

APIKS Conference

General work situation and working conditions in academia

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Responsive work conditions in academia – Setting the scene

The globalisation of higher education is the convergence of the academic profession's position and working conditions in the academy. In this paper we discuss the work of the academic profession in relation to civil society and the general work conditions in the context of societies. The overall expectations of the higher education sector have changed (Aarrevaara & Dobson 2015). Clark (1998) has noted, there is a demand-response imbalance: expectations on higher education exceed resources at every level.

We can identify an *international relevance discourse* aiming at the fundamental transformation of universities and their core functions. impact to society. In this paper, we compare countries the higher education is a predominantly and heavily publicly funded. This feature means that universities' public information management, performance management systems and regulation are first of all determined by governments. It is also necessary to set other criteria. Finland has a dual system in which working conditions differ significantly depending on whether higher education institutions focus on teaching or research. It is also essential that the countries in the comparison have a career system in which an effective affiliation to higher education institutions requires pre-defined career path rules such as a tenure track system.

Under these circumstances, working conditions are determined by the autonomy, regulation and collective employment agreements of higher education institutions as a whole. The tension of these elements has led to a situation in which researchers can study whatever they want but funding is increasingly provided only for certain topics, which are judged beforehand to be of social relevance (Kekäle, Diego & Varis 2017; Kaldewey 2018).

In recent decades, universities have increasingly been seen as a part of the innovation chain, producing the innovations (and key employees) for the industrial and business sectors (Goddard et.al 2016). However, the awakening to climate crisis brought in yet another emphasis on social relevance: seeking solutions to global grand challenges (Kekäle & Varis 2019). Grau et.al (2017, 38) have even maintained that universities have "the singular responsibility of helping to provide appropriate and adequate responses to both legitimate needs and interests to contribute to overcoming the global challenges of the world".

The relevance of the discourse on working conditions in the academy is connected with the core functions of higher education institutions of research, education and service functions (Enders & Teichler, 1997). In this paper, we pay particular attention to the working conditions of the two discussions that are identified as the quality movement in academia and the responsive university. The key initiatives in the storyline of the *quality movement* in academia from the 1980s onwards, is stressed through the perspectives and expectations of the various stakeholders, including internal and external stakeholders, in defining the desirable outcomes of higher education processes (Vroeijenstijn 1995; Aarrevaara & Dobson, 2013). The *Responsive University* (Tierney 1998) needs to be in constant conversations with public knowledge and experience should flow in both directions. The justification of institutional existence is in the outcomes, social relevance, high quality

research, education, and service. Institutional efforts and resources should be directed to those who are served by the university, not for the university for its own sake.

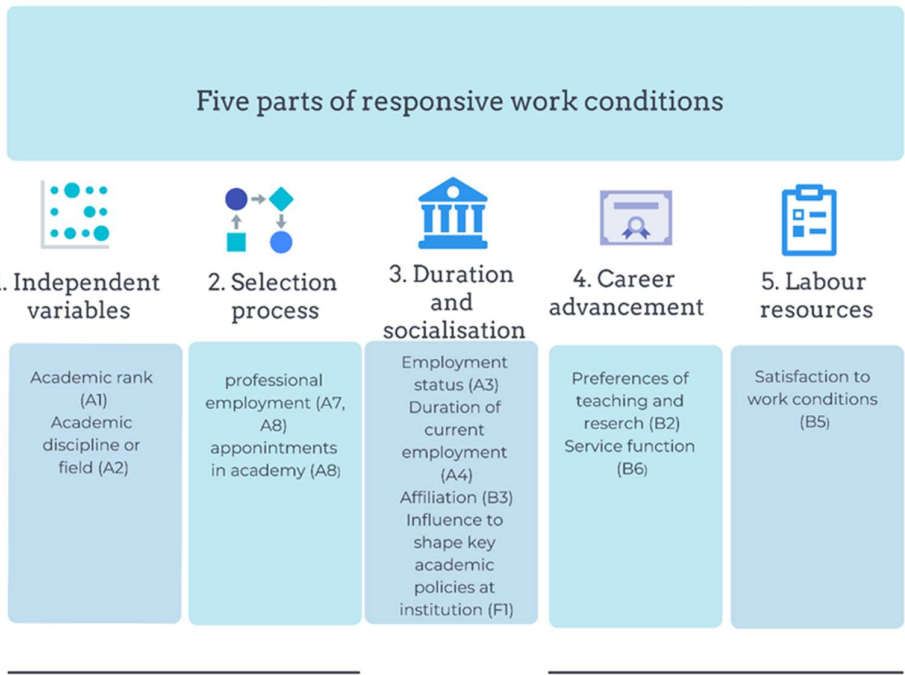
In the framework presented above, this paper presents discussion of how working conditions at the universities have changed between 2008 and 2018. The classic theory of Herzberg et al. (1959) on motivation and working conditions opens some points of views. Herzberg’s motivator, “the work itself” – which might be changing according to the discourse - has been noted as a significant predictor of job satisfaction (Smerek & Peterson 2006).

As there are basic disciplinary differences (Becher 1987) fundamentally affecting academic leadership (Kekäle 2001) and conceptions of quality (Kekäle 2000; 2002), these changes vary according to disciplines or more generally between “soft” disciplines in the humanities, social sciences and the arts, and science, medicine and engineering or the STEM fields. The soft areas receive less policy attention (Benneworth & Jongbloed 2010) and in the STEM fields, stakeholders are more often invited to discuss goals and objectives (Jesiek et.al.2009), in line with the relevance discourse.

Research questions are

- Is there a change in working conditions between 2008 and 2018?
- Is there a difference in working conditions in the humanities and the STEM fields comparing 2008 and 2018?

We respond to these research questions by combining factors which describe the variables of the relationship. Based on variables presented in the Illustration below, we will draw conclusions about the progress of work conditions. We chose Finland, Germany and Portugal as reference higher education systems. These countries meet the conditions we have set in this abstract.



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