

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF REFRESHER COURSES ON THE TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF HRDC, JABALPUR

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Higher Education system is expected to provide highly skilled human resource equipped with the required knowledge and expertise in tandem with the fast growing economy. Unfortunately, though the quantitative growth of higher education in India has been in leaps and bounds but the qualitative aspects seem to be missing. There is a lack of appropriate academic staff and their development is an issue that requires immediate attention by the concerned authorities. This study attempts to evaluate the impact of HRDC programmes on the teaching skills and knowledge up gradation of the teachers of various colleges of Jabalpur. A self made questionnaire has been used as a tool for the study of a total sample of 115 teachers selected randomly who have attended the refresher courses held by HRDC Jabalpur. Findings of the study reveal that there is a significant impact of the HRDC programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of the academic staff. The results of the study indicate that even though the HRDC programmes have a significant impact on the teaching skills and knowledge enhancement of the teachers in higher education there are some lacunae in the professional development of the teachers which need to be addressed on a priority basis.

Keywords: Higher Education, Human Resource Development Centres, Refresher Courses.

Introduction

Higher education in India has witnessed a significant growth over the last few decades and has played an important role in the country's economic and social development. The Indian Higher Education system is expected to provide highly skilled human resource equipped with the required knowledge and expertise in tandem with the fast growing economy. It is expected to ideally play an innovative and more promising role towards human resource development in the country. This certainly calls for modern courses, relevant curriculum, good instructional materials and a dynamic institutional climate. Unfortunately though the quantitative growth of higher education in India has been in leaps and bounds but the qualitative aspects seem to be missing. Most of the Indian educational institutions face shortage of highly motivated and qualified academic staff. This lack of appropriate academic staff and their development is an issue that requires immediate attention by the concerned authorities.

Adhering to this critical issue in Indian Higher Education, the National Policy of Education 1986, made a focused reference to the quality ensured delivery of education through continuous knowledge up-gradation and capacity building of teachers and provide them opportunities for professional and career development to cope up with the new and ever emerging challenges in the field of education. The NPE, further proposed 'in-service training' of teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills through specifically designed orientation and refresher programmes. With the view to overcome these challenges, the Academic Staff Orientation Scheme, which later on came to be known as the Academic Staff College Scheme was initiated by the University Grants Commission in the year 1987. Consequently forty eight Academic Staff Colleges were established in different parts of the country in the year 1987 with the following objectives:

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- To understand the significance of education in general and higher education in particular and higher education in particular
- To understand the linkages between education and economic and socio- economic and cultural development
- To acquire and improve basic skills of teaching at the college and university level to achieve goals of higher education
- To keep abreast of the latest developments in their specific subjects
- To understand the organisation and management of a college and perceive the role of teachers in the total system
- To utilize opportunities for development of personality, initiative and creativity, and
- To promote computer literacy as well as internet knowledge

Presently, sixty six Academic Staff College are functioning as per the guidelines of UGC to provide adequate opportunities for the professional development of academic staff in higher education. Recently, UGC proposed to transform all the existing Academic Staff Colleges into two level systems in the form of a scheme of setting up Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) and Regional Centres for Capacity Building (RCCB) in various universities in the country through the following programmes:

- Orientation Programme for newly appointed faculty members in higher education within two years of continuous service.
- Refresher Programme for those faculty members who have already undergone the Orientation Programme, in an attempt to upgrade their discipline specific knowledge.
- Workshops for capacity building of academicians and administrators.
- Short term course especially on research methodology and specialised fields of interest.
- Academic Administrators' Meeting for Principals, Heads and Deans to familiarise them with the importance of staff development programmes and persuade them to motivate teachers to attend such programmes.

Rationale of the Study

During the last few years, the new methodologies of teachings, advancement in educational technologies and extensive use of technological aids, has made the job of a teacher highly demanding and skill based. In its report, Kothari Commission too has pointed out that a higher education teacher neither receives orientation to his profession nor any training for his teaching skills enhancement thus creating a dire need for well trained faculty. Even though it is mandatory for the school teachers to have a degree in education, there are no such professional requirements for teachers in higher education except NET and Ph.D. which unfortunately do not train them for the teaching profession at the higher education level. Therefore, the need is felt to evaluate the system of functioning adopted by the Academic Staff Colleges and determine whether the programmes offered by the HRDC's help in boosting the confidence, courage, teaching skills and commitment towards their profession among the teachers. It is the need of the hour that a systematic criterion be evolved to ensure that the HRDC's will contribute towards the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in higher education.

Review of Literature

Abouelenein and Mohamed, Yousri Attia (2016) in this study have tried to identify the training needs of university faculty members from different Saudi universities in order to achieve the desired quality. The list of training needs was developed to assess university faculty members in four areas of teaching, scientific research, community service and promoting quality assurance procedures. The study states that despite the attention and importance given to the professional development of faculty members by educational institutions all over the world, a number of studies revealed that the university education faces many problems and serious challenges. It was noted that *Veiga-simao, Flores, Barros, Fernandes and Mesquita (2015)* investigated the views of 171 faculty members towards the quality of higher education and came up with the conclusion that effective teaching relies largely on employing innovative technology and professional development opportunities.

Bhattacharya, Jonaki and Pal, Prasenjit (2016) in their study have discussed the emerging issues and challenges in higher education like quantity of institutions, teacher availability and quality control mechanism. The long heritage of quality higher education system of India has failed to solve issues of quality and thus globalisation may prove helpful in improving the quality of education and bring about the development of educational sector of the country.

Kamel, Ashraf (2016) in the review article has discussed the importance of faculty development programmes in an attempt to establish whether such programmes produced any positive effect on the students' academic achievements and outlined its ideal structure and barriers to its successful implementation in Saudi Arabia. The article established the fact that high quality faculty training and development programmes have become essential for the higher education institutions enabling them to compete and create a niche for themselves. In fact the faculty development programmes have proven effective in developing the skills and abilities of the faculty, producing promising outcomes in the teaching- learning process.

Hasan, Mohammad and Parvez, Mohammad (2017) in their research discussed the need for professional development of teachers in higher education in India and analysed the elements and area of professional development of teachers in 21st century. Though all the commissions and committees always highlighted the issues and need of professional development for teachers in higher education, unfortunately very little attention has been paid to the pedagogical training of teachers in India.

Hoque, Jewel (2018) in the research article has put forth the Indian Higher Education scenario in the 21st century and the challenges faced by our education system. To improve the scenario, the Indian government initiated RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyaan) in 2013 but even though it resulted in an improvement in the enrolment ratio, the quality of education remains the same and is a matter of concern till date. The poor quality higher education is a serious issue which in the opinion of the academicians and different policy makers failed to meet the required pace of technological changes and the new trends of education system. The article suggests that certain parameters of quality education such as sufficient number of quality and skilled faculty members, updated curriculum, and appropriate teaching and learning sources must be maintained as an effort to improve the quality of higher education in India.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the impact of HRDC Programmes on the performance of academicians in Jabalpur.
- To evaluate the impact of HRDC Programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of academicians in Jabalpur.

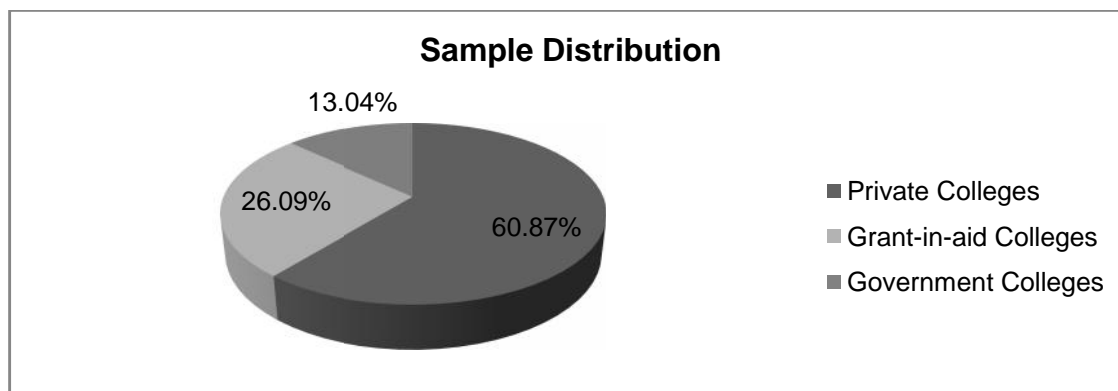
Research Methodology

In this study, the survey method has been adopted and both primary and secondary data has been used for accurate findings and results.

A self-constructed questionnaire in consultation with the subject experts was administered to the teachers from various colleges of Jabalpur. The Random Sampling method has been used for sample collection. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed at various colleges out of which 115 filled questionnaires were chosen as the sample for this survey by eliminating the partially filled up ones.

Table 1: College- wise Distribution of the Sample

| S. No. | Type of College | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Private Colleges | 70 | 60.87% |
| 2 | Grant-in-aid Colleges | 30 | 26.09% |
| 3 | Government Colleges | 15 | 13.04% |
| | Total | 115 | 100% |



Hypothesis

H₀: There is no impact of HRDC programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of academic staff in Jabalpur.

H₁: There is a significant impact of HRDC programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of academic staff in Jabalpur.

Limitations

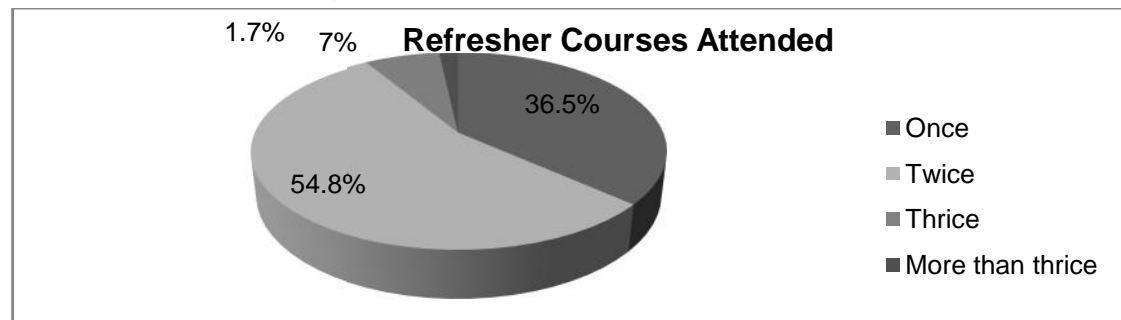
- From among the various programmes offered by HRDC, only Refresher Course has been selected for this study.
- This study is confined to the colleges of Jabalpur.
- Selective Convenience Sampling method of data collection having its own limitations has been applied.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

Table 2: Refresher Courses Attended by the Respondents

| Parameters | Responses | Percentage |
|------------------|------------|------------|
| Once | 42 | 36.5% |
| Twice | 63 | 54.8% |
| Thrice | 08 | 7% |
| More than thrice | 02 | 1.7% |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires



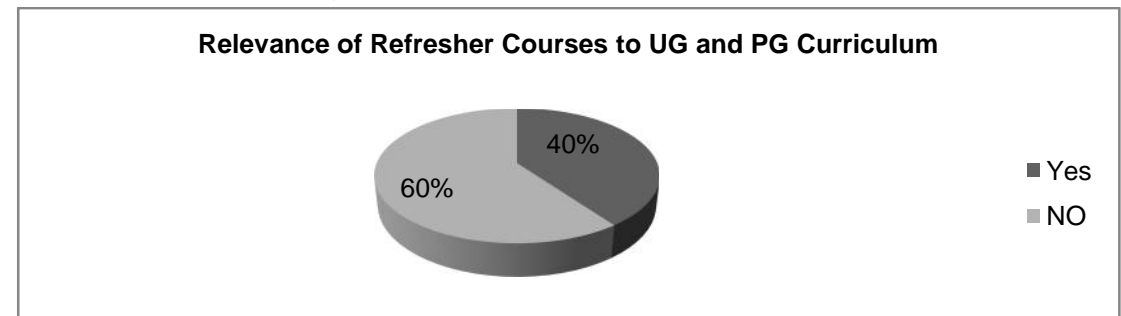
Inference

From the above table it is evident that 36.5% of the respondents have attended only one refresher course even though as per the UGC guidelines the teachers in higher education are required to attend two refresher courses during their service tenure.

Table 3: Relevance of Refresher Course to UG and PG Curriculum of the University

| Parameters | Responses | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 46 | 40% |
| No | 69 | 60% |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires



Inference

The above Table 3 indicates that 69 respondents agreed that the refresher courses are relevant to the curriculum of the UG and PG programmes offered by the university whereas, 46 respondents did not find any relevance between the two.

Table 4: Course Material Provided to the Participants by HRDC

| Parameters | Responses | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 38 | 33% |
| No | 77 | 67% |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires

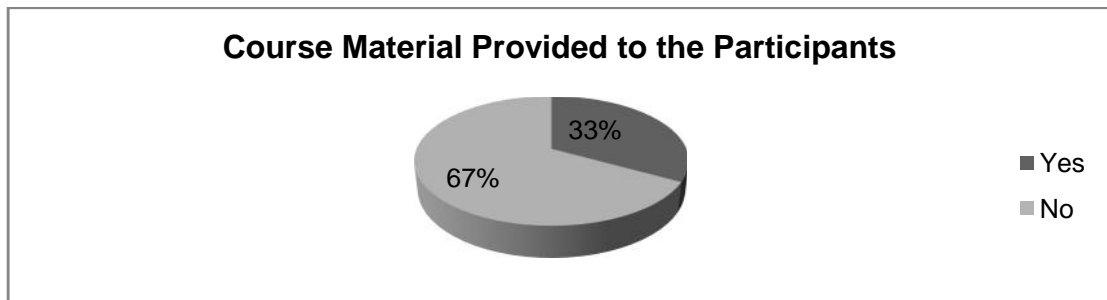
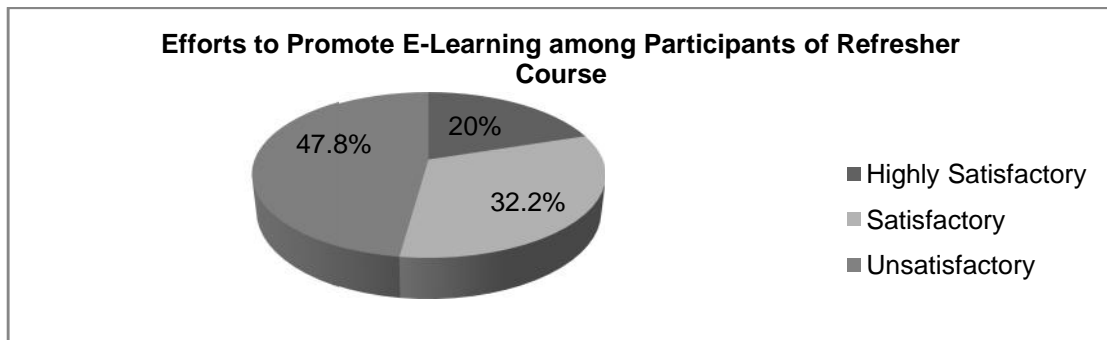
**Inference**

Table 4 clearly shows that 67% of the respondent participants did not receive any course material during the HRDC programmes attended by them at the university.

Table 5: Efforts by HRDC to Promote E-Learning among Participants of Refresher Course

| Parameters | Responses | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Highly Satisfactory | 23 | 20% |
| Satisfactory | 37 | 32.2% |
| Unsatisfactory | 55 | 47.8% |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires

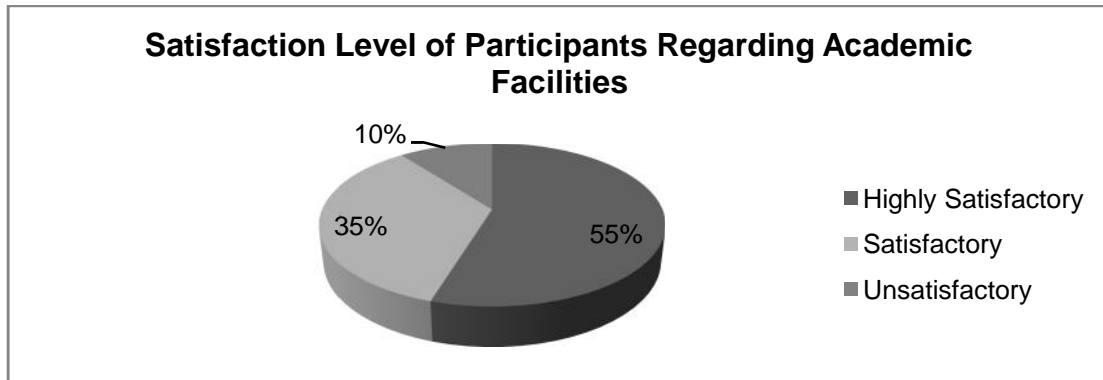
**Inference**

The above table depicts that out of total 115 respondents, only 23 respondents were highly satisfied whereas 55 respondents were dissatisfied with the efforts of HRDC to promote e-learning among the participants of the programmes held by HRDC.

Table 6: Satisfaction Level of Participants with Regards to Academic Facilities Provided at HRDC

| Parameters | Responses | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Highly Satisfactory | 63 | 55% |
| Satisfactory | 40 | 35% |
| Unsatisfactory | 12 | 10% |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires

**Inference**

From the above table 6 it can be analysed and interpreted that out of the total respondents to the questionnaire, 63 respondents were highly satisfied with the academic facilities provided at HRDC, Jabalpur whereas, only 12 respondents were not satisfied with it.

Table 7: Satisfaction Level of Participants with Regards to the Expertise of Resource Persons

| Parameters | Responses | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Highly Satisfactory | 65 | 56.5% |
| Satisfactory | 40 | 34.8% |
| Unsatisfactory | 10 | 8.7% |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires

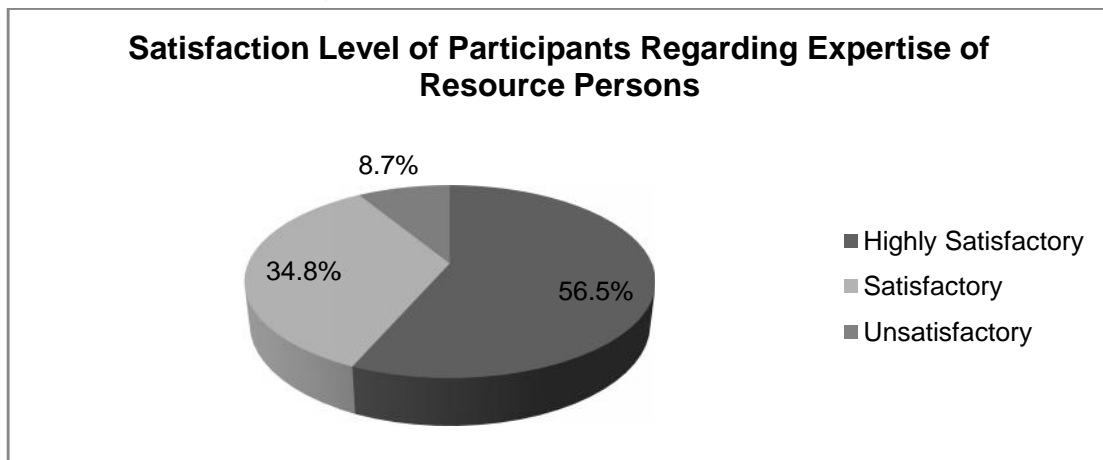
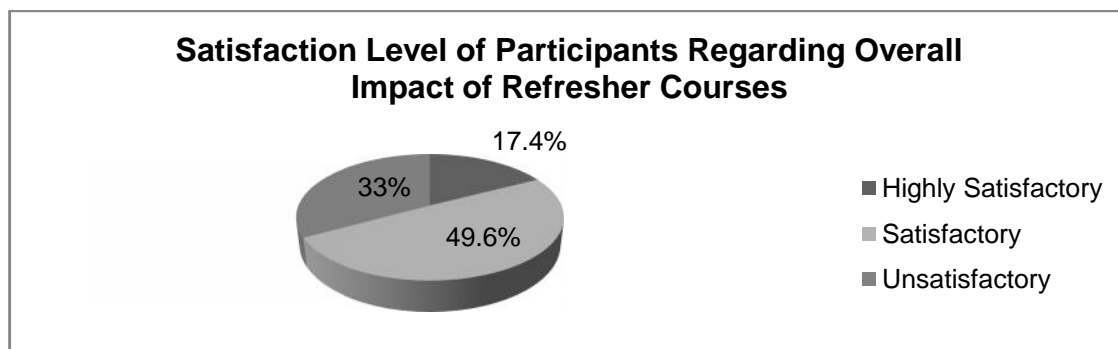
**Inference**

Table 7 depicts clearly the satisfaction level of the respondents towards the expertise of the resource persons invited at HRDC, Jabalpur. From the table it is quite evident that most of the respondents (56.5%) were highly satisfied and found the resource persons highly knowledgeable and expert in their field of study. On the contrary only 8.7% of the respondents thought otherwise.

Table 8: satisfaction Level of Participants Regarding Overall Impact of the Refresher Course Attended

| Parameters | Responses | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Highly Satisfactory | 20 | 17.4% |
| Satisfactory | 57 | 49.6% |
| Unsatisfactory | 38 | 33% |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires



Inference

Table 8 measures the satisfaction level of respondents regarding the overall impact of the refresher courses attended by them at HRDC, Jabalpur. Out of a total of 115 respondents 57 respondent participants were moderately satisfied and 20 respondents were highly satisfied with the refresher course attended.

Testing of Hypothesis

H₀: There is no impact of HRDC programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of academic staff in Jabalpur.

H₁: There is a significant impact of HRDC programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of academic staff in Jabalpur.

Table 9: Calculation of Chi Square Test

| Parameters | O(fo) | E(fe) | O-E | (O-E) ² | (O-E) ² / E |
|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Yes | 75 | 57.5 | 17.5 | 306.25 | 5.33 |
| No | 40 | 57.5 | -17.5 | 306.25 | 5.33 |
| Total | O=115 | | | | $\chi^2=10.66$ |

Source: - Primary Data Collected through Questionnaires
Fo=Observed Frequency, Fe=Expected Frequency, χ^2 =Chi Square value

This table determines the impact of HRDC programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of the academic staff. The results reveal that the Calculated Value (CV) of chi square is **10.66** whereas the Table Value (TV) of chi square at 5% level of confidence for 1 degree of freedom is **3.841**. Since the calculated value is more than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted which shows that there is a significant impact of the HRDC programmes on the subject knowledge up gradation of academic staff in Jabalpur.

Findings

- Most of the colleges do not encourage participation of their teachers in the HRDC programmes.
- The Refresher Courses are usually organised on a macro level and do not cover the curriculum taught at the UG and PG levels.
- Academic facilities and expertise of the resource persons was satisfactory but the availability of course material during the Refresher Course was not felt up to the mark by the participants.
- A majority of respondents felt the lack of efforts by HRDC to promote E-learning among the participant teachers.
- Most of the participants found only a moderate impact of the Refresher Courses on their overall teaching skills.

Suggestions

After a careful analysis of the data collected from the teacher participants and considering their suggestions following suggestions are presented to modify the existing pattern of courses and make them meaningful.

- The courses of HRDC should be more result oriented.
- Guidelines should be framed by the UGC and other concerned authorities to increase the participation of teachers from private colleges in the refresher courses.

- New topics introduced in the university curriculum should be included in the course contents of the refresher courses.
- A soft copy of reference or course materials should be provided to all the participants during their course for future references.
- The HRDC should train the teacher participants about the use of latest teaching aids. ITC knowledge as well as e-learning should be given due weightage in the course contents.

Conclusion

In the anxiety to provide access of higher education to all, the nation has witnessed a quantitative explosion in the number of higher education institutions which has made the education system face erosion in the quality of education. The establishing of the HRDC's, formerly known as Academic Staff Colleges, was an appreciative step taken by UGC way back in 1987 to enhance the academic skills of college and university teachers. Still the HRDC's need to re-design the course content of the training programmes, improve the functional efficiency of the teachers and encourage them to pursue innovative teaching methodology.

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