



International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research

ISSN : 0972-7302

available at <http://www.serialsjournal.com>

© Serials Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Volume 15 • Number 15 • 2017

A Study on the Effect of Changes in Higher Learning Institutions on the Roles of Faculty Members in Advancing Learning

Ariz Naqvi¹ and Farah Naqvi²

¹ Assistant Professor (Human Resource Management), American University of the Middle East, Kuwait, E-mail: ariz.naqvi@aum.edu.kw

² Independent Researcher & Freelance Trainer, Kuwait, E-mail: frh_naqvi@yahoo.com

Abstract: Faculty members are significant in the advancements of higher education. There have been various changes in the institutions of higher learning which have resulted in different impacts. This study seeks to explore how changes in higher education institutions have influenced the roles of faculty members in advancing learning. The study considers two major global curriculums, which are the UK and the US curriculums. The study used qualitative survey approach on a sample of 200 faculty members obtained from universities and colleges in the Middle East region. The results from the study identified major changes in the institutions as changes in students' demographics, decreased state funding, and increased services by faculty members and advancements in technology. These changes have affected roles of faculty members differently such as increasing their duties through offering various roles which include library guidance, online teaching and students' advisory among others. The study recommends that learning institutions should consider various changes in the sector and assist faculty members to adopt the changes in their roles. Also, the state should consider increasing funding for institutions of higher learning for research and students' learning.

Keywords: higher learning education, advancement in technology, state funding, faculty roles

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Institutions of higher learning play a critical role in the society. Therefore, they require adequate management to ensure that they deliver the expectations to the government and the society. Besides, the level of complexity in the management of higher education is high. There are various parties involved in higher education. Therefore, there is need to have proper coordination which ensures the attainment of the set objectives. The various stakeholders involved include Politicians, institutional managers, faculty members, institutions managers, financiers, policy makers, students, parents and the

community. Each of the stakeholders has different roles to play in the realization of the education objectives.

Faculty members contribute significantly to advancing learning through the diverse roles they play in the sector. There have been various changes in the institutions of higher learning (Zusman, 2014). These changes may contribute to affecting the roles played by the faculty members. Therefore, it is important to understand these changes as well as their impacts on the roles of faculty members. The current study considers two major international curriculums, which are the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This section presents the existing literature on the topic that was reviewed. The critical analysis of the literature was useful in obtaining the research gap as well as in informing the method used in the study. This section starts by describing who the faculty members are. Secondly, the section discusses the roles of faculty members based on the UK and US curriculums. The changes in the sector are also analyzed. Lastly, the part concludes by identifying the research gap filled by this study.

2.2. Faculty members

According to Schneider (2006), the term faculty is highly used in the United States while in the United Kingdom the term academic is common. Therefore, the faculty members refer to the academic staff in the university or college. It includes professors, assistant professors, lecturers and researchers (Ginsberg, 2011). The members of the faculty are considered to be either serving as full-time employees in the university or part-time employees. In most universities, the faculty members are distinct from the academic administration members. The faculty members are considered as those directly involved in facilitating learning and in conducting research. The academic administration is involved in carrying administration duties in the University (Englehardt, 2010). However, in other institutions of higher learning, there is no clear distinction between faculty members and administrators. For example, the department chairpersons, presidents and vices, deans and the librarians are also considered as faculty members. The close relationship exists because most of the administrators begin as professors and advance to become professors and join the faculty team. Besides, the two categories work hand in hand to facilitate learning in the universities. For this study, a clear distinction was made between academic administrators and faculty members.

2.3. Role of faculty members

According to the European University Institute (2016), most of the academic members in the United Kingdom curriculum are employed on a temporary basis as opposed to permanent employment. More than half of the positions in the universities are given regarding fixed contracts. Therefore, there is high mobility within the UK curriculum among the faculty members. It is also worth to note that at different levels of the faculty, members are awarded different roles. The promotion levels also depend on the qualification of the member as well as the period served on the faculty. Therefore, there are differences in promotions between the US and the UK academic curriculums.

Gerke and Kezar (2015) discuss the key roles of faculty members which include teaching, conducting research and leading research groups. The faculty members are required to teach students in their respective disciplines. Also, they are required to conduct research in the areas of their specialization. Moreover, they have the responsibilities of supervision students in research as well as leading other teams in research (Umbach, 2015).

2.4. Factors Influencing Faculty Members Roles

There are various factors, which have continuously influenced the roles of faculty members. According to Aljeeran (2016), one of these factors is advancement in technology. There have been rampant improvements in technology, which has created notable influence in different sectors. The higher learning institutions have also been largely influenced by changes in the technology. Among these effects is in the roles of faculty members. Through technology advancements, Aljeeran (2016) noted that the role of faculty members has expanded from classroom teaching to offering online learning. Aljeeran (2016) conducted a study on the acceptance of e-learning in Gulf University for Science and Technology. The increased spread of e-learning is a result of advancements in technology where computer and the internet are used in learning. Consequently, the role of faculty members has extended into the management of virtual classes, giving online assignments, the creation of chat rooms for students' discussion, making follow-ups on students learning progress and submitting their scores online among others.

The increased services offered by faculty member have also contributed to the diversification of roles they play. According to Debra (2011), faculty members play a critical role in assisting in the provision of library services. Debra (2011) advocates for more involvement of the faculty members in offering the library services since they assist in boosting academic progress. The various roles played by faculty members in the library include offering guidance, providing instructions, course reserve services and assisting in library research (Debra, 2011).

Changes in state funding also influence the faculty members as well as their roles. Kane and Orszag (2003) conducted a study to evaluate the impact of decreased state funding to institutions of higher learning. The results from the study revealed state funding reduces the ratio of faculty members to students. Therefore, the faculty members are overworked because they have to attend to a higher number of students. The increased number of students per faculty member reduces the time for the faculty members to engage in diverse roles hence limiting their roles. Besides, decreased funding reduces the amount available for faculty members to conduct research in various disciplines hence affecting their research roles adversely.

Martin (2014) argues that there have been notable changes in students demographic in higher learning. These changes include increased mixture of students from diverse origins. Due to globalization, students can relocate to other countries for higher education. Therefore, classes are composed of mixed students from different nationalities. Similar observations were made by Tienda (2013) in his analysis of the diversity in institutions of higher learning. Tienda (2013) observed that there had been increased inclusion of diverse students in universities. Faculty members need to consider the diversity of the students while teaching (Barbera & Reimann, 2014).

Changes that have occurred in recent years have continued to shape the roles of faculty members differently. Rice (2007) argues that the major changes taking place in the academic field require for the

formation of new concepts in all parties involved in the sector. The major themes changing in the sector include changes in disciplines, staff and the society (Ramley, 2014). Besides, Hermanowicz (2011) made the same observations after conducting a critical analysis of the changes taking place and has an impact on the faculty members. According to Hermanowicz (2011), there have been changes in the profession, industry regulations, academic work structural changes, and in the appointment of faculty members.

2.5. Research gap

Past studies had discussed into details the roles of the faculty members under different curriculums. These roles include teaching, conducting research, leading research teams, guiding and supervising students among others. Besides, the studies discussed some of the changes in the higher learning. However, there was not enough knowledge on how the changes in higher learning have affected the roles of faculty members hence the need for this study.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

According to Austin and Sorcenelli (2013) argue that there are complex demands which face universities and colleges hence affecting faculty roles and excellence. Camargo (2015) observed that there are various disruptions to higher education which also affects the faculty roles. These disruptions include the decrease in state funding, improved technology, changes in students demographics, and the increase in the number of disciplines taught. Due to these changes, institutions have developed measures to address these needs hence causing changes in their faculty. The curriculum is a key factor which influences the roles played by the faculty members. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how the changes in the institutions of higher learning have influenced the roles of faculty members.

3.1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study have been classified into two that is, the main objective and the specific objectives. The primary purpose of the study was to explore how the changes in the institutions of higher learning have influenced the roles of faculty members in the Middle Eastern region.

The specific objectives contribute towards realizing the main objective. In this case, the specific objectives include:

- i) To explore the roles of faculty members in the changing institutions of higher learning
- ii) To understand the various changes taking place in institutions of higher learning
- iii) To study how changes in institutions of higher learning affect the roles of faculty members.

3.2. Research Questions

The research questions are associated with the objectives of the study since they guided the researcher in training the objectives. Therefore, there are major research questions and the specific questions, which address each objective outlined. The major research question is “how the changes in the institutions of higher learning have influenced the roles of faculty members in the Middle East Region?”

The specific questions used are:

- i) What are the roles of faculty members in the changing institutions of higher learning?
- ii) Which changes are taking place in institutions of higher learning?
- iii) How have the changes in institutions of higher learning affected the roles of faculty members?

4. METHODOLOGY

The research used an exploratory approach. According to Yin (2009), this approach is suitable in finding out more about certain issues of interest. The study focused on exploring how changes in the institutions of higher learning influenced the roles of faculty members.

The methodology used is the survey. The survey includes conducting research on a particular group derived from the target population. The study focused on the institutions of higher learning within the Middle East region. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews which were administered to 200 participants. The selection of participants was done using the random sampling approach. This method was preferred due to its objectivity. According to Khan (2011), random sampling is scientific; therefore, it is considered to be objective.

The study used qualitative method. Creswell (2013) asserts that qualitative method is essential in the collection and analysis of non-numeric data. The questions used in the interviews are attached in Appendix 1.

5. ANALYSIS & RESULTS

This section presents the findings obtained from the study. It discusses the findings made from the data collected and analyzed.

A total of 200 participants were involved in the interviews. The interview balanced the respondents based on the curriculum taught. Therefore, 100 members were from the UK curriculum while 100 were from the US curriculum.

The inductive approach was used in the thematic analysis where codes and the development of the themes were obtained from the data collected. The first step was familiarization with the data collected from the interviews by reading them several times. The second stage involved coding. According to Clarke and Braun (2013) coding involves generating labels through which important feature of the data useful in answering the questions used in guiding the study. The second stage involved deriving themes from the codes. Fourthly, the themes were reviewed and refined. Lastly, a report of findings was made as presented in the following section of data presentation.

Various codes obtained from the data and themes developed included the following. Codes such as the increase in the number of subjects taught, adjusting subjects to give students applicable in the real world, and generating more updated content developed the theme of increased number of disciplines in the education sector.

The codes such as teaching through the internet, managing online classes, communication with students through online, and accessibility to different databases developed the theme of the impacts of technological advancements in the sector.

The theme of increase in services offered by the faculty members was derived from codes such as involvement in the department by offering services as a heads or directors, counseling students, serving the public in areas of their expertise and participation in different committees.

The theme of decreased funding for higher learning was developed from codes such as inadequate funds in the sector, the increase in some students that exceeds in the increase in funding, lack of enough funds for research, and insufficient equipment.

The increased number of students increased mixture of students from different nationalities, and students with different ages led to the development of the theme of changes in students' demography.

Regarding changes in the sector, the study revealed there had been rampant changes in the industry. Among the changes noted include increase in the number of disciplines. The thematic analysis conducted on the data showed that a significant number of the participants agreed that there had been a continuous increase in the number of subjects offered in both curriculums.

Regarding whether the increase in the number of disciplines affects the roles of the faculty members, different opinions were obtained. However, the analysis indicated that most faculty members' roles were affected. In this case, the participants' roles were influenced differently where some were made to teach more subjects than they taught. Besides, they were involved in designing new courses to match the changes in the industries.

Regarding the technological advancements, the results indicated that most faculty members believed there had been major improvements, which also influenced their roles. Regarding how technology influences the roles of faculty members, participants gave different opinions. However, through the thematic analysis, the following were considered most prevalent. Among the approaches to which technology has affected the roles of faculty members is in the fostering of e-learning. Through improvements in technology, participants argued that e-learning has gained prominence. Through e-learning, the scope of faculty members have increased and now includes offering online teaching, managing virtual classes, offering online tests and making students follow up online. Besides, participants noted that they play the role of preparing digital content to teach online.

About the increase in the number of services offered by the faculty members results indicated that more the three-quarters of the participants agreed there is continued increase in services that they offer as faculty members to the universities as well as to the society.

Regarding whether the increase in the number of services offered by faculty members has an influence on their roles; various new roles that members played were noted. The added roles include serving in their departments as chairpersons or directors, students' advisors, as members of various committees such as grant review, and in editorial boards. Also, members participate in public services. Other services noted include desk research assistance and offering library instructions.

Concerning the decrease in state funding in institutions of higher learning, the funds provided by state were not sufficient to meet the needs of the institution. Therefore, the lack of sufficient adversely influenced the functioning of the faculty members.

About how the decrease in states funding influenced the faculty members' roles, the participants argued that decrease in the financing was limiting their research roles particularly those disciplines that

required more funds for research. The increase in the number of students was higher than the rate at which the funding increased. Therefore, the funding was considered not adequate.

Also, the faculty members were assigned to many classes which were also huge. Therefore, they had limited time to participate in other roles within the institutions. The huge classes required the faculty members to emphasize on the roles of classroom management as well as in sharing duties among students to enhance coordination of the large groups.

On the issue of changes in students demographic, a significant number of the respondents noted that there had been notable changes. The changing demographics have also influenced the roles of the faculty members. For instance, participants noted that they had to consider the diversity of the students while carrying their roles. Besides, some students required to be advised on different fields and disciplines.

6. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The increase in the number of disciplines is paramount in the institutions of higher learning. The analysis has indicated that there is a high increase in the number of disciplines in higher learning. Similar observations were made by Poverty (2012) who observed that there was continued increase in the number of disciplines offered in universities and colleges. The increase is attributed to changes in the industry as well as advancement in technology. The complexity of the business environment is also attributed to increased number of disciplines where robust skills are required to address these challenges.

The numbers of disciplines have influenced the roles of the faculty members significantly. Due to the increase in the disciplines offered, the faculty members are actively involved in developing new courses that suit the needs of the market. Therefore, they have extra roles of finding relevant content that will provide students with relevant knowledge. Besides, the faculty members are expected to conduct thorough research in the new disciplines introduced to gain more knowledge and content.

Concerning the influence of technological advancements, it is clear from the study that technology has greatly influenced the roles of the faculty members. Besides, future advancements in technology are likely to continue influencing the roles of the faculty members. The participants noted that with advancements in technology, the scope of higher education had increased. Consequently, their roles had expanded. The various roles introduced as a result of technological advancements include teaching online classes due to the adoption of e-learning. Other duties noted from the survey included creating students chat rooms, managing virtual classes, and offering online assessments among others. These results were similar to those by Aljeeran (2016) who noted that e-learning which is a product of advancements in technology creates additional roles to faculty members.

Concerning the increased number of services offered by the faculty members, there have been increases in roles played by the members. The study noted these services to include serving in the department where the faculty members spend more time in assisting in the governance of their departments. The results indicated that most faculty members have ever served in their respective departments in different capacities for example; some said they served as chairpersons while others served as directors either for graduate or the undergraduates. Besides, other argued that they had served as heads in research in various departments. Other positions that the participants reported having been involved in include as members of grant review

committee, members of editorial boards. Moreover, the results indicated that faculty members offered other services to the public when they are called upon to assist in the areas of their specialization.

Besides, the members assist in offering library services such as desk research and instructions. These findings are supported by the study by Debra (2011) who argued that faculty members contribute significantly to other services. The particular services noted by Debra (2011) are the library services which the faculty members assist in delivering such as assisting in desk research and offering relevant instructions and guidance to students on how to use library materials.

State funding for higher education is essential. Where there is reduced state funding, the faculty members' roles are adversely affected. From the results, the faculty members argued that reduced state funding also influenced their research roles due to reduced research funds. Besides the increase in the ratio of students to faculty members adversely affects the faculty members' performance (Kane & Orszag, 2003).

The study also noted the changes in students' demography and how they affected the roles of the faculty members. The additional roles noted to arise from changes in students demography has increased the involvement of the faculty members in students' guidance and counseling in different aspects. Tienda (2013) also noted the increased diversity in the students and the need for faculty members to consider their diversity.

From these findings, the study recommends that institutions of higher learning must consider the changes affecting the sector and how they influence the roles played by faculty members in advancing learning. The faculty members need to be assisted in coping with these changes. The institutions require providing necessary infrastructure and tools required for effective operations of the faculty members. For example, in the provision of e-learning and management of virtual classes institutions need to provide relevant assistance and equipment. Besides, the reduced state funding is observed to affect the roles of faculty members adversely since it is limiting service delivery by the members. Therefore, the study recommends that governments need to increase their funding to facilitate leaning in higher learning institutions.

6. CONCLUSION

Faculty members play a critical role in advancing education in the institution of higher learning. Their major roles include teaching, students supervision, research and in leading research teams. The study has identified various changes that are taking place in the institutions of higher learning. The changes identified include advancement in technology, changing students' demographics, changes in state funding and increased number of services offered by faculty members. These changes have influenced the roles of faculty members differently. For example, the increase in services requiring the efforts of faculty members have created new roles such as participation in offering library services such as desk research and library guidance. Changes in students demographic have influenced the roles of faculty members by encouraging them to consider students diversity and offer advisory services to students. Changes in state funding have affected the amount available for research hence influencing the research roles of faculty members. The research did not study on how the impact on these roles differed based on different curriculums. Therefore, there is a gap for further studies on to compare how the changes in institutions of higher learning influence roles of faculty members based on different curriculums.

REFERENCES

- Aljeeran, R, (2016), The role of social-cultural factors in faculty members acceptance of Moodle at GUST. [online] Accessed from <https://etd.obiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1469121024&disposition=inline> [Accessed on January 30, 2017].
- Austin, A.E & Sorcinelli, M.D, (2013), The future of faculty development: where are we going? *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (133), pp. 85-97.
- Barbera, E., & Reimann, P, (2014), *Assessment and evaluation of time factors in online teaching and learning*. Hershey, PA : Information Science Reference, an Imprint of IGI Global.
- Camargo, E, (2015), Beyond boundaries: The future role of faculty. [online] Accessed from <<http://www.beyondboundaries.vt.edu/assets/the-future-role-of-faculty.pdf>> [Accessed on January 29, 2017].
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V, (2013), *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W, (2014), *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Debra, L, (2011), 'Faculty in-service: How to boost academic library services,' *Collaborative Librarianship*, 3(2), pp. 117-122.
- Englehardt, E. E, (2010), *The ethical challenges of academic administration*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Ginsberg, B, (2011), 'The fall of the faculty, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hermanowicz, J. C., (2011), *The American academic profession: Transformation in contemporary higher education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.
- Kane, T.J & Orszag, P. R, (2003), 'Funding restrictions at public universities: Effects and policy implications,' *Brookings Institution Working Paper*. [online] Accessed from <<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20030910.pdf>> [Accessed on February 1, 2017].
- Khan, J. A, (2011), *Research methodology*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation.
- Martin, A, (2014), 'Fifty years after integration: have we overcome?' *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 29 (1), pp. 4-15.
- Poverty, C, (2012), 'University challenge: How higher education can advance social mobility. [online] Accessed from <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/80188/Higher-Education.pdf> [Accessed on January 31, 2017].
- Ramley, J. A, (2014), The changing role of higher education: learning to deal with wicked problems,' *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 18 (3), pp. 17-23.
- Rice, R. E, (2007), 'The academic profession in transition: Toward a new social fiction'. *Teaching Sociology* 14 (1), pp. 12–23.
- Schneider, C.G, (2006), Recognizing and supporting faculty work. [online] accessed from <<http://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/recognizing-and-supporting-faculty-work>> [Accessed on January 28, 2017].
- Tienda, V, (2013), 'Diversity/inclusion: Promoting integration synthesis of recent research,' *Review of Higher Education*, 45 (1), 89-125.
- Umbach, P. (2015), 'Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement.' [online] Accessed from <http://nse.indiana.edu/pdf/research_papers/faculty_do_matter.pdf> [Accessed on January 29, 2017].
- Yin, R. K, (2009), *Case study research: Design and methods*. Los Angeles, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Zusman, A, (2014), Challenges facing higher education in the twenty-first century. [online] Accessed from <<http://engage.nci.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/10/Challenges-Facing-Higher-Ed-in-21st-Century.pdf>> [Accessed on January 28, 2017].

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample of Questions used in the Interview

1. How you noted an increase in the number disciplines in the education sector?
2. Have the services you offer changed in the recent past?
3. What are the changes in high learning funding?
4. How has students demographic changed?
5. How does the high increase in the number of disciplines in the education sector influence your roles?
6. How do the technology advancements your roles as a faculty member?
7. Does the increase in the number of services offered by faculty members influence your roles?
8. Does changes in state funding influence your roles as a faculty member?
9. What are the impacts of the changes in students demographics in higher learning institutions on your roles as a faculty member?