FACULTY ENGAGEMENT- KEY TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT
This paper breaks down the understanding of faculty engagement into elements like professional preparation, professional development, professional involvement and professional contribution. It also links each of these elements to academic excellence and derives on how to come out of the cyclic pattern of these element and put oneself into the spiral model to leverage the their academic excellence.
Index Terms—Faculty engagement, academic excellence, factors, professional development

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee Engagement has assumed a pivotal role in the face of rapid changes such as Globalization, Liberalization, Technological and Market changes. It is the backbone of HRM for any organization intending to produce a high performance and leverage its Human Capital. Employee Engagement efforts in organizations should be distinctly integrated and every sphere of human resource management activity must be integrated vertically and horizontally to derive significant positive results. The widely used term 'Employee Engagement' focuses on two attempts of management –motivating the employees and focusing their commitment to achieve the organizational objectives. It further emphasizes the willingness to help colleagues at par with Organizational Citizenship Behavior. In the broader sense, employee engagement goes beyond job satisfaction, job involvement, motivation etc. Employee Engagement has a substantial impact on productivity and talent retention.

Developing successful strategies for enhancing student attainment through faculty engagement involves understanding the current context. Over the last forty years there have been substantial changes in the structure of professional employment in higher education, with implications for fostering faculty engagement on a broad scale. So, too, substantial changes in student

demographics, patterns of attendance, and modes of delivering instruction also have implications for engagement and attainment. Moreover, current policy pressures, and the institutional practices they incentivize create a challenge for colleges and universities to increase attainment and quality. Finally, the current policy context, in which faculty are absent, ignored, or identified as the problem, creates an additional challenge in supporting faculty engagement to enhance student attainment.

II. PREVAILING APPROACHES TOWARDS FACULTY ENGAGEMENT TO ENHANCE ATTAINMENT

The prevailing approaches to engaging faculty in order to enhance student attainment focus on them as individual professionals. The models treat professors as if they do their jobs in isolation from one another. And the overriding emphasis is on classroom instruction, as if that is the sole place in which faculty influence student attainment. Each of these three premises underlies the four basic mechanisms by which organizations seek to improve faculty engagement with students: **professional preparation, professional development, professional involvement and professional contribution.**

Much good work is being done in each of the four professional realms identified above. In the last two decades, more attention has been devoted to improving and emphasizing faculty's instructional work, including the use of new technologies. Yet there is much room for improvement in each of the realms of professional involvement.

Professional Preparation:
The Importance of Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is a vital component of the teaching-learning process. Proper classroom planning will keep teachers organized and on track while teaching, thus allowing them to each more, helps students reach objectives more easily and manage less. The better prepared the teacher is, the more likely she/he will be able to handle whatever unexpectedly happens in the lesson.
Lesson planning:
- provides a coherent framework for smooth efficient teaching.
- helps the teacher to be more organized.
- gives a sense of direction in relation to the syllabus.
- helps the teacher to be more confident when delivering the lesson.
- provides a useful basis for future planning.
- helps the teacher to plan lessons which cater for different students.
- Is a proof that the teacher has taken a considerable amount of effort in his/her teaching.

Professional Development:

Need for professional development

Faculty development is an essential element of institutional effectiveness in higher education. The extent to which the university supports faculty development will be strongly reflected in levels of student engagement and motivation, and thus ultimately, student learning. Faculty who engage in professional development experiences benefit also in terms of increased vitality, informed pedagogy, teaching innovations, and scholarly teaching. Moreover, faculty professional development contributes to the effective use of emerging technologies and establishes a firm foundation for the overall development of high-quality programs and curricula.

A rapidly changing knowledge base, the lightning speed of advancing technologies, and the unique characteristics of today's learners all demand that the professoriate give high priority to their own professional development. Technological developments and characteristics of learners also oblige colleges and universities to find effective ways to motivate and reward faculty participation. With competing demands for effective teaching, scholarly productivity, and service contributions, faculty may be tempted to opt out of professional development training and seminars.

The term 'faculty development' is commonly used to describe activities and programs designed to improve instruction. All three of the previous reviews of the literature that we discuss in the next section adhere to this definition. More recently, the term 'academic development' has been used in some of the literature to refer to development activities and programs that more fully address the multiple roles of faculty (instructor, researcher, citizen and scholar within departments, faculties and the wider university community). This definition is based on a more holistic view of the higher education faculty member within his or her institution. Centra (1989) has proposed four possible types of development: personal (interpersonal skills, career development, and life planning issues); instructional (course design and development, instructional technology); organizational (ways to improve the institutional environment to better support teaching); and professional (ways to support faculty members so that they fulfill their multiple roles of teaching, research, and service).

Professional Involvement: Imbibes three important aspects i.e learning, sharing and participating. Learning from the peers and professional networks and being to help/assist/collaborate in and out of workplace.

Sharing experiences/approaches with fellow professionals, including (especially) what didn't work! It means knowing (some of) what's going on, what issues are big etc., and having a means to vent my opinions on that. It also means contributing to everyone's professional development - by speaking/writing/organising stuff - & supporting colleagues informally.

It is about active participation and engaging with peers in your industry. It means interacting with

librarianship and / or the library industry, beyond your own job and institution. Being in contact/discussion with other professionals across sectoral boundaries, engaging with topical issues, having an awareness of what is happening across the profession and contributing to that in some way through professional organisation or not.

On the whole professional involvement means engaging with the profession in any way that is beyond the normal demands of your job

Peer Networking is another way of involving. It provides an opportunity for benchmarking; discovering solutions to problems; finding out about tools others have used first; making you realise you are not alone in your struggles.

Professional Contribution:

This may be in terms of making use of specialist expertise, including expertise in the form of research; or giving and receiving structured peer support using collaboration, Contribution can also be made through sustained, enquiry-oriented learning over a period of time about pupil outcomes and from observing teaching and learning exchanges especially those involving experiments with new approaches. Research output by the academicians would actually purport to contribution to knowledge. Academic research supports the industry transactions only if they are crosscutting. This makes a research indispensable for the industry. The result of an academic research should contribute advancements in any area for that matter. The output of research should be to create something new, establish a niche for oneself, further science and add some important piece to the sum of human understanding.

Numerous stakeholders are exercising influence and expressing their increased expectations. Students and parents are scrutinizing their investment, administrators are balancing shrinking resources with growing demands, governments and citizens are asking for measureable outcomes, key influencers are increasing their support (and inquiries), and faculty are simultaneously engaged and uneasy. These demands require new political and personal relationships, as well as an understanding of cultural differences, legal interpretations, diverse technical platforms, vendor communities, and varying traditions regarding data governance. Change is in the air. Nobody disagrees with the goal of increased educational attainment by students, and few would disagree with the objectives of data-informed accountability and transparency, especially concerning learning outcomes and student success.
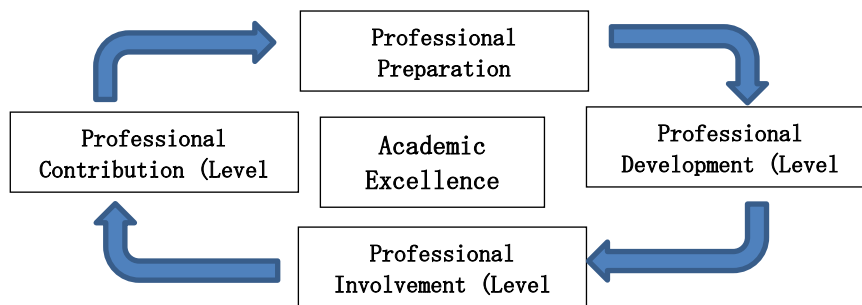
III. THE EXCELLENCE CYCLE

Fig 1 : The excellence cycle

The inter relationship between the four components of Academic Excellence has been depicted in the above diagram. It shows the cyclical process where professional preparation of the faculty leads to professional development leading to professional involvement which further facilitates the faculty members' professional contribution which ultimately leads to organizational growth. This cyclical process is more applicable in case of junior level faculty members. This is because of the reason that the research output is not up to the expected extent contributing towards organizational growth. Hence the cyclical process continues until an intervention is initiated by the organization.

The faculty has to come out of this cycle and to facilitate this process the organization has to motivate the faculty for reaching higher and higher levels of professional development leading to more than proportionate contribution towards organizational growth. This process results in an excellence spiral which has been explained in the diagram below.
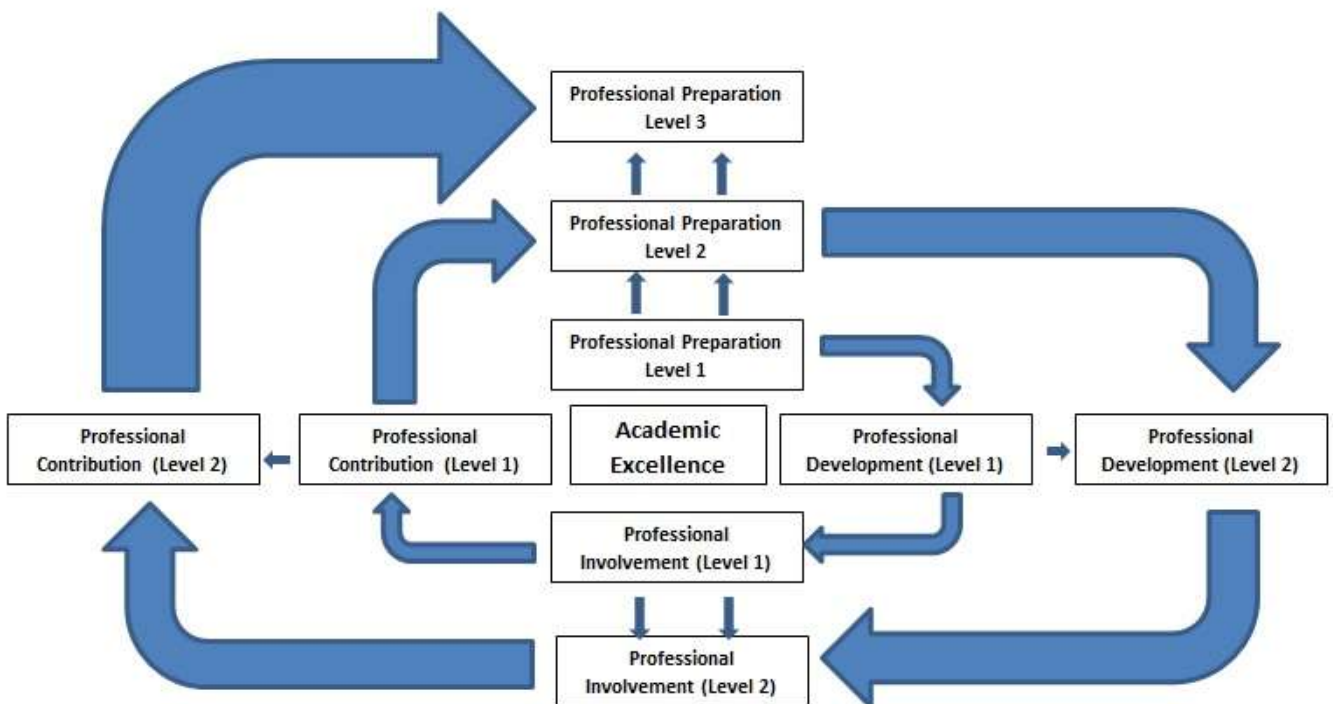
IV. THE EXCELLENCE SPIRAL

Fig 2: The excellence spiral

In the above case the faculty leverages his/her professional contribution from the existing level to the next higher level which mandates a higher level of professional preparation. This in turn triggers higher professional development through better professional involvement, which ultimately results in again a much higher professional contribution. This gets the faculty out of the cycle and puts their professional engagement into the excellence spiral accelerating the overall academic excellence of the organization.

V. FACTORS THAT ACCELERATE OR RETARD THE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The factors affecting the professional growth of the faculty have been classified into three categories namely; Individual, Institutional, and Environmental factors.

1. **Individual:** The factors that might accelerate or retard professional development at individual level are the attitudinal and motivational attributes for the particular person.

Attitudinal attributes of professionals are described as:

- Use of the professional organization as a major reference, i.e., using professional colleagues as the major source of professional ideas and judgments in practice
- Belief in service to the public, i.e., one's professional practice is indispensable to society and benefits the public
- Belief in self-regulation, i.e., one's peers are the best qualified to judge one's work
- Sense of calling to the field, i.e., dedication to the profession regardless of extrinsic rewards
- Autonomy, i.e., one can make professional decisions without external pressures from clients, non-professionals, and employers.
- Creating an environment that motivates employees is one of the toughest challenges our managers and leaders face today. It takes tremendous energy and time to build a motivated team, but the incremental benefits are critical to the long-term success of the organization.

An excerpt of the Individual factors could be accountability, volunteering, desire for self-improvement, Diversity, Work Ethics, Blame Game, Irresponsibility, Achievement, and Recognition, Growth, Work Condition.

2. **Institutional Factors:**

   Environmental: Loucks-Horsley's delineation (1987, cited in Craft 1996, 37-38) of ten conditions for a faculty's successful professional development includes elements of institutional factors like

- Cooperation, collegiality.
- Readiness for taking risks and experimentation
- Using the existing knowledge base
- Suitable inclusion of participants in the taking of decisions, establishing goals, realizing goals, methods of procedure and evaluations
- Adequate and suitable time for the development of employees and professional learning
- Clear and supportive leadership
- Suitable use of stimulation and rewards
- Incorporating principles of adult learning and processes of change into professional learning
- Unity among the individual and institutional goals as well as the goals of the Organization
- Instillation of professional development within the organizational structure and the philosophy of the organization and its environment.

3. **Environmental Factors:** Are the identifiable element in the physical, cultural, demographic, economic, political, regulatory, or technological environment that affects the survival, operations, and growth of an organization.

Some of the environmental factors affecting the professional development of the faculties could be:

- Availability of opportunity to perform or use training
- Technological tools and infrastructure.
- Open climate for communication
- Continuous-learning culture
- Pace of work flow within a work group
- Subordinate support
- Recognition from peers, work group or peer support
- Reward or incentive for training
- Availability of a mentor
- Inadequate tools, equipment, materials, and/or resources
- Heavy workloads
- Time pressures
- Few opportunities to use skill
- Disagreement or negative responses from the peers.

VI. CONCLUSION

➢ In education, research has shown that teaching quality and organization leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement.

➢ For a faculty and his/her affiliated Institute to be as effective as possible, they have continually expanded their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices.

➢ Educators learn to help students learn at the highest levels. Many people may not be aware of their local school system's methods for improving teaching and student learning.

➢ Faculty engagement is the only strategy organization systems have to strengthen educators' performance levels. Faculty Engagement is also the only way educators can learn so that they are able to better their performance and raise student achievement.

➢ It becomes imperative for the organization to break the performance cycle of the faculty and upgrade it to the excellence spiral thereby facilitating individual growth and also organizational growth.

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