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The Wasted Professors: Rethinking Academic Merit

Professors are often seen as the top experts in their fields with high h-index scores and numerous citations. The term "professor" itself derives from the word "profess," signifying someone with strong knowledge and expertise. However, the reality paints that individuals with lower academic credentials demonstrate exceptional common sense and expertise. Professors of practice should become the norm. A professor of practice is a faculty member that a higher educational institution appoints to help students with their practical instruction. They typically have some academic backgrounds and are highly successful and knowledgeable in their fields.

Academic metrics like h-index and citation counts are often viewed as indicators of a professor's value. However, these measures do not fully capture an individual's ability to teach, mentor, or innovate within their field. The reliance on quantifiable achievements can overshadow the qualitative contributions of dedicated educators. Many professionals at the bachelor's or master's level possess deep knowledge and practical skills that can be used to support our students. Their experiences in the field lead to a more grounded understanding of real-world applications, allowing them to connect with students and address contemporary issues effectively.

Pursuing a PhD can be financially burdensome, leading many talented individuals to prioritize immediate employment or familial obligations over long-term academic goals. This financial strain can deter capable candidates from entering academia. Additionally, raising a family or managing personal issues can limit the time and resources available for advanced studies. As a result, capable individuals who could contribute significantly to academia are often sidelined.

Universities should recognize diverse pathways to expertise, valuing practical experience alongside traditional academic credentials to enhance the educational landscape. By embracing a broader definition of merit, institutions can cultivate a more inclusive environment. This flexibility can harness the knowledge of experienced professionals who bring unique insights to the classroom.

The academic community must reassess how it defines merit and capability. By embracing a broader understanding of expertise, we can foster a more inclusive and effective educational system. Recognizing that potential is not solely defined by academic titles can lead to a richer and more diverse learning experience for our students. In the UAE, the [Commission for Academic Accreditation](#) (CAA) has introduced an outcome-based evaluation framework, which will address many of the aforementioned issues.

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