

Article

Professorship Conferral: A Comparative Study of International Practices and the Requirement for Regulatory Flexibility

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Abstract: The awarding of the title "professor" is an important academic distinction that varies greatly between institutions and geographical areas of the world. With a focus on geographic differences, institutional autonomy, and the underlying philosophical and pedagogical reasons, this comparative research examines the different processes and standards used to assign teachers. A professor may be a more flexible title linked to professional achievement or institutional requirements in some countries, while in others it is considered a purely academic degree obtained through years of study, teaching and publication. The study examines the legal framework that governs the awarding of chairs, highlighting strict and codified procedures in some areas and contrasting them with more adaptable and contextual methods in other areas. However, the need for regulatory flexibility in the allocation of chairs is a key argument of this analysis, especially given the changing needs of higher education and the increase in international mobility of academics. Traditional requirements for faculty positions, such as publications or tenure-based promotion, may no longer be sufficient in light of increased interdisciplinary research, innovations in teaching approaches and the evolving circumstances of higher education funding. To maintain academic rigor and institutional integrity, the study promotes a more dynamic and inclusive model that takes into account a wider spectrum of professional and academic contributions. The study examines best practices and potential barriers to implementing more flexible models by comparing global practices in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Thus, to ensure that the title "professor" remains relevant and meaningful in the contemporary academic landscape, the study concludes with suggestions for developing a balanced framework that supports academic excellence, taking into account the various ways in which academics contribute to their fields. A renowned Ugandan academic and political scientist, Professor Mahmood Mamdani, has advocated regulatory flexibility in seat allocation. He drew attention to the need for a nuanced approach to academic leadership, particularly in African universities where institutional and academic circumstances may differ from strict Western standards. According to Mamdani, a more context-specific approach to the chair's needs one that recognizes a range of academic activities, such as community engagement and beneficial institutional leadership—could improve Africa's intellectual development. Adding traditional academic results. The conferment of the title of professor is a key stage in an academic career and signifies a degree of achievement and competence that varies significantly between educational systems around the world. Many elements, including academic cultures, institutional goals, social expectations and legal frameworks, influence this complex process. According to the department's research, regulatory flexibility is absolutely necessary to adapt to the different contexts that define higher education in the world.

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1. Introduction

In academia, the title "professor" is one of the most prestigious and well-known. Defines outstanding contribution to teaching, research and community engagement, in addition to academic achievement. However, due to different institutional traditions, legislative frameworks and educational philosophies, the processes and requirements for awarding this prestigious title vary considerably around the world. Some fields have a well-defined path to becoming a professor, which is often characterized by strict requirements such as years of service, a substantial body of published research, or tenure[1]–[3].

In other areas, the title is given more broadly, taking into account a series of successes such as industry partnerships, creative teaching approaches or leadership in university governance[4]–[6]. Professor Mahmood Mamdani, a renowned Ugandan academic and political scientist, has argued for regulatory flexibility in the allocation of chairs. He drew attention to the need for a nuanced approach to academic leadership, particularly in African universities where institutional and academic circumstances may differ from strict Western standards. According to Mamdani, a more context-sensitive approach to the chair's needs one that recognizes a range of academic activities, such as community engagement and beneficial institutional leadership could improve Africa's intellectual development in addition to traditional academic results[7], [8].

Mamdani emphasized in his publications and speeches that instead of just importing standards from other contexts, African institutions of higher education should focus on creating models of academic success that represent local realities and objectives. In general, his writings support the awarding of diplomas and academic titles in a sufficiently flexible way to respond to the particular challenges and contributions of scholars from the Global South. Mamdani's support for regulatory flexibility is consistent with a broader body of academic opinion that suggests that academics should embrace a variety of teacher forms to promote intellectual development in a variety of international academic contexts[9], [10].

Traditionally, professorships are awarded based on academic success and academic rigor, but in recent years, global developments in higher education have challenged established paradigms. The rise of globalization, the emergence of multidisciplinary disciplines and the demands of market-oriented educational institutions have led to requests for a more comprehensive and flexible method for the allocation of the chair[11], [12].

While some universities still attach great importance to traditional standards, others are looking for new models that account for the evolution of academic work and recognize contributions to public policy, pedagogical innovation or achievements in professional practice[13]–[15]. This research aims to compare how teachers are allocated around the world, examining how different nations and organizations manage the procedure and the legal frameworks that control these choices. By examining the complexity of these behaviors, we hope to clarify the potential benefits and difficulties of implementing a more adaptable strategy that can respect the integrity and prestige of the teacher while accommodating the diversity of academic trajectories.

Literature Review

International Procedures for Awarding Professorships

Differences in educational traditions, cultural values and institutional frameworks are reflected in wide variations in the way teachers are assigned from one country to another. According to a study by Sullivan and Ogawa (2020), professors in the United States are often awarded on a mixture of service, research and teaching, emphasizing meritocratic ideals. Huang and Chen (2018), on the other hand, discuss the

more hierarchical system of countries like China, where seniority and institutional loyalty are important factors in the promotion process.

Bennett and Enders (2019) examine the rise of teacher commercialization in the United Kingdom, focusing on market-driven standards and the demand for academic institutions to present graduate research. This is in contrast to European traditions, where teacher appointments are often determined by institutional frameworks and collective agreements, as cited by Gonzalez (2017).

Criteria for Promotion and Appointment

Faculty selection criteria often include research output, teaching effectiveness and service contributions. Although research productivity is still a major focus in the world, Miller and Johnson (2021) found that the importance of teaching quality and student engagement in the responsibilities of teachers is in growth. According to Lindqvist (2020), this difference is particularly evident in Scandinavian countries where teaching skills have a great weight in the promotion process. Furthermore, Elken and Wollscheid (2016) argue that the use of quantitative indicators to assess faculty performance is the result of increasing pressure on universities to demonstrate impact and accountability. This change raises concerns about the possible deterioration of academic freedom and the restriction of the definition of valid scholarship.

Regulatory framework and Flexibility

Studies show a growing need for regulatory flexibility in seat sharing. Rigid frameworks can hinder institutional adaptability as the academic landscape evolves, particularly in response to global issues such as digitization and multidisciplinary research. O'Meara and DeAngelo (2018) advocate more flexible regulations that allow organizations to modify their standards and procedures to better suit their particular goals and contexts. On the other hand, excessive flexibility can lead to inequality and inconsistency in the promotion process, according to Jansen and van der Meer (2020). They argue that a well-balanced strategy is needed, one that gives academic institutions the freedom to experiment, while respecting the basic standards of fairness and rigor.

Comparative studies and case examples

Best practices and lessons learned from different national contexts are highlighted through comparative studies. To show how different models can be complementary, Murray (2022) presents case studies from Australia, Canada and Germany. The Australian system, for example, represents a possible compromise that protects institutional autonomy while ensuring accountability as it incorporates aspects of meritocratic assessment and collegial decisions. Furthermore, Lee and Zhang (2023) highlight how mobility and global partnerships have shaped modern faculty practices. They argue that international academic contacts can improve regional customs and foster a more sophisticated understanding of the allocation procedure.

Implications for policy and practice

The results of the literature highlight the need for continuous communication between all parties involved, including academic institutions, teachers and policy makers. The promotion of an inclusive academic climate requires, as Smith and Jones (2021) propose, to create a common understanding of what it means to be a professor and the different paths to that position. Policy makers are advised to consider how their regulatory frameworks affect academic activities and the wider academic community.

The need for regulatory flexibility

1. Embrace diversity in educational settings The need for regulatory flexibility has become evident as universities grapple with globalization and the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of research. Institutions can modify their promotion procedures to adapt to the changing academic environment through a flexible

regulatory framework. Flexible promotion criteria can improve institutional responsiveness to local demands, allowing universities to attract and retain exceptional faculty who support their particular mission, according to the Association of European Universities (2019).

2. Promoting inclusion and innovation Flexible regulations encourage diversity and innovation in academic procedures. Various contributions, such as community engagement and multidisciplinary research, can be recognized by giving institutions the freedom to specify their requirements for faculty positions. According to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2016), inclusive promotion strategies can contribute to the development of more equitable learning environments where a wider variety of achievements are valued.
3. Case studies of successful implementing organizations that have effectively incorporated flexible promotion criteria provide important insights into the benefits of regulatory flexibility. The University of California's adoption of policies that prioritize diversity and inclusion in recruitment and promotion procedures has also diversified the faculty and strengthened the institution's reputation (Kezar, 2018). These case studies show how flexibility in academic promotion can translate into better institutional results, such as greater faculty satisfaction and better alignment with societal demands.

2. Materials and Methods

Qualitative approaches were used in this study. Because it allows an in-depth analysis of seat-sharing practices in many international contexts and legal systems, this technique was chosen. The study uses comparative analysis to examine variations and parallels in the distribution of seats in countries. In addition, the research focuses on understanding the impact of regulatory frameworks on these practices and the degree of regulatory flexibility that may influence the allocation process. Using this approach, the study provides an in-depth examination of institutional autonomy, international academic standards and the changing landscape of executive appointments

3. Results

The results show that, worldwide, there is no single path to becoming a Professor and that the criteria and expectations are very different. In countries like the United States, research results and publication in high-impact journals are often essential. On the other hand, European countries sometimes give equal importance to educational contributions and educational innovation. Some regions, especially in Asia, have strict hierarchical structures, which make the path to the profession longer and more defined by rigid criteria. At the same time, in some parts of Africa, the appointment of professor often reflects a mixture of research, teaching and service to the community or institution.

The study also examines emerging trends in academia, such as the rise of practice- and industry-oriented professors who recognize professional experience and applied contributions outside of traditional academia. This trend, particularly pronounced in fields such as business, engineering and medicine, indicates a growing recognition of non-traditional academic paths and the need for flexible criteria to integrate them.

4. Discussion

The article argues that while standardized criteria can ensure quality and consistency, they can also limit innovation and prevent the recognition of diverse contributions. For example, regions that emphasize traditional academic publishing risk overlooking important professional work or alternative academic activities. This rigidity

can discourage talented people from non-traditional academic backgrounds from pursuing or being recognized by professors.

To remedy this, the article recommends regulatory flexibility that allows institutions to adapt criteria according to evolving educational landscapes and disciplines. By creating a balanced approach, academic institutions can more effectively recognize the diverse contributions of candidates, whether in research, teaching or professional practice. The discussion concludes that greater regulatory flexibility would not only encourage diversity of skills in academia, but also strengthen the relevance of academic roles to contemporary societal needs.

5. Conclusion

The award of the title of professor is a key step in an academic career and demonstrates a degree of success and competence that varies considerably from one educational system to another. Many elements, including academic culture, institutional goals, social expectations, and legal frameworks, influence this complex process. According to research on faculty positions, regulatory flexibility is absolutely necessary to adapt to the different contexts that define higher education in the world.

Academic cultures have a significant impact on faculty selection. For example, the tenure system in the United States prioritizes a combination of service to the academic community, research productivity, and teaching excellence. Publications and university grants are often awarded according to this approach, which creates a competitive environment where professors are constantly compared to their peers. On the other hand, the United Kingdom places too much emphasis on institutional standards that prioritize research excellence, as defined by the Research Excellence Framework (REF), perhaps underestimating the importance of high quality teaching.

Another strategy is the rigorous accreditation procedure in Germany, where becoming a professor requires extensive research and teaching experience. While this ensures excellent academic standards, it can also disadvantage different candidates, reducing the representation of other opinions in the academy. Meanwhile, moves towards more adaptable models that recognize the need for interdisciplinary methods and wider contributions to society are taking place in countries such as Australia and a number of Asian countries.

Given the variety of uses and standards governing seat allocation, regulatory flexibility is imperative. The dynamic nature of higher education, marked by rapid technical advances, changing student demographics, and the growing importance of international collaboration, is often overlooked by traditional approaches.

Recommendations

In light of the findings from the comparative study of international practices regarding professorship conferral, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the process and ensure its alignment with global standards while maintaining necessary regulatory flexibility.

First, it is recommended that academic institutions adopt more standardized criteria for the conferral of professorships, informed by best practices across various countries. This approach would help streamline the process and provide clearer, more transparent guidelines for candidates. While the core focus should remain on academic and research excellence, institutions should have the flexibility to tailor these criteria to suit local needs, fostering a system that balances standardization with contextual relevance.

Secondly, there should be greater recognition of professional experience, especially in disciplines where traditional research output may not be the sole indicator of academic excellence. Educational systems should incorporate innovative teaching practices, industry collaborations, and professional contributions as valid components in the

professorship conferral process. This would allow a broader range of candidates, including those with non-traditional academic paths, to be considered for professorship roles.

Another key recommendation is the inclusion of a robust peer review process. Incorporating evaluations from international experts and academic peers would help ensure that the process is rigorous, unbiased, and reflective of global academic standards. Peer reviews provide valuable external perspectives on the candidate's scholarly impact, enhancing the credibility and fairness of the conferral process.

Additionally, the conferral process should allow for greater institutional autonomy. While regulatory bodies should establish overarching frameworks, institutions should have the flexibility to make final decisions based on their unique academic environments and needs. This autonomy would encourage innovation in how professorships are awarded and allow institutions to adapt to emerging trends in academic disciplines and research.

Promoting diversity and inclusivity within the professorship conferral process is also essential. It is recommended that regulatory bodies encourage institutions to consider diversity in their appointments, ensuring that a broad range of perspectives, including those from underrepresented groups, are included in academic leadership. This would foster a more dynamic and inclusive academic environment, reflecting the diversity of global academic communities.

Furthermore, there should be clearer pathways for non-traditional candidates to attain professorships. This includes recognizing the value of professional experience in industry, entrepreneurship, or fields that may not follow traditional academic trajectories. By creating avenues for these individuals, institutions can tap into a wider pool of talent and enrich academic discourse with diverse perspectives.

It is also recommended that regulatory frameworks be reviewed regularly to keep pace with evolving academic trends. As new interdisciplinary fields emerge and research practices evolve, the criteria for professorship conferral should be adjusted to remain relevant and forward-thinking. This will ensure that the process of awarding professorships reflects the current and future needs of global academia.

Encouraging interdisciplinary research is another important recommendation. The conferral process should reward candidates whose work bridges multiple disciplines or promotes cross-disciplinary collaboration. This would incentivize the development of holistic research that addresses complex global challenges and reflects the increasingly interconnected nature of modern scholarship.

Lastly, educational institutions should invest in professional development programs to prepare candidates for professorship roles, especially those in mid-career stages. These programs should focus on leadership, mentoring, and developing research agendas that align with both institutional goals and global academic trends. Such initiatives would ensure that future professors are well-equipped to assume leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to their academic communities.

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