

Is It Still Worth Working In Academia? The Views from Portuguese Academics

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FIGURE 1

Is It Still Worth Working In Academia? - The study in brief

Changes and reforms in higher education, framed by managerialism, New Public Management (NPM) and neoliberalism-driven policies, are expected to have an impact over academics. Namely deprofessionalising processes and devaluation of working conditions, social prestige and status are expected to occur. Even if a relevant body of research has addressed how such policies affect academics' professionalisation processes and professionalism, studies tend, however, not to reveal the extent to which previously mentioned changes make academics more willing to change profession. Focusing on the Portuguese case, this study analyses academics' perceptions about their current working and employment conditions, academic profession's social prestige and their willingness to change profession.

Collected through a survey to all Portuguese academics, perceptions suggest a contradiction: while evidencing the deterioration of working conditions, academics maintain a positive view regarding the academic profession, evidenced by a predisposition to consider it as socially valued and worth to recommend. Indeed, although academics identify an increase in contractual precariousness and working hours, the reduction in permanent staff, the primacy of management values over those of the academic profession, they still see academic profession as socially valued and prestigious and allowing for some degree of autonomy and they show a low willingness to change profession.

This contradiction is valid notwithstanding the nuances in the perceptions of different groups of academics (e.g. women, junior academics, the public sector, in the profession for the longest time and with less influence in decision-making), some of them allegedly more affected by the changes induced by managerialism, NPM and neoliberalism in higher education institutions. So, despite all changes, it seems that to Portuguese academics, working in academia is still worth, at least to some extent. The question is to know for how long.

