**Faculty or faulty members of universities**

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The role of faculty members is mostly teaching subjects of their domain to undergraduate and post-graduate students at University and conducting research in the same domain as well. There are more than 100 public sector Universities in Pakistan and around 100 private sector Universities. The faculty members in both type of these Universities have distinct characteristics in teaching and research. The faculty members at public Universities are commonly considered to have secure job and smooth working environment whereas the job and work environment is dependent on relations with respective HOD in the private Universities.

The faculty members are main stakeholders of higher education sector and their efforts for quality teaching and research are considered important for development of the sector. The funding of Higher Education Commission (HEC) mostly surrounds the teaching and research related activities in Universities. The recruitment of teachers is carried out by the Universities on minimum requirements of HEC which are based on three areas i.e. Qualification, Experience and Research publications. These minimum guidelines are to be followed by the Universities. They can make these further stringent but cannot lower it because these minimum standards are designed to assure quality of teaching and research in the universities. Other parameters which may be considered are supervision of MS/M.Phil and PhD students, Relevance of research funds for the development of country, membership of prestigious professional societies of the discipline and the contribution made to the community.

The favor is mostly given in terms of experience and research publications. Suppose a person who has applied for the post of Associate Professor on Basic Pay Scale (BPS) requires experience of more than 10 years of teaching at undergraduate level or working at Research & Development (R&D) organization. In case, if he is short of 1 year or some months, then University handles such situation by relaxing the condition and rejecting the same if not a favorite candidate. Getting experience from any R&D organization is also not difficult, the personal contacts or money does matter for such favors. On the same pattern if the research publications are short for appointment then the candidate who is favorite one is given time of 6 months or a year for fulfilling that requirement. Further, due to frequent change in HEC recognition of journals the papers published during different past year are evaluated by the university registrar office through their own interpretation and it pass through different fora without re-evaluation.

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Most of the times the internal candidates of the University are asked to share list of HEC recognized publications and then the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) verifies the same. As far as relevance of research publications is concerned it is also not strictly followed and due to this sometimes an electrical engineer may have publications of social sciences. The publication requirement is fulfilled in numbers only. Its weightage as per importance and contribution for the society and the sector is merely assessed. Even the role of second, third, fourth and fifth author is considered equally which is not only illogical but against the real spirit of this condition.

Although both conditions i.e. Publication and Experience along with other achievements can be documented through HEC’s Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) which is like NADRA’s citizenship record management system. The automation will help to create transparency and merit culture in higher education sector. There is also good practice being followed by Pakistan Medical Commission where experience and publications are evaluated by subject experts and certificate is issued which confirms the fulfillment of these conditions. Other methods in practice are score card system through which faculty member themselves prepare profile document with specific weightage for each parameter, such systems are in practice in developed world as well as in India with different titles e.g. Performance Based Appraisal System.

I remember in one of the interviews at Federal Public Service Commission for teaching job, I was asked to describe main criteria for teaching job. Although, I responded but I still remember the explanation given by honorable member. He said one should have subject knowledge and capability to deliver that knowledge. Same approach is followed by Indian University Grants Commission (UGC) where appointment of faculty members in Universities and degree colleges is carried out through Centralized Test conducted by UGC. The potential teachers are required to score high in their respective disciplines and then Universities will conduct demonstration as well as interview for assessing their capability to deliver the knowledge.

HEC has established Educational Testing Council (ETC) which may be tasked to develop subject tests on same pattern and initially universities may be allowed to voluntarily consider those candidates who score high in these tests. It will help them to find faculty members who have subject knowledge in depth and breadth. This will also help in bringing quality in teaching which is incredibly low in some cases. The current result of Central Superior Service (CSS) shows extremely low passing ratio. It is time to make joint efforts at national, regional, and local level through various institutions for merit-based appointments for faculty members at degree colleges and Universities, otherwise violation of merit will create a class of faculty members who will remain faulty members of higher education sector.

*Dy. Director, Higher Education Commission*