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Professional Development Priorities among Different Age-Based Groups of Higher Education Faculty in Institutes of Delhi

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Abstract- Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) are very important to the careers of teachers in higher education institutions. They become better at what they do, and the entire institution is improved. But the fact is that faculty members are not all alike, and age is actually a factor in what they want from an FDP. This research explores how the interests of faculty change with age. On the basis of a structured survey of 302 faculty members from various universities and colleges, a One-Way ANOVA test was conducted to determine how needs differ in three age groups: 25-34, 35-44, and 45 and above. The findings are quite striking. Age does make a difference. The younger generation is more concerned with handling classes and establishing a sound foundation in subject matter. The middle-aged faculty begin to tilt towards competency development and professional growth. The 45+ age group is more concerned with developing their personalities and management acumen. To synthesise all this, this study proposes an Age-Life-Cycle Model of Faculty Development Priorities. The study concludes that "one-size-fits-all" solutions do not work. If universities are serious about faculty development, they need to listen to where people are in their life cycle and provide development that fits.

Keywords – Faculty Development Programmes, Age Differences, Professional Development, Higher Education, One-Way ANOVA, Life-Cycle Model.

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching in higher educational institutions is a dynamic and complex profession that demands continuous professional development to effectively deal with the ever-changing nature of teaching practices, diversity of students, technological developments, and institutional needs. Unlike other professional areas, becoming a teacher in higher educational institutions does not necessarily demand training in teaching practices. Therefore, Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) are the most crucial institutional efforts for enhancing teaching skills and professional effectiveness.

Age is an important variable that impacts professional development because it not only measures biological maturity but also psychological development, identity formation, control over emotions, and role transition. Younger faculty often encounter challenges related to classroom management, instructional confidence, and professional socialisation, whereas senior faculty increasingly engage in leadership, mentoring, and governance roles. Understanding how professional development priorities vary across age groups is therefore essential for designing responsive and effective FDPs.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical perspectives from adult learning and professional development suggest that learning needs evolve across life stages.

University Education Commission (1948-49), headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan suggested, “it is for the universities to create knowledge and train minds who would bring together the two, material resources and human energies. If our living standards are to be raised, a radical change of spirit is essential.”

Drucker (1994) observed that the great majority of the new jobs require a good deal of formal education and the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical and analytical knowledge. They require a different approach to work and a different mind-set. Above all, they require a habit of continuous learning. He rightly predicted that education will become centre of the knowledge society. An educated person, according to Drucker, is somebody who has learned how to learn and who continues learning.

Indian National policy on education 1986 described, “Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the

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critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through the dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is a crucial factor for survival...In the context of the unprecedented explosion of knowledge, higher education has to become dynamic as never before, constantly entering uncharted areas."

The three main responsibilities of the college teachers as perceived by K. Ramachandrachar and Shobha S. Nilavar are – responsibility to oneself as a scholar and an academician, responsibility to the institution, responsibility to the society. (Mohanty, 1993) explained, "Since the frontiers of knowledge have been expanding every now and then, teachers would lag behind even their own students unless they keep in touch with the latest trends and developments."

Patton (2010) stated, "University classrooms all over America are populated with professors who may have developed a substantial knowledge of and or expertise in their respective disciplines, but who may have very little training on how to teach what they know. Faculty development bears on this issue, providing opportunities for faculty to increase and maintain currency in their respective disciplines as well as providing opportunities to improve their teaching."

Polly et.al. (2011) state that, as institutions of higher education increase access and support the use of educational technologies, there is a need to examine how to best support faculty's integration of technology into their courses. Waghmare (2012) stated that teachers have to play an active role in the development of the horizons of their respective disciplines by way of involving themselves voluntarily in systematic research activities. The three important dimensions of the teacher, as stated by Alphonse (2012) are sharing information and presenting values; formation, bringing out the talents and best in the students and social transformation.

III. PRESENT SCENARIO OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF ORIENTATION SCHEME IN INDIA

For being a faculty member in a higher education institute, one should have a good academic record with at least 55% marks in the post-graduate level education and have qualified the UGC National Eligibility Test for lecturers may apply for a teaching position in a higher education institute. Appointment is based on one's performance in the interview. As such, there is no prescribed requirement to have any pre-job training for appointment as a teacher in any higher education institute. To address this need, the University Grants Commission (UGC) set up Academic Staff Colleges to offer structured Orientation Programmes for newly recruited faculty members and Refresher Courses for teachers already serving in higher education institutions. Further, various higher education institutes organise faculty development programmes under Quality Assurance Schemes, either funded by AICTE or self-sustained models. Moreover, there are National Institutes of Technical Teachers Training and Research, which hold training courses in technical and professional areas.

As per the Gazette of India Notification dated September 18, 2010, faculty development programmes have been linked to the Academic Performance Indicators (API) in the Career Advancement Scheme (CAS). Under the present system, teachers are awarded 20 points on successfully participating in the faculty development programmes for not less than two weeks' duration and are awarded 10 points on successfully participating in the FDPs for one week's duration.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Find out professional development priorities across age-based faculty groups.
2. Identify specific FDP domains that are more influenced by age.
3. Suggest a conceptual life-cycle model explaining age-based shifts in professional development needs of higher education faculty.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research work is carried out using the analytical and descriptive methods of research. The questionnaire survey method is adopted to examine the training requirements of the practitioners in the field of higher education. The questionnaire survey after the pilot study was improved and shaped into the format of the Likert Scale, which included the dimensions of the effectiveness of the faculty development programmes.

Data Collection - 450 questionnaires were circulated among the practitioners of higher education in various colleges and universities in the capital city of Delhi in 2012. Only 359 questionnaires could be received out of these, and 302 out of them proved to be fit for the study, as the remaining ones turned out to be incomplete.

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach α) - Before proceeding towards any statistical analysis on the data, it is significant to estimate the degree of reliability and validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was estimated by calculating Cronbach's α. The α index computed is .94, pointing towards a high reliability level of the instrument.

Participants' demographic profiles - Frequency analysis of the data reveals, there are 150 males and 152 female respondents to the study. On the basis of age, responses have

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been categorized into three 25-34 years, 35-44 years and 45 years and above.

Statistical Analysis - To analyze the differences based on age, One-Way ANOVA was employed. In cases where statistically significant differences were observed, Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was employed to determine the differences at the group level. The significance level was fixed at $p < 0.05$. Only statistically significant results are presented in the current report.

VI. RESULTS

To study whether professional development priorities vary significantly across different age groups of higher education faculty, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted using age as the independent variable. Faculty respondents were categorised into three age groups: 25–34 years, 35–44 years, and 45 years and above. The analysis confirmed five major domains of Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs), namely class handling skills, education-related subject knowledge, competency building, personality development, and managerial skills, having significant differences in priorities of higher education faculty regarding professional development. The detailed findings for each domain are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of Age-Based ANOVA Results

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Professional Development Dimension	F-value	p-value	Age-baseed Groups with Significant Differences	Direction of Difference
Class handling skills	3.801	.023	25–34 > 35–44	Younger faculty show higher FDP needs
Education-related subject knowledge	7.752	.001	25–34 > 35–44, 45+	Younger faculty show higher FDP needs
Competency building	3.223	.041	25–34 > 35–44	Younger faculty show higher FDP needs
Personality development	5.894	.003	25–34 > 35–44, 45+	Younger faculty show higher FDP needs
Managerial skills	4.832	.009	25–34 > 35–44	Younger faculty show higher FDP needs

Age-Based Differences in Class Handling Skills

Class handling skills include competencies related to managing classroom interactions, student engagement, communication, and instructional delivery. The One-Way ANOVA test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the needs for class handling skills due to age ($F(2, 295) = 3.801$, $p = .023$). The post hoc test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the needs for class handling skills between the 25-34 years and 35-44 years age groups, with the 25-34 years group having higher needs, and no statistically significant difference between the 25-34 years and 45 years and above age groups.

This result implies that the younger faculty members face more difficulties in handling class interactions, which could be attributed to their lack of teaching experience, lack of confidence in dealing with different student behaviours, and developing their teaching identities. When faculty members enter middle adulthood, they develop more instructional stability and control over class interactions as a result of their accumulated teaching experience.

Age-Based Differences in Education-Related Subject Knowledge

Education-related subject knowledge refers to faculty members' knowledge of educational psychology, learning theories, pedagogy, and instructional practices. The ANOVA output showed highly significant age-related differences in this area ($F(2, 293) = 7.752$, $p = .001$).

The post-hoc test showed that the 25-34 years age group had a significantly higher need than the 35-44 years and 45 years and over age groups. There was no significant difference between the 35-44 years and 45 years and over age groups.

This suggests that early-career faculty members have a greater perceived need for formal knowledge in educational theory and pedagogy, which are not necessarily covered in training programs. As faculty members gain experience, they seem to absorb pedagogical knowledge from their teaching experiencee, thus perceiving less need for formal pedagogical training.

Age-Based Differences in Competency Building

Developing competencies requires skills such as analytical thinking, communication skills, adaptability, innovation, and professional effectiveness. The ANOVA test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the impact of age on competency development needs ($F(2, 297) = 3.223$, $p = .041$). The post-hoc test revealed that the competency development needs of the younger faculty members (25-34 years) were significantly higher than those of the middle-aged faculty members (35-44 years), but there was no statistically significant difference in the competency development needs of the younger and senior faculty members.

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This is an indication that the younger faculty members are in the active acquisition stage of their skills, where they aim to improve both hard and soft skills required for professional development. The middle-aged faculty members might be using experiential competence, where they have already acquired the necessary professional skills.

Age-Based Differences in Personality Development

Personality development encompasses areas such as emotional intelligence, self-confidence, interpersonal communication, stress management, and professional identity. The ANOVA test showed highly significant age-related variation in this area ($F(2, 297) = 5.894$, $p = .003$).

The post-hoc test showed that the group of faculty members aged 25-34 years had a significantly greater need for personality development compared to the other two age groups. This is because, as a psychological transition takes place in the early years of professional life, younger faculty members are still in the process of developing their academic identities and are becoming more confident in their professional capacities. With increasing age, faculty members become more emotionally mature and professionally stable, and thus there would be less need for personality development.

Age-Based Differences in Managerial Skills

Managerial skills are skills associated with academic planning, leadership, decision-making, coordination, and administrative functionality. The ANOVA test showed a statistically significant difference in the effect of age on the need for managerial skills ($F(2, 297) = 4.832$, $p = .009$).

The post hoc test showed that the mean managerial skill need was significantly higher in the 25-34 years group than in the 35-44 years group, but not significantly different from the senior faculty group.

This implies that the younger faculty members have a high need to develop managerial skills as they start handling administrative tasks in their academic departments. The middle-aged faculty members, who have already had exposure to managerial tasks, have a lower need to develop such skills.

Overall Pattern of Age-Based Differences

Cumulatively, the findings reveal a consistent and systematic pattern across all domains of FDP. The 25-34 years age group of faculty members reported a significantly higher need for professional development in all five domains. This reveals that early-career faculty members constitute the most developmentally sensitive group, requiring intensive institutional support.

Middle-aged faculty members (35-44 years) have been found to have relatively lower perceived needs, suggesting a stage of professional development when experiential learning has partially replaced formal training. Senior faculty members (45 years and above) have been found to have relatively stable needs, with a growing focus on leadership and institutional contribution.

The findings above confirm that the needs for professional development have a life-cycle pattern, wherein the type and level of training needs change across different stages of the faculty members' lives, as opposed to a uniform decline with age. The findings are depicted through Figure 1, illustrating the Age-Life-Cycle Model of faculty development priorities.

Figure 1

The above figure '1' describing "Age-Life-Cycle Model of Faculty Development Priorities" shows the developmental change in faculty development priorities throughout the life cycle of academics. Younger academics (25-34 years) stress on pedagogical competence, personality development, and teaching skills. Mid-career academics (35-44 years) prefer professional development and research productivity enhancement. Senior academics (45+ years) show increased orientation toward leadership, mentoring, policy engagements, institutional governance, and competency development.

Discussion

The findings clearly indicate that professional development needs vary systematically with age, confirming that faculty needs are developmentally organized rather than homogeneous. For all categories of FDP, the needs of the younger faculty members were higher. This is expected as they are in the

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transition phase where they have not yet developed teaching expertise, professional identity, and emotional regulation.

The middle-aged faculty members have relatively lower perceptions of needs, which suggest a phase of professional establishment where experiential education takes over formal education. The senior faculty members have relatively stable pedagogical needs but higher needs for leadership, governance, and institutional engagement.

The life-cycle approach suggests that there is a non-linear relationship between professional development and the faculty life cycle, where the relevance of professional development does not diminish at any stage of the faculty life cycle but its focus shifts from teaching skill development → role establishment → leadership and legacy development.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study offers robust empirical support for the influence of age on professional development priorities among faculty members in higher education institutions. The younger faculty members show the strongest demand for systematic pedagogical and personal development, while the older faculty members show evolving demands for leadership and institutional roles. The proposed Age-Life-Cycle Model is a theoretically informed and empirically supported framework for analysing professional learning pathways in higher education. The study concludes that faculty development needs developmentally differentiated and life-cycle-based training frameworks. The results support age-sensitive design of FDPs, including elements of training needed during that stage:

- **25–34 years:** Pedagogy, class management, educational psychology, personality development.
- **35–44 years:** Research productivity, curriculum leadership, academic networking.
- **45+ years**: Leadership development, mentoring, policy engagement, institutional governance.

This implies that one-size-fits-all FDPs are pedagogically inefficient and administratively suboptimal.

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