

CHAPTER II

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2.1 Introduction

Over a period of time, since the dawn of independence the system of higher education in India has experienced rapid changes. There has been extensive expansion of higher education in terms of manifold increase in the number of colleges and universities as well as astounding increase in the students population beyond proportion. In the course of rapid change and expansion of higher education there has been a emerging concern regarding its falling standard. This concern is officially endorsed by the various committees and commissions set up by the Government of India from time to time, starting from University Education Commission (1948-49) to the National Policy on Education -1986 (revised in 1992). The concern for quality, has stressed on the need of professional preparation of teachers. Moreover, professional development of teachers in higher education is also stressed on the ground that the explosion of knowledge in all fields of education has revolutionized the system and accordingly the development in the pedagogical fields has established the fact that, the teachers in higher education can be provided educational inputs to make them efficient professionals without disrespecting the theory of born or natural teachers. The need of training or education of teachers at the higher education level seems to be reckoned

with if not fully recognized for which, different models of such teacher education, academic staff orientation and academic staff development programmes have been tried out of late in different countries including India. However, the launching of Academic staff orientation Scheme in the year 1987 has marked the beginning of a new era in the professional education of the college and university teachers in India.

The present study is conceived in the context of the need to understand the exigency and suitability of the Academic Staff Orientation Course from outside the structure of ASCs and its monitoring agency the UGC. The study is just an attempt to elicit certain fundamental strengths and weaknesses of Academic Staff Orientation Programme; the assumption being that notwithstanding the regional, structural and implementational differences, there are many basic factors invariant in the ASCs and one might as well study these invariant characteristics in detail in limited field situation profitably.

2.2 Rationale for the Study

Since the inception of ASOS in 1987 many speculations were made about the success of the scheme. However, there were mixed response in the intellectual circles about its efficiency and subsequent success. There were scepticism that a mere hearing of lectures on some selected topics as listed in the curriculum of ASOC by the UGC would orient the

new entrants to the teaching profession at higher education level to the extent of fulfilling the ambitious objectives of the scheme (Ramanujam, 1993). The time when it is doubted whether the teaching community has realized the importance of such orientation, it is convincingly posited by Anand and Buch (1991) that, teacher education at the higher education level has not been recognized as yet by the teachers. Regarding the need and importance of orientation course when new entrants very frankly admit that they are attending the orientation course because of its mandatory requirement and would not be attending these courses otherwise, the principals are unable to understand and appreciate the utility of such programmes (Indiresan, 1991). In this context, a study conducted by Veeraragbhan and Malik (1988) throws certain light over the fact that, most (58%) of the teachers of a university in Delhi were against the idea that training would improve the quality of teaching at university level. In contrast, another study by Sharma and Wizarat (1988) revealed that, majority of the teachers felt the need of training in the areas of general awareness, teaching learning process, planning and management.

In the face of the diametrically opposite empirical facts regarding the need of orientation and training programme, it is necessary that, success of a scheme like ASOS has to be backed by a systematic analysis and identification of the orientational needs (or training

needs) of its beneficiaries. The UGC Review Committee on ASCs (1991) has also observed that the orientation courses are conducted in a mechanical manner without taking into account the specific interests of the participants. This may be the reason for the poor and wayward response to such programmes which needs further careful investigation.

There are many issues which are again internal to the ASOP and ASCs which also deserve thorough research attention. Regarding the structure and duration of the orientation course, its components and curricular contents, its organizational methods and approach/climate, and, its impact on the teachers there are mixed view points as put forward by Rao et al. (1990), Dhar and Singh (1990), Passi and Pal (1991), Rajmony and Aravanan (1991), Deshpande and Jantli (1991), Gupta and Buddhi (1992), Passi and Pal (1992), Rehman and Biswal (1992), Sharma et al. (1992), Rao (1993), Pal (1993), Passi and Pal (1994) and Rao and Palsane (1994). The review of research made by the present researcher reveals that regarding the overall efficiency of the ASCs studied by Rehman and Biswal (1992), Sharma et al. (1992) and Rao (1993) have shown the similar trend which depict the various aspects of ASCs programmes as very effective, very positive and very much satisfactory, whereas, on the other hand Rao and Palsane (1994) have given the exactly opposite version of it by pointing out that the overall efficiency of the programme is unsatisfactory. It may be noted here that the causes of mutual contradictions

observed in the findings of Rao and Palsane (1994) Vs. Rehman and Biswal (1992), Sharma et al. (1992) and Rao (1993) is to some extent traced in the methodologies applied in those studies. As the studies conducted by Rehman and Biswal (1992), Sharma et al. (1992) and Rao (1993) have totally based on the participants' feedback collected by the ASCs for sending it to NIEPA which was given the responsibility of monitoring of ASCs programmes, these feedbacks were by and large towards the end of favourableness on a favourable and unfavourable continuum, hence the difference (Rao & Palsane, 1994).

Considering the above, a further inquiry outside the structure of ASCs and its monitoring agencies like NIEPA and UGC is justifiable. The other studies like that of Passi and Sahoo (1988), Dhar and Singh (1990), Passi and Pal (1991, 1992, 1994) and Pal (1993) were micro level studies with very limited scope and those were mainly relied on the responses of participants of any one individual ASC at one time or other. Besides, there were also certain mutual contradictions in the findings of these studies and in some cases the findings were followed by unanswered questions (e.g. as it is observed in case of Passi and Pal, 1991 regarding the relevance of topics in the ASC curriculum).

The impact of the orientation programme on participants' professional behaviour has been almost completely overlooked by the researchers. However,

Deshapande and Jantli (1991); and, Gupta and Budhi (1992) made some effort in studying attitudinal change and change in teaching styles of the teachers soon after the orientation courses were over. But for that matter the number of studies conducted in the area of teacher education at higher education is grossly inadequate (Singh and Malhotra, 1991) and it is more so in the specific context of ASOS and ASCs. But it is quite pertinent to study the impact of the ASOC on the teachers of higher education when crores of rupees being spent by the UGC in maintaining the ASCs. According to an estimate, nearly 20-30 million rupees are spent every year in the staff development programmes mainly conducted through the ASCs in the form of orientation and refresher courses and in the year 1992-93 itself about 9 million rupees were spent on organization of orientation programme alone (Sharma, 1995). Hence it is quite imperative to make stock takings from time to time to give proper directions to the scheme and from this angle too the need of the study is justified.

With these rationale the researcher decided to conduct a study on ASOS:

- to examine the present status of ASOS, the way ASOCs are organized and the progress made so far by the ASCs;
- to analyze the response of participants of orientation programme and the functionaries of ASCs regarding various aspects of the ASOP;

- to list the problems and difficulties of both the participant teachers of orientation course and the functionaries of ASCs; and
- to make recommendations for the improvement of the scheme.

Accordingly the present study is conceived to answer the following research questions:

- i) What progress is made by ASCs so far as the implementation of ASOS is concerned?
- ii) What is the present status of ASCs? Are they functioning in a satisfactory manner?
- iii) What are the responses of the participant teachers regarding the need of ASOC considering their diverse academic and demographic backgrounds?
- iv) What is the current practice in organization of the orientation course, its duration, content, methods of instruction and methods of appraisal?
- v) How do the participants and functionaries react to the course contents, methods of instruction, instructional materials, organizational climate and methods of evaluation?
- vi) How do the participants perceive the course (ASOC) as a whole?
- vii) Are there any variations in the perception of the different groups of participants about the ASOC?
- viii) What are the problems faced by the participants with regard to attending the orientation course?

- ix) What are the operational problems faced by the functionaries of ASCs in conducting/organizing ASOP?
- x) Are there any possible solutions to the problems faced by the participants and the functionaries of ASOP?
- xi) What is the impact of the ASOC on its beneficiaries? Are they really benefitted?

The answers to the above questions will definitely help the ASCs to restructure the orientation programme, help the policy makers by providing feedback for planning future endeavours in this direction or while going for further expansion of academic staff orientation scheme and it will also provide enough insight to understand the actual training needs of the teachers at higher education level. Above all the findings of the study will contribute towards suggesting new directions to the ASOP in particular and to the professional education of teachers at higher education level at large.

2.3 Title of the Study

In the perspective of the rationale of the study and the research questions listed above the title of the study is stated as hereunder:

"A Critical Inquiry into the Academic Staff Orientation Scheme (1987) of UGC".

2.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To study the progress of the ASO scheme with reference to orientation course.
2. To report the current status of ASCs with reference to:
 - infrastructure,
 - human resources, and
 - finance.
3. To study the participants' response regarding the need of orientation course.
4. To study the suitability of the present model of orientation course with reference to:
 - its structure and organization,
 - curriculum ,
 - instructional process, and
 - and evaluation mechanism.
5. To study the participants' overall perception of the ASOC.
6. To study the problems of participant teachers with reference to:
 - their selection for the orientation course, and
 - their difficulties during the orientation course.
7. To study the problems faced by the ASCs regarding organization of orientation programmes.
8. To study the impact of orientation course on teachers participating in orientation programmes.
9. To draw implications about the success of ASOP in the light of the reactions of the directors of ASCs.

10. To recommend measures for the improvement of the ASOP based on responses of the directors of ASCs and the participants

2.5 Hypotheses of the study

As mostly the study is descriptive in nature there was no any a priori need to have a set of hypotheses. However, for the objective - 5, because a quantitative measure was taken to study the perception, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There will be no significant difference in the mean perception scores of the participants of different ASCs.
2. There will be no significant difference in the mean perception scores of the participants of Arts, Science and Commerce faculties.
3. There will be no significant difference in the mean perception scores of the participants of different levels of qualifications.
4. There will be no significant difference in the mean perception scores of male and female participants.

2.5.1 Rationale behind Hypotheses

The academic staff orientation course is a common course meant for all those lecturers who have less than eight years of experience irrespective of their belongingness to any faculty - Arts, Science or Commerce,

their qualifications, their teaching at graduate or post-graduate level, whether they are male or female etc. But, one's perception of the ASOC is likely to be coloured by his/her academic as well as situational backgrounds. Hence, there is the possibility of perceptual differences.

As ASOC is a standard course formulated by the UGC and it is organised more or less in a uniform manner considering the course objectives, course contents, etc. in the different ASCs, it is expected that the perception of the teachers would not vary even though they attend such programmes in different ASCs. Moreover, any observed difference in the participants' perception of ASOC in different ASCs would mean either the assertion of a standardized format of orientation course is untenable or the courses are organised in significantly different manner.

However, these are logical assumptions, the testing of hypotheses would establish the facts. It may be noted here that, some hypotheses could not be tested though formulated in the beginning, considering, inadequate representation of subjects in various categories based on the levels of teaching (UG & PG), college/ university background and experiences.

2.6 Definition of Terms

Even if the present study is non-positivistic in nature, the researcher felt it important to clarify specific

definitions of terms those are pervasively used throughout this research report. Normally these terms connote wide variety of meaning in difference contexts, therefore, such terms weere needed to be defined here to remove any ambiguity associated with those. These definitions may appear here as too rigid and limited in meaning in contrast to the usual meanings attached to these terms.

Critical Inquiry: The term critical inquiry would mean here an impartial and empirical investigation into a particular phenomenon with both assessment and evaluative approach. An inquiry in general is a fact finding mission with an aim to report the facts as it is. However, critical inquiry involves in addition to the finding of facts the task of interpreting the collected facts in a given perspective, to weigh the validity of facts and to add a value judgement to it, to find out inter connections between the isolated facts gathered from a given situation to answer any emerging question, questions or a complex problem. In the context of the present study critical inquiry would mean all these i.e. to find out basic facts about the various aspects of the ASOP, to deduce implications from those facts and to answer the research questions on the basis of the collected facts and deduced conclusions.

ASOS: ASOS represents Academic Staff Orientation Scheme formulated by the UGC, the apex policy making body in the field of higher education in India. However, the ASOS is

conceived here in a limited perspective as the orientation programme/ course alone without categorical reference to the refresher courses. The study (critical inquiry) of ASOS would mean here the study of the structural details of orientation course, the need of orientation, the suitability and impact of the orientation course, the problems and difficulties associated with organisation of orientation programme and the progress and success of the orientation programme.

ASOC: ASOC represents Academic Staff Orientation Course. The use of the term ASOC is limited to the course as such, in a literacy sense; to the course structure, content, methods and evaluation mechanisms that are in the form of a prescribed theoretical frame of reference which is there supposed to be translated into action.

ASOP: ASOP which represents Academic Staff Orientation Programme is the ASOC put into action or made operational, hence, broader in scope than ASOC. The term ASOP is mainly used in this report in the sense that it transcends beyond the theoretical frame of reference of ASOC to cover many other aspects once the ASOC is set in operation.

Progress of ASOS: Progress of ASOS is conceived as the quantitative increase in the number of orientation programmes organised and the number of participants enrolled in these orientation programmes according to the latest

available data.

Status of ASCs: Status of ASCs means, the existing state of affairs in ASCs in terms of the infrastructure, human resources and financial position.

Perception of ASOC: Perception of ASOC is operationally defined as the score participant gets on the basis of his/her responses to the 'perception of ASOC Scale' prepared by the investigator. The score obtained is the indicator of one's general feeling about the ASOP on the whole. It may be noted here that the terms ASOC and ASOP are often alternatively used in this report.

Suitability: Suitability of the various components of ASOC was studied on the basis of the ratings and opinions given by the participants and the directors (including Dy. Director and Asst. Directors in some cases).

Impact: Impact of the ASOC was studied in terms of any significant change in the professional behaviour of the teachers as observed by themselves while responding to a self- evaluation questionnaire six months after attending the orientation course.

2.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The present study was conceived not by the pre-occupation of evaluating a particular ASC or ASCs where the scheme is under implementation, rather than, the study of a

few ASCs in a comprehensive manner was a means to finding answers to the emerging questions regarding the effectiveness of ASOC and efficiency of ASCs as discussed in the rationale of the study.

The ASCs selected under the sample of the present study and the ASCs those provided appropriate data for the present study, at best, are exemplars of ASO system in general in India in recent times. However, it may be categorically mentioned here that the study does not attempt arriving at definite conclusions generalizable to all the ASCs and at all times.

Nevertheless, the scope of the present study covers the ASO scheme in general and ASOP in particular with following limitations:

- i) The study is limited to orientation course/programme only.
- ii) The study is limited to the specific aspects of the ASOS, ASOP, ASOC and ASCs as listed in the objectives of the study.
- iii) The study of suitability of the present model of orientation programme is limited to the ratings given by the directors and participants.
- iv) The determination of participants perception of ASOC is limited to their obtained score in the 'Perception of ASOC' scale administered to them.
- v) The problems faced by the participants during the

orientation programme and the problems of ASCs are limited to the concerned individual ASCs only.

- vi) The impact of the orientation course is limited to the response of participants to a self-evaluation questionnaire prepared by the investigator.