

## Additional Charge to University Faculty - Is There a Way to Stop the Rot or is Continued Decline Inevitable?

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**KEYWORDS:** Additional charge, Administration, University, Faculty, Research, Quality.

**How to Cite This:**

*Naseem N. Additional charge to university faculty – Is there a way to stop the rot or is continued decline inevitable? Biomedica. 2020; 36 (3): 226-7.*

Quality assurance in education is a critical process that includes promoting innovation in teaching, research and scholarship including, but not limited to, novel uses of technology to enhance in-person teaching and learning, with subsequent continuous quality improvement. The development, collection and analysis of appropriate performance metrics, and building a culture of excellence in teaching and research that rewards the best and supports the rest, stipulates as obligatory for every higher education institution working in public or private sector.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the universities all over the world seem to practice an unequivocal approach regarding the complementarity between teaching and research; inspiring their faculty members to perform a mix of the aforesaid tasks along with a limited amount of administrative assignments. Reflecting on this approach as a positive indicator of the presumed symbiosis between various academic duties, a valid argument still exists whether the realistic input and output of faculty are optimal, or, alternatively, it calls for a redefinition of the responsibilities and objectives set by the university authorities? The interplay among intrinsic (individual, supply-driven) and extrinsic (institutional, demand-

driven) motivators hence play a primary role in an academician's binding to his/her role as a teacher, researcher, or administrator: quality versus quantity if accommodated appropriately.

In most of the universities in Pakistan, contrary to the policy of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, the faculty is assigned with variable and negotiable long-term administrative duties other than the academic managerial posts like Head of Departments, Dean, Chairperson or Provost etc. that demand full-time commitment. This practice may be a consequence of institution's logical constraints or indiscreet policies. These faculty members, in most cases, carry good incentives including, but not limited to, additional remuneration and/or allowances, an influential and bureaucratic status within the university community and blue-eyed phenomenon with the higher authorities. This has been a creeping change that subsists as a short-term and non-generic entity for the overall well-being of the institution where the structures are not necessarily robust enough to protect teaching and research as the primary aim, especially among the junior faculty members and new entrants who take it as a charming precedent.

Nevertheless, these additional positions entail mandatory reductions in the quantity and quality of teaching, redirecting the workload towards junior faculty members, reducing the annual intake of students' numbers or even missing the entire batch intake for a specific year to compensate for the heavy load of the administrative work. This situation has subsequently halted the ability for academic thought and discourse to develop. Besides, it seems to me that the current structures,

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- Received for publication: 12-09-2020
- Accepted for publication: 20-09-2020

we have, are not transparent enough or balanced enough in terms of their authority to judge the performance of the faculty member. Numerous university policies and practices have been modified over the years that have, in actual, marginalized the academics and research productivity of a faculty in comparison to the administrative output given by them. No one or very few voices in these institutes are arguing for accountability that has led to a stronger community of people that aren't accountable; a vicious cycle goes on!!!

In many cases, the faculty members who volunteer their services for these dual or multiple additional charge(s) tend to mask their inabilities to perform teaching and research with excellence in their parent departments. On the other hand, it is reported that a significant number of faculty members enjoy administration more as compared to mere teaching and research.<sup>2</sup> If the teaching load is appropriately distributed among all faculty members of the department, the responsibilities of an additional charge do not place the students in an actual peril. However, in departments and divisions where faculty number is already inadequate and supervisors or Heads are committed heavily towards administrative assignments, student's education remains invariably compromised with subsequent lack of significant confidence in their training and mastery of the subject. The role of Quality Enhancement Cell, therefore, becomes imperative in devising a strategy for saving the endangered attribute of faculty as academic leaders- who enjoy teaching, training and research with timely completion and publication of the thesis of supervisees from their own departments. For the research rating of academic units, research output at the end of the year should primarily focus on the contribution by the departments' own students. Nevertheless, the research output must also include the overall publications by the department in collaborative studies within or outside the university. Additionally, for a university teaching faculty, administrative assignments must contribute very little to their promotion or rewards. Instead, performance review at the end of the year must be carried out per their engagements in developmental projects of relevance and application while displaying most of the time and thoughtfulness being spent for their specialty or

departments for which they are actually hired, paid and being promoted for.

After the Pakistan Medical Commission has set-in new directions and policies for the medical and dental framework of Pakistan, higher institutes and universities are becoming much more competitive with each other; to retain affiliated colleges, develop new courses, attract students from all over the country and hire people who are more innovative in teaching and research aptitude. After the launch of the Prime Minister's Complaint Portal in Pakistan, every one of us witnesses that more and more complaints are coming through, more and more inquiries are going into that, and institutes are continuously filling the white papers after being held answerable for both genuine and ingenuine grievances. At this time, university authorities, instead of making decisions on the hoof, must focus on adopting and implementing discreet policies for uplifting their faces as innovative and cutting-edge research centers with the development of networking for commercialization if they want to survive in these challenging times. The realistic approach against the present backdrop would be to discourage the uprising trends of heavy administrative assignments over-shadowing the teaching and research by the faculty. Skilled and experienced administrators may be hired as full-time employees for the jobs that require round-the-clock commitment instead of letting the faculty play the ruck and maul with these charges termed as "additional", "acting" or "looking after".

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None to declare.

#### **FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE**

None to disclose.

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