was decided on

the basis of their initial preparation as evidenced during the screening phase. This was followed by a comprehensive training programme where an input-process-output-feedback model was used in developing the total teaching plan and teaching-learning material for two subjects that they would be required to teach during the coming semester. (The training started two months in advance of their final placement in the respective colleges). Final selection of these teacher trainees as regular teachers was done alongwith others who came for walk-in type of interview. About eighty percent of the trained teachers got selected as regular teachers in different institutions of the group. The group engaged a few experienced subject teachers to follow up the quality of work of these newly recruited teachers during a semester and to provide guidance during the course of their teaching.

During the summer break, similar training for developing teaching-learning material for another two subjects were done and follow up activities were carried out for the next semester. In between, opportunities were created for the teachers to visit industry for short exposure (sometime along with the students and on some occasions separately in small groups). During the third semester, it is envisaged that the guidance control and monitoring will be reduced. However, the evaluation of teaching effectiveness will be carried out and feedback provided. Two years of intense involvement of mentors in off-the job and on-the job training will, hopefully, produce Personalities reflecting the total personalities of the well experienced teacher trainers. The experiment is in progress and the total outcome will be documented through continuous evaluation and appraisal. A

reward system for good performers has also been inbuilt into the scheme.

7. The Future Plan of FTI

(i) *Extending the faculty training facilities to other institutions:*

Small institutions may not be able to set up FTI themselves. The FTI set up by this large group will work as feeder institute to the small groups through mutual understanding. After providing an initial input of training and development a follow up schedule will be prepared jointly by the FTI and the individual institutions. These teachers will be allowed to enroll themselves for M.Tech programme on part-time or Modular basis in the institutions arranged by the FTI.

(ii) *Recruiting Faculty Associates and developing them as Full Fledged Faculty with higher qualification and Teacher-Training Diploma.*

Fresh graduates will be taken as Faculty Associates through open interview with employment guarantee on satisfactory completion of the requirements of acquiring an M.Tech degree to be pursued on a part-time mode and acquiring a Post graduate diploma in Technical Teaching all in a period of 2 to 3 years. During the training period a consolidated fellowship of the range of basic pay of a teacher will be paid to the teacher trainee. The trained teachers will find employment in the own group of institutions or they may be placed elsewhere for which a part of the training

cost has to be paid to FTI either by the teacher trainee or by the hiring institutions. However, if the trainee serves the institution of FTI for three years, no such financial restrictions will be there.

(iii) *Continuous Updating of Knowledge and Skill of existing faculty of the group of institutions.*

Preparing a profile of all categories of instructional staff, identifying the areas in which training is required, identifying training opportunities (in-house, in industry, in institutions of higher learning) and preparing an year-wise operational plan, implementing the plan and evaluating the short-term and long-term outcome are the activities envisaged for continuous updating of faculty.

(iv) *Developing Specialists within the organization (group of institutions) in related areas.*

FTI, to sustain its activities from internal resources, plan to develop specialists through intense training and involvement in developmental projects like Curriculum Design and Development, Educational Technology, Multimedia Courseware Development, Use of ICT in Education, etc. The group will sponsor projects and implement them with the help of this core team. They will also be exposed to outside organizations and industry for carrying out their projects.

8. Conclusion

It is encouraging to note that the leadership of a group of institutions is committed to offer quality education to its students through intense faculty training and development activities. The long-term impact of this initiative will lead to creating a name, attract good students, provide students with satisfaction in their learning, encourage innovations, research and development,

and retain faculty for a longer duration. This will also help the group in attaining a University status as also utilize that opportunity of truly becoming academically autonomous. In due course of time, the Faculty Training Institute of this group will extend its assistance and share the expertise developed to other institutions who are willing to spend some percentage of their student fees towards faculty training and development.

