

CUE guidelines and their implications

In the year 2014 Commission for University Education (CUE) came up with harmonized guidelines on academic staff promotion. Currently it is not strange to find Master degree holders being appointed as lecturer grade 12 and not Assistant Lecturer/ Tutorial fellow grade 11. While the move was seen as a good action against unfair practices in academic staff promotion it was also met with a fair amount of criticism. First CUE guidelines placed hard lines for promotion especially considering the number of postgraduate students that academic staffs have supervised to completion. Some lecturers found their share of disappointment especially in disciplines that do not attract many postgraduate students. These disciplines include medicine, law, life sciences among others. I am aware of colleagues who are senior lecturers and have graduated several master degree students but cannot apply for promotion because they have not graduated a single PhD holder. Most of them retire as senior lecturers. It is therefore wise to scrutinize these guidelines in order to provide a fair verdict to the proposal. In order to do so it is important to analyse the CUE guideline short coming.

Although the CUE guidelines were suspended by the high court it is necessary to understand the guidelines and their implications. CUE guidelines stipulates that for appointment as a tutorial fellow grade 11 one must have graduated with a master degree and is enrolled in a PhD programme. For Lecturer grade 12 appointment one must have graduated with a PhD degree. In order to be appointed for a senior lecturer grade 13 one must have graduated with a PhD, have published at least two papers with an equation of twenty four points, have three years teaching experience since the last appointment as a lecturer or six years industry experience and have supervised at least three postgraduate students to completion. On the other hand in order to be appointed as an associate professor grade 14 one must have taught for three years as a senior lecturer, supervised three postgraduate students where one must be a PhD holder, attracted research funding and have published at least four papers in a peer reviewed journal. Finally in order to be appointed a full professor one must have graduated three postgraduate students where one must be a PhD holder, taught as an associate lecturer for at least three years and have attracted research funding. Comparatively it is unfair that a staff in administration can rise to grade 14 positions with a master degree!

These guidelines have had some serious implications. First is the issue of control over students' supervision. While the academic staffs understand the requirement for promotion there is some extent that the staff has no control on the control of the students especially on their motivation to progress with their thesis. On the other had such guidelines can lead to poor quality of postgraduate thesis because of the urge to 'graduate a postgraduate student'. Secondly is the issue of quality research publications. It should be noted that a good quality paper takes sometimes to get published because of the rigorous process involved in publishing in high end journals like NatureTM. A minimum of one year review period should be expected in high index journals. This has led to the growing number of predatory journals that promise to process an article within few days at a fee.

These guidelines fall short of other considerations that the academic staff contribute to their respective faculties including curriculum development, consultation, linkages, collaboration, administrative roles, community work, quality of research publications, organizing conferences, contribution to public discourses among others. It is therefore necessary to consider a broad approach to these guidelines in order to give fair promotion criteria for academic staff.

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