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Academic Staff Development in Third World Countries: Emerging Quality Issues

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The Background:

Staff development, particularly the Academic Staff Development of the University system is now at the cross roads. The academic staff development as a method to improve quality in higher education was evolved in the 1970s in the West after the campus crises. Staff development programmes as practised by units of higher education / staff development, included consultancy, project work, offers of courses, seconding to research projects, seminars, workshops, etc. for teaching staff members. The Pedagogical Staff Development according to UNESCO, ROEAP, Bangkok, should include "provision of the means for the development of individual competency in : (1) Academic knowledge and understanding, (2) Research skills, procedures, design and applications, (3) Teaching, (4) Administration and (5) Serving the Community". A general review of the implementation of staff development programmes in different countries revealed that there are broadly 5 approaches in use.

1. The professional approach, focuses on the qualification for all functions of staff members within the university.
2. The research oriented approach, focuses on the improvement of knowledge about a certain area of teaching through a tangible outcome like a Ph.D. or M.Phil.
3. The personal development approach, concentrates on the change of individual attitudes and teaching behaviour in order to optimise student's learning.
4. The self help approach, reflects on the improvement of teaching qualifications by an exchange of experiences among university and college teachers.
5. The comprehensive reform approach, as a rule is practised by the units of higher education to promote the democracy of university and society to transform knowledge into practice.

The above approaches have been employed simultaneously at different universities in several countries. However, there was no known model suitable for the conditions of the Third World countries. It was during the early part of the 1980s that the Government of India wanted to implement the recommendations made by Radhakrishnan Commission, 1948-49 on university education and the Kothari Commission, 1968 to improve the quality of teaching in colleges and universities.

The University Grants Commission was searching for a viable model. It was at that time the 'Andhra University Teacher Training Model' based on the experiences of the developed countries was implemented. The model was purely based on the objective of improving the performance of the teacher in the class room. The model was structured with four important components broadly covering the above mentioned 5 approaches. It was taken as a national model without duplicating the so called teaching model of school education imparted through colleges of education.

The University Grants Commission wanted that the Academic Staff Orientation Programme as experimented at Andhra University be adopted as a national model with some modifications. The staff orientation programme was linked with the implementation of scales of pay of university teachers in 1986. Therefore, it became inevitable for the UGC to adopt the scheme as a UGC sponsored programme. A separate unit with funds was earmarked for this purpose in UGC to train all the teachers in the cadre of lecturer. As the number of teachers at that time was found to be around 2 lakhs, it became the world's largest ever teacher training programme at the university level through the establishment of 45 Academic Staff Colleges in the country.

The UGC had later realised that mere orientation of the teachers for classroom performance was not sufficient. The teachers need to be provided with opportunities to upgrade their knowledge base to cope up with the changing knowledge in science, technology and social sciences. Later a method of refresher courses was introduced for the senior lecturers to upgrade knowledge in the respective disciplines. Thus, staff colleges were entrusted with the task of organising two kinds of courses; 1. Orientation courses for Junior teachers and 2. Refresher Courses in the subject area for Senior teachers.

In addition to the well established staff colleges, advanced centres of learning in the country were also provided funding to organise subject oriented refresher courses. Similar model seems to have not been found in other Third World countries, though some variants of it can be discovered in a few countries in Asia.

The Missing Link in Staff Development:

The review of the courses offered by the staff colleges in India was undertaken by the UGC to assess the utility of the programme. It was revealed that the teachers in higher education system have accepted the model. It became a part of the teaching and learning culture in the country that every teacher wishes to go to a staff college once in at least two years. Though the staff colleges have fulfilled the objectives for which they were established, the process of organisation of the courses became routine and stereotyped. As the successive pay commissions linked the time scale promotions with attendance at staff colleges, the colleges are left with little opportunities to experiment and innovate new methods of staff development. The refresher course became almost a replica of post graduate teaching programme of the concerned discipline in a four week crash programme. The thrust areas identified, the reading material selected and the resource persons who transacted the content with participants had to inevitably repeat what is happening in a post graduate

department in the university. In the meanwhile, economic reforms and globalisation have helped the economy to develop resilience. This created opportunities in new occupations.

The private sector in education responded positively to the changing situation. A plethora of short term courses and qualifications providers came on to the education market. The scheme of vocational courses offered by the UGC in 35 identified areas attracted the attention of some innovative private colleges. Most of these courses are interdisciplinary in nature. The response from the state supported government colleges however was found to be unenthusiastic. These vocational courses are being taught by teachers who were educated in the tradition based disciplines. The staff colleges have also failed to respond to the needs and requirements of the teachers who are teaching these innovative courses. Some of the participants who attended some of our refresher courses disclosed that the knowledge obtained by them from the advanced topics of the refresher courses and the subjects they teach in the colleges do not have any organic link, though this will definitely enrich their competence in the subject. This has created a hiatus between the knowledge gained from the courses and the knowledge utilised in the classroom.

The orientation courses which are structured in nature with prescribed guidelines and topics are also found slowly obsolescent in India. The anachronistic nature of the components of the orientation course such as pedagogy, personality development, philosophical and psychological foundations of higher education is purely due to the telematics revolution and information technology². It is also observed that the emergence of new structures like the National Qualifications Frame Work (NQF) which are designed to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in broad areas of study and vocations in the west as a new phenomenon in education.

The NQF provides opportunities to people to receive national recognition for their skills and qualifications. The NQFs as introduced in the advanced countries like the UK, New Zealand, Australia, etc., offers greater flexibility for the learner and removes many traditional barriers of learning such as attending to a formal training course in an institution. The NQF is designed to cover general, vocational and industry based education and training and each is registered at an appropriate level on the framework. In the UK the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are designed at 5 levels.

The levels reflect increasing levels of complexity and responsibility in a job role. "Roughly speaking, level 1 applies to jobs which are mostly routine and predictable whereas level 5 applies to jobs which are very complex and involve significant responsibility for the work of others (senior managers). Therefore, not all occupations have NVQs at all levels but eventually all occupations will be represented within the NVQ framework (from Abattoir workers to zoo keepers!)"³. In New Zealand the framework has eight levels, ranging from achievement comparable to school certificate at level 1, through to post graduate qualifications at level 8. The emergence of NQFs and the organisations involved in setting standards, awarding qualifications and accrediting providers helped to popularise the framework among the job seekers and employers. Table 1 shows the subjects available at each level in the UK.

In New Zealand thousands of subfields at unit standard are available on the website of the ministry of education. This has far reaching implications for teaching and learning not only in the advanced countries but also in the third world countries like India which has strong economic, educational and manpower relations with these countries.

Table-1
Vocational areas available at different levels in UK

Vocational area	Foundation level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Art & Design	✓	✓	✓
Business	✓	✓	✓
Health & Social Care	✓	✓	✓
Leisure & Tourism	✓	✓	✓
Manufacturing	✓	✓	✓
Construction and the Built Environment	✓	✓	✓
Hospitality and Catering	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓
Engineering	✓	✓	✓
Information Technology	✓	✓	✓
Media: Communication and Production	--	✓	✓
Retail and Distributive Service	--	✓	✓
Land and Environment	Pilot 1996/97 - 1997/98	Pilot 1996/97 - 1997/98	Pilot 1996/97 - 1997/98
Performance Arts & Entertainment Industries	Pilot 1996/97 - 1997/98	Pilot 1996/97 - 1997/98	Pilot 1996/97 - 1997/98

Source: DfEE, UK.

[DfEE, UK.](#)

Half Life of Knowledge and NQF:

The half life of knowledge is a concept popularised by World Bank experts. It constitutes the speed of acquisition and deterioration of knowledge. Table-2 shows that the half life of knowledge can be divided into Long Half Life of Knowledge (LHK) and Short Half Life of Knowledge (SHK) depending upon the knowledge type, acquisition time, finance and the positive externalities.

In the context of the half life of knowledge and the provision of 'education on demand' and 'just-in-time training' through the development of NQF, it is necessary to analyse the significance of vocational qualifications framework in countries like India and their implications for staff development. It is a known fact that knowledge can be embodied in persons through the development of skills or disembodied through the advancement of technology.

As the knowledge-based industrial development is fast developing, modern technology can be classified on the basis of indicators like: (a)

automation, (b) science relatedness, (c) research intensity, (d) dominant skills, and (e) leading sectors like steel, rail, computers, etc. Of these factors, b, c and d are developed through acquisition of knowledge and training. The skill intensity of equipment depends upon the mode of capital used in production and the technical manpower required to operate it. In an advanced technological society, the operations of petty jobs are abolished and or transferred to robots or skilled technicians.

Now the skilled manpower of the third world countries is migrating to the west (due to lucrative pay) making the scarce native experts of the advanced countries to concentrate on highly sophisticated jobs. The half life of knowledge as seen in the table is of short term duration and is offered through NVQs. The NVQs can be obtained by anyone including those who are in formal educational institutions undergoing training in a comprehensive curriculum. As the NVQs provide opportunities of employment to those who are in the formal institutions, will they concentrate on the class room learning?

As the interchangeability of credits and units are flexible in NQF to obtain a certificate at a particular level, does it not affect the teaching learning process? As the NQF provides certificates in short half life of knowledge that concentrates on the application part of knowledge should the teacher/trainer get similar knowledge or long half life of knowledge? As there are alternative sources of knowledge such as internet, distance learning modules, gadgets etc., should the teacher concentrate on socially relevant LHF courses?

There are several such issues that need to be examined in the context of staff development programmes in a new environment.

Table-2

The Half Life of Knowledge

	Long Half-Life of Knowledge	Short Half-Life of Knowledge
Knowledge Type	Academic, basic, theoretical	Vocational, practical
Acquisition Time	Long - years, months	Short - days, weeks, months
Quick Econ. Return	No	Yes
Social Externalities	High	Low
Finance	Families, state	workers, businesses
Examples	Basic socialization, citizenship, language, mathematics, logic, reasoning, theoretical parts of professional training	Industrial processes, science, specific technical professional skills

Source: [Knight-Moore](#)

In translating the changing educational structure and content into staff development programmes, it is necessary to address certain realities. The third world countries particularly India has developed its staff development programmes through structured formal instruction. It is necessary now to innovate new approaches to complement the fast developing alternative sources of training such as Internet.

At the same time, the third world countries need to concentrate on the LHK courses which will have long run advantages compared to SHK courses that can be obtained through NVQs. The LHK courses and the staff development models associated with it will enhance the competitiveness and self sufficiency of the country in the area of technology and development.

The emerging NVQs of the third world countries are now being concentrated mostly among the IT skills that are prone to migration without any advantage for the country of origin except the remittances of the expatriates. These skills are now being imparted by people who do not have any experience in teaching. This is an important area where staff development with short term courses can be devised to quickly respond to market demand.

Emerging Quality Issues:

The Higher Education Quality Council, UK stated that, "quality in Higher Education is not the same as satisfying a customer with, for example, the latest motor car ... Quality in higher education embraces, but is not synonymous with effectiveness, efficiency and accountability".

Quality is generally equated with excellence. It is based on some intrinsic qualities of knowledge in higher education. The bench marks of quality as enumerated for NQF in Table 3 can be used to ensure quality in staff development. At the same time, staff development can not remain uniform and structured in the third world countries due to the competition from alternative providers of knowledge. Staff development should emerge as an important source of quality in strengthening NQF itself. It will also get influenced by NQF and develop short term credit based units of standard staff development in future.

The staff development courses in India are now broadly divided into (1) orientation courses of 4 weeks duration with prescribed units to improve the competence of a teacher as a communicator, and (2) the refresher courses for senior teachers with subject content as prescribed by the coordinators and providers of the course. It will have to transform into a short term competency based courses such as lecture methods, discussion methods, language skills, class room dynamics, etc., under the orientation scheme.

In fact, this has already taken place in the west. As far as the subject based refresher courses are concerned, the units should be developed in such away that they can be exchanged with other credits obtained through formal and informal sources over a period of time. The refresher courses should be designed to provide specific knowledge base to the teacher who undertakes a new course in the emerging vocational areas rather than devoting all the time for acquiring comprehensive knowledge in a discipline.

This will change the administrative and funding methods for staff development units. As in the case of SHK based NVQs, the individual or his/her sponsoring agency should meet the expenditure of such training as it largely benefits the individual or his sponsor. Staff development can not be limited to time and prescribed content. Staff development units should emerge not only as providers of knowledge and skills, but also as centres of assessment of staff development qualifications obtained by serving teachers through different modes in the third world countries.

Table - 3
The Benchmarks of Quality

Attribute	Benchmark
credible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the purpose/aim of the qualification is clearly stated the qualification is valuable to students and employers relevant groups have been identified and their interests addressed the qualification is endorsed by a body of national standing arrangements are in place for managing the award of the qualification arrangements are in place to ensuring the qualification's ongoing relevance arrangements are in place for the timely review of the qualification
portable and durable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the qualification has logical and obvious relationships with other qualifications the qualification has the potential to offer credit towards other qualifications the outcomes of the qualification are expected to remain valued over time, and/or apply in different contexts
structurally sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the outcomes relate to a coherent body of skills and knowledge the outcomes assist valid assessment of students' achievements components of the qualification reflect its overall purpose/aim, as well as students' and employers' needs components of the qualification have logical and obvious internal links components of the qualification provide (as far as practicable) clear information about pathways for achieving the qualification, including flexible entry and exit points the qualification is appropriately named within commonly understood terminology

Source: Green paper, New Zealand.

Once the individual rather than the sponsoring agency or UGC takes up the responsibility of funding, the quality and standard will become the emerging issue to be addressed by staff development providers including staff colleges.

The quality of staff development can not be assessed merely on the basis of the competencies and knowledge base developed by the unit, but it should rely on the following:

1. The relevance of the course taught to the geographical conditions to reflect local skill requirement such as development of Agriculture and Agrobased industries as most of the third world countries are still agrarian economies.
2. Equity in achievement among different caste and ethnic groups.

3. Developing competencies among the academic staff to involve in research and encourage research standards ultimately to result in R & D.
4. The capacity in developing innovative methods of teaching and training in knowledge and skills.
5. The perseverance of the teacher in spending long hours of work in the class, lab, etc.
6. The infrastructure facilities such as library, IT, Internet and other knowledge goods available in the unit.
7. Interpersonal relations among the colleagues vis-à-vis with others.

Conclusion

In view of the developments in the system of higher education, particularly with the introduction of NQF, not only the quality but even the structure and content of staff development programmes need to be updated.

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