



RESEARCH AND TRAINING NETWORK

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Academic Staff in Europe: Changing Employment and Working Conditions¹

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1. An Uncertain Profession

In observing the various sectors of production and service in our modern societies and the various institutions in charge we note that the higher education and research sector is peculiar in several respects. It might be characterised by a relatively open set of goals, by loose mechanism of coercion, control and steering from above, by a high degree of fragmentation and - last, not least - by a strong influence of the principal workers - the academic profession - on the determination of goals, on the management and administration of its institutions and on the daily routines of work in the respective sector. In addition, if we look on the interrelationships between different sectors of production and services, we might consider the academic profession as one of the most influential one in shaping other sectors as well, as - for example - Harold Perkin (1969) underscored in calling the academic profession the "key profession".

Public debate and academic reflection on the academic profession is, however, not characterised by contentment and serenity. We note complaints that the concept of a single academic profession might be an illusion, that the academic profession hardly can cope with the professional tensions it has to live with, that the academic profession is endangered.

Second, we can reasonably ask to what extent the conceptual framework of 'the profession' fits for academics in higher education. At least, three different concepts might be emphasised in the academic context:

- the 'profession', best represented by the independent so-called liberal professions, i.e. lawyers and medical practitioners;
- the 'estate', deeply rooted in older pre-industrial and pre-professional characteristics of guild-like organised vocations;
- the 'staff', employees in large institutions that have to deliver an efficient service.

Obviously, all three options are possible ones embedded in the positioning of academics in higher education. They might be treated as alternatives but might as well be mixed up in the same system, the same institution or in the same academic position. However, we note different conceptual traditions and we have to take into account systematic variations of the academic profession according to countries, for example the Oxbridge, the Humboldtian and Napoleonic approach. Furthermore we note specific national laws and other regulations, and we have to take into account specific social and economic conditions of individual countries.

Third, we can ask, if the recent changes of and the new challenges for higher education have a serious impact on the academic profession. Since about two decades it is widely assumed that the academic profession seems to feel increasingly entrenched and the available literature suggests (cf. for example, the overview in Clark, 1987; Altbach, 1991; Morey, 1992) that the sense of

crisis has grown as far as the academic profession is concerned. Decline, erosion, and de-professionalisation are frequently used words in a growing literature asking if the academic profession might be on the way of losing its characteristic features.

The concern about the academic profession is obviously entangled with the massification of higher education and the long standing secular trend towards a 'knowledge' society, a 'highly qualified' society, a society of 'life-long learning' or an 'information' society. Whatever the short hand title might be, the transition of higher education and the changing nature and role of knowledge for society seem to be accompanied by changes in higher education and its interrelationship with society that are a mixed blessing to universities, their status, function and role (cf. Teichler et.al. 1998).

2. Recent Pressures

In many industrial societies, the coincidence of three phenomena had contributed to political climate in the 1960s and early 1970s which allowed for a substantial increase of the expenses for higher education:

- the boom of the economics of education, i.e. the believe that substantial educational investment is needed in order to ensure economic growth,
- the readiness to reduce inequality of opportunities in education, and
- the radical student protest of the late 1960s

In various countries, that period was overshadowed by marked controversies about the future of higher education and about the role professors, junior academic staff, students and possibly other staff and the externals should play in the decision-making processes within higher education. Yet, in retrospect, this period might be viewed as a time in which the dominant political forces in industrial societies considered higher education as a relevant sector for the future of society.

Since about two decades, however, it is widely assumed that the academic profession seems to feel increasingly entrenched, and we observe a growing literature studying the academic profession in comparative perspectives (cf. Altbach 1996; Enders/Teichler 1997; Farnham 1999; Karpen/Hanske 1994; Kogan/Moses/El-Khawas 1994). Four closely interrelated problems tend to be named in this context.

First, the academic profession seems to face a more rapid status loss than in the past. In many countries, it is assumed that the professoriate lost its high rank in the reputation of various professions, relative losses of income are reported, and junior positions became more risky and less well paid. The above named notion that the members of an expanding profession with growing importance for

society might consider themselves losers applies for the last two decades more strikingly than for previous periods.

Second, the resources at institutions of higher education became more tight than in the past. In many industrial countries, the student: academic staff ratio increased and the basic funding of research declined. Some of the developments might be called "efficiency gains", but altogether, the feeling of impoverishment of higher education is widespread.

Third, the academic profession might lose considerable proportions of its academic guild powers. We note a rise of managerial powers in higher education as well as increasing controlling activities as regards the performance of the academics.

Fourth, the academic profession is more and more publicly blamed of not providing the services to society it is expected to do. The critique ranges from a claim that the academic profession is not ensuring the quality expected to the widespread accusation that the graduates do not learn what is in need and that research does not sufficiently address the most pressing problems of our times.

We live in times of great uncertainties about the future of higher education and it is therefore not surprising to note that the future of the academic profession seems uncertain, too.

According to one view, one might hope that the 'scientification' of society will strengthen the academic profession in its function as the cutting-edge profession, the profession of the professions (Clark 1997), not only providing the knowledge and skills on which advanced societies depend but serving as a kind of role model of rational and disinterested discourse for highly qualified expertise. In this context, the academic profession might be characterised as the axial profession training, socialising, and selecting other professionals, experts and knowledge workers as well as supplying them with research-based knowledge for their career. This does, however, not mean that the future will be without problems for the academic profession, but universities have ever been changing, always adapting to new circumstances and it seems reasonable to expect for a flexible response to current changes and a continuity of job roles, at least, for the core of the academic profession.

According to a second view, the academic profession is endangered to lose its key position and leadership role within higher education as well as for further development of society. It is assumed that there is a danger for the academic profession to lose considerable proportions of its privileges and academic guild powers, that traditional notions of social control of quality within the academic profession will be undermined and that managers, institutions and governments strengthen their impact on higher education procedures and outputs. Deprofessionalisation, bureaucratisation and marginalisation are frequently used terms to analyse the negative consequences of these ongoing changes in the external conditions of the academic profession. Furthermore, one fears for a

decline in faculty morale, a disillusion of academics about their mission perceiving themselves as academic workers doing a routine job no longer strongly committed to the traditional norms and values of the academic profession. From this perspective a decline of the traditional professoriate and a rundown of the academic calling (Clark 1997) are reasonable visions of a possible future in which the academic profession is seen mainly as an institutional resource providing more or less effective services.

3. Employment and working conditions of academic staff in the European Union: An international study

The following presentation is based on the analysis and data gathered in the context of the project on 'Employment and Working Conditions of Academic Staff in Higher Education: A Comparative Study in the European Community'. The study was initiated in 1998 by the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work in Kassel, Germany. The study has three main objectives:

- First, to gather up-to-date information about the employment and working conditions of academic staff in the European countries involved;
- second, to analyse changes of employment and working conditions of academic staff, which have been undertaken in the last years and current debates on these issues;
- third, to analyse recent changes and current situation as regards the constellations of actors and procedures relevant for staffing in higher education.

Experts from 15 countries, i.e. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, were invited to write country reports to highlight the developments of the last two decades and the 'state of the art' of the academic profession mainly in universities in the different national contexts. The analysis cover issues of employment and working conditions of academic staff, issues related to staff structure and staffing in higher education as well as recent developments and changes as regards the relevant actors and procedures in this area. Moreover, the experts contributing to the study have done their best to gather up-to-date data on the structure and conditions of academic staff frequently struggling with the wealth of information and the shortcomings of national statistics, the potentials and limits of recent surveys in this area.

As both scholars and objects of re-organisation, they have brought their professional expertise and knowledge, their academic background and experience to this study. They have adopted an analytical and critical approach in analysing and interpreting the recent developments in the context and conditions of academic work and how academics perceive these changes in their national setting.

The study comes most timely. Many countries involved in our study have seen changes as regards the actors and procedures relevant for the regulation of the employment relationships of academic staff. In some countries, such as Finland, Germany, Ireland, and Sweden new Higher Education Acts or State decrees have been recently introduced that are actually implemented within higher education institutions. The country reports and the first comparative findings provided in this paper are, therefore, relative and preliminary, analysing a moving target. In this sense, this paper is a contribution to the ongoing debate on the changing nature of academic work in higher education and its impact on the conditions of academic staff.

The term employment and working conditions of academic staff is used here in a broad and narrow sense. In a broad sense it concerns the regulation of the academic labour market, the framework between employers and trade unions, the governmental affairs in the determination of staff structure and employment, the institutional policies and management of academic work. In a narrow sense, the term comprises the conditions of service of academic staff, their contractual situation and positioning in the rank structure, issues of job security and tenure, remuneration and work load and the entire work of academics in teaching and research.

4. Regulating the employment relationship: A changed playing field

Unlike the so-called liberal professions academics are not self-employed professionals but work as members of their staff for public or private institutions that are governed by legal rules. In the public sector, academics commonly have the legal status of civil servants, like the German *Beamte* or French *fonctionnaires*, or the status of public employees. They have a public law status quite different from that of an employment contract, even if their contract or part of it is determined through bargaining between representatives of the employers and the employees. Where the employer is a private institution or a public, non-governmental one, academics most commonly have the legal status of employees regulated by contracts of employment under private law. The continental European higher education systems included in our study are dominantly public ones. This still holds true even though there are on the one hand some countries with growing private sectors in higher education, namely Portugal, and on the other hand some countries where we observe ongoing debates on the establishment of private universities. The overwhelming majority of academics are, however, civil servants or civil employees. While power, privileges, and conditions of employment of the academic estate in continental Europe are protected by constitutional or administrative law, academics in the United Kingdom work under contracts of employment, rooted in the principles

of common law. Traditionally, they form an academic profession that is relatively unitary as regards a professional self-consciousness unmatched in mainland Europe.

Three basic ways of regulating the employment relationships of these academic staff can be named: They might be regulated by state law, by collective bargaining between representatives of employers and employees or by employer regulations of the higher education institution. Furthermore, various higher education systems have traditional mechanisms of individual bargaining between a member of academic staff on the one hand and representatives of the employer (state authorities or institutional leaders) on the other hand. The regulations and rules might, therefore, be laid down in legal degrees, government decisions, collective agreements, institutional documents, employment contracts, depending on the principle ways they have been determined; either unilaterally by state law or employer regulations or bilaterally by national, local or individual bargaining or a composite mix of elements of both types. Typically, these rules cover regulations for salary and working load, job security and tenure, procedures for recruitment and promotion, fringe benefits, sabbaticals, pension arrangements and so on.

During the last two centuries, the basic philosophy of regulating the higher education systems and these employment and working conditions of their academic staff have changed. While the direction and depth of these changes might differ, all higher education systems under observation in our study have experienced and/or are currently experiencing similar trends. Watchwords in this context are performance and quality, competition and flexibility, efficiency and accountability. It is not surprising to note that the employment and working conditions of academic staff are not only influenced by these and other developments but seen as an important tool for adaptation to the new circumstances higher education systems are facing. Although the dynamics and areas of change might differ according to country, at least, three major trends might be identified before going more into the details of specific developments and regulations:

Heterogenisation: A remarkable trend in a number of countries can be analysed as a reaction and withdrawal from the former idea or philosophy of legal homogeneity of higher education institutions. The underlying assumption is that the logic of formal equality and homogeneity of higher education institutions placed severe limitations to the capacity of higher education institutions to adapt to a changing environment. In this context diversification provides a tool to enforce the division of labour between and within higher education institutions and their academic staff.

Decentralisation: Higher education environment has grown so diverse, complex and changeable that a nation-wide bureaucratic system with detailed ex ante regulations, tight process control and line item budgeting, can no longer be

appropriate. Governments, therefore, have to switch towards a system of distant steering or state supervision in which each institution is given a higher degree of autonomy. Government sets broad missions, framework conditions and finances in which each institution is given a higher degree of autonomy to their tasks in teaching, research and service.

Marketisation: As regards financial resources, manpower, quality and quantity of products efforts are made to create a more competitive environment within higher education. This might refer to governmental policies to build up a market-like resource allocation system as well as to efforts to strengthen competition between and within higher education institutions.

In effect, control of higher education institutions shifts to some extent away from what Burton Clark (1983) has called the academic oligarchy towards more market and more state control. Government remains the most important player, but it tends to withdraw from operational interventions into distant steering setting the legal and financial boundaries and using instruments of quality control.

While the distribution of power within the famous triangle of state, market and academic oligarchy tends to be rearranged, other actors have appeared on the playing field as well (see Figure 1).

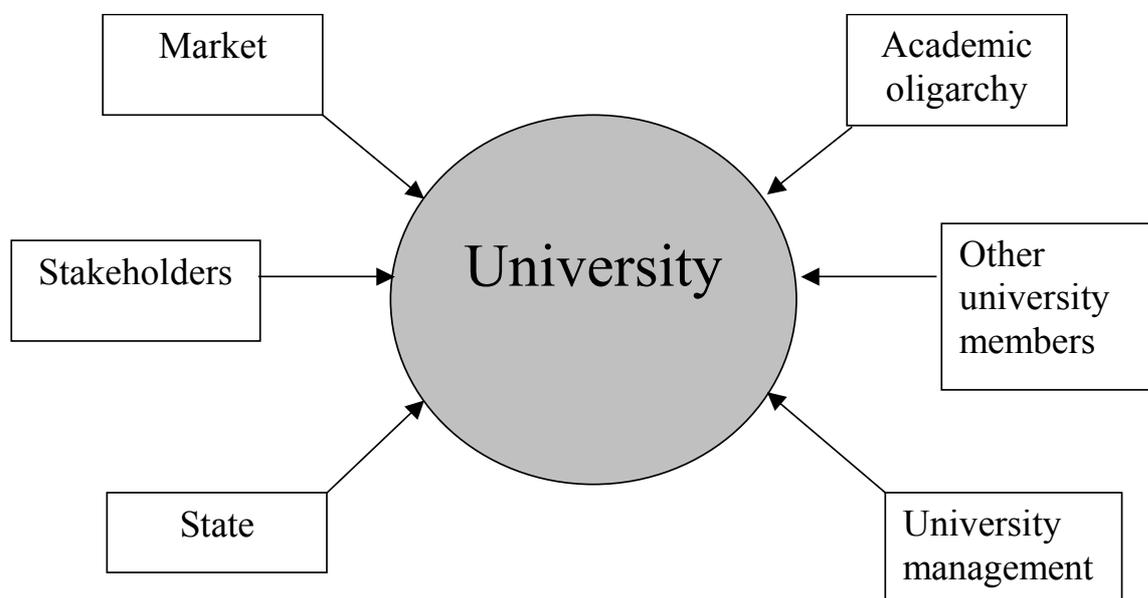


Figure 1. The new complexity of actors

The continental European reforms of the 70's have legally established non-professorial staff and students as a fourth power within universities. Recent debates and restructurations of steering and financing higher education have brought the stakeholders as a fifth power into play. Last but not least, efforts to strengthen institutional capacities for self-regulation supported the establishment

of the ‘managerial class’ as an important actor in universities. In consequence, we observe a rather complex constellation of actors and powers directly or indirectly influencing the public and private life of higher education and its principal actors, the academic staff.

These developments are accompanied by the assumption that they will allow for a more flexible responsiveness in steering higher education and its staff.

One hopes for strengthening the quality of work processes and outcomes of basic units and individual academics by efforts made in staffing and human resource development: activities in these areas may comprise reorganisation of staff structure and doctoral training, staff development and appraisal, flexibilisation of work load, especially teaching load, introduction of salary bonus-systems and partly performance related pay scales.

Furthermore, it is argued that a better functioning of higher education as modern institutions, that is loosing some of their old-fashioned characteristics, will be supported by strengthening the self-steering capacities of institutions and their managerial power. We observe various forms of managerialism, we might call them soft ones and hard ones, but the crucial question for academic staff is obviously if there is growing support or growing control by the institutional management. At least, four different concepts of the homo academicus and his institutional leadership can be observed in recent debates about their relationship (see Figure 2).

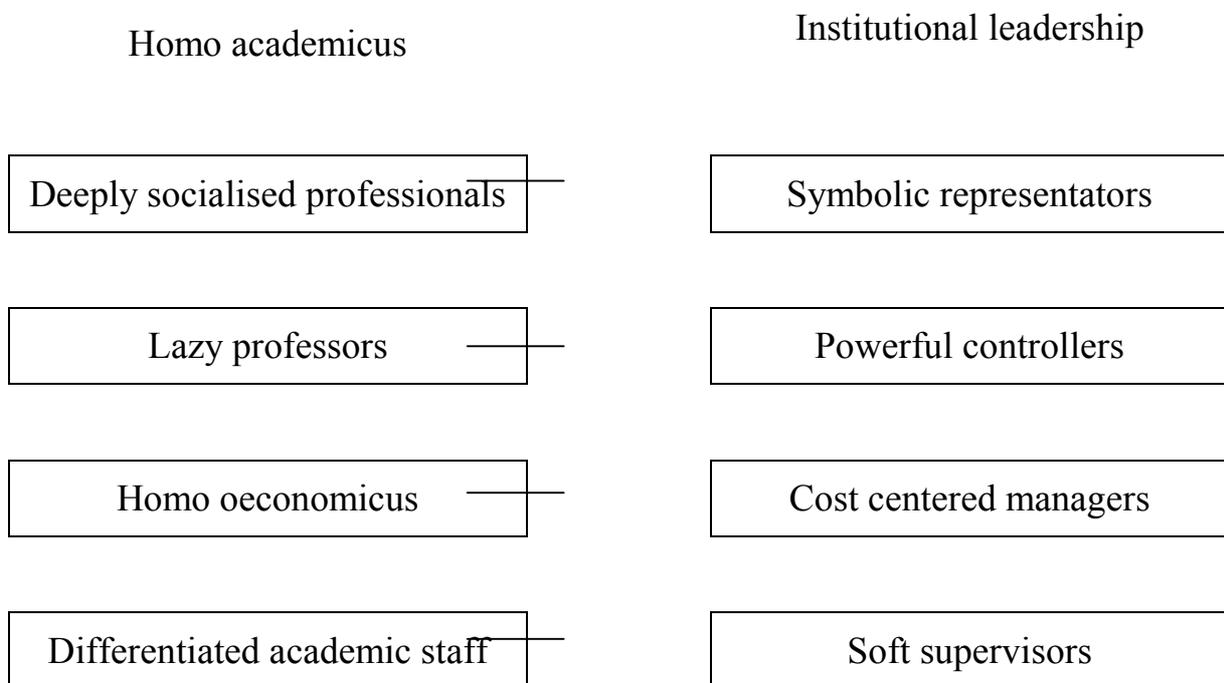


Figure 2. The homo academicus and his institutional leadership

First, overall trust into the self-steering capacities of academics as long-standing and deeply socialised professional that are best let alone and symbolically represented by institutional leadership is diminishing.

Second, in some countries public debate tends to draw a caricature of the homo academicus as the ‘lazy professor’ who has to be kept at work by a management of short-breath incentives and visible sanctions.

Third, in another variation the academic tends to be seen as a homo oeconomicus who can easily be steered by a cost centered management that is locally shaping rules, regulations and instruments for efficient work and output.

Fourth, a more sophisticated version emphasises the internal differentiation of academic staff and the role of institutional leadership as soft supervisors aiming to design status and tasks of academics according to their strength and weaknesses.

4.1 Modernisation of employment relationships: Convergence or varied solutions?

Although there is a more or less common new philosophy of self-steering of higher education and a common drive to make higher education systems in Europe more efficient and cost-effective in the recent past, the changes have to be placed in their specific contexts. As far as the systems of state financing for higher education are concerned various new models of output based funding, lump sum funding, assessment based research funding have been introduced. Attempts in the area of staffing include activities to make higher education institutions and their staff more accountable, to increase academic productivity and output, to reduce staffing costs, and to create more flexibility as regards the academic workforce. In the continental European countries attempts have also been made to shift the responsibility for some aspects of employment and working conditions of academics from central governments or national bargaining to the institutional management, to local or individual bargaining. At least in the Nordish countries and the Netherlands, elements of neo-corporatism tend to be strengthened by these developments.

Among the Northern European neighbours, Finland and Sweden, both countries where membership and representation of academic staff in trade unions is high, are shifting towards two-tier bargaining structures that tend to strengthen the localisation of regulations on pay scales, teaching load, terms of recruitment and appointment. Here, determination by national collective bargaining sets framework conditions while local bargaining between institutions and local branches of trade unions regulate further details of employment conditions. In the case of Sweden, a diverse, unitary system of higher education, this is supplemented by individual bargaining on salaries and teaching loads. In Finland, the right to appoint professors as well as to establish or discontinue

chairs for the first time in the history of higher education in this country has been given to the universities.

The Norwegian higher education system, comprising 4 large universities and a number of state colleges and private colleges, has gone through a wave of expansion during the 90s. In this period measures for result-oriented planning were introduced and the influence of university and college administration in academic matters were strengthened. At the same time numbers of administrative officers and managers in higher education increased considerably. Like in the other Northern European countries, academic membership in trade unions is relatively high and employment conditions are determined by a composite mix of unilateral and bilateral regulations. Negotiation on salaries were recently supplemented by a new system of local bargaining on pay raise partly based on performance of staff in teaching and research.

In order to cope with the massification of higher education, the Netherlands and the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium have created binary systems of higher education. Interestingly enough, the Netherlands - where membership in trade unions is certainly lower than in the Northern European countries - has also introduced a two-tier bargaining structure where so-called primary issues, i.e. pay scales, are regulated on the national level and other conditions on the local level. Like in Sweden, the individualisation of employment conditions is supported by a further trend towards individual bargaining on salaries.

In the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium - with its tradition of 'clerical universities' enjoying a relatively high degree of institutional autonomy - decision-making on salaries, teaching load or the recruitment and appointment of academic staff have shifted to some extent towards employer regulations. Labour unions and professional associations exist but are relatively weak and widely spread over a range of organisations, while the elected rectors, deans and department heads play a significant role in representing their profession on the local and intermediate level.

The United Kingdom with its high degree of institutional autonomy and professional collegiality has faced a whole series of reforms and initiatives setting the traditional distribution of power under strain. In contrast, recent developments in the United Kingdom can be interpreted as a threat to traditional patterns of institutional autonomy and bargaining. Here, we observe rather a shift towards a hybrid system comprising a growing impact of market-like forces as well as a strengthened governmental influence. The abolishment of the binary line in 1992 and the inclusion of former polytechnics and colleges in the university sector, the recent sharp increase in student numbers accompanied by a sharp decrease in government funding for teaching have changed the picture, too. Major changes in the resource allocation have been undertaken actually leading to a mix of block grant teaching funding and assessment based research

funding. Various measures were introduced to increase institutional responsibility and managerial power in higher education. Furthermore, localisation and individualisation in the determination of conditions has grown in order to increase discretion as regards salaries, teaching loads or recruitment/appointment procedures. In effect, threads to national bargaining and trade union influence are perceived.

Ireland, with its high participation rate in universities and technical colleges, provides the interesting example of a country with a tradition of a relatively high degree of autonomy of higher education institutions and a high representation of academic staff in trade unions. While salaries are negotiated on the national level, some other elements of employment conditions like the teaching load and the recruitment/appointment of academic staff are traditionally negotiated on the local level. Ireland has recently introduced an unit cost system of funding and elements for strategic planning and quality assurance. At the same time explicit legal guarantee of tenure for academic staff has been underlined by state decree, and there are up to now little signs that the relatively stable and homogenous status of academic staff tends to be changed.

In most Central and Southern European countries, terms of work and employment of academic staff have traditionally been regulated mainly by the state authority supplemented by national bargaining or consultations with trade unions being in charge for the whole public service. Austria, France, Greece and Italy retain fairly centralised systems of higher education in which the terms of employment and working conditions of academic staff are mainly regulated by the central government. In Germany, responsibility for higher education and its academic staff is shared between the central government and the 16 federal states which have a considerable autonomy. For several interrelated reasons, labour unions have only limited influence in these countries. In national bargaining academic staff are represented by trade unions in charge of the public sector and play, therefore, a marginal role. The national power of academic trade unions might be diluted because their membership is relatively low and is spread over a number of organisations. Moreover, membership in professional organisations might be relatively high, such as in Austria, but professional associations are split into those covering the professoriate and higher senior ranks and those covering the assistant academic personnel, or, such as in Germany, representing the professoriate only. In these countries, the tradition of a strong position of the academic oligarchy was characterised by a strong connection to the state and a gap between professorial and sub-professorial positions.

There have, however, been various initiatives to rearrange the conditions of working life in higher education in these countries. In the 1980s and early 1990s, higher education systems in these countries have seen several waves of state reform and re-reform with rather mixed performance. Higher education in

Greece has, for example, seen numerous laws regulating the overall academic staff structure, the terms of employment and the pay scales of academics and new laws are currently discussed in order to overcome the shortcomings of the last reforms. Italy has experienced the so-called Ruberti laws offering greater autonomy from central government but they were largely ignored by the academic community. In Germany, various attempts have been made to rearrange staff structure and junior staff positions, but the situation of younger academics is still a matter of concern. The experience of rather mixed performances of legal state reforms in staff structure are obviously contributing to a search for a new distribution of power between the state, the academic oligarchy, the market and the emerging managerial class in higher education institutions.

It is during the last years that, at least, in Austria, Germany and Italy, discussions and initiatives are taking place to rearrange the playing field in higher education. Alongside with the Austrian University Act from 1993 attempts have been made to strengthen institutional responsibility for budgets and staff and to introduce regular evaluative measurements. In the Federal German Higher Education Act from 1998, the central authority withdraws in certain areas from detailed regulations in order to provide more space for the ongoing regional and local attempts and experiments to strengthen institutional autonomy in staffing and financing and the various new Federal State systems for financing and outcome oriented planning in higher education. Moreover, attempts are discussed to introduce performance-based salary components for the professoriate and to establish assistant professorships in order to bridge the gap between junior and senior staff. In Italy, a system of lump sum funding for higher education has been introduced and intermediary bodies, the Italian rectors conference and a national evaluation agency for higher education, were established.

Portugal and Spain are both systems that have undergone expansion; and it might be said that in both countries academic staff in public higher education have until recently benefited from this expansion as regards their employment and working conditions. Since these systems are facing more and more the financial consequences of growth to limits the future of the next generation of younger academics has, however, become an issue of concern. Portugal is moving from an elite to a mass higher education system experiencing a considerable growth of the private sector in higher education actually comprising around one third of all students. Even though the private institutions are run under public law, the conditions of academic staff as employees in the private sector might differ significantly from their colleagues in the public sector. Spain has moved to a mass system in the early eighties and is now close to a participation rate in higher education of around 45 per cent. In the eighties attempts have been made to move away from highly centralised control of

higher education strengthening on the one hand the responsibility of regional governments and on the other hand the autonomy of higher education institutions. Staff structure moved from a traditional chair system to a department model and new categories of academic staff were introduced. In the early nineties a salary system with productivity bonuses and continuous individual evaluation of academic staff were introduced.

4.2 Mutual observation: The European dimension

Last but not least, this view on the national contexts and developments has to be supplemented by the international and European dimension in higher education. Yet the phenomenon of ‘internationalisation’ is not a new one for higher education and its academic staff. At least in two respects we might consider a growing impact of the international dimension on staffing in higher education. On the one hand, policy-makers and those responsible for higher education have become more aware of international co-operation and competition between higher education systems. Higher education systems are more and more expected to contribute to national economy and welfare in a globalising environment and to maintain their performance in a competitive international environment of teaching and research. In effect, interest in international developments and trends in higher education and mutual observation of higher education systems has grown. Furthermore, the watchwords of international competition in higher education serve to some extent as a legitimisation of national policies in this area. There is a widespread view that higher education in highly industrialised societies serve similar functional needs and that higher education can improve its performance through reforms taking into account comparative experience. Yet, we note a striking persistence of varied solutions. Respect for variety of higher education systems, for example, is viewed as a principle to be observed in the European Union in any activities aimed to promote European co-operation and the stimulation of a European dimension of higher education. The European programmes in the area of higher education and research have, on the other hand, changed the situation in Europe very fast by creating new possibilities for exchange and participation in international research networks and supporting academic training for teaching and research in the national and international context. The extent to which this European dimension becomes visible within national systems might differ between countries according to the size of the system, the degree of traditional international orientations and other factors. From a number of countries involved in our study, such as in Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Portugal or Spain, a very visible and welcome influence of the various programmes of the European Union is reported.

Academic labour markets in Europe seem, however, far away from being

international ones. Our knowledge and available data on international staff exchange and mobility are still very limited. While temporary mobility as well as a certain degree of permanent brain drain to the U.S. as well as two-way academic mobility between industrialised and developing countries were already more or less frequent for various decades, mobility within Europe becomes important and interesting nowadays, but is accompanied by many barriers and traps. We found little evidence to believe that the higher education systems under observation would attract large numbers of academics from other countries or, in contrast, would suffer from serious brain drain problems.

5. Conditions of working life

The following section will turn now to the conditions of working life in higher education, the concerns with staff structure, job security and tenure, remuneration and work load and the entire work of academics in teaching and research. They demonstrate a whole range of issues that are under debate in most of the countries under observation (see Figure 3). The wide variations across and within countries tend to show, however, that the outcomes of new actor constellations and regulations on the academic labour market might be less uniform than expected.

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- Staff structure and career tracks:
chair/department structure; contract-track/tenure-track/regular employee-track
 - Job security and tenure:
Increase of part-time/fixed-term academic staff; tenure under debate
 - Academic salaries:
Relative decrease of academic salaries; widening of pay scales; flexible and performance related income streams
 - Staffing and human resource development:
Improvements of explicit training; support for and control of teaching quality, re-allocation of time budget and teaching loads
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Figure 3. The conditions of academic life: A moving target under debate

5.1 Staff structure and the issue of tenure

Traditionally, we might differentiate two ideal types of staff structure: the chair model and the department-college model (cf. Neave/Rhoades 1987). The chair model - in its Humboldtian and Napoleonic variations - has been characterised by a relatively sharp contrast between the traditional professorial core of the profession holding tenured positions as chairholders and the largely untenured class of junior staff aiming to reach professorial positions through a relatively long period of two or three career stages and qualification periods. Under these conditions, appointment to a professoriate is seen as a big jump in status and prestige, independence and resources.

In contrast, the department-college model traditionally forms a more collegial than individual based organisation of the basic units of academe. Academic staff from lower ranks to (full) professor are in general supposed to have basically the same functions, status is dependent on publicly acknowledged qualifications and expertise. The probationary period of non-tenured staff is shorter, admission into regular staff structure of tenured positions comes earlier and further career steps within academe are more regular organised, like for example in the tenure-track model of US universities or the tradition of (senior)lecturers, readers and professors in the Oxbridge model (cf. Halsey 1992).

These career systems represented various types - contract-track, regular employee-track, tenure-track - of highly structured, uniform career tracks characterised by differentiated ranks and a deeply imbedded schedule for the positioning of various groups of academics and their moves within the career ladder. Today, this evolution of academic roles and careers has become more mixed-up for a variety of reasons and may well be at a critical turning point.

One of the reasons is the re-interpretation of regular staff structures. While, for example, staff structure in Germany might still be characterised most strongly in terms of the chair-contract-track model (cf. Enders/Teichler 1997), attempts are made to strengthen the positioning and independence of postdoctoral junior staff that are influenced by the US tenure-track model. Staff structures in Ireland and the United Kingdom and to some extent in Norway are still following more clearly the department-college approach of a more regular career ladder. In the UK it seems, however, that expectations of middle rank staff of a professoriate are growing and that non-promotion tends to be regarded as a failure. In Austria, France and Italy, the largely untenured assistants have gained to some extent permanent contracts, and in Austria the new position of a tenured assistant professor has been introduced. Greece has recently introduced a new staff structure abolishing the chair system and moving towards a kind of 'tenure-track' model with assistant, associate and full professors as the core of academic staff. Spain has formally introduced a department structure in spite of the chair system as the basic working unit. In Belgium, Finland and Sweden, countries

influenced by the approach of the chair-model, professorial positions and assistant-like positions are supplemented by stable teaching staff positions. Sweden remains, however, in one respect a special case due to the relative sharp distinction between research positions on the one hand and teaching-only staff on the other. Staff structure of universities in Portugal might be described as a mix of apprentice-like assistantships leading to a ‘tenure-track’ model starting with untenured assistant professors. Finally, staff structure in Dutch universities developed a hierarchy of three professorial ranks as well as permanent positions for academic employees supporting and supplementing the professoriate in teaching and research.

A further observation in this context is that a growing number of academic staff are excluded from regular staff structures - whatever their character might be. Expansion as well as a policy reorganisations of resources and personal changed non-professorial posts. The rise of a class of non-professorial teachers in response to the growing student numbers as well as the rise of a group of externally financed contracted research staff are a more or less international phenomena. They tend to embed conflicting values and expectations as regards the functions of higher education and its staff directly into academe. Continuous and satisfying employment as well as personal development and encouragement for a ‘regular’ academic career have become more insecure for a growing number of staff. In short, these appointments are likely to be dead ends.

Increase of temporary research staff are especially reported from the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, and the United Kingdom. Spain and Portugal are actually facing the problematic outcomes of recently remarkable growth of higher education and the envisaged saturation of the system as regards newcomers to the academic profession are reported.

A third observation is that the meanings of tenure have changed in some countries. In the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, ‘tenure’ in its traditional strict meaning that permanent academic staff can only be dismissed in very exceptional cases, has come to an end. In these countries, tenured staff can now be dismissed in case of redundancy, that is e.g. that their department or institute might be closed down. Up to now this seems to have little impact on the realities of ‘tenure’, but it is, at least, a significant symbolic loss for the academic professions in the respective countries. Finland has introduced temporary positions for professors and in Austria positions for professors or senior staff under contract have become an issue. In other countries, we observe debates about the future role of ‘tenure’, that might include debates about a reduction of tenured positions, the introduction of new untenured positions alongside the traditional tenured ones, the increasingly common practice of voluntary redundancy and early retirement. In contrast, we observe a development in some countries, such as Greece, Ireland and Italy, that has

emphasised the status of academics as tenured or permanent staff. All in all, there are actually little signs in the European countries under observation that the traditional privilege of high job stability for the core of the profession tends to be extensively undermined.

The design of staff structures, the size of fixed-termed staff and, last but not least, the inclusion or exclusion of doctoral candidates as members of academic personal have to be taken into consideration when we furthermore look at the proportion of permanent academic staff reported from the European countries in our study.

The proportion of permanent staff in universities, that is those holding a tenured position or a permanent contract as employee, varies, however, significantly between countries: It is lowest in Portugal, with somewhat less than 40 per cent, and in Finland and Germany, with a proportion of permanent staff somewhere between 40 and 50 per cent. In a number of countries, i.e. Austria, the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain between 50 and 60 percent of university staff hold a permanent position. We can estimate that in the French-speaking community of Belgium and the United Kingdom permanent staff make up between 60 and 70 per cent of university staff. The highest proportion of permanent staff are reported from Ireland and France with around 80 percent and Italy with around 90 percent. The proportion of academics holding professorial positions in universities differs significantly, too, and this is a clearly more selective group in all countries representing between 10 and 30 percent of academic staff.

Tenure or permanent contracts for academics are more common in the non-university sector of higher education, except the case of the Austrian *Fachhochschulen* mainly run by temporary and part-time teaching personnel. For the other countries - comprising non-university institutions in their higher education systems - proportions of permanent staff are reported that are relatively high compared to the respective university sector: In Belgium and Finland around two third of academic staff in non-university institutions have a permanent contract; in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, this proportion is around 90 percent.

5.2 Women in the academic profession

In all countries, the share of women within the academic profession has grown during the last two decades. In some countries, such as in Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway or Sweden this development might have been supported to some extent by deliberate policies or programmes to support academic careers of women whilst staffing policies in most of the 15 countries have given little explicit attention to this. In both types of countries the share of women among academic staff has mainly grown from below - in the junior staff positions and

lower ranks of academic staff. The academic profession is , however, still a clearly male dominated one, and women are much more underrepresented on the level of the professoriate or other senior rank positions: About one fourth of academic staff in universities in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are female. Somewhat higher representations of female academics, that is about one third of their university staff, are reported from the other countries included in our study. Proportion of female academics in the professorial ranks is clearly lower in all countries under observation: In a number of countries, i.e. in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, it appears that the proportion of female professors is lower than 10 percent. This proportion is only somewhat higher in the other countries, with Finland and France having the highest participation rate of female academics among their professoriate (about 15 percent). A further look on the participation of women among academics in non-university institutions provides a mixed picture: Higher proportions of female academics in these institutions compared to the respective university sector are reported from Belgium, Finland and Norway; proportion of female academics in universities and non-university institutions are nearly the same in the Netherlands and Portugal. In contrast, the proportion of female academics is lower in German *Fachhochschulen* than in universities.

5.3 Academic salaries and fringe benefits

The academic profession has frequently been characterised by its high degree of job satisfaction and academic staff have been thought as well rewarded by extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of their profession. Even though not as well remunerated as comparable employees outside higher education, they were thought as well rewarded by their status and income. Furthermore, the intrinsic rewards of the job role, i.e. a high degree of job autonomy and freedom in the use of time, a low degree of job prescription and control, the possibility to do challenging and initiative work, might be even more important than employment status or pay.

In a number of countries, however, seen over a longer period, a gradual erosion of the academic remuneration, seems to have taken place. Especially for those disciplines, for example business studies, computer sciences and engineering, where higher education has to face serious competition with the private labour market the academic profession has become less attractive. Prestige and academic freedom might therefore compensate less for the financial handicap when youngsters consider an academic career. Another factor that might have an impact on academic remuneration in the near future is possible flexibilisation and widening of pay scales: As more autonomous institutions may have very unequal income streams they might well be able to pay very different salaries

and performance rewards to their academic personnel.

Looking at current pay scales in the European higher education systems analysed, we observe considerable differentials between countries. In absolute terms - that is without taking relative costs of living into account - we can estimate that highest top salaries for the professoriate are paid in Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands, followed by France, Germany and Ireland. Lowest top salaries for the professoriate are paid in Finland, Portugal and Spain. A preliminary further view on pay differentials in relative terms shows, however, that academic salaries in Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom are considered as being relatively low and/or declining. In these countries dissatisfaction with salaries seems to be most clearly expressed among academic staff.

Remuneration for the professoriate differs significantly within countries, too. This is, of course, influenced by various factors like the degree of internal differentiation of positions within the professoriate, the impact of seniority and family status on income, etc. The widest pay differentials are, however, reported from Austria, France, Germany and Ireland, where the lowest starting salaries for professors are around half of the highest ending salary. In contrast, pay differentials between starting and ending salaries are relatively flat in Finland, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, where the lowest starting salaries for professors are around three fourth of the highest ending salaries.

We observe relatively little variations across countries if we compare full-time staff at the beginning of their academic career or being employed in the lowest ranks on the one hand and those who have reached top professorial positions on the other hand. Starting salaries for lower ranks are somewhere around a third of top salaries. In fact, pay differentials might be wider than this crude estimations suggest if we take into account that part-time employment in the lowest ranks might be observed more or less frequent according to country.

More important for the overall standing of the academic profession is a trend in a number of countries towards flexible pay scales due to the introduction of various pay-bonus systems. In 10 countries analysed in this paper some form of additional payment is known. The systems differ widely according to country: we observe special payments for additional lectures and teaching loads, like in Austria, temporary salary participation in research contracts, like in Belgium, additional payments for posts of responsibility, like in Sweden, a whole mix of teaching, research and administrative bonus-systems, like in France or Spain or discretionary points in salary increase in the United Kingdom. In most higher education systems analysed some kind of flexible and partly performance related income stream has become an incentive for performance and competition.

In contrast, the various systems of fringe benefits for academic staff - in most countries rooted in respective regulations for the public service - are up-to-now not a real issue in academic staffing. In this area, we still find a high degree of

homogeneity, at least, among the core of the academic profession, while the situation is different for those being employed at the periphery of fixed-term and part-time contracts.

5.4 The entire working life

The impact of recent changes in higher education policies on the most prominent tasks of teaching and research is difficult to assess. The country reports of this study and the results of national and international surveys among academics suggest, however, that the freedom in teaching and research is still not only highly valued but deeply embedded in the core of the academic profession. Even though, we observe growing complaints on work intensification and decreasing resources, over external interference and internal bureaucracy, the overall satisfaction of the university professoriate with their profession seems to be relatively high.

‘Massification’ on the one hand and ‘financial constraints’ on the other hand have had their serious impact on growing student/staff ratios that can be very different across countries in Europe. It is obvious that academic staff in all countries involved in our study have to shoulder to some extent additional work load in teaching. However, it is surprising to note that for some countries (Germany, Norway, Sweden) where reliable data on the work load and time budget of academics over time is available, a relatively stable use of working time is reported. There are obviously counterforces that enable academic staff to reserve a considerable amount of their time for research even under conditions of increasing student/staff ratios. Furthermore, we observe, though not consistently for all countries analysed, that the professoriate steps back from research and teaching due to a strong administrative and leadership function. More than 40 percent of university (full) professors time budget in England, the Netherlands and Sweden is devoted to other activities than teaching and research, namely to administrative tasks. About one third each of the professors in these countries reported that their main activity during term-time is not teaching and research but administration, service and other tasks (cf. Enders 1997).

In some countries, support and control for teaching quality is explicitly given a more important role. Not only is quality control a new legal obligation, but also university administrations take up this new task setting up control mechanisms and rewarding teaching more explicitly in their promotion criteria. More or less embedded in this context a number of countries have undertaken changes as regards the allocation of the teaching load of their academic staff. Finland, for example, has recently shifted from the traditional system of setting a minimum number of lecturer hours per week to an annual total working time for teaching. Spain has recently changed to a modular system of teaching credits. In Sweden a

further effort to counterforce the strong division between research and teaching staff has been undertaken by fixing a new maximum teaching load per year. In contrast, Italy has introduced a new system of minimum teaching load per year. More or less flexible frameworks for teaching load that have to be determined by negotiations on the local level are reported from Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. In contrast, teaching load is still more or less fixed by state decree in Austria, Germany and Portugal.

Another issue that has to be named, is the rise of new stakeholders for research in higher education. The most obvious impact of a further shift towards research money from separately budgeted funds and external sources is the growing size of ‘research or project staff’. An important and rather controversial issue in this context is to what extent the marketisation of higher education and the changes in the resource allocation affect the nature of prestige and power among academics.

Diversification of income streams for research raises, for example, the question to what extent research and research excellence are becoming more and more an area not only of growing competition but growing polarisation between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. This polarisation might not only occur between institutions but within the same institution creating a degree of heterogeneity not known in the past. Following resource dependence theory, we might furthermore ask for the impact of external market and government pressures that provide incentives for faculty and managers to change the mix of research from discipline-inspired to market-driven problem choice. Recent studies mainly inspired by organisational theory tend to show that institutions, in fact, tend to go where the money is, but do academics? Any serious answer to these questions would go beyond the potentials of our study, and it would be naive to underestimate the ongoing changes some assert as a significant revolution of academic work (see for example, Slaughter & Leslie 1997). Our study provides nevertheless some evidence that any scenario of an almost inevitable transfer of control over the entire work from the disciplines and academics to groups external to the academic communities would be misleading, too. This perspective asserts that academics are victims in the path of a secular trend about which they can do nothing. It underestimates the more dynamic role of academics and their participation in influencing the environment, and tends to be culturally blind for the variety of national traditions and characteristics to be taken into account.

6. The winds of change: Preliminary conclusions

Higher education systems and their academics live in interesting times of change. It is obvious that these changes occur in the area of actors and

procedures relevant for staffing in higher education as well as in the area of regulations for employment and working conditions themselves. It remains less clear what the outcomes of these developments are. Here, different socio-political options as well as our hopes and fears for the future come into play when we look on diverse scenarios on the long-term changes of the academic profession. Furthermore we have to take into account that we might emphasise continuity or rupture, evolutionary or revolutionary visions according to our vision of higher education.

The roles and rules for the actors on the playing field of higher education have been mixed up. While the speed and depth of these changes might differ, all higher education systems under observation in our study have experienced and/or are currently experiencing similar trends. Watchwords in this context are performance and quality, competition and flexibility, efficiency and accountability. It is not surprising to note that the employment and working conditions of academic staff are not only influenced by these developments but seen as an important tool for adaptation to the new circumstances higher education systems are facing. Although the dynamics and areas of change might differ according to country, at least, three major trends might be identified: Heterogenisation as a reaction and withdrawal from the former idea or philosophy of legal homogeneity in higher education institutions; decentralisation as a switch of governments towards a system of distant steering or state supervision in which each institution is given a higher degree of autonomy; marketisation as an effort to build up a market-like resource allocation system as well as to strengthen competition between and within higher education institutions.

In effect, control of higher education institutions shifts to some extent away from academic oligarchy towards, paradoxically enough, more market and more state control. Government remains the most important player, but it tends to withdraw from operational interventions into distant steering setting the legal and financial boundaries and using instruments of quality control. Within these boundaries institutions enjoy greater autonomy and responsibility for their academic staff.

In a number of countries, we find obvious signs that this approach leads to a growing decentralisation as regards the employment and working conditions of academics. We observe various shifts of responsibility and decision-making according to country.

Intermediatesation: responsibility shifts from the central government to intermediate bodies; Regionalisation: responsibility shifts from central to regional state authorities;

Localisation: responsibility shifts to the local level of employer regulations and local collective bargaining;

Individualisation: responsibility shifts towards individual bargaining between

academics and institutional representatives.

Salaries, teaching loads and other elements of time and resource allocation tend to be flexibilized and rearranged according to institutional and individual circumstances. It seems premature to assess the outcomes of these developments, but they contribute to a growing loss of communality within the academic profession.

Another problem of this trend towards distant steering by the state and growing institutional responsibility might be named as ‘rebureaucratisation’. Actors and procedures might differ from country to country, but there are signs that the ‘new freedom’ of universities might produce new rigidities. Decentralisation of rules and decisions is often accompanied by new detailed and bureaucratic rules to get accepted by the federal state or agencies. The intention to leave more room for strategic judgement within the institutions is accompanied by more detailed regulations for performance evaluation and more detailed internal process regulations. All in all, external formalism might be translated into internal or internalised formalism.

Second, the changing playing field is entangled with growing measures to preserve or improve quality of teaching and learning, of research and service under conditions of tighter financial control, and in many cases, under conditions of increasing student-staff ratios. These measures may include: Restructuring of the higher education system to set different quality objectives, different resources for various sectors, institutions or sub-units in higher education; improvement of the training of academic staff, restructuring of junior academic careers and careers criteria; extension of assessment and evaluation of academic staff performance and linking evaluations to rewards and sanctions; restructuring of management of higher education institutions and increasing its potential for steering academic staff. With other words, in recent higher education policies we can identify typical methods used by any product or service company to increase quantity and/or quality of output without additional resources or additional staff: The company shifts its market segment of products and services, and might search for a certain market niche; the company changes the organisation of work, the training and careers and reward structures for its staff.

In this context it is interesting to note how the concept of ‘staff’ has entered the field of higher education. Universities are no longer only the home of scientists, the place of educators or the breeding ground for elite. They are as well organisations that have to deliver an efficient service, and, for that, have to take care for the appropriate manpower, their academic staff.

The obvious and serious danger of this approach is that it might threaten central elements of the academic profession, i.e. the collegiality of decision-making, the individual autonomy in teaching and research, the pride of intellectual leadership and social prestige, the stability of economic and intrinsic rewards.

There are persuasive elements in the thesis of deprofessionalisation and proletarianisation: Salaries tend to be broken up to different components and seem to decline; the status of tenure has become an issue in many countries; teaching and research are monitored and inspected and the casual workforce of part-time and fixed-term staff is growing at the periphery of the professional core. Last but not least, we observe a transition from civil servant status of academic staff to contract relationships in some continental European countries. The thesis, however, tends to take the new rhetoric of output and product orientation, consumerism and flexibility, market and managerialism as reality. Actually, it tends to overestimate the impact of external actors and external conditions on the entire life of higher education, and to underestimate the idiosyncratic elements in different national contexts as well as the flexibility, inertia, resistance and variety of responses by the academics.

Up to now the traditional character of the academic profession is not counteracted by advocacy of a new modern model, but it is left to ongoing changes to eventually lead to a 'new professionalism' of the academic profession or various academic sub-professions that will hopefully find a third way beyond erosion and traditionalism in adapting to new circumstances and changing environment of higher education.

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