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A MODEL FOR ENHANCING ACADEMIC STAFF PROMOTION SYSTEM IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL STUDIES, AS A CASE KUWAIT

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Abstract:

Vocational and technical colleges and schools is a type of education which place students on apprenticeship system. It is through which students can spend certain time in industry premises to gain the necessary skills and attitudes mostly required by industries. Vocational and technical education is completely different from a formal education that is taught in classrooms. Developing countries (e.g., Kuwait, Oman, Qatar), has realized the importance of vocational and technical education in vital sectors of the economy (e.g., oil, electricity and water, construction), where expatriates are the dominate workforce and the need to reduce dependence on expatriates is one of high governments manpower strategy. In Kuwait, the government has absorbed the need to reduce dependence on expatriates and thus established the College of Technological Studies, CTS, to respond to the urgent need of skilled and semi-skilled indigenous workforce. Thus, the management of the College of Technological Studies has to appreciate and value the significant role of the College of Technological Studies in meeting government workforce objectives. This can be accomplished by ensuring that academic staff has the necessary skills to prepare students to meet industrial needs and ambitious. The academic staff promotion system must be one of the CTS management priorities. The constant review and update the academic staff promotion system is crucial to maintain high standard of vocational and technical graduates. A model is introduced in this research for academic staff promotion system that enable the CTS management to review and assess the quality of the CTS academic staff competencies and their ability in meeting industrial requirements. The new model for academic staff promotion system would overcome and/or reduce the deficiencies of the current academic staff promotion system. The new model would encompass more realistic and efficient criteria's for assessing the performance of vocational and technical academic staff and introduce a proper work methodology and procedure for minimizing the percentage of errors while promoting a candidate to a higher academic status.

Keywords:

Key words: Vocational and technical Education, industrial training program, developing Indigenous Manpower, Interaction between vocational and technical education and local industries and business, model of academic staff promotion system, Kuwait.

JEL Classification: I20, I21, I29

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1. Introduction

It is believed that vocational and technical education is limited to a specific skill. In fact, vocational and technical education has been expanded and diversified to encompass other essential skills such as problem solving, creativity, communications, and team work. It is an opportunity for students to practice and show their skills and talents and creativity in industries and business. "Vocational education will facilitate young people learning in a variety of settings, including the classroom, workplace and wider community... vocational education will help young students to acquire lifelong learning skills to enable them to cope up with the rapid pace of technological changes through lifelong learning and adapt to the frequent changes through "earn and learn" concept" (National Education Policy, 2020). Vocational and technical institutions are designed to be equipped and prepare students to the world of work. It is always referred to as career or work education. The UNESCO, define vocational and technical education "as comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods". (UNESCO, 2016) Vocational and technical education can be viewed as the acquisition of competencies in different occupations with a broad general education suitable for the world of work. (NEP 2020) In addition, vocational and technical education can provide skills for self-employment and reduce obstacles to the world of work. There is a need for vocational and technical education to perform successfully. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018) The management of vocational and technical education needs to absorb the know-how and know-why regarding the provision of vocational and technical education. The organizational structure in vocational and technical education colleges and schools and completely different from a formal education as in universities. The management skills in vocational education institutions would concentrate on creating a mutual interest with industries and business in order to succeed in preparing students for the world of work. Academic staff need to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes that are practiced in related industries. A constant review of academic staff competencies is one of management priorities to ensure their ability of academic staff to respond to the rapid change of technology in industries. The World Bank stress on the need for vocational and technical education to be more flexible to adapt the changes in technology used by industries, "flexibility between general and vocational education particularly in higher education is imperative to enable workers to compete in changing labor markets where technology play an increasingly important role". (World Bank, 2019). Academic staff promotion system in vocational and technical institutions play a vital role in meeting industrial requirements. It is crucial that industries participate in the setting of the criteria's that are related to the interest of both parties (vocational and technical institutions and industries). Industries are interested in those academic staff who are familiar with the types of technology applied in their activities rather than the number of publications in academic journals except if it solve their problems or introduce new techniques. Academic staff who participate in industrial activities such as: research and development, problem solving, training of employees, and supervising training students are those of industrial first interest. On the other hand, vocational and technical institutions eager for financial and moral support to facilitate the achievement of institutions objectives. The College of technological Studies, Kuwait, was established to provide industries with skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower. The College of

Technological Studies is under the umbrella of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training which has four colleges and four training centers. The College of Technological Studies has nine departments. They are namely: Manufacturing Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electronics Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Automotive and Marine Engineering, Mechanical Power and Refrigeration Technology, and Laboratory Technology. The purpose of this research is to introduce a model that would enhance academic staff promotion system not only at the College of Technological Studies, but also at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training colleges and training centers. New criteria would be introduced and a proper procedure would be applied to overcome and/or reduce some of the deficiencies of the current academic staff promotion system. Consequently, responding to the need of industries for skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower able to manage, maintain, and probably adapt the imported technology to suit local requirements. This, would indeed reduce dependence on expatriates and encourage local capabilities.

2. Research Objectives

- a. To examine the current academic staff promotion system.
- b. To introduce a new model for academic staff promotion.
- c. Discussions and Recommendations.

The outcomes of the research would indeed guide the management of the College of Technological Studies, CTS, to improve the quality of academic staff promotion system. In addition to, reviewing and evaluating the current academic staff promotion system. This would contribute positively in providing related industry with indigenous skilled and semi-skilled manpower able to manage, maintain and adapt the imported technology, Thus, reducing dependence on expatriates.

3. How would the proposed model for academic staff promotion system enhance the quality of the CTS graduates?

The quality of the CTS graduates would depend entirely on the type of management. In other word, the mentality of the management would decide, to great extent, if graduates would have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes mostly needed by related industries. The academic staff promotion system is one of the most elements in shaping graduate's standard. It is through which academic staff can transfer their competencies to students. In fact, the level of student's success in meeting industrial needed would depend on the ability of academic staff in managing, maintaining, and adapting the technology applied in related industries. The new academic staff promotion system model would ensure that the CTS is providing industries with skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower and thus achieving the country's overall manpower plan in reducing dependence on expatriates.

4. Evaluating the current academic staff promotion system

The present academic staff promotion system which was forged in 2005 have not been reviewed nor evaluated to overcome the deficiencies that might affect the standard of the

CTS graduates. In respect to the requirements concerning the academic journals. The promotion system booklet has indicated that the academic journal must be refereed. However, no mentioned whether the academic journal should be waved or accepted when asked for names of reviewers. In most academic journals the names of reviewers kept undisclosed. The purpose is to prevent any conflict of interest that might affect the credibility of the academic journal and the author. The academic journal must specialised as mentioned in the promotion system booklet. However, no mentioned of the academic journal that are diversifying their specialist. In fact, academic candidate for promotion can publish research papers in multidiscipline journals which are contradict with the requirements mentioned in the academic promotion system booklet. It is notable that candidates for an academic promotion tend to involve an author as a first or a second author who is a currently an editor for the same journal. This is without doubt considered a clear conflict of interest. However, the promotion system booklet has not considered the involvement of an editor in the same paper and same journal to be viewed as a conflict of interest. Surprisingly, many published papers at the CTS has more than five authors and it is rare to allocate a published paper by one author. A team work approach is inevitably preferable for exchange of information's and skills. However, an academic staff who spend more than ten years at the CTs and did not attempt to published a single research papers by him/herself is worth reviewing his/her work credibility. Academic journals must be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the promotion system requirements and not be elected by voting. Academic staff may not have the opportunity to examine the reliability of the academic journals and relying on voting in approving academic journals would indeed handicap the efforts of enhancing the CTS graduates.

5. A Model for enhancing academic staff promotion system

Indeed, this new model (Figure 1) would enhance quality of the CTS graduates in meeting industrial requirements. In addition, it would help in providing industries with skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower able to manage, maintain, and probably adapt the imported technology in related industries to suit local environments. The new model for academic staff promotion system consist of the followings stages:

5.1 Creating a common awareness towards an academic promotion

It is a management responsibility to ensure that academic staff thoroughly absorb the objectives of the academic staff promotion system. The notion of obtaining an academic promotion for the purpose of an academic promotion only must be eliminated. In other word, an academic promotion is not for the purpose of an increase in the salary or a higher opportunity to win a management position. It is rather a tangible contribution in the development of vocational and technical education. It is a chance to strengthening the linkage with industries and effectively exchange knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes between both parties (industries and the CTS). The contribution of industries in the academic staff promotion system must be encouraged. The assessment of an academic staff at the CTS must include criteria's that are related to a joint collaboration with industries in various activities such as: curriculum development, improving the standard of workshops and laboratories, the application of health and safety regulations, research and development, industrial training programs, and consultation committees. The CTS

management can create a common awareness on an academic promotion through meetings, seminars, orientation sessions, and lecturers.

5.2 Defining Promotion Procedures Ethics

It is well understandable that an academic promotion would achieve a self-satisfaction resulted from a dedicated sincere work through various academic and industrial activities. Indeed, it is the fruitful of a challenging work environment that consume times, efforts, and health from the candidate to achieve a higher academic status. However, it is highly notable, as headed several promotion committees, dispute, anger, and frustration unfortunately are some of the symptoms occur during the promotion process. Therefrom, academic staff must be aware on the consequence on deliberately delaying or complicating the promotion process. At the same time,

Academic staff must understand and appreciate the efforts made to review an examine all documents related to an academic candidate promotion. A healthy working environment would facilitate team work approach and achieve a positive cooperation in meeting industrial requirements. It is the responsibility of the CTS management to clarify and monitor the promotion process to block any unpleasant actions that might affect the credibility of academic staff. In addition, ensuring a fair practice and transparency in the promotion process. The CTS management must forge a promotion procedures ethics booklet and clarify related issues to academic staff through seminars, meeting, lecturers, and group discussions.

5.3 Defining Publications Ethics

The academic publications are considered as the core of the academic promotion. It was revealed that there is no unified process for reviewing and approving academic journals in the scientific departmental committees. Academic staff was found eager to publish their research projects in a refereed journal that are approved by their scientific departmental committees. The promotion system booklet insists that the academic journal must be refereed. However, there no indication on those journals which request from the author names of reviewers. Normally, the names of reviewers kept undisclosed so that to prevent conflict of interest issue. In addition, the promotion system booklet indicated that the academic journal must be specialized. Unfortunately, there are who deliberately published their research papers in multidiscipline journal. Authors must be aware of conflict of interest when inviting an author who is, at the same time, an editor for the same academic journal that is publishing the research paper. Therefore, it is essential for the CTS management to ensure that academic staff well aware of publication ethics to maintain a high level of academic standard and to prevent any conflict that might affect the learning process. The CTS management must issue a publications ethics booklet that tackle all aspects of publication ethics and norms to prevent any complexity and incredibility to the promotion system process. An interaction with academic staff through meetings, seminars, and discussions groups would enhance the level of academic staff awareness to publications ethics and norms.

5.4 Defining Journals Approval Criteria's

The promotion system booklet which was established in 2005 has revealed the criteria's for approving an academic journal. Academic journals must be refereed and has at least

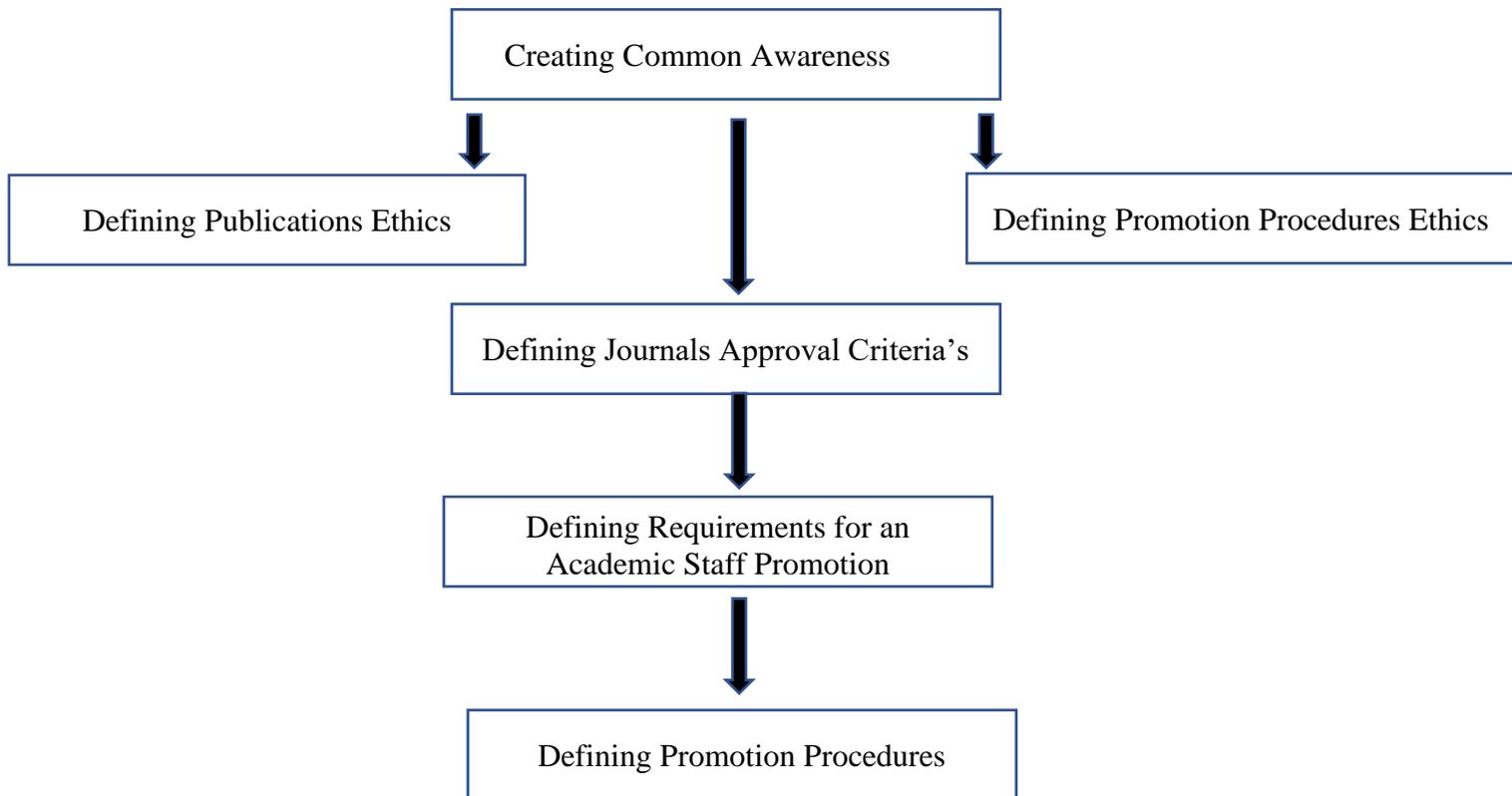
two to three issues published a year, have to be specialized, has an editorial board, and must be issued by a recognized academic organizations or institutions. Academic staff must not publish more than two research papers in one issue of the academic journal. The promotion system booklet did not tackle crucial aspects regarding the creditability of the academic journal. In respect to the refereed journal, the promotion system booklet did not wave or accept any academic journal that asked for names of reviewers which raise the issue of conflict of interest. In addition, no mentioned if the academic journal are multidiscipline which normally have less restrictions on publication comparing to a specialized academic journal. It is essential that the CTS management unified the 'criteria for approving academic journals for all the academic departments. In other word, all academic staff should be aware of those criteria to avoid any mis-interpretation or conflict that might evolve while approving or rejecting certain academic journals.

5.5 Defining Requirements for an Academic Staff Promotion

The promotion system booklet has specified the requirement for a candidate for an academic promotion. Amon which are: serving four years at the present academic status, participate in two training courses, achieved a minimum rating of "good" in teaching skills, published ten research papers in a refereed journal where a minimum five research papers as a first author for a promotion to a professor title for instance, and participate in committees. It is highly preferable that an academic staff show a successful experience with related industry. Activities such as joint research, curriculum development, problem solving, seminars, updating workshops and laboratories, applying health and safety procedures, and industrial training programs. Therefrom, it is essential to inject new criteria that are related to industrial interaction with the CTS, when evaluating an academic staff for a promotion.

5.6 Defining Promotion Procedures

It is in this stage where the frustration and anger occur when there is a either a deliberate delay of some sort of documents organizing and filtering that are related to an academic staff promotion. Even though, the promotion system booklet defined the promotion procedures and time table, there are a delay that affect the process of an academic promotion. Unfortunately, the promotion procedures are manually handled and loss of documents are inevitable. It is a management responsibility to ensure the availability of a proper promotion system that a candidate can apply electronically to avoid any delay or loss of essential documents.

Figure: 1 A Model for Enhancing Academic Staff Promotion System

6 Discussions and Recommendations

The need for skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower is highly noted in Kuwait, particularly in vital sector of the economy (e.g., oil, electricity and water and construction). The Kuwaiti government has forged the College of Technological Studies, CTS, under the umbrella of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training to respond to industrial need of local skilled and semi-skilled manpower. The success of the CTS in achieving and meeting the country's overall manpower plan would depend on the mentality of the CTS management. Unfortunately, through the past years the CTS has been managed and run by a Ph.D. holder with no or slim management skills. The need to coordinate efforts in vocational and technical education require a highly management skills. The CTS management has to show evidence of management success and ability in performing in a highly competitive environment. Personal interviews of possible candidates for the CTS management seems to be insufficient and unrealistic when eliminating management professional skills and positive attitudes. The believe that the success of vocational and technical education would depend on the ability of the CTS management to successfully collaborate with industries is one of its most highly priorities in vocational and technical education. Academic staff are considered a significant mediator between the CTS and related industries. A proper and efficient promotion system would indeed ensure that academic staff maintain a high standard of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are mostly required by industries. The reviewing, updating, and

monitoring of an academic promotion system would contribute in the facilitating of achieving mutual interest between both parties (industries and CTS). The current promotion system has shown a notable deficiency that would affect the standard of the CTS graduates. The promotion system booklet has specified that the academic journal must be refereed but no mentioned if the academic journal ask for names of reviewers which would affect the creditability of the academic journals and authors. Academic staff tend to publish their research papers in a multidiscipline academic journal rather than a specialized academic journal despite the requirements mentioned in the promotion system booklet which emphasis on publishing in a specialized academic journal. The teaching skills is important in obtaining course objectives, however, a minimum rating of a "good" for assessing an academic staff performance in classroom, workshops and laboratories seems unacceptable. Lecturers and trainers have to show a high standard of teaching and training skills in order to succeed in meeting industrial requirements particularly in managing, maintain, and probably adapting the imported technology to suit local environments. It was noted that the majority of published research papers at the CTS made by more than five authors. Academic staff who spend more than ten years and cannot publish a single research papers with his/her name must be checked his/her work creditability. Promotion system for academic staff must be electronic to avoid frustration and anger for either a deliberate delay or missing essential documents through the manual promotion process. The introduced model for enhancing academic staff promotion system would significantly contribute in preparing students to the world of work and thus reduce dependence on expatriates, the main aim of the overall manpower Kuwaiti governmental plan.

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