Research Article
Sketching Effective Faculty Professional Development Framework

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Abstract: Professional development plays a demanding role in the continuous advancement of teachers. It does support all facets of academic careers, but accepting its importance to teaching is the most significant accountability of the organization and the teachers themselves. Professional faculty development bridges faculty across disciplines and career phases, serving to create a pedagogical community within the college or university. Professional development is not remedial or an activity only for those having concerns, but should be an essential component of every faculty member's endeavor to become more effective in the classroom. It form teachers attentive of what they achieve, inquire them why and demand them to continually do it more excellent. Professional development enhances the affective, thoughtful and social aspects of academic life. It reforms the academic experience at institutions for teachers and students. Correctly designed faculty development approaches can promote and create a culture that supports a mindful focus on teaching, while concurrently, nourish a sense of association and collegiality across the organization that is crucial to constant innovation and progress. This study recommends a faculty professional development framework that can be designed to improve the collegial culture at a higher educational organization.

Keywords: Faculty development, higher education, innovation, organizational culture, professional development

INTRODUCTION

Educators have conceived that improving faculty quality is an integral component of any proposition to create highly accomplished educational institute. These are transforming times in education philosophy globally. Many educational sectors are engaging in thoughtful and secured educational reforms. One of the leading elements in most of the transformation is the professional development of the full time faculty and instructors because an inspiring and informed faculty and instructors is the most important school-related determinant directing student achievement and so it is critical to pay close attention to how to train and support both new and experienced educators. This new transformation is embraced by educators as it promotes the recognition of their work as professionals and open avenues for new opportunities for growth, research, learning and development. Precisely designing effective professional development framework and programs for the institute's educators is essential to improving good teaching methods and to achieve higher and positive student learning outcomes.

Being a former member of the teaching and learning center team the suggested guidelines can assist administrators and faculty sketch efficient professional development framework for their institute's educators. This study is organized in 4 sections. The first section is an overview of process of faculty professional development, its definition and significance, the second section presents the impact of professional development on education systems and student learning process and the final section provides the framework that specifies the factors that are to be taken into account in designing and implementing models of professional development.

Defining and understanding faculty professional development: During the past decade, an ample material of literature has stemmed on professional development, teacher learning and teacher change. Any academic institute public or private and faculties depend on the knowledge, skills, competency and motivation of its human resources. Development needs of faculties in these areas should therefore be amongst institute's leading and continual goals. These developmental goals can be achieved by:

- Providing faculties with training opportunities to accomplish paramount effectiveness.
- Guarantee that faculties develop their skills and proficiency to be able to work efficiently and

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acknowledge promptly to changes within their institutes.

- Enhancing performance of their current responsibilities.
- Ensuring that the preeminent benefit is achieved of the natural abilities and faculties skills for the prosperity of their academic institute and their career.

Lectures, instructional faculty and professors often start their teaching and other academic commitments on the foundation of their prior academic experiences. Many at no time have taken a course or studied theories involving current pedagogy and curriculum methods thus transferring instruction which proceeds to long lectures, irrelevant assignments and monotonous classes. In research on how students feel about their college professors, Bain writes that students will, when given the opportunity to evaluate their course, indicate "how much they learned and whether the professor stimulated their interests and intellectual development". This gives the professor a good idea of the quality of his teaching. If the professor knows how to "simplify and clarify complex subjects, to cut to the heart of the matter with provocative insights" and bring about their own reflection and the student's in the discipline, the process of analyzing instruction and evaluating its quality becomes a simple matter (Bain, 2004).

Kim (2008) suggests "they see themselves as conduits to learning and their core focus is on the students, coaching them to help build their skills". They too have expertise in their chosen field. However, they concentrate on how to convey what they know in a manner that makes them keenly aware that teaching is an art which means continual practice is needed in developing various skills in order to reach every student in their class.

An urgent need, therefore, prevails to provide faculty with on going professional development opportunities to capacitate the faculty to become a substantial educator and scholar of students. Professional development areas should include proven instructional practices and how best to incorporate and infuse these pedagogical theories into undergraduate general education courses to enhance student learning, increasing student engagement, retention and success (Berg and Haung, 2004). According to Scott (2006) most universities have not yet transferred over to teaching in what is known as an active mode. A mixture of active learning modes is considered to be most advantageous to student teaching. Little (1996) describes professional development as "a focus on and responsibility for student learning and the formation of professional community inside and outside the school". Therefore the approach to professional development is to assure that educators have the finest probable skills, content knowledge and preparation for teaching in order to be qualified and supported to facilitate students

to reach high standards. In order to contribute and promote the best practices of faculty members for being informed and brilliant it is significant to be proactive and provide continual professional development in an contemporary domain that inspires life long learning.

Faculty professional development is a process: The term "professional development" means a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers and educator's effectiveness in raising student achievement.

Professional development includes formal experiences (such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring. etc) and informal experiences (such as reading professional publications, watching documentaries related to an academic discipline, etc) (Ganser, 2000).

This conception of professional development is, therefore, broader than career development, which is defined as "the growth that occurs as the teacher moves through the professional career cycle" (Glatthorn, 1995).

In the past few years faculty professional development has been considered a long term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession. This shift has been so dramatic that many have referred to it as a "new image' of teacher learning, a new model of teacher education, a revolution in education and even a new paradigm of professional development (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2001; Walling and Lewis, 2000). This unique vista of professional development has several characteristics:

- Educators are respected as effective learners who are engaged in tangible responsibility of teaching, evaluation research and cogitation.
- It is recognized as a long term process as it accedes that teachers acquire information over time. As a result a series of related experiences is seen to be the most effective as it allows teachers to relate prior knowledge to new experiences (Cohen, 1990; Ganser, 2000; Lieberman, 1994; Dudzinski, 2000).
- It is a process that takes place within a particular ambience and the most effective arrangement of professional development is the one which takes place on campus and ins related to the regular activities of faculty and learners such as study groups, action research and portfolios.
- A teacher professional development program that is not supported by the school or curricular reform is not effective (Schifter *et al.*, 1999).This process and thought is identified because professional development is a process of learning culture and just not skill training.
- Professional development promotes combined responsibility for improved student performance

and must be comprised of professional learning that.

- Is coordinated with accurate student academic achievement standards as well as related academic improvement goals.
- Is conducted among educators on campus and facilitated by well-prepared higher educations consultants, higher education based professional development coaches, mentor and other leaders.
- Mostly results several times on a weekly basis among established teams of faculties and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a regular cycle of improvement.
- Professional development process is to guide faculties in constructing new pedagogical theories and practices and assist them to acquire their expertise in their fields and profession as faculties are perceived as a reflective professional.
- Professional development is to provide collaborative interactions between faculties, administrators and other community members which lead to meaningful contributions to the student achievement.
- Diversity in professional development is the key to cater to several models of trainings to meet the needs and practices of an educational setting. "The uniqueness of the individual setting will always be a critical factor in education. What works in one situation may not work in another… Because of the enormous variability in educational contexts, there will never be one right answer. Instead there will be a collection of answers, each specific to a context. Our search must focus, therefore, on finding the optimal mix–that assortment of professional development processes and technologies that work best in a particular setting (Guskey, 1995).

Quality professional development is a progressive process. If applicable framework are in place, a collection of best practices are employed and appropriate knowledge and skill acquisition are occurring, then professional development will impact student achievement. The higher education system is thoroughly focused on raising and improving student performance and thus the need for an ongoing effective professional development has become an urgent approach for many higher education institutes. In other words, "student achievement is the product of formal study by educators" (Joyce and Showers, 2002). When teachers are given the opportunity, via high-quality professional development, to learn new strategies for teaching to rigorous standards, they report changing their teaching in the classroom (Alexander *et al.*, 1998). Professional development can succeed only in settings, or contexts, that support it. Probably the most critical part of that support must come from administrators

(McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978). Professional development should be designed around research-documented practices that enable educators to develop the skills necessary to implement what they are learning (Joyce and Showers, 2002).

The process of professional development should also be based on sound educational practice such as contextual teaching. Contextual teaching presents information in familiar contexts and in contexts in which the information is useful. It is effective because it takes advantage of the fact that learning occurs best when learners process new information or knowledge in such a way that it makes sense to them in their own frames of reference.

Furthermore from the sole professional contentment and monetary gain that faculty will procure from participating in professional development opportunities, the process of professional development has a compelling positive impact on educator's knowledge, students learning process and on the fulfillment of educational transformation.

Successful professional development practice has a evident impact on faculties work. Evidence shows that that professional development has an impact on teacher's beliefs and behavior. Research reported by Baker and Smith (1999) identified the following characteristics of professional development as being the most effective in sustaining change in teachers:

- A heavy emphasis on providing concrete, realistic and challenging goals.
- Activities that include both technical and conceptual aspects of instruction
- Support from colleagues
- Frequent opportunities for teachers to witness the effects that their efforts have on students learning

In relation to the impact of faculties professional development on student learning a number of studies report that the more professional knowledge that teachers have the higher the levels of student achievement (National Commission on Teaching and Americas Future, 1996, 1997).

Borko and Putnam (1995) offer evidence to support the fact that professional development plays an important role in changing teachers teaching methods and that these changes have a positive impact on students learning. Another study that supports the strong relationship that links the improvement of teacher's practices and increasing level of student's achievement is reported by Cohen and Hill (1997). This large study of mathematics teachers in California discovered that: teachers who participated in sustained curriculum based professional development reported changes in practice that, in turn, were associated with significantly higher students achievement scores on state assessment (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Teachers attitudes, preparation and practices all showed strong positive and significant growth from pre professional development to the following spring. Furthermore these

gains were sustained over several years following [the teachers] involvement (Supovitz *et al*., 2000).

The relationship between educational reforms and faculties professional development is a 2 way relationship. Educational reforms that do not include teachers and their professional development have not been successful and there are several cases to support these findings. In an attempt to understand the factors affect the relationship between educational reform and teacher's professional development could be the following:

- Lack of significant funds will lead the professional development deficiency in an educational reform. The universities alone should not be the only source to cover the expenses.
- Local leadership is crucial if the reform is to acquire the support of the institute and district leaders.
- Long and effective range planning will promote reform initiatives that will include faculty's professional development.
- Provide ample opportunities for professional development and maintain the effective time frame for its implementation as well.
- Including teachers and their professional development plans will lead the activities to a great success.
- Faculties and administrators personal commitment towards the reform and their own professional development is a significant factor.
- In order to permit professional development to play an integral part in education reform policies must be auxiliary of the changes that faculties request for example the obligation to create advanced structures and institutional layout that support the role of educators as lifelong learners, cooperate and maintain outside institute structures for educators networking and finally supporting distinct system of assessment, accountability and promotion. These new structures and policies will drive the initiatives with positive results. In summary professional development of educators is a leading factor in ensuring that reforms are effective. Successful professional development opportunities for teachers have a significant thorough and genuine effect on student's performance and learning.

Framework of professional development: One of the purposes of reviewing the teacher's professional development literature was to better understand the current trends regarding the most productive framework of professional development. Researchers have classified and studied a range of concepts. Sparks and Loucks (1987) list five models: individual/self-directed, observation/assessment, school improvement, training and inquiry. Pelavin Research Institute (1996) lists four approaches: workshop/presentation, observation/ feedback, inquiry-research, product/program development. Feiman-Nemser (2001) argues that

different types of professional development should be offered on a "continuum" over the teacher's career, starting with formal education (courses offered by the college), then induction (pairing with a master teacher or mentor when beginning to teach, offered by the school), then ongoing inquiry activities while teaching (practitioner research or study circles, organized by the school), supported by a learning environment in the school and opportunities for professional development (workshops, institutes offered by the district). Professional development models that focus on teacher knowledge and inquiry are preferred to those that deliver expert knowledge and expect teachers to adopt specific practices (Lytle *et al*., 1992a, b). In addition to teacher reflectiveness, this new vision of professional development emphasized professional development that was "results-driven" (focused on students learning rather than teachers teaching), "systems-related" (focused on organizational rather than individual change) and "constructivist" (focused on professional development embedded in practice and driven by teachers, rather than knowledge and skills transferred from expert to teacher) (Guskey, 1997; Sparks, 1994, 1995). Since the goal of improving student outcomes is the central objective (Elmore, 2002), other researchers (Ball and Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond and Ball, 1997) advocate making student work the center of professional development, promoting strong content-based and practice-based professional development models, where groups of teachers use an inquiry process to look at "artifacts" of teaching-samples of student work or samples of other teachers' teaching-to analyze what this "data" tells them about how to solve problems of practice. Helping teachers to look at how students think and reason generates teachers' knowledge and self-sustaining ability to learn (Carpenter and Franke, 1998).

The connection between professional development and teacher change is extremely significant factor to understand before an effective professional development framework is to be initiated. Elmore (1996) provides a good summary of the change process "Changing teaching practice even for committed teachers takes a long time and several cycles of trial and error; teachers have to feel that there is some compelling reason for them to practice differently, with the best direct evidence being that students learn better; and teachers need feedback from sources they trust about whether students are actually learning what they are taught" (Elmore, 1996).

Researchers specifically looked at three "structural features" promoted in the literature as features of quality professional development (Loucks-Horsley *et al*., 1998): the form of the activity, the duration of the activity and degree of collective participation. Other independent variables included "core features" of the professional development activity: the content of the activity how much the activity included active learning

and how much the activity was in coherence with other activities the teachers had participated in:

- **Form:** In my observation faculty attend two different formats of professional development: Local training options designed to channel a specific set of ideas, techniques or materials or they attend their university/college in house workshops taught by university based faculty with an academic rather than tested focus. The verdict is that neither of these approached leads to evident and sustained changes in teacher practice. Therefore I highly recommend reform activities such as study groups, teachers networks, mentoring, coaching and other collaborative efforts should be initiated as they lead to successful change in teaching practice.
- **Duration:** Teachers who experience professional development for long period of time has substantial effect on their teaching. Activities for longer duration have more subject area content focus, more opportunities for active learning and more conformity with teachers other experiences.
- **Participation:** In the field of professional development a growing consensus from all over the world is that planners need to move teachers away form traditional patterns of seclusion and privacy and move them towards collaboration and shared inquiry. Reflective dialogues with colleagues, shared practice and thus professional development being targeted towards the group rather than individual brings effective results.
- **Content focus:** The effect of teachers professional development programs on student achievement will have the largest positive effect on student learning if the programs focus on content and not the just the structure.
- **Active learning:** After reviewing several researchers material on how active learning influence teacher practice I propose that when the teachers have the opportunity to be actively engaged in their own learning through observation, close study of student work in coordination with other colleagues and designing joint curriculum planning they are more likely to improve their practice.
- **Coherence:** Professional development is most effective when they are coordinated with organizational goals. If the activities and programs are not aligned with the national and international standards then the faculty commitment to make changes in their practice after attending a certain faculty development activity will be minimal.

CONCLUSION

In order to share and promote the principle of "best practices" of professional development framework and

to keep new and experienced faculty members informed and knowledgeable in the best ways to promote student learning, it is necessary to be proactive and provide continual professional development in an asynchronous and synchronous environment that encourages lifetime learning.

Knowing these "best practices" are missing from many of our university and college classrooms, we have a moral and ethical responsibility as educators to teach in a manner that provides the best learning environment and provide the best learning opportunities for every student we teach. This can best be accomplished by developing a comprehensive professional development series that is easily accessible to all faculty. The best way to share the above mentioned practices and principles is to incorporate them into professional development modules readily available for faculty.

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