

Evaluating the Process of Recruiting Faculty Members in Universities and Higher Education and Research Institutes Affiliated to Ministry of Health and Medical Education in Iran

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Abstract

Introduction: Given the vital and constructive role of faculty members in universities, recruiting qualified faculty members is considered as one of the priorities of each university. Thus, the current research was conducted to evaluate the process of recruiting faculty members in universities and higher education and the Research Institute of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in Iran.

Methodology: This study was conducted using descriptive and analytical method. Research data were collected through administrative and recruitment regulations of the faculty members of the universities and higher education institutes affiliated to the Ministry of Health, their reforms and circulars and subsequent guidelines, and searching the papers published in well-known sites in Iran and foreign countries.

Results: There are 65 universities and independent faculties of medical sciences, 8,000 faculty members, and 200,000 students in the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in Iran at present. Faculty members are recruited through recruitment recall of faculty members in a competitive space and after approval of the scientific and general competencies of candidates at relevant authorities. Faculty members are recruited full-time geographically (working at least 54 hours per week, without permission of specialized profit-making activities out of university), and full-time (working at least 40 hours per week and with permission of specialized profit-making activities out of university) and in different recruiting forms, including formal, committed to service, soldier, and contractual.

Conclusion: Shortage of faculty members and lack of consistency between number of professors and student, and their lack of interest to continue working in deprived regions are some of the challenges of the Ministry of Health in this regard.

Key words: Recruiting; Faculty Member; Ministry of Health; University; Iran.

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Introduction

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the ancient civilization of Iran is paying attention to medical knowledge, which in its turning point was the establishment and development of Jundishapur Medical University in the north of Khuzestan province (Dezful city) (1-2). It was established 1,746 years ago. Development of human resources will not be possible without considering the faculty members and transforming them from independent elements into effective elements and without increasing their efficiency, and maintaining and increasing their motivation and innovation (3). Universities in any country undertake the critical function of educating the specialized and committed forces required by the given community (4). Studies suggest that medical, dentistry, pharmacy, and other related fields of study are among the fields of study (5), which are more demanded by candidates of universities and higher education institutes in Iran. Approximately 70% of university candidates are female (6). In total, there are 65 universities or independent medical science faculties in Iran. During Iran's fifth development plan (2012-2015) and given the increasing number of students, especially at post-graduate period, reforming and promoting the ratio of professors to the students was prioritized in educational deputy programs of Iran Ministry of Health and Medical Education. Accordingly, it was planned that one faculty member for two specialized PhD students, one professor for 6 master students, and one professor for 10 to 12 bachelor students were to be recruited. Total number of students of medical sciences universities affiliated to Iran Ministry of Health and Medical Education has followed an increasing trend from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016, so that it has reached from 171,022 in 2012-2013 to 189,967 in 2015-2016. The number of faculty members also has followed an increasing trend since 2008 to 2015, and it has experienced a growth of 55%. In 2015, the number of faculty members reached 16,863. This index has increased by 26.19% during the last four years, and the index of ratio of professors to students has increased from 10:3 in 2009-2010 to 10:7 in 2015-2016 (7). Nowadays, given the increasing amount of medical science information and rapid changes in the information (doubling information every 20 months and violating 50% of information every 5 years), the issue of life-long learning of faculty members has found special importance. The consistency in the ratio of professor to student is one of the indices taken into consideration around the world to make educational systems efficient. Educational and research activities of faculty members in each university play a key role in increasing the university rank in the domestic and international areas. Thus, function and success of medical science universities largely depends on efficiency of their faculty members (3). For this reason, recruiting and employing qualified faculty members is one of the priorities of each university and higher education institute (8). Accordingly, the current research was carried out to evaluate the process of recruiting faculty members in universities and higher education and research institutes of Ministry of Health in Iran.

Methodology

This research was conducted using descriptive and analytical method in 2017 to evaluate the process of recruiting the faculty members in universities and higher education and research institutes of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. Research data were collected through searching the papers published in valid Iranian and International sites including SID, MAGIRAN, PubMed, Scopus, ISI, and administrative and employment regulations of the faculty members of the universities and higher education institutes affiliated with the Ministry of Health (9), and their reforms and circulars and subsequent guidelines.

Results

Given the high status of science and knowledge in Iran's culture and civilization and the need to protect the high dignity of the higher education institutes and given the critical and constructive role of faculty members and the need to use the knowledge of well-educated, efficient and committed professors, and in order to create a unified process in evaluating the qualifications of those who are candidates to be faculty members, executive boards of recruiting faculty members of universities and higher education institutes were established in Science, Research and Technology Ministry, and Health, Medical, and Education Ministry of Iran. Given unoccupied posts and according to the employment permission obtained annually from the Ministry of Health, Iran medical sciences universities can recruit faculty members twice per year, usually in September and March months in the form of recruiting faculty member recall. Faculty members of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in Iran are recruited first in the form of contractual recruiting through recruiting the faculty members recall in a competitive space among qualified applicants who have at least a specialized Ph.D. degree or higher (Master degree is also allowed in exceptional conditions and for universities having less numbers of faculty members). At time of recruitment, faculty members recruited as assistant professors or higher will be full time geographically and educators will be full time. A geographically full-time faculty member is a person who works for a university full-time and at least 54 hours per week and he/she is not permitted to perform profit-making activities out of university (including work in personal office, personal pharmacy, laboratory, personal diagnostic centers, educational centers, charity and private hospitals, etc.). A full-time faculty member (non-geographically full time) is a person who works for a university for at least 40 hours per week according to the university program. In exceptional conditions, when universities and higher education institutions have urgent need, the recruitment of non-geographically full time faculty members will be feasible with the approval of the Board of Trustees and with conditions determined by University Council. Currently, faculty members are "contractual and formal" (geographically full time) in terms of type of recruitment. In order to recruit and for continuous service of faculty

members, a notarized pledge is taken from them for at least 5 years based on the University Council diagnosis. The contract term of faculty members will be between 1 and 3 years at first, and in the case of university satisfaction of their educational, research and therapeutic activities, it can be extended. If promoted to higher ranks (assistant professors and associate professors), faculty members' contracts can be transformed to experimental formal contract by observing the relevant rules and standards, and after 3 years, their recruitment status will be transformed to permanent formal contract in the case of acquiring the base annual qualifications. In addition to recruiting faculty members, universities and higher education institutes under the Ministry of Health can compensate a part of their requirements for faculty members with the framework of rules and through recruiting people with legal services (committed to service, K coefficient, human resource design, and faculty member soldier). After beginning of the commitments, these people can participate in the recruitment recall of the university for which they serve. Participation in recall of other universities will be possible by approval of the Source University and Ministry of Health. Participation in recruitment recall of a faculty member soldier is possible after 20 months of military training. Specialist performing their K coefficient obligations as medical staff they can participate in the recruitment recall of the university for which they served after one year of serving at the university and approval of the same university. In addition, universities and higher education institutes under the Ministry of Health can recruit temporarily, at most up to 18 months, faculty members with at least specialized PhD degree and higher in the contractual form. Finally, non-faculty member employees of universities and higher education institutes can become a faculty member, in the case of having qualifications and participating in recall.

The seven activities of faculty members that they are obliged to perform include educational, research, and cultural activities, individual development, executive and managerial activities, providing health and medical services, health promotion, and specialized activities

outside of university specified by the university. Acceptable service also refers to active presence of faculty member at university or higher education and research institute and performing the seven activities and participating in committees and councils of institute and other executive affairs assigned for him/her by the university or institute.

General conditions required to recruit a faculty member:

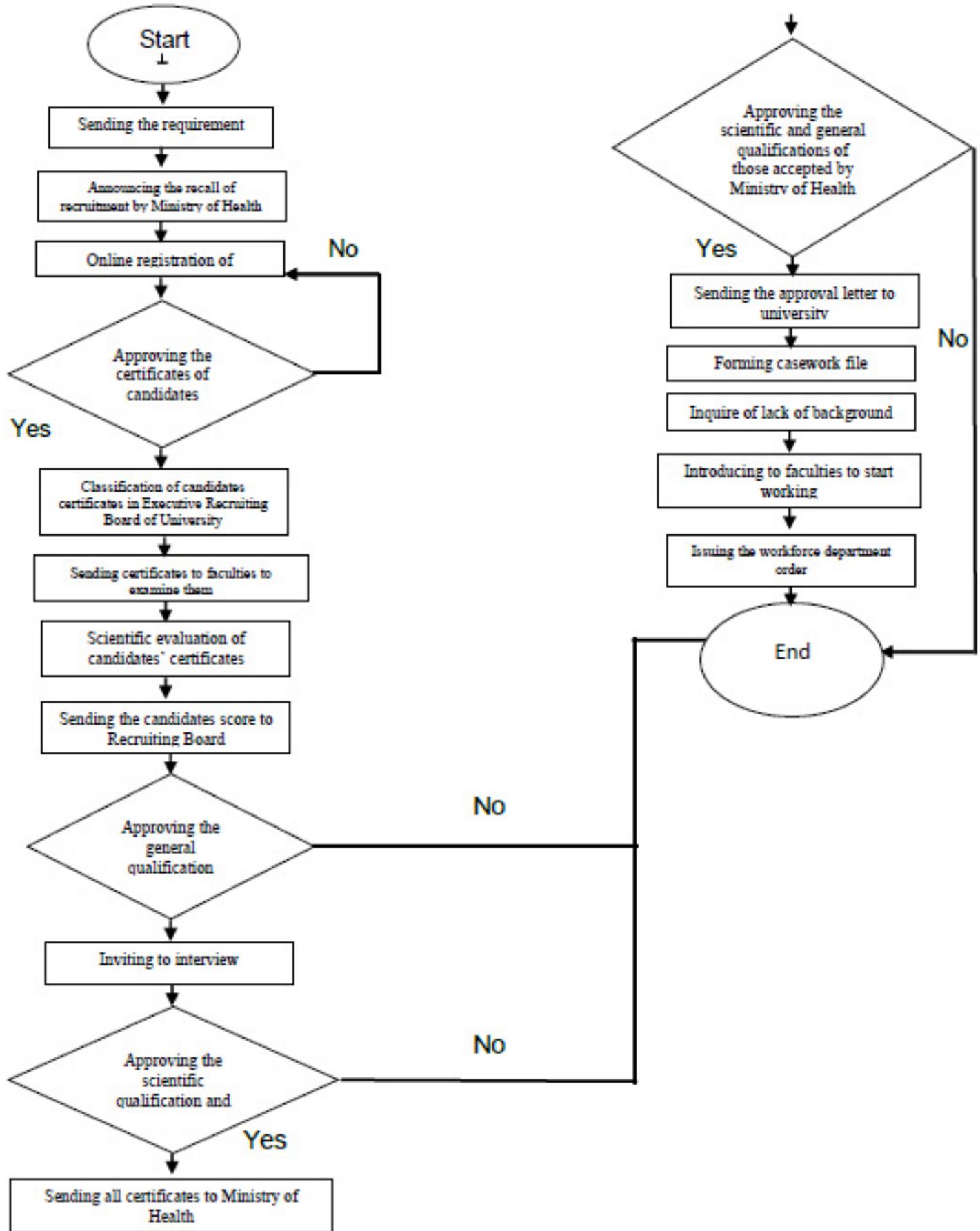
- A)** Nationality of Islamic Republic of Iran
- B)** To complete military service or having legal exemption or completing the necessary period (for men)
- C)** Non-convicted to being deprived of government employment and lack of effective criminal conviction, and lack of dismissal and termination of service under legal authorities verdict
- D)** Non-addiction to tobacco, narcotics and psychotropic substances.
- E)** General and scientific qualifications of candidates approved by the executive board of the university and approved by the central board of the Ministry of Health, according to standards approved by the Supreme Council of the Iranian Cultural Revolution.

F) Aged less than 35 years at time of recruitment to acquire the educator rank and 45 years for educational degrees of Ph.D., specialist encyclopedia and higher (in exceptional conditions and in the case of having educational, research and management experience of candidates to be recruited as faculty member and with approval of Central Board of Trustees established in the Ministry of Health for up to 5 years will be added to age limit). Special privileges have been considered for those injured (referred to as warriors) in the war between Iran and Iraq that occurred from 1970 to 1988, in recruiting the faculty member. The conditions for their entry and recruitment as faculty members have been facilitated.

Table 1: Academic ranks of educational and research faculty members

Educational (educational, research)	Research
Educator	Research Educator
Assistant professor	Research Assistant Professor
Associate professor	Research Associate Professor
Professor	Research Professor

Conceptual model of recruiting contractual faculty member in the Ministry of Health and Medical Education



Discussion

Faculty members are recruited through recall of recruitment of faculty members in a competitive space and after approval of the scientific and general competencies of candidates at relevant authorities. Faculty members are recruited full-time geographically (working at least 54 hours per week, without permission of specialized profit-making activities out of university), and full-time (working at least 40 hours per week and with permission of specialized profit-making activities out of university) and in different recruiting forms, including formal, committed to service, soldier, and contractual. There are 65 universities and independent faculties of medical sciences. In addition, 200,000 students are studying at different educational levels from associate to specialized clinical fellowship in different fields of study at the level of Iran University of Medical Sciences. In addition, 18,000 faculty members are working in Iran University of Medical Sciences, of whom 4,000 have committed to service faculty members working temporarily or as merely legal commitment of free educating in universities. According to the Head of Faculty Member Affairs of Health Ministry, about 1,200 people have been recruited as faculty members of the Health Ministry during the last four years. It has been also planned that 1,500 people are to be recruited as faculty members in medical universities of Iran (10). According to the Educational Deputy of Health Ministry, more than 1,200 faculty members have been recruited in the medical universities of Iran. Despite all efforts, there is a wide gap between the current ratio of professor to student in most medical universities and the ideal ratio, and this is more evident in clinical education, which requires special considerations. Since the beginning of implementation of the Development and Innovation Plan in medical science education in Iran, much effort has been made to promote the body of faculty members in the medical universities of Iran. Based on the faculty members' status in universities and studying 200 top universities in the world, the need of the health area for faculty members has been estimated (11). According to the Iranian Health Ministry's current policy and for the purpose of educational innovation and transformation, the issue of internationalization of universities has been proposed and serious steps have been taken during the last three years. In this regard, Iranian universities have taken measures to accept students from various countries and it has had good cooperation with European and Iranian universities out of Iran to exchange faculty members (10).

Conclusion

The performance and success of the medical universities greatly depends on efficiency of its faculty members. Given the development of specialized fields of study and increasing PhD studies in medical universities and considering the lack of faculty members in clinical training, the nursing, midwifery and medical fields of study require recruiting more faculty members (more than 8,000 people). Finally, considering the shortage of faculty members and their early retirement requests, lack of consistency

between numbers of professors and students, especially in deprived regions, one of the challenges of the Health Ministry is recruiting and retaining faculty members.

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