

## **Chapter 12**

### **The Academic Profession: The Realities of Developing Countries**

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The academic profession worldwide is united by its commitment to teaching and the creation and transmission of knowledge. Yet, as pointed out by Burton R. Clark, it is also composed of “small worlds” and “different worlds” divided by discipline, role, and other factors (Clark 1987). This chapter examines the conditions of the academic profession and workplace in developing countries. A growing proportion of the world’s postsecondary students are found in developing countries, and the rate of expansion of higher education is greatest in this part of the world. In 2010, there are more than 150 million postsecondary students worldwide, with at least half studying in developing or middle-income countries (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley 2009). China and India are now the largest and third largest academic systems in the world, respectively, and most of the enrollment expansion in the coming 30 years will be in developing countries. Further, many developing countries are building up large and complex academic systems, including research universities. There are an estimated 3,500,000 full-time academics in developing and middle-income countries, with perhaps an equal number of part-time teachers. Yet little is

known about the professionals responsible for teaching and research in these universities.

What is recognized about the conditions of the academic profession and of academic work in the developing world is not positive. The conditions of work and levels of remuneration are inadequate, involvement in institutional governance often limited, and the autonomy to build both an academic career and academic programs in the university is often constrained.

While some of these circumstances exist in middle-income nations such as the countries of the former Soviet Union, this chapter is mainly concerned with developing countries—nations with low-level per capita income. There are major variations among the developing countries and, indeed, within the academic systems of these countries. Larger countries, such as India and China, have some universities and specialized postsecondary institutions with excellent facilities that operate at international levels, although they have not yet achieved the status of top world-class institutions. However, these higher education systems are overall of fairly low quality. As with most comparative analyses, the generalizations presented here do not fully apply to all of the countries or higher education systems discussed in the chapter.

The academic profession is at the heart of any university; without committed and well-educated professors, no university can achieve its potential. Professors perform the central tasks of the university – teaching, research, and service. They must be taken into account in every decision made by the university. Their working conditions and remuneration must enable them to perform well. Universities have traditionally involved the professoriate in governance and, thus, the participation of the academic profession in decisions concerning the central functions of the university – who is admitted for study, what is taught, who is hired to the profession, who is promoted up the ranks, what are the requirements for academic degrees, and who is awarded a degree. The academic freedom and job security of the professoriate must be protected.

Yet, as will be discussed in this chapter, the conditions of the academic profession in the 21st century are far from ideal and in some ways are deteriorating. This is true worldwide. The impact of massification, the privatization of higher education, and the impact of the financial crisis have all contributed to the challenges faced by the academic profession.

## **WORLDWIDE TRENDS**

Many of the conditions affecting the academic profession in developing countries are central realities worldwide. For example, G. R. Evans (2002) points out that

the British academic profession has been drawn away from its traditional values and that in many ways this has weakened the country's universities. As she points out, these trends are observable worldwide. The central realities of higher education in the 21st century—massification, accountability, privatization, and marketization—affect universities everywhere and academics, to differing degrees. Massification has led, among other things, to an expanded academic profession and an academic community that is increasingly fragmented. Accountability has limited the traditional autonomy of the profession, more tightly regulating academic work and eroding one of the major attractions of the academic profession. Privatization has, in some contexts, placed pressure on academics to generate income for themselves and for the university through consulting and other nonteaching activities. Marketization has forced academics to become more aware of students' curricular interests. Professors have also been encouraged to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The sad fact in the era of mass higher education is that the conditions of academic work have, for most academics, deteriorated everywhere.

There has been a major shift in the nature of academic institutions and academic work in many countries and for a substantial part of the academic profession. These changes have implications for the career structure of the professoriate, choices for research and teaching, the relationship of academic staff to administration, and the participation of academics in the governance of

institutions—to mention a few factors. In industrialized nations, the top segments of increasingly differentiated academic systems have thus far managed to retain the ability to engage in high-level teaching and research and to protect the central values of the university. While the problematic trends described earlier affect academics everywhere, the impact may be especially severe in developing countries, where the traditional roles of the professoriate are often less well established, financial and other resources less adequate, and the pressures greater.

### **CENTERS, PERIPHERIES, AND DEPENDENCY**

The professoriate in the developing countries is a profession on the periphery (Altbach 1998). With few exceptions, research is undertaken at the major universities in the industrialized countries, and the norms of academic work at these institutions set the standard everywhere. The academic world is itself hierarchical, and research universities in the industrialized countries are at the center of an international knowledge system (Shils 1972). These institutions produce most of the research and control the key international journals and other means of communication. They train researchers and top scholars and in most countries educate the elites (Geiger 2004). Peripheries are not, of course, limited to developing countries. Academics in teaching-oriented universities generally

are peripheral to those at the major research universities. The academic profession in developing countries is also peripheral to the international centers.

The academic systems of developing countries are, without exception, imported from the North. Indeed, all contemporary universities are based on the medieval University of Paris model, with the exception of the al-Azhar University in Cairo. In part, the European model was imposed by the colonial powers, but even in Ethiopia, Thailand, and Japan, where foreign academic patterns were not imposed, European models prevailed over existing indigenous academic traditions. Following independence, when developing countries had the chance to change the nature of the university, none of them chose to do so. Indeed, in many cases, even the language of the colonial power was retained for instruction and research. The European and increasingly the American academic models—based on departments, competition among academic staff, institutional hierarchy, and specific definitions of science and scholarship—continue to prevail throughout the developing world and are increasingly influential elsewhere.

Language is one element of the peripherality of the academic profession in developing countries. In the 21st century, English is the main language for academic communication—in journals and Internet networks, as well as at international meetings (Crystal 1997). Major Western languages—such as French

and to a lesser extent German and Spanish—are also widely used. Other languages may be used for teaching and perhaps local publications but have little international relevance for scientific research. This is as true for Danish or Hungarian as it is for Chinese or Swahili. A significant number of developing countries use English or French for instruction—permitting the use of textbooks and curricular materials in those languages but also weakening the connection to local cultures and realities.

Larger and wealthier than their counterparts in the South, the long-established academic communities of the North possess resources that permit them to maintain leadership in all areas of academic work. Universities in the North also have close relationships with multinational corporations and other consumers of research. These links provide further funding sources and outlets for research and other academic work. This combination of wealth, resources, and position ensures the centrality of the universities of the North.

Global realities are in the process of change. Not only has globalization created an international knowledge system in which academics and universities worldwide can participate, but some of the larger developing countries are rapidly building research universities and may be shedding their peripheral status (Altbach and Balán 2007; Salmi 2009). China, for example, has provided significant support to a small number of its top universities, and these

institutions produce research and train doctorates. Countries that have in the past half century moved ahead economically – such as South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Singapore – have also built research universities that can compete with the best in the world. These institutions offer working conditions and remuneration to the academic profession necessary to sustain a research university.

Related to peripherality is dependency. Third World academics often perceive themselves to be dependent on the main centers of knowledge and the world scientific networks. The vast inequality in wealth, size, and access to resources and institutional infrastructure contributes to dependency. The policies and practices of academic systems in the North also play a role in the power imbalance. For example, scholarly journals select articles based on the interests as well as the methodological and scientific norms that prevail in the North, which often places Third World researchers at a disadvantage in getting their work published and recognized internationally. In many developing countries, funding for research, participation in international conferences and programs, and access to academic collaboration is often dependent on external support from the North. The decision-making structures are based in the North and reflect the interests and concerns of the dominant academic communities. The situation is most extreme for Africa, where almost all research and funding for international linkages come from external sources – foreign governments,



multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, philanthropic foundations, and so on. African scholars and scientists are dependent on foreign funds and must comply with the particular priorities and programs of the funders for their research (Teferra and Altbach 2002).

The fact is that most academics work in the “small worlds” of their departments and universities, spend most of their time teaching, and are thus unaffected in their daily lives by the trends in international scholarship. While research and knowledge communication at the top of the system are directly involved in the peripherality and dependency discussed here, the daily lives of most academics operate at a different level—less directly affected by academic globalization. Academics in developing countries function in a world of peripherality and, depending on the country and region, dependency but at the same time are deeply embedded in national realities.

### **THE DOMINATION OF EXTERNAL VALUES**

The universities of the developing world are in many ways dependent on the world academic system. Not only is the institutional model and, often, language of instruction adopted from the North but many of the norms and values of the academic profession as well. The Third World also looks to the North for validation of academic quality and respectability. For example, academics are

expected to publish in Northern academic journals, and promotion sometimes depends on such publication. Even where local scholarly publications exist, many academic decision makers do not consider them of sufficient quality. While it is understandable that in small and relatively new academic systems there may be the desire to implement external validation of the work of scholars and scientists, relying on foreign journals has implications for the professoriate. Internationally circulated journals are often highly competitive, but they may not place much value on research topics relevant in developing countries. Moreover, it is always more difficult for authors to write in a language that is not their own. Journal editors, for their part, must be guided by the methodological and topical predilections of their colleagues and are as a result less interested in work done by Third World authors, who are disadvantaged by the lack of access to the library and laboratory facilities available at the major universities of the North.

Third World academic systems, however, rely on the major Western academic institutions to give legitimacy to their academic work. China and other developing countries measure the research productivity of academics in part by relying on the Science Citation Index (SCI) and, to a lesser extent, the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). This measurement of the impact of scholarly work counts the citations in a group of internationally circulated journals. The number of journals covered is only a small proportion of those published, and almost all of them are edited and published in the North. Thus, the scientific work

produced in the developing countries is largely overlooked. The SCI and SSCI are the only major scholarly citation indexes available. Their prominence augments the power of international scientific networks, further undervaluing scientific work carried out in developing countries. While Third World academics strive to keep abreast of world science, they are at a distinct competitive disadvantage. The way in which the world of scientific publishing is organized discourages national and regional scientific communities from emerging in the Third World. While understandable and probably necessary for universities seeking to engage in research and teaching at the highest international levels, an overreliance on these external norms distorts academic development and introduces unrealistic expectations for institutions and for the academic profession.

## **THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION**

The globalization of higher education has had a broad structural impact on systems everywhere (Scott 1998), and certain elements are specifically affecting the academic profession. The most visible aspect of globalization is the emergence of a worldwide market for academic talent, stimulated in part by the large numbers of students who study abroad. It must be emphasized that the international labor market for scholars and scientists and most of the flows of foreign students are South-to-North phenomena. In 2009, more than 2.5 million

students were studying outside the borders of their own countries; the vast majority of these students are from developing countries, and their destinations are in the industrialized nations. The United States is the host country for close to 660,000 students, with western Europe, Australia, and Canada absorbing most of the rest. The flow of students from North to South is tiny, although there is some South-South flow. A large majority of international students from developing countries study for advanced degrees—in contrast to patterns from the industrialized nations, where students tend to study for their first degree or spend just a semester or year abroad. A significant number of students who obtain their degrees abroad do not return home, and those who do return and join the academic profession bring the values and orientations of the country in which they studied back with them.

While foreign study has received considerable attention, its impact on the academic profession has not been analyzed. In many developing countries, academics with foreign degrees constitute a significant part of the professoriate. Furthermore, these returnees are clustered at the top of the profession and dominate the research-oriented universities. They are the “power elite” of the academic community. These trends are linked to a number of factors. Foreign academic degrees are valued not only because of the perceived quality of the training and the exposure to the best facilities and professors available but also because foreign study is deemed to be more prestigious than receiving training

at home. Scholars returning from abroad often wish to employ the values they absorbed during their studies to upgrade local standards, whether or not such replication is practical or desirable in local conditions. These academics follow the latest international academic developments and seek to maintain links with the countries in which they studied, often importing scientific equipment as well as ideas. Conflicts between foreign-returned academics and their locally educated colleagues are common.

There is also an increasingly important flow of academic talent around the world. Again, the flow is almost exclusively from South to North. It takes many forms, including migration from one country to another on a permanent basis, stints as visiting scholars or postdoctoral fellows, or temporary work assignments abroad. Statistics are difficult to obtain, but some 106,000 visiting scholars were at American universities in 2008 – up from 80,000 just eight years earlier. It is a well-known fact that there is a large flow of academics and professionals from a number of African countries to North America and Europe. For example, more Ghanaian medical doctors are practicing outside of Ghana than at home. There is now a flow from sub-Saharan African nations to South Africa, while at the same time South African academics are taking jobs in the North.

What used to be called the “brain drain” has evolved into a much more complex phenomenon. For academic and scientific personnel, settling in another country no longer means permanent emigration. In some cases, people from developing countries employed in the North return home when attractive opportunities open up after domestic circumstances have improved in terms of living conditions, academic infrastructures, and the intellectual and political climate. As Taiwan and Korea developed in the 1960s and became stable democracies, academics and scientists who had settled abroad began returning home to take jobs in universities. More common is the phenomenon of scientists and scholars from developing countries, who have emigrated, maintaining active relationships with their countries of origin (Choi 1995). They serve as consultants, visiting professors, lecturers, or advisers to universities, governments, and sometimes companies in their countries of origin. In this way, they act as important links between centers and peripheries. Migrants understand conditions in their countries of origin and regularly participate in academic life there as well as at their new homes. A growing number of foreign-educated Chinese are returning home as the universities and working conditions for academics improve.

In the 21st century, the diaspora of professors, scientists, and intellectuals from developing countries who study or live in the North represents a significant factor in the academic culture of the developing world. Globalization makes this

human flow possible. An international academic culture, the willingness of universities worldwide to accept students and in many cases faculty members from abroad, and immigration policies that permit migration all contribute to this diaspora. While the bulk of the flow is from South to North, there is also significant movement among the industrialized countries. Academics move from countries with relatively low salaries and poor working conditions to those with greater resources. For example, large numbers of academics from the former Soviet Union have moved to western Europe and North America in recent years. Smaller numbers have gone from the United Kingdom to the United States and Canada because of deteriorating salaries and working conditions in the United Kingdom. There has also been a modest South-South flow – Indians can be found teaching in a number of English-speaking African countries and South Africa has attracted academics from other African countries. Egyptians and Palestinians staff universities in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. The costs and benefits of this massive international migration are considerable – with most of the benefits accruing to the wealthier academic systems.

Information technology (IT) is also closely related to globalization and is beginning to affect universities and the academic profession in many ways. Two basic elements are of concern here – the use of IT for scientific communication worldwide and for pedagogical purposes, both through distance education and for improving instruction and learning in traditional universities. The IT

revolution has yet to fully unfold and will increase its impact on higher education everywhere. It is likely to be especially influential in developing countries, where the demand for access is greatest.

IT is a new phenomenon in much of the developing world – Africa, for example, has been connected to the Internet for a relatively short time, and even now many African academics have only sporadic access to it (Teferra 2003). The issue of access is central. In the academic context of developing countries, many academic staff do not have their own computers and must rely on spotty access and service. Personal e-mail accounts are by no means universal. Connectivity is unreliable and often slow, due to inadequate and poorly maintained telephone systems – meaning that many sophisticated databases will not run well. Prices are often high, and this means that individuals cannot afford their own accounts, and universities may ration access. Despite these serious problems, IT has provided many academics in developing countries with unprecedented access to current scientific information, which to some extent makes up for the inadequate libraries that exist in virtually all developing countries. Just as important, the Internet has permitted academics to communicate with colleagues worldwide, dramatically decreasing traditional isolation.

While IT has given access to knowledge on a scale hitherto unknown, it has in some ways increased the peripherality of developing-country academics



(Castells 2000). Studies show that developing countries use information from the North but contribute relatively little to the total flow of knowledge. Developing countries are, in sum, users of knowledge produced by others.

Developing countries are making use of IT-based distance education—indeed, 7 out of the 10-largest distance-education providers are located in developing countries—in countries such as Turkey, India, and China. With the exception of the few academics who have been involved with developing and delivering curriculum in these distance-based universities, few individuals in developing countries have had their teaching affected by IT.

The impact of the Internet and IT on the academic profession is in many ways similar to the patterns of inequality described earlier in the chapter. Academics in developing countries are largely dependent on outsiders for the technology, basic equipment, and content. These assets have helped developing-country academics to keep abreast of scientific research, communicate with international colleagues, and participate in scientific debates on a more equal basis. However, academics in developing countries are still peripheral in many ways in the Internet-based knowledge system.

## **THE SHAPE OF THE PROFESSION**

The professoriate is changing in many parts of the world, and developing countries are not free from these changes. In developing countries, a higher proportion of academics work on part-time contracts or are subject to irregular hiring practices. In many developing countries, a large part of the profession is composed of part-time staff who teach a few courses and do not have regular academic appointments or real links to the university. This is the norm at most Latin American universities, except for Brazil, where full-time permanent staff are a small proportion of the total academic labor force. In many countries, tenure is not guaranteed, and even full-time academics have little formal job protection, although, in fact, relatively few are actually fired. Clear guarantees of academic freedom or the assurance of a stable career are often missing.

There are curious contradictions in the nature of academic appointments. On the one hand, those hired in regular full-time positions are generally given de facto security of appointment, without much evaluation as to job performance, competence in teaching or research, or other attributes of a successful academic career. At the same time, while few appointees are in fact removed from their academic posts, many academic systems do not offer a formal tenure system that protects academic freedom or inhibits interference by university authorities in the intellectual life of academic staff.

In many Latin American countries, the pattern of academic appointments includes periodic “contests” for academic posts, which require each professor to defend his or her position publicly and permit others to apply for the post. Often, contests do not occur due to the inability of university authorities to organize open competitions on a regular basis. In reality, few faculty are removed from posts they already hold, but the possibility of removal remains a fact. In many developing countries, the terms and conditions of academic appointments are not clearly spelled out, leaving considerable latitude for administrative or governmental interference in an academic career.

The requirements for academic appointments vary greatly in developing countries and are in general less rigorous than is the case in most industrialized nations. In the North, the standard requirement for an academic appointment includes holding a doctoral degree or the equivalent—the highest degree possible in the country. In Germany, Russia, and other countries following the German academic model, a second doctorate—the habilitation or its equivalent—is required for appointment to a full professorship.

It is probably the case that a majority or a significant minority—in some developing countries a majority—of academics in most developing countries hold just a bachelor’s degree. Those in senior academic positions almost always have higher academic qualifications, but much of the academic labor force has

modest qualifications for their jobs. A number of countries, including India and Brazil, have engaged in successful efforts to increase the qualifications of their academic staff by providing opportunities for study to those already in academic positions and increasing the minimum qualifications for appointments. The lack of qualifications has meant that academic upward mobility is limited for many junior staff. It also means, of course, that the level of expertise possessed by many teachers is quite modest, affecting the quality and depth of the instruction provided to many students.

It is unlikely that, on balance, the qualifications of academic staff will improve dramatically in the coming period. Continued expansion throughout the developing world means that large numbers of new teachers will be required, and selectivity will be minimal. The bulk of enrollment growth worldwide will be in developing countries. In India, for example, enrollments will almost double in the next two decades. The challenge of providing teachers to instruct these students will place severe strains on the limited capacities in most developing countries for advanced training in the universities.

The mixed qualifications of academic staff have resulted in a highly differentiated academic profession. The small minority of well-qualified professors, many of whom hold foreign doctoral degrees, are located at the top of the system. The large majority of poorly qualified teachers at the bottom possess

few possibilities for mobility. Missing is a successful middle rank of scholars. A wide gulf exists between the thin wedge of highly qualified personnel and the large, poor, and marginally qualified group of teachers.

In spite of the limited data on the socioeconomic backgrounds of the academic profession in developing countries, some generalizations can be made. The involvement of women in the profession varies and is surprisingly high in some countries. In many Latin American nations and in South Asia, the proportion of women holding academic positions is high—often higher than in industrialized countries. As of 1993, more than one-third of academics in three large Latin American countries (Brazil, Mexico, and Chile) were women (Boyer, Altbach, and Whitelaw 1994). Only a few industrialized nations have reached that level. In developing countries, academics tend to come from well-educated, urban families, although the majority of the population remains largely uneducated and rural. Academics do not, however, come mainly from elite families, due in part to the fact that salaries are not high and chances for mobility are limited.

The academic profession in developing countries differs significantly from the professoriate in the North. In developing countries, there are more part-time staff. Full-time professors have less job security and are sometimes subject to insecure terms of appointment; they are not as well qualified; and they come from more modest backgrounds. While there have been efforts to upgrade

academic skills in some developing countries, massification has meant that qualifications have not kept up with the need for more teachers in the classrooms of the Third World.

## **DEVELOPING COUNTRY REALITIES**

While the basic roles of academics everywhere are similar – teaching, research, and service – in all countries most academics are mainly teachers, with research and service a minor or negligible part of their work. Academics worldwide have recently suffered from a deterioration in income, working conditions, and, in some cases, prestige (Altbach 2002). Working conditions for academics in developing countries are, in general, significantly less favorable than for their colleagues in the North, and there is less emphasis on the research and service roles of the profession.

### **Institutional Environment**

The working environment for most Third World academics is far different than what is the norm in the industrialized nations. While this chapter is not intended as an analysis of the infrastructures of academic institutions, it is necessary to point out that conditions vary considerably across and within countries. For example, India has a few academic institutions – such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, several management schools, and the Bhabha Atomic Research

Centre—with facilities comparable to average institutions in the industrialized countries, although not the very best. But the vast majority of Indian universities, colleges, and other academic institutions fall far below the level of the average postsecondary institutions in the North. While precise figures do not exist, it is probably the case that 95 percent of Indian academics work in an environment that is well below international levels (Jayaram 2003). The situation is significantly better in China, which has a growing number of academic institutions that seek to compete on a global level in terms of research and teaching. However, in China, the large majority of academics work in substandard conditions, and most staff teaching in postsecondary education do not hold an advanced degree. In many developing countries, especially smaller nations, no academic institutions exist that even approach international standards in terms of facilities or quality. Even large countries, such as Ethiopia or Nigeria, have few if any academic institutions that can offer working conditions permitting scholars and scientists to function competitively on an international basis. Even in fairly well-developed academic systems in relatively affluent countries such as Argentina, the physical facilities available to most academics are quite limited. What is surprising in the developing world is the ability of many academics to work effectively under such difficult circumstances.

The academic environment is characterized by inadequacies at all levels. The cost of maintaining up-to-date facilities and resources has increased with the

escalating prices of journals and books and the complexity and sophistication of scientific equipment. In the 21st century, it is increasingly costly to stay competitive in world science. Further, all of these scientific products would have to be imported at unfavorable exchange rates and in an environment of financial scarcity.

In fact, many academics lack even a desk on which to place a computer, even if one were available. Office space is in short supply, limiting the possibility for academic work and consultation with students and colleagues. Many academics have nothing but the books they use as texts or perhaps a few related publications. The physical infrastructure available to most academics is inadequate for scientific research and scholarship and barely adequate for teaching. Indeed, in much of the developing world, facilities are actually deteriorating due to financial shortages and the pressures of ever-increasing numbers of students.

### **Bureaucracy and Politics**

Universities everywhere are bureaucratic institutions. In the North, the concept of shared governance is the norm, with the professoriate sharing or controlling (decreasingly) the key governing structure of universities. Professorial power has weakened everywhere as academic institutions expand and demands for accountability mount. However, academics' control over key aspects of the



curriculum, the hiring of new faculty members, issues of instruction and evaluation, and related issues remains largely intact.

The same cannot be said for many universities in developing countries. First of all, the tradition of professorial power and shared governance is weak. In countries formerly under colonial rule, universities were founded with strong bureaucratic structures and firm controls to ensure loyalty and adherence to the norms of the colonial authorities. In other countries, academic institutions, which were often directly established by government, also lacked the traditions of faculty power. Governments have been concerned about institutional stability, student political activism and unrest, and the risk that universities could become sources of dissent in society. These factors led to the buildup of strong bureaucratic controls and prevented the growth of professorial autonomy and strong faculty governance. Even in Latin America, with its long tradition of formal autonomy for the universities, the academic profession has attained less control over working conditions and over institutional structures.

Many universities in developing countries have become politicized, which has directly affected the academic profession. In developing countries, universities are important political institutions—not only do they train elites but they also play a direct political role as a forum for student political activism, dissident perspectives, and even mobilization of opposition activities. Especially in

societies with unstable governments, universities often serve an oppositional political function.

In many developing countries, two kinds of politics affect higher education: academic politics within the university and societal politics. Academic politics can be found everywhere—in departments, among colleagues, and in the university at large. In the North, while factions may be present in departments, institutions and units within them are generally not disrupted by politics or governed by political considerations. Seldom does the partisan politics in broader society intrude into the on-campus operation of the institution. In developing countries, politics is more prevalent at universities and is not infrequently a motivating force in academic policy decisions, the hiring or promotion of academic staff, and other areas.

A number of factors explain the intrusion of politics into academe. In the developing-country context, the university is an institution with considerable resources. In such a resource-scarce environment, the decisions made on campus—including the hiring of staff (faculty and administrators), student admissions, the creation of new programs, and so on—have broader implications. Universities in developing countries have a tradition of being politicized, the result of a long history of involvement in independence movements or other struggles. Politics has continued to be an element of campus

life in the absence of the norms in the North that keep partisan politics away from the university.

In Latin America, parts of South Asia, some African countries and elsewhere, party politics sometimes determines the election of academics to administrative posts. Candidates for rector or dean may stand for election backed by a political party or a campus faction. Political partisanship is often felt in the appointment of professors and other staff. Occasionally, even student admissions or examination results may be influenced by political considerations.

Universities are complex bureaucratic institutions. In developing countries, bureaucratic control, government involvement in academic decisions, and the politicization of all elements of higher education have been detrimental to the academic profession and the strength of academic norms and values in higher education.

### **Academic Freedom**

Not surprisingly, given the realities discussed here, academic freedom is often not well protected in developing countries. The institutional protections common in the North are often missing – such as tenure or civil service status, as well as academic freedom. A number of factors have combined to put professors in developing countries in a more vulnerable position than their counterparts in the

North. The history of higher education in developing countries, as noted, is one of governmental oversight and bureaucratic control. Colonial regimes as well as postindependence governments worried about the political loyalty of the professoriate and of the university. To a certain extent, a tradition of subservience exists in the academic profession of developing countries (Gilbert 1972). Academic freedom is often more highly contested in developing countries because the work of professors can have direct political relevance – that is, their writings can have an immediate impact on society. The campus environment is often highly volatile, and professors may contribute to dissent on campus and in society. Protecting professorial freedom of expression and academic work does not receive a high priority from governments.

These limitations on academic freedom damage the professoriate, creating problems for expression and research. When professors step over an often undefined line, they can suffer serious consequences—ranging from mild sanctions to loss of their positions or imprisonment. In some countries, research, especially in the social sciences, is restricted. Publications are closely monitored, and professors who express views in opposition to government policy face problems. Most academics, however, do not perceive the situation regarding academic freedom as problematic. In the sciences few restrictions are imposed. Most academics are in any case involved exclusively in teaching, and classroom

expression is seldom monitored. However, the lack of a respected culture of academic freedom has an impact on the intellectual atmosphere of the university.

### **Working Conditions**

In general, the professoriate in developing countries works under much-less-favorable conditions than what is standard in the North. Again, there are significant variations—with a small proportion of academics at the top universities enjoying conditions similar to the North. Few classrooms have anything more than the most rudimentary teaching aids. Class size tends to be large, and in any case the almost universally accepted method of instruction consists of the lecture, with little opportunity for discussion or questions. In some countries, the lack of laboratories and equipment deprives students of an essential component of scientific training. Rote learning constitutes the norm in many places.

Teaching loads, even for senior professors, are high by international standards, and academic staff typically spend more time in the classroom than do their peers in the North. There are some exceptions, such as China, where teaching loads are less onerous. The trend, with enrollment pressures and financial shortfalls, is toward ever-higher teaching loads. The practice of assigning advanced graduate students to assist professors is virtually unknown. Academic staff may spend 20 or more hours per week in direct teaching. Little time remains

for research, course preparation, advisement, or other academic activities. Academic staff often possess little control over what courses are taught. Differences do exist by country, rank, and institution, with academics at the most prestigious universities teaching less than their colleagues further down on the academic hierarchy. Junior staff often teach more than senior academics.

In a growing number of countries, academics are expected to engage in remunerative activities unrelated to their basic teaching. Consulting; extra instruction in the form of revenue-producing, noncredit courses, or other programs; extramural service; and other activities increasingly constitute part of the academic workload. These forms of work produce additional income for universities as well as for individual faculty members. The traditional job of the professor is expanding to include entirely new kinds of responsibilities.

### **Remuneration**

Without adequate salaries, professionals would be hard pressed to perform their best-quality work. The gulf between the industrialized nations and the developing countries, with regard to salaries, is immense. Of course, academics everywhere earn less than people with similar qualifications in the rest of the labor force, but people do not become professors to get rich. Nonetheless, in most industrialized countries, it is possible for academics to achieve a modest middle-class standard of living based on their salaries. With variations by country,

discipline, and rank, academic salaries are usually sufficient to live on in the industrialized countries. In developing countries, however, with some exceptions, this is not the case (Rumbley, Pacheco, and Altbach 2008).

In many developing countries, a full-time academic salary cannot support what is considered to be a middle-class standard of living. This is almost universally the case for junior academics but is also true of senior professors in many countries. Thus, in many countries, academics must hold more than one job. Their main appointments provide a portion of their income, but they must earn additional income from teaching at other universities, consulting, or even holding jobs in business or in service occupations unrelated to their academic work. In many countries, academics provide tutoring or other ancillary teaching to boost their income, even when such activities are proscribed by the university. In the industrialized world, professors also take on outside consulting in order to earn extra income. The difference in developing countries is that, without this additional income, academics could not survive, and many cannot be the sole breadwinners in their families.

Salaries do, of course, vary significantly across and within institutions. Private universities often pay higher salaries than public institutions. The majority of academics in developing countries work at public universities. Income is linked to rank, but in some countries professors engaged in research and graduate

teaching can earn higher salaries. In a few countries, professors receive additional payment for publications and other evidence of academic productivity. In Mexico there is an elite cadre of research-active professors who receive additional remuneration in recognition for their work. Salaries tend to be higher at the most prestigious institutions, in business schools, and other specialized schools. In some countries, academic salaries are not paid regularly, placing great strains on the affected academics, civil servants, and other public officials. The many part-time professors earn much less than full-time professors, in some cases just a token payment.

As a general rule, the low academic salaries in developing countries are unlikely to improve. Salary structure produces a significant impact, as the poor salary levels have led to brain drain. The best scholars and scientists in developing countries can earn many times their local salaries by relocating to the North, and many take this option. Few academics in developing countries are able to devote their full attention to their academic work because of the need to supplement their incomes. Thus, an academic career in the Third World is less than a full-time occupation, even for academics who hold regular full-time positions. This has negative consequences for research and academic productivity, generally. When combined with the structural impediments discussed earlier, it is hardly surprising that the research productivity of academics in developing countries is so low. Salary structure also negatively affects morale.



## **Corruption**

While not much analyzed, corruption in higher education is an issue of concern in some developing countries. Corrupt practices take many forms that affect the professoriate. Student admission may be dependent on the payment of bribes that can take many forms, including expensive tutoring courses by professors in charge of admissions. Professors may engage in plagiarism of different kinds or may purchase research papers that they publish as their own. Professorial appointments may be based on nonacademic criteria such as personal relationships, religious, political, or ethnic affiliations, or others. Promotions or salary increments may be given for nonacademic reasons. In a few countries, corruption is widespread in academic life—and in the society as well—and the academic profession is significantly affected. In a larger number of cases, corruption is an occasional matter, but it is deeply damaging to core academic values and to the profession. Without a transparent and meritocratic environment, the academic profession cannot flourish and the university cannot achieve its goals.

## **FUTURE PROSPECTS**

This overview of the academic profession in developing countries has provided a generally gloomy perspective. Although the outlook for improvement is not

promising, some specific changes may enhance morale, productivity, and, perhaps most importantly, the quality of universities and other academic institutions. These suggestions are not complex—in some instances stating the obvious—but implementation will be a challenge in many countries.

- Adequate salaries and a stable career path should be provided to at least a key segment of the professoriate that holds full-time positions at the main universities.
- At the top academic institutions, university facilities need to be upgraded sufficiently so that the most-well-qualified professors are able to pursue research and offer excellence in teaching.
- Procedures for involving the professoriate, along with administrators (and in some cases students), in academic decision making are essential to ensure that the academic staff have a significant role in the governance of the institution.
- In some countries, the academic profession must be depoliticized—this would involve links between political parties and academics, close ties between the professoriate and student activists, and the partisan nature of academic decision making and elections.
- Academic freedom must finally become a recognized part of university life, with guarantees protecting freedoms regarding research and publications, teaching, and reasonable expression in the public sphere.

- The academic profession itself must develop a sense of responsibility with regard to expression and publication, especially on controversial topics.
- The academic profession must receive adequate training—the doctorate, for those involved in research as well as teaching; the master’s degree, for those who are exclusively teachers; and for all, some exposure to training in pedagogical methods.
- Academics must be provided with the means to keep up with current trends in their fields.
- Great care needs to be taken to ensure that part-time and temporary academic staff are well qualified and provided with appropriate benefits.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented an almost unremittingly pessimistic picture of the current state of the academic profession in developing countries. Yet, what is surprising is that so many people who are working in higher education institutions freely chose the academic life and persevere under difficult circumstances. Fortunately, academic work in developing countries does have many rewarding aspects. Scholars are generally held in high regard, and a professorship, even if poorly paid, is an occupation with high status. Learning is respected, and those who possess knowledge are held in high esteem. Despite the circumstances described here, university life holds considerable attraction. It

is, after all, the life of the mind, and those who are inspired to heed the call for intellectual pursuits will put up with many hardships to pursue an academic career.

Yet, as is clear from this analysis, the profession is truly in crisis. The continued deterioration in the conditions of the professoriate has not only had a negative impact on one of the most highly educated and potentially productive segments of the population but has also weakened higher education as well, since academic institutions cannot perform well without a committed, well-trained, and stable academic profession. In the context of globalization, developing countries require access to the wider world of science and technology, and the academic profession represents a central link to the international knowledge network. As the primary educator of future generations, the academic profession is in many ways the linchpin of development.

*Note:* An earlier version of this chapter appeared in Philip G. Altbach, ed., *The Decline of the Guru: The Academic Profession in Developing and Middle-Income Countries* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College Center for International Higher Education, 2002).

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