The Impact of Faculty Promotion and Designation Policies on Sustaining Quality Education: A Study within Colleges of Social Sciences

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Abstract

This paper discusses the research topic of the effects of promotion and designation of the faculty members in the Colleges of Social Sciences regarding the sustainability of quality education. While promotion is typically associated with academic performance and leadership, its actual influence on teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and institutional growth has not been thoroughly examined. This study utilized concepts from institutional theory and organizational behavior models. The research employed qualitative methods, including interviews, policy analysis, and academic performance data, to investigate how hierarchical structure and career incentives impact educational outcomes. Such discoveries highlight the potential and limitations of current promotion systems, particularly within the higher education environments of developing countries. Strategic suggestions, which are primarily used in aligning faculty promotion with the goals of quality assurance, are also included at the end of the paper.

Keywords: *Faculty Promotion, Designation, Quality Education, Social Sciences Colleges, Higher Education Policy, Academic Development*

1. Introduction

The quality of faculty members' professional development is closely connected to their instruction, academic leadership, and institutional innovation in the field of contemporary higher education (Md Atikur et al., 2023). Faculty promotion and designation form some of the mechanisms that cause cracks in such development, as it is not only used to recognize individual excellence in academia but also to sustain logical efforts toward contribution in the area of teaching, research, and services (Ali et al., 2023). In the Colleges of Social Sciences, in which disciplines like sociology, political sciences, anthropology, and development studies are located, the maintenance of quality in education depends on the motivation, competency and institutional recognition of the academic personnel (Latif et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the increasing

institutional focus on the reward mechanism promotion does not always address the subtle connotations of educational sustainability. In most contexts, especially among developing nations, the promotion of designation setups is influenced by stale policies, dissimilar standards, or administrative inflexibility (Akram et al., 2023; Uddin et al., 2023). Faculty can become the titles, without a relative increase in pedagogical innovation, student-centred teaching and curricular contributions. Conversely, bright junior faculty can become disastrously disillusioned or at least ignored when they do not receive the attention they might have expected within a meritocracy. This process is a significant threat to the quality and relevance of social sciences' education in the long term (Latif et al., 2024).

The issue that this research paper aims to solve is that many of the contemporary systems of promotion and designation may not be in conjunction with the mission of quality provision of education in social sciences colleges, which is sensitive to social well-being (Sayed et al., 2023). This mismatch leads to de-motivated faculty, distorted incentives (e.g., incentives on quantity over quality in research) and, worst of all, impaired institutional efficiency in creating socially engaged graduates. Despite the centrality of the academic staff, there have been minimal empirical examinations as to how career route systems physically influence the educational ecosystem in these fields (Shams et al., 2025).

Based on this, the primary focus of the study is to critically explore the implications or influence of faculty promotion and designation practices in ensuring the continuity of quality education in Colleges of Social Sciences (Akhter et al., 2022). To be more precise, it will focus on finding out the effect of the promotion values/criteria, designation, and role on teaching quality, academician leadership, and faculty involvement. It is also aimed at all the studies to discover the views of members of the faculty on these institutional policies and what inhibits and enables those existing systems. This research is limited to the three Colleges of Social Sciences in a chosen region but gives a comparative study concerning institutions types (e.g. public and semi-autonomous colleges). Although the researchers do not extend the study to all the institutions in the whole world, what they give is transferrable information, which they can give to the policymakers and academic administrators in a similar context; perhaps in a jurisdiction where higher education reforms are a current issue (Latif, 2022).

The study is of importance as it will possibly guide fairer, transparent and pedagogically perceptive promotion guidelines. There is a recent trend to associate positive results of measuring educational quality, like student feedback, curriculum development, and interdisciplinary teaching, with the faculty career progression, which can redesign the faculty development system not as a ladder of ranks only, but as an instrument of academic reinvention as well (Latif, 2023). Universities are now supposed to address global concerns and local community demands, so the human capital inherent in faculty positions needs to be cultivated by adopting insightful, evidence-based policies. The paper adds to such a conversation by putting faculty and institutional actions and practices at the forefront of the overall endeavour of educational excellence in the social sciences (Choudhury et al., 2019).

2. Literature Review

The connection between advancement of faculty, appointment and quality education evokes great interest both in higher education policies as well as studies. As thousands of institutions continue to maintain promotion as a system of rewarding academic achievement, the fundamental importance of this kind of vertical structure on teaching quality and curriculum development, as well as student performance, is an intricate and widely debated process. The literature review summarizes important theoretical and empirical knowledge and concerns the topic of faculty promotion in the social sciences colleges (Khan & Gupta, 2025).

2.1 Academic Incentives and Faculty Promotion

Faculty promotion is usually a movement between academic levels of achievement- i.e. Lecturer to Assistant Professor, or Associate Professor to full Professor- among other factors such as productivity in research, evaluations on the teaching faculty, contribution in the field of service, and adequate administration (Latif et al., 2023). Raj et al. (2019) described that performance-based models practised in academic systems across the world have gradually reduced the ability of performance to relate to promotion based on measurable performance or publication rates, or the number of grants received. Although this model is associated with research-intensive objectives, it usually overshadows the role of innovation in teaching, especially in the case of social sciences, where the in-class interactions, facilitation of a discussion, and the development of critical thinking are the main tasks (Yuan et al., 2023).

Academic capitalism theories (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) imply that the commercialization of scholarly work is an incentive for faculty to concentrate on that which attracts prestige or revenues, possibly at the expense of national quality. The conflict is particularly acute in social sciences', where the commercial value of research is not always directly evident, and the social implications of good teaching are immense (Hosain et al., 2025).

2.2. Academia titles and Organizational Hierarchies

Faculty designation systems are organized hierarchically, with appointments to different positions carrying varying expectations regarding teaching load, research leadership, curriculum development, and institutional governance. The system of designation in the university not only determines the status but also access to institutional power, such as the process of making decisions concerning curriculum and student policies (Ahmed et al., 2020; Zia et al., 2024).

Low et al. (2022) found that designation in certain situations does not indicate increased pedagogical commitment but rather reflects administrative disconnection from students and classroom realities. This has the potential to reduce direct interaction between faculty and learners, especially in social sciences' programs, which rely on a dialogue-based, participatory approach for their success. Conversely, junior faculty tend to be tasked with much teaching without having power or respect within the institutions.

2.3 Quality Education in the Social Sciences

Social Sciences education, in my opinion, requires more of a global approach to education with regard to the importance of dealing with quality education, as this is necessary to address the everyday problems that people in communities face. In my case, it is regarding the value being given to quality education in the field of social sciences (Gazi et al., 2024).

Social Sciences quality education is contextual itself, and the educator must be able to combine a variety of perspectives, encourage critical thinking and address practical issues. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report and social Sciences education are playing a crucial role in developing civic awareness, ethical reasoning, and policymaking that includes everyone. In that regard, faculty act as transmitters of knowledge but also developers of democratic and humanistic values (Mochizuki & Vickers, 2024).

Several models of educational quality assessment the like as the Total Quality Management (TQM) model in education, stress the need to synchronize institutional mechanisms

(e.g. promotion, evaluation, rewards) with an unending process of watching the proceedings of learning. Regrettably, empirical literature shows that conventional promotion criteria rarely contain measures that are closely linked to the practices of the student-centred approach, curriculum co-construction, and pedagogy, community-based (Tambyah, 2022) .

2.4 Career Development and Motivation of Faculty

Faculty members stay committed and much more productive when there is an open promotional policy, which is fair, consistent as well and congruent to their professional beliefs. The Two-Factor Theory was developed by (Herzberg, 1965), which is frequently used in the studies of education, states that recognition, promotion, and the type of work itself are motivating sources. Faculty turnover, burnout, or lack of engagement through disengagement and stagnation is the result when promotion processes are either unfair or illogical (Bennett, 2021). Further, there may be gender differences as well as institutional bias in career advancement opportunities, especially in institutions where social norms or the machinery of bureaucracy affect the application of the policy.

2.5 Existing Literature Gaps

Although much of the bibliographic material relative to the enhancement of faculty and academic promotion in general exists, little literature exists that specifically considers and gives insight into the effect of the professional practices of promotion and designation concerning educational quality, and not necessarily the quantity of academic output, in the social sciences (Latif et al., 2021). Moreover, little scholarly activity has been performed concerning how such dynamics work in regional or developing settings, wherein faculty resources tend to be lean, and institutional change is underway. This research will help fill this gap and provide empirical evidence of the colleges of social Sciences and the connecting between the sustainability of career advancement structure with educational quality (Karim et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

This segment describes the methodological design of the research used to study the implications of faculty promotion and designation on maintaining quality education in the Colleges of Social Sciences. It was decided that a qualitative case study approach is most suitable due to the overall complexity and perceptual nature of this topic. The methodology was

defined by the need to consider contextual, institutional, and personal perceptions, rather than relying solely on statistical generalisations's (Latif et al., 2021).

3.1 Research Design

The design of the research was a qualitative multiple-case study that provided an opportunity to make comparative insights among colleges. The consideration of numerous institutions allowed the research to retrieve the differences in faculty experiences, promotion policy, and administration. The methods used were interpretivist in that the definitions the faculty gives to promotion, designation, and educational quality are formed by the lived institutional realities (Ahmed & Latif, 2019). The research was done based on constructivist epistemology that focused on the subjective experience of the academic staff and administrative leaders in explaining how advancement and teaching quality relate. Case study methodology provided profound investigations in terms of policies, perceptions, and practices in their real settings (Song et al., 2025).

3.2 Setting and scope of research

Research was administered among three Colleges of Social Sciences in one region in the South Asian part. These included:

  a. A university college that has established a promotion framework over a long time.
  b. A semi-autonomous college which had been subjected to policy reforms recently.
  c. A small college with freer systems based on performance.

This was a selective process to appreciate the comparison of promotion-designation processes about institutional type and governance style, as well as the availability of resources.

3.3 Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was the methodology that was used to determine the number of participants who had a direct role or aided in the policy of promotion and designation. Participants included:

- There were 18 faculty members (6 members per college), balanced by the Lecturer, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors.
- One administrative officer representing each institution that attended to the process of faculty evaluation and promotion.

Each of the participants was an individual with more than three years of experience in their particular institutions, and they could not base their knowledge on a limited exposure to the institutional systems.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

Data was collected over a 2 months' time and it comprised:

- Semi-structured interviews of administrators and faculty. These interviews were audio-taped and took 45 to 60 minutes. In the interview, the topics included standards of promotion, the impression of fairness, influence on teaching quality, and faculty motivation.

- All documents were analyzed to gather answers about promotion guidelines, institution policies and internal memos concerning designation requirements and academic performance standards.

- The faculty meeting and internal review session notes of staffage (when allowed), which created a contextual awareness of the institutional culture.

3.5 Analysis of the data

Thematic analysis was performed to analyze the data from interviews and documents with the help of NVivo 14 software. Coding was done openly in order to establish some emerging themes, after which axial coding was used to categorize similar patterns. The following major categories were identified:

- Promotion passes and weightage

- The emphasis in teaching vs. research: Teaching

- Sentiments about designation equitableness

- Quality education on an institutional level

- Policy Implementation Vacuums

This used triangulation of interview data with policy documents and observation notes, thus increasing the trustworthiness and credibility (Mamoon et al., 2021).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research ethics committee of the lead institution approved. Participants signed an informed consent, and they were assured anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation in the

study. There was anonymity in reporting of the participants and the institutions that they represent, with the use of pseudonyms. Member checking was also used as participants had a chance to check their interview transcripts and their accuracy in line. All the information was stored safely in password-protected digital formats.

3.7 Weaknesses of the Methodology

Although qualitative case studies have the advantage of depth and richness, in generalizability, they are limited. The results are a product of the respective conditions of the chosen institutions and might not apply to all colleges of social sciences of the region or the world. Moreover, the topic of faculty promotion is a sensitive one; therefore, it is possible that some of the participants have not revealed critical views, even being assured (Latif et al., 2023).

4. Findings and Discussion

Here, readers will find the main findings of the interviews, policy materials and observations. It is also provided with the comparative analysis of the three target colleges: public, semi-autonomous and those of the private type, with attention given to the disparities of the establishments (Mamoon et al., 2021). The results are put in four broad categories: (1) Perceived fairness of promotion tracks, (2) Teaching implications and quality of education, (3) Role-responsibility disjuncture about designation, and (4) Institutional congruence with quality objectives.

4.1 Perceived Fairness of Promotion Processes

Another theme which was common in all three colleges was faculty concerns with the transparency and fairness of the policies on promotion. Participants in the public college were concerned about bureaucracy inertia, which one of the senior lecturers described as follows: It has already been two years since I was qualified to be promoted, but somehow, due to paperwork and politics within the company, things are never done on time (Zhu et al., 2022).

The semi-autonomous college, in contrast, had put in place structured evaluation rubrics, which, according to faculty, were unevenly applied. The writer of this book was the former president of the private college, which, despite its performance-oriented culture, was accused of excessively using student evaluations, and some faculty believed that such evaluations could be biased through loosely holding grades.

In general, the following factors ruined fairness:

- Non-transparency in applying of criteria

- Late cycles of evaluation

- Excessive focus on heavier research than quality teaching

4.2 Effect to Teaching and Educational Quality

Most of the faculty members indicated that the stress to achieve promotion requirements, particularly in research production, came at the expense of teaching. One mid-career faculty person in the public college said, "The promotion is made according to the number of publications. Those students will understand or not is second-hand."

At the private college, even though the teaching quality would be officially assessed, the gradual evaluation of teaching effectiveness by the students continuously led to the formation of the culture of grade inflation and through the motions attitude (Sizan et al., 2022).

In the three colleges, aspects that were mostly or not rewarded formally included:

- Curriculum innovation

- Interdisciplinary teaching

- Counselling and student guiding

- The mismatch thus found a significant weakness in institutional quality assurance mechanisms; in those institutions that acknowledge academic promotion as a reward but fail to relate them closely to the main capital of quality education in social Sciences (Gazi et al., 2024).

4.3 Importance Gaps in Faculty Title Collection

Designation titles (e.g. Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor) were to have different expectations between institutions, and lacked a clear commonality of roles. At the semi-autonomous college, junior faculty had the same or more teaching obligations as senior faculty and usually lacked access to research support or decision-making. Masud et al. (2024). This misalignment inspired burnout and a sense of unappreciation, especially among early-career faculty. One of the professors in the public college contemplated: "It is merely a ceremonial Designation. It does not matter whether I am a department head or simply an instructor because it all depends on the network that you possess.

4.4 Alignment of its institutions to quality objectives

The semi-autonomous college was the only one that had such an internal system that tried to balance promotion with overall educational goals, such as faculty in curriculum development, community outreach activities and students' activities. This was, however, not entirely carried into official promotion measures (Ali et al. 2025). In both occurrences, there appeared to be institutional disconnectedness between practice and policy. Pedagogically triggered promotion systems were not always passed on in a manner that was considered up-to-date or modern, or even pedagogically oriented. This opened the opportunity for a strategic redesign of the faculty advancement pathways, where the quality of education remains a central concept.

Table 1: Comparison of Promotion-Designation Practices and Educational Implications

Theme	Public College	Semi-Autonomous College	Private College
Promotion Transparency	Low – Bureaucratic delays, unclear criteria	Moderate – Structured rubric, inconsistently applied	Moderate – Fast-track system, but student-rating dependent
Teaching vs. Research Balance	Skewed toward research	Mixed – Attempts at balance, not yet institutionalized	Teaching emphasized but tied to student satisfaction
Designation Clarity	Poor – Titles not aligned with responsibilities	Moderate – Some clarity, junior faculty overburdened	High – Clear designation, workload still heavy
Link to Quality Education	Weak – Promotion unrelated to teaching or student learning	Emerging – Some initiatives, limited integration	Weak – Reward system emphasizes popularity over pedagogy
Faculty Morale and Motivation	Low – Frustration with stagnation	Moderate – Recognition of reform efforts	Mixed – High performers rewarded, others marginalized

5. Conclusions

Research results of this study highlight an ongoing conflict in academia between long-standing measures of faculty accomplishment, which are connected mainly to research output, and the very critical but less appreciated realm of teaching excellence. Such tension is especially relevant in Colleges of Social Sciences where pedagogy is important in shaping critical thinking, ethical reasoning and an awareness of society (Karim et al., 2019). The excessive focus on publications and quantitative measures as the locks of the door to the promotions provokes the development of a distorted incentive system that quite possibly makes faculty less motivated to take the needed time and develop the needed creativity in their teaching (Karim et al., 2021).

Academic capitalism can be used to explain this dynamic because the marketisation of the process of faculty assessment gives an upper hand to the externally measurable deliverables, namely publications, grants, and rankings. These measures are significant, but their prevalence has the potential to push out pedagogical innovation and mentorship training, which are more crucial factors of practical education that are harder to measure. The trend is evident in the results obtained in the public and private colleges, and a report by the faculty suggested that they were being pressurized to compromise their commitment to teaching by focusing more on research to achieve a promotion. This creates an issue regarding the sustenance of teaching excellence with teaching over a long time, especially in those fields which demand custodian-like involvement on the part of a student, and a critical discourse (Ali et al., 2025).

Contrastingly, the activities of the semi-autonomous college to strike the correct ratio between research and teaching priorities introduce an opportunity for institutional redesign. The fact that rubrics have been introduced that address teaching-related elements, though sporadically, has led to the view that a shift in policies can encourage a more holistic perception of faculty contribution (Latif & Yasin, 2025). These endeavours find echoes with modern patterns such as the Total Quality Management (TQM) model in education that supports systematic coordination of institutional policies to an ongoing process of improvement in teaching and learning (Sallis, 2002). The aspect of ambiguity in designation also adds more to the impression. Faculty members in the colleges indicated that academic rank above did not necessarily imply higher influence or leading in issues on teaching and curriculum. Such a disconnect could be a result of deep bureaucratic cultures where titles are merely symbolic, and

not functional (Latif et al., 2014). It also references a possibility of the redefinition of the role of faculty by institutions associating the title with particular leadership and pedagogical requirements. Defining these roles can also improve the morale among the faculty and spur other contributions, which are more significant than research output (Karim et al., 2019).

Additionally, a sense of fairness in the processes of promotion became an essential aspect of motivating the faculty and building trust among them. Transparent and fair evaluation frameworks not only provide individual satisfaction but also develop a culture of excellence. When such systems are undeveloped or sporadically enforced, faculty can become alienated or cynical, and this, too, can undermine the quality of the education. (Ahmed & Latif, 2019).

The findings in a larger scope, this fact corresponds with the theory of motivation developed by Herzberg, who emphasized the need to recognize and progress at the workplace to ensure a high level of satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). The members of the faculty system who feel that the process of promotion is inaccessible or uncorrelated to their view of their professional worth are less inclined to become motivated towards high achievements in teaching or research. Containing these dynamics of motivation is thus very important to the success of institutions (Mamoon & Rahaman, 2021).

Lastly, the regional setting of the study sheds light on the unique problems of Colleges of Social Sciences within the developing or transitional educational system. Poor resources, bureaucracy, and culture may be the obstacles to the application of progressive promotion policies. However, the evidence in the study that there are emerging reforms in some colleges indicates that nothing is impossible when there is serious leadership and new policy creation (Ahmed et al., 2025).

5.1 Implications

These findings are extensive in their implications. In order to have a truly sustainable quality education, colleges have to work out of focusing on promotion, in the sense of mere reward for research productivity. Instead, the current system of promotion and designation has to be recast in a manner that rebuffs the single-mindedness of all these aspects, i.e., teaching, curriculum development, mentorship and community engagement have equal standing (Das, 2025). Open and fair evaluation systems are imperative to develop a sense of trust and motivation among faculty. In contrast, well-defined roles and responsibilities will also result in a

evenly distributed workload and empower faculty across careers (Ahmed et al., 2025).

Rewarding pedagogical innovation among the faculty members will not only commit them to learning. However, it also makes the lives of learners beautiful and ready to tackle complex issues in society (Akram et al., 2023). Furthermore, faculty can be assisted with mentorship and professional development opportunities, which will help them mediate between the policy and the practice so that they can flourish and become the leaders in their institutions (Ahmed et al., 2025). Although this research was carried out in a small sample of colleges, the issues it identifies, as well as the opportunities it brings, are relevant in the higher education sector, particularly in the developing regions (Ahmed et al., 2024). Further studies that would increase the scope and add longitudinal considerations would help to further understand and inspire productive changes (Jalil, 2024).

Finally, the full re-conceptualizations of faculty advancement structure is the key to the maintenance of quality education in the social sciences'. Through congruency between career progress and institutional values, institutions will produce an academic culture that not only magnifies achievement but also operates as a propellant of the transforming mission of higher education.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, the study acknowledges several limitations that affect the generalizability and depth of its findings. The research employed a qualitative case study approach, focusing on only three Colleges of Social Sciences within a specific region, which limits the extent to which the findings can be applied to other institutions or higher education systems globally. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study, while providing rich and contextual insights, lacks statistical representation and broader empirical validation. Secondly, the sensitivity of the topic—faculty promotion and designation—may have influenced the openness of participants, despite assurances of anonymity. Some faculty members or administrators might have withheld critical opinions or provided socially desirable responses, potentially affecting the authenticity of the data. Thirdly, the research is institutionally specific, meaning that the unique administrative structures, cultural contexts, and policy environments of the selected colleges shape the findings. As a result, the experiences and perceptions reported may not fully reflect those of institutions in other regions or with different governance models. Lastly, the study is cross-sectional and does

not capture the long-term evolution of faculty perceptions or institutional policies over time, thus missing a longitudinal perspective that could reveal deeper trends and changes in academic motivation and performance linked to promotion systems.

5.3 Future Directions for Research and Practice

Firstly, there is a need for broader and comparative studies that include a larger and more diverse sample of institutions across different geographical and cultural settings. This would help identify whether the findings are context-specific or reflect broader patterns in higher education. Secondly, future research should incorporate longitudinal studies to track how faculty motivation, teaching quality, and institutional effectiveness evolve in response to changes in promotion and designation policies. Thirdly, future research should integrate quantitative data— such as student performance metrics, curriculum development indicators, and peer evaluation scores—with qualitative insights to provide a more holistic understanding of how promotion systems influence educational outcomes. Fourthly, institutions, particularly in developing countries, should experiment with innovative promotion frameworks that value pedagogical excellence, interdisciplinary teaching, and community engagement alongside traditional research outputs. Lastly, future research can be conducted to broaden the use of the Altman Z-Score model to include the role of the model in providing an insight into risk and result expectations of faculty promotion and designation policies in colleges and universities. Considering the incorporation of machine learning based methodologies on more conventional models such as Altman Z-Score, scholars would be able to create predictive instruments that would be used to estimate the stability of the institutions, trends of faculty performance, or even the sustainability of the educational standards under various policies frameworks, particularly in underdeveloped or unstable academic ecosystems (Chishti et al., 2024).

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