

# Guest Faculty in The University System: Issues and Challenges

**Dr. Bibha Kumari**

Assistant Professor, Patna University, Patna

## **Abstract:**

Teachers are a vital part of the educational system. With the help of teachers, the educational system successfully makes students understand themselves more. From being a mentor to learner to a helping hand, teachers never fail to make themselves the base and inevitably the most important factor of the educational system. Can we imagine the impact of teacher shortage on the education system? Teacher shortages can significantly affect the entire teaching-learning process. In the knowledge era, when we are talking about developing productive manpower who could combat global challenges and survive in a world driven by knowledge, a shortage of teachers no doubt, can jeopardize the process. Thus, teachers are the fulcrum around which our entire education ecosystem revolves. Now the question arises- Why there is a shortage of teachers in the education system of our country and especially in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country? Is there a lack of qualified teachers or is there any problem with the recruitment mechanism of our university system? Answers to these questions lie in the fact that the basic reason for the shortage of teachers in HEIs is the lack of regular recruitment. The tentative solution to this problem which has been found by the Indian Universities is the hiring of ‘Guest lecturers, and ad-hoc lecturers temporarily.

In the present paper, a discussion has been made regarding the nature and appointment of guest lecturers, their service conditions, and duties performed by them.

**Keywords:** Guest Faculty, HEIs, Shortage of Teachers

## **1. Introduction:**

India has been known for its quality education for ages. In the Vedic era, the teacher enjoyed a special status and position. He/She was held in high esteem by society and this was due not only to learning and scholarship but also because of qualities of head, heart, and hand. The Guru or the teacher was an embodiment of good qualities, a fountain of knowledge, and an abode of spirituality. This tradition continued, and even after the establishment of India’s first university in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1857, our country produced high-quality teachers, and scholars who are still revered for their intellect and wisdom across the world. There is no doubt that teachers have worked tirelessly to impart quality education. But with time, we have witnessed a deterioration in this quality of teaching and learning. The most important setback came from the not recruitment of teachers in Higher education Institutions across the country. Since the 2000s, there has been an exponential growth in the number of higher education institutions and the college-going population, but as compared to this growth there is a huge mismatch between faculty demand and supply. According to the All-India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) reports regarding the growth in the number of students, they have gone up from 27.5 million in 2010

to 35.2 million in 2016 to 40.15 million in 2023. Since, the appointment of teachers in HEIs involved a lot of political willpower, and resources as well as complexities and constraints, the post of regular teachers remained vacant. It is in these circumstances that a new term called ‘Guest Faculty’ has come into vogue. To overcome the shortage of teachers, provision for guest faculty has been made in Indian universities.

## 2. Shortage of Faculties in Higher Education: What the Data shows?

The New Education Policy (NEP), 2020 emphasizes that among the several objectives for the Indian education system, the most critical is to achieve a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50% in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by 2035. While strides have been made in school GER, higher education GER lags significantly, with a current GER of 26.3% (Government of India, 2020). The NEP 2020 proposes meeting the 50% GER target through curriculum restructuring, pedagogical reforms, and assessment changes. However, India faces a shortage of quality teachers, needing 3.3 million more faculty members by 2035 for a 1:15 teacher-student ratio. Despite being the fourth-largest producer of Ph.D. scholars globally, the country grapples with a 38% demand-supply gap in higher education faculty (Kumar, 2021). In management, the ratio of potential students to faculty is 60:1, surpassing the target ratio of 10:1 (Srivastava, 2022). With this stark faculty shortage, it seems impossible to achieve the envisioned GER, and has become the foremost challenge facing higher education institutions in India. Since the 1980s, faculty shortages in India's higher education system have persisted, with private universities, comprising the majority of institutions, facing challenges in teacher availability. According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in 2022, 6180 positions across 45 central universities remained vacant out of a sanctioned strength of 18956 (Bajeli-Datt, 2022). 20.7% of seats of Assistant Professors, 45.98% of Associate Professors, and 59.8% of Professors are vacant. In Central universities, such as Allahabad and Delhi University, the faculty shortages exceed 47%. Between 2008 and 2018, new central universities operated at only 52% of faculty strength (Pushkar, 2018). At Delhi University, there is a huge faculty scarcity in its several departments, including Economics, Commerce, English, Law, Maths, Management, and Computer Science. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is confronted with a shortage of 140 faculty members against its sanctioned strength of 560, highlighting a pervasive dearth of quality faculty. Technical institutions, including IITs and IIMs, confront a 67% faculty shortage, with approximately 4,502 faculty posts vacant in IITs and 493 in IIMs out of sanctioned strengths (Reference). With this situation, how can any institution meet the standards as set aside by regulatory bodies like UGC, AICTE, and NAAC?

The problem is even worse at state universities. Here also several reasons prevail that hamper the appointment of regular teachers such as budgetary constraints, bureaucratic delays in recruitment, and the lack of attractive incentives for talented candidates. According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21 report, state universities in India have 543,135 sanctioned faculty positions, out of which 409,711 positions are filled, and 133,424 positions are vacant. This indicates a vacancy rate of approximately 24.5 percent. According to a report by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2020, Uttar Pradesh faces the highest teacher shortage in higher education, with 2,620 teaching positions vacant across 10 central universities (Agrawal, 2022). In Madurai Kamaraj University, despite having a sanctioned strength of 318 teaching faculty, the working strength was just 156 as of March 31, 2007. Posts of lecturers could not be filled for the past 17 years. In Patna University, has only 470 teachers against 981 sanctioned posts of teachers to teach nearly 20,000 students. All the 200-odd superior posts of teachers, including professors and readers, sanctioned by the UGC during different plan periods have been

lying vacant for the last several decades. Neither a single post has been created by the government since 1975 nor has any appointment been made against any vacant superior post since 1985 by the Bihar State University (Constituent Colleges) Service Commission. Hundreds of posts have fallen vacant following the superannuation of several working hands during the last 10 to 15 years (Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation 2018). Recently approx. 26 subjects teachers have been appointed through the Bihar Public Service Commission in various Universities of Bihar. In 2020, the Bihar State University Commission (BSUC) was constituted to look after the issue of teacher recruitment. Although vacancies have been created for appointment in 2020 but still except few subjects, appointments have not been done owing to the extremely slow process of interviews following several cases in the Patna High Court because of this the process has been jeopardized.

The widening gap between the demand and supply of teachers at all education levels brings numerous challenges, such as a decline in teaching quality, increased pressure on existing faculty, and demotivation among aspiring academics. The surge in the demand for teachers requires a redesign of recruitment processes. Instead of finding a concrete and lasting solution, universities have resorted to appointing guest faculties to show favorable teacher-student ratios. State universities hire guest faculty temporarily to meet their teaching requirements. Approximately there are 45,000 guest faculty positions in state universities across India University Grants Commission (UGC) report (2018). However, the UGC report also noted that many guest faculty positions remained vacant due to budgetary constraints and administrative delays in recruitment.

Thus, since the 1980s, there have been faculty shortages in India's higher education system, but they now seem to be a persistent condition. The lack of an adequate number of faculty members limits the country's desire to be known as a "Vishwa guru" and stunts the expansion of its knowledge industry. The provision of 'Guest Faculties' in Colleges or HEIs is not the permanent solution to the problem. But still, the responsibility for curriculum transaction and the teaching-learning process lies on the shoulders of these guest faculties. So, it is pertinent here to discuss who are guest faculty are and what kind of responsibilities are expected from these teachers. The time has come that a closer examination of the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals investing their time and effort as guest lecturers must be done.

### **3. Who is a Guest Lecturer/ Guest Faculty?**

A guest lecturer/faculty is an educator or academician who is appointed on a contractual basis to teach in Colleges, Departments of Universities, or any other Higher Educational Institutes. They are no doubt expert in their subjects but they are entrusted with the responsibilities of taking classes and giving lectures only when there is a shortage of teachers in particular subjects or courses. As compared to the regular faculties, they are supposed to teach limited subjects or take fewer classes. Most colleges and universities hire guest lecturers only for a single semester or academic year and renew their contracts periodically as they do not have fixed tenure. So, any person who holds the desirable qualifications to teach in HEIs based on which he/she is hired on a part-time contractual basis and does not have a proper working period or tenure is referred to as a guest lecturer. They do not hold the responsibilities of full-time teachers but teach like full-time teachers. The Guest lecturers are exempted from most of the responsibilities of a full-time faculty and are not required to publish papers, hold or attend administrative meetings, and conduct research. Yet, they have become a crucial component of the HEIs. They are required to spend time with students to fulfill their teaching responsibilities and must possess the required teaching skills and

knowledge. They play an equal role in imparting quality education to the students and their role cannot be sidelined.

These are some common responsibilities with which these faculties have been entrusted. Firstly, they are tasked with preparing lesson plans for their classes and effectively delivering lectures. They are supposed to engage students by imparting information uniquely and interactively. Additionally, they play a pivotal role in assessing student performance, assigning and evaluating projects and assignments, as well as preparing, conducting, and evaluating examinations. Beyond the academic realm, they provide invaluable guidance and career advice to students, contributing to their personal and professional development. They also take on the responsibility of organizing educational trips and field visits, enriching students' learning experiences beyond the classroom setting. Their involvement extends to the broader college community as they play a role in organizing events, seminars, and workshops. Furthermore, they create electronic content (e-content) for students, ensuring accessibility through submission to the university's portal. Lastly, they have to take on various tasks assigned by the college or department, showcasing their commitment to the holistic development of their students and the overall success of the educational institution. Not only this but they are also supposed to enhance their professional expertise by participating in academic discourse by writing and submitting academic papers to journals. Based on their overall performance, their assessment is done either by the Head of the Department or by the Principal of the Colleges and then only their contract can be renewed for the next academic session.

#### **4. What the UGC Guidelines State about Guest Faculty in Indian Universities**

As per UGC guidelines, guest faculty will not be treated like regular teachers to vote rights or to become members of the various statutory bodies of the university. The guest Faculty will not be given the benefit of allowance, pension, gratuity leaves, etc. as admissible to the regular teachers. The UGC revised the Guidelines for Guest Faculty in its 537<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2018 and as such some changes have been made which could be stated as follows:

- The Honorarium for Guest Faculty will be enhanced to Rs. 1500/- per lecture, subject to a maximum of Rs. 50,000/- per month\*. It is noteworthy that the previous rates were Rs. 1000/- per lecture and Rs. 25,000/- per month.
- Guest Faculty appointments are to be made exclusively against sanctioned posts. However, in cases where the number of sanctioned posts falls short of meeting the teaching load requirements in certain Universities, up to 20% additional Guest Faculty may be appointed over and above the sanctioned posts.
- The qualifications for Guest Faculty will align with those prescribed for regular Assistant Professors in Universities/Colleges, as specified in the UGC regulations.
- The selection procedure for appointing Guest Faculty will mirror that of regularly appointed Assistant Professors, ensuring a consistent and rigorous process for both categories of faculty members.

#### **5. Issues and Challenges Faced by Ad Hoc /Guest Faculties**

Working as a guest faculty is accompanied by several issues and challenges. It is not about just taking classes and getting paid for this. But the provision of hiring them temporarily puts a question mark on their existence. However, engaging in teaching as a guest faculty offers valuable opportunities for their professional development. It allows individuals to gain practical teaching experience, fostering a hands-on understanding of pedagogical strategies. Actively participating in seminars, engaging in academic

discussions, and collaborating with other professors contribute to the development of a robust professional network. Moreover, serving as a guest faculty member facilitates the enhancement of communication skills, as individuals interact with diverse groups of students and colleagues. The ability to design effective lessons for students is honed through this experience, providing a platform for creative and impactful teaching methods. Being a guest faculty member also enables one to influence young minds positively, contributing to their holistic development. Active involvement in extra-curricular and administrative activities further enriches the overall teaching experience.

However, despite these enriching experiences, guest faculty members often face challenges. Their contributions are not accorded priority in regular vacancies, and the working conditions are less than ideal. The remuneration, approximately Rs. 50,000 per month for eleven months, comes with the caveat of a service contract renewal for the next calendar year. Unfortunately, this renewal process results in the loss of one month's payment of honorarium for guest lecturers. Additionally, they forego honorariums for summer vacations, adding to the challenges faced by these dedicated educators. Efforts to address and improve these working conditions are essential to recognize and encourage the valuable contributions made by guest faculty members. These universities manage to barely do just about enough in terms of teaching by using large armies of ad-hoc or part-time/guest faculty. Indeed, all government universities make generous use of part-time/Guest faculty out of necessity, because they do not have budgets to hire full-time faculty. Hiring ad-hoc/guest faculty – who are poorly paid – is the only affordable option but over time, if not absorbed into the system, they lose all motivation to do the job well. Furthermore, salaries at these institutions remain below that recommended by the Seventh Pay Commission, and even then, in some states, teachers are only occasionally paid on time.

This is common to private institutions whose strategy is to manage with less to maximize profits. Most private institutions prefer to hire larger numbers of ad-hoc faculty/guest faculty as a matter of choice and complain about the shortage of suitably qualified faculty across all disciplines. A lot of institutes avoid having permanent faculties for the numerous courses. They rely heavily on guest faculties for the academic purpose. A lecture fee varying from Rs 200-400 in institutes is a trend that seems to continue forever. The remaining faculty or as called 'Contract Faculty' was another way out for the institutes to save costs. Such is the situation that Rs 21600 a basic implementation of the UGC scale is done purposely. Using this trick, the institutes have played a major role in hiring faculty not as per industry demands or requirements. There are several departments which have only one or two permanent faculty members and the rest are guest lecturers. For important department-related activities like curriculum development, admissions procedures, and decisions guest faculty take part. Many advocate for the absorption of ad-hoc and guest faculty members as a potential solution. The uncertain employment conditions contribute to a stressful atmosphere, further complicating their situation. Their plights can be understood from the fact that these guest faculties are ousted as soon as regular teachers are appointed. There are several such instances from different Universities across the country. The institutions show no sympathy towards these faculties who contributed to the whole process of teaching-learning and served as a backbone for the institutions.

## 6. Conclusion

The above discussion highlights the challenges faced by ad-hoc/guest faculties, marked by an uncertain future and job insecurity. In India, a significant number of ad-hoc/guest faculties, having dedicated more than 5-7 years to teaching university students and meeting all eligibility criteria established for appointing

regular professors, find themselves grappling with a bleak and uncertain future. The appointing authorities, unfortunately, exhibit a neglectful attitude, contributing to the predicament of these educators. Despite accumulating vast teaching experience, these individuals encounter a disheartening reality when regular appointment processes commence, as their expertise is not duly considered in the selection procedure. The availability of numerous eligible candidates for permanent positions further compounds the challenges faced by ad-hoc/guest faculties. To address this issue, it is imperative that guest faculties, particularly those holding Ph.D. degrees from reputable institutions and possessing UGC NET qualifications, be allowed to transition into regular faculty positions at the universities where they are currently teaching. Such a measure will not only acknowledge their academic credentials but also aid in mitigating the shortage of teaching staff within the university. This approach would contribute to a more equitable and supportive environment for guest faculties, fostering their professional growth and stability.

## 7. References

1. Singh, Mithilesh. (July 22, 2008). Apeejay Sty Education Research Foundation. Shortage of Teachers in Institutions of Higher learning. Retrieved from <https://aserf.org.in/analysis/Shortage%20of%20Teachers%20in%20Institutions%20of%20Higher%20Learning.pdf> dated October 15, 2023
2. IAS score (May 30, 2023). The lack of teachers in higher Education in India. Retrieved from <https://iasscore.in/current-affairs/the-lack-of-teachers-in-higher-education-in-india> dated October 20, 2023
3. Patil, Amruta (May 30, 2023). Prepp. The Lack of Teachers in Higher Education. The Hindu retrieved from <https://prepp.in/news/e-1552-the-lack-of-teachers-in-higher-education-upsc-current-affairs> dated October 20, 2023
4. The Print (October 25, 2023). 'Budget constraints, low-quality candidates': Why Indian universities are facing faculty shortage. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/India/education/budget-constraints-low-quality-candidates-why-Indian-universities-are-facing-faculty-shortage/1257490/> dated
5. Government of India. (2020). All India Survey on Higher education. [https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd\\_files/NEP\\_Final\\_English\\_o.pdf](https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd_files/NEP_Final_English_o.pdf). Retrieved from October 30, 2023
6. Government of India. (2020). All India Survey of Higher Education. <https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/viewDocument.action?jsessionid=62991A187E92D268CD1DBFB91913BC07?Documented=2771>. Retrieved from October 30, 2023
7. Kumar, C. (2021, March 16). 38% of faculty posts lying vacant at India's premier institutions India News. Times of India. The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/38-faculty-posts-lying-vacant-at-indias-premier-institutions/articleshow/81521268.cms> Retrieved dated November 10, 2023
8. THE WIRE, Like it or Not, Faculty Shortages in Indian Universities Are.... Retrieved from November 10, 2023. <https://thewire.in/education/like-it-or-not-faculty-shortages-in-Indian-universities-are-now-permanent>.
9. Srivastava, R. (2022, March 4). How to alleviate the critical shortage of higher education faculty. LinkedIn. [https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-alleviate-criticalshortagehighereducationrajendrasrivastava/?trk=public\\_profile\\_article\\_view](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-alleviate-criticalshortagehighereducationrajendrasrivastava/?trk=public_profile_article_view) Retrieved from November 15, 2023.

10. Bajeli-Datt, K. (2022, December 13). Shortage of teachers in IITs and IIMs, says the center. The New Indian Express. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/dec/13/shortage-of-teachers-in-iits-and-iims-says-centre-2527521.html>. Retrieved from November 30, 2023.
11. Pushkar. (2018). Like it or not, faculty shortages in Indian universities are now permanent. The Wire. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/education/like-it-or-not-faculty-shortages-in-indian-universities-are-now-permanent>. December 5, 2023.
12. Agrawal, S. (2022, August). UP tops the list of states with the most faculty vacancies in centrally-run institutes. The print. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/education/up-tops-list-of-states-wit-most-faculty-vacancies-in-centrally-run-institutes/1067721/> December 7, 2023
13. University Grants Commission (28 Jan,2019) [https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/5315244\\_Revised-Guideline-Guest-Faculty.pdf](https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/5315244_Revised-Guideline-Guest-Faculty.pdf). Retrieved from December 10, 2023.
14. Mehta, Arun C (2023). All India Higher Education Survey (AIHES) & Status of Higher Education in India 2023. NIEPA, New Delhi. Retrieved from <https://educationforallinindia.com/about-udiseplus-portal/> December 10, 2023
15. Global Governance Initiative, India's Ongoing Teacher Crisis: Policy Education Guide on Quality, Quantity, and Gender. <https://www.theggi.org/post/policy-education-guide-upsc-india-s-ongoing-teacher-crisis-quality-quantity-and-gender>. Retrieved from December 28, 2023