



CHANGING ACADEMIC PROFESSION

AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT

Argentina

Monica Marquina
Universidad Nacional General Sarmiento

Australia

V. Lynn Meek
University of New England

China and Hong Kong

Hong Shen
Huazhong University of Science and Technology
Gerard Postiglione
University of Hong Kong

Finland

Seppo Hölttä
University of Tampere

France

Christine Musselin
Centre for Organizational Sociology

Germany

Ulrich Teichler
Marek Fuchs
Kassel University

India

N Jayaram
Tata Institute of Social Studies

Japan

Akira Arimoto
Futao Huang
Hiroshima University

Netherlands

Jürgen Enders
University of Twente

Norway

Bjørn Stensaker
NIFU-STEP

Portugal

Alberto Amaral
Fundaçao des Universidades Portuguesas

Russia

Olga Bain
George Washington University

United Kingdom

John Brennan
Open University
Rajani Naidoo
University of Bath

United States

William K. Cummings
George Washington University,
Joseph Berger
University of Massachusetts-Amherst,
Martin Finkelstein
Carol Frances
Seton Hall University,
John Hawkins
UCLA,
Lisa Wolf-Wendel
University of Kansas.

1. Aims of the project

The project will examine the nature and extent of the changes experienced by the academic profession in recent years. It will explore both the reasons for and the consequences of these changes. It will consider the implications of the changes for the attractiveness of the academic profession as a career and for the ability of the academic community to contribute to the further development of knowledge societies and the attainment of national goals. The project, relying on a six-stage model of change, will make comparisons on these matters between different national higher education systems, institutional types, disciplines and generations of academics. The following countries are committed to conduct national studies: Argentina, Australia, China and Hong Kong, Finland, France, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Russia, The Netherlands, UK, and the US. Additional countries are under consideration including Brazil, Canada, Korea, Korea, Singapore, Sweden, and South Africa.

2. Context of the project

As the landscape of higher education has in recent years undergone significant changes, so correspondingly have the backgrounds, specialisations, expectations and work roles of academic staff. In many countries the academic profession is ageing, increasingly insecure, more accountable, more internationalised and less likely to be organised along disciplinary lines. It is expected to be more professional in teaching, more productive in research and more entrepreneurial in everything. A private sector has become more prominent in many national systems and new approaches to governance and management are evolving in both private and public sectors. In many places, the very definition of an academic has become ambiguous as have the boundaries between academic jobs and the jobs of other professionals, both within and beyond the walls of the academy. Some of these changes have raised questions about the attractiveness of an academic career for today's graduates.

With expansion of higher education has come increasing differentiation, increasing expectations from society, and an evolution of professional roles that may take academics away from their original disciplines towards new forms of identity and loyalty. At the same time, knowledge has come to be identified as the most vital resource of contemporary societies, and many nations have taken great strides to improve their capacity for knowledge creation and application. This new devotion to knowledge has both expanded the role of the academy and challenged the coherence and viability of the traditional academic role. Three new emphases have become particularly pervasive:

Relevance. Whereas the highest goal of the traditional academy was to create fundamental knowledge, what has been described as the 'scholarship of discovery', the new emphasis of the knowledge society is on useful knowledge or the 'scholarship of application'. This scholarship often involves the pooling and melding of insights from several disciplines and tends to focus on outcomes that have a direct impact on everyday life.

There are strong interdependencies between the goals of higher education, the rules for distributing resources, and the nature of academic work. The changes associated with movement from the 'traditional academy' with its stress on basic research and disciplinary teaching to the 'relevant academy' are largely uncharted and are likely to have unanticipated consequences. The task of the project is therefore to understand how these changes influence academic value systems and work practices and affect the nature and locus of control and power in academe.

Internationalisation. National traditions and socio-economic circumstances continue to play an important role in shaping academic life and have a major impact on the attractiveness of jobs in the profession. Yet today's global trends, with their emphasis on knowledge production and information flow, play an increasingly important role in the push towards the internationalisation of higher education. The international mobility of students and staff has grown, new technologies connect scholarly communities around the world, and English has become the new lingua franca of the international community. Questions are therefore raised about the functions of international networks, the implications of differential access to them and the role of new communication technologies in internationalising the profession.

Management. In academic teaching and research, where professional values are traditionally firmly woven into the very fabric of knowledge production and dissemination, attempts to introduce change are sometimes received with scepticism and opposition. At the same time, a greater professionalisation of higher management is regarded as necessary to enable higher education to respond effectively to a rapidly changing external environment. The control and management of academic work will help define the nature of academic roles – including the division of labour in the academy, with a growth of newly professionalised 'support' roles and a possible breakdown of the traditional teaching/research nexus. New systemic and institutional processes such as quality assurance have been introduced which also change traditional distributions of power and values within academe and may be a force for change in academic practice. The project will examine both the rhetorics and the realities of academics' responses to such managerial practices in higher education.

3. Method

Each participating country team will obtain a national representative sample of its academic profession. In order to allow international comparisons, all countries will address some core groups and conform to the highest standards of sampling and data collection. The project will use a self-administered survey instrument. In order to minimize measurement bias across countries, country teams will maintain a high level of standardization in terms of question order, question wording, response options, reference periods, and layout and formal design. However, cultural patterns and language specifics might require functional rather than formal equivalents. Country teams may design national extensions to the questionnaire. Participating countries plan to complete data collection by the middle of 2007. Data entry and cleaning will be organized in a central facility in each country. The international data set will be made available by late 2007 when the project will begin reporting its findings. All participating countries will have full access to the common data set. The project is democratically coordinated and any member can be contacted for further information. The current international coordinator and hence the first point of contact is William K. Cummings, Professor of International Education at The George Washington University, 2134 G St., Washington, D.C., USA or wkcum@gwu.edu with phone of 202-994-4698 and fax of 202-994-0148.

4. Significance

In this period of rapid change stimulated by globalization and national policies promoting the knowledge economy, it is essential to understand the orientations and actions of knowledge workers, and especially those of the academic profession who occupy such a central position in the knowledge production process. What are the academic profession's views towards the increasing relevance, internationalization, and managerial adaptations of their workplace, and how are these views changing? The CAP project is especially well positioned to answer these questions. It will be carried out by a high quality international team committed to open scholarship. The survey it plans to conduct will build on the First International Survey of the Academic Profession carried out in 1991 in 14 nations; hence many of the findings can be directly compared to findings from this earlier period. The CAP team is committed to expeditiously sharing its findings with the various stakeholders concerned with the future of the academic profession. The CAP project will thus be able to provide unique insights on a wide variety of issues facing the academy including:

- To what extent is the nature of academic work changing?
- What are the external and internal drivers of these changes?
- To what extent do changes differ between countries, disciplines, and types of higher education institutions?
- How do the academic professions respond to changes in their external and internal environment?
- What are the consequences for the attractiveness of an academic career?
- What are the consequences for the capacity of academics to contribute to the further development of knowledge societies and the attainment of national goals?