

Challenges Encountered by University Administrators in Performance Management and Job Satisfaction of Academic Staff in Kenyan Universities

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Abstract

Globally, university education is recognised as essential for socio-economic and political societal transformation and Kenya has heavily invested in it. Nevertheless, attaining high levels of academic staff job satisfaction has proved to be challenging for university managements. This paper, therefore, sought to investigate the challenges encountered by the University management in performance management and job satisfaction in Kenyan universities. This study was carried out in chartered universities in Rift Valley Region (RVR) of Kenya. The study targeted 2,773 members of university management and lecturers in the chartered public and private universities with their main campuses in RVR with a sample of 605 participants. Convergent parallel mixed methods design was employed with census, random and systematic sampling used to select the respondents. Purposive sampling was also used to select information-rich cases. Questionnaires, interview and document analysis guides were the main data collection instruments. Data analysis was done by coding and categorizing qualitative data into themes while quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, independent-samples t-test, One-way ANOVA and regression coefficients, with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. It was established that the challenge of insufficient funds was the most crippling for university management. The author, however, recommends that university management should address the emerging challenges relating to limited resources, poor communication and bureaucratic procurement procedures among others as identified in this paper. The results obtained in this paper will add to knowledge base in the Human Resource field. The challenges and solutions presented if taken into consideration by management, will improve job satisfaction among academic staff in universities for better productivity in teaching, research and community service.

Keywords: University administrators, Performance management, Challenges, University management, Job satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

University administrators are finding it necessary to comprehend the changing relationships between institutions and governments and the move to an information equipped society. Consequently, current leaders ought to be trained, new leaders prepared, and students identified who will both lead and study higher education (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2004), for the future.

The rapid expansion of university education has led to many other challenges. According to Republic of Kenya (2006), governance and management, quality assurance, student welfare and discipline, increasing access and equity, staff welfare and discipline,

resource mobilization and financing, and meeting demand for knowledge, relevant skills and competencies, were the challenges of higher education. In addition, United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009) underscored the critical need to deal with emerging challenges relating to gender inequality, brain drain, the lack of graduates' preparedness for the job market and academic freedom.

Since such challenges confront Kenya's universities' management, Jowi (2003) stated that reforms in the management and governance styles of higher education institutions were required. The development of University administrators in terms of

enhancing their management skills in order to deal with these challenges has not been highlighted by the foregoing studies. Moreover, policies which guide university management in their daily work have neither been outlined nor discussed.

As pointed out by Republic of Kenya (2006), the underlying and cross-cutting challenge confronting Kenya's university sector was how to satisfy the demand in the context of meagre resources, competing needs and ever rising graduate unemployment, while concurrently ensuring equity in provision of high quality education. Also, the number of qualified secondary school learners to join university has consistently increased over the last decade and was forecasted to exceed by one hundred thousand by the year 2015, when the effects of Free Primary Education (FPE) would be felt at this level.

In their study, Gudo *et al.* (2011) found that tribalism (ethnicity) was an impediment to equal employment opportunities in Kenya's universities. They found that tribalism and nepotism were the factors which mainly prevented equal opportunities in universities in Kenya. As a result, they interpreted that negative ethnicity and nepotism were obstacles to an objective search for senior university officers and had the adverse potential of denying universities competent human resource for quality management. However, their study did not investigate the relationship of the challenge of negative ethnicity and nepotism to overall academic staff job satisfaction in Kenya's universities.

While examining competencies, roles and effective academic leadership in world class university, Shahmandi *et al.* (2011) identified at least five challenges that globalization has created for universities which may be applicable to Kenya's universities. First, globalization means that education has no boundaries; students can take classes virtually anywhere in the world, in person or online. Second, in a globalized world, competition in the marketplace increases, students as customers have more choices about the kind of institutions they can attend and the type of training they desire. Competition demands universities to think about how to compete or they will either shut down or be obsolete.

The third challenge is the use of relevant technology and how it affects the university. Technology has been a key driver of globalization and will continue to transform teaching, learning and research. Fourth, globalization has weakened the social welfare role of the state and increased the significance of privatization. Virtually all universities have to raise most of their resources from the private sector. Finally, the challenge of universities being more decentralized and decisions made closer to where the action occurs. In a competitive marketplace,

departments and faculties require a strategic plan and need to have a clear criterion about how they judge unit productivity and individual performance.

These studies by Gudo *et al.* (2011) and Shahmandi *et al.* (2011) did not examine the influence of the challenges facing universities on academic staff job satisfaction. This paper thus investigates the management related challenges including their possible solutions and their relationship to lecturers' job satisfaction in chartered universities in Kenya's Rift Valley Region.

Statement of the Problem

University administrators are faced with the challenge of understanding shifting demographics, new technologies and the commercialization of higher education. Limited resources (financial and human) continue to adversely affect quality, equity, efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in governance and management of universities.

As a result, lecturers have to teach increasingly more students from a shrinking resource base, while facing an explosion of new skills and knowledge to be acquired. What is the likely influence of such declining conditions on the ability and readiness of dons to deliver high quality education? Could the spiralling student numbers at Kenya's universities strain lecturers thereby causing job dissatisfaction? Gudo, Oanda and Olel (2011) in their study indicated that inadequate involvement of staff and students in decision-making impacted negatively on quality teaching and learning in public universities and to some extent in private universities. Too (2013) also found that in Kenya's faith-based chartered private universities, lecturers' turnover was due to leadership problem such as lack of proper policy implementation, heavy work load, lack of personal development programmes and compromised terms of contract. This paper thus discusses the challenges encountered by university Administrators in managing performance and Job Satisfaction of academic staff in Kenyan universities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The author utilised mixed methods design, convergent parallel mixed methods in particular, which involved both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Many designs exist in the mixed methods field, but Creswell (2014) focuses on three basic mixed methods designs namely: Convergent parallel mixed methods, explanatory sequential mixed methods and exploratory sequential mixed methods. The study targeted all the Vice Chancellors (VCs), Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVCs), Registrars, Deans, Head of Departments (HoDs) and lecturers in the chartered public and private universities in Rift Valley Region (RVR) of Kenya. The manner in which the university management discharges its

duties and responsibilities will directly affect the lecturers in the context of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction on their jobs. The study targeted 2,773 members of university management and lecturers in the chartered public and private universities with their main campuses in RVR. A sample size of 605 participants was then obtained through purposive sampling which enabled the author to select information-rich participants for the study. The study used three research instruments to collect data: questionnaire, interview guide and document analysis guide. Data analysis was done by coding and categorizing qualitative data into themes while quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, independent-samples t-test, One-way ANOVA and regression coefficients, with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This paper identifies the challenges facing university management and recommends possible solutions to the problems according to the top management of the universities.

Challenges Facing University Management

The challenges facing university administrators were identified in the context of management performance and lecturers' job satisfaction. In the presentation of these findings the data from individual interviews are integrated. The suggestions were also meant to respond to the major concerns raised by the findings. The real identities of the respondents are withheld in conformity with ethical consideration. This guaranteed clear separation of the participants and the data obtained. The study established the prevalence of the following challenges in the universities:

First; ignoring procedures, work etiquette and best management practices by lecturers and their supervisors was established. Qualitative data showed that lecturers are negligent in a number of ways which pose a challenge to the smooth running of the university. With regard to ignoring procedures of the university by academic staff, a Deputy Vice Chancellor pointed out lack of punctuality. He explained that "in a university setting it is a bit difficult to manage lecturers, especially in the area of punctuality. Some think their duty is only to lecture then leave" (DVC3, personal communication, December 10, 2014).

This introduced a related challenge as it meant that lecturers had other engagements and may not have time to attend crucial meetings, be available for consultation with students, or update themselves on new knowledge, which affects quality of learning, as supported by a Registrar who observed that "moonlighting (part-timing) has serious weaknesses. This has affected the quality of teaching. There are some departments whose students have reported poor

teaching because the lecturers are not available for teaching and consultation" (R5, personal communication, January 15, 2015).

Input from a different Registrar emphasized this through the following revelation:

Management-related challenges that influence academic staff job satisfaction in this university include, first of all, part-timing. This strains lecturers which in the long run may affect their health hence escalates the costs of medical services and weakens their delivery due to constantly being on the move. Part-timing could affect the quality of teaching adversely because the lecturers lack sufficient time for planning and preparation which results in shoddy work. Secondly, we do not have adequate lecturers. We have bare minimum. Given our location, we cannot attract senior lecturers (R4, personal communication, December 11, 2014).

Chairpersons of departments were also found to neglect disciplinary procedures concerning absconding of duty by lecturers. Professors' arrogance and insubordination of chairpersons was also established. Reasons given by CoDs' with regard dealing absconding duties was: "the CoDs say they don't want to be seen as bad people. They also say that if they report them [lecturers], they will be sacked. However, it is very difficult to sack someone in a public university due to lengthy procedures" (VC1, personal communication, December 3, 2014). In addition, a Vice Chancellor expressed a challenge management faced as resistance to change by arguing that: "Some academic staff are dogmatic, using old notes and teaching styles. They are resistant to embracing technological changes. Instead of being digital they remain analogue. We must be facilitators while teaching as opposed to being content providers" (VC2, personal communication, December 11, 2014). Power struggles that lead to creation of camps and attempts to out-do one another among the university academic staff, and dependence on gossip and grapevine were also found to be a challenge to management.

However, before the lecturer is judged, management should be scrutinized to establish its contribution to this kind of 'hit and run approach' by lecturers to the university. The study established that management took long before making decisions, there was lack of inspiration and enthusiasm at work, management made decisions without the contribution of lecturers and did not understand reasons for lecturers' behaviour. In addition, management was unable to not only recognise feelings and perspectives of academic staff but also take an active interest in their concerns. Management was neither able to anticipate

staff needs nor meet those needs. Moreover, lecturers did not have a conducive environment as evidenced by lack of work office space; inadequate washrooms; high student enrolment, implying work overload; lack of working tools; lack of an effective medical cover and conversion of warehouses into lecture halls; the lecturers handle large numbers hence have no time for research; lecturers are fatigued and fatigue adversely affects job satisfaction.

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that management is in itself a challenge in running the university in its way of handling the academic staff. The study also established that, according to the lecturers, the dominant management style employed in the university was the benevolent authoritarian style. The study also established that lecturers were not in favour of working under a benevolent authoritarian manager with the reason that lecturers working under them could not enjoy high job satisfaction. These challenges touch on supervision, interpersonal relationships and working environment which leave a lot to be desired and fall under Herzberg's dissatisfiers which affect job satisfaction.

Second, insufficiency of financial resources was found to be a challenge to the university administrators as evidenced by the following illustrations from various interviews: lack of resources to put up structures for offices, laboratories, inadequate teaching and learning materials such as books, lack of funds for research, inadequate medical scheme and shortage of staff. In addition:

Inadequate computers, hence lecturers handwrite their notes and cannot make presentations on power point. This is ineffective and inefficient. We only have one LCD projector for teaching in the whole university! I would have loved to have one LCD in each teaching room. I would love to have lecturers trained on ICT but we cannot due to financial constraints, we cannot afford tuition waiver to academic staff, their spouses and children pursuing studies and we also cannot afford to carry out academic staff capacity building courses" (R5, personal communication, January 15, 2015).

As pointed out by Republic of Kenya (2006), the underlying and cross-cutting challenge confronting Kenya's university sector was how to satisfy the demand in the context of meagre resources, competing needs and ever rising graduate unemployment, while concurrently ensuring equity in provision of high quality education. Also, the number of qualified secondary school learners to join university has consistently increased over the last decade and was forecasted to exceed one hundred thousand by the year 2015, when the effects of Free Primary Education (FPE) would be felt at this level.

Limited resources (financial and human) could adversely affect quality, equity, efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in governance and management of universities. University administrators are faced with shifting demographics, new technologies and the commercialization challenge of higher education. They are also finding it necessary to comprehend the changing relationships between institutions and governments and the move to an information society. Consequently, current leaders ought to be trained, new leaders prepared, and students identified who will both lead and study higher education (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2004).

Third was the challenge of delayed payments and its consequences as explained in the following discussions: One Registrar explained that delayed capitation from the exchequer caused by insufficient finances primarily due to reduced capitation led to delayed payment of full-time and part-time lecturers who then threatened to sue the university (R5, personal communication, January 15, 2015).

Closely related to this is the issue of low student enrolment. According to one Deputy Vice Chancellor, "this led to insufficient finances such that the personnel is not remunerated well, hence high turnover" (DVC 2, personal communication, December 9, 2014). Yet another Deputy Vice Chancellor revealed that, "inadequate resources are a serious challenge. Resources are lacking to put up structures for offices, teaching and laboratories, among others. With adequate facilities, the academic staff can be comfortable. Financial resources are insufficient due to delayed fees payment by students which leads to delayed payment of part-time staff" (DVC1, personal communication, December 8, 2014).

As a result of insufficient funding, the challenge of faculty retention was birthed. According to a Deputy Vice Chancellor, "this has made it difficult to employ qualified and competent academic staff. The funding has been declining over the years, and if it is growing, it is not at the rate of university expansion. In addition, our market share in terms of self-sponsored student programmes has declined due to the existence of many universities in our previous catchment areas. This has reduced our finance base" (DVC4, personal communication, January 15, 2015) In addition another Deputy Vice Chancellor explained that;

With the promulgation of the Universities Act 2012, all universities in Kenya are regulated by CUE. In this regard, funding from the exchequer has been declining. For example, we have been receiving Ksh.37 million which is insufficient to provide all the requisite facilities. A single dental chair

costs one Million Kenya Shillings. How then can we provide quality service without sufficient funding? CUE does not care to understand this. It wants to see facilities in place (DVC5, personal communication, February 2, 2015).

Other challenges that affect staff retention concerned infrastructure. One Registrar expressed this by saying: “[the university is situated in] a rural place and the road leading to the university is not in a good state. This is a major strain due to wear and tear of the vehicles of the lecturers. Also, fatigue due to using public transport means is very common” (R4, personal communication, December 11, 2014). Lastly, one Deputy Vice chancellor revealed that academic staff retention was a challenge, considering the number of universities in Kenya. “Turnover is high. We must provide resources needed to retain academic staff. Attracting qualified staff to take up teaching responsibilities is another challenge. In our university about 25 per cent of our lecturers are PhD holders” (DVC6, personal communication, February 3, 2015). The challenge of the academic staff being on contract and subsequent feelings of job insecurity also featured. The rapid expansion of university education has led to many other challenges. According to Republic of Kenya (2006), governance and management, quality assurance, student welfare and discipline, increasing access and equity, staff welfare and discipline, resource mobilization and financing, and meeting demand for knowledge, relevant skills and competencies, were the challenges of higher education including university education.

As a result of all these delays, inadequacies, frustrations, threats and insecurity, it can be concluded that the challenge caused by insufficient finances, which has the effect of low pay, had given rise to hostile, uncertain and unattractive work environment that qualifies for a dissatisfier, which affects job satisfaction according to Herzberg’s Theory. There is urgent need to address this challenge by concerned stakeholders. Work place environment has a positive relation with job satisfaction and it contributes 16% to job satisfaction. When employees are given favourable and clean environment then their satisfaction level rises (Javed *et al.*, 2014).

Fourth, University Academic Staff Union (UASU) was found to be a challenge for the following reasons: they can call strikes if the university does not meet their demands; strikes can paralyse the operations of the university thereby leading to wastage of time and sometimes resources when damages are caused in the process of agitation; UASU demands are beyond what the university can afford and sometimes it does not want to reason. Many negotiation meetings eat into the university

time and resources that could be utilized to improve the institution; capitation from the exchequer has been dwindling yet the Union wants more remuneration and other packages given to the lecturers; unions want huge salaries which cannot be sustained.

An understanding of what the academic staff expects and demands of its employer is important for the challenge to be clear. One research method for collecting data in this study was from university documents relating to academic staff. One such document was a bargaining agreement between University Academic Staff Union (UASU) (unnamed), University Chapter and the University Council (2010-2012). The issues bargained for were important to this study because they enriched the study by deepening the understanding of staff job satisfaction in real life situations. University management ability to meet these extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, will, to a great extent, guarantee job satisfaction.

The following is a summary of Negotiated Employment Conditions in the Supplementary Collective Bargaining Agreement between Academic Staff Union (UASU) University College Chapter and University College Council (2010-2012).

Permanent and pensionable appointments; basic salary - Professor - 165,000/- Associate Professor - 135,263/-; Senior Lecturer - 105,766/-; Lecturer - 92,954/-; Assistant Lecturer - 77,924/-; Graduate Assistant - 77, 924/-; career progression salary adjustments; job security; promotions and appointments; occupational safety and health; adequate office space, teaching facilities, internet and ICT facilitation; equal opportunities without discrimination; inclusion of HIV and AIDS victims, protection from sexual harassment; Staff Training and Development: sponsorship for higher degrees; participation in local and international conferences; and assistance in research and publications.

In addition, the following were also bargained for: leave entitlements: annual leave; sick leave; maternity leave and time off for breastfeeding (three hours per day for an additional two months after the expiry of the normal maternity leave); paternity leave; compassionate leave; study leave - granted by council on basis of needs of the university; sabbatical leave; unpaid leave; special leaves; public holidays. Benefits included a pension scheme; gratuity; medical scheme; group personal accident cover; and lastly, tuition waiver for dependants.

Moreover, the following allowances were also bargained for: passage and baggage allowances; settling allowance; relocation allowances for academic staff on sabbatical leave; supplemental teaching allowances; academic and professional allowances paid to Full Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers; book and journal allowance; subsistence allowance within Kenya; subsistence allowance outside Kenya; car/commuting allowance; special duty allowance; acting allowance; mileage allowance; leave travelling allowance; hardship allowance; house allowance and hotel allowance.

United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Higher Education (2009) underscored the critical need to deal with emerging challenges relating to gender inequality, brain drain, the lack of graduates' preparedness for the job market and academic freedom.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

According to one of the interviewed Vice chancellors, the following suggestions could help ameliorate the challenges in the university: recruitment of competent/qualified staff and reinforcing them with seminars, workshops, conferences and relevant trainings so as to meet the person's need; to remedy resistance to change, academic staff should be helped to see that change is good, educating, mentoring and that coaching will bring about change; revisiting the core value of the university as well as the mission of the university is critical for embracing the right change; the serious challenge of uncompetitive remuneration package can be handled by setting up an endowment fund and increasing enrolment through aggressive marketing, rolling out marketable programmes and offering quality education/training; to ensure timely start of classes each semester, teaching should commence on opening day even if one student is present; proper time management must be enforced in the institution; management and lecturers should become better friends and shun the perception of them versus us; the lecturers should become better marketers and vision bearers; lecturers should embrace value-based education and take care of the head, hands and heart (VC2, personal communication, December 11, 2014). More specifically, the discussion with a Deputy Vice Chancellor revealed the following concerning solutions to various challenges. Concerning UASU, management was of the opinion that unrealistic demands by UASU be remedied by constant engagement:

We wait for them to give us their proposals after which I call a divisional meeting in which we task each other so as to come up with coordinates within which negotiations should be done. A counter proposal is then

generated and forwarded to the unions to study. After that, a date is fixed for negotiations where we go item by item in order to reach a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)(DVC5, personal communication, February 2, 2015).

Furthermore, "in order to avoid the problems caused by university staff unions, we should facilitate their leadership to undergo some training so as to understand the university operations, government policies and procedures. This will enable them avoid making unrealistic demands" (R4, personal communication, December 11, 2014).

The issue of finance attracted some remedial suggestions as well. According to Registrar R2 (personal communication, December 9, 2014), the university had mobilized other financial resources to pay salaries and part-time lecturers were prioritized every time there was funding to clear the backlog. With regard to remedial actions on finance, the study also established that the matter may be addressed through fundraising and development of fundable research proposals and establishment of Income Generating Units (IGUs). For example, Privately Sponsored Students Programmes (PSSP) would bring in financial stability. About two years ago, PSSP generated Three Billion Kenya Shillings per year. With the stiff competition the amount of money generated has declined to 600 Million Kenya Shillings per year" (DVC5, personal communication, February 2, 2015).

Solutions to creating an enabling environment attracted the following suggestions:

Poor work ethic among staff could be remedied by introducing training programmes for Deans and HoDs. The people skills ought to be inculcated through training of Deans and HoDs to better their administrative skills. In addition, the Administration and Human Resource Division should give priority to academic staff in addressing their issues to reduce stress hence perform their duties well. Whenever they complain that they have no auxiliary staff and/or materials, it should be addressed promptly. On promotion, there should be a deliberate effort to fill all the vacant positions, such as appointment of senior lecturers while giving internal academic staff priority in order to boost their morale (R2, personal communication, December 9, 2014).

Another Registrar gave the following suggestions: "They also need teaching and learning materials such as books, journals and stationary. Lecturers also require the administrative aspects of their work to be

satisfied, for example, timely processing of emoluments for part-time. Moreover, they need proper equipment of the laboratories. The lecture halls should also have ICT equipment that can make the lecturers deliver” (R8, personal communication, February 20, 2015).

Remedies on staff retention were found to be as follows according to one of the Vice Chancellors:

In order to remedy the shortage of lecturers in specialized disciplines, advertising throughout the East African Region in order to attract competent academics is the solution. Doctors and Engineers should be paid non-practising allowances so as to attract them. For the School of Law, 27% of the fees collected remain in the school to determine the hourly rate payment for lecturers. The school has proposed an increment to 30%. In University management should work to match what is paid by University of Nairobi (UoN) in law and medicine (VC1, personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Other solutions suggested include more government funding, ceilings on salary demands by Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC), more understanding by Regulators, more research funds and increase in staff development funds. Lastly, “to remedy the need for part-timers and the shortage of academic staff, we should engage, develop and train our own staff and bond them (R4, personal communication, December 11, 2014).

Ng’ethe *et al.* (2003) observed that staff retention remains a major challenge in most universities in Africa. Ishengoma (2007) disclosed that universities in Tanzania have been experiencing brain drain, a process through which academic staff leave for other sectors of the economy within or outside the country (Bavendum, 2000). Moreover, Bavendum notes that workers with higher job satisfaction levels are convinced that the institution will be satisfying in the long run, care about the quality of their work, are more committed to the institution, have higher retention rates and are more productive. According to Armstrong (2006), job dissatisfaction results in absenteeism and turnover.

In examining major gaps between Human Resource (HR) practice and the scientific research in the area of employee job satisfaction, job satisfaction is regarded as a powerful predictor of intentions or decisions of employees to quit a job (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2002 cited in European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007). It is also a good predictor of overall well-being of individual workers (Diaz-Serrano & Cabral Vieira, 2005 cited in

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that most of the universities that participated in the study did have a number of management challenges outlined as follows: limited research funds and finances for running the universities, inadequate teaching staff which means that there were high learner-lecturer ratios, poor remuneration of lecturers and non-teaching staff, which demotivates lecturers and non-teaching staff, inadequate teaching and learning resources, for instance lecture halls, computers, textbooks and library space due to increased student population admitted in the universities, promotion criteria, ignoring procedures, work etiquette and best management practices by lecturers and their supervisors, delayed payments, and dealing with demands of the University Academic Staff Union (UASU).

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study covered the challenges facing university administrators limiting the responses to only management than academic staff. Focus was only on chartered universities in Rift Valley Region of Kenya. However, since chartered universities in RVR are governed and advised by Commission for University Education (CUE) policies just like the rest of chartered universities in Kenya, it is arguable that findings of this study can be generalised to all universities across the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Besides the proposed possible solutions to the challenges raised in this paper, it is recommended that management should address the emerging challenges relating to limited resources, poor communication, bureaucratic procurement procedures, training and development opportunities, poor working conditions, irregular appraisal, gender inequality, brain drain, and academic freedom.

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