

Assessment of academic staff for Appointment and Promotion for productivity in Nigeria Universities

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Abstract

Study Background: Assessment of academic staff for appointment and promotion for productivity in Nigeria Universities is a measure of quality assurance to attract merits and excellence for qualitative academic service delivery that will impact positively on students/junior academics and the community. It is a provision to select the best for effective teaching, research and community development. **Aim and Objective:** This work was designed to review available documents from some universities in Nigeria on assessment of academic staff for Appointment and Promotion for productivity in Nigeria Universities to identify gap for possible recommendation. **Materials and Methods:** Available and online guidelines for appointment and promotion of some universities in Nigeria and the Draft Benchmark Guidelines for Appointment and Promotion of Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities of were reviewed. **Results:** There was no uniform assessment procedure and instruments across the universities. There were also possible factors that may militate against objective and quality assessment. Recommendation were also provided for improvement. **Conclusion:** This review has been carried out on Assessment of academic staff for Appointment and Promotion in Nigeria Universities for productivity and facilitate appropriate research for policy formulation.

Keywords: Academic staff, Appointment, Promotion, Nigeria Universities

Introduction

Assessment criteria for appointment and promotion are provided in the university system in Nigeria to ensure productivity and assure quality in the service delivery. Categories of academic staff in Nigeria Universities include: Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II, Lecturer I, Senior Lecturer, Reader or Associate Professor and Professor. Consideration into any of these categories through promotion and appointment is based on the contribution of the academic staff to teaching, research and development which takes into account of indices such as qualification, research (projects, attraction of research grants, creative works, patents, products and prototypes), key contributions to policy, fellowships, scholarships and distinctions, supervision of postgraduate students, teaching and or professional experience, presentation of papers at conferences, administrative experience, academic leadership and maturity, quality of teaching and community service (ABU,2018, NUC,2019, University of Ibadan, 2019, University of Ilorin, 2019).

The academic qualification required by someone interested in taking up career in academics is Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree obtained from a recognised university for an individual to be appointed or promoted to Lecturer II or I (in case of core professional programmes recognised by an Act of the National Assembly). There are additional qualification required for candidates interested in teaching on core professional programmes. For an individual in some other core professional disciplines like medicine can be appointed or promoted to Lecturer I with professional fellowship plus first degree in lieu of Ph.D (ABU,2018, NUC,2019, University of Ibadan, 2019, University of Ilorin, 2019). . These professional qualification recognised by the university are those obtained from professional regulatory agencies of the federal government established under an Act of the National Assembly of Nigeria. These professional qualifications are grouped as Associate or Fellowship. Another major area of assessment is research. Research can be assessed through quantity and most importantly the quality of publication of academic research findings, projects, ability to conceptualize to attract research grants, creative works, patents, products and prototypes(ABU,2018, NUC,2019, University of Ibadan, 2019, University of Ilorin, 2019). Key contribution to policy is another area that can be credited for someone interested in academic career or progression. Policy is a procedure/ protocol, statement of intent or a guiding principle regarding actions or decisions, outcomes and approvals which are proposed and adopted by management or the authorized body in an organization (Deleon and Steelman, 2001).

Fellowships certificates traditionally obtained after the doctoral degree is another area that may be assessed though the opportunity is not open to everyone as there are restrictions like age, years of postdoctoral degree, employer's interest as it affects release and availability of space. Fellowships offers opportunity for internship, training on research including attraction of grants and publication of quality research findings in area of interest(ABU,2018, NUC,2019, University of Ibadan, 2019, University of Ilorin, 2019). . Some Universities use this for appointments like Vice Chancellorship post. This supposed to be an additional advantage and not a major requirement. Scholarships and distinctions currently are being assessed through academic awards like commendation, award of academic excellence, sponsorship for programmes based on distinctions, conference travel /registration grants, research grants, patency, ground breaking

research, quantity of publication in journals indexed in highly rated database/organization, excellent performance in academic activities such as presentation of papers, excellent contribution to administrative/academic procedures. Recently, the National Universities Commission, Nigeria proposed google scholar h-index of 40 and i10index of 30 for science disciplines while h-index of 10 and i10index of 18 was proposed for non-science disciplines(NUC, 2019). Mentorship is determined by the number of postgraduate students supervised and completed (NUC, 2019). Though, some lecturers employed in universities or programmes without postgraduate programmes may be at disadvantage especially at when seeking appointment or progressing to professorial cadre. As a result of this, many universities or programmes that have not mounted postgraduate programmes do not consider this in either the promotion or appointment process. Active participation in conferences is passed through presentation of abstracts of academic research findings at national and international conference(ABU,2018, NUC,2019, University of Ibadan, 2019, University of Ilorin, 2019). The publications of a staff aspiring to a Professorial or Readership position must have 70% and 60% research focus respectively in his/her discipline (University of Ilorin, 2019).

In the university appointment and promotion, cognate experience is another major area after the consideration of qualification. This encompasses teaching and or professional experience. Teaching experience in any recognised university is required. However, years of teaching in other tertiary institutions/or on sub-degree programmes is divided by 2 to be equivalent to teaching/research experience in the university with consideration given to only a maximum of 10 years teaching experience in institutions other than the universities(ABU,2018, NUC,2019, University of Ibadan, 2019, University of Ilorin, 2019).. Research experience from a recognised research institute are considered as the equivalent of university experience. Professional experience are also considered for teachers on core professional programmes such as Accounting, Engineering, Laws, Medicine, Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Radiography, Optometry and other recognised professional programmes recognised by an Act of the National Assembly. Professional experience which is subject to possession of PhD including relevant professional qualification is credited for appointment and promotion not beyond Senior Lecturer cadre. Quality of teaching is assessed by students, department of quality control of the university and superiors to determine qualitative delivery of lectures as appropriate including coverage of curriculum content and promptness(ABU,2018, NUC,2019, University of Ibadan, 2019, University of Ilorin, 2019).

Administrative experience, academic leadership and maturity involves activities as a result of appointment to university duty posts, university headships, membership of university committees, design and coordination of a research or projects, public assignments such as Chairman or member of board or committees/team including ad hocs, and member of editorial board In most universities administrative duties recognised for promotion and appointment include Dean/Director, Head of Department/Head of Section, Member of Council/Senate Committees/other Statutory, University Committees, Chairman/Member/Secretary to other University Committees, Member of Faculty/Centre/Institute/ Departmental Committees, Examination/Registration/Colloquium Officer and External Examiner/Moderator. Some universities define academic leadership as

contributing significantly or taking a lead in teaching, research and mentoring in Departments, Faculties, Institutes and Centers.(ABU,2017; 2018; University of Ilorin, 2019)

Community service involves service performed other than recognised official/formal duties, to immediate community/state/nation/international (ABU,2017; 2018).

The appointment and promotion process starts with the department through faculty, college to the university central appointment and promotion. Appointments and promotion board to the professorial cadre are ratified by the university council. Criteria for appraisal and assessment including scoring vary from one university to another(ABU,2017; 2018) .

This work was therefore designed to review the Assessment of academic staff for Appointment and Promotion for productivity in Nigeria Universities to identify possible gap for appropriate recommendation.

Qualifications

Qualification is a basic requirement to determine the ability of an individual for qualitative academic deliveries in the areas of teaching, research and community development. It is a way of assuring quality in the universities. This requirement however vary from universities and from some programme to another(Ajao and, Lawoyin, 2005; ; Ekoko, 2005; Chukwuma et al., 2015; ABU, 2018; University of Ibadan, 2019'University of Ilorin, 2019).

The minimum qualification as prescribed by the National Universities Commission is Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in an area relevant to the respective areas of interest. This is in addition to first degree or basic professional qualifications in core professional programmes recognised by the act of the National assembly. However, a Fellowship Diploma awarded by the West African or National Postgraduate College is also adjudged to serve as the minimum qualification for Physician interested in academic career as alternative to PhD. In addition, Associateship diploma awarded by the Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria before 2004 (MLSCN Act. 2004 Cap 114 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria), when the programme was upgraded to a degree programme by the enabling act of the National Assembly is acceptable in place of first degree though some universities insist on Fellowship Diploma in place of the degree. Few Universities take Higher National Diploma plus Postgraduate diploma in place of the first degree.

Sometimes, Postgraduate diploma in education was prescribed for all teachers in Nigeria universities. After an exhaustive argument, lecturers were only encouraged on this but should not be a basic requirement for teaching in the universities. However, this diploma is a compulsory requirement to teaching on Nursing Science programme and a criterion for those who want to teach on education programmes but do not have basic degree in education. (Ajao and, Lawoyin, 2005; ; Ekoko, 2005; Chukwuma et al., 2015; ABU, 2018; University of Ibadan, 2019'University of Ilorin, 2019) .

Publications, creative works, patents and prototypes

Publication is to make the content of our academic research findings available and accessible to the public in form of journal articles, monographs, textbooks reporting new findings and technical reports on research projects(Hawksworth, 2011; Blackwell and Manar, 2015). Creative works is a demonstration of creative ability such as fine artwork (sculpture, paintings, drawing, sketching, and performance art), dance, writing (literature), filmmaking, and composition. Creative work is peculiar to those who are bias in arts. A patent is an intellectual property manifested in form of finished product with which the owner has the legal right to exclude others from making, using, or selling an invention for a limited period of years in exchange for publishing an enabling public disclosure of the invention(Lemley and Shapiro, 2005).. Prototype involves semantics, design, electronics, and software programming used to evaluate a new design to enhance precision by system analysts and users. This is relevant in the field of Engineering and Computer Science(Hawksworth, 2011; Blackwell and Manar, 2015).

Publications, creative works, patents and prototypes are revelations of intellectual contributions expected of academic staff to solve problems in the community. These are assessed as research or score as the intellectual contribution of an academic staff. It is a significant aspect of the credits in assessment of candidate for appointment and promotion in Nigeria universities. It may cover 40% of the assessment(Hawksworth, 2011; Blackwell and Manar, 2015).

Journal articles are expected to be published in high impact indexed non-predatory university, research institute and professional association or societal journals. Currently, Scopus and web of science/ISI/Thomson Reuter indexed journals are rated higher. Some Universities accept articles in predatory journals based on the merit of the content. Some University like University of Ibadan requires certain percentage of the journal articles to be accessible through google scholar(Hawksworth, 2011; Blackwell and Manar, 2015).

Some universities require a proportion of articles published in Local/National journal outlets to be 70% while some use proportion of articles published in International journal outlets to be 70% for full professor(Hawksworth, 2011; Blackwell and Manar, 2015).

Some objective ways of assessing journal articles include use of Quartiles of journals provided by Scimago's Scientific Journal ranking (SJR), impact factor, citations, google scholar metrics, Index Copernicus Value, journal indexing, journal volume, authorship and research gate metrics. Generally, assessment of quality of publication is based on Contribution to knowledge, Editorial Quality, clarity of objectives, extent of technical soundness/quality, unique contribution to knowledge, and Focus of the Research in relation to specialization of Candidate (Ajao and, Lawoyin, 2005; FUAA,2014; ABU, 2018; LAUTECH, 2018;University of Ilorin, 2019; UNIBADAN, 2020) ..

Assessment of publications internal assessors and external assessors which include relevant Professors from other recognised universities (e.g 2) and at least a relevant Professor from any of the recognised foreign universities(Hawksworth, 2011; Blackwell and Manar, 2015).

Key Contributions to policy

Policy is a statement of intent which include system of principles or protocols adopted by the authorized and relevant management body that will guide the operation or governance of an Organisation or establishment to make subjective and objective decision for rational outcomes. Though, not a major criterion but it can also credited for academic staff who is opportune to be involved in this for appointment and promotion as part of intellectual contributions (Deleon and Steelman, 2001).

Attraction of Research Grants

Grants are non-repayable funds or products awarded by government, corporation, foundation or trust, to an academic staff, , or the university for the purpose of teaching, research and development. Attraction of research grants is also a demonstration of academic quality of staff in the University system. Research grants can be minor or major depending on the amount of money involved as determined by the quality, relevance and volume of the project work. This can be scored based on the role of the affected candidate in the work and whether the work is completed or not. Most at times the research proposal for grants may not be awarded but ability to conceptualize is also credible(NUC, 2019).

Fellowships

Fellowships traditionally refer to as pre-doctoral or postdoctoral fellowships is a form of postgraduate internship to enhance the ability of academic staff to carry out and report quality research finding. It will also empower the staff to qualitatively impact knowledge regarding teaching, research and development. Though, not many academic staff are opportune because of limited space which warrants strict requirements which include age, the period of time the PhD is awarded among other factors(NUC, 2019).

Scholarships and distinctions

Scholarships and distinctions these are awarded to individuals with ground breaking academic performance or contributions regarding academic activities which include performance at training, teaching, research, and development. Recently, the National Universities Commission proposed an assessment criterion of google scholar h-index of 40 and i10index of 30 for science disciplines and h-index of 10 and i10index of 18 for non-science disciplines(NUC, 2019).

Supervision of Postgraduate Students

Supervision of Postgraduate Students is a demonstration of provision of mentorship to junior academics specifically in research and development. It is used to assess the quality of the output of an academic staff. This may not be applicable but will be an added advantage in some universities or programmes not running postgraduate programme. Some universities or programmes that are not on postgraduate programmes still make it mandatory their staff to have mentored students elsewhere for appointment and promotion into professorial cadre.(FUD, 2017; LAUTECH, 2018; NUC, 2019)

Teaching / Research Experience

These academic activities are very key to the appointment and promotion criteria to determine the ability of an individual regarding mentorship of students through teaching and or research. To become a full Professor, the affected individual must have put in a minimum of 10 years University experience. Individuals who have acquired 10 or more years of teaching experience at sub-degree level like Polytechnic, College of Education, School or College of Health Technology/Nursing, Medical Laboratory Technology/Agriculture/Animal Science and Husbandary etc accredited by the appropriate body is assumed by some universities as equivalent to 5 years University experience and as such are engaged as either Lecturer I or Senior Lecturers provided other criteria are met(FUAA, 2014).

Professional Experience

Recognised professional experience including feats from reputable public or private organizations in addition to other requirements is used by some universities for appointment of academic staff into cadre that is not beyond senior lecturer. This is significant and relevant in core professional programmes recognised by the Act of the National Assembly .Covenant University Nigeria allows the appointment of not more than 25% of the faculty staff of candidate seeking senior lecturer position who have cognate industry experience and have attained the Managerial position(Deleon and Steelman, 2001; Ajao and, Lawoyin, 2005; ; Ekoko, 2005; ‘Chukwuma *et al.*, 2015; ABU, 2018; University of Ibadan, 2019’University of Ilorin, 2019) .

Presentation of papers at Conferences

Active participation in a conference by an academic staff is determined through presentation of academic research findings at a recognised and relevant scientific conference. The number of conference to be attended with paper presented required for appointment and promotion varies. There are also variations in the expected number of international conferences attended with paper presented (2 and above before becoming full professor)(NUC, 2019).

Administrative Experience, Academic Leadership and Maturity

These are assessed considering administrative leadership and duty posts including Level advisers, examination officers etc., membership and chairman of committees at Departmental, Faculty/College and University levels (Deleon and Steelman, 2001; Ajao and, Lawoyin, 2005; ; Ekoko, 2005; Chukwuma *et al.*, 2015; ABU, 2018; University of Ibadan, 2019’University of Ilorin, 2019) .

Quality of teaching

Scores regarding this are obtained from the students, the supervisor, colleagues, and quality control unit of the university through interviews, lecture supervision and structured questionnaire to assess quality and delivery and coverage of the curriculum content including promptness and punctuality(Deleon and Steelman, 2001; Ajao and, Lawoyin, 2005; ; Ekoko, 2005; Chukwuma *et al.*, 2015) .

Community service

It include the contribution of the affected candidate to the university community and community outside the university. This include activities such as hall mastership, coordination of sport activities, counselling of students, in loco parentis, delivery of public lectures, public awareness activities, providing voluntary community supports, coordination of conference, and keynote / theme/sub-theme speakership at scientific conferences.(ABU,2017; 2018).

Prima Facie assessment

This provides opportunity for physical assessment of the claims of the candidate with respect to appointment and promotion. This will involve physical assessment of the evidence of qualifications through certificates, evidence of publications through soft and hard copies, evidence of administrative experience, evidence of quality of teaching, evidence of teaching/research experience, evidence of professional experience, evidence of community development, evidence of conference attendance with paper presented, evidence of mentorship, evidence of attraction of grants, academic and professional interaction. This is carried out by the relevant panel including at least a relevant external assessor. The panel is constituted by the university (Deleon and Steelman, 2001; Ajao and, Lawoyin, 2005; ; Ekoko, 2005; Chukwuma et al., 2015; EUI, 2017) .

Special Consideration for appointment of staff into Core Professional Departments

Some universities like Covenant University, Nigeria give special consideration for appointment of lecturers with PhD in addition to other requirements into core professional programmes recognised by an Act of the National Assembly who have cognate Industry and University teaching experience up to the position of Senior Lecturer(CU, 2018) .

Factors militating against objective and quality assessment

1. Lack of uniform assessment procedure and instruments. Universities in Nigeria have different procedure and instruments which do not allow the system uniform means of assessing academic staff which may bring about variations in the quality of academic staff.
2. Use of unrealistic instruments and procedure. Some universities unnecessarily make the procedure very difficult for academic staff using instruments and procedures that may not be achievable with respect to appointment and promotions. This practice is common in big universities that have higher percentage of staff in professorial cadre.
3. Problems of areas of scarcity. Some new courses or profession with limited number of human resources may be flexible with the assessment procedure to mobilize resources for the programme.
4. Sentiments/Interests and subjectivities. There were cases where senior academics waived some aspects of the appointment and promotion requirements to accommodate interests and prevent other from attaining some status.
5. The status and type of the university. Recently, the National Universities Commission alerted the public of fake professors who are grossly deficient in terms of publications and teaching experience. This practice was associated with a particular structure of universities.

6. Staff strength and mix by rank. The pressure to meet up with the accreditation requirements regarding staff strength and mix by rank may tempt the universities to waive some conditions to appoint or promote academic staff at all cost.
7. Lack of strict policy in the Enforcement of PhD as basic professional requirement for appointment of Lecturers as this has been severally challenged.
8. Inappropriate integration of professional qualifications in the assessment of academic staff. In addition to PhD the professional basic requirement to teach on some core professional programmes is either their Associate, Fellowship diploma or a registrable degree which has been issues in some universities regarding appointment and promotion of academic staff.
9. Too much emphasis on the quantity of publications. This is done at the detriment of quality of teaching, teaching and professional experience.
10. Inadequate review of the content of article. Some criteria does not allow for a critical consideration of the quality of the content of the publication like using Quartile Score such as Q1 Journals 2.5 – 3.0, Q2 Journals 2.25 –2.5, Q3 Journals 2.0 –2.25, Q4 Journals 1.5 – 2.0 and Other recognized journals without Quartile 0.0 – 1.5.
11. Journal indexing requirement at the expense of the quality of article. Some universities give more preference to journals indexed in SCOPUS at the expense of the quality articles published in journals in other indexing data bases like J Stor, PubMed, Web of Science/Thomson Reuter , Index Copernicus etc., . This has also led to sharp practices and has made academic staff prey of the predatory journals.
12. Area of specialization or research no longer depend on intellectual contributions through publications
13. Crediting plagiarized works. Some universities do not verify the geniuses of publication possibly due to inadequate internal paper by paper assessment.
14. Eliminating journal articles in predatory journals irrespective of the quality of the article as some quality articles were ignorantly published in predatory journals before this issue was aggressively communicated around year 2015.
15. Inadequate preferences given to articles published in journals of professional associations, research institute and universities because of the priorities given to a particular indexing data base
16. Problems of assessing postgraduate mentorship in universities or programmes without postgraduate programmes.

Recommendations

1. The National Universities Commission should develop a benchmark guidelines for academic staff appointment and promotion in collaboration with relevant academic stakeholders and professional bodies
2. Adequate evaluation of all relevant professional qualifications and experience for appropriate integration
3. Vast relevant administrative, quality teaching/research and professional experience should attract more credits

4. Substantial number of publication of academic research findings required for appointment and promotion must be published in journal outlets of the universities , research institutes and professional associations/societies
5. Adequate evaluation of all relevant professional or industrial experience for appropriate integration

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