

Academic Careers in Spain

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We present and analyze the situation of academic staff in Spanish universities. The current situation of academics is the result of fast changes happened in the eighties due to both the legal reforms and the remarkable growth of the higher education system. From the early 1980's, Spanish universities have enjoyed a very dynamic situation that can be considered in general as very positive for both the quality of the system and for the working conditions of academic staff. Nevertheless, new conflicts have recently appeared. Both people governing universities and academic staff are accustomed to a situation where growth was the norm, and more academic positions were always available or foreseen. This situation has changed dramatically with the stability in the number of students, and the landscape of higher education institutions is shifting very quickly. At the moment, more positions are not necessary if academic staff policies do not change, abandoning the general rule that closely relates academic staff numbers to the number of lectures delivered. On the other hand, a relatively young population occupies most of the professorships, and vacancies due to retirement are very scarce. The consequence is the existence of a growing group of young people, with very high qualifications, that cannot opt to tenured positions if the current structure of academic personnel is not changed soon. This situation is becoming a severe problem, and great concern is arising among experts and in governmental circles.

We can summarize the results of our analysis stating that working conditions of tenured staff could be considered reasonable. Generally speaking, tenured academic staff, with a civil servant status, feels comfortable in their positions. Nevertheless, the situation of non-tenured academic staff is rather less positive. Whereas non-tenured positions were considered only a provisional situation, no conflicts came up among non-tenured academic staff. However, the more saturated the system is becoming, the more problematic the situation is for this group.

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