

**EXCELLENCE IN TRAINING OF HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS**

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Training of higher education teachers is a recent concept. Since sixties, efforts have been made to provide training to higher education teachers. Berendt (1994) stated that since 1965, discussion for training of higher education teachers were reported in Europe. This led to European Network on Staff Development. The staff development programmes covered aspects such as (a) Planning, organisation and evaluation of university teaching, (b) Communication-cooperation in university teaching, (c) Role and professional status of university teachers, (d) University didactic, etc. In certain systems, there are teaching assistants, who in due course become teachers. Teaching assistant work helps them get some training under the guidance of regular teachers. Kashoki (1994) reported that since 1974, academic staff development programmes have been going on in Zambia, Africa.

There have been a few foreign studies on improving the quality of the training programmes. Berendt (1989) reported that the training activities in Africa covered aspects such as induction, workshops, self study etc. El-Hares (1994) gave stress on use of information and communication technology. Kember and Gow (1994) gave stress on action research. Silvo (1994) gave stress on use of audio-visual aids. The study reported that majority of programmes covered aspects such as general didactics, curricular designing, teaching methods and techniques and evaluation principles and methods.

In India, in 1966, the Kothari Commission pointed out the necessity of regular orientation courses, every year, for a few weeks, in every college. The University Grants Commission started orientation courses (*Trivedi and Desai* 1969). Later, University of Bombay, University of Madras etc started Diploma courses in Higher Education. University of Calicut started Master of Collegiate Teaching Course. But due to lack of appropriate recognition, these courses were closed. IGNOU has started Diploma in Higher Education Course. The University Grants Commission has started organisation of Orientation and Refresher Courses through its Academic Staff Colleges. While IGNOU course has a set of literature, the ASC courses do not have any set of printed literature. The IGNOU course has also video feedback. In many cases, ASC courses do not get proper resource persons. The author found even copying of written materials from textbooks written by other persons in ASC literature supplied to participants. Ram (1966), Mahajan (1967), Trivedi and Desai (1969), Sharma (1971), Mathew and Vmayak (1972), Kapruan (1974), Katiyar (1974), Singh (1974), Desai (1975), Kapur (1975), Jawanda (1976), Anand (1977 a and b), Krishnamurti (1977), Patted (1977), Singh and Nand (1977), Joshi and Singh (1978), Airan (1979), Patted and Mench (1979), Srivastava (1979), Bhusan and Sharma (1984), Mathur (1984), Taneja (1984), Yadav and Roy (1984), Bhattacharjee (1988) and Mohanty (1989) have discussed about necessity of training for higher education teachers. After starting of ASC programmes, a few studies have appreciated the functioning of orientation programmes. Some of these studies include those of Aravanam (1991), Deshpande and Jantle (1991), Gupta and Budhi (1992), Rehman and Biswal (1992), Pal (1993), Sreedharswamy (1993) and Pal (1994) etc. A few studies have reported dissatisfaction and have suggested improvement. Such studies include Bourai (1987), Chalam (1987), George (1987), Srinivasan (1990), Verma (1990), Kapur (1992), Mohanty (1992), Joseph (1993), Kapur (1993), Mehrotra (1993), Ramanujam (1993), Sethumadhava Rao (1993), Sethumadhava Rao and Palsane (1993), Valicha (1993), Kumar (1994), Kashinath and Patted (1995), Passi and Sahoo (1995), Ramabrahmam (1995), etc. Hence, there is a case for analysing ASC programmes and suggesting strategies for excellence in teacher training programmes.

**OBJECTIVES OF ORIENTATION COURSES**

The objectives of orientation courses, as specified by the UGC are as follows:

1. Understanding the significance of education in general and higher education in particular in the global and Indian context.
2. Understanding the linkages between education and socio-cultural development with particular reference to the Indian policy where secularism and egalitarianism are the basic tenets of the society.
3. Understanding the role of a college/university teacher in the context of national goal of achieving a secular and egalitarian society.
4. Acquiring and improving basic skills of teaching at the college/university level.
5. Becoming aware of the developments in his/her specific subject.

6. Understanding the organisation and management of a college/university and to perceive the role of a teacher in the total system.

7. Utilising opportunities for development of personality, initiative, and creativity.

The objectives outlined above need to be reviewed. The objective of acquiring and improving basic skills of teaching at college/university level needs to be given more stress. Other objectives can be achieved by a teacher trainee even through self study. Since orientation programmes cover lecturers of a number of subjects, the objective of becoming aware of the developments in the subject of each of the participants cannot be achieved. This can only be taken care of in refresher courses. Since ASCs have functioned for nearly a decade, an assessment of the objectives has become necessary.

### **METHODS OF TEACHING EMPLOYED BY RESOURCE PERSONS**

Methods of teaching employed by resource persons play crucial role in developing suitable competencies in teacher trainees. These need to be ideals discussed in the classes. Sethumadhava Rao (1993) has suggested strategies such as a~games and exercise sessions, panel discussion, brain storming, book review, etc. Valicha (1993) has suggested project work, discussions etc. Normally, the resource persons use lecture method. They need to use the ideal methods about which teacher trainees are to be made aware of. Utilisation of these methods in the classroom transaction meant for teacher trainees can have lasting impact on them.

### **TRAINING IN SKILLS OF TEACHING**

Every lecturer needs to be an expert communicator. Lack of adequate training on communication skill development has resulted in making orientation programmes less effective. As the system did not have any system of orientation, even today, one finds lecturers and readers without possessing minimum communication skills, not to speak of other individual skills necessary for effective teaching. Mohanty (1989) reported that a lecturer of 18 years of experience was found standing in attention position for the whole period, without making any movement of head, hand and eyes and explaining from a language textbook. Valicha (1993) gave stress on training in use of gestures, voice, dialogue, humour etc. IGNOU has brought out a video cassette on *communication skills*. The said cassette may be used, or an improved version may be developed by the UGC. Training in communication skills can be effective, if carried out in a Closed-Circuit Television Studio. Such facilities are not provided in Academic Staff Colleges. Adequate time should be provided for development of communication skills in simulated situations like teaching skills of introducing a lesson, use of audiovisual aids, including blackboard, bulletin board, flannel board, charts, maps, tape recorder, video cassettes, films, film strips, slides, opaque projector, over head projector, etc. At present, the ASCs have not been able to give due justice to these types of practical training. This training can be given in groups. In order to develop teaching skills, certain ASCs organise micro-teaching sessions. But these are carried out hurriedly and in unsimulated situations. The training programme for development of skills of teaching shall take at least 10 days.

### **DEMONSTRATION LESSONS**

Demonstration lessons provide models for teacher trainees. These need to be delivered in real classroom situations by expert teachers. Discussion should follow delivery of the lesson. Normally, provision for delivery of demonstration lessons does not exist in orientation courses. ASCs need to locate expert teachers in their catchment area and organise such demonstration lessons covering varieties of methods such as lecture cum discussion, project, tutorial, etc. There can be a demonstration lesson using video recording of one of the UGC telecasted lessons. This shall motivate the participants to use such telecast lessons for their own students. A resource person needs to circulate his/her lesson outline earlier to ensure better participation of the teacher trainees. Wherever possible, these lessons should be video recorded and rescreened, if found necessary during discussion.

### **OBSERVATIONS OF LESSONS OF GOOD COLLEGE TEACHERS AND PEERS**

Academic Staff Colleges need to give stress on observation of teaching. One demonst train lesson is not enough. After discussing various aspects of good teaching, a proforma for observation needs to be developed. The proforma should be. used by teacher trainees to observe at least a few lessons, delivered PAGE 7 by their peers participating in the programme and lessons delivered by selected good college teachers. Such facilities can be made available without much cost. Observation should be followed by discussion. In case of orientation programmes, the participants may be sent for observation of lessons in groups, consisting of not more than 5 in a group. They should be at the back of the class and meet the teacher taking class only after the lesson is over.

### **PRACTICE TEACHING BY TRAINEES**

The teacher trainees need to practice teaching (Sen 1986 and Bourai 1987). The lessons can be observed by experienced and expert teachers, who can act as supervisors. These lessons can also be observed by their peers. Peer evaluation has been found effective by Goldschmid (1978), Aubrecht (1979), French Lazik (1981), Conard (1982), Mathias and Ruthorford (1982). A separate proforma can be developed for use by college students to report about their

evaluation of teaching skill of the trainee. Usefulness of student evaluation has been reported by Bannister and others (1961), Rayder (1968), Hilderbrand and Wilson (1970), Trent and Rose (1973), Frey, Leonard and Beatty (1975), Rose (1976), Marsh, Overall and Kesler (1979), Eobatt (1982), Sa-gi and Miller (1987), Dunkin (1990), etc. There may be provision for teaching of at least three lessons, observed and supervised by competent resource persons (effective teachers) of concerned content areas to which the teacher trainee belongs. These lessons should cover at least three different methods of teaching of a subject.

#### **READING MATERIALS FOR TRAINEES**

Reading materials are essential in any teacher training programme. Unfortunately, ASC programmes have not been able to give much stress on this aspect. In many cases, cyclostyled reading materials are supplied even after the delivery of the lecture. Reading materials are also prepared hurriedly by resource persons. In case of one ASC, it was found that a resource person circulated a reading material completely taken from a book without quoting the original author and book. Without being aware of such duplication, the concerned ASC had circulated the material in its report of the orientation course. This type of situation occurs due to haste in preparation. Often the circulated reading materials do not contain up-to-date references. Passi and Sahoo (1988) reported that the participants did not use the cyclostyled materials and handouts. Sethumadhava Rao (1993) reported about inadequate reading materials. German Foundation for International Development (1995) has brought out a publication entitled "Teach your Best" used as a handbook for university lecturers of Africa, authored by Barbara Matiru, Anna Mwangi and Ruth Schlette. In India, there are books written by Vedanayagam (1979), Upsani (1980), Sharma and Ahmed (1986), Anand (1987), Dhar and Singh (1990), Chalam (1991), Kapur (1991), Sethumadhava Rao and Palsane (1994), Mohanty (1995) etc. Review of these books and various other writings on university and college teaching may be of much use in making orientation programmes more effective. Berendt (1994) mentioned about use of modules in German staff development programmes. In India, NCERT has developed modules for secondary and primary school in-service teacher training programmes. The IGNOU has developed reading materials for its Diploma in Higher Education Course. UGC may need to take up the project of developing modules for training of higher education teachers. Funds can be diverted from the ASCs for the purpose. If modules are developed, the resource persons need only deal with these modules. There should be an application fee for admission into orientation courses. The modules may be supplied along with the application form. This shall make the teacher trainee become better prepared for the orientation courses.

The development of study material can take care of the suggestions of Rambrahmam (1995) for prior distribution of reading materials. This also can take care of the suggestion of Kapur (1992) for advance intimation to resource persons. The resource persons need to improve upon the printed material and add ideas from their experiences and recent literature. This can also take care of the problem of longer duration of classes as pointed out by Passi and Sahoo (1995) and Verma (1990). If the classes are restricted to modules, the practice of taking continuous three-hour class by a resource person can be dispensed with. The study material should be different from that of IGNOU. These need to have points for discussion in classroom setting. These materials need to contain list of reference materials and suggestions for further reading.

#### **LINKAGE WITH IGNOU**

ASCs need to develop linkage with IGNOU. This can facilitate use of the recorded video cassettes of IGNOU produced in connection with their Higher Education Course. Collaboration with IGNOU has been advocated by Mohanty (1992), Joseph (1993), Kapur (1993) and Mehrotra (1993). The Programme of Action (1992) document of the Govt. of India has PAGE 8 also recommended distance cum contact mode. In fact, orientation courses can be better taken care of by IGNOU. In such cases, ASCs can be used as study centres for IGNOU programmes. This arrangement shall be more economical and effective. This can dispense with the cost of travel and daily allowance for all participants. Participants can have the modules, video cassettes and observe telecast lessons and may be required to answer assignments. Selected participants may be called for face-to-face interaction, based on assessment of assignments.

#### **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

The ASCs should not be content with only imparting orientation or refresher courses. They need to undertake follow-up activities. The Directors and Assistant Directors need to conduct studies and bring out follow up publications. There can be shorter duration, even one day follow up programmes in various places of the catchment area with no provision for travel cost. If ASCs can be linked up with IGNOU, ASC officials shall have more time for follow up work. There may be financial provision for tea and snacks for participants on the days of the meetings and for stationery charges including charges for printing of paper etc, if necessary. The UGC may provide funds for travel costs of ASC personnel to organise such one-day programmes at various places. Necessity of follow up activities have been pointed out by Chalam (1987), Joseph (1993) and Ramabrahmam (1995). There may be lectures organised at various places on various issues concerning techniques of teaching or developments in a field of study, as part of follow up activity. Directors and Assistant Directors of ASCs sit mostly idle during non-programme days. Such types of provision for follow up activities will ensure adequate and efficient utilisation of human resources found in ASCs.

## CONCLUSION

Academic Staff Colleges have been working as catalysts for improving the quality of teaching in higher education. Whatever may be the quality of orientation programmes of ASCs, they bring together participants from various parts of the country, share their experiences and learn from each other. The participants get exposed to new ideas of certain resource persons. This paper suggests necessity for more practical training. Linkage of the ASC Orientation Courses with IGNOU Diploma in Higher Education Course can be economically and academically more sound than the present strategy used for orientation courses. Refresher courses may be continued by ASCs without help of IGNOU. The suggestions outlined above are meant to improve the quality of these programmes so that excellence in training can be achieved.

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