

Strategic Planning for Institutional Excellence-
An approach for Faculty Development in Higher Education:

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Abstract

The changing environmental context demands more enrichment and support to the education system. The education system has lost its vision and thus is in trouble. It has become critically important to develop faculty members, institutional leaders, and higher education members itself. In order to modify educational environment and to introduce new curriculum approaches it is essential to design faculty development programs. This paper will address faculty development for purposes of enhancing teaching effectiveness and preparing instructors for potential new roles associated with curriculum changes. Its overall purpose is to provide information and insights about faculty development that may be useful to higher education in designing professional growth opportunities for their faculty. The program's primary objectives are to: provide opportunities for continuing faculty and academic staff to renew their intellectual vitality and further their professional growth, improve the quality, diversity and accessibility of the University's academic programs, improve decision-making and organizational functioning within the University community, and better utilize the institution's internal resources to improve instruction and assist faculty and academic staff in their professional development. With the growing education environment, there is a continuous need for development of faculty as the dynamic world demands innovation and better practices for developing the educational environment. Keeping the changing academics scenario into consideration the paper attempts to identify that the faculty development programs positively correlate with the institutional excellence. Thus the paper focuses on designing the strategic approach that help to develop and enrich faculty in order to enhance the institutional excellence.

Keywords: Teaching effectiveness, continuing education, faculty development, technology based learning, institutional excellence.

INTRODUCTION

A true educational institution shall strive towards promoting values and nurturing culture that facilitates academic atmosphere and competency development among all the participants in the learning process. These participants include faculty as well as students. A Faculty Development Programme (FDP) is designed to train and develop professionals in Personal development and entrepreneurship development so that they can act as resource persons in guiding and motivating young persons. The FDPs provide inputs on process and practice of Personal development and entrepreneurship development, communication and inter-personal skills, creativity, problem solving, achievement motivation training, inputs on resource and knowledge industries. The training methodology includes case studies, group discussion, games and simulation exercise, field visits and classroom lectures. Faculty Development Programme (FDP) aims at inculcating skills and knowledge among faculty so that they can guide and monitor students towards progress in a much better way.

Faculty members in higher education are not hired because they are just excellent but because of their subject-area knowledge. Most faculties have never been formally taught how to teach and how people learn. As a result, faculty-development programs have been instituted in academia to help faculty learn new and better ways of teaching as well as to increase organizational effectiveness in higher education (Graf et al. 1992; Gullatt and Weaver 1997; Knight 1997; Millis 1994; Oromaner 1998). At most universities, faculty-development activities are designed as per the new faculty, new programs and departments, and as the needs of the institution changed. As a result, faculty-development activities became an ad hoc process in many institutions. In the early stages, faculty development is often a component of the human resources department, or is provided by individual departments, faculties, or programs; later, it often becomes a component of an institution-wide teaching and learning centre or faculty-resource centre. (Cravener 1998; Kress and Hafner 1996; McHargue 1996; McMahon 1998).

Organisations cannot manage continuing professional development effectively as per research (Jones and Robinson 1997). Most institutions lack a formal faculty-development plan, in the classic strategic planning. There is an incremental change in the faculty development planning. An online search in March 2001 revealed a number of documents related to faculty-development planning, although most of which were not comprehensive, and many were either undated or out of date. Generally, the result of the recent research showed that, limited comprehensive faculty development planning is being done in relation to the dynamic technology rich environment.

NEED FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

University faculty members are with high levels of professional and content expertise, but still have varying levels of teaching and educational technology exposure (Cheung 1999). Initial needs are to ensure that faculty (1) are comfortable with educational technology use, (2) have solid understanding of the instructional design and development process, and (3) have basic understanding of how learning theory can be applied to enhance teaching and learning in their own classes. But there is a need for continuing performance. Therefore new faculty members must be trained appropriately in their areas so that they are updated on theory, technologies, and applications so that they do not assume that, after the training, they can revert to their previous teaching habits (Drummond 1998; Murphy and Terry 1998; Schauer et al. 1998; Tomazos 1997). The changing role of faculty in today's information age is one additional need which must be addressed. Technology has made information available to anyone with access to a computer and modem. Students come from heterogeneous backgrounds; their needs cannot

be met with the traditional methods of content providing. Faculty must learn to cope with student diversity by choosing the teaching approach that best fits the content to be taught (Gandolfo 1998; Matthew, Parker, and Wilkinson 1998; Pincas 1998; Wright 1999).

DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR FACULTY

Development plan for faculty must be prepared according to the academic mission of the institution. Basic components include a mission and a vision statement for teaching and learning at the institution, a set of goals and objectives, and a series of strategies for reaching those goals and objectives. Strategic planning for teaching and learning is important. It is separate and distinct, but developed from, the overall strategic intent of the institution. This strategic planning focus on certain aspects that include the overall vision and mission of the institute, desired outcomes as set by the institute and the values hold by the institute with regard to the teaching practices.

The development plan should ensure the clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of teaching and learning by everyone involved with the institution. The plan should set the goals for teaching and learning and also describe strategies for meeting those goals in such a way that guide future developmental activities of the faculty for the institutional excellence. In order to check the effectiveness and appropriability of the strategies, actions of other institutions must be reviewed and compared.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EXISTING AND NEW FACULTY.

Development activities designed for faculty are divided into two main sections: New faculty development, and continuous faculty development activities. In order to train faculty, it is important to focus on the pedagogy. Faculty members must be motivated to participate in faculty development programs even if it is beyond their requirement. These programs are taken as a source of knowledge and increased sense of competency by some of the faculty members but for many others, faculty-development activities may seem just one more burden in a crowded schedule of other activities. Faculty development must become part of the organizational culture and norms. Institutions should set rewards and incentives for the participation in such programs. Various activities for existing and new faculty are as:

New-Faculty-Development Activities

These activities are provided to any faculty person who is new to the institution, whether or not he/she is new to teaching.

University Orientation Activities. The most common faculty-development activities are new-faculty-orientation programs. These normally are held just prior to the beginning of the fall term and can take place over three to five days. While intended to introduce new faculty to the processes and administrative staff of the university, they generally also include continuing faculty in at least part of the proceedings, so that new and continuing faculty can meet.

Mentoring Projects. They are relatively recent innovation on university campuses and are becoming more popular because they are effective (Luna and Cullen 1995; Kerka 1998). A mentoring project assigns a more-experienced faculty member to assist and guide a newer member in professional

development, navigating the institutional systems, making useful personal and professional connections, setting up a research program, and providing support in adjusting to the new professional home.

Improving Teaching. New faculty members have a limited background in teaching, learning theory, or the appropriate use of technology, their mental model of university teaching may be based on the styles of the teachers they have known. Because there has been extensive theoretical development and research in areas of teaching and learning, and new models for teaching and learning have developed over the past several decades, it is important that new faculty be exposed to multiple ways to teach, and to how people actually learn. Some ways that institutions have developed to provide new faculty with this information include:

- Workshops on various aspects of pedagogy and learning theory, provided by "master teachers," educational psychologists, and teaching-support staff.
- Workshops on course design and development methodologies, provided by teaching-support staff and professional instructional designers.
- Workshops on using technology in teaching and learning, provided by teaching-support staff and educational technology specialists.

Using Technology. The use of technology in teaching and learning ranges from showing videotapes during a class session to holding class on the World Wide Web or through interactive/desktop video. Many technology-poor academic environment still exists. Faculty members moving from these environments to richer environments may not have been fully exposed to technology and, to avoid embarrassment, may not seek assistance. There is a need to provide new faculty with a basic level of comfort and familiarity with technology. At many institutions, this either is done at orientation through workshops, or is provided by a teaching-and-learning support centre. The faculty should be formally introduced to:

- The standard suite of office productivity tools used by the department or university (i.e., word processing, spreadsheet, presentations, e-mail, course management, and Web browser software and environments).
- Accessing and using basic educational technology, including computer labs, media centres, library technology, audio-visual equipment, copy-centre equipment, and testing support.

Continuing Faculty Development Activities

There is a need for continuing faculty development that help the members of an institute to be updated with the latest technology and innovation in the environment. Some of the activities designed for continuous development are as:

Peer-Mentoring Activities. New faculty members are trained and motivated to work by some old and experienced members of the institute. Experienced faculty formally or informally mentor each other by sharing hints and tips, resources and contacts, and their experiences. However, certain experienced faculty members are reluctant to participate in formal peer-mentoring programs. The reluctance of continuing faculty however can be resolved by making peer-to-peer mentoring mandatory, in the institution.

Semester-Start Development Programs. Similar to the initial orientation programs of the faculty, development programs must be adopted at the start of the semester. Such programs are tailored to the needs of more-experienced faculty. These programs include presentations about new resources and support programs at the institution, formation of cross department groups that help to address current issues of interest, announcing upcoming opportunities for faculty that include grants, awards etc.

Updated Technology Use. A major issue in today's technology rich learning environment is keeping faculty updated in current areas of technology. Such a program focus on providing certificate programs to the faculty with latest knowledge and innovation in the field of technology and also by the help of workshops on beginning topics and advanced training in particular educational technologies/hardware/software (e.g., HTML/Web page design, video production, advanced use of presentation software, desktop publishing approaches, using asynchronous communications effectively).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Needless to further elaborate the importance and need of faculty development. FDPs help to develop and train faculty and professionals personally so that they can act as resource persons in guiding and motivating young/professional persons to excel in teaching with much better tools and techniques. The environment is dynamic. Thus the old techniques need to be replaced with innovation and continuous updating so as to be in the competition and to excel in dynamic world. The faculty-development program should ensure that the members of an institution clearly understand the role of teaching and learning at that institution. It should also set goals for teaching and learning and describe strategies for meeting those goals. The strategies are specific, clearly defined approaches that help to meet the goals of said institution in such a ways that guide future professional development activities for faculty and other teaching assistants. Institutional excellence depends largely on the faculty efficiency and their role effectiveness. Thus following recommendations are made to improve the quality of work atmosphere and institutional excellence at large:

Planning for Faculty Development: Develop a clear strategic intent for teaching and learning. Tie future faculty development activities to the plan and then periodically review and update the plan.

Organizing Faculty-Development Activities: Provide a centralised focus for faculty development and teaching excellence as an organisational value

Activities for New Faculty Members: Develop and implement a comprehensive new faculty-orientation program, mentoring program, workshops and training on pedagogy/teaching and learning, including learning theory and approaches and techniques for teaching.

Activities for Continuing Faculty Members: Encourage continuing faculty development through incentives and rewards, Provide a targeted semester-start faculty-development program each term, Develop and implement a peer-mentoring program, Provide ongoing workshops, speakers, and training on topics of professional interest, and to encourage research and innovation in teaching through incentives and funding opportunities.

Technology in Faculty Development: Use of technology is essential for faculty development as it helps to make clear understanding of the latest tools and techniques that makes learning interesting. Use of

technology tools like computers, visual aids and disseminate information about teaching, learning, and educational technology throughout the institution via e-mail, a Web site, and electronic or print newsletters.

Building Bridges: Faculty members must be encouraged to participate in off-campus activities. They must also be encouraged to publish their research in teaching and to publicize their activities in order to attain teaching and learning excellence.

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(Primary Data collected by)

Interviews with students,

Interviews with faculty members of different colleges,

Information based on surveys in different areas.

Interviews with institutions involved in providing faculty development programs.