2014 ERI-Net Research on Academic Promotion: Synthesizing Research Findings and Discussing Follow-Up

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Research Questions

1. **Policy context in Asia-Pacific**: How do governments and higher education stakeholders think about the issue of academic promotion?
2. **Criteria for advancement**: What are the structures and criteria for academic promotion in public research-intensive universities?
3. **Procedures**: How are promotion decisions made?
4. **Implications**: What are future implications for policy and academic promotion practices?
I. POLICY CONTEXT
I.1 Policy Context

How do governments and higher education stakeholders think about the issue of academic promotion?

- Case studies present a diverse context yet common challenge with regards to balancing research, teaching, and service.

- In some cases, teaching effectiveness was perceived to be significantly undervalued in the promotion process.
I.II Policy Context

- Academic promotion policies tend to focus on **research productivity** and are sometimes linked to **national and international recognition** such as:
  - publications in “high impact” journals
  - prestigious funding opportunities

- “Some universities offer 0.1 billion won, equivalent of approximately USD 95,000, for a paper published in renowned international journals such as *Science* or *Cell*” (Republic of Korea).
In some higher education systems, part-time faculty have an unequal status facing greater pressure to perform and may not have equal employment rights.
II. STRUCTURE AND CRITERIA
II.1 Structure and Criteria

- Focusing on public research-intensive universities, what are the **structures and criteria for academic promotion**?
  - No standard structure for academic promotion (e.g. associate lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and professor).
  - Increase from strong teaching and learning to strong research and innovation, with increasing seniority.
## II.II Structure and Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/region</th>
<th>Academic hierarchy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>associate lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>assistant professor, associate professor, professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong SAR</td>
<td>assistant professor, associate professor, professor, chair professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>lecturer, senior lecturer (grades 11, 1, and 11/1), associate professor, professor, senior professor</td>
</tr>
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Evaluation criteria reflected an underlying concern for fairness. However, implementation remains a challenge (e.g. burdensome self-reports).

Evaluation criteria include:
- individual performances in research
- teaching and supervision
- contribution to institutional administration
- social actions
III. EVALUATION PROCEDURES
What are the procedures for evaluating and promoting higher education teaching personnel? How are decisions made?

- Largely a merit-based process
- Demand for evidence imposes a heavy workload on applicants seeking promotion.
III.II Evaluation Procedures

- Typical **evaluation procedure** involves self-assessment, input from a Faculty Council, external review, and final approval from institutional leadership.

- Anecdotal evidence that the **right to appeal** promotion decisions is largely in place.

- “**I am okay with the rules and regulations...as long as they are clearly made known and the criteria were applicable to all personnel in the university...**” (Thailand, PL-2, 04/08/2014)
IV. IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION
IV.I Implications

What are the related implications of academic promotion mechanisms on HEIs?

- Growing tension and increased focus on research productivity, sometimes at the expense of teaching and service.
- Academic promotion policies may be unintentionally encouraging short-term research with less risk and greater opportunities to publish.
IV.II Implications

- Pressure to publish may be linked to lower quality research outputs (i.e. **quantity vs. quality**) and an aversion to longer-term or riskier research efforts, which may not lead to immediate publications/research outputs.

- Emphasis on English-language publications and high impact journals may **limit incentives and rewards for domestic research**.

- Impact on **professional development** of teaching personnel.
Hiring adjunct staff appears to be a strategy to **overcome financial strain** and **mass enrolment** at institutional level.

Defining **excellence and relevant criteria for academic promotion** are key policy challenges for the future of higher education in the region...

“There is a lack of systematic measurement of the extent to which **teaching excellence** is included in formal promotion criteria across Malaysian public universities.”
Discussion and Next Steps: Regional Synthesis Report

- Prepared by the ERI-Net Secretariat in consultation with ERI-Net researchers and colleagues at UNESCO field offices and Headquarters
- As one of UNESCO’s technical documents to be disseminated among the Member States in this region and beyond
- Date of finalization: end of December 2014
Thank you for your contributions