Professional Development Programmes: Practices and Impacts

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Abstract

Professional programmes like trainings, workshops, symposiums, conclaves, conferences, and similar development opportunities play a significant role in enhancing faculty professional skills and ultimately nurturing quality ecology within an institution. This study attempted to analyze the practice of such programmes during the last five years at J S Campus Lahan, Siraha, how they have been practically prioritized by the faculty members and this institution, and what impacts are being observed so far. It applied the mixed research design and the sample of study included faculty members, RMC coordinator, and Heads of the institution. The data from them were collected through interview and questionnaire, and also from the RMC/administrative records about the programme practice and the graduate products. The analysis was developed discussing the nature of the programmes, their occurrences, participation of the faculty, and the impacts on the faculty performance and the institution as well. The results showed that such programme practice was good but its products revealed the worst, an action to be considered soon. Finally, some initiatives are recommended for healing such a bizarre research scenario with this leading institution of Madhesh Province.

Keywords: JS Campus, professional programmes, nurturing quality, faculty members

Introduction

Professional development activities expose teachers to current research, trends, and best practices in education. They can learn about the latest educational theories, subject-specific contents, and pedagogical approaches. This knowledge helps them stay up-to-date and ensures they are using evidence-based practices in their teaching. Hoque et al. (2011) argues, ''Professional development (PD) means

continually process of learning to enrich and enhance oneself at any institution. In this sense, teachers' professional development means increasing teaching technique, broadening subject knowledge, creating responsibility and commitment with gathering latest information.'' Darling and Richardson (2009) also supports that such a development in teachers' learning would help improve education system in general. Through self-reflection and discussions with colleagues, teachers can critically analyze their practices, identify areas for improvement, and develop action plans for professional growth. Such activities provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other educators. Sharing experiences, ideas, and challenges with colleagues from different schools or districts can be highly beneficial. Collaborative environments foster the exchange of knowledge, innovative practices, and mutual support, creating a professional network that teachers can tap into throughout their careers. Bhandari (2021, p. 79) states ''Professional activities are inevitable to prepare abler and competent teachers making their teaching career better and efficient''.

The faculty members/teachers of the post-era are supposed not only to teach, but also to engage learners, change themselves with the changes, absorb new discoveries from different opportunities and sources of knowledge. It is now the policy of an Institution to regulate incentives as well as opportunities for its faculty members to invest on their abilities to help create and sustain a learning focused culture. Universities ought to carry out the restructuring of their faculty workload policies to put emphasis on learning which is regarded as the valued outcome of the Institution. Professional programmes such as trainings, workshops, symposiums, conclaves, conferences, and similar development opportunities play a significant role in enhancing faculty members' professional skills and advancing their careers for their appropriate performances in their respective fields. Teachers' professional development opportunities mainly focuses on teachers' learning; learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into classroom practices (Avalos, 2011) and taking place in both informal and formal contexts (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Joshi et al. (2018, p. 54) states ''Informal learning constitutes self-practice, reflecting on one's own performance, interacting with colleagues, seeking answers to emerging issues, and reading to keep one-self up-to-date. Formal learning involves pursuing higher education, undertaking teacher training courses, attending workshops, seminars and conferences''. Such sessions/programmes/interactions provide teachers/professionals with the opportunity to learn new teaching/learning strategies, instructional techniques, and the latest educational methodologies. They can acquire practical skills and knowledge that they can apply directly in their classrooms to improve students' learning outcomes.

By investing in the professional development programmes that teachers/faculty members demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning, which positively impacts their motivation and overall effectiveness as educators (Saleem et al. 2021). Participating in professional training and workshops may lead to formal certifications, qualifications, or credentials that recognize teachers' expertise in specific areas. These credentials can enhance their professional profile, open doors to new career opportunities, and facilitate advancement within the educational system. Such opportunities expose teachers to innovative teaching methodologies and emerging technologies. They learn about the latest tools, resources, and instructional techniques that can engage students and enhance learning outcomes. By staying abreast of advancements in education, teachers can adapt their teaching practices to meet the evolving needs of their students. Joshi et al. (2018, p. 59) further discusses ''Teachers' professional associations also contribute partly to teachers' PD activities. For instance; in the context of EFL teachers, the Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) is an important organisation to support EFL teachers' PD.'' In Nepalese context, NELTA really has been a common platform for English professionals to empower themselves to tailor their teaching-learning activities to address specific student needs and improve overall learning outcomes.

Similarly, Panthee (2019) states that professional development programmes foster a culture of lifelong learning among teachers. By engaging in continuous professional growth, educators model the importance of learning to their students. They become lifelong learners themselves, seeking out new knowledge, trends, and research in education. This mindset of continuous learning enhances their professional competence and adaptability in an ever-changing educational landscape. They can acquire the knowledge and abilities necessary to take on leadership roles within their schools or districts, such as mentorship, curriculum development, or instructional coaching. Training on educational software, digital resources, and online teaching platforms equips teachers to deliver more engaging and interactive lessons.

Very importantly, at present, teacher well-being is crucial for sustained effectiveness in the classroom. Some professional development sessions focus on stress management, mindfulness, and strategies to prevent burnout, promoting a healthy work-life balance. Similarly, professional development activities also keep teachers informed about changes in educational policies, curriculum standards, and the latest educational trends. Understanding these developments helps teachers align their teaching practices with broader educational goals and priorities.

Majed et al. (2017, p. 122) states that training programmes for teachers/faculty do not end after qualifying, rather continue and are lifelong processes, as

they offer them the chance to develop and update their knowledge, whether on a particular subject, or an area. Notably, good teachers always seek activities that help them in their professional development. Moreover, training is important for a faculty's curriculum vitae that he or she can show an interest in maintaining subject knowledge and extending skills. Continuous professional development through trainings introduces new methodologies and instructional technologies. Nasreen and Mirza (2012, p. 229) view that institutions of higher education must develop a sustained long term faculty development strategy to enable their valuable human resources to work effectively and accomplish the organizational goals that are necessary to survive in the rapidly changing environment of higher education. Along with such programmes, higher institutions often organize career fairs where students can interact with potential employers, explore job opportunities, and learn about industry requirements. Additionally, career counseling and job placement services are provided to support students in their career development.

In general, teachers' Professional Development strategies/programmes can be classified into four different themes: self-initiated, peer-supported, study (research)-focused, and profession-related (Giri, 2015).

Self-initiated	Professional Development Strategies	Peer-supported
Profession-related		Study (research)-focused

Based on Richards and Farrell (2005) as stated in Joshi et al. (2018, pp. 55-56), the self-initiated or self-directed PD strategies are those set of self-developmental efforts in which a teacher adopts responsibility for setting goals to manage and control his/her own learning, the peer supported approach is a learning methodology where group-oriented activities with shared goals and responsibilities are performed, the study (research)-focused developmental strategies aim to systematically carry out research that translates into learning practices, and profession-related strategies are generally institutional in-service or job-embedded learning approaches such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and so on, which are meant for continuing professional growth of an individual teacher as well as an institution. Joshi et al. (2018) found:

> Despite some positive efforts of the government of Nepal to increase the number of teachers receiving PD trainings, the effectiveness of these trainings in classroom teaching was found to be low (Ministry of Education, 2013). As a continuation of the SSRP, the second phase of the SSRP (SSRP, 2016–2023)

has been recently launched to further strengthen quality school education through improved school-based teachers' PD (Ministry of Education, 2016). Therefore, a long-term implementation of SSRPs is believed to have some positive impacts on the school education system in Nepal through improved teachers' PD programmes. (p. 59)

Many higher institutions in Nepal have collaborations with industries and organizations, allowing students to participate in internships or industrial training programmes. These experiences provide students with hands-on exposure to real-world work environments and help them develop practical skills. Nepalese higher institutions encourage students and faculty members to engage in research activities and publish their findings. This practice helps them develop critical thinking, analytical skills, and a deeper understanding of their field of study. Pokhrel and Behera (2016) claimed teachers' professional development has been realized as a powerful approach to implement child friendly activity-based education in the 21st century.

Thus, professional training, workshops, and similar development opportunities offer numerous benefits to teachers. They enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, foster reflection and collaboration, support personal growth, enable career advancement, promote innovation, improve classroom management, enhance assessment practices, cultivate lifelong learning, and develop leadership abilities. Investing in teachers' professional development is crucial for ensuring high-quality education and positive student outcomes. Organizing training in the form of seminars, workshops, conclaves, lectures, peer observations, and conferences in higher education is necessary to expose faculty members to the modern trends and enhance managerial and administrative skills.

Literature Review

Hoque et al. (2011) describe the teachers' professional development activities in Bangladesh and explores the hypotheses about the relationship between teachers' traditional professional development activities and school improvement and found significant impacts of some of teachers' professional development activities on school improvement. Nasreen and Mirza (2012) carried out the study on current practices of faculty training and development in the old and new public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan analyzing the current practices of faculty development (FD) and training in old and new universities of Punjab. The results showed that training programmes were more instrumental in improving teachers' skills and attitudes in old universities as compared with that in new universities. Shah (2015) completed his study on Nepalese EFL teachers' professional development:

present practices, realities and looking forward and found that some external or non-governmental organizations, such as British Council Nepal, American Embassy, and Rural Education and Environment Development Centre, etc. contribute to EFL teachers' professional development programmes. Majed et al. (2017) investigates the prospects of promoting training programmes for faculty members in Saudi universities by presenting a comparison of qualitative data between the efforts of two major American universities, trying to display how these universities endeavor to meet the current teaching and learning needs, and found that the two American universities are coming up with skills training programmes that are deemed to be appropriate, including: conferences and workshops, faculty member orientations, consulting, instructional support, online training, discussion forums, family-led discussions, junior faculty training, and summer training. Joshi et al. (2018) found that the participants' experience PD strategies based on their personal experiences and knowledge. The findings of this study also indicated that Nepalese EFL teachers have positive experience towards different PD strategies. Profession-related PD activities such as workshops, seminars and conferences have been very popular approach to PD. Similar findings have been reported while surveying secondary school EFL teachers in other region of Nepal (Bharati & Chalise, 2017). The work also found that there is no mandatory provision of PD for higher secondary/college level EFL teachers in Nepal. The teachers, therefore, seem to be largely unaware of the potential use of many of the PD activities. In Nepal, a small survey found that a majority of EFL teacher seem to lack institutional support for their PD (Shah, 2015). Moreover, Bhandari (2021) revealed that the English language teachers were found attending conferences, trainings and workshop seminars, engaging in action research and academic writing for their professional development. However, poor internet access, lack of regular professional trainings and collaborative culture among them were the major challenges in teachers' professional development.

Even though 21st century professional skill training programmes are very critical for faculty members, most institutions of higher learning have not prioritized programmes that would make faculty members fit well in the changed learning environments. In reality, generally many academic staff members are yet to get actively involved and participated in professional development programmes as a result of some challenges. This situation which is also found in this Institution calls for redress considering as a critical issue to be addressed well for its betterment dynamically. Thus, ignoring professional programmemes is the problem with almost all higher institutions of the Madhesh Province creating a gap which this study intends to cover.

The study thus attempted to analyze the practices of professional development programmemes during last five years of J S Murarka Multiple Campus Lahan, Siraha, Nepal (a community based Institution) focusing on how they have been practically prioritized by the faculty members and the Institution and what impacts are being observed so far for nurturing its quality.

Methods and Procedures

The study was based on the mixed research design and the participants were all the faculty members of JS Campus, its administrative heads, and RMC Coordinator selected using purposive non-random sampling procedure. The semi-structure interview and the questionnaire were used for collecting the data from the participants. Similarly, the secondary sources including the campus records maintained in the RMC and the administration section were also used. The researcher also consulted the faculty members individually for gathering information about their programme participation, presentation and publication. The collected data were analyzed using different tables along with their thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

The study was carried out with due focus on the information about the Institution policy developed by its Research Management Cell for professional programmes, the faculty members' working experiences, their active participations in such activities, their research based publications, their study based research, the administrative body attitudes towards the programme mechanism, and ultimately how this scenario has affected the graduation rate during the last five years in the institution.

Table1

Number of Faculty Working at Present and their Experiences

SN	Faculty number	Service type	Experience year					Last degree
			1-5	5-10	11-15	16-20	20-	
1.	1	Permanent					■	PhD
2.	6	Permanent					■(green)	Master
3.	2	Permanent				■		PhD
4.	2	Permanent				■(green)		Master
5.	7	Permanent			■			Master
6.	1	Permanent		■				Master
7.	1	Contract			■			Master
8.	3	Contract		■				Master

9.	1	Contract					■	Master
10.	1	Part time		■				Master
11.	8	Part time	■					Master

Tracer Study Report (2021) claims that J S Murarka Multiple Campus Lahan as stated earlier is a pioneer educational Institution dedicated to uplifting the quality of education in this area. This Institution has been led by 33 academic leaders of having different year experiences, i.e., from 1-5 to even more than 20 years. The data show that 7 faculty members have been serving here for more than 20 years, 4 having 18-20 years, 8 with 11-15, 5 for more than five years and 8 are only of less than five years. This indicates obviously that the Institution has good experienced team members for leading teaching-learning activities. Similarly, regarding the academic qualifications of the faculty, the data shows 3 faculty members are holding PhD degree and the rest of others, i.e., 30 faculty members are with the Master degree from different universities. Since the Institution is of 36 years old, two faculty members got retired from their service, 19 academicians are with permanent service type, 5 are of the contract nature and 9 are recruited as part time faculty members.

Table 2

Professional Development Programmes during Last Five Years

SN	Name	Title	Date	Expected participants	Faculty participated
1.	Symposium	Discussion on Article Writing	11/02/075	All faculty	16
2.	Seminar	Pure, Applied and Social Sciences	16/04/075	All faculty	11
3.	Workshop	Research Writing and its Importance	06/05/075	All faculty	22
4.	Training	Proposal and Thesis Writing	18/08/075	All faculty	21
5.	Workshop	Advanced Research Methodology	01/12/075	All faculty	17
6.	Training	Thesis writing	31/01/076	20 faculty	7
7.	Programme	Article &Proposal Writing	11/06/076	All faculty	10
8.	Seminar	Applied Linguistics: Current Trends in Nepal	11 & 12/09/076	All faculty	12

9.	Workshop	Comprehending Research Article	01/07/077	All faculty	18
10.	Workshop	Sharing Experiences for Experiencing Research Writing Articles	25/09/077	All faculty	13
11.	Workshop	Professional Development of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff	24-25/6/ 2078	All faculty	15
12.	Seminar	Basic Science Lab Safety Attitudes and Practices	15-17/3/ 2079	15 faculty	7
13.	Workshop	Research Manuscript Drafting and Publishing	13-14/3/ 2079	All faculty	13
14.	Symposium	Research Findings Dissemination	21/08/079	All faculty	17

Source: Research Management Cell, J S Murarka Multiple Campus Lahan, Siraha

The Institution has established Research Management Cell for empowering the research culture for the faculty and the students as well and has been organizing different types of research activities/programmes with/without the financial supports of the University Grants Commission, Nepal. Such programmes are trainings, symposiums, workshops, seminars, conclaves and conferences. The data presented in the table 2 shows that RMC has been managing such programmes every year addressing the needs of the time and the courses. As the table shows, in the year 2075, there were 5 research programmes; symposium, seminar, training and two workshops, and in the year 2076, the Institution conducted only 3 activities; 1 training, 1 programme and 1 seminar. However, in the year 2077, it was very less and due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19, there were only two programmes; Comprehending Research Article and Sharing Experiences for Experiencing Research Writing Articles. Similarly, in the year (2078), there was only one workshop on the title Professional Development of the Faculty and the Non-teaching staff which was carried out in the blended mode. Finally in the last academic year, i.e., 2079, the RMC organized 3 programmes; 1 seminar, 1 workshop and 1 symposium.

Regarding the faculty participation in the programmes organized during the last five years, the data shows a big difference between the expected faculty participation and their actual participation. Out of the thirty-three faculty members

working till now, even less than 50% faculty members attended the programmes for almost all of them (programmes). Most of the programmes were organized to better the existing condition of the faculty especially for their improvement in the field of research and teaching. As interviewed to the administrative body, the Institution has its own provision to allocate about Rs. 10,00,000/ - Rs. 12,00,000/ (Ten to twelve lakhs only) budget for the RMC for organizing research based activities. The amount seems sufficient as 2-4 programmes are generally organized per year and in addition the UGC also supports financially for one seminar/workshop. The participation customary indicates that there still lacks the concept of research culture among the faculty so far, and on the other hand, the Institution also needs to focus on more practical and maximum participatory programmes. So, the Institution has realized the need of the professional productive programmes for the faculty and therefore has good policy about them but with poor practice due to which the entire academic regularities here are observed very out-dated.

Table 3

Faculty Research Articles Published in Journal(s)

SN	Research faculty	Articles	Journal
1.	Binod Kumar Yadav	6	Peer-reviewed
2.	Ram Nath Yadav	4	Peer-reviewed
3.	Jitendra K. Chaudhary	2	Peer-reviewed
4.	Bijaya Laxmi Chy	2	Peer-reviewed
5.	Dilip K. Chaudhary	2	Peer-reviewed
6.	Praveen K. Singh	3	Peer-reviewed
7.	Ram Prabodh Yadav	3	Peer-reviewed
8.	Sachindra K. Singh	2	Peer-reviewed
9.	Bhola BK	3	Peer-reviewed
10.	Mod Narayan Jha	1	Peer-reviewed
11.	NarendraK Chaudhary	1	Peer-reviewed

Based on the journals the RMC has published so far, as well as other publications, and also the conversation with the faculty who involved in writing the research articles, it is obvious that all together only 11 faculty members have got their articles published in the peer-reviewed journals. Among them, one has six publication contributions, one more has four, four have four, three with three and two are of one-one only. Thus, along with the programme presentation, the professionals of this Institution are found to have very low article contributions that also indicate

the professional programmes are less effective and less productive as a whole. The practice of such programmes has good connection with the professional productivity and ultimately for the Institutional products.

Table 4

Faculty Paper Presentation and Participation at Int'l/national programmes

SN	Research faculty	Presentation		Participation	
		National	International	National	International
1.	Binod Kumar Yadav	6	9	22	26
2.	Ram Nath Yadav	2	-	5	5
3.	Jitendra K. Chaudhary	1	2	5	7
4.	Bijaya Laxmi Chy	1	1	4	4
5.	Dilip K. Chaudhary	2	1	5	10
6.	Praveen K. Singh	2	2	3	8
7.	Ram Prabodh Yadav	1	1	8	5
8.	Sachindra K. Singh	2	2	5	4
9.	Bhola BK	1	0	7	2
10.	Mod Narayan Jha	1	0	8	1
11.	NarendraK Chaudhary	1	0	5	2

Similarly, Table 4 shows that these 11 faculty members are having very low experiences except one regarding the paper presentations in national/international programmes. Paper presentation is a pure research based job that needs good practices by the presenters and this certainly strengthens the professionals' performance. Besides, they are also observed that they even are not interested in participating the programmes. The data again shows that they have long teaching experiences but have not practical records of attending such activities. This also indicates that they are working with out-dated practices. Present scenario of any good academic practice demands deliberate involvement of the professionals in research programmes with the aim of mitigating the changes. This is what the institution is lacking.

Table 5

SN	Questions	Attitudes/responses	
		CC	**ACC**
1.	Are such programmes needed here?	Yes	Yes
2.	Why do you think so?	For quality	For updating all
3.	How do you manage them?	With RMC	With RMC & UGC
4.	How much do you allocate budget for it?	As per RMC	Based on RMC need
5.	Do you promote faculty to attend them?	Yes	Yes, but based on nature
6.	Are they facilitated with proper allowance?	Some extend	Based on RMC policy
7.	Do you think research is most needed now?	Yes, needed	Needed dynamically
8.	Do research experiences get valued here?	Some extent	Yes but getting valued
9.	Do you support faculty for further study?	Yes	Yes
10.	Do you find such activities help learning?	Some extent	Not much more

Table 5 shows that the administrative body over all seems very positive towards the professional programmes because they have also realized their needs at present for the Institutional quality maintenance. As talked to them, the budget for organizing such programmes is allocated as the need and policy of the research operational guidelines of RMC of this Institution. Similarly, they also promote the faculty for participating the programmes for which they are provided the basic allowance as rules and regulations of RMC. Moreover, they also put due focus on the research activities of the faculty and recommend for their academic promotion to some extent in the CMC meetings. There is the provision in the Institution Statute that one faculty can be granted the study leave for MPhil/PhD study with his/her salary as well. All these clearly hint that research activities are being considered well in this Institution since its accreditation. However, the campus chief and the assistant campus chief are not yet satisfied with the outcomes of such activities since they still do find the changes in students' learning due to the changing trends of research programmes in this Institution.

Table 6

Study-based Research Faculty

SN	Research Faculty	Post	PhD/MPhil	Award year	University
1.	Anil Kumar Jha	Prof.	PhD	2004	LMU, India
2.	Binod Kumar Yadav	Lecturer	PhD	2022	TU, Nepal
3.	Ram Nath Yadav	Lecturer	PhD	2016	LMU, India
4.	Ram Prabodh Yadav	Lecturer	PhD	Incomplete	TU, Nepal
5.	Sachindra K. Singh	Lecturer	PhD	Incomplete	WBU, India
6.	Jitendra K. Chaudhary	Lecturer	MPhil	Incomplete	PU, Nepal
7.	Suman Kumar Sah	Lecturer	MPhil	Incomplete	PU, Nepal

In this Institution, based on the table, there are 3 faculty members holding the PhD degree which indicates these three have been involved in the study research supports for their professional development. However, it is observed that some of them are not contributing as much as the institution expects. Similarly, two of the seven faculty members are in the pursuit of the PhD degree; one from Tribhuvan University, Nepal and another from West Bengol University, India. Finally, two more faculty members are improving their research practices by pursuing the M Phil degree from PU, Nepal. Very remarkably, even the study based research practices are not seen in the Institution till now as very few faculty members are having some kind of growing interest in the professional development.

Table 7

Graduates' Status of Last Five Years of the Institution

SN	FY	Appeared in Exam	Graduated	Employed	Unemployed	Further study
1.	2017	851	113	27	86	2
2.	2018	990	184	25	159	9
3.	2019	825	140	9	131	15
4.	2020	871	215	36	179	28
5.	2021	1347	88	80	8	5

Source: Annual Reports: 2020; 2021; 2022

The personal and professional development of the graduates has been highly influenced by the higher education they got. After being graduated, some of them got jobs in different sectors. They have also developed their financial position by their profession. They have developed personally, professionally, economically and socially by the higher education they got from this institution (TSR, 2018, p. 20).

The table above shows that there is a vast gap between the students appeared in their exams and the graduates graduated in the years respectively. The four years, i.e. 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021 had the graduated rates of even less that 20% in this Institution, and it was even less than 10% in the last year (2021) in which out of 1347 appeared students, only 88 students were found to have their graduation. However, in the year 2020, there were 871 students appeared in the exam and 215 graduated that shows approximately 25%. Similarly, the graduates graduated from this Institution were found unemployed far more than employed except the year 2021, and the status of their further study, it was also very poor.

Conclusion

Professional development programmes aim at updating teachers' academic excellence and enabling them perform their experiences addressing the requirements of the students and their Institutions. Regarding J S Murarka Multiple Campus Lahan, the study shows that there is good policy for the mechanism of professional programmes as its Research Management Cell has been provided the full authority for such activities organization. However, the great challenges are observed on the part of the faculty members as they have less interest in participating such activities on the one hand and on the other they are also found to have involved very rarely in research publications which are remarkably noticed for their updating knowledge in learning-teaching. From the administrative body, it is claimed clearly that the Institution has realized the values of research as its budget is allocated based on the RMC operational guidelines every year and also the UGC has been supporting for it. Moreover, the research involved faculty members are also recommended for their academic promotion to the CMC meetings (that has not yet been applied here, as the researcher also being one of its faculty members of this Institution). Over all the practice of research programmes has not been practical here due to the Madhesh Province ecology of research also prevailing with almost all the faculty members of this Institution. Finally the data regarding the product rate of the enrolled students shows also very poor as the pass rate of the last five years is about 25% and the maximum graduates graduated from here are found unemployed yet, which hints the poor impacts of research activities on the part of teaching-learning.

The faculty members should be stimulated to initiate and participate in trainings / seminars/round tables/conclave/conference, etc. based on self-development and encouraged/forced for research publications, and only the research experienced ones are to be recommended for their promotion and extra facilities. RMC should be provided with the good assistance and advice on all the faculty development practices.

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