

The Academic Workplace Country Report Poland

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Published in:

The International Attractiveness of the Academic Workplace in Europe,
edited by Jürgen Enders and Egbert de Weert, Frankfurt/Main: GEW,
2004, pp. 332-344.

1. Introduction

The changes in recent decade in Poland have been dramatic, for all professions and all workplaces, including those in the academy. Apparently, transformations in the academy have been much less radical and prolonged in time; higher education systems cannot be changed overnight, and the fact became obvious after the new law on higher education was adopted in Poland in 1990, and then, despite numerous attempts, it was not followed by further major legal changes until the present (2003).

It is thus important to stress that after the changes following the collapse of communism in Poland in 1989 and the new law on higher education that was adopted in 1990, hardly any new changes regarding employment and working conditions in the academy occurred in strictly legal terms. The law on higher education today is 13 years old, and although a dozen or so attempts to adopt a new law had been taken, by almost all stakeholders, none of the proposals was finally accepted.

Thus in purely legal terms, there were no major changes in academic employment and working conditions in a recent decade, even though the outside world is beyond recognition; in practice, though, the academy operates today in a different surrounding which witnessed the passage from central-command economy to the market economy in general, and from ideological suppression of academic freedom to full academic autonomy, from the absence of the private sector in higher education to a boom of it (with enrolments reaching 30 percent of the whole student body today), and the unprecedented growth of enrolments in both public and private sectors from 400.000 to almost 2.000.000 students between 1990 and 2003.

Although legal provisions have not changed much during that period, the social, political

and economic contexts of functioning of higher education have changed beyond recognition. The indirect influence of the real world on the academic world in recent years has been tremendous and cannot be ignored in any analyses of the academic profession (Kwiek 2001).

The results of avoiding changes in public higher education in recent decade are very mixed indeed; on the one hand, the public sector is accepting more than four times students than in 1990, on the other hand, the number of academics is roughly the same (about 80.000 academics in both public and private sectors). Two hundred and fifty private institutions operating in 2002 and almost 300 operating or waiting for licensing in 2003, opened due to huge demand for higher education combined with the inability of meeting it in the public sector, have changed the educational landscape in Poland beyond recognition.

Polish academics would not be the same without the dramatic growth of the private sector accompanied by very liberal regulations (and explicit permisiveness in administrative practice) to open and run private educational institutions. Surprisingly enough, the growth of the private sector showed that Polish academics are very flexible, mobile and ingenuous in the hard times for the public sector. The relatively peaceful coexistence of the two sectors in recent decade had at least several significant effects on the academic profession: it turned the energies of scholars, administrators, and the public away from reforming the collapsing public sector; it made it possible for the (vast part, probably between 30-50 percent of the) profession to survive hard times; surprisingly, it helped to retain the academics in the public sector and even in the academic profession itself by combining their incomes from the two sectors; it showed that education for hundreds of thousands of students may be treated just as private good, a commodity to be paid for, rather than as a traditional public good in the way it has been cultivated in public universities. Finally, the private sector exposed the academic profession to the market and its forces (see Altbach 1999, Kwiek 2003d). The growth of the private sector in Poland in a recent decade can be shown by both growing enrolments and increasing number of institutions: the first private institutions were opened in 1990, but already in 1994 their number was 56, in 1995 - 80, 1996 - 116, 1997 - 146, to reach finally 221 in 2001; in terms of enrolments, the growth of the sector meant about 50.000 students in 1994, 142.000 in 1996, 331.000 in 1998, to reach finally about 510.000 in 2001. Consequently, the scholarization rate in Poland grew considerably, from 12,9 to 43,6 (gros) and from 9,8 to 32,7 (net), in the period between 1990 and 2001.

The academic profession has been deeply affected by this unprecedented phenomenon of the growth of the private sector and any analysis of it that would ignore the fact would be incomplete: it affected those involved in founding and running its institutions, as well as those not involved, by changing the context of academic work, widening possibilities and reducing time and energy available, revealing new expectations concerning working conditions, remuneration, and teaching (as in most general terms, with notable exceptions, the private sector is the teaching sector rather than the research and teaching one).

2. Employment and working conditions

2.1. Academic faculty in Poland

There are assistant professors, associate professors, university professors and full professors in Poland (*asystent, adiunkt, profesor nadzwyczajny, profesor zwyczajny* in Polish), with different formal requirements for each position. In European terms, professors are only university and full professors and all university and full professors are habilitated. Junior faculty would be assistant and associate professors, senior faculty would be composed of university and full professors (plus faculty with the scientific degree of habilitation but without the academic rank of university professor). At the moment, there are two scientific degrees (Ph.D. and *Habilitation*) and a scientific title of professor in a given domain of sciences or of the arts.

The number of full-time faculty in public higher education institutions in the academic year 2001/2002 was 70,000, and the number of non-academic staff was 63,000. In private institutions there were 9,000 faculty and 7,000 non-academic staff, giving the general proportion between the public and the private sector of 8 to 1 (all numbers here and below are approximated to the closest thousand). Out of 70,000 faculty in the public sector, 13,000 (19 percent) are full professors and independent academics (those holding the *doctor habilitatus* degree), 43,000 (61 percent) are assistant and associate professors (those holding Ph.D. and MA degrees), 13,000 (18 percent) are senior lecturers and lecturers (some of them holding Ph.D. degrees) and 1,000 are foreign languages instructors and instructors. In these numbers part time staff and faculty are not included (the details are provided below). In most general terms, it is very rare indeed for anyone involved in higher education teaching and research to be working part-time, for a variety of reasons: it is almost impossible to work part-time as full, university or associate professors as this form of employment does not “count” for an institution (part-timers do not have equal rights, do not get relatively comparative salaries and do not have voting rights in faculty and department councils); salaries in public higher education are very low indeed by any standards, and the salary for parttime work cannot include any benefits, so the money received by part-timers would be unacceptable; besides, part-time work is temporary and does not count as regular employment for pension schemes and social security/medical treatment. Full time employment guarantees, to an extent, an equivalent to tenure; part time employment, on the other hand, is used widely by the private sector in which, by contrast, full time employment (especially as the sole employment for academics) is very rare. It is very different from recent trends in both the USA and many Western European countries: as John Stevenson put it, “at present, there is every possibility that a majority of those on the faculties of American colleges and universities are part-time employees, subject to very low pay, no job security, no fringe benefits, and no participation in the life of the department or school outside of the classroom” (Stevenson, 1998, 65; for Europe, see also Enders, 2000). It is interesting to highlight the differences with Poland: even though the overwhelming majority of faculty are employed full time, they are subject to low pay; they have very high job security, relatively good fringe benefits and full participation in the life of departments.

The structure of the academic faculty in Poland in 2001 was the following: in the public

sector, full-time 70.000 and part-time 2.000 (total about 72.000); in the private sector, full-time 8.900 and part-time 1.100 (total about 10.000). Thus in both sectors the number of academic faculty in Poland in 2001 was about 79.000 full-time and about 3.200 part-time (see Kwiek 2003b). The model situation of employment of senior higher education faculty would be the following: full time employment in a public higher education institution plus part time employment in the private sector. In the long run this situation will most likely be changed. Top ranking private institutions are trying to produce their own junior faculty but the process is a long one. Finally, as far as gender distribution is concerned, women are 40 percent of the academic faculty in public institutions.

2.2. Academic career and academic degrees: doctorates and habitations

As noted, there are two scientific degrees in Poland: doctorate and habilitation. In short, in the Polish structure, habilitation is a degree that opens the way from junior faculty to senior faculty, although full seniority in rank is achieved only with the scientific title of the professor. The habilitation degree, though, opens the way for the academic to become a university professor (a function, without a scientific title). The background information, numbers, gender and discipline distribution for both doctorates and habitations are provided below.

In recent four years there were significant discussion about the future of the habilitation degree in faculty training and academic career. Although the opinions varied, the status quo of the existence of two scientific degrees is maintained, and seems to be maintained in future legislative projects. The impulse for discussions came from Germany where habilitation was seen as a gate-keeping mechanism for the academic profession making it hard to become a professor (as a result so called „junior professorships” were created as a fast tract for young scholars, without the need of obtaining the habilitation degree). In Poland, the strongest support for the abolition of the habilitation degree seems to come from the trade union circles, and the strongest opposition from senior faculty afraid of the (apparently unavoidable) lowering of academic standards (at least as long as the standards for doctoral dissertations are not raised). The data concerning the age of academics at which they obtained their habilitation degree in 2001 are the following: out of the total number of habilitation degrees awarded (755), the biggest share went to academics 51 years old and older (36 percent), then to those between 46 and 50 (27 percent) and between 41 and 45 (24 percent). The share of academics in their thirties was only 13 percent. The overwhelming majority of academics obtained their habilitation degree after nine years following their PhD degree (98 percent).

The number of all degrees of doctorates and habitations awarded in Poland in institutions of higher education, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences and in research and development institutes in 2001 was 4,400 and 755, respectively. Interestingly enough, 60,000 people in Poland are claimed to hold Ph.D. degrees, of which slightly over 41.000 were working in public higher education institutions in 1999. Although people holding Ph.D. degrees are scattered from higher education institutions to research institutions to the industry and administration, the main place for promoting Ph.D.s are public higher education institutions. Only two private higher education

The number of doctoral degrees awarded annually in recent quarter of the century varied, from almost 4,000 per year in the second half of the seventies, to about 3,000 in the first half of the eighties, with another decline in the second half of the eighties and first half of the nineties to the average of about 2,000 per year. Interestingly enough, by the end of the nineties the number rose sharply again to the level higher than ever before - exactly 4,000 in 1999 and then 4,400 in 2001 (details provided below). The “safe” level of doctorates promoted per year merely to continue the biological regeneration of this category of potential academic faculty was established in government and independent policy reports at the level of 3,000, taking into account a relatively high level of those wishing to leave the country in this category. Obviously, the total number of Ph.D.s in 2001 indicates a trend toward getting higher credentials, but it does not show the general inflow of new Ph.D.s into higher education system. To put it shortly, the number of Ph.D.s increases, but the number of Ph.D.s wishing and being able to begin their academic careers decreases.

The age structure of recipients of doctoral degrees awarded in Poland in 2001 is the following: the majority of them were either between 31 and 35 years old (37 percent) or between 27 and 30 years old (28 percent). The group of recipients aged 36 to 40 was 15 percent. Those aged 41 and more constituted 19 percent of PhD recipients, and there were also 30 youngest recipients (0,006 percent), those 26 years old and below.

The gender distribution of doctorates and habilitation clearly favours men, with women being awarded 41 percent of the former (out of 4,400 in 2001), but only 29 percent of the latter (out of 755 in 2001). While in case of doctorates, the number of degrees awarded in the university system more or less equals the number of degrees awarded in institutions controlled by other ministries, in the case of habilitation it is the university system that is in the lead, providing as much as one third of all habilitation degrees. Speaking of disciplines in which the two degrees are awarded: the single most significant domain for doctorates are medical sciences in which over a quarter of all doctorates were awarded in 2001 (26 %), followed by the humanities (19%) and technical sciences (19 %). In the case of habilitation degree which opens the way for the academic positions of university professors and full professors, the most dynamic disciplines are the humanities (22%), followed by medical and technical sciences (16% both).

What are the requirements for being awarded doctorate and habilitation, who may get them, for what, and where? The rules are very clear in this respect. Starting with doctorates: they may be awarded by those higher education units that employ full-time at least eight academics with the scientific title of professor or the scientific degree of habilitation. Ph.D. degree may be granted to a person who holds the MA degree, who has passed all required doctoral examinations, presented and defended a thesis. The thesis should contain “author’s original solution of a scientific problem, demonstrate general knowledge of a given field of science and show the author’s ability to carry out independent research”. The degree is granted by the eligible institution but is valid only after the confirmation by the Central Committee on the Scientific Title and Scientific Degrees. Currently, Ph.D. holders may start academic careers at the position of *adiunkt*,

The requirements to start the procedure of granting the degree of habilitation are the following: a given person must hold Ph.D. degree, must have a considerable scientific or artistic output and must have presented the habilitation dissertation. The habilitation dissertation must be “author’s considerable contribution to the development of a particular scientific discipline”. The most general requirement of publication of a work in total or in its substantial parts is intended to let the academic community of a given discipline get acquainted with it. The procedure of habilitation consists of the reviewing process, acceptance of the habilitation colloquium, the acceptance of habilitation lecture, and granting the degree. This decision must be confirmed by the Central Commission as well. The habilitation degree forms a caesura between junior (or auxiliary) faculty and senior (or independent) faculty, no matter how long it takes for those habilitated to become university professors. In the nineties there were several attempts in projects of the law of higher education to abolish the habilitation degree but the attempts were very unfavourably received by the (especially senior) academic community. In most probability the degree will not be abolished in the future, at least according to the newest law proposals.

In very broad terms and before a new law on higher education is introduced, junior faculty do not have tenure while senior faculty have it. From a legal perspective, junior faculty may be removed from the public higher education system following the failure to write and defend their habilitation dissertations within nine to twelve years after the completion of their Ph.D. theses. Senior faculty, on the other hand, in practical terms right now is guaranteed the equivalent of academic tenure. Professors from the public sector are not state employees as is common in Western Europe. There is no automatic progression up the ranks in public higher education: still the most important factor is research rather than teaching, and the passage from the junior to the senior rank is guaranteed by the scientific degree of habilitation. Habilitation until fairly recently guaranteed, with the passage of time, the post of the university professor granted at first for five years, and then renewable for life. But as the number of habilitations is growing, and the number of university professors within the same department may not, according to internal regulations accepted in the public sector, exceed the number of full professors by more than 20 percent, in practice the number of habilitated faculty without the position of the university professor may certainly be growing (Kwiek 2003c).

2.3 Doctoral students

In a Polish system, doctoral students are somewhere between students and junior academic faculty: they have faculty’s privileges, including social security, four weeks of summer holidays, reduced transportation fares etc, but do not receive regular salaries. Some of them receive doctoral stipends, on a competitive basis, generally equal to assistant’s salary (but without taxation). At the same time doctoral students have low chances of being employed in the public academic sector as the number of positions available is very low in the vast majority of disciplines. The system of public higher education is relatively closed for new entrants to the profession. Regular Ph.D. studies

Current research on junior faculty and doctoral students indicates that only 20 percent of them are interested in pursuing academic career. The remaining 80 percent wants higher credentials in the labour market or, more often, do not have ideas what to do in professional life and selects more time to choose (there is a widespread feeling of “negative selection” for PhD studies in some disciplines; in others, more marketable, there are paid doctoral studies in which the expected level of doctoral students is very low and no exceptional abilities are required). Very few doctoral students are interested in academic teaching. Traditionally, doctoral education has been oriented toward educating higher education professors: university teaching and scientific research. As Roger Geiger put it with respect to the USA, “the PhD as it stands today represents *too much* training for many potential consumers of graduate education; yet it is *too little* training for its traditional role of preparing future faculty” (Geiger, 1997, 248; see also Pavel, 2000). Both in the States and in Poland the sharp rise in the number of doctoral students took place in the 1990s - in Poland the increase was ten times (from 2.700 in 1990 to 28.000 in 2001). But while the balance between the supply and demand of PhDs raised some concerns in the USA, in Poland it was generally neglected as an issue. If we compare the relatively closed public higher education system and small opportunities provided to recent PhDs in the private higher education (and 80.000 of faculty in both sectors in 2001), the current number of doctoral students - 28.000 - looks like overproduction from a traditional perspective. From a new perspective, though, doctoral education is viewed by both universities and doctoral students alike as a way of increasing chances of finding employment outside of the academy on the highly demanding labour market. Four years of studies is along time in many professions, but let us also remember that the vast majority of doctoral studies are free, and 13.000 PhD candidates (slightly less than 50 percent) receive government-funded doctoral stipends. In the long run, the present situation is bound to be changed, probably with reducing the status of PhD candidates to the level of students (following the recommendations of the Bologna Declaration about a three-tier system of higher education in Europe) and introducing some sort of fees. Current system leaves the burden of doctoral education with universities as no special funding is made available to universities: PhD candidates are treated as students and they are funded accordingly.

2.4. Gender distribution: women in the academy

The gender distribution of the academic faculty varies by discipline and changes with

In universities, women are 22 percent (1,065 out of 4,653) of professors; the greatest percentage of female professors is in academies of economics and medical schools - 30 percent, while the lowest, as could be expected, in technical universities where women comprise 9 percent of full and university professors. In the rank of associate professors (junior faculty, without habilitation degree), women are almost 50 percent in the university system, in academies of economics and in pedagogical institutions of higher education, 26 percent in the technical universities, as well as 52 percent in medical schools and 35 percent in academies of arts.

As the average age of senior faculty in general is between 50 and 60, it would take a long time for the gender distribution among senior faculty to be more equal. On the one hand, there are limited human resources to become full professors today (namely current university professors, who are still male in the vast majority), but on the other the number of women with Ph.D.s is constantly growing. Unfortunately, the predictions for the coming years for junior faculty generally are higher workloads, renewable, periodic, performance-based contracts which may force some most mobile junior faculty to leave the public system altogether, and either move to the private sector of higher education or change the profession altogether. In the light of changes in the coming years, and taking into account the international pattern of transformations, the number of part time faculty is expected to grow from an insignificant to considerable percentage in the public system, many of them being current junior faculty or new Ph.D.s. With still strong attachment to traditional distribution of social roles in families and the strong position of the father as the main supporter of the family, I would expect part of male junior faculty leaving and female junior faculty staying or even entering the system in their place. Especially if the current pattern of university salaries is maintained in the future and if the rising trend of female graduates and Ph.D.s is still maintained.

At the same time the percentage of female Ph.D. students is growing constantly, especially in the arts and the humanities, which is due to at least two factors: the percentage of women entering higher education system is bigger - 57 percent (1999), as

is also the percentage of women at Ph.D. studies and women entering annually the academic profession. And in private higher education women are also in the majority, comprising 62 percent of students. Female graduates from both the private and the public sector in 1999 were 63 percent (107.000 out of 171.000). Thus, both in terms of students entering the system and those graduating from it, the domination of women is very strong indeed.

It can be said generally that in recent years academic faculty tended to complete Ph.D. dissertations within 6-8 years and habilitation degrees within next 8-12 years (see above for details by age). Although a small fraction of the academic body left the public higher education system in the last ten years, generally there is small social mobility to other professions. Surprisingly enough, the single most important fact that allowed academics to stay within the public system despite steadily decreasing financial situation was the parallel participation in the creation of the new private sector. Higher up the ranks, the progression is much less certain: to become full professor the academic faculty member needs the scientific title of professor which may be unavailable to the majority of current university professors. Still, it is perfectly possible to continue working in the system at the level of university professor.

2.5. Working conditions: private and public sectors

Although professors in the public sector are not civil servants, they are guaranteed raises in salaries each year as others from the public sector slightly (usually one percent) above the expected level of inflation. In terms of working conditions, they have prolonged holidays as compared to other professions (generally six weeks in summer and a week in winter), one additional salary each year and some support for summer holidays. Academic faculty in the public sector are so-called employees of the budgetary (public) sphere which means they are financed by the central budget; in this case, these are the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Science. Civil servants in Poland are employees of the public administration, from local to government levels. For employees of the budgetary sphere, including academic faculty, salaries and working conditions are determined centrally, by the ministry of education. Specific working conditions are determined in the law on higher education and subsequent amendments, as well as in the law on scientific title and scientific degrees. They concern hiring and firing, periods of time granted to obtain subsequent academic degrees, conditions for obtaining the title of the professor etc. Generally speaking, in terms of remuneration, the ministry provides basic salary brackets for each academic position and the details are determined by each academic institution. There are no major differences in salaries and no differences in benefits for the faculty in all Polish academic institutions. The public higher education is a still relatively noncompetitive environment for the vast majority of the academic faculty. The part timers form a negligible margin of the academic body in the public sector (less than 3 percent in 2001). From a both global and Western European perspective, this is a very unique structure of employment (as Philip G. Altbach remarked in connection with the Western world, “the traditional full-time, permanent academic professor, the ‘gold standard’ of academe, is increasingly rare” (Altbach, 2000, ix)). In the private sector, though, working conditions are very different indeed. They are not

centrally- determined as in the public sector. Terms and conditions in the private sector are terms and conditions of a given institution, with the exception of some nominal state requirements (e.g. salary cannot be lower than the lowest national salary agreed on between government and trade unions etc). The majority of academic faculty is employed part-time, with the exception of the minimum required to run an institution by the current law on higher education, which is eight professors per institution. Generally, the environment is very competitive and scholars are pretty mobile; academics are travelling to other institutions where they usually hold renewable yearly work contracts. In such fields as economics, business, management, marketing or law, the working environment is very competitive and salaries vary according to seniority and the scope of involvement. There are no promotions in this sector, generally, as the main place of work for the vast majority of academics, especially senior, is the public sector anyway. While lectures are given by professors, classes are most typically given by recent Ph.D.s or even graduates who may not necessarily hold academic posts anywhere else, may be employed full-time and may work long hours. Although in the public sector the weekly average teaching is 6-8 hours, for junior faculty in the private sector it could be as much as in secondary schools, that is to say even as much as 20 hours of teaching.

Since the very beginning of the private sector in higher education in Poland right after 1989, rules and regulations concerning private institutions have been very relaxed. Explicit permissiveness of each successive governments allowed the booming private sector to be built almost out of nowhere (Wimberley, 1999, 490; Kwiek 2003d), with the number of institutions going up from zero to 221 in 2001, and the number of students reaching over half a million (and almost 30 percent of enrolments). The permissiveness in question concerned the practice of who was allowed to found an institution (basically anyone), who was employed as “core” - required by the law - faculty (basically, with notable exceptions confirming the rule, retired or almost retiring professors) and who was teaching (basically part-timers from the public sector). The permissiveness of the Polish law on higher education (of 1990) and of Polish educational practice allowed academics to hold several, most often two, positions in both sectors. It is only very recently (since 2001) that the discussion about the so-called “basic academic workplace” has been widespread, following governmental proposals to making academics choose which is their main institution, and which is additional, if finally allowed by the future law on higher education (by way of comparison, let us say that in the US in 2001 the average income from another academic institution was 9,500 USD, with the average basic salary for academic year being 51,400 USD (Clery, and Lee, 2002, 17). The permissiveness in question had two major advantages: the creation of the private sector and the way to keep academics in relatively badly paid public higher education institutions. On the other hand, the major disadvantage was a severely and steadily declining level of teaching and research in the public sector. That epoch for both the private sector and for the academic community of the public sector is certainly coming to an end, though; employment conditions will have finally be determined in a new law on higher education, possibly introduced in the 2003/2004 academic year.

3. The attractiveness of the academic workplace

The current attractiveness of the academic profession compared to other sectors of highly qualified work in Polish economy has to be divided into two parallel questions: the attractiveness for present senior academic faculty and the attractiveness for present junior faculty, new entrants to the profession and recent doctoral students and PhDs. The situation and the perspectives for the two groups of faculty are radically different, although it is important not to overgeneralize and oversimplify. There are wide variations between various types of institutions, various parts of Poland (main academic centers and peripheries), and different disciplines of teaching and research (more and less “marketable”, more and less dependent on external grants etc). Generally, though, it is important to stress that the status quo of unreformed higher education system may be good for the first group (senior academics) and is certainly discouraging for the second group (junior staff and PhDs). Certainly, it is very bad for Polish higher education in all three main aspects: teaching, research, and service. No matter how we treat the social and cultural role of the university today, academics apart from their cognitive curiosity, creativity, strong will to be inventive and to focus on their research activities, are also citizens of a country in transition, with specific opportunities and peculiar challenges. No matter how much analysts want to forget about the financial aspect of functioning in the academic profession, it will not be forgotten by the academic community except for some (always and everywhere present) enthusiasts of science. The issue of academic salaries is especially important in post-communist transition countries where generally academic salaries are very low compared with other professions. It is interesting to note that the Carnegie report on the Academic Profession (by Ernest L. Boyler, Philip G. Altbach and Mary Jean Whitelaw), now almost ten years old, has already indicated that the level of satisfaction of academics with their salaries in the majority of countries studied (except for Hong Kong, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States) is between 5 and 30 percent (Boyler et al, 1994, 50). In Poland, in the times of vast economic and social transformations, the main difference in the situation of junior and senior faculty is not basic salary received from home university, which is very low in both cases; the main difference is access to relatively well-paid positions in the private sector in which the demand for senior academics is very high and the demand for junior staff is much lower, and in many disciplines merely negligible. Geographically speaking, private institutions are booming in biggest academic centres (Warsaw, Poznan, Krakow, Lodz, Wroclaw) or in the proximity to them. Academics from the public sector are rectors, vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans and professors in the private sector as the number of (especially senior) faculty who would be willing to choose the private sector alone is very limited, statistically negligible.

Thus the current situation and future prospects for senior faculty and for junior faculty is structurally very similar in their home public institutions (decreasing research funds, relatively small salaries compared with other professionals) but radically different in private institutions where both groups potentially seek additional employment. What does it mean for junior faculty and recent PhDs? It means very difficult financial situation, lack of financial stability in the medium run, and growing frustration (as Nicholas Fames described his perceptions of academic profession in Central and Eastern

Europe: “widespread pessimism, disillusionment, frustration, slow progress and funding shortages ... Western experts mainly come into contact with individuals who are energetic and innovative but are unrepresentative of the sector as a whole” (Fames, 1997, 380; see also Marga 1997)). The pre-selection for the academic profession is radically different today than a decade ago: as new entrants to the profession (most often) have to already hold a doctoral degree, the first mechanism of selection of future candidates for the profession is the choice or rejection of doctoral studies. For many people, especially in disciplines in which there is high demand from the labour market, already at this point the decision is either not to apply at all, or to engage in doctoral studies but with the explicit intention of never entering the academic profession after graduating with PhD. The second selection is after obtaining PhD: in many disciplines, it is both discouraging to enter the relatively low paid academic profession and impossible to enter it in practical terms, as the system has been mostly closed for new entrants in recent decade (it is interesting to note the stable number of academics in the public sector in recent decade, despite 300 percent growth in student enrolments during that period).

Consequently, the average age of the university professor is increasing and reaches now 55 and the generation gap between junior and senior faculty is growing due to the combination of at least two factors: low attractiveness of the profession and mostly closed system of public higher education with a very limited number of new positions. It means in practice that the choice of the academic career very often is a result of a mixture of good luck and willingness to enter lower quality institutions outside of main academic centres in the public sector where the opportunities to enter the profession are bigger.

It is interesting to note that the majority of draft laws on higher education in recent years had new (higher) salary scales as their components but none of them was actually implemented. The general feeling of the academic profession is that the chance for radical increases in salaries, compensating for the steady decline in recent decade, is very small. The decline in academic salaries has been especially striking in recent years: between 1997 and 2001 the average monthly salary in public higher education institutions fell, in relation to the average monthly salary in the national economy, from 109,2 percent to 95,5 percent (and is 430 EUR gross today). This downward trend in academic salaries threatens the very foundations of public higher education, especially in terms of the competitiveness of the academic workplace for the junior faculty. And as Philip G. Altbach recently observed in an edited volume about the academic profession in developing and middle-income countries, “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 industrialized nations and the developing countries with regard to salaries is immense” (Altbach, 2002, 18).

It is important to note that there is a number of significant differences between the attractiveness of the academic workplace in Poland (as well as in selected other countries of Central and Eastern Europe) and in the countries of current European Union. After the European Enlargement expected for May 2004, these differences will be already within the European Union. In this context, it is useful to say that general conclusions about the academic career in Western Europe today do not hold in Poland (or in some other

The problem of (both junior and senior) academics working from contracts to contracts, or from grants to grants, or part-time, is virtually unknown in Poland (as mentioned, 97 percent of academics employed in the public sector held full-time positions in 2001). Once in the higher education system, the faculty has had full-time employment more or less guaranteed so far. Reappointments are not an issue and termination of employment is very rare for junior faculty and unheard of for senior faculty (who has the equivalent of tenure privileges). The details are provided further in the text. What is a serious problem both in the US and in Western Europe - the growing number of “temporary” positions - is not a problem at all in Poland; what is a problem, though, let me hasten to add, is that “full time” positions, with all benefits included, carry very low salaries, especially for junior faculty who do not have much chances for research grants or additional positions in other higher education institutions (which is still allowed by the law on higher education). Generally speaking, with small exceptions, faculty positions are tenured and permanent unless subsequent steps in the ladder of the academic career are not made and requirements for them (described in more detail below) are not met within a timeframe given. As opposed to EU countries and OECD Anglophone countries (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), the situation of junior faculty is not so much structurally different from that of senior faculty. So far, no non-tenure tracks, no fixed-time appointments with conditional reappointments, and no part-time academic faculty tracks

have been introduced for junior academics. Research grants are not used for keeping academics without positions in the higher education system (as generally the access to grants is very limited), and there are no teaching contracts or their equivalence (teaching assistants in the US etc).

It is interesting to note that the overall number of academics has been relatively stable in recent decade (details for recent 5 years are provided above), despite an immense growth of the private sector and the enrolments going up to 1.800.000 in 2001 and almost 2.000.000 in 2003 (from 400.000 in 1990). Even though the number of doctoral students is constantly growing (doubling between 1996 and 2001, and reaching over 28.000 in 2001), their chances for employment in the academic sector are very limited. The majority finds employment in other sectors, both public and private. Private higher education generally prefers to employ (on a parallel employment basis) academics already working in public higher education institutions rather than recent PhDs.

Although recent decade has witnessed huge changes in the outside world and in the practices of the academy, no major changes in the legal context governing its functioning. So estimated 30-50 percent of academics each year found parallel employment in the private sector without leaving the public system (it is interesting to refer here to the Carnegie Foundation report on the academic profession in which only in three countries studies the percentage of those holding other paid academic position outside of home institution was higher than 30 percent: Israel, Chile and Japan; as far as other paid non-academic positions are concerned, the percentage over 30 was only in Chile, Mexico, and Brazil (Boylor et al, 1994, 37); the salaries of both junior and senior faculty in the public sector have been steadily declining compared with other professions and with the industry average, with the average for the profession (430 EUR gross) slightly below the industrial average (in 2001). The major plan of increasing salaries from 2001 (and confirmed by the law passed in Parliament in summer 2001) was stopped at the very beginning. Although there were periodic layoffs in almost all sectors of the Polish economy in the 1990s, the higher education sector was generally spared. The academy in general was trying to compensate for budget cuts in opening new subsidiaries in smaller towns and enrolling fee-paying weekend students and particular academics were seeking additional sources of employment, including teaching in the booming private sector. Although Philip G. Altbach's observation directly referred to the Third World, let me quote it here: few [scholars] 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. ... Salary structures also negatively affect morale" (Altbach, 2002, 19).

The academic profession has not lost its traditional respect and social status but at the same time lost its relative attractiveness for the young generation compared with other professions. Most young, dynamic, and well educated graduates (and majority of recent PhDs) do not consider the option of starting an academic career in Poland. The long-term (relative) decline in academic salaries accompanied by predictions of limited chances to

Generally speaking, nothing changed in recent decade in academic recruitment processes and promotion procedures; the same requirements must be met for two subsequent academic degrees (PhD and Habilitation) and for the academic title of the professor. As the academic surrounding has not been organised on a competitive basis so far, both promotions and competitions for particular posts are local in nature (mostly within a given department). Because of the principle of full employment for both junior and senior faculty, the academic workplace is relatively free from rivalry for posts or for participation in larger research grants. Despite the apparent unattractiveness of the academic profession with other options open for professionals, very few academics leave the system (both junior and senior; see above). Relatively liberal regulations allow them to work for several institutions, teach long hours in fee-paying courses, run their own firms, and seek additional employment and income from other sources like consulting etc. The workload has not changed in recent decade and is comparable with Western standards for tenured faculty (approx. 6-8 hours per week; 210 contact hours per year for junior faculty and 180-210 contact hours per year for senior faculty); the emphasis on research rather than teaching and linking promotions to research record have been maintained, and the accountability and evaluation mechanisms have not been introduced on the level known in EU countries or in the USA (see Scott, 2000). Sabbaticals every seventh year have been maintained, as have been special regulations for the academic community to pay lower income taxes on their salaries (like writers, actors, journalists and other “creative”, by legal definition, professions).

The attractiveness of the academic workplace should be seen from the perspective of both retaining the academic faculty currently employed and recruiting new entrants to the profession. While in some Western countries apparently the fundamental issue does not look to be increasing salaries, in Poland (and in other countries of the region) the level of the academic salary is certainly crucial today. As long as the salary of a PhD at the prestigious research university is slightly lower than the salary in the secondary school system, and 2-3 times lower than the salary for highly qualified professionals in other sectors of the economy, the attractiveness of the profession will be very low, no matter what other immaterial benefits mentioned above could be available. The level of salaries in the higher education system today does not guarantee the lower-middle class standard of living for the new entrants and for the vast majority of junior and majority of senior faculty; hence the issue for new entrants is different in CEEs than in current EU countries where what counts equally strong are chances for promotions, loosening of rigid academic ladders, contractual, time-fixed employment and lower benefits compared with tenured faculty.

At the same the fundamental issue is what keeps academics in the system, what is it in

4. Academic staff and the internationalisation of higher education.

Between the world wars, the international co-operation of Polish universities with Western Europe was very well developed. For political reasons, though, between the end of the second world war and 1989 the international co-operation between Poland and Western academic world was very limited. After 1989 small-scale exchange programs with the USA, Germany, Great Britain and France continued (via Fulbright Foundation, Kosciuszko Foundation, Humboldt Stiftung, DAAD etc), but generally they never engaged more than several hundreds scholars a year at the most, at all levels and both for short and for long-term; fortunately they were very soon supplemented by programs available from the European Union, reaching the peak with the 4th and 5th Framework Programme, both within mobility schemes and research and training co-operation grants.

The chance of developing international co-operation for Polish academic faculty is its further participation in EU programs. So far, the experiences are very good. Poland has been very active in all recent competitions and expressions of interest: to give an example, Poland already has 2/3rds of all centres of excellence in EU-accession countries (call for proposals NAS-2 (2001), see below). Similarly, in the 5th Framework Programme, out of the total number of 13.935 thematic and horizontal programs and 73.456 partners, Poland participated in 1.016 projects and co-ordinated 192 of them, while the number of Polish partners totalled 1.295. In the 6th Framework Programme, the percentage of “Expressions of Interest” in 2002 from Poland was 6 percent, which put it in the 6th position in Europe, after Great Britain (15), Germany (15), Italy (10), France (9), and Spain (8 percent). The Sixth Framework Programme is certainly a big chance for

further internationalisation of academic work in Poland.

Currently, international mobility of Polish academics is increasing rapidly, both with the aid of EU funds and other international sources of funding. In terms of the traditional distinction between brain drain, brain gain, and brain exchange, the most adequate model of mobility today would be brain exchange: the vast majority of Polish academics going abroad return to their home institutions. Very few senior academics leave the country to begin international careers except for short-term contracts or fellowships lasting up to one year. Brain drain is very limited and concerns almost exclusively very selected disciplines (e.g. natural sciences: biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy); in general, brain drain, as rare as it is, can be found among junior faculty rather than senior faculty, as well as among doctoral students and recent PhDs. While in the eighties of the twentieth century a large number of academics left to the West due to political reasons, already in the nineties the process was stopped. Today beginning of an academic career in Western countries is very rare indeed (which might change, but mainly for junior staff, when Poland enters the European Union in 2004). One of the main reasons why senior Polish academics are not seeking international academic careers even though the general situation of the academy is very difficult is the existence of the booming private sector and the legal possibility of holding several positions in several institutions. The fact on the one hand contributed to the emergence and fast development of private higher education institutions (almost 300 in 2003), on the other was instrumental in helping to keep the majority of senior academics within higher education system and some of them in the country. Although research opportunities in the private sector are very limited, teaching there allows the academic profession to survive in difficult times. A by-product of the prolonged status quo is decreasing focus on research in many disciplines and decreasing interest in international mobility. To put things in the nutshell: for many academics, it is too difficult to combine internal mobility (connected with parallel positions held in several institutions) with international mobility.

The discussions on how the situation of academic staff may be affected by the Europeanisation of higher education, the Bologna process, the introduction of the European Research Area or GATS of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are very limited. The most widely discussed issue is the introduction of the European Research Area and the participation of Polish academics in EU-funded programs and projects. The participation of Polish academics and teams in the 5th and 6th Framework Programmes is strongly supported by universities and the State Committee for Scientific Research. At the same time, Polish academics make wide use of the mobility opportunities provided by the Erasmus component of the EU Socrates programme: the number of contracts with Polish institutions grew from 46 (1998/1999) to 74 (1999/2000) and to 100 in 2000/2001. In 1998/1999 700 academics and 1.500 students participated in this mobility scheme, while in 2000/2001 the numbers reached almost twice as many academics and 4.700 students.

Generally speaking, though, the international mobility of the academic faculty is restricted to main research universities and to a relatively small percentage of academics. A trend is towards greater mobility for more or less the same group of internationalising

faculty rather than greater mobility for a greater number of academics (although exact data are not available, the author's experience from social sciences and the humanities suggests that in the last decade the number of internationally mobile senior faculty is the same, while the scope of mobility for junior academics, including doctoral students, is growing rapidly).

Discussions about the international aspect of the performance and international competitiveness of the Polish academic profession are very rare. European or international level in Polish research is restricted to several disciplines, and a relatively small (compared with a huge system of higher education institutions) number of places. As the fact of low international competitiveness is well documented, and the public research funds have been decreasing every year in a recent decade, any engaged discussion about the international competitiveness in research is difficult to be widely held. Under the circumstances, it looks - academic. Discussions about the challenges of globalisation to higher education and the academic community are virtually nonexistent. The most internationalised sector of higher education teaching is that of MBA courses, currently taught in collaboration with Western European, Canadian and American partners in dozens of institutions. The challenge of new technologies in teaching, especially the use of ICT, is not a matter of wider discussions, as is not the matter of virtual and corporate universities.

5. Concluding remarks

To conclude: the academic profession in Poland faces many structurally similar problems to those faced by their Western European colleagues. But it also faces many other problems which seem to be marginal in the West but which are common to several other post-communist transition countries, severe underfunding of both faculty and their research being at the forefront (as Jacques Rupnik rightly observed already a decade ago, "throughout Central Europe ... higher education has passed from total dependency on the State to a very large measure of autonomy. But its financing still comes from the State. If political and ideological interference has disappeared, new material constraints are quickly encountered - some inherited from the past, other linked to the introduction of the market economy" (Rupnik, 1992, 149)). In the context of the European Enlargement in 2004 and a wider trend of internationalisation and globalisation of higher education, problems faced in Poland will be increasingly multiplied by problems similar to those faced in the West, though. The attractiveness of the academic profession seems to be low today compared with other highly qualified professions. The academic workplace is bound to be changing, though, and its current appeal may be even smaller in the future, especially if globalisation processes will be transforming higher education systems as a part of transforming welfare states in Europe towards more Anglo-Saxon variations of them and if necessary reforms of the system are not introduced soon (Kwiek 2003a, 2001). One of options open to Polish academy is open further to the European Union in search of teaching and research opportunities, especially within EU funded programs and projects of co-operation. A deep structural reform in Poland is needed, though, if the attractiveness of the academic profession is to be maintained even at its current relatively low level.

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