

Relationship of Administration and Teachers' Association in the Public Universities of Punjab: Perspectives of Top-Level Administration and Teachers' Elected Representatives on Current Faculty Management Practices

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Abstract

Present study was conducted to find out the nature of relationship between administration and teachers' associations in the public sector universities of Punjab. Vice-chancellors, Registrars, and teachers' elected representatives from ten universities were taken as sample of study. The technique of interview was used as the diagnostic tool. The main objectives were to study the nature of relationship of university administration and respective teachers' association; to analyze the opinions and beliefs of top-level administrators about teachers' associations; and to explore the teachers' elected representatives opinions and concerns about teachers' problems in universities. The data were organized for qualitative analysis. Synthesized descriptions were used to organize, summarize, and interpret the information. It was concluded that teachers' associations were more actively working in old universities than in new universities and they claimed to have solved many problems of teachers and were of the opinion that they were assisting and cooperating with the universities' administration in managing the welfare of teaching community. However, some universities' administrators condemned their conflicting role and said that they work for personal benefits and create problems for their universities. New universities' administrations were mostly very happy on not having such associations.

Introduction

Human relations can be defined as the ways people treat each another. This treatment may take place in a social or a work situation (Lewis, 1983). Good human relations in professional settings characterize fair and consistent treatment to all employees enabling them to be committed to the organization. Organizations with good employee relations are likely to have HR strategy that places a high value on employee as stakeholders.

New ideas, outstanding services, and timely decisions are important but human resources are critical among all these. Many conflicting situations arise in handling human resources at work place. Such a situation demands cautious agreement between or among the conflicting parties. Noe et al. (2007) defined collective bargaining as “negotiation between union representatives and management representatives to arrive at a contract defining conditions of employment for the term of the contract and to administer that contract” (pp: 563). The first faculty union in institutions of higher education was organized at two community colleges in Michigan in 1965 (Cameron, 1982) and collective bargaining in American four year colleges and universities escalated throughout the 1970s (Jackson and Clark, 1987). Cameron (1982) described that these ten years produced enormous growth in faculty unionism, and by the beginning of 1980 approximately one fifth of the colleges and universities were unionized representing between 25 percent and 30 percent of all full time faculty. Harrison and Tabory (1980) pointed out that the emergence of unionism and especially the adoption of trade union tactics by professional groups have some times viewed as indication of the erosion of professional orientations. They further described research based results showing negative association between professionalism and unionization among academics and other professional groups and to the tendency of professional unions to avoid strikes and other forms of militancy. Union militancy can be expected to increase as the occupation undergoes greater bureaucratization, in consequence, its professional ideology become weakened. However, the failure to adopt such tactics may lead to decline in economic position of the profession, which will ultimately affect the quality of professional work and the ability of the field to attract a new generation of university scholars. Jackson and Clark (1987) found that collective bargaining has been more effective in public institutions than in private institutions. They also found that differences in the missions of institutions, the institutions’ ability to pay, and regional values had significant effects on faculty remuneration. They further concluded that faculty power, as represented exclusively by a union was enhanced and they were able to influence the level of resources allocated for their remuneration. The results of another study show that on the average unionized institutions are found to be less effective than non-unionized institutions on eight of nine dimensions of effectiveness. In comparing the institutions with old unions with institutions with new unions, it was discovered that effectiveness on dimensions related to morale is low at the time of unionization but seems to improve thereafter. Effectiveness declines on academic dimensions after unionization. Effectiveness on the ability to acquire resources dimension seems to improve after unionization (Cameron, 1982).

According to Mathis and Jackson (2004) employees are major source of performance, problems, growth, resistance, and lawsuits. He further pointed out that humans are necessary, varied and sometimes problematic resource that most organizations must use to a greater or lesser degree. Designing systems to effectively manage people with their needs, expectations, quirks, legal rights, and high potential is a big challenge. So it is necessary to develop good human relations to regulate the work. Lewis (1983) discussed two aspects of human relations, social and work:

- a. Social relationships are contracts with people outside the working environment.

- b. Work relationships are those involving contracts with people in the working environment. People fail on the job daily because they can't deal satisfactorily with its social and human conditions. Many people who get fired from a job are, no doubt, fired because they can't get along with others.

The relationship between staff association and administration includes the negotiation on administrative and academic matters concerning pay, working hours, and other terms and conditions of employment. This process is called collective bargaining. Some examples of collective bargaining can be seen in the reports of American Federation of Teachers (AFT). According to report on "empowerment & voice" (2006), AFT is the largest union of college faculty and professional staff in American higher education. AFT higher education affiliates have some of the longest-standing and most sophisticated collective bargaining contracts for professional staff at universities and colleges. Some issues faced by teaching faculty were reported in AFT's reports. AFT in its report "Recognition and respect" (2004) and "Fairness and equity" (2002) mentioned an issue about graduate teaching and research assistants who are not considered as employees in universities and are largely contingent, underpaid, and professionally marginalized. Another recognized issue was overuse and exploitation of part-time/adjunct faculty. Other reports "Professionals and colleagues" (2005) and "The growth of full time non tenure-track faculty" (2003) highlighted the current scenario on hiring the full time non tenure-track faculty in place of full time tenure-track faculty. This two tier system has created one group with relatively good salaries and benefits, and another group of faculty that is paid less, has fewer benefits, less or no job security, and little institutional voice. AFT is working to settle such issues and improve working conditions, benefits and wages for faculty members to cure the addiction of administrators to this form of cheap labor.

According to George and Cole (1992) whenever people come together, politics will occur, as individuals jostle for their place in the pecking order, for influence and respect. It may be useful to think politics as a game to be played in order to gain the influence one need to make the best contribution one can to the organization. Moorhead & Griffin (2001: p, 601) define organizational politics as activities carried out by people to acquire, enhance and use power and other resources to obtain their desired outcomes.

In Pakistan, there is one well recognized teachers association at national level "Federation of all Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association" (FAPUASA). This teachers' federation is trying to work for the improvement of working conditions, benefits and salaries in all the public universities of Pakistan. They try to solve teachers' problems by negotiating with the concerned authorities.

Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted to examine the nature of relationship between administration and teachers' associations in the public universities of Punjab.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Analyze the opinion and beliefs of top-level administrators about teachers' associations
2. Study the liaison between university administration and respective teachers' association.
3. Analyze the teachers' elected representatives' opinions and concerns about teacher's problems and the role of association in solving such problems in universities.

Research Methodology

The nature of the research study was qualitative and interviews with three categories of subjects were conducted from each university. They include, Vice Chancellor, Registrar, and elected president of teachers' association. As to the process of conducting the interviews, first the relevant concepts were identified from the literature in order to focus the interviews on the important issues. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these authorities. The responses of the interviewees were tape recorded and later on transcribed on the same day the interviews were conducted while observations and information were fresh in the researcher's memory. The transcribed interviews were read and the essential issues reported were annotated.

Letters were written to the universities to seek interviews with the authorities but only one university responded and that was a refusal too. One of the researchers, then, visited all universities to request them for appointment for interview. Some universities facilitate by giving time within two days (In two cases, they arranged the interview on the same day). For attaining optimum level of response rate, several visits to each university were made. In some universities the attitude of authorities was very discouraging towards research. One of the universities flatly refused to give time for interviews. The report on interviews with authorities is provided in table 1:

Table 1: Interview Status Report

S/n	University Name	Vice chancellor	Registrar	Teachers' association
1.	University of the Punjab, Lahore.	done	Done	done
2.	University of Engineering & Technology, Lahore	done	Done	done
3.	Lahore College university, Lahore	Didn't allow	Done	Does not exist
4.	Government College	Didn't	Didn't	Does not

	university, Lahore.	allow	allow	exist
5.	University of Engineering & Technology, Texila.	done	Done	done
6.	Fatima Jinnah university, Rawalpindi.	done	Done	Does not exist
7.	Arid Agriculture university, Rawalpindi.	done	Done	Does not exist
8.	Agricultural university, Faisalabad.	done	Done	done
9.	Islamia University, Bahawalpur.	done	Done	done
10.	Bahauddin Zakria university, Multan.	done	Done	done
Total response rate		08/ 10= 80%	09/ 10= 90%	06/ 06= 100%

Criteria for Classification of Universities and Sample Selection

The universities were divided into two groups for comparison e.g.

1. Old universities
2. New universities

For the purpose of this research, the universities having more than 25 years of their establishment in 2005 were classified as “old universities”.

Table 2: Universities Included in the Sample

Type	Name of the University	Year of Establishment
Old Universities	University of the Punjab, Lahore	(1882)
	University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore	(1961)
	University of Agriculture, Faisalabad	(1961)
	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.	(1975)
	Islamia University, Bahawalpur	(1975)
New	University of Engineering and Technology, Taxila	(1993)

Universities		
	University of Arid Agriculture, Rawalpindi	(1995)
	Govt. College University, Lahore	(1997)
	Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi	(1998)
	Lahore college for women university, Lahore	(1999)

Sources: (Higher Education Commission, 2007; prospectuses of various universities, 2005-06; Universities of Pakistan, n.d.; a telephonic survey, 2005).

Other public sector universities in Punjab have been established in 1993 or afterwards but for the purpose of this study, the universities which completed less than five years in 2005, were excluded because they might not have established HR practices. Consequently five universities were labeled as “new universities” and were included in the study. In this way total ten (10) universities (five old and five new) were taken for the research study.

Narrations from the Interviews Regarding Relationship of Administration with Teachers’ Association

Information on relationship of administration and teachers association was collected through interviews of Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, and Presidents of teachers’ association. Teachers’ association was present in six out of the ten universities (five old universities and only one new university)

Vice-Chancellors Reflections

Vice-Chancellors of old and new universities were asked if political activities of teachers’ elected members are affecting the university working conditions, three of them said that there is no political association in the university. While others responded that they are effecting positively. However, two of them stated that generally their activities were positive but sometimes they behave negatively too. One of the new universities Vice-Chancellor responded about the teachers’ associations in these words:

“Thank God, there are no political activities of teachers in this university. There is an Association but that is not political they are concerned only with their academic problems or personal problems of teachers.”

When VCs were asked about their views about teachers' associations, two of them said that they create problems yet four VCs said that teachers are involved in politics but it has no effect on academic activities and that teachers' associations/ unions have important role in universities. Two of the VCs stated that they have no such association in the university. Here are three narrations which encapsulate some important view points, taken from their interviews:

"Apparently they [representatives of teachers' association] are not working actively. We reject such elements in new inductions but those who have been selected in 1980s and 1990s are associated with political associations we can not change them. They create problems." (Old University)

"They [representatives of teachers' association] cause problems. Sometimes they get benefits on the cost of other staff. I think without academic association university can run better." (New University)

"My views are democratic. The teacher union/ association play an important role for teacher community. They are involved in political activities but I don't think, it has any effect on their academic activities." (Old University)

Registrars' Reflections

Registrars were also inquired about the effects of teachers' associations on teachers' activities. Four of the universities have no such association while six out of the nine said that there are no such problems and no effect was reported by them. One of the old universities Registrar reflected on this matter in the following words:

"That's true but this is subjective, some times teachers' elected members on forum have good relations with management. They contribute as much as they can, however, other aspects should not be ignored. In past, we have political activities at campus that influence the university environment negatively but now things are changing."

They further commented about teachers' association and a new university Registrar strongly rejected the idea of having a teacher association. This university has no such association. His views are given in his own words:

"It is a matter of importance; sometimes things get very much politicized. They [teacher association] don't go for all development of teachers rather they go for personal things and benefits. I don't like associations much. They are threat for you. If you want to make system compatible you have to determine what are the merits and demerits then I think you don't need political associations because everything is already there. Of course human nature is there if it is five or ten

percent involved in personal benefits, then its ok, but if it is 95% involved, then it is a disaster.”

Another Registrar from an old university positively responded and talked about the importance of having teachers’ association in these words:

“There must be teachers’ union/association to have positive criticism so that the University may have their positive points for the development.”

Reflections of President of Teachers’ Association

When Presidents of teachers’ associations were asked about the goals of association, on the whole, three important goals of teachers’ association were highlighted i.e. improvement of academic activities, negotiation on teachers’ problems with administration, and to work for the welfare of teaching community. Response percentage is given below in figure:

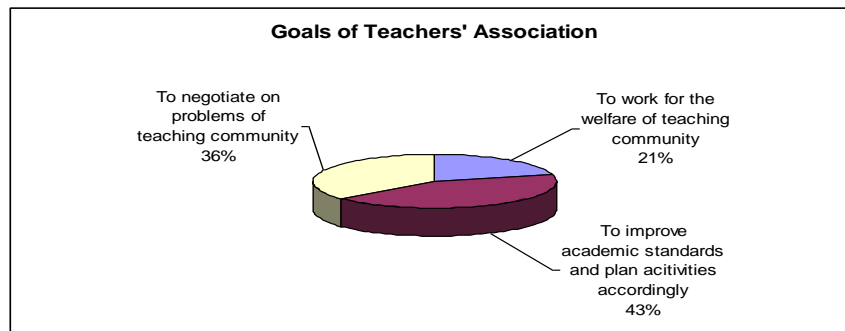


Figure 1: Goals of Teachers’ Association

Goals of teachers’ association described by the elected Presidents of two old universities are narrated here:

“To promote social, cultural and educational activities for the welfare of the members to safeguard their interests and to undertake such other activities as may be determined by the association to achieve its objects”

“.....Our goal is to take the issues of teaching community and discuss them with administration to solve. We are for the welfare of teachers and improvement of academic standards in university. In welfare of teachers we address individual problems and collective problems i.e. increase in pay, allowances etc.”

All the presidents of teachers’ association further emphasize the need of teachers’ association to solve teachers’ problems and facilitate academic process. One example from an old university is illustrated here for reference:

“There are more than 400 teachers in university. They cannot discuss their problems individually with administration. We work as a bridge between teachers and administrators and help in saving their time. We collect points on daily bases or weekly bases and discuss with concerning body i.e. Vice-Chancellor and Registrar etc. Mostly our fair demands which are according to rules and regulations are accepted. Sometimes these are rejected as well. There is a need of such a teachers’ association, which can discuss the teachers’ academic and other problems with administration and defend there rights.”

Four challenges and problems were identified by the Presidents of teachers’ associations i.e. opportunities for advancement (37%), other financial and non-financial benefits and facilities (27%), unfair practices (18%) and contradictory policies of HEC (18%).

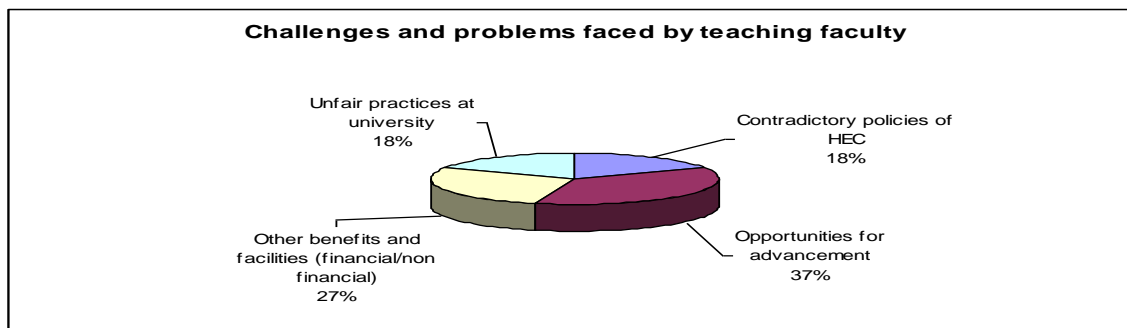


Figure 2: Challenges and Problems Faced By Teaching Faculty

One of the Presidents of teachers’ association from an old university described the main challenges faced by the teaching community as follows:

“The greatest problems for new teachers are their accommodation and opportunities for higher qualification. Pay is not sufficient to meet the needs....”

Another example from an old university about the main challenges is about unfair practices:

Main problems are unfair appointments, promotions, house allotments, house repairs. Pressure groups are there which certainly take their toll.

Two more illustrations further throw some light on challenges and problems faced by the teaching community:

“Our main challenge or problem is contradiction in Higher Education Commission’s policies which are made without taking consent of teachers. They took decisions which effect teachers’ working conditions. They must consult teachers before formulating policies.” (Old University)

“We have to survive in 21st century. Our focus is on the product which will come out from this university. Not education but quality education is needed..... How teachers will update themselves in present scenario... HEC wants to implement its new policies immediately but transition should be gradual. People who are working for last 25 years, they were excellent at that time criteria. Now we are comparing them against 2007 criteria which are wrong. This is a great problem. You can’t cover 50 years gap in 5 years....” (New University)

Three main issues were identified that negatively impact teacher relations by the elected presidents of teachers’ association. The most commonly recognized issue was the conflict among junior and senior teachers followed by the complaints of misuse of authority by the administration. Grouping among teachers on various issues was the third important issue that has a negative impact on teachers’ relations.

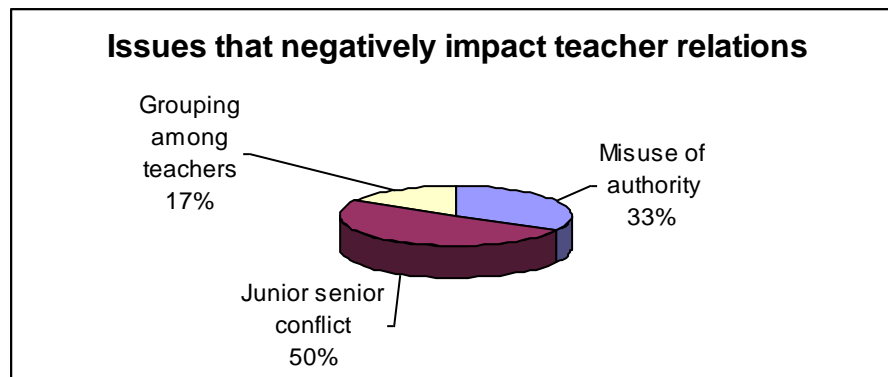


Figure 3: Issues That Negatively Impact Teacher Relation

Following narrative statements taken from the interviews of elected presidents of teachers’ association of three old universities are clearly indicating the issues which have negative impact.

“There should be no concept of junior or senior in teachers’ community. Newcomers are not included in decision making and statutory bodies. In this way, we can not prepare good teachers and future leadership. Formally there is a representation in board of studies, but it should be broader....Another problem is the conflict between senior and juniors.... When a junior becomes superior to a senior, it creates conflict. I think teachers should be promoted according to their seniority, unless extraordinary qualification is there.....Within teachers in department, there are rivalries regarding promotions. If seniority is maintained then relations can be better. Promotions should be according to the sequence.

“Yes! Negative thinking of administrators is a big problem. Inexperienced administrators create problems and corruption of administration is also need to be handled in proper way. In-experienced administrator comes from outside the

university. Corrupt people are appointed by VC. Reporting environment [purposefully passing along information to higher authorities, positively or negatively] is also creating difficulties.”

“.....There is contradiction in policies. New professors who are meeting the criteria want to have those rewards which are given to seniors but they are not getting, that brings dissatisfaction.”

The presidents of teachers’ association in different universities were asked about their way to settle issues and resolve conflicts among teachers. All of them said that they resolve all conflicts through negotiations.

“We make personal meetings, discuss, and negotiate with teachers and concerned authorities to eliminate or resolve the causes of conflict. For example some times we have one seat in department but three people are qualifying. Then we try to make it possible to advertise three seats in place of one seat.”

When they were questioned about their contribution in the selection of teachers, five of six the presidents, responded negatively. Only one of them among old universities responded affirmatively and said:

“Of course yes, we do contribute in the selections of teachers. Even though I should not but being member of association, if we see discrimination, then we fully interfere in the selection process to make it merit based. For example, there are two people eligible for one seat. Vice Chancellor says I can only select on one seat then as president of teachers’ association, I request him to announce another seat.”

Further, four out of the six presidents were not satisfied with the working conditions and environment of universities. Following statements encapsulates a number of factors creating dissatisfaction among teaching community:

“Cast system, and political affiliations are so deep rooted that it becomes difficult to avoid and some time these are so biased and force [administration] for unrealistic decisions which badly effect the university environment.”

“We have worked here in very difficult circumstances. Students groups were armed and clashes were there. Even many murdered. Student teacher clashes were there but now days working conditions are better, peaceful student and teachers have good relations.....Salaries of teachers are low as compared to engineers working in field. Now people are adopting tenure track system for better pay package. But there is still a lot to improve the academic conditions. Provision of equipment, demand of Ph.D. teachers is there. Demand from HEC to improve qualification is creating many problems... Teachers are kept on contact for

two years. HEC’s policy to appoint teachers on contract created dissatisfaction among teachers.”

General grievances of teachers regarding job and working conditions were mostly about HEC policies for promotion to next grade followed by problems due to political affiliations and biased attitude of authorities. Response percentages were 59%, 27%, and 14% respectively.

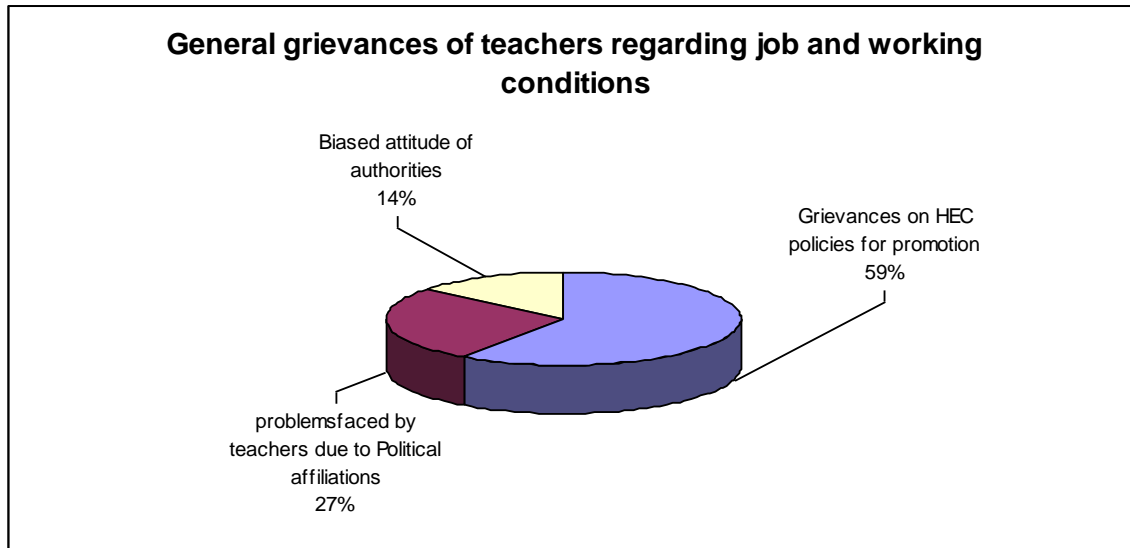


Figure 4: General Grievances of Teachers Regarding Job and Working Conditions

Following descriptions shows the general grievances those teachers of old universities generally discuss with teacher associations’ president.

“...If there are grievances, director can make reformations. He should be impartial... It’s all due to the style of head whether he wants to divide teachers or unite them. Institutions fail when managers fail. If people are not working it should be searched what is the reason. Try to eliminate the cause of conflicts. Overall it’s the responsibility of head.”

“Timely promotions are not given. HEC criterion for promotion has upset teachers....Now teachers who are above 50 years they are asked to do Ph.D. They are worried. Senior professors met old time criteria of HEC.... Now juniors got higher grades but seniors don’t. There is no set policy here”

“There are many teachers who are eligible to get promotion. They have more than 10-20 years of service but still working in lower grades. Delayed promotion is creating dissatisfaction among teachers. Threats are also there, people are called and then being threatened by authorities. Some times teachers are also

discriminated on the basis of political affiliations. We take care such things, and negotiate on such matter with the authorities.”

Teachers’ association negotiates on all type of problems with the administration for example academic & administrative matters, and provision of facilities for teachers etc.

“We solve all types of problems regarding Seats, facilities, promotions, residential accommodations, implementations of rules, or resistance against some rule from teachers, problem in admission etc”

“Any of the staff members can come to share his feeling and we are supposed to help him in consultation with the administration. Mostly problems like teachers on contract, regular teacher have problem with chairman. Such problems are tackled through negotiations. Some time, we succeed and earn good name but if failed then otherwise. We try to address problems but the success depends on condition of the problems. For example, during promotion interviews some has to be dropped, since all can not succeed. We try to convince the administration to advertise more posts if available but sometime we can not do so which make the situation little tense.”

Presidents of teachers’ association in universities were asked about the how they tackle the situation if there are complaints against any elected member for misusing of authority. Only two out of six presidents agreed that such a situation occur and they handle the situation carefully:

“Yes it happens; to represent teachers is the most difficult job. All the respect and dignity we have is due to the votes of teachers if they are not satisfied, they immediately complain and they don’t select him next time. We have to sacrifice if there is some complaints against any of our representative I take back the assignment from him....I try to present role model, neither had I taken any benefit nor my members. We strive for common cause.”

Further one of the old universities presidents emphasized the need for collaborative efforts by the teachers’ associations in all the universities in these words:

“HEC is involved in all matters of university and due to this involvement the autonomy of university is affected. New universities can’t resist. Therefore it is needed to work collaboratively.”

Positive thinking was another important feature that was suggested by a new university elected president of teachers’ association:

“They [Associations] should think positively, believe on coordination, discussion and should avoid coercion with administration. Table talk is the solution of

problems. Faculty development should be priority than other demands. We always talk about “I” we never talk about “we” the last most important word should be “I” but there is no training in such matters.....”

Discussion

Most of the Vice-Chancellors and Registrars said that teachers’ associations are supporting academic activities. However, few of them considered these associations as a threat but generally positive views were expressed by majority of VCs and Registrars. Some strong views were expressed on having teachers’ associations for example these associations were considered as problem and threats for administration and some universities’ VCs were satisfied over not having these associations in their universities. Whereas, some of them said that these associations’ are required for having criticism on management practices. The president of teachers’ association described three goals of association that include improvement of academic activities, negotiation on teachers’ problems with administration and work for the welfare of teaching community. They think that teachers’ associations are necessary to solve teachers’ problems and facilitate academic process. They further identified four challenges faced by the universities i.e. less opportunities for advancement, lack of financial and non financial benefits and facilities, unfair practices and contradictory policies of HEC. For example one President of teachers’ association said that “HEC wants to implement new policies immediately but transition should be gradual. People working for last 25 years were excellent at that time criteria. Now we are comparing them against 2007 criteria, which is wrong. You can’t cover fifty years gap in five years”. Teachers’ associations were negotiating on all these issues with the concerned authorities on behalf of teachers. The other issues that negatively effect teachers’ relations were conflict among junior and senior teachers, misuse of authority, non academic administrators and grouping among teachers on various issues for example, rivalries regarding promotion. The president of teachers’ association of one university suggested that teachers should be promoted according to their seniority to minimize their mutual clashes. In my opinion, seniority as a criterion for promotion will slow down the process of professional development. Teachers will be having no motive to strive for advance studies and trainings. Consequently, this will impede the quality of teaching and learning.

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