

What do the amendments to the associate professorship exam regulation mean?

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For many years, the discussions we have been having are still alive, and at the forefront of topics where both determinations and criticisms maintain their currency are the academic promotion criteria applied in universities and the Associate Professorship exam or appointment criteria organized by the Turkish Interuniversity Board. Today, most research are produced for academic promotion and mainly to achieve a quantitative level, consisting of master's, doctoral, and specialization thesis studies that find identity in this context (1). These research are done to complete an academic stage rather than reaching original results aimed at changing life, the world, and science. These research, which cannot always gain the quality of national and international publications, create a data and article landfill after a while. Labor and value loss are just the tip of the iceberg. One of the most significant triggers of this process is the quantitative evaluation of scientific studies in the academic promotion process in today's scientific world, the haste of the research, and their values as a number. Another significant reason is that the standards defined by the Council of Higher Education (CHE) and the Turkish Interuniversity Board (TIB) in academic promotions lead to the production of research that responds to the needs of the West, the USA and Europe's developed countries, in other words, international capitalism, without any economic burden on these countries, rather than researches that will meet Turkey's needs and make the events, phenomena, and developments experienced in the country understandable. We can say that this process has particularly increased the number of mostly biologically based research guided by the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry (1).

TIB updates the academic appointment and promotion criteria, as well as the associate professorship conditions at regular intervals. The associate professorship regulation was previously updated in 2016, and significant changes were made. Looking at the changes made during that period, a scoring system had been established that provided a significant advantage to being the sole author, aside from determinations regarding the number of publications that needed to be included in the scanning indexes determining the international publication category. Furthermore, all activities and endeavours conducted throughout academic life, including book authorship, editorship, patents, citations, consultancies, projects, meetings, and educational activities, were somehow included in this scoring. These changes were viewed positively. However, one of the most significant shortcomings was the overemphasis on international publications while not sufficiently supporting national publications. This tendency carried the potential to create an impact that would lead to fewer studies and research addressing the country's needs in the national field, thus reducing productions in this area (2). This prediction has largely come true.

Although we see that relatively more points are given to the research listed in the TR Index in the new criteria we are discussing today, we observe that national scientific publishing has not developed since 2016, many domestic scientific journals have closed, changed hands, a significant portion stopped publishing articles in Turkish, some national journals only accept articles in English, and many journals publish articles by charging authors with very high fees. It seems that this trend has not slowed down with the latest amendments and

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changes made in 2023. It is extremely difficult to say that the new criteria, which are stated to be implemented from 2024 onwards, bring an innovation that allows overcoming this problem.

A while after the 2016 amendments, it should be remembered that the oral exam, which was an extremely important phase to overcome in the process of becoming an associate professor, was abolished, and the title of associate professor began to be granted only through a review of the scientific dossier. Previously, the obligatory requirement to teach a lesson for associate professorship, which was an important evaluation criterion in making the decision to become an associate professor, had also been abolished. These changes have been highly criticized for disabling the competency of the faculty member, whose primary duty definition is education and teaching, followed by the responsibility for scientific research and health service, to provide education, its testing and responsibility, and for being a decision inflicting damage to university education, while the subsequent removal of the requirement for oral exams indicates that this qualitative erosion is growing. After educational competence, clinical competence was also excluded from the assessment, and an associate professorship assessment dominated the process, only through the "scientific" studies whose framework I outlined above. The oral exams, which were conducted earlier, were problematic as a practice that doomed the candidate's associate professorship process to arbitrariness, with its characteristic of not aiming to test clinical interview skills, and being prone to unethical guidance, evaluating more knowledge and to a lesser extent attitudes. Therefore, while it was desired to enhance the quality of the oral exams, its complete abolition initiated a destructive change that sterilized education. It should not be considered an empty claim to say that the changes made in 2023 aim to conceal this erosion, this sterilization with quantitative and publication criteria, and that an effort is being displayed in this direction.

So, what do the amendments made in 2023 encompass? These amendments include:

1. Taking into account the Web of Science Quartile

category for journals within the scope of SCIE or SSCI.

2. Abolishing the field index definitions, and in their place, implementing scoring for articles published in AHCI, ESCI, and Scopus covered journals, introducing a minimum limit purported to enhance quality in the relevant category.

3. Increasing the score for national articles published in journals under the TR Index.

4. Introducing a requirement of at least one single-authored publication for each fundamental field, increasing the number where they exist, and raising the main author number from one to three.

5. Utilizing the WoS Book Citation Index as a reference for books and book chapters, while categorizing others separately.

6. Instituting restrictions which have become one of the most debated alterations regarding editorships in other international/national book chapters.

7. Renewing the citation category within the scope of Web of Science, giving more weight to citations made in journals under the TR Index, and assessing other citations under the "other" title.

8. Awarding points for completed thesis supervisions across all basic fields.

9. Introducing a completion requirement for all projects, with role definitions in these projects being fundamental in scoring.

10. Using the Web of Science Conference Proceedings Citation Index as a reference for scoring publications in all fundamental fields, categorizing others as "other."

11. Renewing the clause titled "Educational/Teaching activity."

12. Adding a "Patent/Utility Model" clause, an "Award" clause, and an "Other" clause (WoS h-

index, overseas research/teaching activity) to all fundamental fields, with the amendments updating and expanding the scope of patent definitions and patent/utility model specifications.

When all these changes are examined, it indicates the formation of academic criteria allowing both the orientation of scientific research and academic production towards generating content required by neoliberal capitalism, and the shaping of a scientific knowledge production and educational model that meets the needs of political power. The objectives, which have been gradually becoming more evident since the first associate professorship regulation, indicate this trend. Although the president of CHE states that these changes were made with the aim of improving quality (4), the perception that the alterations fundamentally aim to foster an academic competition environment oriented towards the needs of national and international capitalism is shared in many circles (5,6,7). For instance, one of the new criteria, which necessitates scholars to be “a professor registered in the YÖKSİS system and have permission from their affiliated university” to be able to become an editor for a book, clearly disregards freedom of speech and thought, eliminates scientific freedom, and showcases a tendency that submits scientific production to the direct control of the political power. Science is being reduced to an activity that can only be conducted under the supervision and scrutiny of a “professor” who has “official permission from the university” (6). Additionally, criticisms are being raised that CHE condemns researchers to these establishments because it refers to internationally centralized WOS (Web of Science) Book Citation Index (BKCI), WOS Journal Index, and WOS Conference Proceeding Index for scoring scientific works (articles, books, reports, etc.). These scanning indexes are commercial entities; they are international organizations directing scientific publishing with the main objective being to achieve high profits. It is claimed that these decisions push all scientific production in the country, scholars, those dealing with scientific publishing, individuals, and professional organizations organizing scientific congresses, into a global capital group, forcing them to succumb to the dominance of these organizations and creating a ground that does not allow for overcoming this (5,7). Especially labour and

professional organizations emphatically underline that academic education and production will be harmed and suffer permanent damage with these new criteria (5,7).

The imposed condition requiring all sections of the published book to be “related” to the scientific field applied for associate professorship is expected to cause confusion, creating ambiguities such as whether a book written on political psychology will be included in political science or the field of psychology, and generating uncertainties about the boundaries of science and who will draw them. It is said that this situation will render interdisciplinary studies impossible, and it will deem academics who “perform editorial duties without permission from the university and are not considered authorized” worthless. These criteria have left out candidates who have given/give lectures in associate degree programs by imposing the condition of “having given undergraduate and postgraduate courses” and scored the lecture-giving activity as the least valuable academic activity. Moreover, there are ambiguities that can create rights violations for those who make their initial applications for associate professorship and are forced to wait for three terms (5).

The scoring assigned to the roles undertaken in projects makes the effort of young academics, who have a significant contribution to bringing the projects to life, invisible and valueless, given the high proportion allocated to project coordinators. This situation implies that the hierarchy here will make the advantages stemming from status and managerial positions determining, and that all the gains of a teamwork, of a collective production will be credited to a single individual. The obligation of single-author research is also likely to produce the same results.

Especially the addition of the clause regarding patents and awards, the definitions of patents and utility patents, and the increase in the number of items in certain fundamental fields, make the basic ideological and class preferences in this direction more visible with the aim of encouraging academic education oriented towards the requirements of national and international capitalism that has been

emphasized through the university-industry collaboration until today.

In conclusion, the principles and criteria for academic promotion will continue to be debated historically along with the new associate professorship assessment criteria. While determining these criteria, CHE and TIB make regulations with the demands and directives of the political power without consulting the professional organizations, scientific institutions and organizations, and competent academics in the field. Particularly, what organizations like the Turkish Medical Association and specialty associations, as well as educational and professional organizations, should do in this context is not to remain silent, to conduct comprehen-

sive studies, to publish reports, to form pressure groups, and to force CHE and TIB to make arrangements based on science, ethics, and solidarity that develop academic production that meets the needs of the society.

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