

Title: Overcoming faculty resistance to development programs: A new approach

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What problem was addressed: The substitution of the word teaching with the word learning was never enough to transform educational systems. Many faculty along the process of transformation have been rendered insulated from argument by a self-created defensive shield.

When it comes to teaching, most faculty lack either credible expertise, respected credentials, common standards, or a framework of meaningful review.

The way Faculty function improvises that change will appear to threaten important faculty endowments: research time, recognition for hard-earned expertise, the privacy of teaching, the security of tenure, the predictability of promotion and perquisites, the safety of the status quo.

Faculty usually exhibit a great degree of resistance to faculty development programs sometimes fearing for the value versus their time sometimes for the sense of security being isolated inside their departments feeling their maximum influence and thus the response and participation rate in the program is not satisfactory.

What was tried: A new approach was adopted where all of the training sessions were conducted through web-based distant discussion forms and email based self-learning.

Each topic began by creating a mailing group including the participants who were introduced to a hands-on assignment that covered the objectives of the training course.

Participants were left to attempt the assignment and submit it within a designated time. Each submission was assessed and the learning needs of each participant were identified.

Based on the individual learning needs, individual learning objectives were created and individual and group assignments were designed to cover the learning needs of each faculty.

For each training course a colleague from outside the institute was added to the mailing list and asked to participate as an expert with expert opinion.

This was tried in two departments (Ophthalmology and Vacular Surgery) that had an approved training program.

The percentage of faculty participation in the faculty development program was increased from (6) 8.3% to (32) 42.1%.

When responding to questionnaire regarding their training experience the mean satisfaction index was elevated from 32.1 to 71.4 on a (1-100) satisfaction index and faculty reported a mean percentage of 74.4% of their time spent during training to be considered useful as opposed to an initial 31% when using traditional face to face training methods.

What lessons were learned: As Muscatine points out, there is a double standard at work: Quality as an important factor is raised only when. The status quo bias ensures that we simply assume the viability of the status quo. In the case of change, however, people begin to build arguments. Engaging in those arguments is a waste unless we address the loss aversion and endowment defenses that drive many faculty members' reactions to change.

Faculty response to development improves when they are offered training through a method that respects their privacy, their needs and their time.

Faculty tend to value imported expert opinion and information thus the presence of an interdisciplinary learning team and the opinion of an expert from outside the school is valued and helps cut down the resistance.

References

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