

# The Academic Profession: Quality Assurance, Governance, Relevance, and Satisfaction

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## 1 The Academic Profession: Challenges of Its Environment

The academic profession has always been changing. This profession is adaptive and responsive to external changes, and it seeks to interact with its own environment. While reading historical research or looking at academics' reflections on their situation over time (e.g. Wilson 1980; Rice 1986; Altbach 1980, 1996, 1998; Clark 1987), it is striking that, whatever their particular historical moment, these writers all comment that the academic profession is no longer the same. There is clearly no ideal, universal, and stable state of the academic profession. These developments affect the relationships between the academic profession and other parts of society, as well as the position of this particular profession within society. These changes also affect the profession's internal modes of regulation and its autonomy and ability to avoid the intervention of external forces. Finally, the content of academic activities themselves and the norms according to which they are to be achieved are also subject to change (Altbach 2000; Musselin 2007).

Academic careers are influenced by various contexts (Steyrer et al. 2005; Hall 2002). Whereas career research traditionally emphasises personal contexts at the expense of global or societal ones, research on academic careers tends to stress structural factors and conditions influencing careers. Academic careers have been seen as the prototype for "new" careers (Baruch and Hall 2004) and as an opportunity to develop an international academic career (El-Khawas 2002) and to change employment conditions (Enders 2004). There are many international comparative research studies of the academic profession (Altbach 1996, 2000) and of faculty members' working conditions (Enders 2001b; Enders and de Weert 2004). There is literature on academic labour markets that is international in scope (Musselin

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2003; Sørensen 1992) and studies concentrate on national higher education system descriptions (Breneman and Youn 1988; Enders 1996; Halsey 1992). A lot of studies have sought to develop typologies of staff structures that support academic careers (Neave and Rhoades 1987 or Enders 2001a).

The public reflection on the academic profession is not characterised by satisfaction and equilibrium. There are opinions that the concept of the traditional academic profession might be history. The professional tensions with which the academic profession has to live nowadays are included by experts in at least four categories: massification, knowledge economy, managerialism, and competition (Teichler and Yagci 2009, p. 107).

In many national systems, the academic profession became more internationalised and more accountable and the academic staff is expected to be more professional in teaching and more productive in research. Also, they are asked to develop new professional skills which are not related to their original disciplines (Henkel 2001). In this context, the definition of academic profession has become ambiguous due to tensions between academic jobs and those of other professionals that are a sort of “satellites” of the academia. As Enders says “The growing importance of scientific knowledge and highly qualified expertise is accompanied by a loss of exclusiveness as far as the role and centrality of higher education and the academic profession as the main source of new scientific knowledge and its dissemination into society are concerned. Higher education seems endangered to lose its monopoly as the main producer of scientific knowledge and technology. In consequence, higher education is facing a growing competition with other research sectors and institutions and their quality of performance is more and more confronted with comparisons to other suppliers of tertiary education or research” (Enders 1999, p. 73). Another challenge to the academic profession is the change of traditional forms of pedagogy. The new Global Information Society imposes virtual pedagogies, electronic forms of learning and communication, and diversification of education and training, much of which is now taking place in settings outside the traditional university. Today, all these changes could raise questions about the attractiveness of an academic career.

Although an academic career seems to remain an attractive choice, there is a challenge to be related to questions about the personal costs of succeeding in academic careers and how to maintain a balance between work and family, personal satisfaction and career requirements. This “cost-benefit-analysis” of academic careers is operating in the general context of abandoning the tenure system and developing a parallel system of fixed-term appointment (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006). As a result, there appears a new dilemma: the academics tend to focus their attention and skills on only one of the three integrated faculty functions (teaching/research/service).

In order to cope with the extreme complexity of the academic tasks, it is necessary to differentiate the roles among academics. Some institutions are in charge of both teaching and research, others focus on teaching or on research. Some academics emphasise the core role of teaching and research, while others understand themselves as academic entrepreneurs (for example—bringing in research grants and

contracts to the universities). All academics must develop more teamwork skills, a competence not always developed in academia.

From a management point of view, all academic staff should be engaged in scholarship at a high level which includes staying informed about the latest research in their areas of expertise.

The pressures coming from the international operational environment of the European nation states, concerning, for example, the need to improve national competitiveness and productivity and strengthen social cohesion, are emphasised in the national, international and supra-national higher education policy processes and debates. Advancing the level and relevance of knowledge and improving the functioning of the innovation system have become integral aims in higher education policy in many countries. Two external dynamics affect the development of the higher education system: (1) changes in the importance, production and application of knowledge in European and other societies, and (2) changes in the operational models that aim at strengthening knowledge-based production and social development within higher education policy and of higher education institutions. The external pressures that arise from the operational environment of higher education institutions also essentially affect their internal operations: their organisational structures, leadership, management and financing. The intersection of these internal and external dimensions gives rise to questions concerning the productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency of higher education institutions.

Ford's opinion is that "... one of the defining features of the modern university is its sameness. Because of its twin commitments to job training and to theory, universities everywhere closely resemble one another" (Ford 2002, p. 13). However, each modern university finds itself in a rapidly changing environment and facing challenges that are by now well known: increased competition for scarce resources, massification of education, economic globalisation with the resulting demands from government and society for more and better trained graduates especially in the sciences, the need to establish improved research capabilities for assisting/underpinning national competitiveness. Autonomy is a necessary prerequisite for speedily responding to these challenges. It is well recognised in European universities that university autonomy is bound up with accountability to society, and that accountability brings with it the responsibility to drive the required change and improvement. Thus, universities must use their autonomy and independence for positive strategic development and involvement with society according to its expectations and needs.

Changes in the production of knowledge cause pressures for change in the organisation, leadership, and management of higher education institutions. To succeed in the international and national competition, it is essential for higher education institutions to modify their teaching and research activities towards models that emphasise cross-disciplinarity, use-orientation, and co-operation with other actors in the innovation system. The changes in the production of knowledge and the use-oriented new models require structural changes in the higher education system that strengthen the production and distribution of multi-disciplinary knowledge, and in the generation of which the users of knowledge have participated. The higher edu-

cation institutions are looking for their competitive edge utilising the tools provided to them by the changes in government steering, such as increases in economic freedom of action, the new salary system and flexibility in working hours, the dialogue in management by results, the creation of quality systems and profiling through their strengths in reacting to regional, national, and global demands. Finding a competitive edge necessitates more professional and strategically oriented leadership and finding a new equilibrium between administrative and academic leadership.

The university “must remain relatively stable in order to continue to fulfil two primary functions: the production of the next generation of researchers and generator of cultural norms” (Meek 2003, p. 24).

## 2 Quality Assurance in Central and Eastern Europe

The changes in Central and Eastern Europe caused by upheavals at the beginning of the 1990s had great impact on the formation and implementation of educational policies. Virtually, all countries within the South East European region share a major concern: how to improve the quality of education (UNDP 2002). One of the most radical common shifts in the educational policies was in the orientation of universities and of teaching and learning processes to quality assurance. This was an immediate response to the challenges coming from the market-oriented policies. In accordance with a global and, in particular, pan-European trend, this shift was associated with the introduction of characteristic instruments into the examination and assessment procedures. The changes included evaluation of individual study programmes and local, regional and national educational units, as well as of individual and collective achievements, the latter related to classes or age groups (Mitter 2003, p. 75).

In the light of globalisation and reforms in higher education in many countries around the world, the concern for improving the quality of students’ learning has come into focus. The traditional assessment system has been scrutinised and the new term “quality assessment” has become the common currency in today’s educational arena. Quality assessment is an on-going activity including student participation and necessitates using a variety of assessment techniques, implementing them effectively, providing good feedback to student and using assessment data to improve instruction. Teachers must strive to give students quality work to do if they want students to do quality work for them.

Despite semantic implications that quality will be assured, quality assurance (QA) regimes at all levels (government, institution, department) are typically management processes (inputs) that are independent of performance criteria defined in terms of educational quality (outcomes). Unfortunately, QA regimes tend to reinforce schisms between administration and academic interests in higher education, forcing a focus on administrative processes to the exclusion of quality outcome interests. QA regimes represent the interests of particular stakeholder groups, but whether they contribute to either relevance or quality of educational outcomes is simply part of a broader question of relevance versus quality.

Assurance of quality (i.e. real quality assurance) depends on demonstration of quality against criteria that are understood and accepted by all stakeholders including students, peers, accreditors and various sectors of the community to whom the higher education teaching community is accountable (Nicholls 2001, p. 134).

Assuring quality in higher education, promoting equal access to higher education and empowering learners for informed decision making are key challenges for higher education in a more globalised environment. To respond to this challenge, UNESCO launched a Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualification in Higher Education (2002). It serves to promote international cooperation in higher education by providing a platform for dialogue between different stakeholders and building bridges between intergovernmental organisations. Participants at the forum proposed that “UNESCO’s challenge is to provide a structured agenda for new developments and offer an international policy framework for dealing with globalisation and higher education, reconciling the interests of national governments, the traditional public higher education sector, for profit providers and the needs of students and the general public interest” (van Damme 2002, p. 20).

Following the inaugural meeting of the Global Forum in October 2002, an Action Plan for 2004–2005 was developed focusing on UNESCO’s standard-setting, capacity building, and clearinghouse functions. The Action Plan aims to provide a framework to assist member states in developing their own policy frameworks. It is based on UN documents and UNESCO’s specific mission and functions. Three initiatives are proposed within this category of activities:

- The establishment of a set of guiding principles,
- A review of the Regional Conventions, and
- Research on the concept of public good and the impact of cross border higher education on widening access.

A need for capacity building at the regional and national levels, to promote quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms within a strengthened international framework was recognised. In this regard it was highlighted that national quality assurance frameworks should not discriminate against new providers while at the same time the quality of all educational provisions should be optimal. This initiative will adopt a gradual approach, taking into account activities/projects under way to increase transparency and information.

In its most common use, education quality refers to the extent that an education system is able to achieve the generally accepted goals of education, central to which are cognitive knowledge and skills development (Randall 2001). For the most part, education systems are deemed to be of higher quality when students demonstrate higher levels of learning. While education systems have multiple goals (e.g. the development of relevant employment skills or attitudes that promote civic engagement), most observers still regard the transmission of cognitive knowledge as its principal objective (Chapman et al. 2005). From this perspective, improving quality involves taking actions that increase student achievement.

When discussing the role of specific mechanisms and general approaches to quality assurance in higher education, experts often tend to focus on the differences: while general approaches tend to stress the autonomy of higher education institutions, field-specific approaches accentuate the need for aligning the goals of educational programmes with the expectations of the relevant stakeholders in order to be comparable and ensure their relevance for the labour market.

For higher education institutions faced with demands from various groups of stakeholders to account for the quality of their processes by employing various instruments of internal and external quality assurance, the question with regard to general approaches and specific mechanisms to quality assurance is often not one of “either or” but of how to best combine them in order to limit the burden placed on the organisation and its members. They also emphasize decentralisation of responsibilities; the relationship between academic governance and institutional mission and strategic objectives and to explore alternative models for institutions and actions for individuals and institutions to improve the contributions of the academic profession towards the relevance of higher education in society. In addition, there are other related difficulties: maintaining high academic and research standards; ensuring the quality of faculty appointments; assuring flexibility and rigor in a curriculum; maintaining political and intellectual freedom; balancing a moral obligation to educating the poor and disadvantaged against the costs of financial aid (De Grauwe 2005).

All these quality assurance demands urge the university to organise as soon as possible a systematic, transparent and routine procedure for the evaluation by students of teachers and courses. Feedback to students about the results of these evaluations should be timely and follow-up procedures agreed. It is crucial that this process should be formative and directed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. This can lead to a continuing dialogue between teachers and students, an important element in developing a climate where real improvement can take place. Other procedures affect the quality of performance in a university. These include the appointment of new staff, the quality and number of the incoming students, and the related issue of their formation and motivation. The procedures for appointing professors appear to be quite open and transparent and totally in the hands of the university, i.e. the universities’ need to decide their own strategy and to take responsibility for their decisions. It is essential that this important element of autonomy is maintained and that existing procedures are scrupulously applied.

Balancing a staff member’s time between research and teaching is a perennial problem in all research universities. At the moment, we encounter high teaching loads in the universities. This is partially due to a large number of study programmes resulting in duplication of courses. However, the increasing weight of modular courses and the shift towards more individual study requirements for students will produce an environment that might contribute to reach the needed balance.

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. Higher education can be characterised by a relatively open set of multiple goals; by loose mechanisms of coercion, control and steering from above; by a high degree of fragmentation; and by a strong influ-

ence of the principal workers—the academic professionals—on the determination of goals, on the management and administration of institutions, and on the daily routines of work. In addition, if we look at the interrelationships between different sectors of production and services, we might consider the academic profession to be one of the most influential in shaping other sectors as well. This is, for example, underscored by the British social historian Harold Perkin’s description of the academic profession as the “key profession... the profession that educates the other professions” (Perkin 1969, p. 13).

## 2.1 *Governance and Quality Assurance*

Before we start a sound analysis about ‘governance’ we need to distinguish between terms such as ‘management’, ‘administration’ and ‘leadership’. According to Galagher (2001, p. 1):

Governance is the structure of relationships that bring about organisational coherence, authorised policies, plans and decisions, and account for their probity, responsiveness and cost-effectiveness. Leadership is seeing opportunities and setting strategic directions (...). Management is achieving intended outcomes through the allocation of responsibilities and resources, and monitoring their efficiency and effectiveness. Administration is the implementation of authorised procedures and the application of systems to achieve agreed results.

The OECD (2006, p. 112) states that:

Governance is concerned with the determination of values inside universities, their systems of decision-making and resource allocation, their mission and purposes, the patterns of authority and hierarchy, and the relationship of universities as institutions to the different academic worlds within and the worlds of government, business and communities, without.

There is a general consensus regarding leadership as being a process for influencing decisions and guiding people, whereas management involves the implementation and administration of institutional decisions and policies (Taylor and Machado 2006).

The roles of governance and management are essential in the management of transformational change in higher education and, paradoxically, they in turn need to be transformed in order to deliver in this respect.

Institutions generally operate in a complex environment that requires hard choices in strategic priorities. What is required are governance and management that, in structure and process, encourage and facilitate positive, proactive, and continuous institutional transformation together with relationship-building strategies focused on all stakeholders.

At a first glance it might seem as if public universities in many countries are under government control, and the universities as public institutions that are closely linked to the government must accommodate national needs, demands, and expectations. The fact that public universities are largely financed by the government contributes to the idea that universities goals and development agendas must concur with the government’s agenda and priorities, as if the universities themselves lack the sense of direction in determining their visions, goals, and priorities. The pub-

lic universities are deemed accountable to the society and nation in materialising social, economic, political, and technological development goals. The government does influence the direction of public universities in some ways in terms of policies and regulations, but the universities have their own management style, determine the quality of the curriculum, the quality of graduates, also the research priority areas, and identify profitable ventures. Public universities are, by and large, autonomous bodies, even in a centralised education system.

One of the characteristics of the governance in higher education is that it is quite diffused and entails shared responsibilities among a variety of stakeholders. Accordingly, the biggest challenge in governance within the university sector relates to issues of power and responsibilities as dealt with by Senates, the university leadership, academic staff (senior and junior level), students, policy makers and other external stakeholders.

Universities are faced with the dilemma of ensuring an appropriate balance between their academic priorities and the demands placed on them by the expectations of policy makers and other external stakeholders.

Traditional methods of governing educational systems from the national level are being replaced by an approach in which authority to make decisions is delegated, as appropriate, to regional, institutional and individual academic levels. Many countries have developed or are developing a new functional distribution of roles and responsibilities, complemented by appropriate systems of accountability, together with effective systems for evaluating and reporting education outcomes.

New cooperative modes are developing where state and non-state actors participate in mixed networks (Enders 2004, p. 372; Maassen 2006). The new approaches must take into account the essential characteristics of the higher education sector and its professional organisations. While governance arrangements usually emphasise formal structure, bodies and decision-making structures, the governance of higher education institutions is still strongly influenced by informal networks, collegial agreements and more process-oriented decision-making structures (Gornitzka et al. 2005). It must be underlined that governance and the academic culture are linked in a complex texture of interactions and effects. This is the key issue to understand the effectiveness of governance arrangements in higher education. Since teaching, research, and knowledge transfer are dependent on the academic staff, a key issue of governance is to create institutional conditions stimulating the creativity of the professionals (EU 2005). In this perspective, governance is about identifying the institutional structures and processes that create optimal conditions for staff performance.

Providing education of the highest quality is crucial for all countries, no matter the circumstances, to support the social and economic development, to develop the potential of the citizens and to give them satisfaction. Pedagogical reforms are recognised to be an important factor in improving education. It is generally agreed that the mechanisms through which the education is governed can have a very significant effect on its quality and efficiency. Thus, devolving responsibilities to all levels in the academic system can lead to the capitalisation of talents of academic staff and to motivation and job satisfaction. These actions persuade the academic



staff to have a personal and professional responsibility to contribute to the achievement of a culture of quality.

In a comparative study by Wielemans and Roth-van-der-Werf (1995, p. 63), decentralisation was found to be the key to the agendas of most European Union (EU) countries as a way to promote quality control and greater efficiency in their education systems. What is seldom visible, however, is that decentralised power, in the name of quality education and with the aim of assuring productivity and customisation, is often accompanied by powerful centralising measures, especially with regard to the core activities of curriculum development and assessment policy. For example, the decentralisation brought about in Flanders by the Basis Decree (the 1991 decree on university education), which accorded to the universities the responsibility of determining the pedagogic project, was accompanied by the introduction of a centralised definition of curriculum outcomes (*kerndoelen*; Berkhout 2002). Similarly, in South Africa, the decentralisation of power introduced by the South African Schools Act was accompanied by the development of a national outcomes-based curriculum and several standardised forms of assessment such as achievement testing for the foundation phase and common task assignments for the General and Further Education and Training Certificate. In both countries this became a policy that “on one side turns out to be a change in steering systems directed towards a distribution of policy-making from the centre to the periphery,... [and] on the other side...a strengthening of a central steering system” (Lundgren 1990, p. 35).

Changes in governance raise additional issues of regulation. We need to understand the concept of ‘regulation’, and whether the education institutions have autonomy and flexibility in governing their education services. This implies developing ‘self-regulatory’ frameworks to assure education quality and academic standards. Most important of all, the power-money dimension is likely to become a source of major tension between the state and non-state sectors, especially when funding sources and education services are diversified. Knill and Lehmkuhl anticipate the development of a new regulatory model: regulated self-regulation. Through this ‘regulated self-regulation’, “the state plays a central and active role in disposing of powers and resources that are not available to societal actors” (Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002, p. 43). Although the state is responsible for promoting quality education and meeting high expectations in terms of education, it cannot adopt the same interventionist and regulatory framework with regard to non-state actors, especially when education provision and financing is diversified.

A regulated self-regulatory framework could be further developed by re-conceptualising the relationship between the state and professional bodies. It is generally accepted that the overall quality assurance responsibility in education, unlike other goods or services, still lies with the state. But state intervention is also influenced by professional communities. With regard to professional qualifications, for instance, it is not the role of the state to set detailed requirements for approving professional credentials. Instead, professional bodies have a very important role to play in governing professional standards. In order to maintain high standards in education, the state must liaise with the relevant professional organisations, rather than simply making detailed requirements (Mok 2005).

In quality assurance, external intervention has taken various forms. A variety of actions, both supportive and punitive, have been taken by governments, including particularly:

- Attempts to standardise higher education by application of competency standards.
- External peer review protocols.
- Quality assurance audits of educational institutions.
- Conditional funding based on various types of performance criteria.

A further government intervention is pressure for cross-accreditation between states within countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia, and between countries such as in the EU (Cowdroy and Chapman 1999; Sporn 1999; Heitmann 2000). They are also recognised as external responses to perceived failure of the higher education community to adequately demonstrate that it meets a sufficiently broad range of stakeholder expectations (Cowdroy and Chapman 1999; Nicholls 2001; Mok 2005).

No country is immune from the effects of globalisation, and controversy continues to reign about its positive and negative consequences. The globalisation processes are complex and often contradictory, and we need to avoid an overly deterministic view of globalisation. The growing impact of globalisation has caused many modern states to rethink their governance strategies for coping with rapid social and economic changes. So, the education policy and development, just like other public policy domains, is not immune from the impact of these globalisation processes (Burbules and Torres 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000; Mok 2001; Mok and Chan 2002; Mok and Lo 2002; Marginson and van der Wende 2006). For example, all education reform proposals talk about the importance of competition, global competence, diversity, and choice (Mok and Welch 2003; Lee and Gopinathan 2005).

In order to make individual nation-states more competitive, universities across the globe have been under tremendous pressure from governments and the general public to restructure/reinvent education systems. With heavy weight being attached to the principles of 'efficiency and quality' in education, schools, universities and other institutions of learning now encounter far more challenges, and are being subjected to an unprecedented level of external scrutiny. The growing concern for 'value for money' and 'public accountability' has also altered people's value expectations. All providers of education today inhabit a more competitive world where resources are becoming scarcer. At the same time, however, providers have to accommodate increasing demands from the local community, as well as changing expectations of parents and employers. Governments in different parts of the globe are facing increasing financial constraints in their efforts to meet people's pressing demands for higher education. In view of the intensified financial constraints that modern states are facing, it is anticipated that non-state actors, including the market, local communities, the higher education sector and civil society, will assume increasingly important roles in education financing and education provision, while the state will

restructure its role in education by becoming more actively involved in becoming a regulator, quality controller, facilitator and coordinator of services.

### 3 Relevance

Related to quality in higher education, there appears the question: Does relevance in higher education equate with quality? Every programme in higher education attracts the interest of a range of stakeholders with a multiplicity of conflicting concerns about relevance and a multiplicity of conflicting criteria of quality. As Brennan et al. (2007, p. 169) noted “the point about relevance is that it is generally defined by other people” and not by individual academics.

Accreditation, accountability, and quality assurance criteria often seem to be contradictory or even mutually exclusive, and national quality assurance agendas seem to exacerbate the problem for all fields of higher education.

A major challenge in higher education is to demonstrate relevance and educational quality to an increasingly wide range of stakeholders’ conflicting expectations in the name of “accountability”. In many cases accreditation (particularly by professional registration authorities) is deemed to represent educational quality, however the criteria for accreditation are focused on relevance that satisfies only a very narrow band of stakeholder interests, and do not address many other criteria of quality as discussed further below.

Today, more than ever, a new analysis of the strategic role of higher education and university is needed. We need to observe better their relation with the society, which often leads the universities towards fundamental transformations and new orientations while preserving the balance between scientific aspects and social commitments. The concept of “social relevance” gains prominence. In many cases, societal relevance is something which is required as part of evaluation processes. For example, the UK Quality Assurance Agency has issued a series of “subject benchmarks” which are intended to specify the learning outcomes of different kinds of higher education study programmes. The benchmarks are meant to inform “consumers”—in this case both intending students and the employers of graduates—of the sorts of skills and competencies which are acquired in particular study programmes. Informing “consumers” is essentially about informing the “market” and more generally universities find themselves having to make claims about the individual and social benefits of university to ensure that a steady supply of customers keep knocking at the institutional door. Of course, quality is not to be entirely equated with relevance but it is a significant part of it (Brennan 2007).

Relevance and importance of higher education need to be evaluated according to the extent of balance between societal expectations from various academic institutions and their academic functions. This evaluation must have in view the ethical criteria, political neutrality, the culture of critique, a strengthened link between societal problems and the labour market as well as the adoption of long-term orientations with respect to societal needs and objectives. The main source

of concern, however, is achieving education for all as well as goal-oriented specialised education with emphasis on merits and skills, since these two forms of education prepare for living in various situations as well as for changing one's job or profession.

From the point of view of expectations, the quality often depends on perceived relevance to the respective interests of various stakeholder groups (for example, academic teachers who prepare and present the programmes; students who study the programmes; graduates who benefit from the programmes; employers of graduates who benefit from the knowledge and skills of the graduates; accreditation bodies who endorse the programmes on behalf of their respective disciplines; the community that benefits from the contribution of the discipline; education specialists who are concerned with the quality and outcomes of the teaching process).

Each stakeholder group expects all of what it considers relevant to be included in respective educational programmes. What is perceived as relevant by one stakeholder group, however, is often perceived as irrelevant by another, and therefore to be excluded (Cowdroy 2000a, b). This inclusion/exclusion nexus creates conflicts between stakeholder perceptions of relevance and quality and dilemmas for academics and institutions trying to achieve quality education. Consider, for example, accreditation authorities which are stakeholder groups typically preoccupied with ensuring minimum standards (of discipline-based knowledge content). Employers of graduates are other stakeholder groups typically preoccupied with personal attributes such as motivation, initiative, self-direction and cooperation (de Graaff and Ravesteijn 2001).

While all stakeholder groups can agree on some general principles, and many subscribe to "standards" and "excellence" in education, notions of what constitutes standards and excellence were found to vary significantly among stakeholder groups. Pressure on academic departments to maintain accreditation was found to translate into pressure on teachers and students to focus on discipline-based knowledge as the only relevant curriculum and the only legitimate indicator of quality (Cowdroy et al. 2002, p. 170; Eraut 2000).

#### **4 Professionalisation, Satisfaction and Identity in Academic Careers**

Developing between the changes in the social, economic and political context, on one hand, and the changes in higher education system, on the other hand, the academic profession has to define a new identity for itself. The "professionalisation" of the academic profession is becoming more important as universities try to respond to issues relating to standards and quality, growing international competition, and generally "doing more with less".

Professionalisation has been much debated since the beginning of the twentieth century. There is a growing debate around the changing nature of academic work

and the concept of professionalisation in academia (Avis 1999; Nixon 1996; Nixon et al. 1998; O'Neill and Meek 1994; Taylor 1999; Watts 2000). The literature on professions suggests that the professional status is acquired during a long-lasting education. So, what is a “professional”? There is a wide range of opinions on this topic but some common characteristics emerge. One can say that “professionals” do work that is not routine and well understood. It is work that has a strong intellectual content, frequently leading to unique or novel outcomes. In addition professionals have:

- Specialised knowledge—usually acquired through academic qualifications.
- A high level of practical and intellectual skills.
- A high standard of ethical behaviour—sometimes codified in the form of a formal “code of practice”.

Profession is equivalent to having power, prestige, high income, high social status and privileges.

Professionalisation is the social process by which any trade or occupation transforms itself into a profession of the highest integrity and competence. Professionalisation involves establishing norms and criteria of qualification of members of a profession. Also, professionalisation “acknowledges the qualitative diversity of the processes that structure occupational groups and the ways in which they have historically constructed a certain degree not only of autonomy but also of power and security and giving rise to specialisation and the non-substitutability of the competences thus produced, as well as a certain subjective and objective collective existence” (Demailly and de la Broise 2009, p. 3).

Using professionalisation related with the academic role raises some questions. First of all, most of the academics assumed that the conduct and publication of research is, *par excellence*, for academics. Their professional devotion is given to a specific subject and disciplinary research. The specialising of disciplines has led to discipline isolation, and the academics therefore first of all construct their professional self-image within the highly specialised “tribes” of their disciplines (Becher 1989; O'Neill and Meek 1994). Accordingly, professionalism is entirely connected to the disciplines, and not to the broader academic function. Moreover, there will be specific division between the areas of professional engagement into research and teaching. In practice, what constitutes professional interests is often identified by what these alliances are against, rather than what they are for (O'Neill and Meek 1994, p. 97).

“... the academic profession needs training in much the same way as academics consider that other professions need it and indeed provide it for them. This means that the training itself must be professional, that it should normally lead to recognised academic qualifications, that it should be closely allied to practice, and that—above all—it must be associated with relevant research” (Elton 1987, p. 76). Since professionalisation of university academic is an incremental process, it is necessary to provide comprehensive ongoing professional development programmes for academic staff, as part of the overall quality assurance system for higher education.

A factor in driving change in continuing professional development is the advent of new technologies, and their application to the administrative, teaching and research

functions within universities. Every aspect of the academic function now requires at least minimal skills in new technologies, and more importantly, an understanding of the pedagogical implications of 'digital delivery'. Hence the academic staff must learn not only the 'how' of operating technical equipment and software, but also how to facilitate a useful and effective information exchange in a digital environment. As a consequence of both the new technologies, and the disaggregation or 'unbundling' of academic work (Coaldrake and Stedman 1999), the lone teacher approach is rapidly disappearing from universities. Collaborative team work becomes the way to build a fruitful academic career.

Most studies of the higher education sector reveal a clear perception that teaching is not valued as much as research (Ramsden et al. 1995). Research has been considered critical in the functioning of modern universities and the quality of major universities has been judged mainly by their research output. Structural change in the funding of the university sector, combined with management decisions on increasing 'flexibility' in staffing appointments, has also resulted in greater separation of "the production of knowledge (research) and its distribution (teaching)" (Rowland et al. 1998, p. 134). This separation is contestable, and is regarded by many academics, such as Rowland et al. and the academics in Dunkin's (1994) survey, as inappropriate. With demands for 'increased productivity' academics will come under pressure for more accountability in relation to their dual role as teacher and researcher. However, many academics perceive that the reward system in universities privileges research over teaching.

In addition, professionalisation is the key issue in establishing the degree in academics commitment and job satisfaction. Organisational commitment is considered as an important variable in understanding employee behaviour and attitudes (Mowday et al. 1982; Meyer and Allen 1984, 1986, 1988; Allen and Meyer 1990). Allen and Meyer's studies confirm that organisational commitment has three components, namely, affective, continuance and normative (Allen and Meyer 1990). Employees with a strong organisational commitment are those with high level of professionalisation and high level of job satisfaction.

Attempts to pursue professionalisation of higher education teaching have had a long history. As O'Neill and Meek (1994, p. 97) note: "... the self-regulation of professions has as much to do with the politics of knowledge as with anything else. This is especially so for the academic profession, with its stake in controlling knowledge production and dissemination". As O'Neill and Meek observe, increasing casualisation in employment in universities also militates against a professional academic role.

Job satisfaction has long been identified as a factor which is related to many aspects of behaviour in organisational construct. Job satisfaction denotes whether employees find their employment sufficiently satisfactory to continue in it, either permanently or until they are prepared for greater responsibilities. Low job satisfaction is associated with low performance, poor quality, grievances and other difficulties.

Locke (1976, p. 130) defined job satisfaction as a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences". In this context, the

job satisfaction is a global construct encompassing satisfaction with work, working conditions, pay, benefits, promotion opportunities, team working and organisational practices (Griffin and Bateman 1986).

Job satisfaction is an active factor in professionalisation. Academic job satisfaction influences the job performance in terms of attitudes, perceptions and reactions. Also, job satisfaction influences both the productivity and morale. It is necessary to find the answer to the questions: Is the staff at research-oriented universities more satisfied than the staff at teaching universities? Are the sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction similar or different? There are two concepts related to the teaching-research nexus in terms of job satisfaction. The first assumes that the two activities are complementary with each other because research enhances teaching (the academics consider teaching as something which follows from research, rather than their main priority). The second concept considers that the two activities are in tension because teaching affects the quality of research. The decrease in number of the academics declaring to give priority to teaching is only one evidence that the notion that academics should do research has become dominant (Balbachevsky and Schwartzman 2008; Arimoto 2008).

The salary level of the academic staff in higher education and research institutions is one of the key issues of job satisfaction. Governments all over the world are trying to cut down costs, increase efficiency, profits and accountability of higher education in the economy (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). “Within developing countries the conditions of work and remuneration of the majority of academics is inadequate ... Academics have to hold more than one job to make ends meet” (Eggs 2008, p. 128). On the other hand, as Teichler and Yagci say (2009, p. 108) “in most economically advanced countries, senior academic staff at universities and public research institutes traditionally had permanent employment contracts, while the situation varied for junior academic staff. In some countries, they had similar contracts as seniors from the very beginning, in others their employment security grew gradually over time, while in others permanent contracts were only awarded with the appointment to senior positions.”

This has affected the structure and organisation of the profession, namely, the way academic staff is employed, the academic profession as a career, quality, academic freedom, autonomy, the relationship between teaching and research, etc. Structural change in the funding of the university sector, combined with management decisions on increasing ‘flexibility’ in staffing appointments, has also resulted in greater separation of “the production of knowledge (research) and its distribution (teaching)” (Rowland et al. 1998, p. 134). This separation is contestable, and is regarded by many academics, such as Rowland et al. and the academics in Dunkin’s (1994) survey, as inappropriate. Universally, the status of the profession seems to have declined.

People’s lives are multifaceted causing challenging conflicts between professional and personal identities (Day et al. 2006). Identity itself is an unstable concept being related to work-based policy changes and the social and economic environment. Change poses both “threats and opportunities” to academic staff whose “academic identities, including identities as researchers, are forged, rehearsed and remade in

local sites of practice” (Lee and Boyd 2003, p. 188). The academic career is influenced by the institutional context, although the individual has the ability to negotiate their roles and responsibilities through the process of prioritising.

The attempt to define the identity is a challenge. First of all, identity is a social construct that develops over time. Churchman (2006) believes that identity is a vehicle for the way one wants “to interact with the rest of the world” (p. 6). Also, academic staff “struggles to define their identity and those of their colleagues” (Churchman 2006, p. 5). As professionals, academics are engaged in solving the dilemmas and challenges that affect their role. In doing so, they “re-story themselves in and against the audit culture” (Stronach et al. 2002, p. 130). Today it is obvious that policy is leading and structuring research, with the result that an academic’s research identity is constructed to achieve governmental and managerial aims rather than educational objectives.

Academic identities are disparate and lack homogeneity and compromises in the workplace are becoming more commonplace and inevitable (Churchman 2006). Development of the academic work in a knowledge and performance-based environment involves staff co-operation between and within departments and affects the nature of interaction between hierarchical levels within the institution. In order to produce a positive environment for effective teaching and research, acknowledgement of multiple and disparate academic identities is needed. In order to increase the numbers of financially viable and capable units (Sjolund 2002), state policies in Europe have had a major impact on institutional organisation, affecting not only the way in which institutions now function, but also the role and responsibilities of those who work within them. Today, more institutions have adopted the German model of “integrating research into universities rather than separate institutes” (Grant and Edgar 2003, p. 319). This integration aims at increased coordination of academic research and provides the primary influence for the research agenda. Of course, this changing policy involves new consequences for the roles of academic staff. Also, this policy has influenced the way institutions are funded, creating tensions between supporting research and the demands of teaching and learning. There are changes in perceptions of the academic staff themselves because they must identify how they can adapt to this culture.

## 5 Conclusion and Research Questions

This study has reviewed the evolution of academic profession in terms of quality assurance, relevance and satisfaction, and university governance change. Also, we tried to depict changes in the professoriate due to international competition that now affect individual faculty and their institutions and we will seek to understand how academic professionals are affected by these shifts as well as how they respond to them.

It is clear that higher education faces new opportunities and new challenges in its role as actor in a more globalised society. Universities are under growing political pressure for reform in face of more acute competition for public resources in



tandem with a marked slowdown in the growth of funding. At the same time, the universities are held responsible for quality assurance of the institutions' academic activities.

Quality assurance also serves as a major indicator for the governments to allocate funding and other resources according to the individual institutions' performance in teaching and learning, research, and management. Nevertheless, such a development has been criticised as a means not to improve the quality of education but produce much more pressure to comply with numerous quantifiable and measurable performance indicators that cannot reflect the genuine outcomes of education.

As Currie (2004) said if universities are going to be models of institutions for the society, it is necessary to involve academia in democratic decision-making processes in the face of external pressures and "pure" managerial decision making in universities. What is more important is to maintain scholarly integrity, peer review, and professional autonomy in the face of the growing threat of managerial accountability.

In order to understand how academic professionals are affected by all these shifts as well as how they respond to them, some research questions are proposed:

1. What are the ways to integrate research, teaching, and learning? Today, the academia must face new academic research policies that promote the priority accorded to research universities. In an international dimension, an academic system capable of responding to worldwide competition in academic productivity is needed.
2. What are the optimal approaches to governance to promote quality and improvement in education? Is the approach in which the authority to make decisions is delegated to universities and individual teacher levels the best choice? This shift of decision-making authority involves a greater need for information on the outcomes of education at the various levels.
3. How does academic staff perceive their teaching and research obligations? Are research-oriented academics more satisfied with their work than teaching-oriented academics? What is the place of research academics in the hierarchies within institutions?
4. How relevant is the academic profession to society in the context of the economic crisis during the past 2 years?

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