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### **Between the Global and the Local: The Study of the Academic Profession from a Latin American Perspective**

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### **Between the Global and the Local: The Study of the Academic Profession from a Latin American Perspective**

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#### **Abstract**

The academic profession represents a subject within the realm of higher education that has experienced an outstanding development throughout the world. In Latin America, the interest in studying this field arises in a context of widespread reforms of the higher education system during the 1990s. The presence of research groups from this region, working within a global framework and in close collaboration with research centres from developed countries, can attest to this interest. This work attempts to establish a balance after three decades of unrelenting study of the academic profession to discover local specificities within global trends. It can be asserted that the tension between the global and the local is manifest both in the conceptualization of the subject matter and in the way this fledgling field has been developing in the region. There is a pending challenge, however, in ultimately establishing the case for the Latin American academic profession within the study of this activity at a global scale: not as a previous stage of a predefined global process, but rather as the outcome of the interaction between the global and the local. This is crucial for the construction of a type of knowledge that encompasses the diversity of the academic profession in the world as a constitutive property of its very conceptualization.

**Keywords:** Academic profession, Latin America, higher education reforms, comparative higher education

#### **Introduction**

The academic profession represents a subject within the realm of higher education that has experienced an outstanding development throughout the world. In Latin America, the interest in studying this field arises in a context of widespread reforms of the higher education system during the 1990s. The presence of research groups from this region, working within a global framework and in close collaboration with research centres from developed countries, can attest to this interest. This work attempts to establish a balance after three decades of unrelenting study of the academic profession to discover local specificities within global trends. It can be asserted that the tension between the global and the local is manifest both in the conceptualization of the subject matter and in the way this fledgling field has been developing in the region. There is a pending challenge, however, in ultimately establishing the case for the Latin American academic profession within the study of this activity at a global scale: not as a previous stage of a predefined global process, but rather as the outcome of the interaction between the global and the local. This is crucial for the construction of a type of knowledge that encompasses the diversity of the academic profession in the world as a constitutive property of its very conceptualization.

Academic profession as an object of study has occupied a noteworthy place in international literature in recent decades, in particular due to the input of American and Anglo-Saxon European authors. The research into academia began to gain notoriety in parallel with the growth and establishment of higher education as a field of study. Although significant research on university faculty and their workspaces

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was carried out in the 1970s (Bourdieu, 1975; 1983; 2008; Geertz, 1976), it was not until the 1980s that its specific study began to take shape internationally, accompanied by worldwide reforms in the higher education system that were being carried out at the time. This influenced the work of academics, since they were considered essential for the analysis of the university education system of a given country (Clark, 1983).

As Altbach (2000) points out, the importance of studying academia is evidenced by the fact that faculty and university researchers are at the heart of the university organization, whose essence is knowledge. They are responsible for the creation of knowledge through research, of sharing it through teaching, and spreading it in society through extension and transfer. Moreover, they have been the primary focus in the analysis of recent changes to the higher education system in the context of a massive growth in enrolment and subsequent state policies that regulate the functioning of these systems and their institutions.

In this sense, Becher and Trowler (2001) argued at the beginning of the century that, simultaneously with the emergence of the “evaluating state,” the required research *performativity* had changed the nature of academic work. Other studies have examined the effects of these changes in academic identities (Henkel, 2000; 2005) and the role of these identities in the productivity improvement of the university, scientific, and technological systems. Those studies suggested that most of the changes were foreign to the disciplines, which traditionally defined the character of what pertained to academia. The pioneering work by E. Boyer, P. Altbach, and M. J. Whitelaw (1994) has represented a significant step forward toward the construction of knowledge on the academic profession, which resulted in the creation of an international network that spurred the development of a field of study on academia in many countries. This was based on an international research project, *The International Academic Profession: Portraits of Fourteen Countries*, funded by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which set out to define this profession on the basis of a survey of academics from fourteen countries<sup>1</sup> carried out between 1991 and 1993. This networking effort continued through 2008 and 2009 with a project called Changing Academic Profession (CAP), which looked into the nature and extension of the changes experienced by the academic profession in 19 countries<sup>2</sup>, and has currently undergone a third edition by the Academic Profession in the Knowledge Based Society (APIKS), a project involving the participation of close to 25 countries with the aim of analysing this profession and its relation with society.

### **The Study of the Academic Profession in Latin America**

The interest in the study of the academic profession in Latin America can only be understood by acknowledging two simultaneously intertwined events. First, the deep reforms to higher education in the region during the 1990s, and second, the emergence of a regional field of study on higher education. In fact, during that decade, Latin American higher education systems adopted public policies based on World Bank directives, whose patterns intended to homogenize these systems in conformity with a common global agenda. Within this framework, each country articulated these tendencies according to their own histories and characteristics (Krotsch & Suasnábar, 2004). Overall, the agenda for higher education at the time attempted to act as a response to the processes of massive growth experienced in the region, with policies such as the promotion of growth in the private sector, institutional diversification, and the implementation of quality assurance systems. In fact, the reforms adopted in the 1990s brought about an expansion of the higher education system triggered by the growth in the private sector and institutional differentiation, which resulted in the creation of higher education institutions with functions that differed from the traditional activities carried out by universities as a whole. Thus, influenced by the model of *research universities* found in central countries, some of these institutions embraced research as part of their mission, whereas the newly established universities began to focus their activities on professional and vocational education, with an emphasis on teaching and varying levels of quality. By then, many countries in the region with advanced higher education systems had

<sup>1</sup> The participating countries in the Carnegie project were the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Sweden, Russia, Israel, Chile, Australia, Mexico, and Brazil.

<sup>2</sup> In CAP, the participating countries were the United States, Australia, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Finland, Norway, Portugal, Italy, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Malaysia, South Africa, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.

already established quality assurance mechanisms, introducing the evaluation and accreditation of degree courses and institutions by third-party agencies. These sweeping changes to the higher education system had a direct effect on the work carried out by Latin American university teachers. At the same time, all of these processes were subject to review, constituting a field of study in higher education and, within it, the academic profession.

Systematic studies on higher education emerged along with these processes. The work of Chilean sociologist José Joaquín Brunner (1990), an advocate of university studies and promoter of Burton Clark's oeuvre in Latin America, has been paramount (Krotsch & Suasnabar, 2004). Rollin Kent, from Mexico (1990), has made significant contributions with his understanding of the cultural changes brought about in mass universities, the establishment of an occupational market of academic workers, and bureaucratization. These studies, which closely followed the unfolding reforms, were the foundation on which Mexico, Brazil, and Chile encouraged a new awareness on higher education, given the strong presence of research centres committed to those studies in those countries<sup>3</sup>. Studies on academia began to increase in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, in light of American developments in the field. Since the mid-1990s until today, the academic profession has been the focus of specialized literature, especially in those Latin American countries with more developed higher education systems, such as Brazil, Chile, and Argentina.

Galaz Fontes and Gil Antón (2009) argue that the pioneering work on academia during the 1990s in Mexico may be divided into two groups: those projects that focused on the consequences resulting from the massive growth of the university system in terms of academic contracts (Kent, 1986), and those that underscored the theoretical understanding and production of empirical evidence in regard to the establishment of this brand new actor in the realm of university education, either through an ethnographical approach (García Salord, 1998; Landesmann, 1997) or quantitative methods within the framework of the Carnegie project mentioned above (Gil Antón, 1994). In order to understand the developments in the study of academia it is necessary to include the output pertaining to congresses on the subject. In Mexico, the Mexican Council for Education Research (Consejo Mexicano de Investigación Educativa) has been holding congresses addressing the construction of this field of study based on contributions from renown scholars in this area (García Salord, Grediaga Kuri, & Landesmann Segall, 2003; 2005; García Salord, Landesmann, & Gil Antón, 1993). There has also been a notable production of theses on the matter from the 1990s onward. By 2006, and with Mexico's participation in the CAP international project, a new line of research emerged in the country at a national level, which allowed for a reliable source of information about academia.

For its part, the study of the academic profession in Chile began at a later stage and as a marginal activity carried out by a few researchers, particularly after the publication of Brunner's work (1990) and the research done by Andrés Bernasconi and his team, from Universidad Andrés Bello, closely linked to American institutions that promoted these kinds of studies worldwide. Other contributions to the understanding of the academic profession can be found in national studies of the Chilean higher education system conducted by the Interuniversity Development Center (Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo) as part of a wider Latin American comparative research (Brunner, 2007; Brunner & Hurtado, 2011; Brunner & Miranda, 2016). Several of these works inform an analysis based on the model followed by central countries through a comparison—critical or otherwise—of the gap separating this amateur field from the professional realm. Bernasconi (2008) claims that the professionalization of Chilean academia was made possible by influence of the *research university* model from the United States, the rise in faculty salaries, which allowed them to commit fully to the university, and research policies centred around measurement and standardization (Bernasconi, 2008).

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<sup>3</sup> In Mexico, the former Centre of University Studies (CESU—Centro de Estudios sobre la Universidad) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the Centre for Research and Advance Studies (CINVESTAV—Centro de Investigación y Estudios Avanzados), and the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES—Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior). In Brazil, the Higher Education Research Centre (NUPES—*Núcleo de Pesquisa de Ensino Superior*) at the University of Sao Paulo, as well as other university centers. And in Chile, the Interuniversity Development Centre (CINDA—Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo), among others.

In Brazil, works on academia had their origins primarily at the Higher Education Research Centre (*Núcleo de Pesquisa de Ensino Superior*), headed by Simon Schwartzman's, and later Elizabeth Balbachevsky's, teams. They both released several studies of international repercussions, given their participation—as was the case with the centres mentioned above—in international networks of knowledge-building and support for the analysis of higher education reforms in the region. Brazil's higher education system has undergone deeper changes than any other country exposed to the reform initiatives of the 1990s, especially in regard to a diversification of the system into different types of institutions. Therefore, studies on the academic profession, from Carnegie to CAP, have examined the impact of this diversified expansion of academic work and have served to distinguish the specific characteristics of this profession in Brazil from global trends (Schwartzman & Balbachevsky, 1994; 2014; Balbachevsky, 2019).

In Argentina, however, the field of studies on higher education has had a belated development. Even though the return to democracy in the 1980s produced several works about the university (Cano, 1985; Pérez Lindo, 1985), it was the 1995 higher education reform that yielded a fruitful period with an increasing output of research. Pedro Krotzsch, a sociologist and renown scholar of higher education, was responsible for the introduction of Burton Clark's work and that of many European authors into the country for the study of the Argentine university system that was undergoing extensive reforms at the time. He also promoted the biannual congress "The University as Object of Study," still held today, as well as the first academic journal on the university, *Pensamiento Universitario*.

The fledgling field of research production about the academic profession stepped up in 2008, when several groups of scholars joined the CAP project. Yet, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, only a few exploratory research papers existed, whereas other works focused on institutional cases or specific disciplinary groups<sup>4</sup>, with no empirical studies at a national level. In contrast to other countries in the region, such as Brazil or Mexico, or the rest of the world, the academic profession in Argentina was, until the mid-2000s, an under-researched field limited to the interpretation of those studies on the recent changes to the higher education system (Marquina & Fernández Lamarra, 2008). Currently, it is possible to witness a solid field of research, partly as a result of the higher education reform of 1995 and the necessity to understand the changes to the academic profession triggered by that same reform. Since 2007, the participation of research groups from three national universities in the international CAP project has represented a substantial contribution to the field. These groups were supported by different government subsidies for research, which also facilitated the continuation of deeper qualitative studies. Argentina is now actively involved in the Academic Profession in the Knowledge-Based Society (APIKS) project, with teams from ten local universities. According to Pérez Centeno, this is the first time that studies of this kind allow for an exhaustive and systematic treatment of the Argentine academic profession, which continues to expand and deepen, "outlining the singularity of the national case in relation to international trends, contributing to its comparison and contextualization within a global and regional framework, and introducing Argentine researchers to international scientific networks" (Pérez Centeno, 2017, p. 230).

### **The Effect of Reforms on the Latin American Academic Profession**

The significant changes the different higher education systems around the world have been subjected to over the last thirty years have been reflected in the level of faculty activity. International literature demonstrates that, in the majority of the consolidated national systems, the academic profession is aging, more insecure in the face of the flexibilization of its access and promotion conditions, and increasingly monitored by governments through productivity assessment tools. Furthermore, it is becoming more internationalized, with the expansion of exchange boundaries as a result of a convergence of higher education systems, and less organized along disciplinary lines due to the increasing demand for institutional managerial practices (Altbach, 2000; Cummings & Teichler, 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Marquis (2004); Araujo (2003); Prego and Pratti (2007); Suasnabar, Seoane, & Deldivedro (1999); García de Fanelli (2009).

Even the traditional definition of “academic” has become more ambiguous, as the boundaries between academia and the work of other higher education professionals have blurred (Macfarlane, 2011; Schneijderberg & Merkator, 2013; Witchruch, 2012). Management demands added to the already existing tension between research and teaching. The complexification of academic activity within the university, subject to new agendas for higher education and parallel to an increasing professionalization of academics, sparked the emergence of new tasks and roles, and in some cases the expansion and specialization of an administrative body more closely linked to academia. This, in part, explains why this profession has endured the curtailing of its autonomy in matters of institutional management, as well as in the acquisition and handling of the necessary resources for its activities (Altbach & Finkelstein, 1997).

Although the effect of the reforms experienced in central countries has impacted on academic working conditions, this role is performed by individuals whose income exceeds the social mean, who commit all their efforts to this task, and who enjoy ideal working conditions for the development of their activities. In contrast, the academic profession in Latin America possesses different characteristics. The faculty in the region has been traditionally dominated by part-time staff and low-income salaries (Altbach, Reisberg, Yudkevich, Androushchak, & Pacheco, 2012). Most teachers see their profession as a partial responsibility, complemented by other sources of income (Boyer et al., 1994). The Latin American organization of academic work has been greatly influenced by the German model. Based on the chair system, it introduces a rigidity to the system and a strong hierarchical differentiation within the faculty.

International trends over the last two decades have also affected the academic profession in the region. Not only was the gap between income levels widened relative to inflationary evolution (Schwartzman & Balbachevsky, 1996), but also incentive systems were introduced through the assessment of the academic activity, as well as a high level of pressure for postgraduate education<sup>5</sup>. These processes triggered a deep fragmentation of the academic profession and an uneven distribution of resources, concentrated on minorities embarked on a race for productivity and incentives (Marquina & Rebello, 2012). Several studies, mainly by Mexican researchers, show the impact of the changes in academic practices, cultures, and regulations (Aboites Aguilar, 1999; Gil Antón, 1994; 1997; 2000; Galaz Fontes, 1999, 2002; García Salord, 2001; Grediaga Kuri, 2001; 2006; Heras, 2005; Marquina & Fernández Lamarra, 2008; Parra Sandoval, 2004; Villa Lever, 2001).

Thus, it can be inferred that academics in the region have tended to accommodate to the professorial model implicit in the public university policies adopted, which aligned with those trends from central countries. The rise in doctorates and master’s degrees is a recent phenomenon. Likewise, there is a clear tendency toward research as a preferred activity, especially among the younger generation of academic scholars (Marquina, Yuni, & Ferreiro, 2015). The policies adopted have been shaping a new “type” of academic grounded on an international model characterized by a high level of postgraduate education and a required standard of productivity, as well as on a variety of incentives and regulations. Until now, this new type of academic had been previously restricted to certain specific disciplines. The difference with central countries is that these are brand new conditions that had not been hitherto deeply rooted in the region’s academic culture (Marquina, 2013).

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<sup>5</sup> Over the last two decades, several countries in the region have developed different programs to increase human capital through scholarships. For example, since 2008, the Chilean government has pushed for an increase in the number of doctorates through a program called “Becas Chile,” which has considerably risen the number of doctors. Between 1988 and 2012, 7,692 scholarships have been awarded (Muñoz-García & Bernasconi, 2020). Similar programs were implemented in Argentina, such as “Doctorar,” an initiative aimed at helping faculty members to complete a doctoral program, or the doctoral scholarships for young researchers granted by the CONICET. In Brazil, similar initiatives were introduced through scholarships awarded by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES—*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*). Between 2000 and 2011, the number of doctoral scholarships in Brazil tripled from 8,800 to 26,100, while in Argentina they quintuplicated from 1,459 to 7,087 (Unzué, 2013). These processes were accompanied by a significant increase in doctoral programs in these countries.

Whereas in the developed world the hegemony of the professor, fully committed to the university, is giving way to a growing presence of academics from the industry teaching part-time and a wide range of temporary support staff, Bernasconi (2010) argues that in Latin America the number and influence of those workers who have embraced academia as their profession is on the rise. The study of university teaching in Latin America reveals an academic profession with heterogenous profiles and functions, segmented in its areas of activity, and stratified in its social conditions (Bernasconi, 2010).

**From Carnegie and CAP to APIKS:  
Between “Borrowing” and Visibilising Latin American Academic Profession**

The participation of Latin American countries in the aforementioned international projects about academia has been low. For instance, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile took part in Carnegie; CAP had the involvement of Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina; whereas APIKS had Mexico, Argentina, and Chile among its members. This reduced presence responds to different reasons, inherent to our countries’ unequal conditions of knowledge production. Funding issues for this kind of research have been coupled with difficulties in the formation of teams capable of carrying out large-scale studies at a national level. Generational change among researchers may also account for certain discontinuity in the interests and possibilities for advancing the production of knowledge in this area.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to examine the process of development of this field in Latin America from a comparative view contrasting the dialectics of the global with the local (Arnové & Torres, 1999; Scriewer, 2013). The initial level of participation in these global projects reflects a sort of adaptive behaviour from peripheral countries, such as Latin American nations, to conceptions of work and guidelines set forth by central countries on the study of world academia. This is understandable, given the almost inexistent prior experience regarding this field of study. In this sense, our countries have “borrowed” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; 2017) the undisputed theoretical categories adopted by developed countries, i.e., the position of *full professor*, as a filtering criterion for the population under study. For some of these central countries, assistant professors or junior academics were not part of the profession—a highly debated characteristic when it came to setting out common work guidelines. Another instance of this sort of “conceptual ethnocentrism” in the study of academia has been reflected in the consideration of another precondition, that of full-timer, for sample incorporation or else the adoption of the idea that any university professor held a doctorate degree. As a result, most of Latin American academics did not seem to fit into this framework. At first, some country teams deemed those individuals who met these characteristics part of the population under study, leaving out of the analysis a vast majority of faculty staff working at university, engaged in teaching and sometimes research, under very adverse conditions. The underlying question was whether the world category of *academic profession* was applicable to our reality.

These differences became increasingly evident as the network of researchers gained ground. Even in CAP, after interesting epistemological debates, each country began to include individuals that met less rigid conditions as population under study, as the only way to achieve a real representation of local academia. But it was with APIKS that these differences in models or conceptions of the academic profession were clearly identified, in accordance with backgrounds, histories, and current realities. Once the existence of this diversity was acknowledged, a set of minimum characteristics were agreed on to define the different populations of academics by country.<sup>6</sup> These characteristics were the basis whereby all participant countries were able to constitute an encompassing global group from which samples were collected according to local distinctive features.

These tensions between the global and the local can also be found in Latin America’s own output on academia. This issue was already raised at an earlier stage. By comparing the level of development of

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<sup>6</sup> It was agreed that the APIKS core population definition would be comparable to the Carnegie and CAP surveys. This equates to academics regularly employed in higher education institutions for more than one day per week in teaching or research roles. Therefore, the APIKS survey core population are academics meeting all of the following four characteristics: 1) Regularly employed in ongoing or fixed-term contracts; 2) Holding contracts of at least a 25% full-time equivalent basis (i.e., more than one day per week); 3) Employed in higher education institutions awarding at least a bachelor’s degree; 4) Employed in an academic function involving primarily teaching and/or research (APIKS Document from August 1, 2017).

the academic profession in Latin America, Brunner and Flisfisch (1989) argued that, in peripheral societies such as those in Latin American countries, the reality was different:

Contrary to what occurs in central societies, academic professionalization is presented as an explicit goal.... It represents an import or adaptation process of a foreign product that originated or developed in other cultural climates. (Brunner & Flisfisch, 1989, pp. 181-182)

Such concern with a lineal and evolutionary vision was prevalent in Latin America in the late 1980s. Several decades later, this perspective was favoured in a report by J. J. Brunner and R. F. Hurtado (2011), who claimed that in Latin American higher education systems the academic profession “has not yet been constituted as such,” implying that our countries are—albeit at a slower pace than central countries—undergoing a process in which the acquisition of certain universal characteristics that would make us part of this profession is deemed paramount. However, as we have seen so far, the engaging path of knowledge production about academia in the region began to show dissenting voices against that vision (Marquina, 2013), and attention was drawn to the hegemonic way of thinking about the Latin American academic profession.

Therefore, is not the group of subjects in charge of teaching and research in our country part of a profession? Are we not at risk of transposing foreign categories, without proper adaptation, in order to explain away apparent similarities that in reality belong to different situations and contexts? Are we heading toward an academic profession or have we already achieved it? Answering these questions forces us to examine what has happened to the university faculty, who they are, what they do, under which conditions, and under what regulations they perform their work. (Marquina, 2013, pp. 40-41)

Addressing these issues is crucial, because only then will we be able to observe how the transformative processes of the academic profession taking place in developed countries are increasingly set forth in more dramatic ways throughout the region. Our academic profession is part of the periphery, for the patterns of academic work are laid out by institutions in central countries for the rest of the world. As Altbach (2004) has stated, academics in the countries of the periphery are viewed as dependent on the world’s main centres of knowledge and scientific networks. The world’s faculty is increasingly becoming a part of a global academic community, and therefore, developing countries are at the bottom of a global system of unequal academic relations. Acknowledging this situation is the first step toward any study of the peripheral academic profession that aims at departing from the normalization of generalizing conceptions that disregard diversity.

From this perspective, it will be possible to understand that the processes of change have fragmented the pre-existing heterogeneity of the region’s academic profession with the establishment of two large groups. On the one hand, a group with a global profile, international connections, full-time commitment to the profession, and a main source of income from this activity; on the other, a comprehensive mass of faculty especially engaged in teaching, attempting to pursue incentives without much success, or else without any possibility whatsoever to achieve it. The different patterns of academic life already characterized for the developed world (Clark, 2008a) now include marked inequalities between regions and countries as a result of the unbalanced economic structure prevalent in the world.

### **Academic Profession in the Periphery:**

#### **Toward the Development of a Latin American Research Field Within a Global Framework**

As a category for analysis, the academic profession is generally distinctive because of the diversity of disciplines and kinds of institutions it encompasses. It simultaneously comprehends rules and values that give it cohesion and distinguish it from other occupations (Clark, 1983; 2008b). Thus, in principle, we should step aside from characterizations that portray the academic profession as one defined by unified features from the developed world, given that a homogenous academic profession is inexistent there as well. Consequently, we can offer an affirmative answer to the question of whether it is possible to recognize in Latin America the existence of a profession that encompasses the work of academia, rejecting lineal and evolutionary perspectives that only consider the establishment of the academic profession as the last step of a path yet to follow.



Likewise, acknowledging the existence of a Latin American profession requires a further step. Frameworks laid out in centre countries need to be adapted to our own realities before their implementation. Integration and heterogeneity, despite bearing similarities to those contexts, are manifested at a different level. Our own academic activity follows certain basic patterns, just as in other countries: it gathers its members around an object—knowledge—within the university realm; has set out access and permanence conditions for faculty positions, some traditional, others more recent and modern; its renown authorities act as peer reviewers in regard to research, degree courses, and positions, and their criteria influence the established and accepted standards; and has unquestionable values that form the foundations of the activity, such as the liberty to teach and research, as well as an *ethos* that denotes a shared culture. All these features are characteristic of the academic profession worldwide.

Nevertheless, our profession is different because its activities are, to a large extent, performed part-time, with a professionalist orientation toward teaching, relatively low-income salaries, a specific set of rules to access a faculty position, and the organization of work set primarily around chairs—all of which makes for a very rigid activity. This is a profession that has combined traditional qualities with more globalized regulations based on efficiency and productivity. That is our Latin American academic profession, and this identity is the outcome of local research, carried out over the last decades through a perspective focused on the “other” and toward our own recognition. Moreover, Latin American academia is a profession of the periphery. Were it not seen as a profession in itself, established within the wider category of global academia, we would not be able to visualize the enormous inequalities it experiences in the international arena.

In sum, conceiving our faculty as part of a profession, with their global and local characteristics, opens the door to the study of an intricate activity that we began developing decades ago and that deserves a deeper understanding. This field, the academic profession, involves individuals who experience change differently and perform teaching and researching activities at the university in accordance with fluctuating regulations that concurrently reverberate across the institution. This profession also fosters values and beliefs that are nurtured by the history of the university system and that have been reconstituted in the face of the massification of the different higher education systems and the regulations adopted in recent decades. These changes have been interwoven with similar processes at a global level in a distinguishable academic world that translates, for all Latin America, into an academic profession that is undoubtedly fragmented.

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