

Competency Model to Identify Competency Gaps and Training Needs (With Special Reference to Faculty in Higher Education Sector in India)

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ABSTRACT

Competencies and Inclination are most important criteria considered while selecting the right people for the right job. Competencies are the set of knowledge, skills or attitude that a person must exhibit to meet the requirement of the specific job type. Ability or possessing the competencies to do the job is as important as person's willingness to do the job.

With a global explosion in market-opportunities and the expanding role of technology in the Education sector, the skills set required by the faculty for effective teaching is also expanding. The ever evolving criteria of benchmarking and accreditation agencies and rapid and unpredictable technological changes and enhanced pressure to roll out an extra ordinarily league of competent workforce are compelling academic institutions to recruit adaptable employees with an objective to achieve academic excellence. Therefore, many Academic Institutions and Universities in India are interested in knowing the present skill level of their faculty so that training programmes can be specifically designed to upgrade their performance.

Looking at the scientific and technological developments in the sphere of higher education in the country, its time that we delve into scientific research of various aspects of teaching and learning methodologies. Easier said than done, the complex interplay of intra and interpersonal actors in the teacher – learner relationship makes the analysis a juggernaut task. Teaching is no more a merely simple process of giving information to the students on the assigned course but it has become a complete knowledge sharing process with the help of blended methods of teaching and learning. Hence, there is need for the educational institution to improve their academic quality by incorporating the skills required by the faculty members to fit in new roles. The new conditions/ characteristics of the present generation of Education system in India is deeply influenced by technology development in information and communication.

To start with let us assume that the domain of knowledge imparting process in education comprises of two fundamental sub domains:-

- (1) Content (what to teach)
- (2) Delivery (how to teach)

While content would focus on academic skills and generally taken care of by the regulatory environment (qualifications, mandatory research experience, NET etc) ,the delivery part is the field where teaching skills step in and is as relevant and vital as content itself for effective and efficient student learning experience. In a nutshell the focus has to be on how the teacher works rather than a myopic vision of prior accomplishments as the later can promise only efficient teaching activities and not necessarily effective teaching skills.

This paper is an attempt to develop a competency score card which can be an effective tool in assessing the competency gaps and catering to the training needs of faculty in Higher Education sector in India. At the top of the competency scorecard are ten competencies of faculty in Higher education through which practitioners can view the model: Inter Personal skills, Presentation skills, Technological skills, Communication skills, Managing diversities, Adaptability, Initiative and Creativity, Planning and Organizing, Problem solving skills, Relationship building skills

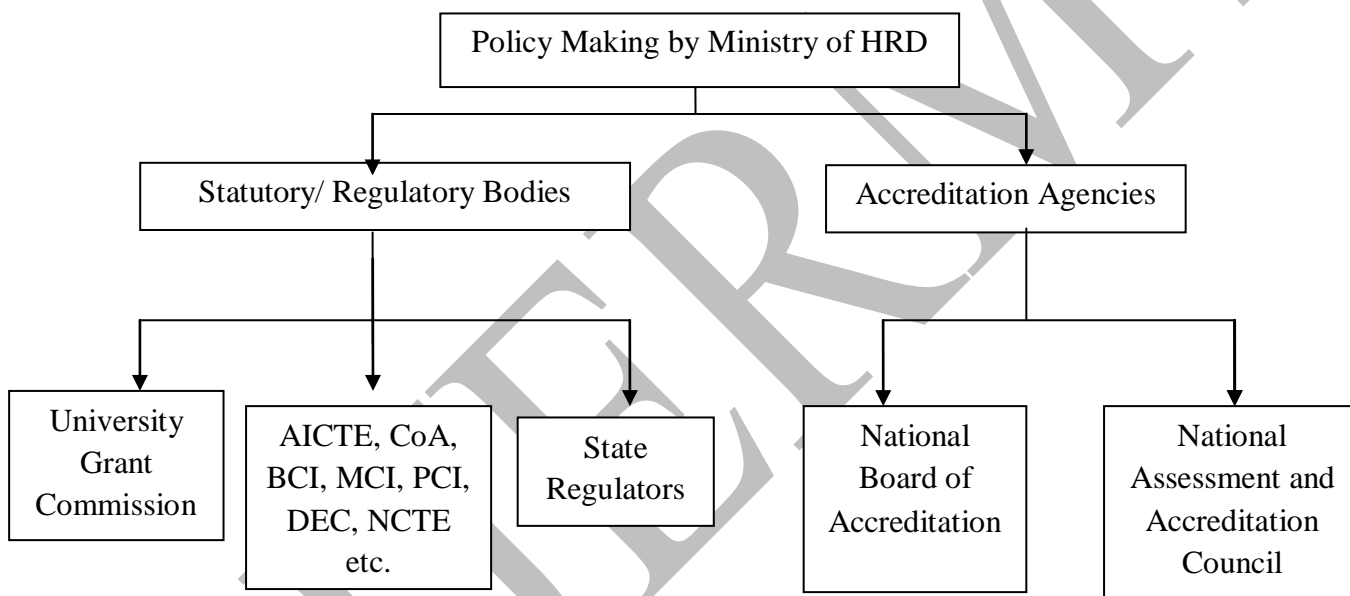
Higher Education Sector in India

India is a country with one of the largest educational system. Over the last twenty five years there is an approximately fifteen times multiplication of students, teachers and academic institutions in number. The present Indian higher education system comprises of about 700 universities and over 35,500 colleges.

The market size of Indian education sector is expected to increase to Rs 602,410 crore (US\$ 100.23 billion) by 2015 from Rs 341,180 crore (US\$ 56.77 billion) in 2012, due to the expected strong demand for quality education.

To increase the percentage of students going for higher education to 30 per cent by 2020, India will need 800 more universities and another 35,000 colleges, according to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD).

Regulatory Framework



In India, the institutions of higher education are undergoing significant changes as a result of the impact of technology on the educational delivery, the increasing private participation in higher education and the impact of globalization. These changes have also being taken into account by NAAC while setting the criteria of assessing quality of educational institutions. In the manual of NAAC's Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for assessment, a special emphasis has been laid down on faculty development programmes and Training workshops in order to enhance the quality of teaching learning and to cater to the student's diversities. UGC has also been continuously emphasizing on up gradation of teachers potential so that they will further be able to strengthen the competencies of their students.

Statement of the problem

Training provides an opportunity to the employees to expand their existing body of knowledge and to improve their skills. Many training programmes organized in the academic institutions do not comply with the skills required leading to lack of efficiency and effectiveness of the training programmes. So with this point of view the following study was designed to determine the gaps between desired and existing skills and to cater to the training needs of faculty of Higher education accordingly.

This article focuses on various teaching attributes that together influence the delivery of knowledge to the learners specifically in the field of higher education.

- All teachers have some theory of what teaching is when they are doing it, even if they are not explicitly aware of that theory...”

Gow and Kember, 1993 cited in Biggs and Tang, 2007, p.15.

A natural question now arises then where to start from?

Let us go the back to the basics i.e. to “What do you want your students to learn? However a question cannot be answers to another question therefore let us try to analyse certain overarching traits influencing teaching considering the process involved as inherently collaborative mentioned below:

- Desires/ expectations of a teacher from his job
- Student driven approach – understanding of learner needs & perception, learning styles.
- Efforts towards continuous up gradation of knowledge, awareness of recent developments and ability to translate them for learning and expertise in relating them to core concepts/ principles.
- Vision of the larger picture- Ability to appreciate the role of individual courses and at times stand alone courses in the overall curriculum.
- Accomplishing a learning culture – Inculcating a culture of perpetual learning.
- Adaptability - Acculturation to diverse learning environments (arising out of advancement in information technology)

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the competencies of the faculty of higher education taking ten skills as variables of study
2. To develop a competency score card of faculty in order to quantify the above mentioned skills
3. The identify the gap between the set standards and present level of skills based on competency score card
4. To suggest recommendations based on findings of the study.

Literature review

Way back in 1953, American management guru for the first time recognized the concept “competence” later in the year 1973, McClelland indicated competency as one of the important factors that affect learning efficiency and is more efficient than intelligence (IQ) to predict the learning output. In the 1970s, McBer and Company (associated with McClelland) and the American Management Association (AMA) launched the first large-scale competency programme. Its key research focus centered on answering one question: What competencies do successful managers exhibit that not such successful managers do not exhibit? The AMA study involved over 1,800 managers over a five year period, and it was the first study to define job competency with a specific focus on isolating the characteristics that underpin superior performance by comparing exemplary to fully-successful performers.

Lucian Cernusca, Cristina Dima (2007) in their research essay explained the concept of competency and how competency is linked to performance and one's career development. William J Rothwell and John E Lindholm (2008) addressed employee competency efforts in the USA programmes have evolved from an early focus on distinctions between best-in-class (exemplary) and fully-successful performers to become a link between organizational strategy and organizational and individual performance. Interest in competency-based approaches is growing. Training and development professionals are using competency models to clarify organization-specific competencies to improve human performance and unify individual capabilities with organizational core competencies. Gaspar (2012) found that Competency based selection method is healthy, structured and comprehensive. Candidates are evaluated on the competencies they need to demonstrate, when inducted into the organization. Similarly, based on the competencies of employees, organizations may design their training programmes in order to cater to the specific areas found weak during competency evaluation

Competency Model

A 'competency model' is a structure that sets out and defines competencies of individuals working in an organization. The suggested model consists of a number of competencies, which can be generically applied to the role of faculty. Each of these competencies is then defined in such a clear way that everyone has a common understanding of desired standard of performance. This common understanding then becomes the benchmark against which the performance of faculty members can be assessed.

The model not just helps the top management to bring in clarity in the job description for each role but also helps faculty to identify gaps in the level of present skills and desired skills. Competency model can be extremely useful for performing the important functions of preparing Job description and establishing criteria for Recruitment and Selection, Appraisals, identification of Training needs, Job Redesigning, Career Planning & Career development etc. more effectively.

Every well managed institution must have a portfolio of well defined roles & responsibilities and set of competencies required to perform each role effectively. In the suggested model, a competency score card will be developed which will highlight the areas where grooming is required based on which more customized and focused training programmes can be designed.

Competency score card can help people to track the present state of their competencies or skills and focus on closing the gaps in order to manage their performance. The purpose of developing competency score cards is to provide a framework through which individuals can strive to reach their potential. As the competencies are elevated or realigned with the hands on experience at workplace, people move towards career progression.

To develop the competency model, following ten skills are taken as variables on which skills would be assessed:

1. **Inter Personal skills** – Interpersonal skills refers to express ones ideas clearly in well defined terms in order to be unambiguously interpreted by the target audience.
2. **Presentation skills** – presentation skills refer to building of rapport during the process of interaction through presentations, notes, handouts with the help of body language, speech, tone, facial expressions etc and control of temperament, nervousness etc.
3. **Technological skills** – In the field of education, technological skills refers to the ease of integrating information and communication technology to strengthen teaching practices.

4. **Communication skills** – it may be defined as the expression of thoughts and ideas in such a way that they are perceived by the target audience in the manner as intended by the speaker. It also encompasses empathetic listening together with accepting and giving criticism.
5. **Managing diversities** – the target group of students often have varied perceived notions of the subject, curriculum, opportunities, learning outcomes and programme educational objectives owing to differences in their background, culture, value systems etc. It is necessary to value these differences and accommodate them for achieving equity and the desired goal
6. **Adaptability** – Acculturation to diverse and dynamic learning environments (arising out of advancement in information technology) in order to manage concurrent priorities and enable oneself to multitasking
7. **Initiative and Creativity** – Putting a firm step forward for a new opportunity, solution to a problem or assuming leadership while the general trend is to go with the tide i.e. a combination of strength, willingness and risk taking capabilities garnished with out of the box thinking and non traditional approaches.
8. **Planning and Organizing** – chalking out a well defined plan to manage the teaching assignments within the constraints of time and available resources with appropriate feedback mechanism at each stage to achieve pre determined objectives.
9. **Problem solving skills** – a process of careful maneuvering through identification of a problem, exploration of all possible solution and selection of the most feasible one, implementation and evaluation of the results in light of desired outcomes is what comprises problem solving skills. Though there is a possibility of a mismatch between the achieved and the desired results but the focus is on giving a shot at understanding and working towards a solution
10. **Relationship building skills** – the transcending of ideas from the teacher to the students if closely looked at is a two way process where both are active participants rather than operating in isolation. Therefore, it becomes essentially important that a reciprocal relationship of trust, understanding and mutual respect for each other's perception is developed to build a symbiotic learning relationship.

These skills are specifically taken as variables for this study. More skills may be added as per the requirements of the academic institutions.

The example of Competency model of the faculty members of a similar specialization in order to assess the skill:

COMPETENCY SCORE CARD											
Competencies/ Skills	Inter Personal skills	Presentation skills	Technological skills	Communication skills	Managing diversities	Adaptability	Initiative and Creativity	Planning and Organizing	Problem solving skills	Relationship building skills	Total
	Faculty Name	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	100
Joseph P.	7	8	5	6	3	7	5.5	6	8	9	64.5
Rose Marry	5	6	8	3	4	6	7	5	9	4	57
Edwin R.	7	4	9	5	7	7	8	3	6	6	62
Saumya.C	8	7	6	8.5	8	4.5	5	7.5	7	8	69
Group Average	6.8	6.3	7	5.6	5.5	6.1	6.4	5.4	7.5	6.7	63.1


The scores are based on the responses gathered from the questionnaire framed consisting of close ended questions wherever possible or using deductive techniques on the deliberations of the respondents can enable a better conceptualization of competencies essential for teaching skills.

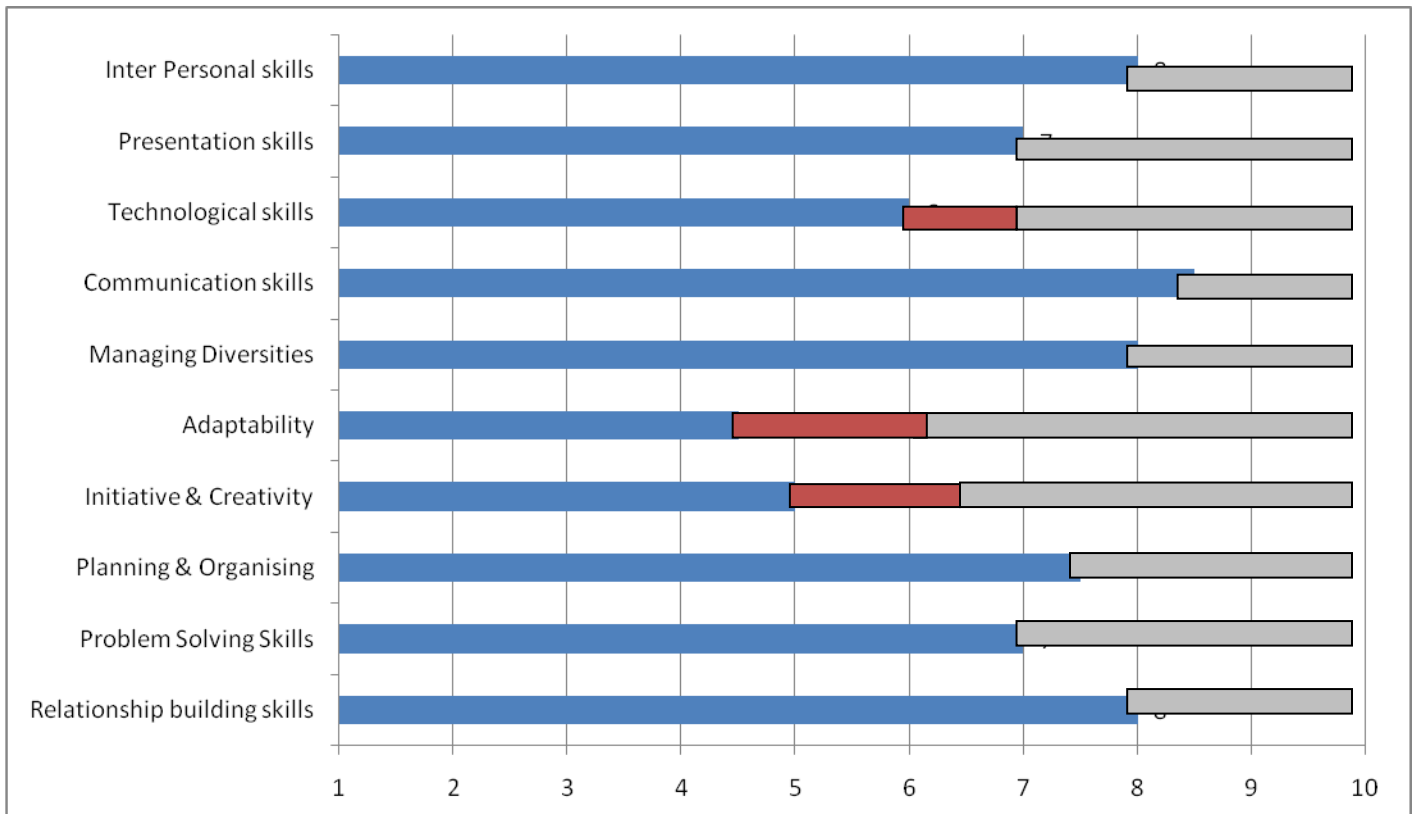
The scores earned will help the faculty members to be able to critically evaluate their own performance against the standards expected of them and appropriately act on insights acquired.

Analysis & Interpretation

On the basis of the scores gathered from competency score cards, a suitable scale (for example ten point scale) may be developed in which the scores of each faculty member are plotted and the grey area may be focused.

Following is an example of one of the faculty Saumya. C.

Competency Scores on 10 point scale 

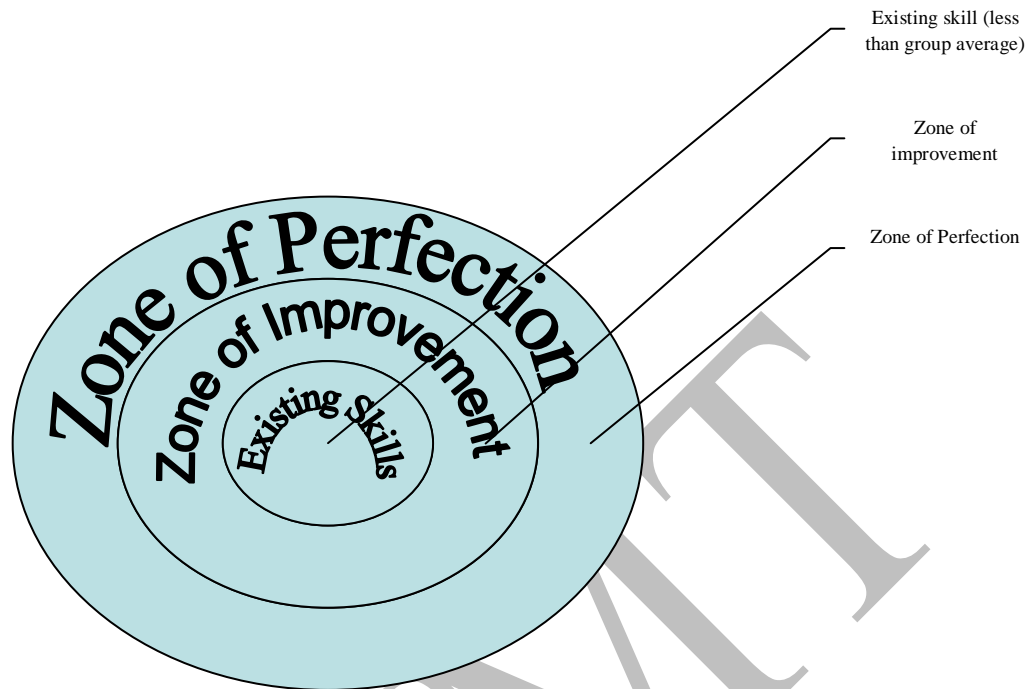


Gap between group score vis-à-vis individual score needs immediate attention 

Comparison of individual skill scores with the group average illustrates specific deficiencies in technological skills, adaptability, initiative & creativity and problem solving skills (highlighted with red color in the score card) and thus triggers the need for training in these areas.

Though a higher than group average highlights existing strengths of the individual relative to the group, it should be borne in mind that there still exists a scope of improvement.

For a better understanding the various levels of a particular skills can assumed in the form of concentric circles as illustrated below.

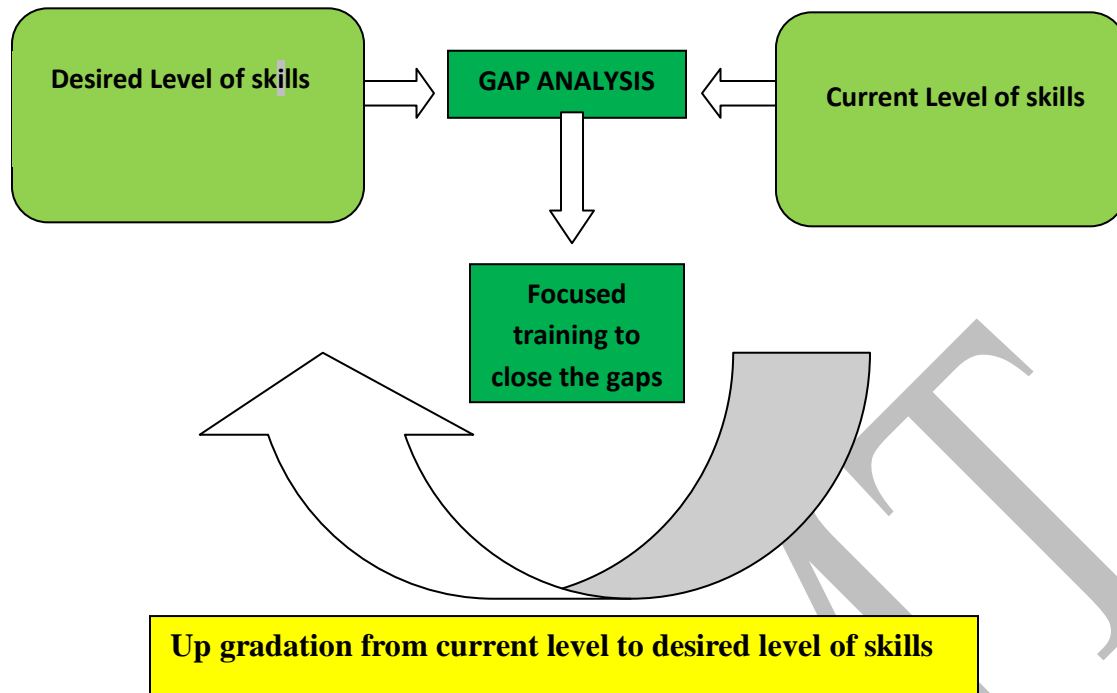


Further development of the model can also help reducing rivalries due to ambitions for growth by replacing them through unity for passion for excellence. The process of Self assessment based on competency score would enable faculty members to engage in the process of excel themselves in the areas of deficiencies and improve their competency scores.

Growth & Development

According to K. Aswathappa “Training and Development offers competitive advantage to a firm by removing performance deficiencies; making employees stay long; minimizing accidents; scrap and damage; and meeting future employee needs”

Competency Model can help academic institutions to impart more focused and targeted training to their faculty members and thereby leads to improved individual performance and the performance of the institution as a whole. The institutions strive to achieve its objectives with the abilities and skills of its people, providing them with the opportunities of growth & development whereas on the other hand, it is important for faculty members to indulge into continuous learning process through the improvement of their own skills and capabilities that help them to grow, develop and make optimum use of all the available opportunities.



The gap between the set standards and present level of skills may be identified with the help of competency score card and bridged with the help of focused training programmes. A customized training programme can help in strengthening the weak areas. The competency score card clearly reflects individual performance with the help of which intergroup comparisons can be made which would trigger a desire among faculty members to perform better than others and make optimum use of their potential.

Recommendations

It is suggested that the deductive techniques or the questionnaire framed to gather the responses to evaluate competencies should be carefully designed in order to implement the model successfully as the scores mentioned in the competency score card are based on these survey. An accurate scorecard can give a clear idea of where the faculty stands and what skills are lacking in them which can be extremely beneficial in following ways:

- Once the existing level of competencies is determined, proper training can be provided to the individuals to work more efficiently on the processes.
- Key areas can be focused and improved by identifying the gaps
- If the competencies are determined for the given job, then the person whose career planning phase is taking place can consider those competencies and can be ready for the same.
- Apart from training, these scorecards may be useful to the HR Department during appraisals in order to determine the promotions/increments of the faculty members

CONCLUSION

Every academic institution must understand the competencies that are necessary for people in key roles to deliver at par with the desired standards, thereby creating value. If the competencies are aligned with mission, it will help foster the success of the institution.

Individual patterns may provide insight in the specific areas needed to be focused for the development of teaching skills while a cumulative analysis of a group of faculty members would reveal a general pattern of existing level of the various skills highlighted in the graph and corresponding deficiencies contained therein. Accordingly targeted strategies to improve and enhance these skills both at individual and the group level can be formulated to achieve the desired outcomes.

To develop the model further a more exhaustive job description may be developed and various skills may be assigned proportionate weights relevant to a particular course or a target group and analysis could be done by replacing average with weighted average. For example a faculty of Core Science courses will require different set of skills as compare to the skills required by the faculty of personality development programmes or vocational courses. In case of the faculty of personality development courses, more weightage can be given to the skills like presentation, communication and innovation & creativity skills.

The model can help the academic institutions to assess the areas where training is required. The performance of faculty may not be at par with the desired standard of performance which may be the result of lack of some specific skills that can be improved by training. Thus, identification of the lacking areas where faculty requires training to improve or upgrade his/her performance as per the expected standards is very important for the success of any training programme.

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