



WORKING PAPER

How are Spanish academics coping with changes? Responses from a life histories research

Symposium basis document

Changing times, changing universities. University faculty facing
new challenges. Universitat de Barcelona. 2011



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**HOW ARE SPANISH ACADEMICS COPING WITH CHANGES?
RESPONSES FROM A LIFE HISTORIES RESEARCH**

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HOW ARE SPANISH ACADEMICS COPING WITH CHANGES? RESPONSES FROM A LIFE HISTORIES RESEARCH

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People are always wanting teachers to change. Rarely has
been more true than in recent years.
(Hargreaves, 2000: 5)

1. Introduction: the purpose of this report

This report is part of a wider research project, *The effects of social changes in work and professional life of Spanish academics*, partially financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (SEJ2006-01876), that has explored change in legislation, organisation, research schemes and so on, in the last thirty years¹. The main aim of this project is deepening our understanding of the impact of undergoing economic, social, cultural, technological and labour change in Spanish universities in the life and professional identity of the teaching and research staff, taking into account the national and European context.

This paper gathers part of the results gained from the project, being its primary objective to contribute to an improved knowledge-base on professional knowledge and work experience in higher education institutions in Spain and, as a consequence, to understand how Spanish academics are coping with current changes.

As in the rest of Europe, Spanish universities are restructuring their organization in terms of economic management, new forms of control and accountability, privatisation practices and so forth. As a consequence, professional identities and demands on professional competences in these institutions are in transition. At the same time, Spanish society has been changing in different ways, e.g. in political, economic, technological, demographic and cultural terms. Professionals such as academics are facing such changes in their work with students, their institutional relationship and the organisational demands. By using a life history methodology, our research aims at capturing the changing professional worlds of higher education faculties, focusing especially on their academic careers and professional experiences, building from their own biographical accounts.

2. Change in Society, Change in Higher Education Institutions: Insights from academics

As most social organisations, higher education institutions are undergoing fundamental structural changes which are deeply affecting academics' identity, working life and working conditions. These transformations are related, among others, to:

(a) The systems of production, access, disclosure and recognition of knowledge in the post-industrial societies (Lyotard, 1984; Gibbons and others, 1994).

(b) The digitisation of information that shifts people's attention from purposes, values and ideals to "the media and techniques to obtain efficient [optimum] results" (Marshall, 1998:9).

¹ Other members of the research team are: Sandra Martínez, Montse Rifà, Adriana Ornellas, Amalia Creus, Patricia Hermosilla, Paulo Padilla Petry and Alicia Cid.

(c) The combination of new economic perspectives with the “explosion” of information and communication technologies that are favouring the appearance of new forms of organisations for higher education (Hanna and associates, 2000).

(d) The generalization of the use of the digital information and communication technologies that enables and demands new ways of teaching and learning, selection, appraisal and interpretation of the information and, therefore, of assessing the process and the results of the learning (Hanna and associates 2000, Jochems and others 2004).

(f) The globalisation of higher education considered by the World Trade Organisation as a paid service and not as a citizen’s right.

(g) The characteristics, needs and expectations of new generations of students who are digital natives in front of their analogical (digital immigrant) teachers (Sancho, in press).

(h) The full incorporation of women into a space traditionally reserved for men (Morley and Walsh, 1996).

(i) In Europe, the construction of the European Space for Higher Education (Bologna Declaration).

All these changes are putting considerable pressure on higher education institutions and their personnel (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; McIntosh, 2005, Metcalfe, 2006). For all these reasons, it seems highly important to understand the different situations higher education faculties are confronting and to analyse the related opportunities and limits of the new scenarios brought about by these changes.

As other social institutions, since the 1990s, and particularly after the agreement made by the World Trade Organisation, universities are undergoing restructuring processes. This means that access is not a citizen’s right, but a service that must be paid for by whoever consumes it. In this way the student is seen as a client who opts for a service (training and qualification) and has to pay for it. In this setting, the university begins to take on the image of a management organisation in which the administrative side, gaining resources and the organisation of the personnel in business terms, that is, performance, is more important than the production and access to knowledge. Political decisions are confused with administrative ones. The teaching staff, as occurs in countries such as Great Britain, is no longer part of the university, but now sells its services to it (courses), something that also happens in the University of Barcelona through UBvirtual. The consequence of all this, and it is what characterises the restructuring processes, is the valuation of the modes of management of production (cost-profit) in detriment to the values of the management of public services (the improvement in the conditions of life of the majority of the population). One of the consequences of this model is that it changes the *habitus* of the teaching staff: the administrative demands multiply, evaluations and balancing the books interfere with their dedication to producing

knowledge, the bureaucracy of planning replaces the pedagogical relationship with the students...

3. The situation of the Spanish university: discourses about the teacher from the legislative changes

This section is based on an earlier paper (Montané, Alejandra; Sánchez de Serdio, Aída; 2010). Its objective is twofold. Firstly, to show a synthesis of the legislative changes related to the Spanish university that have taken place since 1970, and link them with the type of university subject (teacher, researcher, manager) that carries out this legislation (see table 1).

Year	Act	Subject	Key words
1970	<i>Ley General de Educación (LGE)</i> (General Law of Education)	Technocratic	Elitism
1983	<i>Ley de Reforma Universitaria –(LRU)</i> (University Reform Law)	Normative	Freedom
1985	Real Decreto 898/1985, of the 30 April, about university teaching system. (University Teachers organisation Law)	Normative	Normalisation
2001	<i>Ley Orgánica de Universidades (LOU)</i> (Universities Constitutional Law)	Bureaucratic	Efficiency-quality-evaluation
2007	<i>Modificación de la Ley Orgánica de Universidades (LOU 2007)</i> (Modifications to Universities Constitutional Law)	Evaluated, Managerial	Productivity-specialization

Table 1: The kind of subjects regulated by the discourses of the Universities Acts

Our starting point is the General Law of Education (LGE) of 1970, passed during the dictatorship and demanded by the social, political and economic changes of the end of the Franco regime and the transition towards democracy. While this law was not exclusive to the university system, it did point out some of the social changes to which the university had to respond: facing up to and encouraging the democratisation of teaching in all the layers of society, encouraging scientific and technological progress and opening up Spanish society to modernisation, adapting flexibly to the permanent changes of modernity.

It is a text full of paradoxes, in which there are clear tensions between an impulse towards flexibility, the reduction of the “dose of legality” and of State intervention regarding educational relationships with the re-inscription (or at least the formal recognition) of the imperatives and values of structural Catholicism. At the same time the law shows the airs of openness of the late sixties; the legislators, aware

that the time of isolation had ended and that a new stage had begun in which the global market set the pace, insisted on the urgent need for modernisation, the training of competitive professionals and for encouraging “cultural progress” and “free objectivity” in research and teaching.

Among the objectives that this law proposes, the following are of special importance: ensure that the whole Spanish population take part in education, basing its orientation on the most genuine and traditional patriotic virtues, completing the general education with professional preparation that provides for the productive incorporation in the world of work; to provide all with equal educational opportunities, without more limitations than that of the capacity to study; to establish an educational system that is characterised by its unity, flexibility and interrelations, while at the same time providing a wide range of possibilities of permanent education and a close relationship with the needs arising from the dynamics of the economic and social evolution of the country. (Introduction)

Thus emerges, though in a still prudent form and confined by the values of the Regime, a technician or technocrat that must be professionally trained to attend to a new professional market and to the demands of economic modernisation and flexibility that the opening up of the country required.

The first law passed in democracy, however, after the victory of the Socialist Party (PSOE) in 1982, and specific to higher education, was the University Reform Law (LRU) of 1983, which would be specified in the subsequent Royal Decree 898/1985, of the 30 April, about the university teaching system. This is also the law that directly affected the academics with whose professional life histories we have worked, since it was in force until the passing of the LOU (2001), forming a long period in which the majority of those collaborating in the research joined academic life.

The fundamental characteristic of the LRU represented the reorganisation of the Spanish higher education system and its attempt to leave behind an elitist university of Napoleonic style (Souvirón, 1988), highlighting the need for Spain to join the advanced industrialised societies. Another important aspect was its deployment through the autonomous communities (decentralisation process) and the declaration, for the first time, of higher education as a public service.

This law is supported by the idea that the university is not the patrimony of the current members of the university community, but that it forms an authentic public service referring to the general interests of the whole national community and its respective Autonomous Communities. (Introduction).

This law also marked the clearest point of inflection towards the emergence of the higher education teaching staff regulation as we know it today. A point that the LRU emphasised, and which the Royal Decree of 1985 specified, was the need to regulate the teaching career so that it responded to rational criteria. According to

that expressed in the Law, it simplified “the current chaos of the jungle-like and irrational, totally dysfunctional, hierarchical structure of the teaching staff, through the establishment of four single categories of teacher and the creation of a teaching career” (LRU 1983, Introduction). In other words, it went from arbitrary authoritarianism to the bureaucratised teaching career. An administrative system was established so that the teaching staff, although forming part of the general system of public service, “has the sufficient autonomy to be able to adapt to the clear peculiarities of their functions and tasks” (Royal Decree 1985, Introduction). Here one perceives the tension between the desire to integrate the teaching staff into a public service structure which puts an end to the university autarchy and endogamy and, at the same time, gives the staff the autonomy necessary to undertake the teaching and research tasks it is entrusted with.

This opening up to a democratic and academically rational framework was accompanied by a confirmation of the tendency that was already featured in the General Law of Education of 1970 towards the integration of a competitive society at a global level. The university had to undertake a key role in this process since:

The incorporation of Spain into the advanced industrial societies involves by necessity its full incorporation into the world of modern science, from which diverse historical transformations separated it almost from its beginnings. However, the experience of nearby countries teaches us that the best-prepared social institution to take on this scientific-technical challenge today is the university. (Introduction).

It even included the need for a European higher education space (EHES) and an impulse towards the promotion of the mobility of both the teaching staff and the students. It confirmed, therefore, the full development of a technical subject that required professional and intellectual training at a time in which one began to foresee competition at a European level. The aim was to create competitive and flexible professionals, with qualifications equivalent to those from abroad.

“The foreseeable incorporation of Spain into the European university area will mean greater mobility of Spanish and foreign graduates, and it is necessary to create the institutional framework that enables us to respond to this challenge through adapting study plans and making the qualifications offered in the labour market more flexible”. (Introduction).

Moreover, despite the claims for freedom and autonomy, and the insistence on the role of the university in social transformation, the only mention of a human subject in the broad sense occurred in rather a vague way when pointing out the role of the university in social transformation and in “fuller realisation of human dignity”. (LRU 1983, Introduction).

With the Universities Constitutional Law (LOU) of 2001, which was the first incursion made by the conservative Partido Popular in the sphere of higher education, the process of universality or internationalisation was entered into,

following economic models of a neo-liberal type. It established mobility and competition as an incentive to improving the quality of teaching. A strong debate ensued about quality, effectiveness, efficiency, evaluation and responsibility, and the encouragement of teaching and research tasks was consolidated, but closely linking it to “parameters of quality” as is clear in diverse parts of the introduction to the Law:

“Thus, the modernisation of the economic system places increasing more imperative demands on the sectors that boost this continuous updating; and we cannot forget that the university occupies a privileged place in this process of continuous renewal, specifically in the sectors linked to cultural, scientific and technical development. This is why our universities must urgently increase their effectiveness, efficiency and responsibility, all central principles of the autonomous university itself”. (Introduction, chapter I).

“[It is] an absolute objective of the Law to improve the quality of the university system as a whole and in each and every one of its aspects. This, therefore, means looking deeper into the culture of evaluation by means of the creation of the National Agency of Evaluation of Quality and Accreditation and new mechanisms are established to encourage excellence”. (Introduction, chapter I).

“Regarding the teaching staff, cornerstone of the university, the Law adopts measures considered unanimously priority for the university community, guaranteeing the principles of equality, merit and capacity in the selection of the administrative and contracted teaching staff. Distinct mechanisms are articulated that guarantee quality teaching in the framework of higher education”. (Introduction, chapter IX).

Where the LRU of 1983 and the Royal Decree of 1985 emphasise the academics’ freedom (although they also aim to rationalise and bureaucratised their careers), the LOU of 2001 shows a need of control and evaluation of the “efficiency” of this freedom. From the regulation of the assessable aspects of the teaching task, a process of self-regulation of the teaching staff occurs in terms of productivity and efficiency: it is difficult to dedicate themselves to other tasks than the assessable ones, since they are the requisite to advance in the teaching career. The threat of the limits of specific contractual figures, as is the case of the *collaborator teacher* or *reader*, underlines this strict regulation.

For both the teaching staff and the students, the need was emphasised of responding to quick changes and the flexibility that a productive world imposes. It is paradoxical, however, in view of these intentions, that one of the problems of our universities, as stated by authors such as Feito (2005:7) and Bantley (2001), is that they are characterised for being hierarchical, routine and with regulated methods of measuring performance, responsible for distributing information, conceived to transmit knowledge in a unidirectional way (from teacher to learner), subject to a centralised control and vertically integrated, with a teaching system organised around departments and subject matter.

While the Law does not seem to have achieved flexibility in the forms of teaching and in the contents, where an advance is noticed is in the post-Fordist flexibility of both academics and learners, who must be able to adopt interchangeable positions at diverse points of the academic and productive system. To do this the quantity of knowledge acquired or given (credits), the quality of the teaching task (surveys, reports, self-evaluations) and research (number of projects, publications, hierarchy of the publications) is regulated in the form of quantifiable and exchangeable units and items. This also involves a big increase in the bureaucratic tasks of the teaching staff and the consequent accumulation of power in the management posts of universities.

The LOU 2007, passed again under the government of the Socialist Party (PSOE), amended the previous law, rewriting some of its tendencies and qualifying others. For example, it increased the specialisation in defining main teaching or research profiles. The notion of a European Space of Higher Education (ESHE) was restated, and of methodological renewal and competitiveness in the European context, which was only noted in the 1983 law. It deals with institutional balance and professionalising university management, and the idea is developed of the transfer of knowledge and technology with the productive sector, for example through the possibility of authorising the incorporation of academics in technological companies arising from publicly-financed university research projects (LOU 2007, Art.83).

As regards the teacher, as we said, they tend towards a specialisation in the field of research or teaching, in such a way as they can dedicate themselves better to one or other activity and the university can be more productive in both aspects at the same time:

Research work and time spent and the contribution to scientific, technological or artistic development of the teaching and research staff of universities will be relevant criteria, attending to their correct evaluation, to determine their efficiency in the undertaking of their professional work. The university will provide compatibility in carrying out teaching and research and will encourage the development of a professional career that enables more intensive dedication to teaching or to the researcher. (Article 40, Section. 3).

Nevertheless, with this tendency there is the danger of creating a division of labour in the assembly line of knowledge, since in the long-term and in practice, achieving excellence in both aspects is complicated and, moreover, aspects relating to academic prestige and attainment of funding can create hierarchies of research over and above teaching.

On the other hand, and following an apparently opposite impulse, one perceives a return to the emphasis on the role of the university as a transmitter of values and as creator of a more tolerant and egalitarian society. A tension is sensed between the university that must contribute positively to the productive sector and that which must transmit values of tolerance and equality. The individuals that train and are trained in the university must be the most specialised in their field and

also be able to collaborate flexibly with the productive world, as well as, however, being the carrier of values of equality, of social progress:

“Society claims an active participation from the university of the future in its vital processes. For this reason, the work of the university should not be confined to the transmission of knowledge; it must generate opinion, show its commitment to social progress and be an example to its setting”. (Introduction).

The academics therefore find themselves subject to important dilemmas when both demands enter into contradiction.

Finally, the professionalization of the management of universities creates an administrative power to which everyone else adapts, in a way that both the teacher and the learner end up adjusting their demands. Thus an “administered” or “managed” individual emerges that we experience today, someone that must dedicate as much time to filling out computerised applications and forms, consulting evaluation criteria, or counting credits, as teaching, learning or researching.

It is interesting to point out that the progress towards this type of individual is not explicitly reflected in the text of the law and would be extremely complicated to take from the written legislation an isolated quote in which this is expressed directly (except perhaps if we look at the gradual enlarging of administrative, technical and evaluative requisites that define the teaching career in the body of the articles). This transformation, which in part constitutes the central theme of our research, is above all an *effect* of the law in the life of universities and its teachers. We could say that the law goes beyond its literal meaning to also contain the practices, adaptations and resistances that occur. For this reason the reconstruction of the careers of the subjects more directly affected by these changes is so important to be able to understand the scope of the transformation described.

4. The need to study the changes that affect the teaching staff

In the Spanish case, the higher education sector has been the object over the last decades, and continues to be so, of important restructuring processes (i.e. the reforms made by the LRU, the LOU and the establishment of the Bologna Agreement) with differentiated applications in the State of the Autonomies that may produce variations in terms of tasks, work conditions and expectations about the professional competences of teachers and researchers.

This situation, along with the process of construction of the ESHE, the visions introduced about the role of the university by the so-called new economy, the changes in the systems of production and management of knowledge, the appearance of emerging problems and fields of study, the digitalisation of information and the characteristics and expectations of the new groups of students, is having unprecedented implications in the life and working conditions

of the university professor. From here comes the need to understand this variety of situations and analyse their opportunities and limitations, but above all, to identify how the experienced teaching staff dialogue, resist, adapt to or adopt the changes, are committed to or disregard their work and build their professional identity.

This leads to the relevance of using the professional life history as a strategy of approaching the changes experienced by teachers and researchers. The method has been suitable for the comparative analysis undertaken among the 24 people who have collaborated in this study. Apart from the professional life history, the research aims to relate the individual and group experiences with the social and historical contexts (Mills, 1959; Bertaux, 1981; Goodson, 1998; 2004) with the objective of relating the subjective meaning to the evidence of restructuring reflected in the different legislative frameworks.

The focus of attention of the professional life histories are the experiences of the university teaching staff with respect to the series of legislative measures and cultural and institutional changes that have had a bearing on their working conditions. These measures have placed the teaching staff before polarities such as autonomy/control in planning; open/closed curriculum; integration/classification with the student body; specialist/generalist; teacher/tutor in the professional roles; adscription/mobility in the teaching levels; professional association/administration in the running of the centres; state/autonomous region in the administrative regulations, etc., which usually involve measures of restructuring and professional repositioning (Naidoo, 2003). This restructuring process, which is accompanied by notable social changes (in values, knowledge, technologies, the student body...), involve other demands, opportunities and limitations in the professions (Sullivan, 2000) which have been explored and revealed here.

We must also take into account that on undertaking this research we face a challenge in as much as academics research into *others*, but do not usually do so about themselves. In this sense, for a group of academics to put into play as evidence of study the experiences before the changes of other colleagues, and not doing it through a survey but through in-depth biographical interviews, means questioning the logic of who has the power in generating knowledge in the university.

If to this we add that, in the first stage of the study, all the members of the research group wrote autobiographical histories about their relationship with the changes that were used as a starting point of the investigation (Hernández and Rifà, in press; <http://www.cecace.org/proj-cambios.html>), emphasising the need to set our sights on ourselves before doing so to *others* and thus breaking, in another way, the traditional relationships in social research. As well as dealing with answering the question of how academics respond to changes through their *professional life stories* to place them in context and explore the common themes that make up their professional life histories, we aim to answer the question: what type of teachers, researchers, academics in general, want to shape –have been shaping- the university?

Our hypothesis is that it has gone from being a ‘nominalist’ professionalization (the

university qualification in a speciality of knowledge accredits to be a teacher in this disciplinary sphere) to a 'competential' professionalization (one becomes a teacher from training in which one acquires the competences that an academic must have in the threefold dimension of teaching, research and management). This latter form of professionalization has been strengthened by the *technology* introduced from the implementation of the European convergence.

4.1 Life history research approach as a methodology to explore how academics are coping with changes

Life histories methodology was the approach we took to study academics' experiences of change over time. Life histories allow connecting the personal accounts of university teachers with their biography and the wider socio-cultural and historical context, thus arriving at what can be called their professional *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977).

Roberts (2002:2) defines life history -following Denzin (1970: 219-257)- as the methodology referred

to the collection, interpretation and report writing of the 'life' (the life history method) in terms of the story told or as the construction of the past experience of the individual (from various sources) to relate to the story.

The distinctive borders between life story and life history have been commonplace in the debate among specialists of this research approach (Goodson, 1992; 1998; Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

The crucial focus from life history work is to locate the teacher's own life story alongside a broader contextual analysis, to tell in Stenhouse's words 'a story of action, within a theory of context. (Goodson, 1992:6).

This approach allows us to explore how personal biographical narratives are embedded in the wider societal structures and framed by historical conditions. From this statement, university teachers' accounts of their relationships with change developed throughout their lifetimes are influenced by a variety of factors, including events, experiences, and other people's role in their lives (Knowles, 1992). However, Goodson's approach to life history could be considered, as Lisa Cary (1999: 412) has noticed, as totalitarian and as part of the redemptive project dominant for years in social and human sciences.

It is definitely time to problematize this desire for totalizing essentialist stories that often emerge "in the name of" life history research. Goodson's essay is another attempt to bring postmodern moments to bear on "situating knowledge" through life history. However, as such it is another failure, another avoidance of the necessary fictions of the method inscribed by the redemptive project of the social and human sciences (Popkewitz, 1998). He continues to

inscribe idealized identity politics suggesting triangulation of data collection as a methodological validity that will overcome the shortfalls of decontextualized life stories. According to Goodson (1998), employing a critical analysis of life history through a study of the sociohistorical context will alleviate many of the issues with this method.

This sociological position on life histories could reduce the complexity and richness of people's life narratives to empirical evidences that allow the researcher to manufacture the context of social relations in order to, finally, confirm their own theoretical position.

In our approach the researcher is a mediator between academics' accounts and their social backgrounds. In theatre terms, collaborators are those who *write the script* and researchers *produce the setting* where these stories will be re-presented. The diversity of focal points and topics through which the biographical histories run, point to the figure of researcher as the teller of the history that others have narrated. This means that, despite the ideas of strengthening, shared training, dialogue, which are stated in the proposals of the research, some of the traditional forms and positions of research are maintained. The researcher is the one who continues having the authority to underline, organise, delimit and put a name to the experience told by collaborators. However, this is done leaving the door open, so that each collaborator can introduce nuances when they receive the professional life history and establish the terms of the agreement of making it public and if the authorship of the history is shared.

In any case, what we have aimed to do has not been to work as *researchers-voyeurs* and establishing the examination of the subjects without interpreting or valuing what they share, without forgetting, just as Denzin states (1997:35), that

The interpreter-observer, however, is not a neutral spectator. As Springer (19991, p.178) observes, what is suppressed in the seeing-knowing equation is the fact "that interpretation are produced in cultural, historical, and personal contexts and are always shaped by the interpreter's values".

To balance out and deal with this tension, at the beginning of the research each member of the group wrote a history that made an appraisal of the relationship with the changes; on the other hand, during the research process, as the interviews were given and the professional life histories noted down, the decisions and evaluations that were made were compared in group.

As undertaken in previous research studies², the way we use biographical information to construct professional life histories is inspired by Bourdieu (1999:

² Analysis of the influences of social and professional changes on teachers' lives and work (BSO2003-02232) <http://cecace.org/proj-cambios-en.html>; Professional Knowledge in Education and Health: Restructuring work and life between the state and the citizens in Europe. (Profknow: 506493) <http://www.profknow.net/>.

609) as an “*active and methodical listening*”, which means that a particular biography is situated within the objective conditions that are common to a social category that the interviewee represents.

Therefore, for us, understanding is not a phenomenological *projection of oneself into the other*, but rather an understanding of the position that the interviewee occupies within a given field under study. Objective conditions that are associated to the positions affect the lives of the individuals belonging to particular social categories by imposing the possibilities and necessities to realize oneself as academic. Hence the methodological problems are, firstly, how to define the appropriate social category or categories and secondly, how to read the general properties of objective conditions from the singularity of an interview (Ibid., 613-8). The structural change can be read rather easily from the thematic interviews and life histories and completed with other information we have about the objective change (universities’ organization). But the naming of the properties that may describe dispositions is a much more uncertain process and should be done very cautiously (Houtsonen and Kosonen, (2007).

As a starting point, we consider that academics’ professional and personal experiences and background affect what they believe, and consequently, how they teach and research. Consequently, a life history approach enables us to understand academics’ lives in terms of the meaning they have for each individual (Butt, Raymond, McCue & Yamagishi, 1992; Denicolo & Pope, 1990; Woods, 1985). This approach helps researchers –and collaborators- to understand academics’ involvement in and commitment to their teaching and their students (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986) and the structural conditions of their professional work.

In fact, a number of researchers have employed a life history approach as a theoretical framework for understanding teachers and their work (Bullough, 1989, 1994; Day, 1993; Knowles, 1994; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1994; Woods, 1985, 1987; Sancho and others, 2007; Müller et al 2008). The vital role of life history in understanding teacher’s beliefs, practice, and potential for growth has been demonstrated in research on professional development and teacher change (Butt, 1984; Denicolo & Pope, 1990; Goodson, 1992a, 1992b; Huberman, 1993; Pajak & Blase, 1989; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987).

4.2 The Sample

In order to account for how university and social changes interact with professional identities over time, biographical interviews were conducted with 24 university teachers with more than 20 years of service and belonging to historical (7) and new universities (9). The university differentiation allowed contrasting the professional attitudes and experiences as they are related to the professional and social context and its history of change in Spain. Participants were selected by gender (12 men and 12 women) and academic speciality (12 from Experimental Sciences and Technology and 12 from Social Sciences and Humanities). In tables 2 and 3 sample characteristics are summarized.

University	Region	Gender	Specialisation
1. Historical	Galicia	Male	Philosophy
2. Historical	Galicia	Female	Mathematics
3. New creation	Galicia	Male	Gaelic Philology
4. Historical	Castilla and Leon	Female	Pharmacy
5. Historical	Castilla and Leon	Male	Education
6. New creation	Castilla and Leon	Male	Economics
7. New creation	Basque Country	Male	Forensic Medicine
8. New creation	Basque Country	Female	Music Education
9. Historical	Catalonia	Female	Cellular Biology
10. Historical	Catalonia	Male	Political Sciences
11. New creation	Catalonia	Male	Chemistry and Agriculture
12. New creation	Catalonia	Female	Social Sciences
13. Historical	Valencian Community	Female	Social Sciences
14. Historical	Valencian Community	Female	Chemistry
15. New creation	Valencian Community	Male	Science and Technology
16. Historical	Andalusia	Female	Pharmacy
17. Historical	Andalusia	Male	French
18. New creation	Andalusia	Female	Palaeontology
19. Historical	Canary Islands	Male	Cosmic Physics
20. Historical	Canary Islands	Female	Law
21. New creation	Canary Islands	Female	Engineering
22. Historical	Madrid	Male	Informatics
23. Historical	Madrid	Female	Fine Arts
24. New creation	Madrid	Male	Industrial Engineering

Table 2. Sample characteristics

Gender	Women: 12
	Men: 12
Type of University	Historical: 7
	New creation: 9
Academic Speciality	Experimental Sciences and Technologies: 12
	Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Economics: 12
Location	Autonomous Regions: 8 (out of 17)

Table 3. Sample synthesis.

Each academic was interviewed once in two parts. The first part was held in an open, semi-structured manner, encouraging collaborators to recount their professional trajectory. The focus on this interview was the personal stories and narratives of their experience as University faculty. The second part had to do with the main university and social changes they considered as affecting their work. Interviews usually lasted between 40 minutes and 1½ hours.

These histories were connected to references with context and qualifying aspects were noted down with the aim of reconstructing the professional trajectory. From the very beginning it was considered that the professional trajectory is a personal process, but can be made through the identification of the facts or moments considered most important by each participant, of how they experienced them,

what caused them and what consequences they had. This process of reflection enables sense to be made of the experience and turn it into narrated experience.

The emerging issues and findings brought about by the first interviews' analyses were then discussed in the research group. The interviews' content was furthermore contrasted with policy documents, and the existing literature. This allowed for comparison of the university teacher's work life narratives with policy narratives. The result is a situated understanding of university teachers' professional experiences as embedded into the wider institutional and organisational contexts and the social fabric.

Therefore, the professional life histories were not geared towards drawing generalisations about the overall situation of academics, but rather to gain insights into how their professional lives and work conditions are affected by socio-demographic shifts and policy reform.

The analytic focus itself rests on teachers' individual accounts. This has implications for the objective of comparison between all participants in this study where the singularity of their experience is foregrounded. The analyses of the different professional life histories does not aim to establish a static picture of the differences and commonalities between each academic but rather to map out the space of possible experiences and reactions to university restructuring. The analyses then mainly evidences the multifaceted and even contradictory ways in which policy and social conditions can affect university teachers' professional lives. In fact, the heterogeneity inherent in the empirical material makes it problematic to continue referring to the "university teacher" as if they formed a homogeneous group.

4.3 The process of analysis: from the interviews to their thematic content

Once the interviews were given they were then transcribed. The result was 24 documents of between 15 and 25 pages. Several readings were made of the transcriptions in order to establish –to draw out– the topics that could organise the life history. The accounts of the university teachers are thus articulated as evidence about which a series of *significant* themes stand out that serve as central axes to articulate the narratives they construct.

If we had followed the recommendation of Bourdieu (1990), who suggests that social researchers should ensure they impose concepts or categories that are products of the social world to which they themselves belong, we would have had the legitimacy that forms this position predominantly in authors such as Goodson and others (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Goodson, 1998; Goodson, & Sikes, 2001). Following it, however, we were faced with dilemmas relating to the researcher exercising power, with their projection over the experiences of the subjects, with the danger of establishing a therapeutic position (interpretative of the I), so that we thought it necessary to take into account what Richardson (1999:70) points out

what is needed is a reflexive approach that takes into account the social relationship between researchers and their informants and the

constructed nature of the research interview (an approach that Bourdieu himself called 'participant objectivation').

However, it was difficult for us to wear the cap of this 'participant objectivation', given that the material of the research was about the life experiences narrated by the collaborators, which meant:

focussing on the experiences of the other people whilst bracketing preconceptions based upon their own experiences of the domain in question (Richardson, 1999:70).

Faced with the thematic content, this led us to think about whether we should impose our themes, according to the line that the research follows, or we could leave our opinion hanging, and take out the themes from the transcriptions. This left us with a new question which was defining what could be considered as a theme. We can obtain a first answer from Ely et al, (1991: 150)

A theme can be defined as a statement of meaning that (1) runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or (2) one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual input.

The option that Ely suggests has a practical meaning and enables, applying, for example, an analysis of content, to capture the most recurrent themes or those which have an emotional load. What interested us, however, was that the theme revealed an aspect of the relationship between the teaching staff and the changes, in the sense of Van Manen's definition (1990: 87):

A theme as the form of capturing the phenomenon that one is trying to understand; a theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experienced.

What it was about, in fact, was to capture the phenomenon we were trying to understand, linked to an aspect (relevant, for the collaborators) of the experience that we were reconstructing.

The themes are justified in a cross between what the collaborators had stated and the central themes that had arisen in the first group studies (around the autobiographies of the researchers, the study of legislation, the analysis of the policies of university teaching staff of the sample). In this way, from the analysis of the interviews we established an index of themes that in some cases appeared as shared and others as relevant inasmuch as they cast light on the key question of the research: how does the teaching staff represent and respond to the changes that affect the university? Table 4 shows the organisation of these themes and sub-themes.

Themes	Sub-themes
1. The context of the changes from elitism to growth and the internationalisation of higher education	• The process of democratisation - The newly-created universities (90). -Control and dependency of the Autonomous Communities -Changes of study plans (90s and after) • The internationalisation and the European Space for Higher Education (ESHE)
2. Changes in the academic career	• Changes in access to the academic career -The mass incorporation of teaching staff in the 80s -The newly-created universities (90s). • Changes in the academic functions (teaching, research, management) • The process of access, maintenance, promotion and payment of the teaching staff
3. Changes in university teaching	• Learning through experience (non-initial training) • Changes in the student body • Changes in the relations • New technologies • Teaching innovation
4. Changes in personal life	Conciliation of personal/working life
5. Changes in research (“academic capitalism” Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004)	• Knowledge as academic and/or business “capital” • The birth and impact of evaluation agencies • Penalisation of Social Sciences and Humanities • Evaluative pressure
6. Changes in the perception of the meaning and mission of higher education	• The meaning of public in the university • The mission: between what is cultural and specialisation

Table 4. The thematic content of the interviews

With the thematic content of the interviews now planned, we were ready to start the process of elaborating the life histories. A general rule was that whoever gave the interviews and visited the universities wrote the professional life history. This, however, did not necessarily have to be done individually. As we did not lose sight of the fact that during the research the training of the junior researchers also took place, in some cases the life histories were written by two people, not only with the aim of guaranteeing contrast, but also of sharing the learning produced in such a singular task as writing a life history.

The commitment established with the collaborators was that, once the text of the histories had been completed, they were sent them so that they could make changes or qualifications, and decide if they wanted to feature as co-authors or be partially or totally anonymous. They would later be published. Meanwhile, work continued comparing and telling the histories.

A prior agreement of the research group in the production of the life histories was that, although while having to accommodate to the peculiarities of each interviewee and the life story of each collaborator, they could be expressed from the following organising index:

1. Meeting story: we agreed that each life history should begin with a personal tale in which we introduce and narrate our “meeting” with the teacher. E.g.: how we came in contact, how we met, impressions, etc.
 2. Brief presentation of the themes that emerge and of how the life history has been organised.
 3. The professional career of each collaborator and their relationship to the historic, legislative and structural changes.
 4. The perception regarding the changes that emerge in the first part and the others that the researcher may suggest.
 5. General appraisal of the history and of its contribution to the research problem.
- All the above woven into each life history with the contributions of the collaborators, the references of context and the contributions of other authors that refer to themes dealt with in the account.

These, then, are some keys regarding the process of thematic content of the interviews.

4.4 Writing up the life histories

As has been pointed out, the process of thematic content led to producing an index that would guide how each life story could be articulated. In practice, when each member of the group shared the index that could structure the history they produced, two main strategies were identified: those indexes that were structured around chronological and/or professional stages; and those that were organised as from key themes or problems (e.g.: bureaucratisation, changes in the research, technologies, change of student body, changes in acquired knowledge, etc.).

In the group meetings, we shared the problems that arose in the individual process of preparing the histories. On beginning to share this process we realised that as we went further into the reading, analysis, interpretation and writing up of the accounts, we often felt *lost*. However, we were aware that at all times the *loss* was different. At each level or stage of our research, of the writing, we would have new problems, doubts, interests, ideas and approaches that would be necessary not only for the construction of the study, but also as work and reconstruction of the process of the very group of researchers.

Additionally, we dealt with how to face the need of placing the personal experience of each collaborator in context. In some cases the interviews were quite complete and provided a great deal of information about the context. This led us to rethink our role as researchers. If the teachers themselves place the context, our function had to go beyond this expression. In this sense, the importance is highlighted of *dialoguing with the text*, and exploring the way of involving ourselves as subjects in the narrative. We accept, therefore, that if the articulation with the context is necessary, we need to specify in each case the level of depth we can dedicate to the contextualisation, without it becoming a repetitive exercise, and without taking

away prominence to the voice of the teachers.

Furthermore, the concern arose of how to avoid *drowning* the voice of the teacher. This meant that our own interpretations and relationships had to appear in a balanced way: what must prevail is the experience of the teachers just as they tell it.

We accept that the important, and at the same time difficult, construction of the life histories was like *making the evidence speak*. In this sense, we feel that the life history must be something more than a commented interview, without forgetting that the act of writing the history is also marked by the background of the researchers and their capacity and knowledge for contextualisation. (It is not the same that the person elaborating the life history had also experienced what the collaborators narrate, that knowing it through references).

Finally, and after making common ground in the process of constructing the first histories, we shared the following dilemmas and problems that arose and which we would have to take into account in the other histories and in their comparative nature.

1. Different styles are observed in the histories. This is unavoidable. We are not seeking to apply a formula, but to be aware that in each history we project our own baggage, not only about the context and experience of narrative research, but also that every person, despite the shared set frameworks, interprets what is a life history.
2. Although it is possible to write a life history from the position of a *spectator* by the researcher, it is necessary to face up to the tension between our own history (our thinking, our way of building it) and the account the collaborator affords us.
3. The space of relationship between the researcher and the academic is only produced in the introduction of the life histories; it can, however, be enlarged if it is made explicit that which the history evokes and compares with the researcher's own experience.
4. This reflection leads us to think about the role of the *I* of the researcher in the histories. Do I say that I find myself with the other person, position myself as the voice that narrates, without involving myself? Or is the life history a commentary by the researcher about that which the collaborating subject has said?
5. Another more complex and richer possibility is to place what the subjects say in dialogue with the theory, with authors that speak about the same themes: e.g. the theme of vocation (which arises in some cases). All in all, this task of relating what the academics say with the bibliography takes time, and requires an in-depth task of searching and revising.
6. From the beginning the question arose: what is the difference between biographical research and life history? The difference is that in biographical accounts we are interested in ordering what the subject says. In the life history we must place the context, the social conditions that enable us to understand what the subject recounts.

With this baggage and from these premises the 24 life histories have been written. What we present below is an analysis of them by placing in relation the contents of the different histories according to the themes that have appeared more often in the different accounts.

5. Presentation of findings: the life stories of academics and their relationship with change

A life history, as we have said before, is a narrative constructed by a researcher in which the life experience narrated by a research subject situates itself in relation to a specific issue (in this case professional histories of how a group of academics relate to change). And here a question arises: can individual experiences, by their nature unique and idiosyncratic, be compared or related to each other?

Our answer is yes, that there are aspects of experience, ranging from the context – shared in its historical and legislative dimensions by all our research subjects – to themes which emerge and weave together, specifically stemming from this shared context. For example, the rapid access to the status of lecturer achieved by the majority of the academics studied was determined by the democratization of university access and the legal framework provided by the LRU. It is in this interweaving of the personal and the contextual that the thematization we have constructed, derived from a preliminary analysis of content emerging from three researchers' intersecting readings of the life stories, takes on meaning.

But there is a second level of analysis, which takes as its reference point the themes we mentioned above, and situates these in relation to what the academic says about them. Through this the themes expand their meanings and take on social significance, since the research subjects' contributions transform *the persona'* into the collective. And the narrative through which the researchers link and interrelate the quotations-voices offers us another level of interpretation of the problem of the object of study, by relating these voices to reference points which frame, situate, explain and widen our interpretation of the relationship of experiential narration to change and its social significance.

In the present report, which we have elaborated basing ourselves on the thematization realized and the interpretative notes and contextualization which appear in the professional life histories, we have chosen to abbreviate quotations from academics. Not with the intention of a selective interpretation, but to avoid reiteration and to enhance the fluidity of the structure of our analysis. What appears here is presented because it was mentioned by the research subjects and reflects their opinions and experiences. But validity does not derive from the number of times something is said, or from the number of academics who agree or not on one point of view. Validity derives from the meaning which emerges in connection with each specific issue, which may come as much from singularity as from consensus.

Finally we present some conclusions which, by way of a balance sheet, bring together a number of coordinates mapping out the situation in which university

teachers currently find themselves. These are presented here as contributions to debate arising from our study, and by way of an agenda of the problems which Spanish universities will have to come to terms with in their current conjuncture of change.

5.1 The context of the change: from elitisms to the massification and internationalization of higher education

These academics' voices are framed by a context of changes which began in the 1980s, when the majority of our research subjects made the transition from the end of their studies to the beginning of their careers as university teachers. Their entrance into the university as teachers and researches coincided with the transition to democracy in Spain, and with social and economic needs which called for profound changes in the university institution, a situation which the approval of the LRU in 1983 was, in part, intended to address.

We should not forget that in 1978, with the approval of the Constitution, and continuing in 1982, with the victory of the Socialist Party in the elections, Spanish society had embarked on a process of transformation and modernization (reflected in the Socialist slogan: "Let's modernize Spain!") which also affected what had previously been an elitists university system, turning it into a mass university in record time.

In this context the enormous expansion of university studies in Spain since the General Law of Education of Education 1970, but above all since the University Reform Law of 1983, is already well known. The increasing demand for teaching and research staff generated by the expansion process created the perfect safety valve for those who were studying in the *historic* universities and saw that they would otherwise have difficulty attaining tenure and promotion in institutions dominated by their still relatively young counterparts.

If this is the frame which marks the beginning of the university teachers' careers, 25 years later they find themselves immersed in the process of internationalization stemming from the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by the Bologna agreement, signed by EU governments in 1999. Since the agreement was signed, each country has had to decide the schedule to fulfil before 2010, the year that the process was planned to be completed.

It is this time span that frames the careers of the academics who took part in this study. In the midst of these issues such as changes in access and promotion in teaching and research careers, the arrival of the pressure of evaluation, the advent of digital media in education and the tension between teaching, research and management, amongst others, have had a continual shaping affect on academics' identities. We talk about all of this in the following pages.

5.1.1 The process of democratization (and massification)

Throughout the decade of the eighties the demand for university studies in Europe increased almost unprecedentedly, and at the same time new universities sprang

up all over Spain. The factors explaining this change can be grouped, according to Rahona (2008), into four main blocs: demographic, economic, institutional, and social/cultural.

However this does not imply, in principle, a higher level of development of the university, the cost of which has fallen, above all, on the teaching staff.

The problems that I came across (...) arose because it was a time when the Faculties had opened up to more people. It was an enormous massification, with classes of 160 students or more. All that was really killing, because, although it was true that the University had opened up, it was also true that standards had fallen a lot. There were so many people that there was no way you could look after all of them. (Woman2, CCSS&HHH, UH).

Thus the growth of the universities, although it may have had considerable social impact, was not achieved with the material and human conditions which could have alleviated the impact of massification and adapted it gradually to a balanced relationship between supply and demand.

5.1.2 The newly created universities (90)

At the beginning of the 80s, in the so-called *historic* Spanish universities, quotas of new posts to be put out to public competition were almost closed. The only option for young PhD graduates was to apply for posts offered by the new universities springing up all over the country. Their experience in some of the historic universities is described here by one of the academics:

We belonged to the district of the University of Valladolid, and I took the first years of my degree in Medicine in Valladolid. A mass university, really big, where there was no contact with the teaching staff, where there wasn't even room in the classrooms for all the students enrolled in the course, where when the exams arrived it was even difficult for them to pack in all of us who were taking the exam. So, a university with a long tradition, with a lot of history, but completely out of date for those years, the 70s and the 80s. (Man3, EESS&T, UNC).

But leaving the protection shelter of the university where they had studied, and where they had a personal relationship with their tutors, would not prove easy (and still is not). Thus one academic tells us how she had to deal with local loyalties which prioritized origin – birthplace – over ability and excellence in research. Something which gives rise to absurd situations, as her testimony shows:

When in the context of the various university reforms we talk about endogamy, I always say that I think that I'm a clear example that endogamy networks can be broken. My CV was crushingly superior to the local candidate's, who, however, put in an appeal, and, apparently,

a lawsuit. He lost the former and the latter was dismissed. His main argument was that I came from the other end of Spain, that the post was to give classes in XXX and that I had no papers published on local topics (the subject of the classes was Paleography, ie the history of Latin writing!), and that he was from XXX and I wasn't. Incredible, right? (...) As you can see, I suffered the consequences of "endogamy", though in a very different way from what we're used to hearing about with politicians. (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC)

The creation of new universities promoted by the Socialist government not only contributed to accommodating the tidal wave of students arriving in the universities from the mid-80s, it also responded to clientelistic political interests, which meant that no rational plan of the studies in which each university could specialize was made.

And when I was in Pontevedra, suddenly – there were rumours but they were never confirmed – the regional government approved a decree in which the Galician university was segregated into three sections, which was one of the greatest scientific catastrophes that ever happened in this country. It caught a lot of us wrong-footed, in a new university without any kind of prospects and with a lot of fears and uncertainties. Not because we did or didn't have tenure, but just because there was nothing. (Man5, CCSS&HH, UNC).

5.1.3 Changes in study plans (the 90s and after)

As we know, university curricula are normally the result of a process of change in higher education whose main objective is to adjust higher education to current social and professional realities. The 90s began with the approval of new curricula intended to address changes in knowledge and new demands in the world of work.

I came back in 91 and then also a big change happened: the reform of the curricula in the Spanish state. The whole business of optional subjects, free choice and so on, that all began then. For a year I had to chair the curriculum commission, which meant a meeting every week for a year. It was really tough and much less pleasant than I thought it would be. (...) I was head of studies from 91 to 93. (Man2, EESS&T, UNC).

The issue of curricula and their reform is a constant theme, emerging again with the adaptation to the EHEA.

At that time they were beginning to debate the new curricula and the same thing happened again. The same situations involving the mechanisms of the powers that were repeated. Now I don't want to get involved. We've had a lot of different curricula already. We'll see what happens. Also I'm at a point where I could almost retire and maybe I will. I have a lot of interests I'd like to devote my time to.

(Man4, CCSS&HHH, UNC).

Curriculum organization always generates tensions in the universities; because it brings into play the micropolitics and predominant power relations of the moment. It is not affected according to an analysis of students' current and future needs but, in general, so that almost nothing changes.

5.1.4 Internationalization and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

While we were writing up these professional histories, the students of a number of universities had been fighting for several weeks for the implementation of the Bologna agreement to be suspended. In some universities assemblies of teaching and administrative and service staff had called for a moratorium (Assamblea PDI-PAS, 2009).

This reflects the fact that in Spain policies to adapt the university system to the EHEA are those which appear to affect academic staff most. If on paper we look at the objectives which the European ministers agreed in Bologna they are, in the main, rational in their attempt to address, as Haug (2008) notes, the following problems:

- lack of satisfaction with the efficiency of the higher education systems
- reduction of exterior appeal, to the benefit of the USA
- the emergence of a single labour market among the countries of the EU
- the desire to promote more generalized, easier and more spontaneous mobility amongst teaching staff and students (Haug, 2008: 294-295)

But the approach to implementing them in practice depends on each EU member state. In the Spanish case the process put in place, apart from creating uncertainty and confusion due to delays at the outset, has thrown teaching and research staff into a kind of helter skelter of changes obviating what should be the essential change: leaving aside personal and corporate interests to consider what students need for career development in a world of changing needs and demands.

Like what they did in the Social Sciences Faculty, it has nothing to do with that; what they've done is fill up paper, paper, paper... more and more paper all the time, with changes from one week to another, and then papers which have to be filled out in a hurry... They haven't really thought about professional profiles, or itineraries, or a clear structure... what degrees and what postgrad degrees. For example, one of the things that seems really outrageous to me is this 4 + 1 structure, when in the rest of Europe it's 3 + 2. (...) But I don't know... the rectors and the professors have a lot of power and, in a way... they don't want anyone to touch it. (Woman1, CCSS&HH, UH).

All of this, also, without resources. This leads to situations far distant from those which might favour a guided process of learning.

A lot of problems with resources. For example they can't hire more

teachers, so that one lecturer, in the first or second year, teaches the same subjects. And they give us this wonderful virtual classroom which I don't use; I mean obviously I can't do on-line evaluations of a hundred students. The first year I innovated I did it in the first term and I didn't have many students, I had 70 enrolled, and I made a big commitment, but I spent four months marking assignments, exercises, doing interviews, leading tutorials, etc, etc... Impossible, impossible... (Woman1, CCSS&HH, UH).

We have groups of 120 students and you can't work there. (...) each time I go into the digital platform I start to shake because I have at the very least twenty e-mails I have to answer. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

The Bologna Declaration and the creation of the EHEA represent a fundamental change which shifts the teaching-research balance towards teaching, creating a series of disorders which extend from lack of recognition for dedication to the job to the absence of a training and advisory plan which could help change the mentality and practices of teaching staff, and include the period of destabilization caused by creating and running new courses.

This has been a really radical departure for me. What they want to put through is a change not of the structure of the degree, but a complete change of mentality in the teaching staff, and I believe it's a change of mentality which we university teachers in general are not prepared for. This change in mentality is intended to switch from the kind of teaching which up to now we've had in the university, based principally on lectures and then on a series of practice assignments, at least in Engineering, to starting to develop what they call education through problem-solving or through suppositions, depending on the degree. But I think that in this case, the teachers aren't prepared. As a university teacher, I've had absolutely no training of any sort. (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

And what we should not forget is that the proposed change is not only structural but also, as Haug (2008) points out, affects the established and naturalized ways of conceiving teaching in the Spanish university.

The internationalization of the university and the construction of the EHEA, potentially a means to having acceptable student numbers and improving quality in teaching and research, provoke in turn a reasonable fear of losing or reducing the use of the minority languages (Catalan, Basque and Galician) in Spain. Languages whose interest, apart from the interest we *should* have in knowing and enriching them, is, like any other area of study, deeply linked to career opportunities.

With this new situation the university is now starting to... be universalized and in the type of disciplines which I teach, disciplines basically linked to the study of Galician language and literature... I'm a bit surprised because I don't know what could happen, I mean in the

teaching area. Because, for one thing, we're losing a lot of students... now we're recovering a bit, but last year we had, for example, three students enrolled in Galician Studies in Vigo. Santiago had 20 ... why? Because it's now four or five years – you have to bear in mind that the natural labour market for our students is teaching – since the Xunta³ called civil service exams for secondary school teachers⁴. (Man5, CCSS&HH, UNC).

On the other hand, many academics question why change something which already works? Why modify a structure or a way of teaching when we are *fine* as we are now? Perhaps the key question left unasked is formulated here by W5:

First we have to know where we're going. That's the first thing. What is it that the students need? What do employers need? What do we need to put in place a similar, or even better, system than what Europe had? I think this is being overlooked. All of it. Who is going to make this innovation? All of us are going to make the innovation. Then this has to be raised on a general level. We have to get everyone involved. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

5.2 Changes in the academic career

5.2.1 Changes in access to academic careers from the LRU to the LOU

When our research subjects began their degrees, academic departments did not exist as such and everything revolved around *the professorships*. Junior lecturers were chosen according to the sympathies and interests of the professor in question. But this was not only true of the professors; important decisions always came from above. Posts *fell* from the Ministry; no one applied for them, they *fell*. For the higher posts – senior lecturers, assistant professors and professors – Madrid was the centre for the official exams.

Yes, from September to September. And it was exactly like that: "They've given us a teaching post; let's see who we can put there." And according to who they liked, or if some student had showed an interest, they gave it to you. You didn't earn much. And if you want to add this, before 1977, when we still didn't have democracy, when you signed your contract as a junior lecturer you had to swear allegiance to the Principles of the National Movement⁵. I don't think I had to do that... No, of course not. I started my PhD in 77-78 and I read my thesis in 82. (Woman3, EESS&T, UH).

The LRU involved the first rationalization of access to and consolidation of the university teacher's career (Capitán, 2000). This is reflected in what M4

³ The Galician autonomous government (tr.)

⁴ In Spain teachers in state education are civil servants and gain access to the profession through official exams called periodically by local governments (tr.)

⁵ *El Movimiento Nacional*, the National Movement, was the name given to the fascist-inspired mechanism of centralised rule during the Franco dictatorship in Spain.

comments:

The implementation of the LRU brought a series of big changes with it. In 1984 I obtained the Professorship of the Escuela Universitaria⁶, and in 1998 I came first in the selection for the University Professorship. To get them I had to fulfil all the requirements that they asked for at that time: a number articles in English, others in national periodicals, some topic that interested them, and so on. (Man4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

Although a research career profile did not exist, as it does now, the path to follow for a recent graduate was more or less laid down. After the fellowship came the PhD thesis, a period abroad – or in another institution in Spain – to complete the education, and then, on returning, given the need for teachers in Spanish universities at that time, it was not difficult to obtain a lectureship.

I read my thesis in 84. I had a child in 85 which was what we did in those days, have a child after doing the thesis and then after the official exams for tenure. This first child was born after the thesis. I had to go away; first I was in Madrid, in the Ramón y Cajal Institute with a research scholarship, and then I went to Norwich. But it was the first post they offered in 87. In the university statutes of XXX a temporary post was provided for, where they gave the option of a post to all of us who were contracted on a particular date. But that was more or less why I went away before, partly to complete my training, partly to do a postdoctorate. So I got tenure in 87 and since then I've been a lecturer. (Woman6 EESS&T, UH).

In 2001 the Partido Popular⁷ government of the day enacted the *Ley Orgánica de Universidades* (LOU). One of the most controversial aspects of this law, modified six years later by the Socialist Party, was the change introduced in the means of access of teaching staff to civil service positions (lecturerships in institutes of higher education and universities and university professorships). The LOU of 2001, intended to “guarantee the objectivity of teaching staff selection tests”, instituted, in article 57, a national authorization system for hiring teacher-researchers in their respective universities. The commissions for this purpose were composed of seven members, instead of five as stipulated by the LRU. This new situation worried many tenure-track teachers and researchers, but led many universities to offer a good number of posts for public competition which, if this change had not come about, would have been offered only gradually. The result was that many candidates were able to achieve tenure or promotion before expected.

We saw the LOU basically as an opportunity. I saw it as a threat, it was a change, we didn't know what was coming after, we're talking about 2000-2001, and I was building my CV. Since 98 I'd been a senior

⁶ Specialised university-level school, for example tourism, business studies, primary teacher training, etc.

⁷ Right-wing Spanish political party.

lecturer, we had research projects under way, from the teaching perspective my CV was good, from the research perspective too, and that's where a query came up. If things had carried on as they were before, I would naturally apply for a professorship in 2005. But things speeded up because of the new law; in the end, before the law could change, or not, the person who was backing me in the university decided to offer a professorship here, and I applied and in 2003 I became a professor. I admit that it happened before I expected. I think that in normal conditions I would have got my professorship two years later, not in the year that I did. But in this case the change in the law, that moment of transition and the uncertainty it generated, I recognise that it benefitted me. (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

These fears, together with other circumstances internal to the departments, explain why in the first decade of the 21st century academics with a solid track record stayed as lecturers and did not take official exams for professorships while they waited to get accredited.

I could have been a professor years ago in my environment and I've preferred to be a lecturer in XXX. Because it wasn't my turn and there are a lot of people here. At the moment I'm tied up with the paperwork for accreditation. So because it wasn't my turn, in this department the last professors who came in four years ago did it with four six-year bonuses.⁸ (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

Under the reform of the LOU approved by the Socialist government in 2007 candidates' track records have to be accredited before they can be considered for a post. This has meant reducing their dependency on balances of power and the micropolitics which used to govern the links between them and the members of the evaluating commission, who now began to play a less important role.

One important detail of the accreditation system is that it not only takes research into account, but also teaching and management. Thus teaching staff have to concern themselves with taking part in groups and promoting and carrying out projects involving innovation in teaching practices, participating as trainers in seminars for updating skills and knowledge, and so on. This means that staff who previously considered their academic life to be mainly research-oriented have had to direct their attention more towards fostering their students' learning process.

With this thing about accreditation, what happens now, which seems fine to me that it could happen, that people with four six-year bonuses who haven't even managed to get their twenty teaching points⁹. Because they haven't bothered to do anything, it seems fine to me that they don't get to be professors, because I actually believe that you

⁸ Incentives paid on positive six-yearly evaluation of high level research dissemination. It implies not only a light increase in the salary but even more important the possibility of promotion to professorship or taking part or not of different committees and commissions.

⁹ Points gained for teaching duties that imply a bit more than simply teaching students, for instance, getting involve in innovative teaching projects.

should have something of everything. I even believe that you should have management, because people are not all going to be academic managers, and otherwise not everyone has the chance to have access to a managerial post (head of department, dean, etc.) or a responsible position in the community. (Mujer6, EESS&T, UH).

This change, which brings with it previously unthinkable situations in fields related to the experimental sciences, where research publications constitute the overriding criterion for academic promotion, challenges us to recognise the importance of improving the pedagogic relationship in the university.

5.2.2 The massive incorporation of teachers in the 80s

A Director General of Universities report of 2008 gives the total number of university teachers during the academic year 2006-7 as 102,300. Thus the mass influx of students was matched by one of teachers.

While I was working as a forensic surgeon the chance of working with the university came up, because since it was a new university, they were looking for teachers in all the medical specialities and so they called me. The people in charge of the medical faculty called me, and asked if I wanted to teach in the university, so then I was doing two jobs, part-time, obviously, because it couldn't be any other way at that time. (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

I studied Chemistry and finished in 1981, in July, and in January they gave me a grant and I began my university career. With its ups and downs, with the LRU, with everything that that implied... A period of insecurity... That you didn't know if you were going to stay or if you were going to go. What happened is that for me it went against the grain a bit. What I mean is I had to jump on the bandwagon. They took me on in a year when a lot of young people entered the university. And in fact, from my whole year only one colleague and I got lectureships. The people from my year, who are still here had to wait years, spend time abroad, etc. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

Yes, because when I got here it was the year 91, then in 91-92 the supply lectureship was turned into permanent lectureship, and in 92-93 they offered a competition for this post and I entered: June or July, I think, 1st of July 1993. (Mujer6, CCSS&HH, UH).

These academics who started their careers during these years of pressing demand due to the floods of new students did not always do so with the willingness, training and capacity for learning and commitment necessary for university career. Apart from having to do the job without any previous contact with the world outside the institution.

In my view this would be the biggest criticism of what I see in the training of other professionals in the university, who had no

experience in real life. There are people who've only worked in the academic world and are completely ignorant of how things work outside the university, and this seems to me to be a huge mistake. (Man3, EESS&T, UNC).

5.2.3 Changes in academic functions (teaching, research, management)

Although university teachers do not sign a contract stipulating their rights and duties, they are supposed – and this is repeated in various official forms and documents – to devote a third of their time to teaching, a third to research and a third to management (Sancho, 2001).

Here the debate revolves around how the academics experience this requirement: as an oppressive overload or as a normal part of the profession of their choice. When the teachers who participated in this study started their careers in the university the institution was – due to its size – easier to cope with, the commitments and the range of minor tasks were smaller, and the changes more gradual (although the LRU reform in 1983 had disturbed the practices and forms of conduct of the Francoist university).

These days, working in Spanish universities involves teaching, research and management activities. However, in practice these three functions are not equally valued enough. Which is also worse in small universities. On the one hand, those of us in higher academic posts have more work because of the increase in activity produced by increased competition, as I've said, and because of the bureaucratization which is now getting enormous. However, we're not rewarded fairly (and the monthly supplement doesn't even cover the week and a half of overtime I do). (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

Thus the need arises to do the difficult balancing act of making all these demands evenly compatible. Especially with regard to the requirements of teaching workload and productivity in research.

The main problem is that we have to give too many classes, which has a negative effect on research; the constant increase in bureaucracy takes away even more time from that supposedly available to do research; and, when someone also carries out a service to the academic community in a higher post like head of department, dean or vice-rector, they can forget their research for the whole time they're in management. It's my belief that it is research which suffers the worst consequences as a result of everything I've mentioned. (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

These obligations have generated a controversy which the university authorities need to face and which would involve, for example, specialization in university staff profiles and assigning duties according to specialization. Access to posts should also take these roles into account, and if for example the candidate opted preferentially for teaching, require their participation – along with the associated

publications – in teaching innovation projects.

The main model of an academic career these days is of a monolithic nature: all academics are supposed to do everything (be a teacher, a researcher and, eventually, a manager) to the same extent as everyone else, without accepting varying roles according to each person's interests, abilities and results. Such a system is by definition inefficient and constantly generates dissatisfaction, since it's not within everyone's capacities to be simultaneously an excellent teacher, researcher and eventually, manager. (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

If the teaching and research areas are fairly clearly delimited, management by contrast includes a wide number of tasks ranging from the management of a project or research group to responsibility for a whole department, faculty or university.

I've been doing management, because it's one of things that has to be done, and because of circumstances I've ended up in managerial positions. Managing the department has taken me on a different career path, because, in a situation as complicated as a department, it means I have to dedicate a very large part of my time to this task. Does that mean that I've stopped doing research? No, no because the lines that I have, the projects that I have are consolidated enough to carry on without my being permanently on top of them. But I have left off teaching quite a lot. (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

Accreditation of teaching staff necessarily involves participation in funded research projects which should generate publications in scientific periodicals whose impact is generally only known amongst members of their respective scientific communities. But there are research fields which have a social utility not restricted to academic peer groups, and which is not recognised as such.

I have always researched human remains and in the forensic world, obviously, and for this reason I've been involved in very diverse and difficult things, relating to what the transition to democracy meant in Spain and with people who disappeared due to state terrorism, etc., etc., people who I have identified, and I've had to intervene, but this was not a Ministry of Science and Education project or anything of the sort. (Man3, EESS&T, UNC).

The situation this academic describes, which could also extend to the social sciences and the humanities, throws into relief university laws and policies which attempt to adapt Spanish universities increasingly to international quality standards, based above all on experimental sciences and engineering parameters.

5.2.4 Processes of access, maintenance, promotion and remuneration of teaching staff

The Spanish university system has been accused of endemic cronyism and nepotism. Contrary to the universities of Northern Europe and countries of Anglo-

Saxon influence, it does not willingly accept those who leave and after professional experience in other fields become interested in academic work – or even those not trained under the wing of people settled in the departments, who have the last word when posts are being allocated.

The various laws enacted to regulate work in the university since the decade of the 80s (LRU, 1983, LOU, 2002, LOU, 2007), have attempted to introduce legal mechanisms which *guarantee* that those who enter the university are the best trained and not those who are closest to the professor, the departmental head or other power-holders. However, each new system finds its ways of maintaining the status quo, and it is still difficult to work in a Spanish university without having to jockey for position.

But money isn't the problem; the real problem of the university is political. The problems are about organization and power. (Man4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

The current situation regarding what is required of university teaching staff for their evaluation and authorization does not derive solely from the Bologna plan or the creation of the EHEA. The foundations of this situation were laid by the University Reform Law (LRU) of 1983 and the subsequent enactment of the Law for the Promotion and General Coordination of Scientific and Technical Research¹⁰. As a direct result of this, university teaching staff selection and promotion systems focus increasingly on scientific production, demonstrated by publication of ISI articles¹¹ linked to RTD projects. At the moment most universities do not hire full-time teaching staff unless they are PhD graduates and have been evaluated by the ANECA¹² or the evaluating agencies of each Autonomous Regions. However, in university teaching staff¹³ accreditation and assessment¹⁴ criteria hitherto published, the track record, activity and experience in teaching of each candidate are always taken into account.

5.3 Changes in university teaching practices

5.3.1 Learning through experience (absence of initial training)

Until not very long ago it seemed unthinkable to propose that university teachers needed some kind of training to carry out their teaching tasks. In the decades of the 1970s and 80s it was usual to find students who were finishing their first degree in June and going back into the classrooms as teachers in September. The issue of training in the area of research seemed much clearer because of the need to write the doctoral thesis, but teaching came to be understood as something inevitable which may or may not be liked.

¹⁰ Law 13/1986, 14th April 1986.

¹¹ Productions included in the databases of the Institute for Scientific Information.

¹² The *Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación* - National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation - is the government body responsible for quality control in Spanish universities.

¹³ For teachers hired with PhD, teachers in private universities and lecturers with PhD.

¹⁴ For lecturers and university professors (Royal Decree 774/2002, 26th July, BOE no 188, 7th August 2002, Royal Decree 1312/2007, 5th October, BOE no 240, 6th October 2007)

I'm self-taught, completely self-taught. I began in the university and I stayed in the university, because the research they were doing in the group I joined appealed to me, and teaching was something incidental at that time and, suddenly, when I came here, I find that teaching isn't incidental any more, it's 120 percent of my work. But I've never received any type of formal training which would enable me to take on all this teaching. (...) the university gives training courses for the staff, but they're courses that are too general, or not specific enough, not well enough defined. (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

When I started giving classes in Economic History, which I didn't have much idea about, Kucinski's book was especially helpful to me. It was the only book about this topic I could find here in Burgos. The author was more anarchist than Marxist, it was the only thing I could find. If I hadn't had that resource I would have had a really hard time since it wasn't my speciality. Later they sent me the book that I had studied with in the University of the Basque Country. (Man4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

The reigning pedagogical model in the university, despite *Bologna*, is clearly transmissive and teacher-centred. This, which in its time eased the entry of many novice teachers into university teaching, has also fossilised ways of thinking about how people in the university teach and learn. Now the situation is changing, with the offering of continuous training courses for teaching professionals. Academics do not see all kinds of training as equally useful however.

For a few years now there have been courses in the ICE; I've been to some and they've been useful to me, especially the ones about ICT and things like that. But I always had the impression they were making a lot of noise about it and that they weren't too specific. At least for me they weren't all useful... (Woman3, EESS&T, UH).

What seems clear is that the students' needs have changed, along with the technical resources available, as well as it being necessary to update teaching skills.

5.3.2 Changes in the students

One area where we have seen dramatic change is in the students. As we have remarked, when the teaching staff in this study came into the universities, Spain was in the midst of the transition to democracy. In those days, getting a university degree was seen as a great achievement by the generations that up to then had been excluded from the university. Also, at a time of changes in the productive system, society valued the training that universities provided.

When I was a student, the university teachers, especially the professors, were something inaccessible. Luckily this has been gradually democratized, and now all the teaching staff, or at least in this university, which is the one I know, and some others here in Spain, are much more accessible to the students. I think that this is a plus. (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

But in the 90s Spanish society underwent a profound change. Not only was the LOGSE (1990)¹⁵ approved, extending basic education to the age of 16, but also the population's access to the university increased more than in any other country in Europe (Rahona, 2008).

This, combined with the impact of globalization and widening environments and influences in young people's socialization (Sancho, 1998) has transformed our ways of being in the world, our expectations and our scales of values.

Beyond whatever explanation you adopt it seems doubtless that the process of massification and democratization has produced a change in the profile of the students. Being born in democratic Spain, in a period in which some aspects of a welfare state have appeared and, especially, having lived through a series of social changes (increased permissiveness and disposable income), economic changes (periods of economic boom with the prospect of full employment), and being part of the 'me' culture promoted by the electronic media means that, inevitably, today's students are "different" to their elders. (Man1, CCSS&HH, UH).

This situation of change in society, values and expectations for the future has transformed the way students approach their university studies. All of which raises a series of questions which teachers respond to with varying observations.

Could it be that now students arrive in the university thinking that their studies are merely a formality they have to go through to get a degree? Could this have something to do with the fact that society still does not value education – hence the constantly growing group of the underpaid in "Macjobs" and hence the fact that our recent graduates are the worst paid amongst their peers in the countries around us – and that to get a job your personal relationships and support and loyalty networks are still the most important thing?

What's happening is that values have changed and sometimes amongst the teachers who are a bit older we say: "Yes, but the thing is that now the students don't think like us, we were people who believed in the value of struggle". OK, what I'm talking about is, when we were at university and we were younger, we were weighed down with all kinds of complexes, from our previous history, because we came from a dictatorship. Because the standard of teaching in primary and secondary education was appalling. (Man3, EESS&T, UNC).

Could it be that the university does not realize – and the students suspect this – that we live in a post-Fordist, speculative capitalist society where the *bad guys* – those who fly the flag of short-term profits - are still on the winning side? Could it be that the politics of desire and the cultural pedagogies with which students have been brought up make them look at the world, the university and themselves in a different way to their teachers? Could it be that we are still teaching neutral

¹⁵ *Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*, Education Act of 1990.

formulae and content shorn of social values without considering their consequences in people's lives?

Before, I believe that people were more independent, more autonomous. And that students are getting less and less autonomous, have less critical capacity, and are reluctant to take decisions. I think that this is detrimental to them. And to us. Some more than others. We have contributed to this. And this isn't good in terms of the future. Protecting them, giving them things all sewn up. People need to make themselves. They need to be guided, but they need to make themselves. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

5.3.3 Changes in relations

Another of the changes which universities are facing and which affects the teaching staff has to do with accountability, which has led to the introduction of programme contracts with the autonomous governments, this in turn prompting the universities to propose to their groups, particularly the departments and faculties that they conform to this regulatory framework for academic relations. This way of managing academic relations has also permeated as far as the teaching staff. Although each university has adopted different terminology (teaching plan, personal plan for professional development, and so on), and its effective use as a medium of supervision has not yet been finalized, it exists already amongst the teaching staff and they have to comply with it, without knowing either its use or the practical effect which it will have.

This is definitely a problem that we have, the bureaucracy, the paperwork to fill in. But in my opinion it's good; this type of programme contract is good not only on the level of the university and the Community¹⁶, or the department and its university, but also on an individual level. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

But like other requirements, accountability has been introduced without a reciprocal commitment; without those who govern the universities – unlike in other leading international universities – providing the resources to enable the teaching staff to fulfil their new commitments.

Also, accountability has to be introduced at a moment when the regulations – for example concerning European doctorates and masters' degrees – call for a great deal of administrative input from the teachers, not to mention flexibility, since constant change mean that often their work is not unlike the labours of Sisyphus.

If now for example we look at what the PhD was, that's where I get lost. We've constantly been changing and now we've got the Official Master, but we're getting lost, it's not that we haven't been trained, it's that everything has been done in fits and starts, and there I would definitely argue in favour of the ability we've had, in general, to adapt

¹⁶ The autonomous regional government (Autonomous Community).

ourselves constantly. In that sense I think that we're really well directed and well trained. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

It is fitting that public institutions should be accountable, but they should at the same time provide the conditions by which academic and administrative staff can fulfil their part. This appears far from the reality of the universities today, where pressure is imposed without providing the necessary resources of time, materials and personnel to carry out the required changes.

5.3.4 The new technologies

The explosion of information due to the unceasing developments in information and communication technology which ease its production, access and reproduction presents a major challenge to education systems. When information was a scarce commodity available only to the select few, transmitting, memorizing and repeating it were seen as important. However, in a period of information overload, when access to information is child's play, it loses its value like anything that exists in abundance. Retaining it becomes unimportant since we can recover it whenever we want using any of the myriad media available. Also information now, in addition to changing and becoming devalued, is under suspicion because we can access different versions and explanations of the same phenomena. Hence the challenge now is not so much to have students pass an exam where they repeat or apply a handful of definitions or formulae that they can forget as soon as they leave the exam room, but to help them develop the ability to find and contrast varying information sources in order to explore and understand issues in the different scientific disciplines. And this is difficult to achieve if stress is placed on efficacy of transmission rather than ensuring understanding.

At the beginning, of course, we had a lot of classrooms, a lot of class hours and the only thing we had was a piece of chalk. A piece of chalk and a library. Now, with the passing of the years, we've got computers, we've got Power Point, we've got virtual blackboards, we've got ICT in the classrooms, we've got internet bibliography, we've got teleteaching, we've got a load of advantages and a load of information that sometimes you have to be selective of because it can overwhelm you. My work also consists in not giving everything predigested, but getting rid of a lot of the chaff that's out there, in a word, my work is guiding people. This involves me in an enormous task, which is to try to digest it all, because keeping up to speed with all this enormous quantity of information which comes our way... Before it was easier and now it's more fun. (Man4, CCSS&HH, UNC)

In recent years the majority of Spanish universities have created virtual campuses based on various ICT systems. Most of the teaching staff uses these resources as storehouses and as a means of pyramidal communication with their students (Gewerc, 2008).

Before I gave lectures in which I explained the theoretical framework and the students took notes. These days I prepare classes using Power

Point, slides and so on. I try to make my presentations more illustrative and enjoyable, but I'm beginning to think twice about this. I'm thinking twice about it because I'm spending a lot of time preparing and I don't see what for, since these days the students don't even take notes, we give it to them all sewn up and we end up working harder ourselves and to my understanding what the university should foster above all is personal work. (Man4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

This is one use of ICT which in the end creates dissatisfaction, because apart from not changing the role of the educators - since they are still the persons who in preparing the materials learn most - it leaves the students in an even more passive role, as they do not even have to write down the information imparted.

5.3.5 Educational innovation

The LRU established the award of teaching bonuses through university teacher evaluation. In practice, the universities used to award bonuses automatically every five years. But since the application of the LOU teaching quality evaluation has changed. In some universities teaching staff have to submit a report on their work, providing evidence for their arguments (including for example student opinion surveys), a report from the head of studies, an Academic Commission evaluation and global assessment summary (direct observation of teachers in the classroom and a new model of student survey are currently being evaluated) (University of Barcelona, 2007). The reasoning behind this process is that it is geared not just to assigning teaching bonuses, but to detecting "what needs to be improved, and to take the necessary training steps." (Ibid, 13).

In my opinion it's good to have changes. I think it's important, and I think it's important that there should be changes in teachers' way of thinking, in the sense of understanding what to give to the student at any given moment. (...) So at the moment what's difficult is knowing how to limit our knowledge, the information that you have to give to the students, knowing what's essential to the education that you want to give them. This is something that will be difficult for teachers who've been teaching for a long time to change; to make the change from wanting to explain everything to saying, "OK, this is what we have to do, and the rest you'll learn when you need to." In my view this is a big change in approach. And it's something that I think will be pretty difficult. (Woman3, EESS&T, UH).

This need for a change of mentality is connected once again with changes in the students and their needs. What experiences like continuous assessment and new teaching approaches imply is that it is now no longer possible to conceive university education as the transmission of one generation's total knowledge to another; since the teacher, the student, the academic structure and knowledge itself have all changed.

5.4 Changes in personal life.

The conditions of teaching, research and management tasks in the university are not planned for compatibility with family responsibilities.

Yes, that's something I've always kept up (the family). I've always been there for them. At lunchtime I call, I check on them. I've been lucky too because my kids have been with my mother. That took a lot of the work off my shoulders. But I keep an eye on them. Even though I'm not there. Now my kids are older. My son is 20 and my daughter 14. But when they're little, obviously, that's hours and hours of work and not being able to rest or have any time for yourself. Because you know that when you leave here, here you have to give yourself 100% and at home you have to give yourself 100% too. But it's work that you have to do. But, I believe that as women we have that. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

My family stayed in León and I didn't get it back. Later here I (had to) create another family; and I say that because it's associated, your personal life is linked to all that, to that intimate side of your life and the professional side as well. (Man6, CCSS&HH, UH).

A double burden that, despite social changes, has not been eased through working conditions which might make it possible to find a balance. This affects women above all, but also some men.

5.4.1 Reconciling work and personal life

The university – and Spanish society as a whole – has not taken the compatibility of work and personal life as one of its priorities. In the case of the women in this study, this dilemma becomes a limitation, either because they have had to postpone decisions about academic promotion, or because they have had to slow down their careers in comparison with their male colleagues.

(The condition of being a woman has been) fundamental, fundamental, constantly. What happens is that it's true – because I'm aware that my position in the university has a lot to do with the fact that I'm a woman and with the social roles that are assigned to us... (...) – that the social structure I'm surrounded by is not geared towards me combining my being a mother with my professional career. (Woman1, CCSS&HH, UH).

The condition or social position which being a woman implies is a visible – and hidden – determinant of their academic careers. Since Wenneras and Wold's (1997) study proved that women have to be more highly qualified than men to obtain the same academic posts, research on the situation of women in the university has corroborated that change has affected this area only minimally.

I remember those days... I took the exams already pregnant one month with my son. It was impossible to get pregnant with the workload we

had... It was impossible. But in contrast from 87 onwards I was more relaxed. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

Writing my thesis took three years of my life. I was married but I didn't have kids, so I did not have any responsibility for my kids, which meant that I could devote myself entirely to it, every day of the week and during the holidays too. (Man4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

But, of course, we're the generation where sharing the domestic work still wasn't the norm, and then also the upbringing we had as I've already told you, that we think the role of the mother is really important and that means, sometimes, because you haven't been at home at a certain time you think that you haven't looked after them and there are situations when you tend to overprotect them; in other words, I think we've lived in permanent conflict. Apart from that mentally the men have had more chance to develop their careers. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

All of this is due to the lack of effective policies to make university work compatible with personal life choices.

5.5 Changes in research: "academic capitalism"¹⁷

A new issue which becomes evident in our research subjects' life histories is profoundly related to one of the contextual changes which has taken place – above all – since 1986, when the Law for the Promotion and General Coordination of Scientific and Technical Research was approved. This law marked out research as an essential element of academic careers, as well as a core component in assessment of both academics and the universities themselves.

In recent years the various Autonomous Communities¹⁸ have evolved different policies to encourage research. One of these has been special consideration as consolidated or quality research groups for those whose track record has gained national and international recognition. This means that such groups can have access to extra funding and be better placed in competitions for funding.

We're not a consolidated research group. In this actual research group there are now two professors, two lecturers and the rest are people in training, there are PhDs who are not yet consolidated and the rest people in training. I still don't think that we're in a stable position from the research point of view. We're in a position in which we have too many lines open. We don't have a consolidated line which we say "This is ours, and we devote ourselves exclusively to this." (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

Another issue is involvement in bureaucratic processes which, in most cases, do not ease research development and the management of the human and material

¹⁷ Slaughter and Rhodes (2004)

¹⁸ Spanish regional governments with varying negrees of autonomy from central government .

resources needed to carry it out.

But this system has made life difficult for me, it's been inconvenient for me for various reasons, the first because of the incredible amount of paperwork it generates and I'm kind of an enemy of this type of bureaucracy. I really hate having to go through this system for days. I mean I think it's more difficult to do than the research itself. (Man6, CCSS&HH, UH).

5.5.1 Knowledge as academic and business capital

The triple work profile of Spanish academics (educator, researcher, manager) generates not a few personal and institutional conflicts (Sancho, 2001). In the experience of some academics the changes introduced in the accreditation of teaching staff by the recent LOUs (2001, 2007)¹⁹ and the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)²⁰ represent, as we have remarked, an added difficulty when consolidating a research group.

Specially in such a changeable legal situation, because we've got the LOU, the modification of the LOU, the appearance of Bologna, what that's going to bring in its wake, what it's bringing, is a load of uncertainty and a load of problems from the teaching point of view. Because here they say, we've changed everything along the lines laid down by Bologna. But changing everything means new subjects and it means starting from scratch and it means an extra effort for people who are only valued for their research, they're not valued for their teaching. So all of this means we're still in a relatively unstable position, so to get to the position I was in the Polytechnic group when I left there could easily take me another ten years, or fifteen. (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

The successive national RTD programmes, apart from being backed with scant resources and modelled on the *hard* sciences and technologies, are managed through a peer evaluation system that often creates bad feeling and suspicion amongst those whose projects are not selected. One small way to get around this obstacle is to apply for funds from the Autonomous Communities (since European-funded projects are even further from the reach of the social sciences and humanities).

I apply for funding here occasionally from the Xunta of Galicia²¹ for specific projects related to the Galician language. For example, to study the lexicon of Galician in Zamora they gave me around a million, a million and a half²² which gives you enough for travel, for expenses, and for hiring an assistant (...) There are things which put you off, for example, asking for nothing from the Spanish ministry (now I'm

¹⁹ BOE 307, 24th December 2001 and BOE 89, 13th April 2007 respectively.

²⁰ <http://www.eees.es/>

²¹ Autonomous Government.

²² Pesetas

working on a project with four Portuguese universities and there they take things seriously). But that doesn't get me down, I keep working because I think that although you don't have many resources, if you have the will and you enjoy the research you can keep doing it. (Man5, CCSS&HH, UNC).

5.5.2. The birth and impact of the evaluation agencies

In 1989, as a consequence of the application of the LRU and following the example of most other industrialized countries, the *Comisión Nacional de Evaluación de la Actividad Investigadora (CNEAI)*²³ was set up under the Ministry of Education and Science in order to evaluate and grant incentives to university professionals' scientific research, and to improve the latter's national and international presence.

From the moment of its creation the meaning and importance given to the fulfilment of *tramos*²⁴ have been very different in the experimental sciences and technologies from the social sciences and humanities. If in a general sense this initiative represents an important advance in promoting the international presence of Spanish research, (Jiménez-Contreras, Moya-Anegón, Delgado, 2003), the areas of the experimental sciences and the technologies have found this type of practice much more congenial and this, in the long term, has not only affected researchers individually (salary increases, participation in commissions, etc), but has also become an index of standards of institutional excellence.

However one of the fiercest controversies revolves around the way in which the generalizing sciences of the experimental and technological type (which set the standards) are valued, as opposed to the idiosyncratic and singular sciences of a social and human character, which suffer the consequences of homogenization in standards.

The third time that I applied I had in my full CV the number of publications, consultations to the Frisian Academy, consultations to the European Language Council, reports to the Mercator Education Programme of the EU, international projects, publications in books, a huge amount of stuff... I had four times more than the two previous six-year periods put together. I was totally sure that it would work and I was really surprised when they turned me down. I asked for an explanation but they didn't give me one. (Man5, CCSS&HH, UNC).

Although the CNAEI itself has clarified research evaluation criteria in successive decrees, it seems that in the area of the social sciences and humanities they are more difficult to apply.

Apart from research, the articles of LRU of 1983 also formalized the need to introduce some form of evaluation of teaching activities and to give an incentive to this field. Later, the Royal Decree on Retribution of 1989 regulated the periods

²³ National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activities, <http://wwwn.mec.es/univ/jsp/plantilla.jsp?id=501>

²⁴ Awards granted on positive six-yearly evaluation of high level research dissemination.

and the form of evaluation, as well as the remuneration that was to result from a positive evaluation. In addition, it defined students and university reports as the main sources for evaluation (Tejedor, 2008). However, some academics declare themselves sceptical on the role student surveys play in these evaluations, as much because of the questions asked as of the value ascribed to the opinions expressed.

The student surveys we've done have been terrible. The standard of the students is so low that you have to tell them not to talk in class, not to eat in class, not to make a noise... And then we're supposed to rely on their judgment in the surveys? For me they're no use at all, these surveys. They're useless and I don't believe they're representative. And apart from that, I don't think there's any group of professionals whose work is valued according to the opinions of their clients. (Woman3, EESS&T, UH).

5.5.3. The penalization of the social sciences and humanities

Under the guidelines laid down in 1986 and developed further in successive Research Guidelines Programmes, research practice is judged in the light of the typical procedures of the experimental sciences. In the social sciences – as in the humanities – research is normally more an individual or small group practice, and lacking an organized body or specific location – the laboratory – as in the experimental sciences.

The lack of criteria for appropriately organizing social science research promotion and assessment has generated (and continues to generate) a situation of discomfort, if not injustice.

Now I'm going to talk about something which is a cause of constant complaint and worry on the part of those of us who do research in the field of the human sciences. For more and more things, and this includes the ANECA, evaluation criteria proper to the positive sciences are being applied to the humanities. It's clear that the nature, the aims and especially the methodology of the human sciences are very different from those of the natural sciences. Also the means of circulation and distribution of knowledge are different and, especially, the way of working is radically different. However, in each of these categories we're judged as if instead of historians or philologists we were chemists or doctors. (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

This situation is even clearer when judging the importance of a book or monograph, habitual media for publishing research-derived knowledge in the social sciences and humanities. Although the importance of forming centres or consolidated research groups in these areas is constantly spreading, there are fields and topics still destined to be more individual and solitary. And this provokes a new imbalance when research is evaluated and the prospect of gaining access to funding arises.

In the same way, it's not right that an article written by several

researchers should be valued equally as one written by a single author. Once again, the sciences model is being applied to the humanities. Continuing with the medical example, an article signed by five or six people conforms to work in the laboratory or the clinic by a medical team where, in the end, everybody signs. On the other hand, in the humanities we work more often alone, also again because of the very nature of these disciplines, and articles are rarely signed by more than two people, normally only one author. (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

Although the issue of evaluation criteria for research in the humanities has been considered in recent reports (FECYT, 2007), and the CNEAI has published specific criteria for evaluating and awarding six-year research bonuses in this field, the issue is still very far from being resolved (FECYT, 2006).

One aspect of the question which the authorities who evaluate and promote research should take into account is the difference in the nature, objectives and purposes of studies in the humanities.

This uniformity in evaluating and judging the products of research in the positive sciences and the human sciences, when it should be different because of the different nature and the distinct scientific demands of each, provokes a false social perception of productivity in the humanities. Not only that, in my view, this situation created by those responsible for scientific policy, as much in the autonomous administrations as in central government, is either intended to gradually wipe out research in the human sciences, or implies a lack of consideration and respect towards the activities and contributions to knowledge of professionals in the humanities. (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

5.5.4. The pressure of evaluation

As we have remarked, the evaluation of research activities is linked to the LRU of 1983 and was further developed in the Royal Decree on the Retribution of University Teaching Staff, 28th August 1989. Since then research evaluation has come under state tutelage and been entrusted to the CNEAI, set up by ministerial order on 2nd December 1994 (revoked on 2nd December 1994 and in turn modified in 2008). The aim of this commission is to promote the quality (especially in its international impact) of research produced in Spanish universities, and the recognition of the teaching staff who carry it out. But this objective, commendable in its intentions, has created an illusion of quality, in that it is publication which is valued, but not the application of research.

Perhaps, and this is something important I want to tell you, what it means from my point of view and in the Spanish universities, and everywhere, is a certain deception, a kind of trick, in what this show of the merits of research projects is, because they never have any real results, and are never applied. They're a theoretical thing which an

academic has produced, forced by the environment in which he lives, because he has to do projects. If you're living in the university and you don't have a project it looks like you're doing nothing. What I see is that there are teachers who make up projects, although they're no use to anybody, because you have to look like you've got projects. Then when after a few years you ask for results, there aren't any. The result was that it was published in a periodical that nobody knows about, a periodical that's not widely read, and there's been a kind of cheat, when this task carried out even with a lot of effort, a lot of time invested in it, a lot of economic resources, has no impact on society, which is constantly watching us. (Man3, EESS&T, UNC).

From this tendency towards the complication, towards the complexity of things, there came up a pressure I'd say around ten years ago, easily, which was that they were constantly asking us for our CV. I can't understand how I work in an enterprise where the enterprise itself, the structures of the university itself, has had to ask me so many times who I am. (...) Every now and again, yet again, you have to send your CV because there's another university structure, I'm talking about the rectorate level, but this time it takes another different form, and this bores people and tires them out. (Man3, EESS&T, UNC).

Thus embarking on research is not without its contradictions and conflicts. But although the criteria – what is required for positive evaluation – for each field of knowledge have been explicit from the outset, a sizeable sector of the teaching staff has for various reasons not put itself forward for evaluation.

I think that the six-year bonuses marked a before and an after, injustices were committed, I myself told you that I don't have my first six-year bonus and I think that's when you work most. Injustices were committed, but there are a lot of people who don't care, a lot of people devote themselves to their classes and that's it, but they're not the people who take part in research, or in management or anything. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

The remuneration is not sufficient, however. It may be that the symbolic and effective value of 'having six-year bonuses' is more so. Especially when they are linked, in the new regulations on doctorates and masters' degrees, to the chance to direct theses or take part in evaluation commissions. But, despite this, there seems to be a sector that considers it an added effort not worth making. Perhaps because they have always considered themselves educators or managers. Perhaps because they are passing through a field of study in which *importance* and *impact* requires publishing in other languages and undergoing evaluation by their peers – something they are not accustomed to.

The six-year bonuses – or having them – have become an indicator adopted by universities and national agencies to assess – and recognise – the activities of academics and research groups. And amongst the academics they are a benchmark.

What will happen with the six-year bonuses – because we all know that the six-year bonuses mean you exist or you don't. Those of us who have six-year bonuses consider that we form part of the scientific community and we look down on those who don't have them. Let's not fool ourselves, we're élitist, whether we accept that or not. We move around in the world of research, and I associate with a lot of really advanced people, but we're really élitist from that point of view and even more so in the [hard] sciences. And especially we consider the people with six-year bonuses to be part of the system, and those who don't have them have are left out in the cold. Because of the prestige, everyone's clear about that. The prestige means you exist or you don't. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

But in reality not all academics prioritize and value this recognition in their choice of career orientation. However there is no doubt that evaluation of the six-year bonuses has meant a change for Spanish university teaching staff.

Obviously, what you can't do is make those of us who do research and management have the same teaching workload as the rest of the department. Because there are people here who spend their time twiddling their thumbs. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

A change which if it has had the positive effects we've mentioned, has also left unaddressed new differences – regarding professional dedication – that have arisen amongst the teaching staff.

5.6 Changes in the perception of the meaning of higher education

From the perspective of the élite university, the institution and those who worked in it were considered a reference point which conferred prestige and social status. But in the mass university, although it fulfils an unquestionable social function – that of permitting access to social groups who had hitherto been excluded – there has been an inflation of degree-holders who have not always found their niche in a constantly changing marketplace, within capitalist practices which while boasting that they value knowledge do not reward it financially, nor give it the same recognition as in the rest of the European Union.

This means that society has begun to consider that one thing is the qualification that the university offers and another very different thing is the effect which this qualification will have on incorporation into the workplace. Thus while statistics show that, even in times of crisis, having a university degree is a guarantee of continuity in and access to work, they also show the low salaries associated with a degree and, above all, the increase in the number of those who work in jobs which have little or nothing to do with their studies. All these factors mean that the value society associates with and attributes to the university have changed.

I'd say that people's perceptions of the university have changed from top to bottom. The perception which people have outside is that we

don't do much work; we get paid a lot and so on... People think that their kids have to go to university to get a degree so then they can find work, which maybe doesn't have anything to do with their degree... I think that it's really held in poor esteem... but I think that the criticisms that are sometimes made are a great help... for example, they help us to think of the university as a place where resources are still really being created, where something is still really being done for the human capital of this country, of this society, but at the same time some of them are true of Spanish universities, which are dysfunctional for the 21st century. One of the things that annoys me most is that typical phrase the neighbours say: "You already on holiday?" (Woman1, CCSS&HH, UH).

The proliferation of public and private universities in the last 20 years, the fall in the birth-rate and a certain disengagement from the university amongst young people have all meant a significant drop in student numbers on many degree courses. This has led all universities to promote and publicise themselves in order to capture the interest of the young, in a context where supply exceeds demand.

We haven't noticed it yet, because in industrial sciences, which are what our department teaches, this problem hasn't appeared yet. But I've got colleagues in IT or telecommunications who've had a dramatic fall in student numbers and we live in a community where the competition is really fierce. There are six public and four private universities (in the Community of Madrid). (Man1, EESS&T, UNC).

And maybe what used to be said about the university having to be an institution with social weight isn't true any more. The university has to be a place where competent professionals are trained, and all that about the level of culture, that has to be left for some other time... Or maybe it has to disappear, I don't know. (Woman3, EESS&T, UH).

5.6.1 The meaning of the public in the university

In the last 30 years the university has seen its purpose or its ultimate social meaning transformed: from being a cultural reference point for a country, it has become a place where professional specialists are trained. This is on the one hand a gain for the disciplines and fields of knowledge, but above all a loss in the sense of human and cultural values. And if the University of 30 years ago could be branded as arbitrary and antidemocratic, on the other hand at least it played this referential role.

At least I had the feeling that the university was the centre of the country's culture at every level, and so the members of the university were people who had to be present at the country's cultural summit. This has definitely been lost. I'm not talking about scientific and professional skills, that's another story, but the sense of culture... And maybe that's the way it should be, I don't know. The cultural base is lacking, a basic level of knowledge. Obviously, whoever devotes

themselves to molecular biology has skills that those of us who trained up fifteen years ago didn't have, because we didn't have the same knowledge or the same chance to move round the world. But, on the other hand, I think that this in the long term will create really one-dimensional professionals, and I don't think that the university should have forgotten this. But sometimes you can't take on everything. (Woman3, EESS&T, UH).

One of the problems that I have with the current concept of the university is the excessively entrepreneurial character that the public university has increasingly acquired (you can understand if the private ones are like that). The university, the state are investing in their own future and in the development of research, which is, in itself, one of the principal indicators of a country's development. In which case, independently of the profits derived from the number of students enrolled, if the state is putting its money on the presence of research in the public universities, it can't asphyxiate or, even, dispense with those qualifications whose objective is basic research, as much in the area of the positive sciences as in the human sciences. (Woman4, CCSS&HH, UNC).

I think that it has lost part of its public character. And I think it's a shame. But I don't know... Everything is more like management... Of course you have to have some kind of control, but I believe that the public university has to have some public principles according to which nothing here is yours. You're just passing through. And there are a lot of people who think that the university is theirs. And it's not like that. You're a public employee, and today you're here and tomorrow you'll be there. And you won't be here and it's not a problem. There are people who think that the university can't live without them. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

5.6.2 Mission: between culture and specialization

What we have explained above is also reflected in the contradiction between the purposes which the university claims to pursue, especially in the achievement of academic excellence, and the resources put in place to achieve and evaluate these.

How do we know when we achieve excellence? Well that's going to depend on the quality that our graduates leave with. And if they're capable of solving the problems that they have to face, which are going to get bigger. And actually I think there's a lot of insincerity at the moment. Quality is a really big word. To measure quality you have to use parameters which allow you to measure it. And what I'm seeing is that very often this is reduced to an administrative procedure. And that isn't quality. That's control. But it's not quality. Quality and excellence mean showing that you're excellent. And how do you show that? Your graduates, your product for society is your graduates, occupying positions at work, solving the problems they've been trained to solve.

This means that this is the task you have to do. And I don't believe that, at the moment, the parameters have been developed, or the indicators that measure exactly whether this is true or false. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

All of which opens the door to the need for university policies to address how their accountability processes make explicit, not in rhetorical terms but in reality, the relation between education and the workplace. Those policies which in the debate around the Bologna agreement have been denounced as subjecting the universities to the interests and agendas of business and the market, take on another meaning when we consider that one of the missions of the university is to educate students under optimum conditions to develop attitudes and acquire knowledge that will allow them to contribute to society in its various productive fields.

I know exactly what I think the mission of the university is. To educate the best possible professionals. In my opinion this is the university's mission. As much from the personal point of view as the professional. (Woman5, EESS&T, UH).

(...) the university needs to recover its fundamental role, both in research and in leadership, which it's losing. The university is trailing behind other institutions a bit. I think that the university should be what it always has been. INFLUENTIAL THINKING, and this is what I think is being forgotten. (Woman2, CCSS&HH, UH).

Finally, not to lose sight of the fact that the purpose of the university is not only to promote science and technology, but also that

we have to educate people with a critical spirit: yes, I think that the most important thing that a person has is their ability to discern, to criticise and to contribute to society. To have the desire to learn new knowledge and (I don't consider that) this is some bureaucratic procedure that I have to fulfil. (Woman6, EESS&T, UH).

6. Conclusions

No one doubts that Spanish universities are immersed in a process of change, and how this affects academics, and how they respond, is the central theme of this study. But the diagnosis and the prognosis differ.

From the contributions of the academics who have participate in this research, from their reflections, observations and experiences the following considerations can be derived, which we have arranged in an order based on the questions posed in a well-known painting by Gauguin, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Where we come from

The hiring of new teaching staff in the 80s and 90s, due to the urgency of student demand and the creation of new universities, did not always select those who had the commitment and the willingness, education and capacity for learning of individuals who dedicate themselves to academic work.

The six-yearly research evaluations have meant a change for the teaching staff of Spanish universities. A change which although it may have had the positive effects we have noted, also has left unresolved new differences – regarding professional dedication – which have arisen among teaching staff.

Where we are

It is necessary to create the resources which will allow us to make the demands of teaching, research and management compatible, demands to which academics respond with generosity and responsibility, although without the means, support and recognition to meet them adequately.

Regarding the changes in the situation of women in Spanish universities, we can say that the university is going through a transition in which we need to promote changes in ways of thinking in order to normalize both ways of seeing women and relationships involving them.

Although approaching academic career mobility by means of accreditation commissions does not solve the problem of endogamy, it alleviates it partially. Now at least it is possible to find out what is required to accede to the post of lecturer or professor. This is a public matter set out in a ministerial directive. It does not depend – so much – on who sits on the commissions, but on the merits of each candidate.

One change which has gradually permeated the universities is the evaluation of teaching innovation. Acknowledging this as a primary criterion for academic promotion enhances the importance of bringing attention to bear on improving the pedagogic relationship in the university.

Accountability has been introduced without a reciprocal commitment. Those who govern Spanish universities, unlike in other leading international universities, have not offered teaching staff the resources which would enable them fulfil these new obligations.

Where we are going

The EHEA calls for a more highly educated teaching profession and raises a reasonable doubt over what the response of the students will be when they have to manage their own study time, conforming to the principles of learner autonomy. Apart from the need for resources to implant this new approach.

One of the purposes of what has become known as the 'Bologna method' is to progress towards more student-centred education, in the sense that students

should be authentically self-directing and responsible for the process and results of their learning, while the teacher should be the director who attempts to draw the best from each actor on the educational stage. Which means that excellence in education is linked to stressing that each student should ask their own questions and find their own answers, by means of stimulating learning experiences, experiments, critical reasoning, comparing and contrasting different viewpoints and above all finding meaning in each activity.

The LOU in its 2001 and 2007 versions asserts the need to “involve the universities in responding to the demands of society” (LOU, 2007: 16242). The main issue to address here is who decides what society’s demands actually are, who has the power and the capacity to lay down priorities, and who is in a position to assess what are the most appropriate responses and for whom.

The University of today is too large and “*some processes depend on a lot of people*”. Before, procedures were shorter and simpler; now there is an excess of form-filling and commissions, but also the “*fear of taking decisions*” and a lack of authority: “*hardly anyone has the authority to make a decision*”.

Successive laws on the universities have attempted to convert them into entrepreneurial systems which should continually produce more and better results and, often, these changes have meant a heavier administrative load for teachers, as well as having to demonstrate progress in their CV. In the future the university will base itself less around isolated disciplines and orient itself more towards emerging, socially situated problems and issues, and with a greater sense of social, political and cultural accountability. Basing itself more on what Gibbons *et al.* (1994) have called Mode 2 knowledge production.

What will be the university model that emerges from the reforms linked to the fulfilment of the Bologna agreement’s objectives? Will we move definitively from a patrimonialist to an economicist institution as its detractors have claimed? Will procuring and managing resources become the main priority for the organs of governance and teaching staff?

Coda: on life stories

Perhaps one of the main contributions of the life-histories approach is that it offers us not only knowledge derived from the experiences narrated by our research subjects, but also that it allows them on occasion to discover unexplored terrain for themselves. This process, which involves a good deal of (self-)awareness-raising, can contribute to the empowerment of those who take part. This is a dimension of social research which is often forgotten; especially when subjects’ voices are used as data from which the researchers constructs a narrative which confirms their initial positions.

Looking at these life histories we had the feeling that one problem of today’s universities in Spain is that there is no one by teaching professionals’ side in the midst of the pressures that derive from constant change; no one is there to listen to them; no one is there when they need to share their frustration and their aspirations; no one seems to have realized the importance of making their work

and obligations more bearable and, above all, of contributing to the creation of a new community.

Finally, we think that from this type of studies we could derive, as Hanna (2002) points out, the possibility of changing things, not from top to bottom, but by establishing horizontal bonds and mutual understanding.

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