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## **A model for Enhancing Academic Staff Promotion System in Vocational and Technical Education: College of Technological Studies, As A Case Kuwait**

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**Abstract.** Vocational and technical colleges and schools is a type of education which place students on apprenticeship system. It is through which students can spend certain time in industry premises to gain the necessary skills and attitudes mostly required by industries. Vocational and technical education is completely different from a formal education that is taught in classrooms. Developing countries (e.g., Kuwait, Oman, Qatar), has realized the importance of vocational and technical education in vital sectors of the economy (e.g., oil, electricity and water, construction), where expatriates are the dominate workforce and the need to reduce dependence on expatriates is one of high governments manpower strategy. In Kuwait, the government has absorbed the need to reduce dependence on expatriates and thus established the College of Technological Studies, CTS, to respond to the urgent need of skilled and semi-skilled indigenous workforce. Thus, the management of the College of Technological Studies has to appreciate and value the significant role of the College of Technological Studies in meeting government workforce objectives. This can be accomplished by ensuring that academic staff has the necessary skills to prepare students to meet industrial needs and ambitious. The academic staff promotion system must be one of the CTS management priorities. The constant review and update the academic staff promotion system is crucial to maintain high standard of vocational and technical graduates. A model is introduced in this research for academic staff promotion system that enable the CTS management to review and assess the quality of the CTS academic staff competencies and their ability in meeting industrial requirements. The new model for academic staff promotion system would overcome and/or reduce the deficiencies of the current academic staff promotion system. The new model would encompass more realistic and efficient criteria's for assessing the performance of vocational and technical academic staff and introduce a proper work methodology and procedure for minimizing the percentage of errors while promoting a candidate to a higher academic status.

**Keywords.** Vocational and technical Education, industrial training program, developing Indigenous Manpower, Interaction between vocational and technical education and local industries and business, model of academic staff promotion system, Kuwait

### **1. Introduction**

Technical and vocational education is a unique type of education that play a vital role in enhancing human capabilities by creating and promoting skilled and semi-skilled manpower that able to manage, maintain, and adapt the technology used in industries. Technical and

Vocational education can provide skills for self-employment and reduce obstacles to the world of work.

It is an education system that enhance industrial ability in diversifying products and services that are aiming in promoting countries economic progress. It is an opportunity to open a gate to labour market and tackling unemployment, particularly among youth. The number of employment youth increased by 4.4 million to 17.5 million. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report, 2020). However, due to the pandemic and its consequences, employment fell sharply and unemployment is higher than expected. The labor force of youth has significantly increased despite the global increase of youth population from 1 billion to 1.3 billion. (International Labour Organization, 2020) Many countries, particularly developing countries, have strengthening technical and vocational education to respond to the urgent demand of skilled manpower in labour market. Their aim is to create a strong linkage between youth competencies and related industries. Technical and vocational education and training has the potential to encourage employment of youth, diversify in productivity, and livelihoods of younger workers in developing countries. (World Bank, 2021, UNESCO, 2016)

Vocational education will facilitate young people learning in a variety of settings, including the classroom, workplace and wider community... vocational education will help young students to acquire lifelong learning skills to enable them to cope up with the rapid pace of technological changes through lifelong learning and adapt to the frequent changes through “earn and learn” concep” (National Education Policy, 2020). Technical and vocational institutions are designed to equipped and prepare students to the world of work. It is always referred to as career or work education. Technical and vocational education can be viewed as the acquisition of competencies in different occupations with a broad general education suitable for the world of work. (NEP 2020) It is believed that technical and vocational is limited to a specific skill. In fact, technical and vocational education has been expanded and diversified to encompasses other essential skills such as problem solving, creativity, communications, and team work. It is an opportunity for students to practice and show their skills and talents and creativity in industries and business

Several studies have emphasis of important role of industry in the success of technical and vocational education, TVET. The Interaction between Technical and vocational education and the enterprises economic division are eminently essential for the both the TVET and industries and job seekers. (UNEVOC, 2020) The impact of the pandemic and the rapid change in the country’s economy creating a gap between TVET and industries and business that require an extensive and urgent effort to close the existing widening gap by preparing a highly skilled workforce ready for the present and future job market. (Australian Government, 2020) Employers in industries and business can interact with TVET institutions in a diverse and fruitful methods, that includes, hiring TVET graduates, apprentices training programs, providing training completion qualifications, and forecasting future skills requirements. (Department of Education, 2020). One of the main advantages of a strong collaboration between TVET and industries is that, through win-win situation. (Syamhanim Ismail, et. al. 2021), facilitate work-based learning (Jabatan. Et., al, 2019), and enhancing work experience. (Watisin, 2019) The importance of teachers in the area of technical and vocational education is also noted in related literature. The competencies of TVET graduates will be influence by the quality of TVET teachers and their competencies. (Jia., et. al. 2014, Andersson and Kopsen, 2015) Teachers would success in achieving TVET objectives if they have a high commitment and values (Gomendio, M. (2017). Teachers who have a positive attitudes and high degree of intelligence will contribute significantly in work place. (Fiftyana, 2018)

The management of technical and vocational education needs to absorb the know-how and know-why regarding the provision of technical and vocational education. The organizational structure in technical and vocational education colleges and schools and completely different from a formal education as in universities. The management skills in technical and vocational education institutions would concentrate on creating a mutual interest with industries and business in order to succeed in preparing students for the world of work. Academic staff need to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes that are practice in related industries. A constant review of academic staff competencies is one of management priorities to ensure their ability of academic staff to respond to the rapid change of technology in industries.

The World Bank stress on the need for technical and vocational education to be more flexible to adapt the changes in technology used by industries, “flexibility between general and vocational education particularly in higher education is imperative to enable workers to compete in changing labor markets where technology play an increasingly important role”. (World Bank, 2019).

Academic staff promotion system in technical and vocational institutions play a vital role in meeting industrial requirements. It is crucial that industries participate in the setting of the criteria’s that are related to the interest of both parties (technical and vocational institutions and industries). Industries are interested in those academic staff who are familiar with the types of technology applied in their activities rather than the number of publications in academic journals except of it solve their problems or introduce new techniques. Academic staff who are participate industrial activities such as: research and development, problem solving, training of employees, and supervising training students are those of industrial first interest. On the other hand, vocational and technical institutions eager for financial and moral support to facilitate the achievement of institutions objectives.

The College of technological Studies, Kuwait, was established to provide industries with skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower. The College of Technological Studies is under the umbrella of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training which has four colleges and four training centers. The College of Technological Studies has nine departments. They are namely: Manufacturing Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electronics Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Automotive and Marine Engineering, Mechanical Power and Refrigeration Technology, and Laboratory Technology. The purpose of this research is to introduce a model that would enhance academic staff promotion system not only at the College of Technological Studies, but also at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training colleges and training centers. New criteria would be introduced and a proper procedure would be applied to overcome and/or reduce some of the deficiencies of the current academic staff promotion system. Consequently, responding to the need of industries for skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower able to manage, maintain, and probably adapt the imported technology to suit local requirements. Thus, enhancing local capabilities and reducing the level of dependence on expatriates, particularly is essential sector of the country economy (oil and electricity and water). The total population to be 4,420,110 for 2019, with non-Kuwaiti’s accounting for nearly 70% of the population 2,993,706 (estimate July 2020). (Kuwait’s Public Authority for Civil Information, 2020)

### **3. Research Objectives**

- a. To examine the current academic staff promotion system.
- b. To introduce a new model for academic staff promotion.

c. **Discussions and Recommendations.**

The outcomes of the research would indeed guide the management of the College of Technological Studies, CTS, to improve the quality of academic staff promotion system. In addition to, reviewing and evaluating the current academic staff promotion system. This would contribute positively in providing related industry with indigenous skilled and semi-skilled manpower able to manage, maintain and adapt the imported technology, Thus, reducing dependence on expatriates.

**4. Materials and Methods**

**4.1 Design**

This research consists of a descriptive survey designed to identify and examine the current promotion system at the College of Technological Studies for the academic staff. The research would focus on the deficiency of the current academic promotion system and suggest a new model that would contribute significantly to the quality of the CTS graduates.

The research would encompass an interview (through Teams program or a telephone due to the pandemic) with (5) heads of academic departments at the CTS. They are namely, Manufacturing Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Electronics Engineering. An interview would be also conducted with the Dean of the College of Technological Studies. The purpose is to identify and examine the views of the academic heads of departments towards the quality of the CTS current academic staff promotions system and whether it achieve its objectives and their view to the new model. Among the issued that would be discusses are: the criteria's applied in evaluating academic journals, the process of identifying and evaluating academic journals, the criteria's for nominating an academic staff to be promoted to a higher level, the obstacles that might hinder the optimal utilization of the current academic staff promotional system. In addition to, examining heads of department perception towards the new proposed model and how can improve the standard of academic staff and contribute to the quality of the CTS graduates.

**4.2 Instrumentation**

The target population for this research consists of (5) heads of academic departments at the CTS. An interview would be also conducted with the Dean of the College of Technological Studies.

**4.3 Statistics and Parameters**

The statistics pertain to the sample. The parameters pertain to an entire population.

**4.4 The research parameters/sample are as follows:**

- (a) Selected (5) heads of academic departments at the CTS.
- (b) The Dean of the CTS.

**5. How would the proposed model for academic staff promotion system enhance the quality of the CTS graduates?**

The quality of the CTS graduates would depend entirely on the type of management. In other word, the mentality of the management would decide, to great extent, if graduates would have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes mostly needed by related industries. The academic staff promotion system is one of the most elements in shaping graduate's standard. It is through which academic staff can transfer their competencies to students. In fact, the level of student's success in meeting industrial needed would depend on

the ability of academic staff in managing, maintaining, and adapting the technology applied in related industries. The new academic staff promotion system model would ensure that the CTS is providing industries with skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower and thus achieving the country's overall manpower plan in reducing dependence on expatriates.

### **6. Evaluating the current academic staff promotion system**

The present academic staff promotion system which was forged in 2005 have not been reviewed nor evaluated to overcome the deficiencies that might affect the standard of the CTS graduates. In respect to the requirements concerning the academic journals. The promotion system booklet has indicated that the academic journal must be refereed. However, no mentioned whether the academic journal should be waved or accepted when asked for names of reviewers. In most academic journals the names of reviewers kept undisclosed. The purpose is to prevent any conflict of interest that might affect the credibility of the academic journal and the author. The interviews with the head of department revealed that 80% of head of departments have no objection on those academic journals who ask for a reviewer's names. In fact, in a meeting (through teams' program), more than ten academic staff in just one department indicated that it is purely acceptable if some academic journal ask for reviewer's names to be included with the submitted research paper.

The academic journal must be specialize as mentioned in the promotion system booklet. However, no mentioned if the academic journals are diversifying their specialist. In fact, an academic candidate for promotion can publish research paper in multidiscipline journals which are contradict with the requirements mentioned in the academic promotion system booklet. Surprisingly enough, 50% of the selected heads of department show no objection in publishing in a multidiscipline journal. It is notable that a candidate for an academic promotion tend to involve an author, either as a first or a second author, who is a currently an editor for the same journal. This is without doubt considered a clear conflict of interest. However, the promotion system booklet has not considered the involvement of an author who is an editor for the same journal to be viewed as a conflict of interest. All head of departments seems to agree on this issue since the academic promotion system have not mentioned and discussed such issue.

Surprisingly, many published papers at the CTS have more than five authors and it been rare to allocate a published paper by one author. A team work approach is inevitably preferable for exchange of information's and skills. However, an academic staff who spend more than ten years at the CTS and did not attempt to published a single research papers by him/herself is worth reviewing his/her work credibility. Academic journals must be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the promotion system requirements and not be elected by voting. Academic staff may not have the opportunity to examine the reliability of the academic journals and relying on voting in approving academic journals would indeed handicap the efforts of enhancing the CTS graduates. In discussing this aspect with selected heads of department, 60% have indicated that voting is suitable for approving academic journals since journals names send prior to the departmental meeting for discussions on academic matters including voting on accepting or rejecting academic journals. A designated committee is an appropriate and more professional for thoroughly examining the academic journals rather than voting. Since the current academic promotion system is done manually, the loss of documents and delay is examining an academic promotion case may delay for months. The dean of the CTS has confirmed to the author that an electronic academic promotion system is on the process to be applied soon to prevent any loss of documents and speed the process of promotion.

Unfortunately, hostility and frustration would occur during the examination of an academic staff promotion case since it carried out in the same department that the candidate is

applying. In other word, due to the sensitively of the process of an academic promotion which conducted by, in all the cases, a candidate colleague at the same department, anger and misunderstanding would easily appear to the surface. This would create unhealthy learning environment and would indeed affect the quality of teaching and learning.

### **7. A Model for enhancing academic staff promotion system.**

Indeed, this new model (Figure 1) would enhance quality of the CTS graduates in meeting industrial requirements. In addition, it would help in providing industries with skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower able to manage, maintain, and probably adapt the imported technology in related industries to suit local environments. The new model for academic staff promotion system consists of the followings stages:

#### **7.1 Creating a common awareness towards an academic promotion.**

It is a management responsibility to ensure that academic staff thoroughly absorb the objectives of the academic staff promotion system. The notion of obtaining an academic promotion for the purpose of an academic promotion only must be eliminated. In other word, an academic promotion is not for the purpose of an increase in the salary or a higher opportunity to win a management position. It is rather a tangible contribution in the development of vocational and technical education. It is an opportunity to strengthening the linkage with industries and effectively exchange knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes between both parties (industries and the CTS). The contribution of industries in the academic staff promotion system must be encouraged. The assessment of an academic staff at the CTS must include criteria's that are related to a joint collaboration with industries in various activities such as: curriculum development, improving the standard of workshops and laboratories, the application of health and safety regulations, research and development, industrial training programs, and consultation committees. The CTS management can create a common awareness on an academic promotion through meetings, seminars, orientation sessions, and lecturers. This suggestion seems to be acceptable to all selected heads of departments at the CTS. In fact, the Dean of the CTS has stress on the need to contribute positively is the CTS activities, and academic promotion must be taken for granted, but for positive collaboration with industries.

#### **7.2 Defining promotion procedures ethics.**

It is well understandable that an academic promotion would achieve a self-satisfaction resulted from a dedicated sincere work through various academic and industrial activities. Indeed, it is the fruitful of a challenging work environment that consume times, efforts, and health from the candidate to achieve a higher academic status. However, it is highly notable, as headed several promotion committees, dispute, anger, and frustration unfortunately are some of the symptoms occur during the promotion process. Therefrom, academic staff must be aware on the consequence on deliberately delaying or complicating the promotion process. At the same time,

Academic staff must understand and appreciate the efforts made to review an examine all documents related to an academic candidate promotion. A healthy working environment would facilitate team work approach and achieve a positive cooperation in meeting industrial requirements. It is the responsibility of the CTS management to clarify and monitor the promotion process to block any unpleasant actions that might affect the credibility of academic staff. In addition, ensuring a fair practice and transparency in the promotion process. The CTS management must forge a promotion procedures ethics booklet and clarify related issues to academic staff through seminars, meeting, lecturers, and group discussions. The dean of the

CTS seems totally agree on such issue and dedicated efforts to solve matters with the CTS boundaries.

### **7.3 Defining publications ethics.**

The academic publications are considered as the core of the academic promotion. It was revealed that there is no unified process for reviewing and approving academic journals in the scientific departmental committees. Academic staff was found eager to publish their research projects in a refereed journal that are approved by their scientific departmental committees. The promotion system booklet insists that the academic journal must be refereed. However, there no indication on those journals which request from the author names of reviewers. Normally, the names of reviewers kept undisclosed so that to prevent conflict of interest issue. In addition, the promotion system booklet indicated that the academic journal must be specialized. Unfortunately, there are who deliberately published their research papers in multidiscipline journal. Authors must be aware of conflict of interest when inviting an author who is, at the same time, an editor for the same academic journal that is publishing the research paper. Therefore, it is essential for the CTS management to ensure that academic staff well aware of publication ethics to maintain a high level of academic standard and to prevent any conflict that might affect the learning process. The CTS management must issue a publications ethics booklet that tackle all aspects of publication ethics and norms to prevent any complexity and incredibility to the promotion system process. An interaction with academic staff through meetings, seminars, and discussions groups would enhance the level of academic staff awareness to publications ethics and norms.

### **7.4 Defining and unifying journals approval criteria.**

The promotion system booklet which was established in 2005 has revealed the criteria's for approving an academic journal. Academic journals must be refereed and has at least two to three issues published a year, have to be specialized, has an editorial board, and must be issued by a recognized academic organizations or institutions. Academic staff must not publish more than two research papers in one issue of the academic journal. The promotion system booklet did not tackle crucial aspects regarding the creditability of the academic journal. In respect to the refereed journal, the promotion system booklet did not wave or accept any academic journal that asked for names of reviewers which raise the issue of conflict of interest. In addition, no mentioned if the academic journal are multidiscipline which normally have less restrictions on publication comparing to a specialized academic journal. It is essential that the CTS management unified the 'criteria for approving academic journals for all the academic departments. In other word, all academic staff should be aware of those criteria to avoid any mis-interpretation or conflict that might evolve while approving or rejecting certain academic journals.

### **7.5 Defining and unifying research papers approval criteria.**

It is essential for academic staff to be aware of those criteria applied for approving research papers. It is the CTS management responsibility to inform academic departmental staff through meeting, seminars, and available network media of those criteria which are applied in approving research papers. In fact, through a past experience as a head of promotion committee, there are who published a research paper in a completely different area and apply for a promotion. The rejection of those research papers would provoke anger, dispute, and discomfort that might affect the learning acquisition and creating unhealthily learning environment.

### **7.6 Defining requirements for an academic staff to apply for a promotion.**

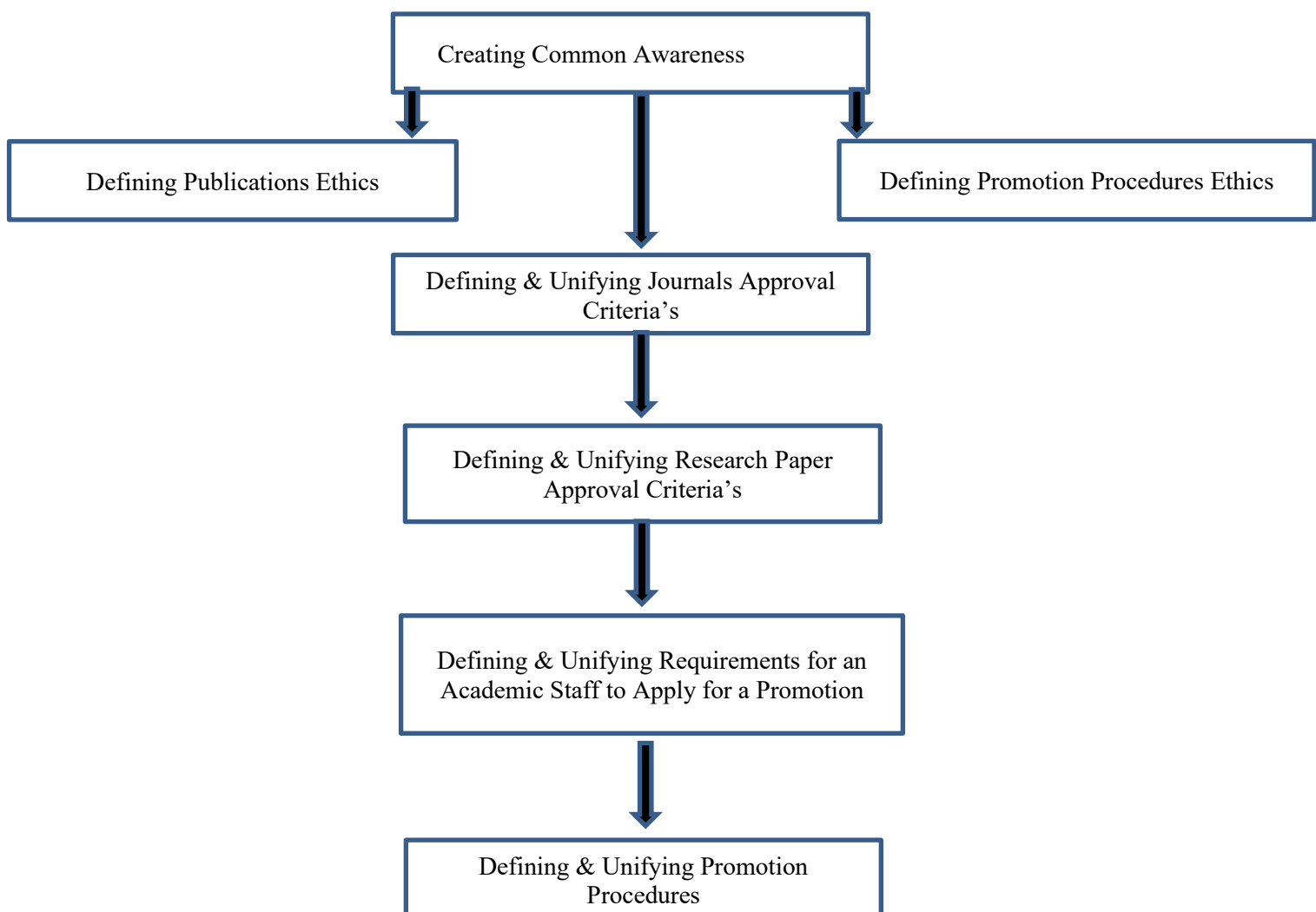
The promotion system booklet has specified the requirement for a candidate for an academic promotion. Amon which are: serving four years at the present academic status, participate in two training courses, achieved a minimum rating of "good" in teaching skills,

published ten research papers in a refereed journal where a minimum five research papers as a first author for a promotion to a professor title for instance, and participate in committees. It is highly preferable that an academic staff show a successful experience with related industry. Activities such as joint research, curriculum development, problem solving, seminars, updating workshops and laboratories, applying health and safety procedures, and industrial training programs. Therefrom, it is essential to inject new criteria that are related to industrial interaction with the CTS, when evaluating an academic staff for a promotion.

### 7.7 Defining promotion procedures.

It is in this stage where the frustration and anger occur when there is a either a deliberate delay of some sort of documents organizing and filtering that are related to an academic staff promotion. Even though, the promotion system booklet defined the promotion procedures and time table, there are a delay that affect the process of an academic promotion. Unfortunately, the promotion procedures are manually handled and loss of documents are inevitable. It is a management responsibility to ensure the availability of a proper promotion system that a candidate can apply electronically to avoid any delay or loss of essential documents. According to the dean of the CTS, the academic promotion system would be soon electronically to avoid any delay and loss of documents.

**Figure: 1 A Model for Enhancing Academic Staff Promotion System**



## **7. Discussions and Recommendations**

The need for skilled and semi-skilled indigenous manpower is highly noted in Kuwait, particularly in vital sector of the economy (e.g., oil, electricity and water and construction). The Kuwaiti government has forged the College of Technological Studies, CTS, under the umbrella of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training to respond to industrial need of local skilled and semi-skilled manpower. The success of the CTS in achieving and meeting the country's overall manpower plan would depend on the mentality of the CTS management. Unfortunately, through the past years the CTS has been managed and run by a Ph.D. holder with no or slim management skills. The need to coordinate efforts in technical and vocational education require a highly management skills. The CTS management has to show evidence of management success and ability in performing in a highly competitive environment. Personal interviews of possible candidates for the CTS management seems to be insufficient and unrealistic when eliminating management professional skills and positive attitudes. The believe that the success of vocational and technical education would depend on the ability of the CTS management to successfully collaborate with industries is one of its most highly priorities in vocational and technical education. Academic staff are considered a significant mediator between the CTS and related industries. A proper and efficient promotion system would indeed ensure that academic staff maintain a high standard of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are mostly required by industries. The reviewing, updating, and monitoring of an academic promotion system would contribute in the facilitating of achieving mutual interest between both parties (industries and CTS). The current promotion system has shown a notable deficiency that would affect the standard of the CTS graduates. The promotion system booklet has been forged in 2005 and since then not being reviewed nor updated. The academic promotion booklet

specified that the academic journal must be refereed but no mentioned if the academic journal ask for names of reviewers to be included with the submitted research paper. This would affect the creditability of the academic journals and authors. Academic staff tend to publish their research papers in a multidiscipline academic journal rather than a specialized academic journal despite the requirements mentioned in the promotion system booklet which emphasis on publishing in a specialized academic journal. The teaching skills is important in obtaining course objectives, however, a minimum rating of a "good" but not "very good or excellent" for assessing an academic staff performance in classroom, workshops and laboratories is considered unacceptable. Lecturers and trainers have to show a high standard of teaching and training skills in order to succeed in meeting industrial requirements particularly in managing, maintain, and probably adapting the imported technology to suit local environments. It was noted that the majority of published research papers at the CTS made by more than five authors. Academic staff who spend more than ten years and cannot publish a single research papers with his/her name must be checked his/her work creditability. Promotion system for academic staff must be electronic to avoid frustration and anger for either a deliberate delay or missing essential documents through the manual promotion process. The introduced model for enhancing academic staff promotion system would significantly contribute in preparing students to the world of work and thus reduce dependence on expatriates, the main aim of the overall manpower Kuwaiti governmental plan. Therefore, The CTS management must adapt the followings recommendations in order to achieve its objectives:

a) Creating and promotion an awareness among academic staff and stressing on the notion of an academic promotion which is dedicated for the improvement of the CTS graduates in order to meet industrial requirements. This can be conducted through seminars, meeting, and other available media means.

b) Introducing an ethical work code of conduct that clarify all norms and academic ethics to prevent any misunderstanding or unacceptable behaviour. Academic staff have been aware of all aspect of publications ethics and consequences. Academic promotion procedures ethics must be highlighted and stressed since anger and frustration occurred among academic staff in a regular basis. This can be accomplished by notifying academic staff through the departmental regular meetings.

c) Defining and unifying those criteria for approving academic journal among all academic departments. This can be accomplished through seminar and meetings.

d) Defining and unifying those criteria for approving research papers among all academic departments. This can be done through seminars and meetings.

e) Defining and unifying requirements for an academic staff to apply for a promotion. It is utterly unacceptable to accept a “good” rating but not “very good or excellent” for assessing lecturers and trainer’s performance in classroom, workshops, and laboratories.

f) Defining promotion procedures through the application of electronic system. This would overcome any deficiencies related to the delay of the promotion or loss of documents through the current manual procedure.

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