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Introduction

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How to cite:

Locke, William (2007). Introduction. In: Locke, William and Teichler, Ulrich eds. The Changing Conditions for Academic Work and Careers in Select Countries. Werkstattberichte (66). Kassel, Germany: International Centre for Higher Education Research, pp. 7–13.

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Introduction

William Locke and Ulrich Teichler

Institutions of higher education are usually acknowledged as the key organizations in society serving the generation, preservation and dissemination of systematic knowledge. The academic profession constitutes the “productive workforce” within these institutions. Academics are highly respected because they form the “key profession” among the professions, as the British social historian Harold Perkin once wrote, i.e. the apex of knowledge in all disciplinary and professional areas. They are a highly select group and have succeeded in most countries over long periods of history in claiming that academic freedom and the governance of their institutions as a republic of scholars were both necessary to ensure the highest quality and significance of higher education. In many countries of the world, a third claim has also been fundamental for about the last two centuries: that the highest quality is guaranteed if the academics at universities – the traditional core institutions of higher education in most countries of the world – are in charge of both the generation and dissemination of knowledge, i.e. research and teaching.

As the academic profession is so central to the functioning of the higher education system, academics are bound to experience substantial changes when higher education as a whole undergoes major transformation. Since the recovery from the devastation of World War II, higher education in many parts of the world has experienced unprecedented growth. Overall student enrolment all over the world has increased more than ten times within five decades. Most narrative accounts suggest that the institutions at the top hardly changed initially while systems developed a longer tail of new institutions only in part reflecting the quality, the functional composition, and the academic freedom of those at the top. The student protests in the late 1960s are often seen as the impetus for major reconsideration of structure, functions, governance, and the modes of teaching and learning. Altogether, both expansion and these major reforms reflect the growing importance of higher education for nations and, in a wider context, a major component of what is called the trend towards the “knowledge society”.

It is interesting to note that the growing societal importance of higher education does not guarantee greater public appreciation or a higher self-esteem. On the contrary, academics lose some of their social exclusiveness and uniqueness as

carriers of systematic knowledge. The conditions for teaching and research are more strongly shaped by financial constraints and efficiency pressures. The respect for the quality of their work is challenged by a growth in measures of performance assessment, and their power to shape their institutional environment is weakened. Academic careers become less predictable and, at least in the early stages, more shaky. Although pressures for the relevance of academic work increase, academics have more difficulties in being heard and recognized by society as a key source of expertise.

The paradox of the growing importance of higher education and the increasingly insecure position of the major producers and disseminators of academic knowledge was already a key issue of debate when, for the first time, an international comparative study was undertaken in 1992. Initiated and coordinated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the so-called *Carnegie Study on the Academic Profession* (see Altbach 1996; Maassen and van Vught, 1996) suggested that the ideal of academic freedom and predominantly collegial coordination continued to shape the minds of most academics. However, higher education had changed so that academics had to accommodate and negotiate more than before within their institutional and societal environments and the conditions under which the academics operated had become quite diverse within each country. Moreover, this first major comparative study was most valuable in highlighting national differences, even though universities are shaped in some respect by universal conditions, cosmopolitan values and international cooperation. Striking differences could be observed in the extent and modes of institutional diversity, the conditions and selectivity of junior academic careers, the proportion of part-time teachers, the assessment of academic work, modes of governmental steering and institutional governance, the perception of the individual university as a place with which the academics identify themselves, as well as the role that academics play in society.

The conditions under which the academic profession operates seem to have changed even more rapidly during the one and a half decades since this first comparative survey was undertaken than in the preceding decades. Therefore, higher education researchers from more than 20 countries joined forces to undertake a second survey in 2007. Within the framework of the new project "The Changing Academic Profession", initiated by William K. Cummings (George Washington University, Washington D.C., United States.), two workshops were held in Paris (France) in 2004 and London (United Kingdom) in 2005 to establish a conceptual and methodological framework for a comparative study. Subsequently, efforts were made, first at a workshop in Hiroshima (Japan) in 2006, to map changes in national higher education systems most relevant for the academic profession (RIHE, 2006). As a second step, at a workshop in Kassel (Germany) in cooperation with the UNESCO Forum for Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, selected areas of change were scrutinized which are of utmost importance and play

a major role in most of the countries cooperating in this second comparative survey: how the academic profession is exposed and responds to increasing expectations of the relevance of academic work, how the growing trend of internationalization affects academia, how changes in the doctoral phase of learning and academic work shapes academic careers, and how academic work and employment changes amidst major transformations in governance, notably the growing power of institutional management in many countries (Kogan and Teichler (eds.), 2007).

But obviously, other important changes clearly underpinned the topics highlighted by the second survey. Growing competition, increasing commercialization in all aspects of higher education, closer cooperation between universities and external stakeholders, the spread of communication technologies, the growing relevance of English as the *lingua franca* of higher education, the increasing relevance of lifelong learning can all be named in this context. In this context, team members of the comparative study were invited to write country reports in which they not only focus on the changes relevant to the academic profession that have been selected for particular attention in this study, but also begin to address a broader range of current conditions for the academic profession in their respective nations. Team members from 12 countries and five continents volunteered to contribute to this volume by highlighting the major conditions for the academic profession in their respective nations.

In the first chapter of this selection of reports on the *Changing Academic Profession*, Ulrich Teichler provides a broad-ranging review of the challenges to the profession in *Germany* and other European countries. The analysis untangles three issues: (i) the growing demand for systematic and applied knowledge, the expansion of higher education and the resulting pattern and structure of the system; (ii) changes in the steering, governance and management of higher education institutions; and (iii) growing international mobility and cooperation and the decline in the influence of nations on higher education. Teichler notes that the perception that the challenges are similar in most European countries and many other parts of the world should not obscure the reality that the reforms may be different, according to national traditions, the extent of modernization and the political choices made in each country.

Marek Melichar and Petr Pabian, of the Center for Higher Education Studies, Prague, use the metaphor of centers and peripheries to frame their chapter on the academic profession in the *Czech Republic*. They argue that the issue of the relevance of academic work is surprisingly peripheral in the Czech context; that Czech academics find themselves on the periphery of the international academy; and that they enjoy a central position in a rather peripheral model of higher education and research governance. The authors analyze the factors pushing Czech academics away from these peripheries: towards the centre of public attention, towards the centre of the international academic community, and towards more mainstream managerial models.

Gerard Postiglione, from the University of *Hong Kong*, reviews the drivers embedded in the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, viz economic globalization, the national mission and the human resource 'brain race'. Its market-oriented background, together with a strong history of internationalism has enabled the Region to establish a highly competitive academic system that has been able to take advantage of the current challenges to the academic profession and higher education in general. The reunion with the Chinese mainland and the social and economic changes occurring there, the expansion of a relatively small higher education system in Hong Kong and the dual use of English and Chinese Mandarin as the languages of instruction, make this a unique context in which to examine the complex interplay of factors affecting the profession and preparation for entry to it.

South Africa has experienced momentous changes in the past 15 years. These changes have affected not only South African society, but the higher education sector as well, and by implication, the academic profession. In their chapter, C. C. Wolhuter from North-West University and Philip Higgs from the University of South Africa outline the key social and economic changes arising from the ending of minority White rule and their impact on higher education. The authors draw on the results of a survey of academics in 2002 using the same instrument as the original Carnegie study a decade before, together with related research. They highlight the rapid internationalization of the profession and achievement of gender equity, together with low productivity and the persistence of racial disparities. The new survey will enable the researchers to investigate these aspects more thoroughly.

Elizabeth Balbachevsky and Simon Schwartzman from NUPES (Higher Education Research Center), University of San Paulo, *Brazil*, outline the evolution of Brazilian higher education during the stabilization of the country's economy and its opening up to international competition. They begin with a brief history of higher education in Brazil, describe its relevant features today and provide key data on the different segments of the system and the patterns of academic employment and credentials. Balbachevsky and Schwartzman outline a four-part typology of profiles of academics in different parts of this stratified system, and offer an analysis of how government and institutional policies have impacted differently on each type, including the recent retrenchment under the current president of the country. They conclude, however, that the system and the conditions for the academic profession are not becoming more stratified as many assume, and even that some convergence is observable.

The origins and main characteristics of the *Japanese* academic profession are analyzed in the chapter by Akira Arimoto, formerly of the Research Institute for Higher Education, Hiroshima University. They include a stronger orientation to research than teaching, a pyramid form of stratification of higher education institutions, a conflict between the German and the North American models in the con-

struction of a modern higher education system since World War II, an imbalance between male and female academics, and the transformation of the chair system and creation of four levels of academic posts in order to improve academic productivity. In a nation that is on the verge of achieving a universal higher education system, Arimoto outlines the challenges of constructing a new vision and identity for the profession.

The chapter on *Australia*, by Grant Harman and Lynn Meek of the Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy at the University of New England, pays particular attention to how academics have responded to a more managerial university administration and culture, with a much stronger emphasis on entrepreneurial activities within departments and faculties and enhanced university-industry links. Using national survey data and a variety of secondary sources, Harman and Meek summarize major Australian policy and contextual changes, explore how academics in general have reacted, and document aspects of the impact of changes on academic qualifications, work roles and practices, job satisfaction and academic values.

The phenomenal expansion of higher education in the last decade and a half in *Malaysia* has challenged the traditional roles of academics, writes Morshidi Sirat and colleagues from the National Higher Education Research Institute (NAHERI), Universiti Sains Malaysia. Bureaucratization and corporatization have eroded the collegial culture, and increasing demands on academics to be fundraisers and adopt administrative and managerial roles have taken them away from traditional teaching and research. Many academics remain strongly opposed to some of these changes, which bring about paradoxes and tensions for the academic community. Nevertheless, they have led to the generation of new academic roles and the diversification of existing ones.

The coexistence of change and continuity is the theme of the chapter on the *United Kingdom*, by John Brennan and William Locke of the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information at the Open University and Rajani Naidoo from the Department of Education, University of Bath. They outline the main features of the academic profession, which is increasingly being regarded by government and its agencies as part of a higher education 'workforce' to be 'developed' and which is becoming stratified by role and type of institution. Brennan, Locke and Naidoo describe the conditions of academic work in the UK and the impact of increasing demands for relevance in research and teaching, the internationalization of student and staff recruitment and the role of the English language in this process, and the impact of the market and managerialism on the locus of control and autonomy in higher education.

Agnete Vabø, from NIFU STEP Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, *Norway*, analyzes the autonomy and power of the profession in that country to control academic work. She argues that the academic profession has become increasingly subject to a principal-agent relationship with national and interna-

tional sponsors, and this has reduced its power to control the content and nature of this work. This is reflected in expectations that higher education will play a central role in Norway's transition from an economy based on raw materials to one that is sustainable, the quest for internationalization, and increasingly managerialist modes of governance of universities. Vabø concludes that, with the growing importance of stakeholders such as employers, students, university administrators, and external governors, academics have been reduced to one interest group among many others.

In *Finland*, the retention of the principles of a welfare society has strongly influenced the recent massification of the higher education system. In their chapter, Timo Aarrevaara and Seppo Hölttä, from the Department of Management Studies, University of Tampere, describe how the Ministry of Education contracts with universities with funding linked to agreed goals, in particular, the number of degrees awarded. Government policies have increasingly aligned higher education and research with national efforts to increase competitiveness. This contractual relationship is applied within universities and has increased the pressure for performance-oriented behavior and flexible workloads based on results. This brings into question the division of work between the different professions and support staff in institutions and the authors conclude by suggesting an alternative, combined academic profession in which individuals move between roles.

The final chapter, by James Taylor and colleagues at the Centre for Research on Higher Education Policies (CIPES) in *Portugal*, briefly follows the history of Portuguese higher education and examines the state of the academic profession as they find it today. It then takes a more critical view of the present by examining a recent report on Portuguese higher education issued by the OECD, the Bologna Process and efforts towards international assessment, and how these factors are impacting the academic profession. It concludes by providing thoughts on the future, with an emphasis on the multifaceted role of the academic professional in addressing system challenges, potential drivers of change and structural reform for system-wide prosperity.

This volume was made possible because Maurice Kogan (London) and Ulrich Teichler (Kassel) outlined a conceptual framework for a workshop held in September 2006 in Kassel, Germany. Sadly, Maurice Kogan died before the results of the workshop were published. The UNESCO Forum for Higher Education, Research and Knowledge as well as the individual members of the international research team provided the financial means for the workshop. Oliver Bracht (Kassel) was responsible for most of the organizational aspects of the workshop. William Locke (Open University, UK) advised the authors and contributed to the quality of writing. Christiane Rittgerott (Kassel) took care of the publication process, and Helga Cassidy and Dagmar Mann were most helpful in the type-setting and formatting of the manuscripts submitted. The International Centre for Higher

Education Research, Kassel, took care of the printing costs. Without the active support of all the persons and institutions involved, this valuable basis for reflection and information could not have realized. Its value is likely to be even more highly appreciated when the survey of “The Changing Academic Profession” is completed and its findings are made available.

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