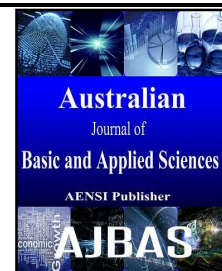




ISSN:1991-8178

Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences

Journal home page: www.ajbasweb.com



Comprehensive Faculty Development And The Need For Innovations

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 October 2015

Accepted 30 November 2015

Available online 24 December 2015

Keywords:

ABSTRACT

Education institutions are expected to be essentially learning organizations though they are meant primarily to be teaching organizations. This Research Paper stresses on the need for continuing training for faculty members of higher education institutes. It presents the recent innovations in training practices of the major academic institutions in India. It deals with the current challenges faced by the faculty members in dealing with the millennial generation. Some of the key areas of focus include: the need for training in technical tools for teachers and the Alternative teaching methods. Other focus areas include developing teachers in the areas of Educational Psychology and popular educational theories. This paper helps Faculty members and education institutes benchmark their quality standards of teaching with the best in the world. The paper recommends some practices that are necessary for ensuring that the faculty members are updated and are abreast with the current market trends and globally popular and successful academic practices.

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To Cite This Article: Jayaprakash Jala, Edison Gundabattini, Varun Kumar M., Comprehensive Faculty Development And The Need For Innovations. *Aust. J. Basic & Appl. Sci.*, 9(35): 182-186, 2015

INTRODUCTION

India has a vital role to play in the area of knowledge development being one of the fastest growing economies in the world. India is looking towards smart cities, aiming at high energy efficiency and doubling the use of renewable energy. India is the rising star in the world economy. India is aiming at achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth while heading towards becoming a global manufacturing hub. All these goals are not possible without modernizing India's education system. Our young ones graduating without sound technical knowledge will lead to increased unemployment and under employment. Building human capabilities and skill levels after sufficiently studying local market conditions and then producing research driven solutions is the need of the hour. Our focus should be turned towards combating the climate change and successfully facing the challenges related to environmental protection and sustainability. Especially we need to modernize the technical education as it is the key to development in the current economic scenario. This is time for innovation in teaching learning process. It is a time for students turning into knowledge creators and product developers. Hence Faculty development is the key to the expected developments to take place.

VIT University is a renowned university for engineering education in India, consistently ranked among the top 10 institutions in various ranking surveys. Academic Staff College is a 12 year old growing international centre for faculty development. The training practices mentioned in this paper can be a lead to many other colleges in developing their faculty members.

Need for Innovation:

India is innovating and contributing to many sectors and areas of the world business. Several major manufacturing brands in the world today are establishing their research and development centers in India. According to the management Guru Mr. Nirmalya Kumar of London Business school "India is the current developing centre for process innovations, product innovations and management innovations, and India has 400,000 Indian employees in the 750 multi-national Research and Development Centers established in India in the recent years." Academic Staff College of VIT University has been innovating in the field of faculty training for years. It is difficult to convince engineering faculty to attend training programmes, learn and change some of the practices. It is quoted in various research papers that faculty members think that training is a waste of their professional

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time“T.R. Guskey observed that most professional development programs in education have had little effect on changing faculty teaching practices, with faculty members typically regarding them as a waste of their professional time, but some programs have been extremely successful” (Brent Rebecca, Felder Richard 2003).

Advent of technology:

Use of technology in the teaching learning process is inevitable and educationists need to work towards this worthy goal. We need to use modern technological applications for demonstrating the concepts being taught in the classrooms. Use of softwares and technical devices is a part of the modern learning process as technically improved learning Management systems, online examination systems, Quizzes, internal tests through internet enabled services is a part of this modernization.

IV. Becoming a global professor:

It is important that the faculty members use international platforms both for cross cultural interactions and for global academic exposure equally to students and faculty members. It is absolutely important to make use of the platforms like LinkedIn and twitter to communicate with the counterparts on the other side of the world. Internet websites like HETL (Higher Education Teaching and Learning) have been of great value and use to many faculty members. Social networking, e-books, advanced mobile phones and hand-held computer devices for conducting surveys and continuing learning are unavoidable. Faculty members need to become tech-savvy and should encourage the use of podcasts video lectures as viable time-saving options for effective learning. May we go forward with a sense of urgency in digitalizing classrooms while encouraging ethical practices and upholding good moral values. It is important that the faculty members are attracted towards attending training programmes. In a university where there are 1200 faculty members, we needed to organize training programmes at a rate which each faculty member gets to attend a 3 to 4 days of training in a academic year. Looking into the previous years the number of training programmes conducted were not sufficiently catering to the number required. Even when training programmes were conducted, it was difficult to attract the faculty members to attend the sessions due to various reasons.

V. Innovative efforts of ASC:

Primary innovation at the academic staff college started with the thought of dividing the training

programmes into various series. Each series provides expertise in a particular domain related to teaching skills. The very division and creating clusters of training programmes take a lot of efforts as it takes a careful study of the objectives of each session to be able to categorize and create these clusters.

VI. Popularizing Training:

After dividing the clusters the immediate challenge is to attract people towards these modules of training. The number of training programmes certainly increased with the new training plan. The training programmes were previously floated or announced to the faculty community through e-mails. As a measure to attract the attention of the faculty members, the mails are filled with colorful brochures that attract attention with meaningful images to catch their eyes and make them read the mail.

VII. Explaining Objectives:

Initially we added a small video of 30 seconds in the brochure, linked along with the email to explain why this FDP/training is important and invited faculty members to become a part of that particular training. The response was good and we understood that people would like to have a clear understanding of the objectives to be able to make a decision of investing their time and efforts into learning and participating in the training programmes of this sort. Currently the practice is that we explain objectives in a 4-5 bullet points on the brochure as the number of training programmes increased.

VIII. Ease in the process:

The registration process previously was done through a return request mail with details like name, designation, schools...etc. but the new process made it easier through an online registration where the click here option on the brochure will lead to a link where few details can be filled for online registration. The inline registration process in the place of a mail made the process simpler and easier. Dividing training programmes into various areas of training We have divided faculty development training programmes into various series. We have propagated the need for development of faculty members in various areas of academics. We have primarily attracted interested faculty members towards each of these areas. The division of these areas basically explain the individuals of the areas that a faculty members needs to develop himself/herself in and how attending a training programme would develop them.

1.	Alternative Teaching Methods -ATM
2.	Communication Skills for Teachers-CST
3.	Educational Theories-ET
4.	Managerial Skills for teachers MST
5.	Psychology for teachers PFT

6.	Quality assessment in instruction –QAI
7.	Resourceful instruction of engineering-RIE
8.	Research and content writing-RCW
9.	Technical tools for teachers-TTF
10.	Technology for teachers -TFT
11.	Multi Disciplinary Research

The division of training into various areas has given rise to new training programmes and new areas have resulted in. Faculty members started advising and proposing new areas of training. Giving such clarity on the areas of training resulted in faculty members understanding some of the areas where-in they would like further development and progress for their own career growth.

IX. Training Capsules:

Shortening training programmes into capsules and delivering the same content of an FDP in two parts is another innovation. This adjustment is made to ensure faculty members manage their schedule with classes and training during the working days. Faculty members have observed a massive growth in the number of training programmes, which have impressed on their minds that there is a massive amount of effort on the University's side towards faculty development. The shortening the programmes with an increase in the number of programmes led to organizing programmes in a schedule that matches with the availability of the faculty members. Some programmes under the same category are conducted during the first half of the day while the same programme next time is scheduled during the post lunch hours. This kind of flexibility made it possible for more number of faculty members to take part in training programmes.

X. Internal Resources:

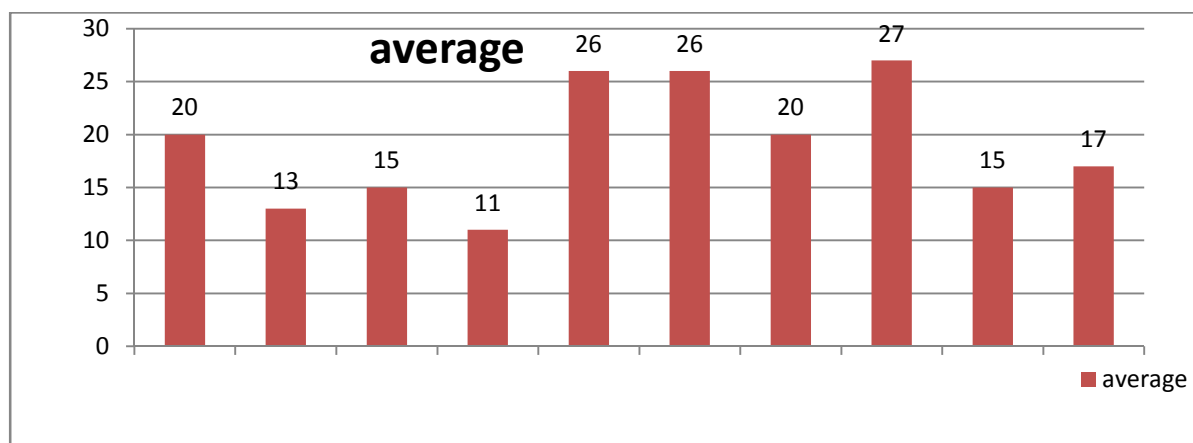
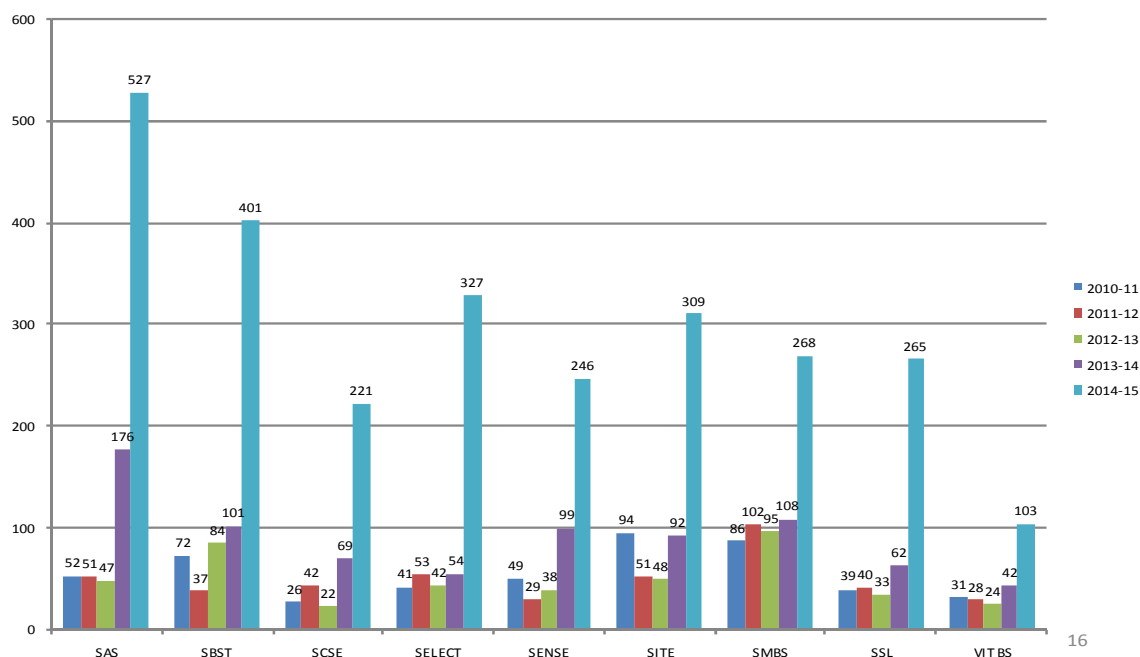
Using internal resources for training is another innovation. Previously we had a team of 6 trainers to train faculty members. The other training expertise is always borrowed from outside sources. Various training companies and prominent institutions provided trainers for various other technical areas. We have started using the expertise of some faculty members to train the remaining faculty members. This has helped in strengthening the training team. We have a large team of internal resources within the university. This has boosted the confidence of several young faculty members. It has given opportunity to the teachers to turn into trainers. There

is additional skill development that is taking place. There is an increase in the learning curve along with the other skills like public speaking and convincing skills and leadership.

XI. Follow-up programmes:

Faculty members are capable of certain amount of self learning. Realizing this ASC has created follow-up exercises, which need to be completed by the faculty member within a week to get the certification for that particular training programme. Practicing the concepts or implementing the learnings of a faculty development programme is becoming an important part of the teaching learning process at VIT University. ASC asked for a brief evidence of learning within a fortnight to know whether a particular FDP yielded any results. The attendance at various training programmes demonstrate the interest and the choices of the faculty members in various training areas. The very number could be a lesson at various institutions. Faculty members would want to more training programmes related to resourceful instruction of engineering. The other major area where the training programmes are surprisingly those related to the series psychology for teachers. Programmes related to Stress management and understanding classroom emoticons are the second most preferred areas of training that engineering teachers voluntarily chose to be a part of. There is a lack of incentive or reward towards the pedagogical changes faculty members make with a lot effort. The faculty members make less effort due to the non-rewarding nature of this area. So it is not much of a surprise that there is less attendance in the training programmes on pedagogical changes when compared to other training programmes. One reason that more faculty members do not bother to learn alternative teaching methods is that they have few incentives to do so. Quite the contrary For the last 50 years or so, the reward system at most universities has tilted overwhelmingly toward research. (Richard M. Felder 2003)

Participation of faculty members from different schools in training (last 5 years)



The average attendance per training programme was 17.02 during the last academic year (2013-14). While in the current academic year (2014-15), has show the average attendance per FDP has raised to 19. The feedback on the training programmes has been highly satisfactory due to the following reasons:

- Training programmes have been designed to meet the requirements of the faculty from various schools

- The participation in the training programmes have been based on voluntary self nomination/registration

XII. Recommendations:

1) There is a need for more training programmes in the area of research and content writing. Faculty members want to publish more and learn skills related to quality writing.

2) An important observation made is that there is no incentive or reward towards the pedagogical changes faculty members make with a lot effort and

faculty members make less efforts due to the non-rewarding nature of this area

3) It is identified that the faculty members are not very happy with the e-certifications and it is found that it is a common tendency that people expect tangible outcomes at the end of the day and faculty members would be happier to receive hard copies of certificates.

4) Faculty members have time crunch. So they have a hard time keeping track of deadlines related to training as they already have so many deadlines to deal with. ASC identified that reminders and follow-up to complete follow-up assignments is essential

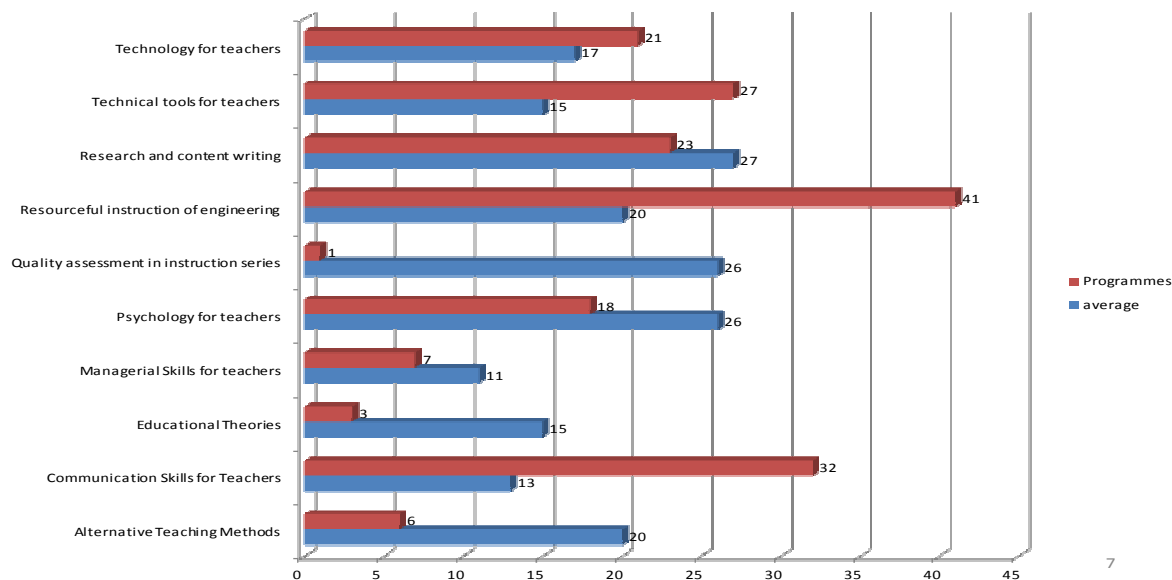
5) Academic institutions need not always borrow external expertise for training. Within your institution there is knowledge and expertise that can be passed on and circulated to develop the skills of your faculty members.

There is need for continuous improvement in the area of faculty development in the Engineering and

Management colleges. It is important for colleges and universities to research on the training needs of

their own staff. Each institution needs to conduct training programmes

Number of programs conducted and the average attendance in each area



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