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Academic workforce in France and the UK in historical perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This historical exploration of the development of the academic workforce in the UK and France was triggered by the observation of significant similarities in contemporary debates on casualisation, and segmentation despite their distinctive HE systems. We develop a quantitative history of academic staff to understand why the differences in the two HE systems are not as significant in respect to labour market and working conditions. The new data show that connected processes of casualisation, professional segmentation, and sectorial differentiation are used to manage tensions between massification and staff recruitment in both countries, in a context of declining and increasingly unequal distribution of resources, producing inequalities within institutions, as within the profession itself. The reorganisation of the academic workforce during three periods of growth of HE systems under traditional, Fordist and managerial influences has incrementally produced three groups of permanent, casualised, and precarised staff and a dual academic labour market.

KEYWORDS

Academic staff; higher education; history; massification; differentiation; segmentation; casualisation; France; UK

关键词

学术人员; 高等教育; 历史; 大众化; 差异化; 分割; 临时聘用; 法国; 英国

历史视角下法国和英国学术劳动力研究

摘要

尽管英国和法国的高等教育制度各具特色，但两国当前关于临时聘用和职业分割的争论却格外相似，基于这一观察，本文对两国的学术劳动力发展进行历史性探究。我们对学术人员史料进行定量分析，以理解两国学术劳动力市场以及工作条件方面的差异为何不如高等教育制度上的差异那样显著。新的数据显示，资源配置减少且日益不均衡，造成学术职业本身以及高等教育机构内部不平等，在这一背景下，两国采用临时聘用、职业分割以及部门差异化等相关联的手段，管控高等教育大众化与学术人员招聘之间的紧张关系。在高等教育系统受到传统式、福特式和管理式影响的三个发展时期，两国对学术劳动力的重组逐步产生了长期聘用、临时聘用和不稳定员工这三类群体以及一个二元的学术劳动力市场。

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Introduction

Higher education (HE) systems in the UK and France have been engaged since the 1960s in a major process of massification putting under strain the structures of the academic workforce inherited from previous centuries. This tension is perceptible in both countries where commentators raised concerns about the fairness and sustainability of the current academic staff model. Similar debates on under-recruitment, working and living conditions, and casualisation of staff are taking place in both systems. Those similarities contrast with the different structures of their academic workforce associated to distinctive HE systems and forms of relationship between the state and universities (Deer 2008), which have produced specific academic labour markets: on the one hand, a binary system of the 1960s shifting towards a unified and marketised system in the 1990s in the UK; on the other hand, a dual centralised public system in France (universities and *Grandes écoles*), evolving since 2005 'towards a diversified higher education landscape, with universities as central actors' (Musselin 2021, 341). Despite the differences, both systems faced common issues regarding the processes of funding, equity, and quality of HE and notably a tension between the continuous and significant growth of student numbers and public underfunding which has strongly influenced staffing debates.

This paper proposes to consider whether and why, despite their outward differences, the two HE systems experience significant similar evolutions regarding the organisation of their academic workforce. We propose to examine the historical relationship between the massification and increased differentiation of HE systems and their academic staff in these two national contexts and consider the extent to which their distinctive systems of professional organisation share a more general logic of transformation of the academic workforce. The empirical analysis is based on new historical data on academic staff (Carpentier 2021) used to explore the connections and tensions between the expansion, fluctuations, and structures of student enrolment and staff recruitment since the 1920s. The analysis of these data allows us to identify key trends, fluctuations, structures, and turning points in the development of the academic workforce in both systems and compare them with financial and enrolment data from a previous dataset (Carpentier 2004). Our objective is to track back in both countries the long-term expansion of academic staff and its associated processes of segmentation, sectorial differentiation, and casualisation.

The paper is structured around 7 sections. The first reviews the key debates on academic staff and those specific to the French and British contexts. The second section presents our methodology combining a reasoned use of history of education and quantitative history. Sections 3–6 present our findings. Section 3 compares the trends in student enrolment and academic recruitment in both countries. Section 4 identifies the process of professional segmentation increasingly associated with casualisation. Section 5 focuses on the historical institutional differentiation of the academic workforce. Section 6 proposes a periodisation based on three successive historical arrangements of the academic workforce common to both countries. Section 7 offers concluding remarks and discusses the proposition that the UK and French academic workforce rearrangements tend to follow the same path.

Academic workforce: contemporary and historical perspectives

The UK and French HE systems and their workforce

France and the UK have different socio-economic models but similar situations regarding population and GDP per capita. They both have constructed high participation HE systems (Cantwell, Marginson, and Smolentseva 2018; Trow 1973) with 49% and 55.8% of their 25–34-year-old age group holding an HE award respectively (MEN 2022). Beyond distinctive historical traditions (Anderson 2004), they share a common context of continuous massification and tensions related to public funding from which derives a set of related issues, with significant implications for the academic workforce.

The academic staff in the UK has been part of a largely growing and changing system over the period. Our analysis relates to the UK but recognises increasing differences between the 4 nations (especially Scotland) since devolution started in 1998 (Scott 2021, 66). The HE expansion in the 1960s was driven by a binary system mainly funded by the state (90% in 1973) with traditional universities being complemented by a more vocationally orientated and socially diverse local public HE sector composed of technical colleges, colleges of HE and polytechnics (Pratt 1997). The system became unified in 1992 with most of the public sector institutions being awarded the university charter (still commonly called the post-92 universities). Widening access did not erase inequalities with persistent differentials in resources and reputation between institutions in both binary and unified systems reflected by stratified enrolment (Boliver 2011). The system also became increasingly marketised and competitive (Collini 2012; Palfreyman and Tapper 2014; Scott 2021). International fees were introduced in 1967 and increased to full cost in 1981. Upfront fees of £1000 for home and EU students were introduced in 1998 in the UK and replaced in 2006 by deferred fees of £3000 funded by income-contingent loans with a repayment threshold in England and later in Wales and Northern Ireland (Scotland switched to free HE for Scottish and EU students). The disappearance of the teaching grant in 2010 combined with the rise in fees to £9000 in 2012 has led to a transformation of income increasingly linked to fees (53%) to the detriment of upfront public funding (21%) questioning the impact of marketisation on fairness and sustainability (Carpentier 2021).

The French system has been characterised by centralised management since re-founded by Napoleon in the early nineteenth century. Universities and academic staff are governed by national regulations and depend quasi entirely on the state for their resources. The initial system was based on equality between universities, alongside a set of parallel, mainly public, highly selective institutions known as *Grandes écoles*. The massification of access to HE since 1990 has led to a sharp expansion of the system and the creation of new universities. During the same period, a deliberate policy of competitive bidding for funds has led to a stratification of the system, with the traditional segmentation of universities versus *Grandes écoles* complemented by a vertical differentiation between universities (Musselin 2005). Discussions on a shift towards a more fee-based financing (recently implemented for international students after tense debates) are underway but highly contested in a system still almost entirely state-funded (Calviac 2019) with low tuition fees for home students. Attempts to push for marketisation continue to generate tense opposition questioning the future of a HE public

service and the implications for students and academics (Carpentier and Courtois 2022; Chauvel et al. 2015).

Key debates on the long-term development of the academic workforce

The long tradition of study of the construction of the academic profession, examining the increased diversity of academic communities and identities (Becher and Trowler 2001) shaped by national, disciplinary, and institutional settings (Altbach 2000; Clark 1987, 3; Enders and Musselin 2008; Fumasoli et al. 2015) remains active with the need to document the transformations of the academic workforce and its conditions of practice in a context marked by ongoing debates on the place of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Knowledge Society (Aarvevaara et al. 2021). Recurrent tensions in the quantitative and qualitative development of academia have been well documented with a focus on the transformations of professional activity in relation to the expansion of HE systems and diversification of student profiles (Evans and Nixon 2015; Laredo 2007; Teichler, Arimoto, and Cummings 2013). The academic profession is confronted with increasing and sometimes contradictory social, economic, and political demands made to rapidly changing HE systems, under increased pressures caused by inequalities, economic crises, political instability, and climate change, recently exacerbated by Covid-19 (Carpentier and Unterhalter 2022; Piketty 2020). We focus on three key aspects and tensions regarding the development of academic staff which are similar in both countries despite their different systems.

Working conditions

A First tension relates to the deterioration of the working conditions and position of the academic staff in the context of mass HE. In both countries, massification (Halsey and Trow 1971) resulted in the weakening (Annan 1999; Halsey 1992) of what Perkin (1969) identified as the key profession, particularly for the UK, but also in France (Bourdieu 1984). This tension is often associated with the impact of falling staff-to-student ratio on the quality of education and working conditions (Hugrée and Poullaouec 2022), but also with difficulties in pursuing research activities (Faure, Soulié, and Millet 2008; Tight 2010). Funding pressures and increased academic accountability have generated intense debates. This includes contested attempts to define and measure the quality of teaching (TEF) (Ashwin 2020) and research (REF) (McNay 2016) in the UK. In France, a general increase in the processes of assessments has also triggered key debates within the profession (Chatelain-Ponroy et al. 2018; Gozlan 2019).

Segmentation and increased casualisation

A second area of tension relates to the segmentation of staff often associated with increased casualisation. This worldwide process has been widely documented through national cases, such as the USA (Rhoades and Torres-Olave 2015), and major comparative surveys like 'The Changing Academy series' (latest issue: Huang, Aarvevaara, and Teichler 2022). In the UK, workforce segmentation has been associated with processes of casualisation (Henkel 2000; Locke 2014; Marini, Locke, and Whitchurch 2019) and precarity

(Burton and Bowman 2022; Robson 2023) driven by marketisation (Leathwood and Read 2022) and a culture of performativity, competition or self-promotion (Ball 2012; Macfarlane 2021; Morley 2003). This led Paye (2015) to distinguish different groups of UK academic staff: the 'stars', the permanent and the casuals. In France, the idea of academics competing against each other is gaining ground with new reforms introducing the possibility of recruiting academic staff outside the regulatory frameworks of the civil service (P.E.C.R.E.S 2011; Rioufroy 2020).

Sectorial differentiation of the workforce

A third tension connects the distribution of the academic workforce with the unequal distribution of resources and prestige between institutions. In the UK, this issue was pertinent within the binary system created in the 1960s combining the elite university sector with a more vocationally orientated public sector of HE (Pratt 1997) and persisted after the two merged into a unified university system in 1992 still characterised by enduring inequalities of reputation and funding between pre- and post-92 universities (Carpentier 2021). In France, inherited inequalities between the selective *Grandes Ecoles* and universities but also between disciplines (sciences are better resourced than humanities in universities) (Calviac 2019; Fack and Huillery 2021) were accentuated by the end of standardised funding policies since the 1990s (Musselin 2021) which have also generated a growing stratification between international and research-oriented universities and local universities.

Another crucial tension beyond the scope of the historical data we collected is how the processes of construction and segmentation of the academic workforce affect and are affected by the various social groups constituent of academia contributing to longstanding inequalities around gender, social class, and ethnicity (Arday 2022; Bhopal 2022; Rogers and Molinier 2016).

In a sense, those tensions are surprisingly similar in the UK and France if one considers the differences in their structures of their HE systems and organisation of their workforce. Those tensions, and the adjustments they provoke, have triggered various waves of industrial actions in the UK since 2018 and strong opposition from the French academic community to the 2021 *Loi Programmation Recherche* (LPR), a research programming act designed to make scientific careers more attractive and to support research and its funding in exchange of increasing competition.

The similarities between the situations in both countries raise questions about the causes of these parallel developments and the pertinence of the 'convergence proposition' debated for a long time in many fields including comparative education (Halls 1974, 211). Are those similarities part of the convergence of HE systems (Frank and Meyer 2007; Zapp and Ramirez 2019) or resulting from common global pressures producing similar transformations of policy and practice without erasing national or local characteristics (Cowen 2009; Dale and Robertson 2012; Marginson 2022)? Many recent works identified above have documented those transformations of the academic workforce without necessarily placing them in a more general analysis of the evolution of modern university systems. Historical studies, on the other hand, mainly focus on specific moments of transformation (Bourdieu 1984; Charle 1994). Thus, long-term analysis is rarely used to examine the links between the transformation of the academic

workforce, the massification of HE systems, and the issue of funding. Finally, existing quantitative historical studies have so far not gathered annual data (Halsey and Trow 1971; Prost and Cyterman 2010). The construction of a comparative analysis over the long-term of those two different HE systems facing the same issues today should therefore enable us to explore the respective roles of structures and circumstances in the evolution of a HE system and its workforce.

Methodology:

A historical and quantitative approach

Our exploration of the historical development of the academic workforce in both countries is guided by the following questions: to what extent has the expansion and transformation of HE not only influenced the quantitative development of the HE workforce but also its structure? What are the long-term connections and tensions between the expansion of student enrolment and staff recruitment? What kind of professional segmentation resulted from this and to which extent is it related to casualisation? How have those processes affected and been affected by institutional differentiation? Beyond national characteristics, can similar historical trajectories be observed in both countries? What does this mean for the future of the academic workforce?

The data

The analysis is based on new historical datasets on academic staff in HE since the 1920s in France and the UK (Great Britain until 1948) developed by Carpentier as part of a project of the ESRC/RE Centre for Global Higher Education (Carpentier 2021) following the principles of quantitative history allowing to compare data across time and space (Marczewski 1961). French data on enrolment and recruitment originate from official sources including the *Annuaire Statistique de la France* and other key publications from the Ministry of Education (Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective). UK sources come from the University Grants Committee (1919–1988), the University Funding Council and Further Education and Polytechnics Funding Council (1988–1992), and the Higher Education Funding Council for England as well as the Higher Education Statistical Agency after 1992.

The statistical sources listed at the end of the paper were used to develop a dataset gathering the numbers of academic staff in each country distributed according to their activities (teaching, research), positions (professor, lecturer ...), and types/conditions of employment (part-time/full-time, fixed term/permanent). Those data were disaggregated when possible, by type of institution. Data on French academic staff are mainly about the public system and often universities only (including the 2-year vocational university institutes of technology-IUT- after 1969) and public *Grandes Ecoles* after 1981. They do not include staff from preparatory schools to *Grandes Ecoles* (CPGE) and 2-year vocational HE (sections de techniciens supérieurs/STS) which are mostly taught by teachers from secondary education and whose only recently available data estimates their numbers representing respectively 5% and 15% of academic staff teaching in HE (DEPP 2022). UK data relate to universities until 1972 after which polytechnics are included. All HE is included after the merger of 1992. It is important to acknowledge issues of availability but also

problems of consistency across time and space in relation to changing definitions of the positions and categories of staff (and students). Moreover, data are not disaggregated by social groups and do not show how inequalities might be distributed according to class, gender, and ethnicity. Our quantitative history approach focuses on structures and evolutions and does not capture experiences illustrating other forms of inequalities regarding working conditions.

Those new series on academic staff are compared with previous datasets on students and funding (Carpentier 2004; 2021; Carry 1999), allowing to generate synthetic indicators (student-staff ratio). Our objective is to highlight specific or common evolutions and establish potential associations between the historical trajectories of expansion and differentiation of HE systems and the transformation of the academic workforce.

The dynamics of expansion of HE systems and their academic workforce

The long view underlines key connections and tensions between historical trends of student enrolment and staff recruitment with significant implications for HE systems.

Historical trajectories: Parallel growths of student enrolment and staff recruitment

Figures 1 and 2 show for both countries a slow expansion of the elite HE system until the Second World War after which started a process of massification in several key phases. The first phase resulted from the combination of the baby boom and policies towards school democratisation in the 1960s and was driven by the creation of new French universities (post-‘Loi Faure’ in 1968) and the development of the UK binary system based on new universities and a growing public sector of vocational HE led by the polytechnics (Shattock 2012). After a pause during the economic crisis of the 1970s-1980s, a second phase of

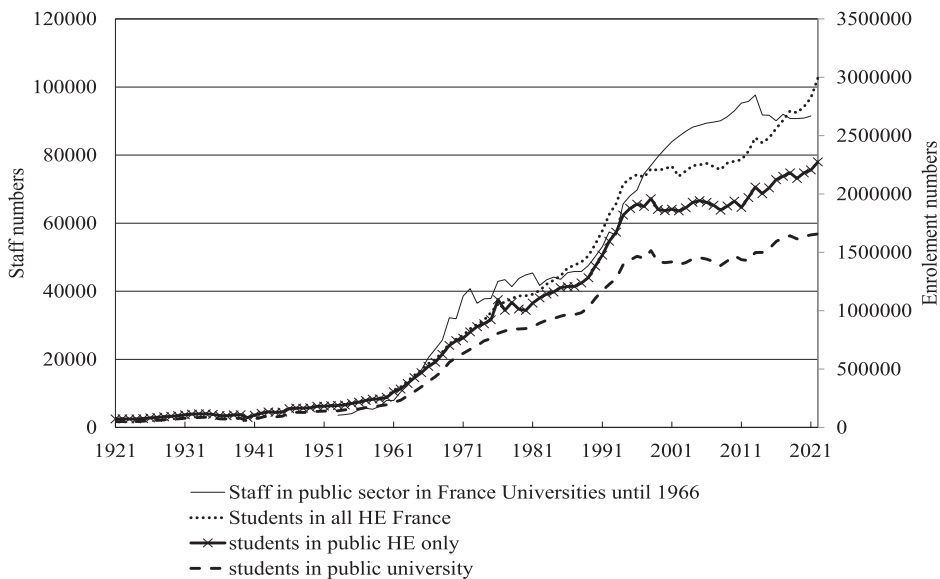


Figure 1. Students and staff in French HE 1921-2021. Sources: DEPP. 1984-current; DSG. 1890-1945; INSEE 1946-current; MEN. 2007-current.

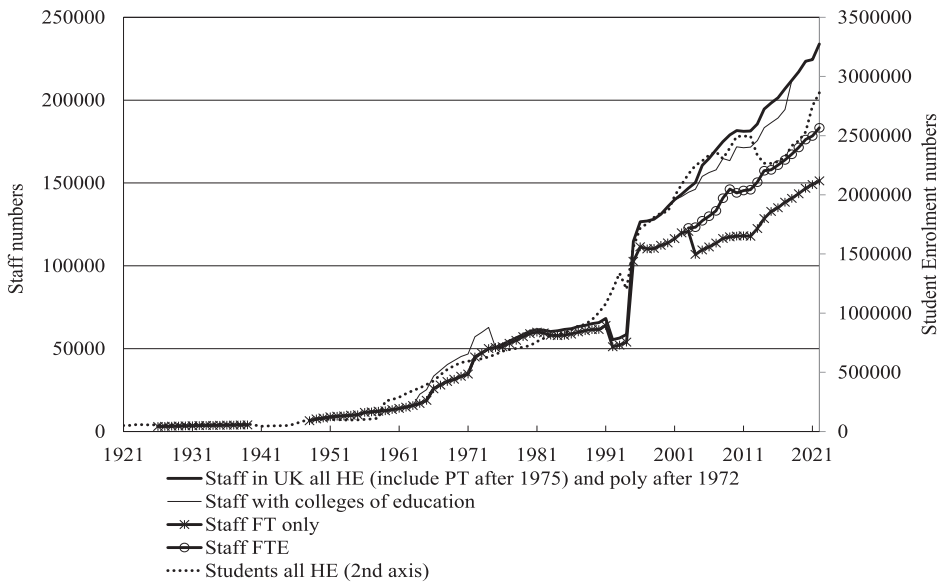


Figure 2. Students and staff in UK HE 1921–2022 (all HE including polytechnics after 1972). Sources: Carpentier, V. 2004; DESa 1961–1990; DESb 1988–93; HESAa 1995–current; HESAb 1995–current; UFC 1989–1994; UGCa 1920–1965; UGCb 1966–1979; UGCc 1980–1988.

expansion started in the early 1990s driven by widening participation in both countries. French enrolment slowed down in the 2000s until a third expansion started in the late 2010s driven by further democratisation of the Baccalauréat and the absorption of the new millennium baby boom. In the UK, the expansion of the 1990s under a new unified system was interrupted after the crisis of 2008 with new funding mechanisms introduced in 2012 and a demographic slowdown. A third phase started after 2016 driven by a revived enrolment of both domestic and international students following demographic changes and the abolition of student number controls.

Figures 1 and 2 highlight key connections and tensions between the fluctuations in the growth of HE systems and those of their academic workforce. Increasing student enrolment in the 1960s coincided with rising academic recruitment in both countries. The slowdown of enrolment following the 1970s crisis was mirrored by a slowdown of the academic workforce in both countries. This was followed by a continuous rise in enrolment and academic recruitment after the 1990s. Since 2010, staff numbers have continued to increase in the UK with enrolment fluctuating while declining academic workforce in France clashed with high enrolment.

The historical variations of the academic staff-to-student ratio

The connections and tensions between the historical trajectories of student enrolment and staff recruitment are well illustrated by the evolution of staff-to-student ratios (SSR). Figure 3 shows a ratio always higher in the UK than in France although the gap is substantially smaller when only considering full-time staff (see next section on segmentation). SSR is characterised by significant fluctuations over the whole period in both

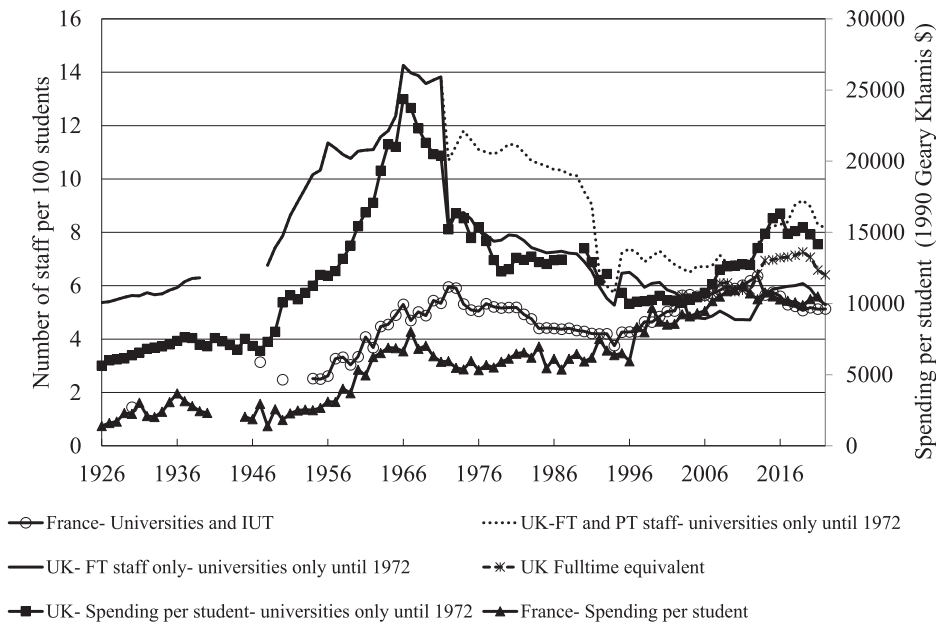


Figure 3. Staff per 100 students and spending per student in France and the UK 1921-2022. Sources: (UK) Carpentier, V. 2004; DESa 1961-1990; DESb 1988-93; HESAa 1995-current; HESAb 1995-current; UFC 1989-1994; UGCa 1920-1965; UGCb 1966-1979; UGCc 1980-1988. (France) Carry. 1999; DEPP. 1984-current; DSG. 1890-1945; INSEE 1946-current; MEN. 2007-current.

countries although these were wider in the UK than in France. Figure 3 also suggests overall an association between the fluctuations of SSR and those of spending per student in both countries: heading upward during the well-funded post-war period and significantly downward following pressures on public funding after the 1970s crisis and the 2008 crisis.

SSR in France recovered after the 1990s partly due to declining enrolment but fell again after 2010 until this day due to a sharp rise in enrolment never matched by diminishing resources and staff recruitment. In the UK, SSR was only revived in 2006 although it is important to note that the increase of both spending per student and SSR after 2012 can also be explained by a contraction of student enrolment until 2020. Since then, UK enrolment has risen sharply without being matched by staff recruitment leading to decreasing SSR. Thus, both countries are currently experiencing declining SSR illustrating structural clashes between HE systems expansion and academic workforce stagnation.

This long-term lens reveals key considerations to be taken on board when examining SSR. Changes in SSR can mean different things as they result from staff and student trends. Its rise might point to expanding staff policies or a shrinking system. The link between student enrolment and staff recruitment appears heavily dependent on political choices regarding resources (the extent to which governments are willing to financially support massification). Those choices affect not only the workforce size but also its structure: the gap between the higher SSR in the UK compared to France is significantly smaller when only full-time or full-time-equivalent staff are considered (Figure 3). This leads us to

consider next a possible association between the expansion of staff recruited to cope with massification and a process of segmentation.

Professional segmentation and the long story of casualisation:

The academic workforce has, like the student body, not only expanded but also significantly changed. The generic term of academic workforce covers very different situations and experiences structured as a process of professional segmentation associated at times with a process of casualisation already largely documented and that the following proposes to assess historically.

Historical process of segmentation of the French academic workforce

The necessary increase in the academic workforce to accompany the continuous growth of the French HE system has been funded and organised by the State (Prost and Cyterman 2010). From the outset, this dynamic was driven by two categories of staff: full members, who are state civil servants; and temporary members, whose contracts may be annual or limited to a particular course. In general, careers start with temporary positions, with permanent recruitment taking place several years after the completion of the doctorate. Permanent staff are civil servants, and statistical data associated with them are fairly simple to define despite the complexity brought about by the existence of several categories. The first group of permanent staff gathers two corps of teachers/researchers: professors and *maîtres de conférences* (lecturers), which were predominant before (Charle 1994) and during the first phase of expansion before stepping back and stabilising at 70% of the overall workforce in the 1980s (Figure 4). The second group of permanent staff is composed of senior secondary school teachers assigned to HE whose function is entirely

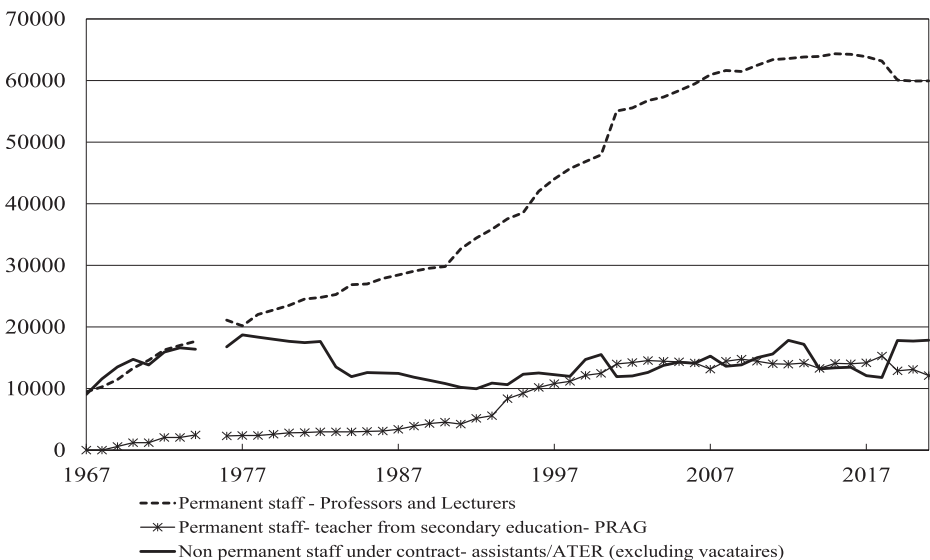


Figure 4. Structure of the public HE workforce (excluding vacataires) in France 1965-2021. Sources: DEPP. 1984-current; DSG. 1890-1945; INSEE 1946-current; MEN. 2007-current.

teaching (permanent assistants, further known as Professeurs agrégés/PRAGs) (Menger et al. 2017) increased substantially with their share of overall staff rising from under 5% before the 1970s crisis to 15% during the second phase of massification (1990s). Therefore, the number of permanent staff grew faster during periods of strong growth in recruitment in the 1960s and 1990s (Barrier and Picard 2020). However, despite this effort, permanent staffing levels have been insufficient compared to student numbers over the long-term, leading to more systematic use of non-permanent staff (vacataires).

Tracing the number of non-permanent workers is difficult, as they are not always included in statistical categories (see below). Moreover, a distinction between casual staff and precarious workers ('précaires') must be made. The first group includes those who are employed on one-year/several-years contracts, and therefore full-time staff. These are mainly assistants, doctoral students, or temporary teaching and research assistants (ATER) who are students working on or having been recently awarded a Ph.D. Figure 4 shows that those non-permanent contractual staff often play a key role of 'adjustment variable' throughout the period, especially during the first massification of the 1960s during which their share of overall staff reached 50% before strongly declining and stabilising at 20% at the beginning of the second massification of the 1990s. Importantly, the symmetry between the curves of permanent and non-permanent groups of staff illustrates a transfer from the latter to the former following the 1984 status reform rather than a rise in the overall number of staff.

Another group, generally absent from official statistics and therefore from our graphs, is composed of precarious academic staff. 'Vacataires' (also named 'précaires') represent a category of non-permanent staff difficult to grasp, as they are individuals paid for a specific task or a limited time (e.g. a 20-hour course), by the piece (by the hour, by the mission), without being possible to measure what part of the teaching they actually provide. They also do not benefit from social rights associated with traditional contracts (holidays, social protection ...). Available data show that there were only 2.000 vacataires in 1976 (Mérindol 2010, 73) and 67.221 in 2009 (MEN 2009, 50). Their numbers climbed to 100.000 in 2013 and 140.000 in 2021 (MEN 2022). Thus, the number of vacataires currently exceeds the number of permanent and casual staff. This precarious group of HE workers at the margin of the system is arguably key to its functioning.

In a context of decreasing numbers of permanent staff involved in both teaching and research, the rise of teaching-only permanent staff was complemented by a massive recruitment of 'vacataires' to cater for the second phase of massification under stagnating resources.

Segmentations of the UK academic workforce and rising casualisation

Figure 5 reveals a process of segmentation of the UK HE workforce which takes several forms and can be seen from various angles including diversification but also casualisation.

The first angle relates to academic employment function and is characterised by a decreasing share of the traditional group of teaching and research staff from 85% in 1977–45% today. This decline coincides with the rise of more specialised academic groups. The proportion of research-only staff rose significantly in the 1980s peaking at 38% in the 1990s and stabilising after the unification at 30% before declining to 20% after the mid-2000s until this day. The share of teaching-only staff also rose dramatically

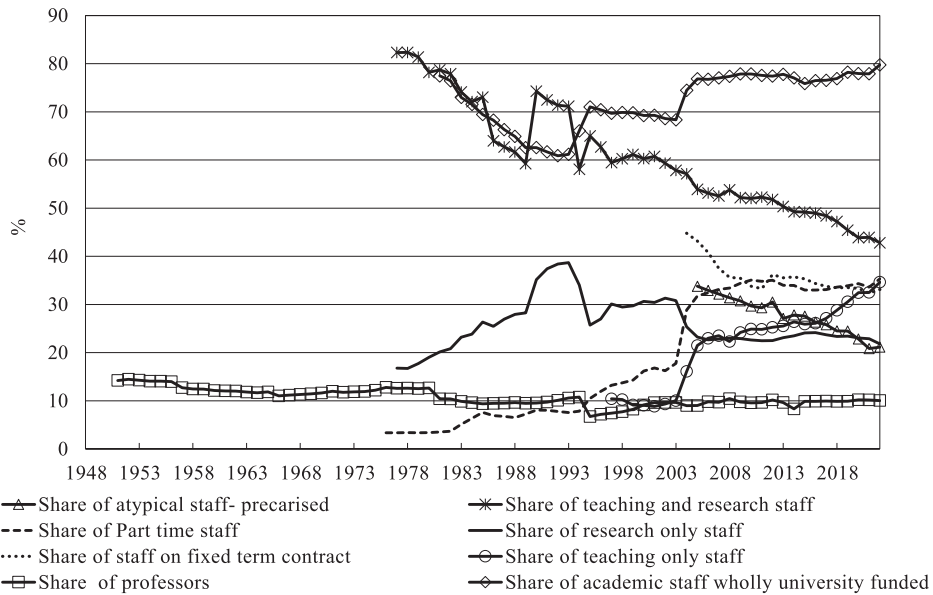


Figure 5. Structure of the HE workforce in UK HE (universities only until 1995) (excluding atypical staff) 1948–2022. Sources: DESa 1961–1990; DESb 1988–93; HESAb 1995–current; UFC 1989–1994; UGCa 1920–1965; UGCb 1966–1979; UGCc 1980–1988.

from 10% in the early 2000s to 34% today with noticeable periods of expansion coinciding with the historical rises of fees in 2006 and 2012. Beyond diversification, the segmentation around academic function raises issues about casualisation as research-only staff are often employed on a project basis and as teaching-only careers are not always chosen (Leathwood and Read 2022). A historical continuity regarding grade distribution is shown by the relative stability of the share of professors in the whole academic workforce between 15% to 20% since the 1950s. Figure 5 also shows changes in modes of employment with the share of staff working on a part-time basis (as a choice or not) increasing from 3% in 1976 to a third today with a noticeable leap in 2003. Terms of employment have also changed significantly since tenure was suppressed in 1988 with the proportion of staff on fixed-term contracts reaching 45% in 2003 and still representing a third of staff today. Overall, this suggests a connection between the rise in segmentation and casualisation of the academic workforce which started with the slowdown of public funding following the 1970s crisis and accelerated again after the rise in marketisation after 2006.

However, as in France, all the data used in most available UK statistics and in previous figures of this paper and elsewhere include staff on open and fixed-term contracts but exclude a third category of staff composed of two groups of precarised workers. The first relates to atypical staff defined as staff employed ‘less than four consecutive weeks, one-off/short-term tasks, work away from the supervision of the normal work provider, high degree of flexibility often in a contract to work as-and-when required’ (HESAb 2022) and recorded for the first time in 2004/2005. Figure 5 shows that atypical staff currently represents an additional 20% of the workforce (33% in 2003) used as a reserve of labour to sustain the HE system gripped by an underinvestment provoking clashes between student enrolment and staff recruitment. A second category of precarised

academic staff on zero hours contract are even more precarious and represents around 2% of overall academic staff.

Thus, taken altogether, staff on fixed-term contracts and atypical staff represent a substantial part of the HE workforce (55%) which was key in absorbing massification in a context of austerity and marketisation while raising significant issues around casualisation and inequalities within the system. The ongoing industrial actions seem to crystallise the issues faced by all three groups in a context characterised by tensions between expansion and funding in an increasingly marketised political economy of HE.

Historical segmentations around permanent, casualised, and precarised staff

Our historical account of the distinction between permanent, casual, and precarised staff shows that although some of the changes in segmentation regarding functions and working conditions may have followed pedagogic or organisational rationales and mission diversification, many others seem to be linked to processes of casualisation associated with austerity and increased marketisation (Harroche 2019; Leathwood and Read 2022).

Comparisons across countries and time periods are complex when it comes to academic staff, as positions and conditions are not equivalent. However, we can point out a recurrent dual form of organisation that distinguishes (and potentially opposes) a group of permanent staff from a group of non-permanent staff. The general logic is that non-permanent staff, or rather part of them eventually join the permanent group, although this is not automatic and the proportion varies according to the period. The first group includes permanent staff occupying a stable position (although the group gathers different lived experiences and working conditions), which does not need to be renegotiated. This hierarchy of permanent positions is at the origin of the idea of a career (independent even of the place of exercise). The second group is dual: it includes non-permanent contract workers (casual staff) and task-paid workforce, more precarious and whose employment is tied to a short, non-recurring task or period. The three categories have always existed but in different proportions across historical periods. The modalities of their articulation, and the part of the academic work they each catered for are characteristics of distinctive ages of academic history.

Sectoral differentiation of academic staff

These three categories are not evenly distributed across HE systems which have expanded through institutional differentiation.

Staff and the differentiated but centralised French model of HE

French HE has since the early nineteenth century been characterised by its centralisation, with universities conceived as identical elements of a national system whose workforce is organised according to a national logic. Regardless of the place of professional practice, staff positions are identical and professional rules are defined by administrative regulations with the profession managed by centralised boards structured according to disciplines (Picard 2023). However, policies over the last two decades have accentuated an

emerging trend of differentiation between institutions, leading to differentials in SSR between universities ranging from 4 to 14 staff per 100 students which reflect variations in funding from 4,000–12,000 euros per student (SNESUP 2021). Another key differentiation within the university sector is between disciplines and institutions (Barrier and Picard 2020). SSR are higher in IUT (8) (which are 2-year vocational and selective parts of universities) than in the non-selective part of the university sector (5.13) in charge of massification. However, one of the key elements of institutional differentiation in France remains between the university sector and other HEIs, the latter having a much higher SSR. SSR are higher in CPGE (6.54) and STS (7.31), both selective and taught mainly in lycées by secondary school teachers than in universities (MEN 2022).

Those differentials in SSR reflect differentials in resources and reinforce social stratification as institutional differentiation tends to mirror social class (Carpentier 2018; Fack and Huillery 2021). Lower SSR in the non-selective university sector contrasts with its key role in widening participation in the HE system. Increasing differentiation between universities might exacerbate this tension.

Academic staff in the UK binary and unified systems

In the UK, institutional differentiation is a key lens to understand the stratification of not only student enrolment (Boliver 2011) but also staff recruitment. The first expansion of the system in the 1960s was driven by institutional differentiation between the traditional universities and the public sector of HE including colleges and polytechnics (Figure 6). Under this binary system, staff from the public sector were employed by local governments until 1988 before those institutions became autonomous and obtained a university charter in 1992 (Pratt, 1997). The differential in resources and prestige within the binary

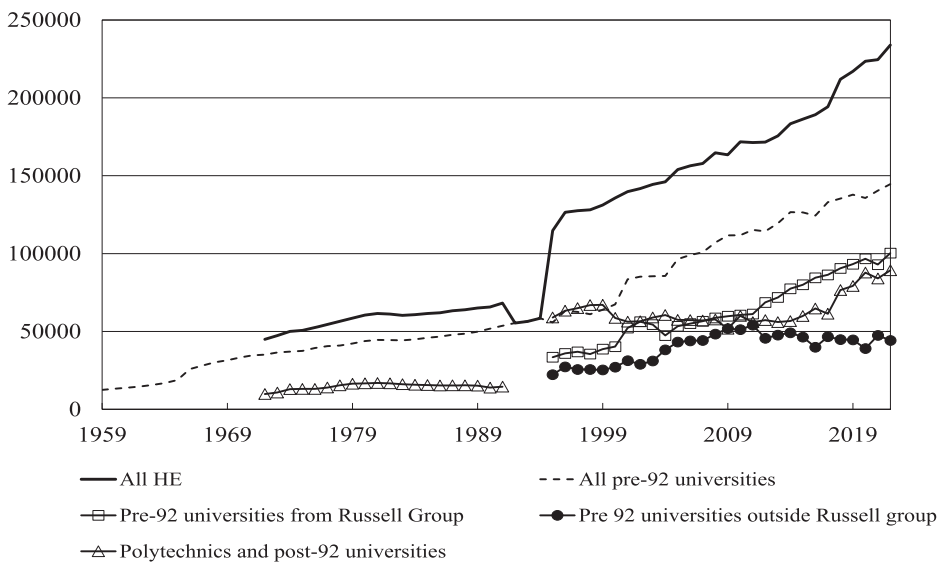


Figure 6. Distribution of academic staff by type of institution in the UK 1959–2022. Sources: DESa 1961–1990; DESb 1988–93; HESAb 1995–current; UFC 1989–1994; UGCa 1920–1965; UGCb 1966–1979; UGCc 1980–1988.

system between the traditional universities and the polytechnics (Carpentier 2021) was reflected by significant differential between their SSR (Figure 7).

The second phase of expansion under the unified system was initially driven by the (ex-polytechnics) post-92 universities, newly independent from local government, and after 2003 increasingly by the traditional pre-1992 (especially those from the Russell group elite research universities after 2012) in a context of decline of public funding and increased marketisation. The sectorial expansion of recruitment (Figure 6) and variations in spending per students and SSR must be understood with this in mind. In any case, Figure 7 shows that the persistent inequalities in status and resources between pre-92 and post-1992 despite unification (Carpentier 2021) are reflected by significant variations in SSR. Inequalities are even more pronounced when the Russell group universities are considered. In other words, the more socially advantaged benefit from the most funded and pedagogically resourced and supported institutions.

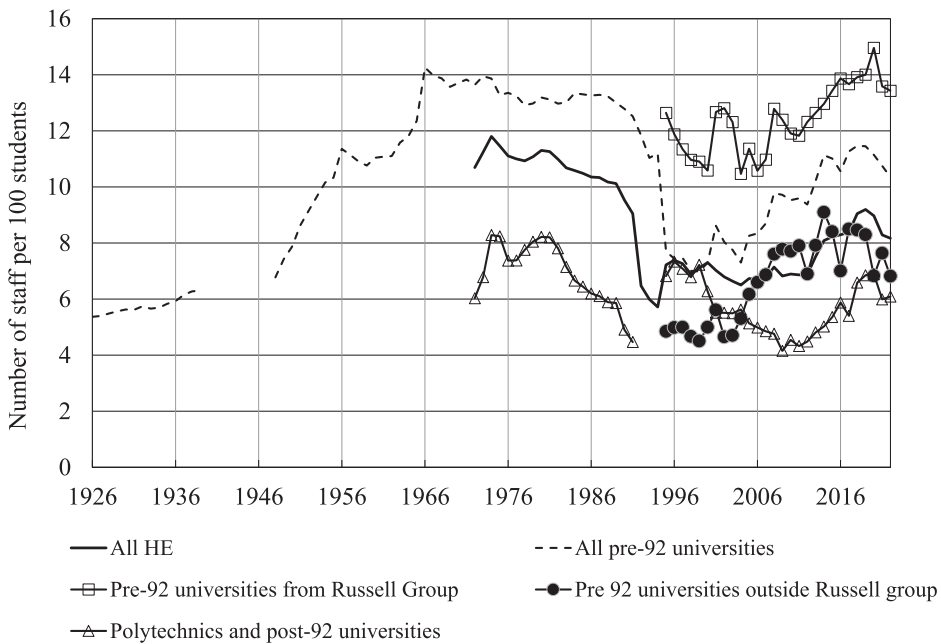


Figure 7. Student/staff ratio by type of institution in the UK. 1926-2022. Sources: Carpentier, V. 2004; DESa 1961-1990; DESb 1988-93; HESAa 1995-current; HESAb 1995-current; UFC 1989-1994; UGCa 1920-1965; UGCb 1966-1979; UGCc 1980-1988.

We observe in both countries a link between the distribution of the workforce across the system and the process of institutional differentiation which both mirror and contribute to inequalities in the distribution of resources.

Three historical arrangements of the academic workforce and a dual labour market

We use this long-term analysis to propose a broader reflection on the process of historical professional arrangement of the academic workforce. We observed a similar two-stage pattern of casualisation resulting from combined processes of segmentation and differentiation. We

Table 1. Periodisation of HE expansion and transformation of academic staff.

| | Eras | HE system expansion | Groups of academic staff |
|------------|--|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Until 1960 | Traditional | Elite HE | Permanent |
| 1960–2000 | Fordist | First massification | Permanent/Casualised |
| 2000 | Neoliberal managerialist (UK) Technocratic managerialist (Fr) | Second massification | Permanent/Casualised/ Precarised |

identify in Table 1 three periods corresponding to specific historical arrangements of the academic workforce in a context of growth and transformation of HE systems.

These configurations do not replace each other but coexist, with the current period combining two components in the academic labour market.

The age of the academic elites: nineteenth century to the second world war

This first period is characterised by a workforce configuration dominated by traditional permanent staff (chair system in France and tenure in the UK) with a limited casual workforce as potential substitutes in a holding pattern. In these small systems, staff number is limited and careers are linear, even if their pace varies across time (large recruitment limits the possibilities of entry for the next generation, creating cyclical blockages). It is a closed and Malthusian labour market.

The age of the Fordist massification and the emerging casualised academic: second half of twentieth century.

This period of the first massification was driven by increasing numbers of permanent staff complemented by a stronger use of casual staff (especially after the 1970s crisis) facing less certain, waiting situations. In this second configuration, their number exceeds that of permanent staff, and careers can be temporarily faster (depending on recruitment needs) but this then creates barriers for those who have not obtained permanent positions. This configuration is characterised by two phases with a period of casualisation leading potentially to permanent positions. It is an open labour market in the sense that a reserve of casual staff has the opportunity (not the guarantee) to join the group of permanent staff. This configuration is characterised by a stronger link between the division of academic labour between institutions and professional segmentation.

The managerial age, the second massification, and the new marginalised academics:

Over the last 20 years, and especially since the sharper decline of public funding following the 2008 crisis, the categories of permanent and casual staff have been complemented by a growing third category of precarious workers, working on a piecework basis and without a contract of even medium duration. Permanent workers are not the majority anymore in the UK (45%). In France the number of precarious workers known as *vacataires* is higher than the number of permanent and contract staff. The gap between the two

groups is growing. The profession is segmenting, not only between those who have job guarantees and others but within the groups themselves with an increasing stratification of institutions and teaching conditions. A dual labour market exists with one component that functions in the casualist mode of the previous period and the other that brings together a part of the casual staff that are unlikely to ever become permanent, and the precarised staff. The increasing stratification of institutions (and the hierarchy of positions that it induces) further complicates this segmentation. Massification is mainly taken on board by these invisible workers questioning the difference between a formal and informal workforce and the implications in terms of inequalities.

Concluding remarks

It is notable that the three historical arrangements of the academic profession are observed in two HE systems built on very different modes of operation: one still a public system, and the other an increasingly marketised one. In a sense, this suggests that it is not only the structure of the system itself that influences the arrangements of the academic profession, but also the logic of overall HE system transformation. Rather than convergence (Zapp and Ramirez 2019), we point to similar tensions between underfunding and massification affecting both HE systems. Those tensions affected the expansion of the academic workforce and its shape following similar processes of segmentation and institutional differentiation. In both countries, those processes led to the creation of three categories of staff and a dual labour market. The three categories appeared incrementally, responding to the successive needs for expansion of the HE system: the permanent staff, the longest-established, catered for the need of the elite HE system (pre-1960s); the casual staff appeared to meet the needs of teaching of the first massification (from the 1970s to the 1990s); the precarised staff grew to cope with the underfunded second massification after the 1990s. The emerging categories have not replaced the others, and the three categories currently coexist within a dual and unequal labour market. Tenured and contractual staff, and marginally a few precarious staff and functions are gathered in a highly stratified primary market which allows a possibility for career construction. The secondary labour market is for precarious staff, conceived as a variable of adjustment, taking an increasing number of tasks according to logics which leave little room for the pursuit of upward careers.

This similarity is particularly interesting even though the two systems retain their main specificities. Despite a common path towards a stronger stratification of HE systems, the management of the academic workforce retains its own national characteristics. UK universities have been autonomous in relation to human resources for a long time now (despite persistent national regulations). By contrast, the modes of regulation of the profession remain centralised in France (national rules set salaries and career development) (Musselin 2021). The French academic employment market is still marked by an apparent uniformity of positions (linked to a national definition of equality in 'academic employment') as opposed to the stronger professional hierarchy in the UK strengthened by the existence of a competitive market between institutions.

In the persistent context of public spending restrictions, universities can no longer recruit a sufficient number of permanent staff to meet their teaching and administrative needs. This explains the use of precarious staff whose share of academic workload has increased steadily as a result, and whose poor quality of contracts (both financially and

administratively) might result in some cases in a deterioration of the relationship between permanent and casual staff.

This structural homology (an academic workforce organised in similar three categories and a dual market) is particularly interesting because it raises the question of the conditions under which HE systems can be massified, regardless of how they are organised. A key similarity is the budgetary restrictions on public funding. In France, this produced an underfunded public system (Carpentier 2012, 2018). In the increasingly marketised UK system where fees kept on increasing, this generated a movement of public-private substitution of funding which shifted rather than increased resources and created inequalities within and between institutions (Carpentier 2021). This has resulted, in both countries in the choice of the most economical solution (a precarisation of staff) without consideration of the risks of growing inequalities that it induces within the academic workforce as a whole but also amongst students. This suggests that addressing some of the inequalities (impacting both staff and students) associated with the massification process observed in both countries, necessitates a combined revival of public investment and a reorganisation of HE systems and their academic workforce.

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