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ADVERTORIAL, EDUCATION PROMOTIONAL FEAT

Why decline in number of professors is students' concern

Declining number of senior faculty and a rise in inexperienced contractual staff is leading to a major lacuna in the education system

Shyna.Kalra@timesgroup.com

Experienced teaching staff is on a decline, and senior professors are the worst hit. In all, 68.9% of teachers in the higher education sector, at the post of associate professors, consist of ad-hoc and contractual staff.

According to MHRD's All India Survey on Higher Education (AIS-HE), the number of teachers in the higher education sector has reduced by 81,031 within a year — from 13,65,786 teachers in 2016-17 to 12,84,755 in 2017-18. This drop is largely because senior professors are retiring and there is no replacement hiring against their posts. Currently, there are only 5% academicians acquiring the senior position, the number of professors has dwindled down to 9.2% in 2016-17. Most of the institutes now rely on temporary staff. According to the report, there has been as much rise in the number of temporary teachers as there has been a decline in the number of professors — that is by 4%. The number of temporary staff across universities has gone up from

4.9% in 2016-17 to 9% in 2017-18.

Ramesh Ghanta, president, Indian Association of Teacher Educators (IATE) and professor, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, said, "Earlier, the UGC sanctioned posts for staff recruitment in the government colleges and universities, so, there was a proportionate hiring."

"However, now the power has been shifted to state governments, where the respective universities prefer to hire more number of ad-hoc or contractual staff," said Ghanta.

Aarti Srivastava, associate professor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration said, "The number of professors would always be lesser than the number of associate professors because of the inverted pyramid structure of the education system. However, the senior faculty in the current system is much less than the required number." She added that this imbalance further lowers the skills required for the job, especially for new teachers. "There are

many aspects of teaching which one learns on the job. With lesser number of senior professors available, new teachers often face scarcity of these resources," she said.

LACK OF PROMOTIONS

No promotion in the mid-level (assistant professor) is yet another reason behind the imbalance. There have been allegations that the quality of faculty members is one of the main reasons that they do not get promotions. However, R Subrahmanyam, secretary, higher education department, MHRD, claimed that faculty members are skilled enough. "The recruitment and promotion process is put on

hold till the SC decides on the reservation policy in the faculty recruitment in colleges and universities," said Subrahmanyam. He further added, "Availability of senior level faculty is also a huge issue. For direct recruitments, the institutes find it difficult to employ teachers from outside since experienced faculty members get familiar with their institutes and are not willing to change. However, for promotion-based recruitments, the institutes often fail to carry out interviews because of procedural bottlenecks." For these recruitments, institutes have to advertise about the post and conduct panel interviews. Often, said Subrahmanyam, institutes fail to get consensus on visiting nominee.

Recently, MHRD has also changed the rules for promoting teachers because of which PhD has been made mandatory, while those without PhD will be recruited only on contract. Frequently changing eligibility criteria is one of the fundamental roadblocks in promotion of teachers, says Sachin N, assistant professor, Dyal Singh College, DU.

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

- 5,998 posts vacant in central universities across India
- Central University of Haryana, Central University of Tamil Nadu and Central University of Orissa have 87.9%, 97.1% and 85% positions vacant, respectively

Source: UGC

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