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**Centers and Peripheries in the Academic Profession:
The Special Challenges 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 Clark, it is also composed of “small worlds, 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. By the mid-1990s, 44 million of the world’s 80 million postsecondary students were in developing or middle-income countries—despite the fact that only 6 percent of the population in these countries have attained postsecondary degrees, while 26 percent in high-income nations have similar qualifications (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000, pp. 111 and 115). Further, many developing countries are building up large and complex academic systems, including research universities. Yet very little is known about the professionals who are responsible for teaching and research in these universities.

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

While some of these circumstances do exist in middle-income nations such as the countries of the former Soviet Union, this chapter is mainly concerned with developing countries—low per capita-income nations. There are major variations among the developing countries and, indeed, within the academic systems of these countries. The larger countries, such as India and China, have some universities and specialized postsecondary institutions with excellent facilities that operate at the highest international levels. However, overall, these higher education systems are not of a high caliber. Some of the smaller countries do have a number of academic institutions with high standards of teaching and research. Some countries have given a higher priority to higher education than others, and some countries have higher literacy rates or per capita income than others. Cuba, for example, has a high literacy rate and educational attainment although its per capita income is low. In Latin America, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina are no longer classified as developing countries and have relatively high income levels and large and sophisticated academic systems. Yet some of the conditions

common to poorer nations are found throughout Latin America. As with most comparative analysis, the generalizations presented here will not perfectly fit all of the countries or higher education systems discussed in the chapter.

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 universities. As she points out, these trends are observable everywhere. The central realities of higher education in the 21st century—massification, accountability, privatization, and marketization—shape universities everywhere, and those who work at them, to differing degrees. Massification has led, among other things, to an expanded academic profession and an academic community that is increasingly unrecognizable. 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 be more cognizant of student curricular interests and opportunities for entrepreneurial activities. The sad fact in the era of mass higher education is that the conditions of academic work have deteriorated everywhere.

While the current realities are not necessarily detrimental for either the profession or for higher education, they do constitute a major shift in the nature of academic institutions and academic work. The 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 the industrialized nations, a segment of the increasingly differentiated academic systems have managed, so far at least, 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 impact academics everywhere, the severity may be especially great in developing countries, where the traditional roles of the professoriate are often less well established, the financial and other resources less adequate, and the pressures greater.

Centers, Peripheries, and Dependency

The professoriate in the developing countries of the South is a profession on the periphery (Altbach, 1998). Research is, with few exceptions, undertaken at the major universities in the industrialized countries of the North, and the patterns of academic work in 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 research universities set the patterns, produce the research, and control the key international journals and other means of communication. Academics in teaching-oriented universities in the North are peripheral to those at the major research universities in the North. Those in developing countries are also peripheral to the international centers.

The academic systems of the 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 chose to do so. Indeed, in many cases, even the language of the colonial power was retained for instruction and research. The major European languages remain dominant in many developing countries; for example, English and French are still entrenched in Africa. Indeed no African languages (unless one chooses to count Arabic and Afrikaans as African languages) are used in African universities. Although India uses many of its regional languages for instruction, English remains important and preferred by many. The European and increasingly the American academic model—based on departments, competition among academic staff, institutional hierarchy, and specific definitions of science and scholarship—continues to prevail throughout the Third World.

There are many aspects of the peripherality of the academic profession in developing countries. Language is one element. In the 21st century, English is the main language for academic communication—in journals and Internet networks, as well as at international meetings. Other 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 publication, but have little international relevance for scientific research. A significant number of developing countries use English or French for instruction, creating global links—but also weakening the connection to local cultures and realities.

The long-established academic communities of the North are larger and wealthier than their counterparts in the South. Their resources permit them to maintain leadership in all aspects of academic work in ways that are difficult, if not impossible, for universities elsewhere to emulate. Universities in the North also have close relationships with multinational corporations and other users of research, thus giving them further sources of funding and outlets for research and other academic work. This combination of wealth, resources, and position cements the centrality of the universities of the North.

The current status of the academic communities at the center is, at least for the immediate future, an immutable reality of the world knowledge system. Universities in developing countries, and their academic communities, must function in the unequal world of centers and peripheries. Peripherality does not mean that academics in the developing world cannot do creative scientific or intellectual work, or that they are forever relegated to a subordinate status in academe. It does mean that they will seldom be at the frontiers of world science and will not share in the control over the main levers of academic power worldwide.

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 the 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. Funding for research, participation in international conferences and programs, and access to

academic collaboration comes entirely 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 others. African scholars and scientists are dependent on foreign funds and the particular priorities and programs of the funders for their research (Teferra and Altbach, 2002).

The fact that academics in developing countries function in a world of peripherality and, to varying degrees, dependency, is central to understanding the nature of academic work and the role of universities. While the professoriate everywhere is increasingly part of a global academic community, the wealthier and better-developed university systems of the North have more autonomy and resources with which to support independent teaching and research. Thus, while academe worldwide is increasingly affected by the power and influence of the largest academic systems, and especially those that use English, the developing countries are at the bottom in a world system of unequal academic relationships. By its nature, scholarly work in the 21st century is interdependent; the developing countries are importers of knowledge, and have little, if anything, to offer in return.

Having pointed out this context of inequality, the fact is that most academics work in the “small worlds” of their departments and universities, are mostly if not exclusively involved in teaching, and are thus unaffected in their daily lives by the trends of international scholarship. Even now, academic work for the most part takes place in a national context at universities that, while affected by global trends, nonetheless work on a day-to-day level in their own context.

The Domination of External Values

The universities of the developing world are closely tied to the Northern-dominated system. Not only is the institutional model and often the language of instruction adopted, but many of the norms and values of the academic profession have been as well. The Third World looks to the North for validation of academic quality and respectability. For example, academics are expected to publish in Northern academic journals in their disciplines. Promotion often depends on such publication. Even where local scholarly publications exist, they are not respected. While it is understandable that small and relatively new academic systems may wish to have external validation of the work of their scholars and scientists, such reliance has implications for the professoriate. For example, internationally circulated journals are often highly competitive, and journal editors 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 immediate colleagues and are as a result less interested in work done by Third World authors. These authors are also at a distinct disadvantage because they do not have access to the library and laboratory facilities available at the major universities of the North.

In many ways, Third World academic systems rely on the North to validate their academic work. China and other developing countries measure the research productivity of academics in part by relying on the Science Citation Index and, to a lesser extent, the Social Science Citation Index. These measurements of the impact of scholarly work count 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 systematically undercounting scientific work in the developing countries. Yet, these indexes are the only major sources available. Their influence emphasizes the importance of participation in international scientific networks, and undervalues scientific work carried out in developing countries that may be directly relevant to local needs and conditions. Even as Third World academics attempt 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.

In most respects, academics in developing countries look to the North for both validation and models of higher education development and professional norms. 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

Global higher education developments have had a broad structural impact on systems everywhere (Scott, 1998). There are also elements of globalization that specifically affect 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 flows of foreign students and the international labor market for scholars and scientists are overwhelmingly a South-to-North phenomenon. Approximately 1.5 million students study 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 547,000 students. Western Europe, Australia, and Canada absorb most of the rest. There is only a tiny flow of students from North to South, 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. More important, 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. This is the case for a number of reasons. 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 because foreign study is deemed to be more prestigious than staying at home for training. Scholars returning from abroad often wish to implant 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 country 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 80,000 visiting scholars were at American universities in 2000. We know that there is a large flow of academics 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” is now 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 who take jobs in the North return home when attractive opportunities open up and the circumstances at home are appropriate in terms of living conditions, academic infrastructures, and the intellectual and political climate. As Taiwan and Korea developed in the 1960s and as both countries became stable democracies, academics and scientists who had settled abroad returned 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. They understand conditions at home and often retain a certain commitment to their home countries that expresses itself in academic cooperation and assistance.

In the 21st century, the diaspora of professors, scientists, and intellectuals from developing countries who study or live in the North is 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, with academics moving 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. Small 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 very much 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

the use of IT for pedagogical purposes both through distance education and for improving instruction and learning in traditional universities. The information technology revolution is in its early stages and will increase its impact on higher education everywhere. For academics in developing countries, IT has so far had a considerable impact and will inevitably expand its role.

IT is a new phenomenon in much of the developing world—Africa, for example, has been connected to the Internet for just a few years, and even now many African academics have only sporadic access to it (Teferra, 2002). 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 sharing with others. Personal e-mail accounts are by no means universal. Connectivity is sporadic and, in general, slow, as it still relies on inadequate and poorly maintained telephone systems in many places. Slow and sporadic access means that many of the sophisticated databases will not run well. Despite these serious problems, IT has provided many developing country academics with unprecedented access to current scientific information, to some extent making 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. They are, in sum, users of knowledge produced by others.

IT is beginning to come into its own as a means of delivering higher education through distance education courses and degree programs offered on the Internet. Developing countries are making use of distance education in this way—indeed, seven out of the ten 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. Even fewer have been able to use IT to enhance classroom-based teaching, as they lack the necessary facilities, equipment, knowledge, and funds. It is likely that these constraints will continue for some time and that IT use will be minimal in developing country universities. It is also the case that many of the IT “products” available worldwide originated in the industrialized countries, and are often available from media corporations. Designed for use in the North, they may not be relevant for developing countries. They may also be too expensive. The fledgling African Virtual University, for example, has had trouble finding “content” relevant for African countries. Creating courses and related content with a developing country perspective is both expensive and requires skills generally unavailable.

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 dependent for the technology, basic equipment, and content on outsiders. These technologies 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, they 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 the developing countries are not immune 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, where full-time permanent staff are a tiny 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 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 permits 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 the posts they already hold, but the possibility of removal remains. 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 appointment 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.

Many of those who teach have earned only a bachelor’s degree. It is probably the case that a majority or significant minority of academics in virtually every developing country 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, with the small minority of well-qualified professors, many holding foreign doctoral degrees, at the top of the system, and the large majority of poorly qualified teachers at the bottom, with few possibilities for mobility. Missing is a successful middle rank of scholars. A wide gulf exists between the thin wedge of highly qualified personnel at the top of the system and the large, poor, and marginally qualified group of teachers at the bottom.

We have only limited knowledge of the socioeconomic backgrounds of the academic profession in developing countries, but 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 a 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 overwhelmingly 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 differ significantly from the professoriate in the North. 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.

Different Realities

While it is, of course, true that the basic roles of academics everywhere are similar—teaching, research, and service, in different proportions, are the central responsibilities—it is also true that in all countries, most academics are mainly teachers, with research and service a minor or negligible part of their work. It is also the case that academics worldwide have recently suffered from a deterioration in income, working conditions, and, in some cases, prestige (Altbach, 2002). Realities for academics in developing countries are, in general, significantly less favorable than for their colleagues in the North.

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 the average

institution in the North, 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 accurate 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. The situation is only modestly 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, but where the large majority of academics work in substandard conditions. In many developing countries, especially smaller nations, no academic institutions exist that even approach international standards in terms of facilities. Even large countries, such as Ethiopia or Nigeria, have few, if any, academic institutions that can offer the working conditions that would permit 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, and quite impressive, 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 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.

As noted earlier, access to the Internet, while expanding in the developing world, remains inadequate. The infrastructure is antiquated and poorly maintained. Access to some of the major databases is limited by the high cost of accessing them. Few academics have work stations for themselves—computer use is rationed at many institutions.

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 for consultation with students and colleagues. Many academics have nothing but the books they use as texts or perhaps a few related publications. Without question, 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 (decreasingly) controlling the key governing structure of universities. Professorial power has weakened everywhere, as academic institutions become larger 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. In recent years, 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 a lack of professorial power and autonomy. Even in Latin America, with its long tradition of formal autonomy for the universities, the academic profession has attained less control over their working conditions and over the structures within the institution.

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 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 society at large 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 in other ways.

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, having been involved in independence movements or other struggles. Politics has continued to be an element of campus life. The norms that in the North keep partisan politics away from the university are often missing.

In Latin America, for example, party politics sometimes permeates the election of academics to administrative posts. Candidates for rector or dean may stand for election backed by a political party or campus faction. Political influence is often felt in the appointment of professors and other staff. Occasionally, student admissions or examination results may be influenced by political considerations.

Universities everywhere 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 to the preeminence 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 (Altbach, 2001, pp. 205–219). The institutional protections common in the North are often missing—such as tenure or civil service status and institutional protections of academic freedom. A number of factors have combined to put professors in developing countries in a more vulnerable position than that of 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. There is, to a certain extent, a tradition of subservience in the academic profession of developing countries (Gilbert, 1972, pp. 384–411). Academic freedom is, in a sense, more than “academic” in many developing countries, because the writings and sometimes the teachings of professors may have direct political consequences beyond the university. 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 are a detriment to the professoriate. They create uncertainties concerning expression and research. And when professors step over an often undefined line, they can suffer serious consequences, 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. For most academics, the situation regarding academic freedom is not perceived 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

It is clear that, 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 is the lecture, with little opportunity for either discussion or questions. In some countries, the lack of laboratories or scientific supplies and equipment has deprived students of an essential component of scientific training. Rote learning has become the norm in many places.

Teaching loads, even for senior professors, are high by international standards, and academic staff spend more time in the classroom than do their peers in the North, although there are exceptions to this generalization—such as China. 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 have 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 related to revenue-producing, noncredit courses, or other programs; extra-mural service; and other work are all increasingly part of the academic workload. These activities produce additional income for universities as well as for the individual faculty member.

The traditional job of the professor is expanding to include entirely new kinds of responsibilities.

Remuneration

Undeniably, remuneration is a central factor in the life of academics. Without adequate salaries, professionals would be hard pressed to do their best-quality work. The gulf between the industrialized nations and the developing countries with regard to salaries is immense. Academics everywhere earn less than people with similar qualifications in the rest of the labor force. 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 on their salaries. There are variations by country, discipline, and rank, but generally academic salaries are sufficient to live on in the North. In developing countries, however, with rare exceptions, this is not the case.

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 intellectual work. In many countries, academics provide tutoring or other ancillary teaching in order 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. For many, there must also be other earners in the family.

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 places, there is additional payment for publications and other evidence of academic productivity. Salaries can 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 numerous part-time professors earn much less, in some cases just a token payment.

As a general rule, the prospects for improvement in the low academic salaries in developing countries are extremely poor. The implications of salary structure are significant, 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 in the North, and many take this option. Few 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 structures also negatively affect morale.

What Is To Be Done?

This overview of the academic profession in developing countries has provided a generally gloomy perspective. Although the outlook for improvement is not good, it is useful to point out some specific changes that would contribute significantly to 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 guarantees of a stable career path should be provided to at least a key segment of the professoriate who hold full-time positions at the main universities.
- At least 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.
- The academic profession needs to be depoliticized—this would include the links between political parties and academics, the 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 with regard to 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 there are so many people working in higher education institutions who freely choose the academic life and who persevere under difficult circumstances. Fortunately, academic work in developing countries does have many rewarding aspects. Scholars are generally held in very high regard, and a professorship, even if poorly paid, is an occupation that has very 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 to 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 consequences of continued deterioration in the conditions of the professoriate include

not only neglect of one of the most highly educated and potentially productive segments of the population, but also the deterioration of 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.

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