

Chapter Nine

An International Academic Crisis? The American Professoriate In Comparative Perspective

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Altbach's work is based on a massive data set stemming from a Carnegie Foundation survey of 20,000 faculty members in 14 countries around the globe. He reports that the American academic profession appears to have little awareness of the complex realities affecting American universities today. These new realities have led to, among other things, serious attacks on the institution of tenure and the amount of research conducted by faculty. Altbach offers a global perspective of the academic profession from which to draw lessons to apply to meeting the challenges facing American higher education today.

The academic profession faces significant challenges everywhere. Financial pressures have contributed to ever-increasing demands for accountability. The privatization of public higher education and the expansion of private academic institutions in many countries have changed the configuration of academe. Questions about the relevance of much academic research have been linked to demands that professors teach more. The traditional high status of the professoriate has been diminished by unrelenting criticism in the media and elsewhere. This discussion of the problems facing the contemporary university and the way they affect the academic profession is presented in a

comparative and international context because similar issues affect higher education worldwide, and an international perspective can shed light on American realities.

The academic profession, in the United States and abroad, continues to function without basic change or even much consciousness of the external forces that buffet the universities. Yet change is inevitable and it is quite likely that the working conditions of the professoriate will deteriorate. The profession's "golden age," characterized by institutional expansion, increased autonomy, availability of research funds, and growing prestige and salaries, at least in the industrialized countries, has come to an end. We are concerned here with understanding the realities that confront the professoriate in the United States and abroad at the turn of the twenty-first century.

The modern American university is an international institution. It traces its origins to the medieval University of Paris, was deeply influenced by academic models from England and Scotland and from nineteenth-century Germany, and today educates students from all over the world.¹ The American university stands at the center of a world system of science and scholarship, and is the largest producer of research and scholarly publications. The English language dominates world science and, in a sense, is the Latin of the twenty-first century. The American professoriate operates in an international system at the same time that it is embedded in a national environment.

The masters of America's earliest colleges followed the English collegiate tradition, with its emphasis on the moral and religious as well as the intellectual formation of students. From this tradition came *in loco parentis*. Later, in the period following the Civil War, American higher education was greatly influenced by the German research university, with its emphasis on research and on the application of knowledge to the needs of society. The German ideals of *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit* contributed to the development of the academic profession by opening up the curriculum, entrenching the ideals of academic freedom, and ensuring the domination of the professoriate over the curriculum.

The American academic profession is today the largest in the world, with a half-million full-time scholars and scientists. It is very difficult to generalize about the professoriate—divisions by discipline, institution, rank, gender, race and ethnicity characterize the profession. As Burton Clark points out, the professoriate is made up of "small worlds, different worlds."² The life of a full professor of biology at a major private research university in the East is very different from that of an assistant professor of history at a public comprehensive college in the Midwest. There are some common elements—the experience of having undergone that most arcane of rituals, study for the doctorate, the practice of teaching, and perhaps, the most elusive thing of all, a commitment to the life of the mind. There is a vague but nonetheless real understanding that an academic career is a calling as well as a job.³

Insularity and Internationalism

The contemporary professoriate is poised between the national and the international. In terms of numbers, American universities are more international than ever, educating 450,000 students from other countries and employing staff members from around the world. Professors, mainly from research universities, are involved in research and teaching in many countries. At the same time, the Carnegie survey notes that the American professoriate is least committed to internationalism among scholars from fourteen countries.⁴ Only half of American faculty feel that connections with scholars in other countries are very important, and while more than 90 percent of faculty in 13 countries believe that a scholar must read books and journals published abroad to keep up with scholarly developments, only 62 percent of Americans are of this opinion.

American faculty are similarly unenthusiastic about internationalizing the curriculum. Fewer than half agree that the curriculum should be more international.⁵ Americans travel abroad for research and study less frequently than do their counterparts in other countries. The Carnegie data show that 65 percent of American academics did not go abroad for study or research in the past three years. This compares with 25 percent of Swedes, 47 percent of Britons, and just 7 percent of Israelis. The Americans rank last among the 14 countries included in the survey. At the same time, American professors have much more contact with international students than do faculty in other countries—96 percent indicate that foreign students are enrolled at

their institutions. There are, of course, significant variations among the American professoriate, with faculty teaching at the prestigious research universities reporting higher levels of international involvement. Academics who are more cosmopolitan in their approach, focusing on their disciplines and on research, seem to be more international than those who are more local in their orientation, stressing the campus and teaching.⁶

These attitudes indicate a complex relationship with internationalism. American faculty seem to feel that U.S. higher education is at the center of an international academic system. The world comes to the United States and therefore international initiatives are superfluous. Of course, there is a grain of truth to this perception, and it is reinforced by the relative ignorance of foreign languages on the part of American faculty. Besides being the language of science and scholarship internationally, English is the dominant language of the new communications technologies such as the Internet. International conferences often use English as the primary language. Increasingly, journals edited and published in such countries as Sweden, Japan, Taiwan, the Netherlands and Germany are also in English so that they can achieve an international readership and join the ranks of the top international journals. Even the large multinational academic publishers active in academic fields, such as Dutch-owned Elsevier or Germany's Bertelsmann or Springer, publish increasingly in English.

American academics do not often cite work by scholars in other countries in their research. The

American research system is remarkably insular, especially when compared to scientific communities in other countries. A few, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, make it a priority to hire scholars from abroad, frequently from the United States, precisely to ensure an international perspective. The American system accepts scholars and scientists from abroad, but only if they conform to American academic and scientific norms. To be sure, generations of foreign-born and foreign-trained scholars have been welcomed in the American academic system, and have contributed much to science and scholarship. Their role in the New School for Social Research, in influencing the social sciences following World War II, and their involvement in the research that contributed to the Manhattan Project come immediately to mind. Ultimately, however, they have been assimilated into the American system. Their research and scholarly accomplishments may have had an impact, but their ideas about higher education have had little salience.⁷

Other countries look to the United States as the academic center. In most disciplines, Americans are among the leaders, and scholars from abroad find the United States an attractive place. In 1995, more than 59,000 visiting scholars studied in the United States.⁸ Americans still win a preponderance of Nobel prizes. Although its preeminence is decreasing, the United States remains by far the largest producer of basic research.

In sum, American academics have an ambivalent relationship with the rest of the world. They welcome scholars from abroad as visitors or as perma-

nent colleagues and eagerly accept students from abroad in their classes and seminars. But they pay little attention to the knowledge that the rest of the world produces and are unlikely to travel abroad much for study or research. They are unenthusiastic about internationalizing the curriculum.

Centers, Peripheries, and Knowledge Networks

Being at the center of the world academic system places American professors in a powerful position, and also imposes special responsibilities on them. The advent of the new technologies for knowledge distribution complicates matters, but may strengthen the position of the United States. A small segment of the American professoriate, the top 10 to 20 percent or so, centered at the major research universities, can be characterized as the “research cadre,” and are the arbiters of many of the scientific disciplines for much of the world. This group includes full-time faculty who are more interested in research than in teaching, and whose positions require them to be regularly engaged in research. This research cadre is composed of fewer than 20 percent of all academics and 37 percent of those in research universities.⁹ The group produces much of the research published in the mainstream academic journals, obtains a large proportion of research grants, and edits the major journals. Many are members of the various disciplinary decision-making elites.

The American research cadre consists of fewer than 100,000 scientists and scholars. They are

largely tenured (88 percent), male, and in the sciences. These academics teach mainly in the research universities—the 236 institutions in the Carnegie classification’s doctoral and research categories. These institutions constitute 6.1 percent of all institutions with 31.4 percent of enrollments.¹⁰ This group dominates knowledge production and its distribution. They are the primary producers and gatekeepers of science and scholarship. The research cadre, not surprisingly, publishes more than other faculty. For example, faculty at research universities published well over twice as many journal articles in a three-year period as faculty in non-research colleges and universities.¹¹ The leaders of this group occupy the commanding heights of a complex knowledge system, and hold tremendous power to determine what becomes legitimate science. There are, of course, some fields in which U. S. domination does not hold sway, such as literary theory, which is dominated by European thinkers. There are many prominent scholars and scientists working in other countries as well.

The knowledge distribution system that the research cadre controls dominates science and scholarship. It is dominated by widely-cited journals in most scientific fields, for although an estimated 100,000 journals exist worldwide, only a small proportion of them are widely read and share in shaping the disciplines and reporting the key advances in science and scholarship. Most of these influential journals are edited in the United States. Americans also are responsible for a significant proportion of scholarly books.

In fact, the United States is the largest market for new academic “products” of all kinds. The library market alone, although it has suffered significant cutbacks in recent years, remains the world’s largest purchasers of scientific materials. The sheer size of the academic community and the numbers of institutions—more than 3,000 colleges and universities—gives the United States advantages in size and scope. Technological innovations such as the use of the Internet for scholarly communications, on-line journals, bibliographical services, and document delivery through computer-based means have all been developed and are most widespread in the United States. Americans are by far the most active users of computers, e-mail, and other database services. The American professoriate remains far ahead of other academic communities in the use of these, and other, new technologies. The bulk of e-mail communication worldwide is in English, and many of the new data services operate primarily in English, giving further advantages to academic communities that use English. It is perhaps significant that only American e-mail addresses do not have to list a country identifier—an artifact, no doubt, of the American origins of the Internet, and symbolic of U.S. domination of this key communications tool.

The agencies that have developed database services, bibliographical resources, and document delivery arrangements are, for the most part, American. Their origins and ownership make a difference. For example, the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) system, the most

important source of research and bibliographical assistance in the field of education, is based in the United States and funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It is not surprising that the orientation of the material available through ERIC is American, and very little research or documentation from other countries is available.

The American professoriate, and especially those academics active in research, are at the center of the international knowledge network. Their paradigms tend to be most influential simply because they are the key decision makers—as well as the major users—of the new systems. Most American scholars do not consider the international dimensions of their decisions simply because, as noted earlier, they do not have a high degree of international consciousness. In this respect, their insularity works to the detriment of academic communities in other countries, which are to some extent excluded from the mainstream.¹² Academics in other countries depend on the major international journals, publishers, and increasingly on the new technologies. In some ways, they reinforce their peripherality by emphasizing the mainstream international journals, sometimes requiring publication in them to qualify for academic promotion.

Academics even in such highly developed countries as Denmark have become in part peripheral to the American scientific center. So too are scholars and scientists in the United States, such as those at small liberal arts colleges, who are not part of the mainstream research system and are to some extent marginalized.¹³ Those who wish to publish in

the major internationally circulated publications often must adhere to the trends of the dominant elites in the discipline. Researchers who do not teach at research universities often find themselves at a disadvantage in terms of access to publication outlets and to research funds from major foundations and governmental agencies—it is estimated that 80 percent of federal research funds go to scholars and scientists at the top 100 universities.

Academe has always been stratified and hierarchical. These characteristics, which can be observed internationally as well as within a large university system such as the United States, differentiate the profession and are salient factors for academic careers. Hierarchies in the disciplines are combined with a pecking order of institutions to forge a powerful system of centers and peripheries. Although access to knowledge has been made easier by the new technologies, the ability to participate in the system remains controlled by scientific elites in the various disciplines.

The Decline of the Traditional Professoriate

The traditional concept of the professoriate is being supplemented by new hiring and promotion arrangements across the United States, and in other countries as well. The proportion of the professoriate in tenured and tenure-track positions is steadily declining in many countries. In the United States, approximately 35 percent of all faculty are part-timers, and over one-third of the full-time faculty hold term appointments.¹⁴ Criticism of the concept of tenure itself is heard in policy circles, and

the recent unsuccessful efforts by the University of Minnesota Regents to modify the tenure system are but the first part in what is bound to be a continuing debate. These changes come at a time of significant financial pressure on higher education—universities and colleges are trying to squeeze more productivity from the one segment of the academic enterprise heretofore thought to be immune—the professoriate.

The full-time tenured and tenure-track professoriate will very likely continue to decline as a proportion of the academic workforce, although it will remain the gold standard to which all aspire. Academic institutions gain flexibility and incur lower costs by hiring nontenure-track teachers. Significant nonmonetary costs enter into this shift. The traditional faculty are those who perform the complex governance functions of the institution. They serve on committees, design new curricula, become department chairs, eventually fill some senior administrative positions of the university, and produce most of the research. Perhaps most importantly, they have loyalty both to the institution and to the academic profession. They are, in short, the traditional core of the university. Indeed, the statutes of most colleges and universities reserve full participation in governance, including voting on important academic decisions, for the full-time faculty, usually those with regular appointments.

The American university is becoming a kind of caste system, with the tenured Brahmins at the top, and the lower castes occupying subservient positions. The part-timers are equivalent to the

Untouchables in the Indian caste system—relegated to do the work that others do not wish to do and denied the possibility of joining the privileged.

In this hierarchical order, the traditional faculty ranks may constitute half (or even less) of the profession. The new and growing middle category of full-time but nontenure-track faculty is growing rapidly. Hired mainly to teach, these new ranks teach more, are not expected to engage in research, and have only a limited role in institutional governance. They receive the standard benefits from the institution, but their terms of appointment are limited by contract to five years or some other finite period. Paid somewhat less than tenure-track faculty, these staff members are part of the academic community, but not fully involved in the affairs of the university. They provide a reliable teaching force. They also permit the institution flexibility in staffing, since there is considerable turnover in positions that can be used to meet the demands of enrollment changes or institutional priorities. This institutional category is new at most institutions, but we can expect it to grow rapidly.

Part-time faculty have been on the academic landscape for a long time, and they are a rapidly growing part of the academic labor force. Hired to teach a specific course or two, provided no benefits, often given no office space, and expected simply to show up to teach a class, part-timers are the ronin of traditional Japan—the masterless samurai who traveled the countryside offering their services and hoping to be chosen as apprentices. These ronin have all the qualifications of samurai—they lack only a spon-

sor (permanent employer). Part-timers are exploited in the sense that they are paid very modestly on a per-course basis. Not surprisingly, part-time faculty feel little loyalty to the institution.

The implications of this emerging caste system for American higher education are significant. The structure of the academic profession will be altered. One of the traditional strengths of the American pattern of academic organization has been its relative lack of hierarchy, especially when compared to Europe or Japan. The American academic department is a community of equals, with participation dispersed among all faculty. This is in sharp contrast to the Japanese chair system, where basic academic power resides with a small group of full professors, with academic power emanating from them.¹⁵ This pattern, borrowed from Europe but modified there by the reforms of the 1960s, remains a powerful influence.

The changing structure of the profession also has implications for the future of research in the universities. Only full-time faculty have the time, commitment, support, and professional obligation to engage in research and publication. Indeed, many universities permit only full-time faculty to serve as principal investigators on grants. In research-oriented universities, academic work is arranged so that research is an integral part of the career of most academics. If one believes that teaching and research are related, and that teaching benefits from the engagement of a faculty member in active research, the new hierarchy places fewer researching faculty in the classroom, and the quality of

teaching, at least in top-tier schools, may suffer as a result.

The new structure of the professoriate will affect the various sectors of the American higher education system differently. The top-tier research universities and selective liberal arts colleges will be least affected, at least in terms of traditional academic work. The new category of full-time, non-tenure-track faculty will likely expand significantly at these institutions, while part-time staff may be cut back. The greatest alterations will likely take place at the less selective colleges and comprehensive universities, where reliance on part-time and non-tenure-track faculty will grow in order to meet student demand in a context of diminishing fiscal resources and the need for institutional flexibility. These differential changes will exacerbate the already considerable variations in academic prestige and quality. The quest of many of these institutions, as well as individual professors, to join the top ranks of academe may be ended as a result of tighter controls on professorial time and greater institutional accountability.

Examples from other countries can help us understand some of the changes taking place in the United States. In Germany and a number of other European countries, an academic category of full-time nontenure-track academic employees has long existed with responsibility for teaching or research.¹⁶ These appointees have no possibility of obtaining a regular (permanent) position, and in general their terms cannot be extended. They often circulate to different universities on term appointments, and compete for regular

positions away from their home institutions. In recent years, this underclass of academics has again become a growing feature of the German university system. Since full professors are seldom promoted from within the institution, the term-appointment *Mittelbau* staff do not seriously alter the academic balance in the German academic system.¹⁷

The Latin American academic profession, where a majority of those teaching in the universities are part-timers, is also a useful point of comparison for the United States. There is a long tradition of the “taxi cab” professor who rushes from his or her professional job to teach a class at the university.¹⁸ The large proportion of part-time staff has helped shape the ethos of the Latin American university, and has hindered the emergence of a modern academic culture. Contemporary reformers have argued that a full-time professoriate is a prerequisite for a competitive and effective academic system. Indeed, countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Argentina have expanded their full-time staff. Reliance on part-timers has meant that university governance is in the hands of a very few senior faculty, little research takes place, and teaching is limited to lectures given by busy professionals who have little interaction either with students or colleagues.

While it is generally agreed that research and innovative teaching and curriculum development cannot be built on the basis of part-time staff, reliance on part-time faculty has given the universities much needed flexibility, and has permitted higher education to be offered at low cost. Tuition levels are very low in public institutions, and government

allocations to postsecondary education are modest when compared to international norms. The public universities in Latin America have expanded their enrollments in order to meet increasing demand through the use of low cost part-time staff.

The growth of private universities in Latin America and elsewhere has significant implications for the academic profession. Although the prestigious older private universities in Latin America, largely sponsored by the Catholic Church, maintain high standards and have many full-time professors, most of the newer institutions rely almost exclusively on part-time faculty. In Latin America as well as in the formerly Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, private institutions are educating an increasing segment of the student body. The quality of many of these new universities has yet to be measured—and the implications of their employment patterns for an emerging professoriate are similarly unmeasured.

Tenure

The tenure system is again under attack. As a result of difficult economic circumstances, a perceived need by academic institutions to increase staffing flexibility, and the perennial complaint that professors who hold tenure are not accountable to anyone, the tenure system has come under widespread criticism.¹⁹ This has ranged from attacks on putative faculty “deadwood” or professorial laziness, to issues relating to institutional priorities.²⁰ The Minnesota case, mentioned earlier, is indicative of the strong feelings on this volatile issue. The faculty ultimately won that struggle, although tenure

rules were slightly modified. Professorial job security is an increasingly volatile issue in other countries.

The central issues in the current debate relate to accountability, post-tenure review of faculty, and institutional concerns about financial and programmatic flexibility. The interplay between the imperatives of the tenure system and its linkage to academic freedom, on the one hand, and pressures for change, on the other, will result in some alterations in traditional arrangements. However, in most institutions, tenure will be probably be retained with only modest modifications.²¹ The important point is that there will very likely be, for the first time in close to a century, a number of modifications in the tenure system.

Post tenure review is one likely reform. Pressures for institutional accountability are being extended to individual faculty members. Moves are afoot to hold tenured faculty accountable for their teaching, and to measure both teaching and research productivity more closely. Clearly, the era of unfettered professorial autonomy following the award of tenure is coming to a close. Another possible change is that fewer faculty members will receive tenure. A cadre of full-time nontenure-track faculty is emerging. This class of faculty will not have the protection of the tenure system. Some will have the possibility of periodic renewal of contracts, while others will be appointed for a limited period without any prospect of renewal.

It should be kept in mind, of course, that in most American colleges and universities tenure has never been ironclad. Tenured faculty members can

be dismissed in times of financial exigency or for reasons of programmatic restructuring (such as the closing down of departments). While relatively few institutions have resorted to such measures, some have, and their actions have been upheld in the courts. During a financial crisis in the 1970s, the State University of New York dismissed several faculty members when specific academic programs were being eliminated, and although the American Association of University Professors censured the administration for this action, the courts upheld it. Top-tier institutions have been less likely to resort to firing tenured staff at times of restructuring or fiscal crisis.

International trends regarding academic employment and tenure present a mixed picture. Permanent employment after a probationary period is the norm worldwide, although this varies and some policy changes are under way. American professors undergo perhaps the longest probationary period and one of most rigorous evaluations of performance prior to awarding tenure found anywhere in the world. In Europe, young scholars are appointed to university posts, “confirmed” after a relatively short probationary period of approximately three years, and are given permanent appointments—if performance in teaching and research is satisfactory. The evaluation conducted is not nearly as rigorous or elaborate as that which is standard practice in the United States. Salary increases are typically based on longevity and are not performance based. Once a scholar is appointed to a permanent post, tenure is often protected not only by university

statutes but by civil service regulations and, as in the case of Germany, the constitution itself.

Promotion to a higher rank, however, is not automatic and often involves a rigorous evaluation. In some countries, promotion to the rank of full professor requires open advertisement and competition, and the promotion of a person already in the university is not assured. In countries with the tradition of the chair system, a relatively small number of academics are promoted to this high rank, and it is by no means certain that most academics will end their careers as full professors. As European academic systems experience financial problems, fewer senior professorships are being authorized; as a result, a growing proportion of the academic profession either cannot be promoted to a senior academic rank, or must be content with temporary appointments.²²

There are even some countries where formal tenure does not exist. In Taiwan and South Korea, for example, there is no formalized tenure system, and it is possible for professors to lose their positions. Yet virtually all academics hold *de facto* tenure and few, if any, are actually fired. England is undergoing a dramatic experiment with the modification of permanent appointments. Traditional tenure was abolished by the government for new incumbents in the academic profession during Margaret Thatcher's prime ministership, and the country is currently witnessing considerable change in the nature of academic careers.²³ The government's policy was universally condemned by the academic profession at the time it was implemented.

Patterns of academic appointment, security of tenure, and provisions for the guarantee of academic freedom vary considerably. Legal as well as administrative arrangements differ. In India, for example, most full-time academics have permanent appointments, but weak legal and administrative protections mean that institutions can violate tenure with relative impunity.²⁴ Even in the United States, policies vary. In Minnesota, protection for faculty at the University of Minnesota has been ironclad, while in New York, tenure regulations, even in a unionized environment, are much weaker.

In the United States, academic freedom has traditionally been protected by the tenure system as well as specific institutional guarantees.²⁵ While few of the attacks on the academic freedom of professors match those experienced by the profession during the McCarthy period of the 1950s, American faculty feel somewhat ambivalent about the state of academic freedom. According to the Carnegie survey, 81 percent believe that academic freedom is strongly protected, but only 49 percent say that there are no political or ideological restrictions on what a scholar may publish.²⁶ Scholars in most of the 14 other countries included in the survey felt more secure in what they can publish—indeed, only Koreans, Brazilians and Russians were less sanguine than their American counterparts.

It is perhaps surprising that even one-fifth of the American professoriate feels that academic freedom is not well protected and that almost half worry about ideological restrictions on publication. This may reflect concern about political correctness

or other debates in recent years over the ideological basis of the curriculum (although 71 percent of American academics feel that this is an especially creative and productive time in their fields—among the most favorable ratings in the 14-country Carnegie study²⁷). Or it may relate to unease about the tenure system, a difficult job market, or other uncertainties.

Scholarship Reconsidered and Assessed

Among the most important implications of the fiscal and institutional pressures discussed here is a significant reconfiguration of academic work. The debate begun by the publication of Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* continues, and may be starting to have an impact on the profession.²⁸ Boyer's argument that the professoriate should pay more attention to teaching and learning and that the definition of scholarship should be broadened so that it goes beyond traditional publication of research findings and analysis came at a time when academic institutions were seeking more productivity and accountability from the faculty. A sense that the emphasis on research that has characterized the top tier of American higher education may have gone too far has increasingly entered the debates about higher education in the 1990s.

Financial reality, institutional necessity, and the ideology of reform have come together in the movement to reemphasize teaching as the central responsibility of the academic profession. As it happens, the American professoriate itself is committed to teaching as its central role. When asked if their

interests were primarily in teaching or research, 63 percent of American academics respond that their commitments are primarily or leaning toward teaching. This compares with 44 percent in England, 28 percent in Japan, and 33 percent in Sweden. In these nations, and others in the Carnegie survey, faculty are more focused on research.²⁹ Not surprisingly, American faculty members in the research cadre, because of their publication records, are more focused on research, yet even these individuals indicate a strong commitment to teaching.

American academics do express dissatisfaction with many of the conditions for teaching and research. For example, 42 percent feel that the pressure to publish reduces the quality of teaching at their institutions, 71 percent believe that research funding is more difficult to obtain now, and 75 percent believe that it is difficult to achieve tenure if they do not publish.³⁰ Half or more are critical of library, computer, and classroom facilities for their teaching. They also judge many of their students to be insufficiently prepared for their studies. But their views are by no means inimical to the teaching role in higher education.

While there is a perception that things are modestly deteriorating in academe, there is certainly no groundswell from the professoriate for greater emphasis on teaching, new procedures for assessment, or a reorientation of American higher education. Yet, it is unlikely that most faculty would be adverse to a renewed emphasis on teaching and a diminished focus on research. Most academics produce relatively little published scholarship or

research, and most express strong loyalty to teaching. Many, as the Carnegie survey indicates, feel that they are under too much pressure to do research. Assessment, mainly in the form of student evaluations of teaching, is nearly universal in the United States. Additional assessment, if not too time consuming or intrusive, is unlikely to be strongly opposed.

Critics often overemphasize the innate conservatism of the professoriate. While it is unlikely that the academic profession will press for drastic change, a commitment to teaching and to the goals of higher education will make the professoriate receptive to proposals for change. The American professoriate, more focused on teaching their colleagues in Europe or Japan, is likely to be more favorable to reform. Even in England, where the professoriate was united against the Thatcher changes and expressed traditional views on a range of issues, the academic profession adjusted to the new academic environment and has been willing to implement changes, including assessment of teaching and research, and a greater emphasis on accountability at all levels of the academic system.

In the United States, the next step in the effort to place more emphasis on teaching and to expand the concept of intellectual work, as well as to assess the totality of academic work, is a Carnegie report entitled *Scholarship Assessed*.³¹ The focus is on better means of assessing teaching so that it can be evaluated along with research as an element of academic work. Guidelines are also provided for covering service as well as teaching. This initiative is part

of an ongoing effort in higher education to assess, measure, and evaluate all academic work. The outcome of these efforts is at this point an open question—the techniques for effective measurement of teaching and learning remain much debated. The widespread acceptance of modified norms of professorial performance will also require something of a cultural shift in the profession.

The research cadre, and indeed most faculty at the top-tier research-oriented institutions will see relatively little change in their working lives. Those in less selective colleges and universities will probably be most affected, coming under increasing pressure to emphasize teaching and to downplay a commitment to research. Most colleges already emphasize the teaching role, although they may benefit from greater sophistication in the measurement of teaching effectiveness. Assessment and accountability are at the top of the institutional agenda. So far, the financial and governmental pressures on American higher education have been felt largely at the institutional level and have not touched on life in the classroom; this situation, however, is about to change.

In a few other countries, mainly in the English-speaking academic community, assessment and evaluation also have been emphasized. Britain has been most active in this field, where policies have been implemented to measure academic performance in both research and teaching, and there are plans to ensure that those who enter postsecondary teaching have some preparation in pedagogy specifically relevant for university teaching.³² The

British approach is to provide training for postsecondary teaching and then to assess the quality of academic performance. Australia and Canada have also paid attention to issues of assessment.

Morale

In general, the professoriate feels good about itself. There is little sense of crisis among academics, and most are unaware of the magnitude of the problems facing American higher education.³³ Overall, most faculty are remarkably content with their careers. They are less pleased with their institutional surroundings, increasingly critical of their students, and especially alienated from the administration of their institutions. Nevertheless, more than 75 percent are happy with their job situation as a whole and express satisfaction with the opportunities they have to pursue their own ideas. A majority feel that this is a good time to become an academic, and only 11 percent say that if they had to choose careers again, they would not choose academia. Faculty report that they are generally content with their colleagues, and 79 percent are satisfied with their job security, although only 61 report that they are tenured. Faculty are even relatively happy with their salaries—46 percent describe their salaries as excellent or good. This is a surprisingly high proportion in view of the reality of relatively stagnant academic salaries during much of the 1990s.³⁴ Ninety-six percent are satisfied with the courses they teach, although they are somewhat critical of their students. A quarter of the faculty reported that their students are less qualified now than they were five years ago. Overall, they feel that

academic freedom is protected.

In short, in their departments and in the classroom, the professoriate expresses general satisfaction. Faculty feel content with their overall professional autonomy. The Carnegie data suggest that if an academic feels professionally autonomous, secure in his or her job, and respected by campus colleagues, he or she is likely to give a positive rating to the job situation as a whole, even if some other, less central aspects of the job are seen as unsatisfactory.³⁵

It is interesting that there is little worry over what some have called the crisis of political correctness on campus. The Carnegie survey shows that most faculty are comfortable with the level of academic freedom and feel few constraints in their teaching and research. However, 34 percent are of the opinion that there are some restrictions on what a scholar can publish, perhaps reflecting a concern about “PC.” There is, however, scant evidence to support the claims of conservative analysts that the campus is seething with conflict over the nature of scholarship, multiculturalism and other issues.³⁶

The faculty do report dissatisfaction in a number of key areas, most notably, as indicated, with the administration, with a number of institutional arrangements, and to some extent with students. Unhappiness with academic administration is a near universal phenomenon.³⁷ In all of the 14 countries in the Carnegie survey, alienation from administration was a strong theme among the faculty. Only in Brazil and Russia did even half of the respondents judge relations between faculty and administration to be good. In the United States, 57 percent of the profes-

soriate rate relations as fair or poor. Thirty-four percent of American academics do not feel that they are kept informed about what is going on at their institution, and 64 percent feel that they have no say at all in shaping academic policies (only 14 percent consider themselves very or somewhat influential). Fifty-eight percent have the opinion that the administration is often autocratic, 45 percent report that communication between faculty and administration is poor, and 39 percent say that top-level administrators are providing competent leadership. American faculty are rather typical in their attitudes toward institutional leadership when compared to the other countries in the Carnegie survey.

This alienation from administrative authority tells us a good deal about attitudes within the academic profession. While faculty express satisfaction with their colleagues at the department level, they are deeply unhappy with institutional governance and policy. Similar dissatisfaction is expressed with governmental involvement in higher education. Only 10 percent of American faculty agree that the government should have responsibility for defining overall purpose and policy for higher education. Thirty-four percent feel that there is far too much governmental interference in important academic policies. Faculty are alienated from the people who run their colleges and universities, and from the governmental authorities who provide the funding as well as shape broad approaches toward research, student aid, and affirmative action. There is a large gap between the satisfaction felt about the local aspects of academe and discontent with the broader policy direction of higher education.

The faculty would like to be permitted to pursue teaching and research unfettered by governmental interference or administrative restrictions. Most academics enjoy what they do, believe that they do their work well, and consider themselves reasonably well prepared for their jobs. There is a vague sense of unease with the institutional climate and with trends in higher education, and this seems to be reflected in negative feelings toward institutional leaders and their policies.

Future Realities and Professorial Perceptions

The full-time American academic profession remains largely insulated from the broad changes taking place in higher education. Not only that, the professoriate seems to have little understanding of these trends. The majority of tenured faculty have been unaffected by the deteriorating academic labor market, although their job mobility has become limited. When colleges and universities have been forced to cut their budgets, the faculty have been largely protected. Only in a few cases has tenure been violated due to financial exigency. For a long period in the 1970s and 1980s, faculty salaries did not keep pace with inflation. However, the last few years have seen a modest improvement, although in 1996 there was slippage again.

In some respects, academic work has changed. Classes have become larger. Research funding is more difficult to obtain, and enrollments in many schools have increased while full-time faculty

numbers remain steady or have even declined. Part of the slack has been taken up by part-time staff, graduate student instructors, and an increase in class size. The full-time professoriate has become somewhat more productive in terms of numbers of students taught. Although there is little hard evidence, most academics are of the opinion that obtaining tenure has become more difficult, especially at the research universities.

Among those who have experienced the current realities are new doctorates in many fields, who cannot find full-time positions and must content themselves with insecure part-time teaching and repeated postdoctoral assignments. Some have been forced to leave academe altogether. Competition is fierce for the positions that do exist. Assistant professors find working conditions increasingly difficult and experience increased obstacles on the road to tenure.³⁸

Most academics do not see these trends as a crisis, and do not recognize them as part of a permanent change in the landscape of American higher education. They have not yet experienced the new realities for themselves. Presidents and other leaders have not communicated the idea that faculty has a responsibility for institutional adjustment and survival in the current period, and have not involved the professoriate in responding to the new financial and other realities. Faculty members do not yet realize that if institutions are going to survive and the traditional prerogatives of the professoriate be maintained, the profession will need to take an active role in ensuring institutional well-being.

The professoriate is faced with difficulties and diminished circumstances almost everywhere. The Carnegie survey portrays an academic profession that has a vague sense of unease but little sense of crisis. It is instructive and even relevant to examine some of the trends evident abroad. Britain has seen the most far-reaching reform, with the abolition of the tenure system, the amalgamation of the polytechnics with the universities to more than double the size of the university system, and most recently, the imposition of performance measures for teaching and research, and the allocation of funds to universities based on these measures. These policies have had considerable impact on the professoriate, as indicated by the low morale of the British respondents to the Carnegie survey.³⁹ The British academic profession has been significantly affected by these structural changes, as well as by forced retirements and deteriorating conditions of teaching.

There has also been a less dramatic deterioration in the conditions of the professoriate in most Western European countries, where little structural change has taken place. Most pronounced in Germany, but also evident in France, Italy, and to some extent in the Netherlands, increases in student numbers have not been accompanied by growth in the professoriate, and the conditions for teaching and learning are declining. Fewer jobs are available for younger scholars, and research funding has been cut or at least has not kept up with costs. There have been few, if any, initiatives to reform the universities or the basic terms and conditions of the academic profession.

Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, on the other hand, present a dramatic picture of decline and deterioration. In all of these countries, higher education has come under severe financial pressure with cutbacks in government funding for the universities. Support for research has been especially hard hit. The establishment of new private universities has changed the equation since few, if any, of these new institutions offer tenured appointment. The Russian universities have suffered severe financial declines so that the conditions necessary for research and advanced scholarship no longer exist. The professoriate has had to adjust to a changed environment. Many have left the universities, pursuing careers in other fields or finding positions abroad. Others find that they cannot survive financially, and take extra part-time academic jobs. The universities and the academic system remain in a period of transition, with the future unclear.

In a trend most evident in China but also seen in other countries (including the United States, to some extent), universities are increasingly asked to generate their own revenues. Chinese universities are now charging many of their students tuition and other fees. The universities have also established consulting departments, profit-making laboratories, and even businesses in many fields. Peking University, China's most prestigious academic institution, runs a successful software company and other enterprises. Many professors are involved in these enterprises, and in private consulting as well. As a result, they naturally pay less attention to campus life and to their students. The professoriate is increasingly seen as a source of direct income for

academic institutions. In the United States, university-industry collaboration has an element of Chinese-style academic entrepreneurialism.

In very few countries is the academic profession secure in its traditional role. Even in Hong Kong, which may have the highest academic salaries in the world, new performance evaluation and accountability standards are being implemented. Many faculty are also worried about the impact of the transition to Chinese sovereignty on academic freedom and on higher education as a whole. In Australia, the new conservative government's promises of significant cuts in higher education funding has the professoriate profoundly worried. In Japan, current reform efforts aimed at improving undergraduate education may affect the traditional autonomy and insularity of the Japanese professoriate. The implications of heavy reliance on part-time faculty, which has been part of the Latin American academic system for a century or more, has some lessons for the United States as the balance steadily shifts.

Conclusion

The American professoriate is part of an international academic community that now faces diminished circumstances, decreased autonomy, and threats to the perquisites and even the traditional roles of the professoriate. While each academic system is embedded in its own national issues and circumstances, there are some common realities, especially in the realm of fiscal problems and demands for accountability, making it possible to learn from the experiences of other countries.

The largest and arguably the most powerful in the world, the American academic profession is faced with unprecedented challenges. Its world scientific and research leadership is reasonably secure because of the size and complexity of the academic system. At the same time, it must function in an increasingly multipolar world in which international skills and connections are important, and it is ill prepared for this role. American scholars and scientists remain remarkably insular in their attitudes and their activities. Domestic challenges also abound, and again the professoriate seems poorly prepared for the future. There is little understanding of the complex realities facing American colleges and universities. Attitudes reflect little sense of crisis. Indeed, the distrust felt by many academics toward the leadership of American higher education makes innovation more difficult.

At the same time, the academic profession has weathered difficulties in the past. The wave of creative energy that resulted in the establishment of the American research universities at the end of the nineteenth century and the professionalization of the academic profession shortly thereafter prove that reform and change is possible. Academics also met the challenges of the economic depression of the 1930s and the expansion of the postwar period creatively.⁴⁰ With leadership and energy, there is no reason why the early twenty-first century cannot be as creative a period for higher education as was the early twentieth century.

Endnotes

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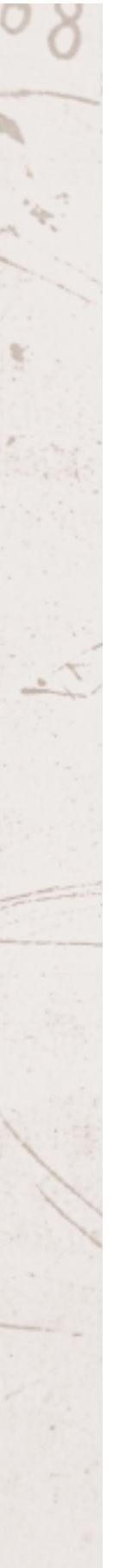
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