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University Teachers' perspective on HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

System devised by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) aims to promote innovation and develop human capital. The efficiency of the system is ascertained if it could help in recruitment and retention of faculty members. Therefore, the study of faculty members' perspective on HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria (FAC) is needed to determine whether it motivates and facilitates them. This study reports the faculty's perspectives on FAC. This qualitative interpretive phenomenological study gathers data using a semi-structured questionnaire for interviewing. The analysis reveals that the criteria do not cover the overall performance of faculty members and is only based upon minimum qualification, duration of service and number of publications. There is a dire need of reviewing the current appointment criteria and for that the involvement of all stakeholders is suggested to devise a profound scheme for better human resource development at HEIs of Pakistan.

Keywords

Faculty Appointment Criteria, Job Design, Job Satisfaction, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, Discrimination

JEL

Classification

I2, I23, I28, J28, J71, M51

1. Introduction

Higher education system is highly important in the modern rapidly growing educational paradigm globally. It is not only fundamental in promoting innovation but also in developing human capital and knowledge economy (Dill & van Vught, 2010). The success and development of the higher education system is primarily dependent

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upon the performance of faculty members. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, the faculty underperforms or low-performs in all areas including research due to many tangible and intangible issues. The faculty members view it as dissatisfaction due to poor compensations in terms of recognition of their performances (Centra, 1977). The important achievement and hallmark of success for faculty in academia is to get promoted, for that purpose different criteria have been devised in the Higher Education System for promotion of faculty (Wiley, Wallingford, Monllor-Tormos, & Konyu-Fogel, 2016). The Higher Education Commission (hereafter HEC) of Pakistan has devised Faculty Appointment Criteria (hereafter FAC) for appointments and promotions of faculty members from the position of lecturer to full professor. The criteria is primarily based upon minimum qualification, length of service and research publications; leaving out the other very important parameters of performance of faculty members (Khuram, Bhutto, & Jabeen, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative to study the faculty's view on the criteria for recruitment in HEIs of Pakistan.

This study presumes that HEC's faculty appointment criteria affect faculty negatively. It is a source of dissatisfaction, disappointment and demotivation of those faculty members who are unable to meet these criteria due to multiple reasons. The objectively stated stance brings forth uni-dimensionality of these criteria. The faculty's performance, efficiency and competence is judged against one yardstick: research publications. Resultantly, the impact apparently can be seen in terms of faculty pursuing one task only, leaving aside the other important jobs expected from them. In this way, these set criteria become a hindrance and obstacle for faculty to move on to the next scale. Addressing faculty's dissatisfaction with faculty appointment criteria, the present study investigates the faculty's perspectives to unearth the problems they face in their professional growth.

The appointment criteria devised by any human resource department ensures merit, justice and employee satisfaction. However, the faculty members of Higher Education Institutions (hereafter HEIs) of Pakistan feel deprived when they map their performances with the Higher Education Commission's faculty appointment criteria. They consider the current criteria as uni-dimensional, as the only performance parameter of criteria is of research output in the form of research publications and that too in HEC's recognized journals only. These discriminatory criteria adversely affect the overall performance of faculty members and their focus towards other key assignments, as they start only focusing on getting their research publications to meet the defined criteria. In order to address this issue it is important to gauge HEI's faculty's perspective.

In order to study the identified problem, the present study intends to investigate employees' views on HEC's FAC. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the researcher explored the perspectives of faculty members of Higher Education Institutions regarding HEC's FAC and also located the problems and reasons due to which faculty cannot meet set criteria.

The basic assumption for conducting this research is that in general the faculty members who serve in HEIs of Pakistan consider the HEC's FAC does not cover the overall performance evaluation of faculty members and is only based upon minimum qualification, duration of service and number of publications. Moreover, the study postulates that there are a number of problems which HEIs' social sciences faculty face when they aim to fulfill it.

2 Literature Review

This study incorporates the thematic critical review of the existing literature on HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria, since this study intends to explore the perspectives of faculty members of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Pakistan regarding HEC's faculty appointment criteria and its impact on the overall performance of faculty members. In this respect there are very few researches that have been conducted to these sorts of criteria; however the review includes those previous researches which address a variety of related perspectives. These perspectives would, nonetheless, help conceptualize the phenomenon of employees' job dissatisfaction due to the appointment criteria. Therefore, this study will be focused to review the different themes associated with faculty appointment criteria, perspectives of faculty members associated with these criteria and the problems which the faculty members are facing owing to these criteria.

Globally, the organizations are striving hard to implant internationally acclaimed best practices of Human Resource Management (HRM) to better compensate their employees, and in order to get desired outcomes (Kang & Lee, 2021). The compensations are directly linked with the performances of the employees, and mechanisms have been devised to better gauge the performances in order to implement compensations accordingly. The understanding of performance measurement tools for any kind of job is pivotal in order to better compensate the employees, as per their satisfaction level. The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), are not different from other organizations and are committed in taking steps to implant best HRM practices. As globally, the faculty members are considered the pivotal and integral part of HEIs, therefore special efforts are being made to better compensate the faculty members.

While reviewing the previous literature it was revealed that there is sparingly any work done on reviewing the performance measuring processes/ criteria for faculty members. Wiley et al. (2016) have also stated the same, that there are very few researches available that evaluate the existing promotion criteria of faculty members. Similarly, there is scarcity of research on recommending suggestions for the change in these criteria. However, the available research revealed that the overall performance of any faculty member can be primarily determined through three factors; teaching, service and research. This study was primarily focused on faculty members of Business Schools; but the factors studied in this research are generalized and can be considered for evaluating the performance of faculty members of any discipline with minor amendments. To get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, the available literature

on these three important factors of measuring performance of faculty members is being reviewed and analyzed.

2.1 Teaching: The research conducted by Crawford, Burns, and McNamara (2012) stated that there are very few percentages of Deans of University, to be precise only 6.2 percent, that consider teaching as the most important part of a professor's job. This study reveals that the faculty members, while reaching the post of professorship, have opined that teaching is not the most integral part of their job.

While analyzing this in Pakistani scenario, Khuram et al. (2017) have reviewed the current HEC's policies and their impact on motivation of faculty members and concluded that the existing HEC's faculty appointment criteria has increased the motivation amongst the faculty members to perform better. The performance measurement mechanism in current criteria is based solely on the research outcomes that is also only on the number of research publications (Rafi, Ahmad, Naeem, Khan, & JianMing, 2020). Hence, this study did not include any other factor to be associated with performance of faculty members. Thus, this study is limited in scope as it ignored the distressed faculty waiting to be recruited for the next post for years owing to problems in achieving set criteria of research publications.

On the contrary, Malachowski (2010), in his study revealed that there is a dire need for the faculty members to bring balance between the increased demand of research productivity and teaching. For this, the teaching load needs to be rationalized and emerging teaching methodologies and approaches need to be inculcated. This study provides a solution to the debate of how much working hours of faculty members need to be dedicated towards research and how much of them should be for teaching. The balance between these two needs to be observed, but unfortunately current criteria do not address this key issue either. While focusing on teaching, the measurement of teaching performance is a most debated topic and a number of researches have been conducted to devise a strategy to measure teaching performance of faculty members. In this regard Fairweather (2002); Paulsen (2002) have studied the assessment mechanism of faculty's performance with regard to teaching and came up with the conclusion that peer reviews, student assessment, and tracking student progress enable accurate assessment of faculty's teaching performance. These studies demonstrate that if deemed appropriate by the policy makers, an accurate mechanism can be devised to measure the teaching performance of any faculty member. Therefore, the study in hand aims to locate the place of teachers teaching performance in the forefront while gathering data from the faculty on HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria.

2.2 Service: A mission of the higher education sector is to serve the communities that support it as well as those that do not. Ward (2003) found that institutions of higher education are falling short of supporting this mission and one way to respond to this challenge is for faculty to be more engaged with community services. When faculty are actively engaged with the community, the campus builds a positive relationship of engagement with numerous stakeholders, including alumni, businesses, and potential

donors. In this context, Mahmood (2016) states the mission of HEC to “facilitate *Institutions of Higher Learning* to serve as Engines of Growth for the Socio-Economic Development of Pakistan”. That implies the focus of HEIs of Pakistan should also be on provision of community services, but this pivotal part has never been gauged by any policy devised for assessing the performance of faculty members. And this is another concern for which this study is taken up.

2.3 Research: Research is one of the most central functions of universities throughout the world and the faculty plays the most crucial role in producing knowledge through research (Tien, 2008). While reviewing the current HEC’s appointment criteria, it is revealed that it is research centric. It implies that the research publication is the only parameter to assess the performance of any faculty member for his/ her appointment/promotion. Whereas other important factors such as teaching, services and industrial linkages are not considered to review overall performance.

Shah, Akhtar, Zafar, and Riaz (2012) in their study revealed that job satisfaction plays an integral part in performance of faculty members at educational institutions. Whereas, the current criteria is only focused on research publications. That implies the faculty members who are excellent in teaching and are serving the community through certain philanthropic tasks are not recognized in the current criteria of appointment/promotion. These factors may lead to job dissatisfaction amongst the faculty members of Pakistani HEIs. In order to address these identified research gaps, the present study attempts to investigate the social sciences faculty of Pakistani HEIs’ perspective on faculty appointment criteria. Thereof, to fill this research gap, the following research questions have been formulated:

- I. What is the perspective of faculty members regarding HEC’s faculty appointment criteria?
- II. What problems do the faculty members face while fulfilling HEC’s Faculty Appointment Criteria?
- III. Why do HEI’s faculty members find faculty appointment criteria a hindrance to their professional growth?

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Strategy

For the purpose of this study the researcher has employed a qualitative research strategy with a semi-structured questionnaire for conducting interviews of social sciences faculty of Pakistani universities and the gathered data was scrutinized by means of interpretive phenomenological analysis (hereafter IPA).

3.2 Context and Population

This study is conducted in Public Sector Higher Education Institutions and specifically in those Institutions that are located in Islamabad. Due to diversity of disciplines and exemptions in HEC’s Faculty Appointment Criteria for some

disciplines, such as Engineering, Information Technology, Medical, Law and Arts & Design, the study was limited to faculty members of social sciences discipline.

The population for this study includes both male and female full time social sciences faculty members working as Assistant Professor or Associate Professor only with age group of 35 years to 50 years, serving in Public Sector Higher Education Institutions of Islamabad. The minimum qualification for population is Ph.D. as Ph.D. is the requirement for appointment/ promotion as Associate Professor and Professor.

3.3 Sampling Frame: Social Sciences Faculty members with the designations of Assistant Professors and Associate Professors who have done their Ph.Ds. (the minimum qualification requirement for Associate Professor and Professor) and have attained minimum experience required for appointment/ promotion as Associate Professor and Professor; and are serving in Islamabad based Public Sector Universities. Initially a data was gathered from Higher Education Commission to examine how many HEIs have adopted HEC's faculty Appointment Criteria, currently there are 221 HEC's recognized HEIs out of which the record of 159 HEIs regarding adoption of Faculty Appointment Criteria was available that revealed that out of them 154 have adopted the criteria from their statutory bodies. The remaining 05 HEIs are newly established HEIs and are working to get approval of adoption of HEC's faculty appointment criteria from their respective statutory bodies. This implies that at Institution level, both Public and Private sector HEIs are committed to adopt the HEC's faculty appointment criteria.

3.4 Sampling Technique: For the purpose of this study purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select those Ph.D. social sciences faculty members that were serving as Assistant Professors and Associate Professors in Public sector HEIs of Islamabad including Allama Iqbal Open University, International Islamic University Islamabad and Quaid-e-Azam University; and have gained the required experience to be appointed/ promoted to Associate Professor and Professor. They were invited to participate in this study through emails and telephonic communication. Owing to the limited time allotted for this research only those faculty members were interviewed who could be conveniently approached.

- 1) **Sample Size:** The sample size for phenomenological studies usually ranges from 05 to 12, and particularly in case of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), Smith (2011) mentioned that sample size of 03 is useful for those researchers who are beginners in IPA, while 5 to 6 is considered to be a reasonable size for any IPA research. Considering this in view, 07 social sciences faculty members from 03 above stated universities have been purposefully and conveniently selected as the sample for the study.
- 2) **Data Collection Instruments:** The study employs self-devised semi structured open-ended questionnaires (see Appendix) for the interviews of social sciences faculty members serving as Assistant Professors and Associate Professors to

evaluate their perceptions regarding HEC's faculty appointment criteria for Appointments and Promotions. A semi-structured open-ended questionnaire was devised as no previous research in Pakistan supports this study. Secondly, it helped direct the interview according to faculty's responses to get insight of the actual perceptions on HEC's faculty Appointment Criteria.

- 3) **Data Analysis technique:** The qualitative data generated from the semi structured open-ended interview questionnaires on faculty perception regarding HEC's faculty appointment criteria was analyzed thematically. The study involved an interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2011) which helped in understanding the perspectives of social sciences' faculty members on HEC's faculty appointment criteria.

4. Analysis of the Data

The interpretive phenomenological analysis provides the opportunity to analyze the subjective experiences of the social sciences faculty. For the objective presentation of these subjective experiences the interviews were analyzed thematically. This thematic interpretive phenomenological analysis helps to find the perceptions of faculty members about the HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria.

As the questionnaire was divided into 02 parts; the first part was about background information to ensure that the respondents meet the minimum requirements to get interviewed. Whereas the second part was focused on getting the perceptions of these faculty members on HEC's faculty Appointment Criteria. While analyzing the responses of the first part of the questionnaire, the collected data from the 07 respondents revealed that 4 faculty members were working as Assistant Professor and 3 as Associate Professor. The next question (see Appendix, Question 2) was asked to determine the length of their service in the current position, the primary objective of this question was to get preliminary information that the respondents meet the minimum requirement of experience for selection in the next scale. The collected data showed that all the 07 faculty members fulfill the minimum experience requirement for posting on the next scale. Resultantly, it was revealed that the faculty members that have been interviewed were eligible to get promoted to the next scale in terms of minimum experience required. In answering to the question (see Appendix, question 3) on how long they have been associated with this HEI, 04 out of 07 informed that this was their first job in University, 02 of them informed that they have switched their university due to lack of opportunities and growth, whereas 01 of them informed that he completed his minimum tenure in his previous institution but there was no sanctioned position of Associate Professor in his discipline, therefore he has to switch his Employer and have to join as Assistant Professor in this university. In answer to the question (see Appendix, question 4) on whether they did PhD while serving in this HEI, all the 04 faculty members who have been into their first job have done their PhD while serving as Lecturer. It revealed that most of the respondents were loyal to their institutions.

Because all of them had availed faculty development program scholarships plus paid leave for the completion of doctorate degrees, they showed integrity to their institution by resuming their services after completion of higher degree.

The second part of the questionnaire was analyzed thematically and main themes were extracted while assigning the codes to core themes and sub codes to other important themes, as suggested by distinguished gurus of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Silverman, 2015). Whereas, Attride-Stirling (2001) came up with the idea of constructing a thematic network, in order to better arrange the like themes in a single network and connect these networks to each other, to analyze the qualitative data. The collected data was reviewed systematically to extract the themes, and while doing so following core themes were extracted:

4.1 Requirements in Faculty Appointment Criteria

The respondents unanimously raised serious concerns on the HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria, specifically related to the requirements mentioned in the criteria that are related to minimum qualification, minimum experience and minimum number of publications in HEC recognized journals. Their opinion about the current criteria was very clear, as reflected from the statement of one of the respondents:

“...how can HEC say that this is an employee friendly criteria, many of employees like us are sufferers of this criteria and nothing has been done to improve this criteria in the last 14 years.....”

Another respondent raised questions on not defining streams in the current criteria, by stating:

“Why we can't have separate streams for researchers and teachers in the faculty appointment criteria, we being teachers are spending our entire life for educating the next generation but are not eligible for selection in next grade”

The responses of these deprived faculty members show that there is a dire need of reviewing the current appointment criteria, and that the involvement of stakeholders of different schools of thought need to be considered. It is evident by reviewing the current criteria that it is unidimensional and primarily focused on only one parameter of performance i.e. research publications. The respondents were also critical of no provision of promotions in the criteria i.e. each time the faculty members have to go through a selection process if they desire to achieve the next scale.

4.1.1 Job Experience Requirements

The respondents also criticized the job experience requirements, as it got considerably relaxed for those candidates who were active researchers and able to get their research published.

“If one gets his or her PhD at the age of 25 and he or she is a good researcher then within 05 years he or she gets to be an Associate Professor and in next 05

years he or she can become a full Professor, means at the age of 35 one can be a full professor, the only condition is to be a good researcher.”

One of the other responded further elaborated this point by stating:

“...tell me isn't it be considered a clear discrimination and unjust to pressing the faculty to leave all other job responsibilities and just focus on research publications”

It is evident from the responses that there should be a proper mechanism to devise minimum experience requirements for faculty members, by inculcating all the important parameters of performance measurement.

4.1.2 Academic Qualification Criteria

Though all the respondents were PhD, they were still criticizing the minimum qualification requirements set by HEC in FAC. One of the respondents was of the view that:

“Who said that only PhD can be a good teacher and only he or she is eligible to become Associate Professor or Professor”

The other respondent was even more critical of this requirement as they state:

“...look I am 49 now, I completed my PhD in 2014 at the age of 45 to get eligible for Associate Professor, you can see my students' feedback record, it's excellent, but still I had to do Ph.D.”

It was revealed by analyzing responses that the faculty members were not satisfied with the qualification requirement set by HEC for appointments as Associate Professor and Professor.

4.1.3 Research Publications

The most serious issue pointed out by all the respondents in the current criteria was related to the requirement of minimum research papers. While analyzing their responses, ethics and plagiarism were the most common issues related to publication requirements, highlighted by the respondents. Some of the eye-opening comments of respondents have been coated below to throw light on the severity of the issue.

“I have seen them (faculty members) forcing their supervisees to include their names as second author and even in many cases as first author; it is just because of fulfillment of that publication requirement”

“It's unethical, isn't it? To pressurize your students, pressurizing your subordinates to include your name in the research paper; in which you have merely contributed”

“...we, the teachers, the so-called builders of nation are turn out to be the most corrupt, we are at the height of academic dishonesty, just to get benefits for our self-promotion”

It implies that the HEC needs to reconsider the requirement of publications by incorporating the perceptions of faculty members.

4.1.4 No promotion, only selection

The faculty members in general were praising this requirement that each time a faculty member has to go through a selection process, to get to the next designation. But the complexity and the delays involved in this process need to be taken care of.

4.2 Lacking in Criteria

The respondents have also highlighted a number of shortcomings or lacking in the current appointment criteria. The first major deficiency, as raised by the respondents, was related to no proper mechanism for measuring performance of faculty members and the current criteria was termed as “unidimensional” as there is only one parameter of performance i.e., of research publications. Further, the respondents also emphasized the inclusion of other important parameters such as excellence in teaching, services including administrative responsibilities, community services, and industrial linkages and so on. The respondents also put their weight on inclusion of separate streams for researchers, teachers and industrial experts so that a blend of well-equipped teachers can be recruited in the universities that would eventually enable to enhance the quality of teaching and education.

4.2.1 Unidimensional in terms of performance measurement

Some of the responses of respondents have been placed below, which truly reflects the concerns of these faculty members on non-inclusion of other very important performance parameters in HEC’s appointment criteria.

“...what was the motto of HEC while devising this criteria, whether research publication is the only responsibility of faculty member”

“These criteria rate me as a bad teacher, because according to these criteria I am not eligible to get promoted as Associate Professor.....”

4.2.2 No weightage to excellence in teaching

The most critical and important duty of any faculty member is to teach, and his or her performance in teaching reflects how good or bad he or she is in teaching. Universities, over the years, with the continuous support of HEC have developed feedback mechanisms, through which each teacher is being evaluated by the student. The respondents were of the view that excellence in teaching should be the key pillar of performance measurement of any faculty, moreover it should also be considered while conducting selection boards of any faculty members. But, due to current appointment criteria, the teachers have shifted their roles from teaching to only research. As stated by one of the respondent:

“Go to the large public sector universities and check what is the actual credit hour load of any senior professor, you would get surprised as in majority cases they are not teaching even a single course”

The other respondent highlighted the issue of ethics:

“what to say about our faculty members’ integrity, most of the times the senior professors have hired research assistants, you can call them teaching assistants and these teaching assistants are teaching their courses”

One of the respondents blamed the HEC’s faculty appointment criteria and HEC’s ranking criteria for decline in the quality of education, he stated that:

“We all are in the race of getting more and more publications, no one bothers to notice how well we are teaching, even our vice chancellors and deans are only interested in the number of research publications. This all is due to these requirements in HEC’s criteria and weightage given to research in HEC’s ranking criteria”

It is affirmed from the respondents’ answers that excellence in teaching is the most critical missing link in the current appointment criteria. Due to which most of the faculty members consider this criteria as non-friendly with respect to the sanctity of this profession.

4.2.3 No weightage to services (including administrative responsibilities, community services etc.)

Beside teaching and research, the teachers have to devote their services in other important tasks that include administrative responsibilities, development of industrial linkages and doing community services. It is the role of the university to act as a hub of community services in which the role of teacher is integral. Further, being a teacher, he or she has to perform certain administrative duties such as dean, head of department, focal person of department for accreditation, program team member and many others. For which they have to perform several tasks related to these administrative duties, a good performance measuring mechanism should also gauge these responsibilities.

4.2.4 No privilege for linking industrial experience with academic experience

The respondents were of the view that industrial experience should be linked with academic experience in order to encourage professionals to come and teach in the universities. As this would enable us to bridge the gap between industry and academia. One of the respondents summed it up by stating:

“There is a dire need of linking industries with academia, without that our university education is going nowhere”

4.2.5 No relaxation for industrial gurus in qualification & publication requirements

The respondents were emphasizing to include separate streams for professionals in the appointment criteria, so that they can come and join academia in reputed positions. For that the requirements of PhD and research publications need to be relaxed. One of the respondents stated this in a very convincing way:

“...look around the world, the gurus of their fields come to universities and teach courses even at doctoral level, though their own qualification could be of only

bachelors level. It is their rich experience that they can transfer, for which qualification doesn't matter at all.....”

4.3 Issues at the university end

The most important issue raised by the teachers was related to the complexity of procedures adopted by the University for Selection of faculty members.

4.3.1 Sanctioned positions

One of the important shortcomings at the university end, as highlighted by the respondents, is no provision of post in next grade. This is due to the pyramid designed by the university that each department would have such and such numbers of professors, associate professors and assistant professors in it. It hinders the chances of selection of other faculty members in higher ranks. As stated by one of the respondents:

“...I have to leave my last job, as there was only one sanctioned position of Associate Professor in my discipline and one associate professor was already there. And agony is that, they were not willing to sanction another post”

4.3.2 Procedural issues and procedural delays

One of the respondents has explained the misery of procedural issues as:

“...one of my colleagues got eligible for the next position two years back and within two months the advertisement was announced for that post, from then the shortlisting is not finalized yet....”

It was revealed that in public sector universities the selection process takes at least 12 to 18 months, subject to availability of sanctioned positions.

4.4 Issues at HEC's end related to promotion of research culture

4.4.1 Limited local journals in social sciences

On the other hand, as the respondents were from social sciences disciplines, they also highlighted the issues of scarcity of journals. One of the respondents further elaborated this issue by pointing out that:

“If you look at the HEC's website for recognized journals, you will find that the number of research journals recognized in social sciences disciplines are way less than sciences discipline, most of the recognized journals are in Z category, the lowest category of recognition, in which the published papers are not considered for appointments”

4.4.2 No bifurcation for Social Sciences and Sciences

Continuing from scarcity of journals in social sciences, the respondents further elaborated their concerns on equal criteria of research publications for faculty recruitment for both: social sciences and sciences disciplines' faculty of HEIs. According to the respondents, it brings a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst the social scientists when they find the criteria for evaluating faculty members of sciences and social sciences is the same. One of the respondents further elaborated this issue by pointing out that:

“...how come sciences and social sciences can be treated equally, when it comes to research outcomes in terms of recognized publications?”

On the other hand, the other respondent pointed out the continuous neglect of HEC for social sciences by stating:

“Since its inception in 2002, tell me what steps have been taken by HEC to promote social sciences discipline, very few. So much so that the first thematic research grant for social sciences is being announced in 2016, whereas up till now the council for promotion of social sciences is still in pipeline.”

4.4.3 Reputed International databases are not accepted for publications

One major concern raised on HEC by the respondents was non recognition of many well-reputed international databases of research journals. Owing to this, they find a limited number of journals suitable for getting their research work published.

5. Discussion

The interpretive phenomenological analyses of the data revealed the perspective of faculty members regarding HEC's faculty appointment criteria. Like previous studies (Shah et al., 2012), the critical evaluation of the gathered data pointed to respondents' serious concerns on the HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria, specifically related to the requirements mentioned in the criteria that are related to minimum qualification, minimum experience and minimum number of publications in HEC recognized journals. The responses of the faculty members show that there is a dire need of reviewing the current appointment criteria, and for that they suggested the involvement of stakeholders of different schools of thoughts. The data analyses also highlighted the problems faced by HEIs' social sciences faculty regarding the fulfillment of HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria. It is evident by reviewing the current criteria's uni-dimensionality in-terms of its prime focus on one parameter of performance i.e. research publications. This study supports Mahmood's (2016) argument that the mission of HEC should be to facilitate learning and education but this pivotal part has never been considered by any policy devised for assessing the performance of faculty members. The respondents also criticized no provision of promotions in the criteria. They emphasized that the faculty suffers owing to this as each time faculty members have to go through the selection process for the next scale. The findings of the study support Khuram et al. (2017); however, this study concludes that HEC's policies affect motivation of faculty members negatively. Although the faculty members in general praised no direct promotion criteria and also the requirement of going through the selection process, the delays involved in this process lead to frustration and anxiety. Another problem is non-recognition of excellence in teaching as a criterion for recruitment. This most critical missing link in the current appointment criteria leads to many other problems for teachers and administration alike. An overambitious researcher may ignore his or her duties towards teaching as teaching performance is a non-existent entity in these criteria.

The study reveals that these criteria do not consider the role of university to act as a hub of community services in which the role of teacher is integral. Further, it also ignores that being a teacher, he or she has to perform certain administrative duties such as dean, head of department, focal person of department for accreditation, program team member and the like. Resultantly, the faculty considers such responsibilities as extra jobs and many try to avoid shouldering such services. Therefore, HEI's faculty finds faculty appointment criteria a hindrance to their professional growth.

6. Conclusion

This study implicates that the policy makers at Higher Education Commission may consider the perspectives of faculty members of Higher Education Institutions on Faculty Appointment Criteria relevant and may revisit it in decision making processes. Since this study provides an insight to the problems the social sciences faculty faces in meeting with the set criteria, HEC may consider it appropriate to revise faculty appointment criteria to better manage human resources at HEIs of the country. Moreover, the study foregrounds the social sciences faculty's concerns and worries related to faculty appointment criteria. In this way, it helps to elucidate and recognize the other important factors for gauging performances of faculty members of Pakistani HEIs. Insofar, teaching performance, faculty's involvement in HEIs administrative services and other community services have not been the part of selection criteria. Resultantly, this study implies an intention to review and revisit HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria.

This study is limited to Public Sector Higher Education Institutions and specifically to those Institutions that are located in Islamabad region. Due to diversity of disciplines and exemptions in HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria for some disciplines, such as Engineering, Information Technology, Medical, Law and Arts & Design, the study was limited to faculty members of social sciences discipline. However, in order to better gauge problems of HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria a broader and detailed study may be conducted in future. The next researchers may involve private sector HEIs as well to better address this issue. Moreover, if a future research involves a longitudinal and detailed quantitative and qualitative survey of all the HEIs of Pakistan, it would provide with a more empirical and generalizable results of the gathered data. And such a study would better help the policy makers to take concrete steps in the light of proposed suggestions. Furthermore, I recommend that the future research may involve a study of the perspective of all the stakeholders of HEC'S Faculty Appointment Criteria. So as to, come up with a profound plan, scheme and agenda for better human resource management in HEIs of Pakistan.

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Semi Structured Questionnaire

Part-I (Background information)

1. On which position are you currently working?
2. How long are you working on this position?
3. How long have you been serving in this HEI?
4. Did you get doctorate while serving in this HEI?

Part-II

5. What is your opinion about HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria?
6. What is your opinion about minimum qualification requirements in HEC's Faculty Appointment Criteria for Associate Professor and/ or Professor? Do you agree or disagree with this requirement?
7. If disagreed to above question, what should be the minimum qualification for Associate Professor and/ or Professor, in HEC's Appointment Criteria? (Leading Question)
8. What is your opinion about minimum experience requirements in HEC's faculty Appointment Criteria for Associate Professor and/ or Professor? Do you agree or disagree with this requirement?
9. If disagreed to above question, what should be the minimum experience for Associate Professor and/ or Professor, in HEC's Appointment Criteria? (Leading Question)
10. What is your opinion for minimum research publication requirements in HEC's faculty Appointment Criteria for Associate Professor and/ or Professor? Do you agree or disagree with this requirement?
11. If disagreed to above question, whether there should be any minimum requirement of research publications for Associate Professor and/ or Professor, in HEC's Appointment Criteria? (Leading Question)
12. Why does HEC consider research publications as the only performance measuring tool? What is your opinion in this regard?
13. What other factors should be included in current appointment criteria?
14. What should be the parameters for measuring faculty's performance?
15. What are the key job responsibilities of faculty members? Are they aligned with HEC's faculty Appointment Criteria? How?
16. How do you consider HEC's faculty appointment criteria from the perspective of its employee friendliness?
17. What is the role of student's satisfaction in gauging faculty's performance?
18. What is the role of community services and other services in gauging faculty's performance?