Promotion in the Academic Profession in India: Upward mobility of faculty in higher education[1]

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The importance of higher education in national development has been well recognized during the post-independence period in India. The critical role of the academic profession in providing high quality higher education and research, necessary for national development, is also well noted, when it was stated, "the academic profession is the mother of all professions in the society" (UGC, 1997). The National Commission on Teachers (1985) further noted, "It is important to have adequate and suitable opportunities for professional and career development." As a corollary, various governmental committees and commissions paid serious attention to the issues relating to the academic profession in higher education, including qualifications for teachers; teacher recruitment; promotion and upward mobility in their academic career; and faculty development in general. Almost at regular intervals, committees are enjoined by the Government of India to examine the pay and promotional structure as well as the service conditions of faculty so as to ensure attracting and retaining the best talent in the academic profession in the country, and they have made important recommendations on the issues of revision of salary scales as

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well as promotional avenues for faculty in higher education faculty which formed the basis for modifications and improvement in the system. However, the academic profession in India currently has myriad problems. This paper presents a critical review of issues relating to the academic profession in the higher education system in India, essentially focusing on faculty, their recruitment and their upward mobility.

Higher education in India

Higher education in India has expanded rapidly during the post-independence period — from an extremely small base consisting of thirty-two universities, 700 colleges[2] and 0.4 million students at the inception of planning in the country in 1950-51, to more than 750 universities, 39,700 colleges and approximately twenty-four million students in 2013-14. In terms of the current size, the higher education system in India is the second largest in the world, next only to China. The system in the United States now comes only after India. These numbers have led some to observe that the higher education system is about to enter the phase of 'massification' or mass higher education, though the enrolment ratio is only approximately twenty per cent, and it is generally felt that only if the ratio crosses forty per cent, the country can be regarded as moving into the phase of massification.

The phenomenal expansion of higher education has contributed much to many spheres of socio-economic development of the country. First, with the massive expansion of higher education, the country could achieve self-reliance in manpower needs, in the sense that no sector of the society — whether it is manufacturing sector or service sector, including planning, administration, defense, science and technology, etc., or the high technology intensive sector, critically depends upon foreign or expatriate manpower. The country can even boast of exporting manpower, earning scarce foreign exchange through foreign remittances. For example, it is rather proudly stated that the Silicon Valley in the United States critically depends upon information & technology (IT)

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[2] Higher education institutions in India essentially consist of universities and colleges. Every college is necessarily affiliated with a university, or is a constituent college of a university. Most colleges offer under-graduate (Bachelors' level) programmes, and some post-graduate (Masters' level) programs. Though colleges are an important part of the system, one finds a big difference between universities and colleges with respect to a variety of dimensions.

manpower produced by the higher education system in India.   Brain drain has become no more a matter of concern.   Secondly, with such expansion, the higher education system itself could get democratized: achieving a fair degree of gender parity－around forty per cent of the enrollments in higher education being women; and making good progress in social equity－about one-third of students coming from socially backward strata of the society.   Third, in terms of quality and excellence, a few institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institute of Science, and even some central/state universities, and some centers of advanced studies could stand out as exceptional ones in the country.   Fourth, higher education played a significant part in socio-economic development of the country, including economic growth, reduction in poverty, improvement in inequalities, and human development.   Lastly, higher education's contribution to strengthening democracy and political stability has also been quite important.

However, at the same time, the system suffers from severe inadequacies: first, though in terms of absolute numbers, the higher education system is the second largest in the world, with about twenty per cent gross enrollment ratio, India still ranks poorly even among the developing countries.   With such a low enrollment ratio, the present size of higher education is regarded to be inadequate to meet the growing socio-economic needs of the country, particularly to transform the country into a knowledge society, to sustain high rates of economic growth, and to emerge from the group of developing countries.   It is generally argued that a gross enrollment ratio of thirty to forty per cent is the threshold level for a country to become, in fact, even to aim at becoming a fast growing economy.   Secondly, in terms of quality of higher education, it is widely felt that though there are a few institutions of high quality, they are only pockets of excellence and hardly any Indian institution figures among the top 200 in global rankings of universities.   The system as a whole is characterized by mediocre quality and moreover the standards are rapidly falling.   Only a small proportion of graduates are reported to be employable.   Third, while there has been somewhat impressive improvement in gender equity and also in access of the socially backward sections to higher education, regional－rural and urban, inter-state, and intra-state inequalities are still very high in higher education. Inequalities between the rich and the poor in participation rates in higher education are found to be the highest and they seem to be increasing.

Thus the system of higher education is characterized by a few major strengths and a few equally significant shortcomings.   Recognizing the need for expansion and overall improvement in higher education, the Government of

India set a target of thirty per cent gross enrollment ratio to be realized by 2030, and launched massive expansion program, which along with high growth of private institutions is expected to enable rapid growth in enrollments.

Academic profession

Presently more than one million teachers are employed in higher education institutions in the country. In 1950-1951, there were barely twenty-four thousand. The increase has been phenomenal, increasing forty-three times during the sixty-four-year period. However, the rate of growth in the size of faculty has not kept pace with the increase in the number of institutions and enrollments, as one can note in Table 1. High growth in the number of faculty members (sixteen to twenty per cent per annum) took place only in the first two decades, followed by smaller rates of growth (below 5 per cent) in the following three decades.

As a result, a severe shortage of faculty is felt in almost all institutions─ universities─central and state, colleges, as well as specialized institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology. The shortage of faculty has also resulted in increase in student-faculty ratios, as shown in Table 3. Though at national level, the ratio is 23, in a good number of colleges it ranges between 30 and 36 (Qamar, 2008). These ratios in India are found to be very high, compared to many other universities in other countries.

### Table 1. Growth of faculty in higher education in India

Year	Number of teachers (in thousands)
1950-51	24
1960-61	62
1970-71	190
1980-81	244
1990-91	271
2000-01	350
2005-06	488
2010-11	817
2013-14	1,049

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development (various years); and UGC (various years)

Table 2. Average annual growth (per cent) in higher education

	Enrolment	Teachers	Colleges	Universities
1950-51 to 1960-61	22.01	15.83	21.47	6.07
1960-61 to 1970-71	25.12	20.65	8.02	10.67
1970-71 to 1980-81	4.07	2.84	3.97	3.23
1980-81 to 1990-91	5.99	1.11	4.48	4.96
1990-91 to 2000-01	10.32	4.58	5.32	3.80
2000-01 to 2010-11	12.26	13.34	21.69	14.45
2010-11 to 2013-14	9.09	9.47	7.76	5.04
1950-51 to 2013-14	13.09	9.71	10.68	7.09

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development (various years); and UGC (various years)
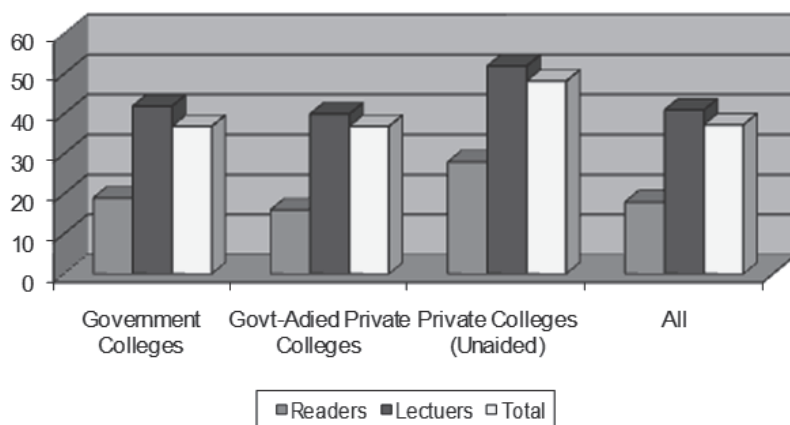
Source: Chadha, Bhushan, and Muralidhar (2008)

Figure 1. Percentage of vacant teaching positions in colleges, 2007-08

Table 3. Student-faculty ratio in higher education in India

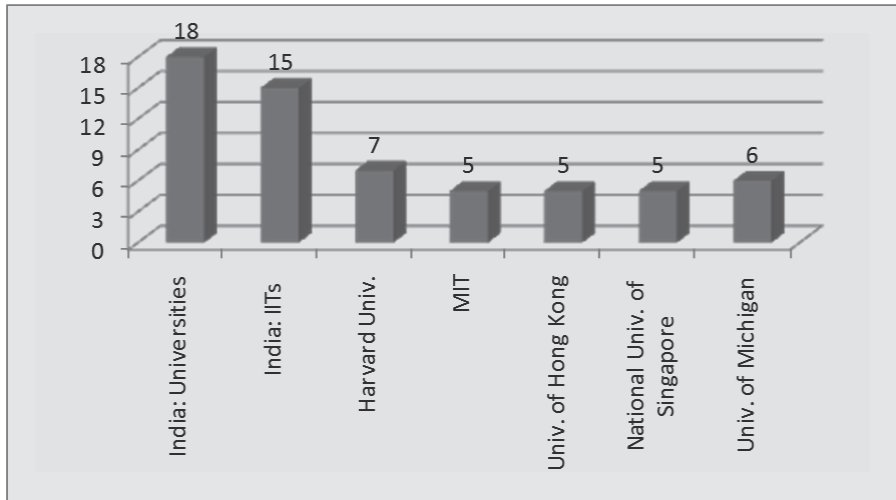|	1995-96	2013-14
Universities	15.0	17.7
Colleges	22.4	23.7
Total	20.7	22.7

Source: UGC Annual Reports

Figure 2. Student-faculty ratio in selected universities (around 2013)

Further, a few important characteristics of the faculty employed in higher education institutions may be noted. The hierarchy of faculty in the present system, consisting of six categories starts with tutors/demonstrators and goes up to professors with high academic grade. Within the category of lectures/ assistant professors, there are three grades/stages; readers/associate professors belong to the middle category and professors to the highest. Thus, the present hierarchy of faculty in higher education in India is:

- Tutors/demonstrators (others)
- Lecturers/assistant professors
    - Lecturers (stage 1)
    - Senior lecturers (stage 2)
    - Senior grade lecturers (stage 3)
- Readers/associate professors (stage 4)
- Professors (mostly in universities only)
    - Professors (stage 5)
    - High academic grade professors (Stage 6)

Though the ladder consists of six levels of academic positions, only three substantial ones have been found in most higher education institutions, as standardized since 2006: lecturer/assistant professor, reader/associate professor

and professor.   Tutors/demonstrators (others) are not considered as core academic staff.   They are regarded as supporting or *para* academic staff.

As indicated in Table 4, the latest statistics reveal that almost sixty-two percent of faculty are assistant professors (including lecturers in senior scale); nine per cent are full professors; and the remaining twenty-six per cent are associate professors.   An overwhelming majority are in the colleges — undergraduate and post-graduate colleges, accounting for eighty-three per cent, while seventeen per cent of them are in the universities.   Within the universities, seventeen percent are full professors; twenty-five percent are associate professors; and fifty-three percent work as lecturers (including senior grade lectures).   Most of the colleges offer undergraduate programs, while universities mostly offer post graduate and research programmes.   There are no provisions for transfer of faculty from colleges to universities; transfers are also not allowed between universities, and between several states in the case of colleges.   They are at best transferable from one government college to another government college within a state.

Table 4. Faculty in higher education in India, 2013-14

	Universities[*]		Colleges[**]		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professors	30,272	16.7	65,859	7.6	96,131	9.2
Readers/ Associate professors	46,102	25.4	227,702	26.3	273,804	26.1
Senior lecturers/ Assistant professors	17,238	9.5	92,850	10.7	110,088	10.5
Lecturers/ Assistant professors	79,372	43.8	456,301	52.6	535,673	51.1
Tutors/demonstrators	8,434	4.7	24,795	2.9	33,229	3.2
Total	181,418	100.0	867,507	100.0	1,048,925	100.0

Source: UGC. Annual Report 2013-2014
Notes: * includes university colleges; ** affiliated colleges
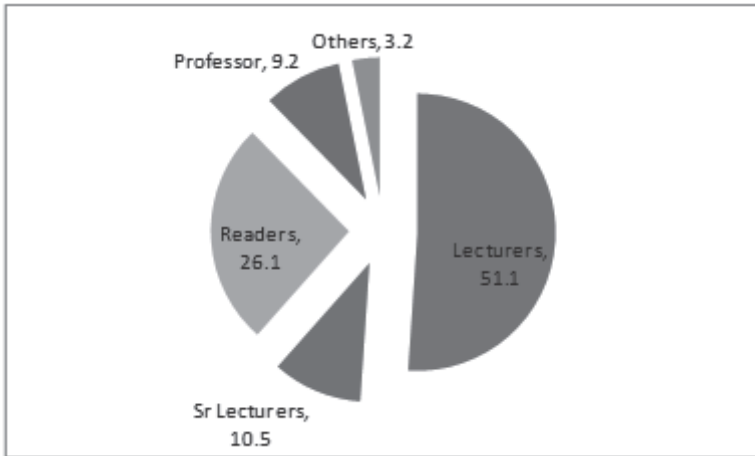
Figure 3. Percentage distribution of faculty in higher education in India, by level, 2012-13

Source: UGC *Annual Report* 2013-14.

An important problem with the academic profession in India was that there had been a *de facto* official ban on recruitment of faculty and non-teaching staff as well in many universities and colleges, following the introduction of economic reform policies in the early 1990s that required downsizing of all public sector units including higher education institutions.   This continued for more than a decade.   Block grants provided by the state governments to the universities have also remained virtually frozen for quite some time.   Reduction in the size of the faculty and frozen state grants have caused serious damage to faculty morale and motivation, and to the physical ambience and overall academic environment of the universities, as many departments and postgraduate centers are sub-critical in the size of the faculty, and are also sub-critical in their performance, offering few high quality teaching and research programs.   Universities resorted to various methods, many of which are not necessarily desirable, to cope with these problems.   The shortage of full-time faculty forced them to recruit temporary faculty with varied designations such as part-time, guest, and contract faculty, and teaching assistants, at very low consolidated salaries, sometimes at a level one-fifth of regular faculty.   Recruitment of temporary faculty, even under-qualified, on contract with inferior service conditions has become a widespread phenomenon.   All this is akin to the phenomenon of *para*-teachers in the school system in the country.   The size of such faculty varies between fifteen and sixty percent of the total in various universities in one south Indian state, and on average one out of every five college teachers belongs to this

category (Qamar 2008, p.202).   Many of them may not necessarily be fulfilling the qualifications necessary for a regular university faculty member.   But they seem to be continuing for several years.   Many are also recruited to teach "self financing courses", which are not funded (and sometimes not even approved) by the government; the students pay for the total cost.   Over the years, such faculty are also recruited to teach regular courses of study.   The long-term effects of all this on the quality of teaching and research could be devastating, if a sizeable system of higher education were to survive with the help of part-time contract staff.   The teaching profession is becoming de-professionalized.   Their role is changing from knowledge creators and transmitters to managers, net-workers and fund-raisers.

Non-recruitment of faculty and the growth of market forces led to significant changes in the academic profession (Tilak, 2007).   The emphasis slowly seems to be shifting from scholarly research to economically productive knowledge creation; from scholarly research to project-based research; and from project-based research to consultancy.   In the area of teaching the shift is from promotion of scholarship to imparting of market relevant, saleable, and employable information and skills.

The teaching profession used to be highly respected with a high level of social status attached, though the salary structure in India was not encouraging. The National Committee on Teachers (1985) went into several aspects relating to the teaching profession in universities and colleges.   While a severe degree of shortage of faculty and other problems like recruitment of temporary faculty, even under-qualified ones on a contract basis with inferior service conditions and a vastly reduced pay package is a reality, salaries of faculty in universities and colleges have been revised with every Pay Commission's revision of government employees' salaries.

Overall, there has been a steep decline in the status of the academic profession, which used to be considered a unique profession of high respect (Jayaram, 2002).   As Altbach (2002) paraphrases this, the *decline of the Guru* has become a phenomenon all over.   Earlier the social status was high, but their economic status was far from satisfactory.   But in recent years, the economic status improved, but their social status declined (Basu, 2005).   Traditionally faculty were regarded as a god (*Acharya Devobhava*); but more recently faculty and students began to be treated as equal; and finally the roles got reversed, the students are treated as gods, as in the market framework, customers are to be treated as gods.   Both students and faculty, who used to be in the forefront of the country's civil, social and political movements, seem to be slowly

withdrawing into the background (Tilak, 2007).

Faculty recruitment, qualifications and promotions

Immediately following independence, the Indian government recognized the need to establish proper mechanisms for recruitment and promotion of faculty in higher education.

The University Education Commission (1948-49) bemoaned that the best talent in higher education did not return as faculty, but moved to provincial services and industry. It found a "great variety of salary scales" for faculty differing from government to government-aided and privately managed institutions; universities and colleges; general and technical institutions; and teachers in professional and technical subjects to other subjects — meaning different pay scales for the same type of work (Ministry of Education, 1950, p.73). It advocated an improved, uniform salary scales and better service conditions for university and college faculty.[3] The Government of India (1986b, p.141) further recognized that "the present system does not accord faculty a proper economic and social status, opportunities for professional and career development …"

Recruitment of higher education faculty is based on merit throughout India. Advertisements for these positions constitution of selection committees and related procedures are governed by University Statutes/Ordinances. According to the University Education (Radhakrishnan) Commission,

"… A Professor should be one who had taught the higher classes for a considerable number of years and established reputation for scholarship; he should have wide interest and a broad outlook to inspire and stimulate his colleagues and effectively contribute to the solution of academic problems of the university. The expected age when these qualifications are fulfilled is likely to be 48 years" (Ministry of Education, 1950).

"For the post of the Reader", the University Education Commission stated, "a research degree and published research work in recognized and well-established journals as the required qualifications". It felt that "a person of

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[3] The salary scales adopted at that time were: Rs. 300 for lecturers, Rs 600 for readers and Rs. 900 for professors.

about 35 years should be able to fulfill these conditions".   As for the Lecturer, the Commission felt a first-class academic record as the *necessary qualification*, and the *desirable qualification* as "some teaching experience" and that one "should have started as a research scholar or a fellow and preferably should have completed his Ph.D." (Ministry of Education, 1950, pp.74-75).   It is important to note that even when the number of doctorate degree holders in India at that time was extremely small (less than perhaps 100), the University Education Commission (Ministry of Education, 1950) emphasized a research degree as essential for faculty in higher education institutions, especially in universities, as they are conceived not only as teaching institutions but also equally, if not more importantly, research institutions.

Even after several years, one could not witness any dilution in the prescription of the essential and necessary credentials needed for higher education faculty, though "in a number of Universities the standards appeared to have been diluted at several places because of unplanned growth, inadequate faculty and lack of infrastructural facilities" (Government of India, 1976).   The Sen Committee (1976) was of the firm view that even at the entry level, i.e., for a Lecturer, "a Master's degree alone would not suffice for the selection of a Lecturer."   It felt higher teaching/research/advanced study beyond the master's degree, and an M.Phil., (pre-Doctoral degree) or a Ph.D., as essential qualifications for recruitment.   This was obviously in addition to a good academic record especially at the master's level with fifty-five per cent or more marks.

The National Council on Teacher Education (NCTE), in collaboration with University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All-India Council on Technical Education (AICTE), are expected to ensure recruitment of properly qualified teachers in Indian higher education institutions.   UGC sets the guidelines for deciding workload of every faculty and correspondingly the number of faculty to be appointed in a given university/college.

The National Commission on Teachers for Higher Education (NCT, 1985) endorsed the minimum qualifications of faculty prescribed by the UGC in 1973 ー a good academic record, with evidence of research capabilities, and a research degree and pedagogic skills.   The Mehrotra Committee (UGC, 1986) noticed that "the stipulation of M.Phil./Ph.D. as an essential qualification for Lecturers had neither been followed faithfully nor did it necessarily contribute to raising teaching and research standards.   If at all, it had led to the dilution of research standards because the rush to get a research degree in the shortest possible time. It noted that the adoption of the 10 + 2 pattern of schooling involved one

additional year of education. Hence, it felt that a good M.A./M.Sc./M.Com., would be adequate as the minimum qualification for a lecturer, and a research degree should be necessary only for career advancement. It suggested that additional increments be sanctioned for research degree holders at the time of selection as lecturers to give due recognition of their research experience. This would attract bright young talent into the teaching profession. However, in view of the diversity of standards among universities, passing a national qualifying examination before recruitment should be made an essential precondition. Accordingly in order to ensure national standards throughout the country, faculty in higher education are recruited on the basis of a national eligibility test (NET) conducted by the UGC, and similar eligibility tests at the state level, namely the "state level eligibility test" conducted by state governments. These tests were introduced to ensure minimum uniform quality faculty in higher education. After all, unlike school teachers in India, the teachers in higher education do not receive any pre-service or even any substantial in-service training. The NET as a minimum eligibility condition is relaxed in case of those faculty who possess research degrees (doctoral and pre-doctoral). In 2006, the NET was abolished with the goal of easing the faculty shortage in many areas. But soon it was found that it is too important to abolish so it was reinstated.

Presently, a good academic record at the master's level from an Indian or accredited foreign university (with at least fifty-five per cent marks or equivalent)[4] is the basic condition, along with either a doctorate degree and/or successfully completing the national eligibility test conducted specifically for the post of lectureship/UGC fellowship for entry into the teaching profession at the Assistant professor/Lecturer level. In addition to a good academic record at the masters' level, a doctorate degree along with eight years teaching experience are essential prerequisites for the post of associate professor. Professors must have ten years of experience and a good publication record.

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[4] Universities are free to upgrade the minimum eligibility qualifications. For example, quite a few universities insist on a good academic record not only at the master's level studies, but also at the bachelor's level; some redefine 'good' academic record as first class, not just fifty-five per cent marks. Depending upon the number of applications received for each post, the screening committees generally set higher minimum qualifications.

Table 5. Qualifications for assistant professor, associate professor and professor in colleges and universities

Professor	**Minimum Qualification:** • Good academic record with fifty-five percent marks at Master level and qualifying NET/SET/SLET • Those with Ph.D. and Masters level subjects not covered by NET now are exempt from NET • A relaxation of five percent marks for SC/ST and differentially abled • PH.D. Degree mandatory for appoint of Professors and promotion to Professors and direct appointment of Associate Professors **Desirable Qualification: (A)** • An eminent scholar with Ph.D. and published work, actively engaged in research with minimum of ten publications; • Ten years experience in teaching in university/colleges and/or research experience in university/national level institutions, including guidance at the doctoral level; • Contribution to educational innovations, design of new curriculum, and courses and technology • Minimum API score • or **(B)** An Outstanding professional with established reputation in the field
Associate Professor	• A good academic record with a PH.D. in relevant discipline • Masters Degree with fifty-five percent marks or equivalent grade • Minimum eight years experience in teaching and/or research in a position equivalent to Asst. Professor in a university/college/research institution • Contribution to educational innovation, design of new curricula and courses • Minimum API score as Performance Based Appraisal System (PBAS)
Assistant Professor*	• Good academic record at Master's level at an Indian or accredited foreign university with at least fifty-five marks or an equivalent grade in points scale • NET/SET/SLET qualified • Candidates with PH.D. will be exempted from NET/SET/SLET as eligibility criterion • NET not compulsory in respect of subjects at MA level where NET is not conducted

*Asst. Professors in Arts, Humanities, Sciences, Social Sciences, Commerce, Education, Languages, Law, Journalism, and Mass Communication

Source: *The Gazette of India*, September 18, 2010, pp.7850-53 (UGC, 2010).

Table 5 provides the details on present minimum qualifications for various academic positions in colleges and universities.   All these and other regulations that are discussed here are applicable to government and government-funded private higher education institutions, and are not necessarily applicable to other private institutions, though it is widely felt that it would be desirable if the regulations were made applicable to all recognized institutions.

Promotional avenues and upward mobility of faculty

It has long been recognized that security of tenure and reasonable prospects of advancement in the academic profession are essential to maintaining the health and tone of the service (Ministry of Education, 1950).   The Radhakrishnan Commission (Ministry of Education, 1950) felt that the ratio between Professors and Readers on the one hand and Lecturers and Instructors on the other should be 1:2.   A faculty member entering the profession at twenty-two or twenty-three years of age as an instructor or a fellow, by the time he/she reached the maximum pay scale of the Lecturer grade, would have acquired sufficient experience and standing to be eligible for a readership and could rise to the position of professor at 48 years of age in an open competition. "There should be opportunities for career advancement but *only through selection in an open competition.*"   According to the Sen Committee (Government of India, 1976), a Lecturer/Reader after completing six years of service could compete for a higher position, to be filled by a duly constituted selection committee of the university on the basis of qualifications and experience.   The promotion in such a case should be regarded as a personal promotion, which implied that there was no limit to the number of posts of Readers and Professors within the total sanctioned strength of the department. A suitable procedure for proper evaluation of the applicants would have to be evolved by the UGC.   Faculty having similar qualifications, appointed to these posts by following the same criteria as those applicable to the university faculty, whether working in a university or a college, would have a similar scale of pay.

The National Commission on Teachers (1985) felt that "it is important to have adequate and suitable opportunities for professional and career development".   But the National Commission did not favor *promotion by seniority as a proxy for merit.*   Instead, it argued that promotion should be based on continuous record of performance in teaching, research, extension and administration.   Career advancement would be linked to faculty development. The Government of India (1986b) deplored the lack of promotional opportunities

such as professional and career development, initiative for innovation and creative work, proper orientation in concept, techniques, and value system to fulfill their role and responsibilities.

Methods of promotion/upward mobility

Two methods of promotion have been in vogue in the higher education system since the formulation of the National Policy on Education 1986 (Government of India, 1986a): (i) open competition, which had been the only method available for promotion for a long time; and (ii) merit promotion under the Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) introduced after 1986. The general principles that guide promotion in both cases are non-discrimination; reservations for backward social groups of population (Scheduled Cates, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes)[5]; merit/performance of the candidate; transparency and welfare of the faculty. Faculty members are assessed and graded annually through a Performance-Based Appraisal System (PBAS) and are considered for promotion. Promotion is considered as a mechanism to promote the morale and commitment to the profession and an incentive for better performance.

Promotion through competition (Direct recruitment/Open competition)

Whenever a vacancy for an academic position arises or a new one is created, the position is filled through open competition, where faculty members already working in the same organization at a lower level and fulfilling the required qualifications compete with applicants from outside the institution. This mode, commonly known as direct recruitment or promotion through open competition, has been the most standard and the only avenue for upward mobility of faculty in

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[5] The Constitution mandates that 49.5 per cent of the positions are reserved for socially backward sections of the society: 15 per cent for Scheduled Castes, 7.5 per cent for Scheduled Tribes and 27 per cent for 'other' backward classes. Besides this 'vertical' reservation, there is 'horizontal' reservation to the extent of three per cent (across categories) for *people with disability* and one per cent each for auditory, visual and orthopedic disabilities. All vacant positions are necessarily advertised and number of posts reserved for each category is also to be mentioned. If candidates from the specified category are not available, the vacant positions need to be re-advertised; they cannot be filled with candidates from non-reserved categories.

higher education institutions for a long time.

Present rules and regulations formulated by the UGC (2010, 2013), define the eligibility criteria for direct recruitment for the position of professor as the doctorate degree with at least ten years of academic experience; ten high quality research publications; and consolidated 400 points on the academic performance index (API), formulated under the Performance-based Appraisal System. The weights assigned to different selection criteria are twenty per cent for academic background, forty per cent for research, twenty per cent for domain knowledge and teaching skills, and twenty per cent for performance in interview, conducted specifically for this purpose. Similarly the criteria for associate professor are a Ph.D. degree, a good academic record (fifty-five per cent marks) at the Master's level, eight years experience at the assistant professor level, five publications, and 300API points. The weights for different selection criteria are the same as those for professor. Applicants for assistant professor must have a good academic background (fifty-five per cent marks) at the Master's level, and pass the National Eligibility Test (NET) (or a doctorate degree obtained before 2009). The selection criteria (with weights) include academic record (fifty per cent), domain knowledge and teaching skills (thirty per cent) performance in interview (twenty per cent).

Direct recruitment for faculty positions were guided for a long period by the same considerations, but the academic performance index with differential weights for different selection criteria was introduced only recently.

The main problem with the direct recruitment system is that the number of positions is very limited, as they only arise when either the incumbent retires, or leaves for some reason; in less frequent cases new positions are created with an increase in student numbers, or new courses of study are to be offered, or when new institutions are created. Financial constraints also restrict the creation of new positions and even filling existing vacancies. Moreover, reservation policies add to the problems. The very limited number of vacant positions－ existing or newly created, are subject to reservations for different social groups of population. Hence for many years stagnation has been a feature of the majority of the academic profession in the country, resulting in decline in their motivation and even deserting the academic profession altogether.

## The career advancement scheme (CAS)

As an answer to some of these problems, a career advancement scheme, also known during the earlier as a merit promotion scheme, was introduced in India in

1983.   It allows promotion of eligible faculty members to the next higher level, even if no vacant positions exist.   Its origin can be traced to the recommendation made first by the Education Commission (1966, p.101): "An *ad hoc* temporary post in the higher grade should be created for lecturer or reader who has done outstanding work, and who cannot be given his well-earned promotion because no suitable posts are vacant.   He/she should then be absorbed against an appropriate permanent post as soon as it becomes available." Under current practice, CAS promotees are not absorbed in regular posts, even if available.   The Commission further recommended that "before such promotions are made, the work of the persons concerned should be evaluated by a specially －constituted, expert committee and the approval of the UGC obtained" (p.101). Promoting vertical mobility, the time-bound promotion scheme introduced in 1983 is regarded as an important solution to the problem of stagnation and to check exit rate from given institutions and from the academic profession as a whole.   It is considered a personal promotion, and once the faculty member retires or leaves, the vacancy would be treated at the lower level only from which promotion was made.   Created to address the issue of stagnation without promotional avenues, teacher turn over, and low morale, the CAS assures promotion to next higher level, even when there is no clear position or vacancy at the next level.   It promotes vertical mobility.   With the merit promotion scheme assuring time-bound promotion, the academic profession was no longer expected to be the last resort of talented college and university graduates.

Thus, faculty in higher education are also assured of promotions in their career, under the merit promotion scheme of the UGC, if they complete a minimum prescribed number of years of service at the given level and if performance is satisfactory.   No single person was considered eligible for two subsequent promotions during the career of the faculty member.   For a long time there was a distinction maintained between CAS promotees and recruits through open competition.   CAS promotees were also treated differently from others, say, for example for the headship of the departments where it was on rotation.   Though direct recruits continue to have an air of superiority and CAS promotees are viewed as inferior, for most official purposes no formal distinction is made between the two.   Certainly the situation where universities promote too many faculty members under CAS in relation to faculty members directly recruited is not considered as a healthy situation (Figure 4).

The merit promotion scheme was criticized as it was regarded as essentially a time-bound personal promotion scheme, with emphasis on seniority and with no concern for merit or performance of faculty members.   Mainly meant for

rewarding merit, it culminated, despite some recommendations made by successive pay review committees, essentially in time-bound promotion.   The incentive for hard work was blurred.   As Amrik Singh (2004, p.209) observed, "It curbs initiative: even promotion to a professional post is based on considerations which underemphasize academic achievement and over-emphasize seniority."
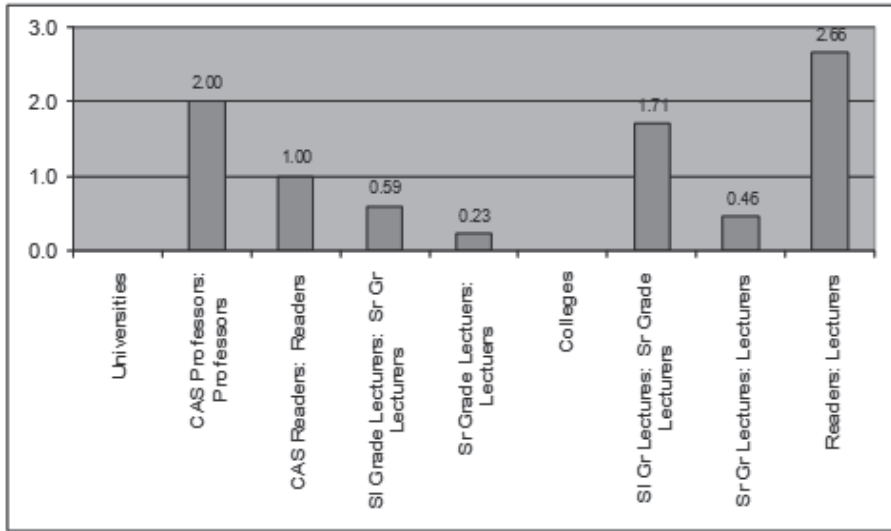
Source: UGC (2008)

Figure 4. Ratio of CAS promotees to others in colleges and universities

In practice, promotion became a right of everyone, and the result was reckless promotion of all, with no differentiation between the deserving and the undeserving, and with no serious consideration for quality in research and teaching.   No proper objective methods of evaluation of faculty performance were adopted.   In effect, assessment of the performance was largely based on annual faculty self-appraisal, and hence promotion became automatic subject to the number of years of service.   Since this was subject to fulfillment of a bare minimum level of performance in teaching and research, it was widely held that the scheme would be counter-productive and would adversely affect the motivation of faculty to excel in their work.   For the same reason it was widely criticized not as merit promotion, but as 'mercy' promotion.   Some attribute the decline in quality and standards in higher education and in the standards of the

academic profession to the merit promotion scheme.   But the scheme is here to stay, as any action otherwise will incur the wrath of the faculty unions.   Only some marginal modifications were periodically attempted over the years, until recently when major changes were made.

Performance-linked promotions and new pay scales

Despite severe criticism, the Sixth Pay Revision Committee of the UGC (2008) recommended the continuation of the career advanced scheme; however, with a few additional qualifications, and along with it recommended revision in the pay scales and an increase in retirement age to sixty-five, with a provision for extension until the age of seventy for some.[6]   While modifying the career advancement scheme and revising the pay scales, the Sixth Pay Revision Committee has considered two important factors: parity in pay scales of members of the academic profession with those of the civil servants and secondly, parity in the promotional time-frame and the number of promotional grades between those of the academic staff and civil servants.   Presently the long-held, sharp criticism raised about the utter lack of parity in career pay profiles of the two categories is no more valid, as there are common and uniform slabs of grade pay across both services.   In addition, the Sixth Pay Revision Committee formulated an elaborate set of parameters for the academic performance index for use in both types of promotion through direct recruitment and through CAS.

First, the pay scales.   The increases in pay scales of faculty, recommended by the Committee, mark very significant increases, though many states are yet to implement them.   There has been substantial revision in the salary scales across the board.   Unlike the pre-Sixth Pay Commission situation, the faculty salaries are no longer low as compared to other government services and corporate business.

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[6] See UGC (2010) full details.

Table 6. Pay scales of faculty (2008) (Rs.)

Stage		Pay Scale (Lowest-Highest)	'Grade Pay'
1	Assistant Professor (1)	15,000-39,100	6,000
2	Assistant Professor (2)	15,000–39,100	7,000
3	Assistant Professor (3)	15,000–39,100	8,000
4	Associate Professor	37,400-67,000	9,000
5	Professor	37,400–67,000	10,000
6	Professor (HAG)	37,400–67,000	12,000
6	Professor (HAG)	67,000–79,000	nil

Note: Current exchange rate (January 2015): INR60 = USD 1 (approximate)

In fact, the starting gross monthly salary of an assistant professor today is Rs. 42,400, associate professor, Rs. 85,800 and professor Rs. 97,400 (Jayaram, 2012).   Revision of the salary scales with additional allowances meant a tremendous increase from seventy to ninety per cent pay over the then existing levels.   Though from the point of view of international comparisons, the salary levels seem low, they are not so compared with the salary structure of others in the public sector in the country domestically, and the relative purchasing power of the money.   They are even somewhat globally competitive salaries.   They are also uniform across the entire country.
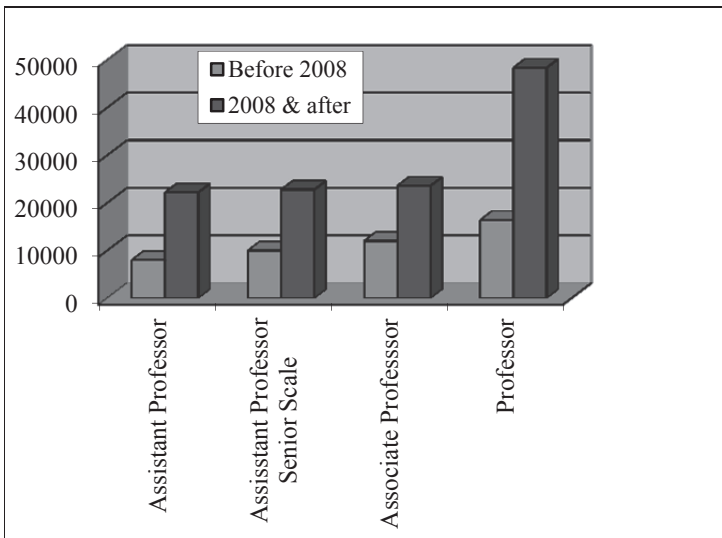

Figure 5. Revision of salaries of faculty in colleges and universities (Rs. at the beginning level: Basic Pay + Grade Pay)

While the new pay scales were widely welcomed, it is also argued that they are common for stages one, two, and three and stages four, five, and six, whereas differential starting scales would have been judicious.   There are differences only in grade pay.   There is not much difference between stages four and five. There is no significant financial reward when promoted to the next stage, say between stages one, two, and three; or between stages four and five, and between five and six.[7]   The pay revision committee has also, however, recommended better/faster upward mobility of teachers.

The Career Advancement Scheme formulated by the Sixth Pay Revision Committee, which came into force in 2010 and revised in 2013,[8] is based on clear criteria: years of experience, score on Academic Performance Index (API score) and assessment by the selection/screening/expert committee.   The API scores take into account: teaching (including innovations in teaching, improvement in syllabi, examinations, evaluation, etc. [score ranging from minimum twenty-five to 125 points]); co-curricular, extension, profession-related activities (including academic administration, relations with corporate sector, seminars, etc. [the range of the score being minimum fifteen and a maximum of fifty points]); and research, including papers/chapters, books, projects, seminar/conference papers and research guidance.   In each of these three areas, a large number of indictors are identified and their respective score points are specified.   By doing so, it sought to reduce the scope for biases and favouritism in the process of promotion and also recruitment, and at the same time encourage, motivate, and reward faculty in their academic pursuits (Das & Chattopadhyay, 2014, p.68).

Specific minimum eligibility criteria for promotion at each level are different, and they are presented in Table 7.   Every category — teaching, extension and research — consists of several items and for each points are assigned.[9]   The API score system, including all minimum eligibility criteria,

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[7] Promotion from stage five to stage six is also conditioned by the total number of positions at the level of stage five in the university, and only ten per cent of such positions can be promoted to stage six, subject to a very high level of academic performance, evaluated by an expert committee.

[8] In response to widespread criticism from the teaching community, the UGC withdrew the API system in January, 2013, but quickly retraced its steps and restored it in June, 2013 with a few important modifications.

[9] See UGC (2010, 2013) for points in detail for each component — like, for example, points for publication of papers in journals, points for publication of books, points for attending seminars, points for conducting seminars, teaching hours, examination related work, etc.

relative weights, and points for various performance indicators are applicable in case of both direct recruitment and promotion under the career advancement scheme.

The goal in creating the elaborate and systematic API under the Performance-based Assessment System was to provide for a 360-degree assessment of faculty contributions to diverse aspects of the academic profession. Though the format and all the conditions were given in elaborate detail, it was also claimed to be leaving enough space for universities to modify the format within the framework to make a comprehensive assessment.

Table 7. Minimum eligibility conditions for promotion under career advancement scheme (revised 2013)

Promotion from Stage 1 to Stage 2		
Experience at Stage 1		
	Experience for those with Ph.D. degree	4 years
	Experience for those with M. Phil	5 years
	Experience for those with no M.Phil./Ph.D.	6 years
API score	Teaching	75 points per year
	Extension	15 points per year
	Teaching & Extension	100 points per year
	Research	10 points per year
		40 points for the assessment period
	For College teachers	5 points per year
		20 points for the assessment period
Assessment of Screening Committee		Positive/Verification of the API scores
Promotion from Stage 2 to Stage 3		
Experience at Stage 2		
	Experience for those with Ph.D. degree	5 years
API score	Teaching	75 points per year
	Extension	15 points per year
	Teaching & Extension	100 points per year
	Research	20 points per year
		100 points for the assessment period
	For College teachers	10 points per year
		50 points for the assessment period
Assessment of Screening Committee		Positive/ Verification of the API scores

Promotion from Stage 3 to Stage 4		
Experience at Stage 3		3 years
API score	Teaching	75 points per year
	Extension	15 points per year
	Teaching & Extension	100 points per year
	Research	30 points per year
		90 points for the assessment period
	For College teachers	5 points per year
		20 points for the assessment period
Assessment of Selection Committee		Positive
Relative Weights		
	Research	30 per cent
	Teaching	50 per cent
	Interview	20 per cent
For college teachers		
	Research	20 per cent
	Teaching	60 per cent
	Interview	20 per cent
Promotion from Stage 4 to Stage 5		
Experience at Stage 4		3 years
API score	Teaching	75 points per year
	Extension	15 points per year
	Teaching & Extension	100 points per year
	Research	15 points per year
		45 points for the assessment period
	For College teachers	5 points per year
		20 points for the assessment period
Assessment of Selection Committee		Positive
Relative Weights		
	Research	50 per cent
	Teaching	30 per cent
	Interview	20 per cent
For college teachers		
	Research	20 per cent
	Teaching	60 per cent
	Interview	20 per cent

Promotion from Stage 5 to Stage 6		
Limit: 10% of Professors in the Organization		
	Experience at Stage 5	10 years
API score	Teaching	75 points per year
	Extension	15 points per year
	Teaching & Extension	100 points per year
	Research	50 points per year
		500 points for the assessment period
Assessment by Expert Committee		Positive
Relative Weights		
	Research	50 per cent
	Performance Evaluation	50 per cent

Source: UGC (2010, 2013)

The API is regarded as India's first major attempt at ensuring that faculty recruitment and promotions are directly linked to their academic performance. The process of recruitment and selection would be transparent, objective, and credible, ensuring a sound and systematic methodology of assessment of the credentials of faculty in higher education. Introduced along with the steep increases in pay scales, the performance assessment system is aimed at increasing accountability of faculty to improve the standard of higher education institutions.

Though some noted that this marks a very significant improvement over the prevailing system, introducing a high degree of objectivity in assessment of faculty performance and in widening promotional opportunities, it has not been immune from serious criticism by the academic community. While the pay increases were widely welcomed, application of the academic performance index was subject to severe attack.

Problems with CAS system are too many and too complicated. The API score system is regarded as very cumbersome one that is flawed, and there was room for manipulation and the documentation process is tedious, cumbersome, and time-consuming.

Though some variations are provided, broadly uniform criteria were applied to all institutions without taking into account the sharp variations in the facilities available for a conducive environment for better performance of faculty. Some argue that the API score system gives undue high weights to research and less to teaching and even less to extension activities and social functions. The API

score system also discourages joint work and department-level team work, and encourages individual concerns since the same points are divided between the team members in case of joint and collaborative activities. Yet there is obsession with API scores and faculty get occupied with manipulating and accumulating their API scores by attending more and more seminars, even if they are not very relevant, publishing more papers in poor quality and non-refereed journals, etc., and become busy in preparing documentation. In general, faculty may choose soft options of the API such as attending conferences, workshops, symposia, training programs, and publication of articles in journals of low or zero credibility[10] and even books with cheap publishers on payment. Faculty can avoid tougher ones, like undertaking major research projects and publication of research papers in standard journals. There is no proper mechanism to monitor the quality of research or assess the commitment of faculty. In short, as Arun Kumar (2013) observed, the API has been "initiated to quantitatively measure the performance of academics. It has set into motion a process of weeding out the committed academics in favor of mediocrity and paper chase." It was also criticised on two other grounds. First, the strict and inflexible requirements of the API score system are responsible for slowing down recruitment, and adding to large scale faculty vacancies. Second, the API system with all its rigidly-specified, detailed conditions is said to be going against the concept of university autonomy on the one hand, and the autonomy of the states on the other. Thirdly, the standardized system of assessment does not differentiate between different colleges and universities, though distinction is made between them and between social sciences and humanities on the one hand and natural and other sciences on the other, it does not strictly differentiate between high and low quality contributions of faculty to the profession.

Many of the indicators are subjective and several are regarded as unfair and also not relevant for faculty in many Indian institutions, say for faculty in colleges, who, like in many other countries, are not "creative intellectuals," but are "consuming intellectuals" essentially involved in transmitting knowledge, and not much in research publication (Altbach, 1977); and colleges are also severely short of basic infrastructure, research support, etc. Some view the assignment of points and weights for each activity and the whole quantification process as highly simplistic, mechanical, and demeaning, ignoring the human

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[10] It also seems to have contributed to proliferation of journals of all types, some of which, particularly online ones, promise to publish articles in a couple of weeks after submission, provided publication fees/charges are paid.

and intellectual dimensions of the academic profession.   It assumes that teacher performance or teacher efficiency can be reduced to a score, which is seriously resented by many.   As Bhattacharya (2013) wondered, whether the API system is meant to "grade or degrade" faculty.   The levels of faculty positions for promotion are many－as many as six!   It takes a minimum of sixteen years for one who joins as an assistant professor to get promoted as a professor (stage five).

Despite the fact that it is a significant improvement over the earlier models of career advancement, in view of large scale resentment and continuing criticism from the teaching community, the UGC withdrew the API system as whole in January 2013, but quickly restored it in June 2013 with a few important modifications at the university level－in the procedures and in the assignment of score points for each performance indicator and relative weights to them.[11]   The revisions include changes in the score points for some items, capping score points on some items, and changes in relative weights for some.   More importantly, the revisions provided for flexibly for the universities to adopt, adapt, and interpret the API in their own way.   Universities are required to rate faculty, but they can set the parameters themselves, and to encourage transparency, give them a point-based score on a university-developed index. The universities are also given flexibility to evolve their own mechanisms to assess faculty performance, based on their own performance based appraisal system and the API scores.   Initially API was to provide an objective system of assessment of performance of faculty and their accountability to the profession, but after 2013 it was made just a screening mechanism and not meant for expert assessment.   If candidates fulfill stipulated cut-off points, they are called for interviews, and the screening/selection committees are entrusted with final responsibility of making a comprehensive assessment of the applicants and the final decision.   As the API score cannot be taken as the final decisive one, the API remains as a bureaucratic/clerical exercise of least significance.   Yet API stays and it matters.

Some of the discontentment among the academic community was not favorably viewed by many, as it was felt that faculty were expressing opposition because the API scores are based on their performance on research publications,

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[11] For example, so as to prevent teachers to increase their API scores by attending too many seminars/workshops etc., the UGC amended the regulations in such a manner that maximum fifteen per cent of API would be allocated for participation in conferences, seminars and training courses.

teaching, innovations, and other activities that require them to actually consistently work hard for years to get promoted, in contrast to 'automatic promotion' after a given number of years, which earlier was a *de facto* practice in many universities.

But some criticism seems to be valid. The whole system continues to maintain that faculty performance could be reduced to a single score, though standardization cannot be avoided and any composite index by its very nature turns out be a single number. The scoring pattern does not differentiate between poor and high quality research; instant/short-term research and long-term engagement in fundamental and path-breaking research or creative writing or between mediocre and inspired. The system continues to altogether ignore student evaluation or student feedback on teacher performance.

The use of API and CAS as a whole in practice is not as efficient as it appears. While the essence of the point system of the API was retained by all universities in practice, by maintaining the mandated cut-off points, the spirit was compromised in terms of quality. Points for publications and activities are manipulated by universities to suit their specific situations, thereby diluting the API system. In the processes of making it flexible, it allowed "infusion of subjectivity and discretion" as well (Das & Chattopadhyay, 2014, p.71). Theoretically, promotion under CAS is not automatic, but it is actually the case in practice. Faculty view it almost as a right, and as there is no competition for such promotions, no need to excel or at least perform well. University administrators might also feel as if they have no choice but to follow the CAS system and promote the faculty to higher levels. CAS leaves no scope for competition. In the CAS approach, there is not enough consideration for quality research, commitment, seriousness and devotion in teaching. Members rejected under a competitive promotion scheme can get promoted under CAS. Even when positions are available under direct open recruitment in the same organization or outside, many tend to opt for the less rigorous option of promotion under CAS. Some critical parts of the process are highly subjective, leading to nepotism and favoritism. No provision exists in the CAS system for any kind of student evaluation of teacher performance. With large scale promotions, it is feared that the structure of teaching staff in the universities is changing from a typical pyramidal structure to a cylindrical one and then to an inverted pyramid, with a larger number of professors and associate professors and a smaller number of lecturers and assistant professors.

Despite many shortcomings, it may have to be acknowledged that the elaborate assessment system used for promotion in Indian colleges and

universities, attempts to achieve the difficult balance, between objective and needed subjective performance assessment of academic faculty and also between ensuring the autonomy of varsities and improving faculty accountability.   It is not a perfect system, in fact, it cannot be perfect.   To conclude, it is widely felt that to ensure a place among the top institutes in the world, an efficient evaluation system should be introduced and the PBAS and the API systems should be revised taking into consideration local specific conditions, national concerns and international environment.   UGC has recognized the need to re-examine the API indictors and has sought in its latest communication in April 2015 to the universities, their views in this regard.   It is hoped that after wider consultations, a clearly formulated, scientific system of performance evaluation and of its efficient implementation are firmly put in place, which do not require frequent modifications or revisions, certainly not their withdrawal and reintroduction, and which are accepted both within the country and internationally.

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