

# Is New Public Management Redefining Professional Boundaries and Changing Power Relations Within Higher Education Institutions?

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The literature on higher education tends to assume that changes in higher education institutions promoted a redefinition of boundaries between academic and administrative staff. Academics perceive a decrease in the control over their own work due to the increasing presence of non-academic managers. The presence of new public management and managerialism has also been apparent in Portugal since the end of the 90's. Several studies have been developed to understand the impact of these changes, but few of them concentrate on the administrative side. The aim of this paper is to examine the changing landscape of professional boundaries in higher education institutions in a binary system like the Portuguese one. Our main finding is that even though non-teaching staff are nowadays recognised as more qualified and more relevant even in terms of the visibility of their work, the traditional roles assigned to both the teaching and non-teaching staff are still predominant, especially in terms of the clearly asymmetrical power relations between these two groups.

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## 1. Changes in Higher Education Institutions and the Redefinition of Professional Power and Control<sup>1</sup>

The institutional environment surrounding higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe has changed profoundly in the last two decades. According to Guy Neave

...few periods in the history of the universities in Europe have witnessed so many changes and that across so many dimensions as has been the lot of higher education over the course of the past two decades. (Neave, 2015, p. 15).

These changes, which encompass transformations in the role of the state in regulating the higher education sector, in higher education institutions' governance and management models, and also in students and professional staff – have been introducing increasing institutional complexity and ambiguity to this sector.

These reforms have been analysed under the framework of New Public Management, managerialism and governance concepts. Even if there are relevant differences between these concepts, they all tend to classify changes that are common to higher education reforms in different countries (Bezes et al., 2012). Some of the principles sustaining these reforms in public sectors include:

### Principles of reforms in public sectors

- Imperatives of efficiency and efficacy;
- the creation of quasi-market mechanisms based on a great diversity of institutions, which deliver the service;
- complex relationships between public and private services providers competing for resources; and
- decentralised control and accountability for results based on the idea of education as a service which is orientation to the customer needs (Carvalho & Bruckmann, 2014).

Guy Neave (2012) refers to the existence of an evaluative state that changes not only the relationships between the state and the institutions, but also the institutions themselves.

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New governance and management models are implemented with the intention of deconstructing traditional bureaucratic structures through a reduction in the collegial bodies, greater concentration of power at the top, the increasing participation of external stakeholders in decision-making and the creation of diverse mechanisms to assure internal quality and accountability systems. Adding to these, the need to find new funding sources has resulted in attempts to institutionalise new organisational models centred on a closer relationship with society, trying to materialize universities' third mission (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000) and implement an entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1994, 2004; Shattock, 2005).

### **New governance and management models**

In the countries that have pioneered the implementation of this evaluative state (such as the Anglo-Saxon countries), the transformations in the higher education institutions' organisational structures and culture were accompanied by an increasing importance of the role of the administrative staff. The tendency towards greater specialisation in the administrative functions, as well as demands for increasing numbers of professionals on the administrative career-track, were reported in higher education institutions in the UK (Collinson, 2006), Australia (Dobson, 2000), Canada (Miller, 1995) and Norway (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004).

The increasing presence of administrative staff in these institutions has turned them into a relevant object of analysis. Academic and administrative staff are usually defined in opposite and exclusive ways. While academics concentrate their activities and professional identities in their teaching and research duties, administrative staff are mainly identified as having bureaucratic-administrative duties. This division was one of the main pillars of higher education institutions as "professional bureaucracies". The literature tends to identify a divergence of interests and activities between the two (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007; Enders & de Weert, 2009). However, the scope of duties held by administrative staff raises questions about the permanence of two divergent and exclusionary groups. Assuming that a professionalization process is in place for this occupational group (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004) it is relevant to ask how professional boundaries between teaching and non-teaching staff are being negotiated and redefined.

The (re-)definition of professional boundaries between the two groups is usually assumed to translate into an increase in the participation of non-teaching staff in relevant institutional decision-making processes and a decrease in academics' autonomy. Based on the analysis of academics' autonomy within Higher Education Institutions (Carvalho & Santiago, 2015) academics perceive an erosion of their autonomy because the competitive markets and institutional accountability requirements, associated with administrators, are assumed to cause a loss in control over their work (Deem, 1998; Trowler, 2002; Peters, 2004). Nevertheless, in an empirical study developed in the Australian context,

### **Changes in professional boundaries**

Pitman (2000, p. 171) found that some administrative staff felt that academics occupied more power positions and some even expressed a feeling of inferiority when dealing with academic staff members.

However, there are more positive views of the redefinition of boundaries. Whitchurch (2008) argues that the emergence of extended projects (for instance related to student transitions, community partnerships or professional practices) contribute to blur boundaries, creating a third space in which the traditional split between academic and administrative service is re-oriented creating a partnership between teaching and non-teaching staff (Whitchurch, 2008).

### **Changes in Portugal since the 1990's**

The tendencies to reform public higher education have also been present in Portugal. The managerialism narratives were already in place in the 1990's (Santiago & Carvalho, 2004; Santiago & Carvalho, 2012), but it was only in 2007 that changes in the higher education (HE) legal framework promoted transformations in HEIs organisational structures (Carvalho & Bruckmann, 2014). These transformations have been analysed, but knowledge about occupational and professional groups and their cultures within academia is relatively sparse, and the published work has tended to concentrate almost exclusively upon teaching staff (Carvalho, 2012; Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a, b; Santiago, Carvalho, & Cardoso, 2015).

The aim to redress this imbalance and to focus on an occupational group which has not received enough research attention was the motive for designing the research upon which this article is based. It is our conviction that the Portuguese case has some specificities that are relevant to the international discussion on the (re)definition of professional boundaries.

## **2. A Brief Glance at the Situation of Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff in Portuguese Public Higher Education Institutions**

The Portuguese higher education system, which at the the time of the 1974 revolution was extremely small and elitist, has undergone major changes and a very rapid expansion in recent decades (Neave & Amaral, 2012).

### **Portugal's binary system**

It is today a rather modern and diverse binary system which comprises university and polytechnic institutions and has high participation rates both in the public and private sector. As we have seen before, studies addressing the professional groups within Portuguese academia are relatively scarce and even then almost exclusively focus on teaching staff, rendering our knowledge about other groups, namely non-teaching staff, almost non-existent.

Although we acknowledge that the division between the two different groups is inadequate for addressing all the complexities of higher education staff and roles, we have decided, considering the absence of studies in the Portuguese context, to adopt this designation present in higher education legal framework and in the official statistics. Higher education staff in Portugal are classified according to their participation in teaching duties. Assuming a traditional perspective, all those who have a teaching workload are classified as teaching staff and are associated with an academic career. In opposition, those who do not have teaching workload are classified as non-teaching staff (even those who are devoted to research activities) and, from this perspective, are not classified as academics. Further studies need to be developed to better understand the typology of existent groups and to clarify the complexities within higher education staff in Portugal.<sup>2</sup>

**Differentiation between teaching staff and non-teaching staff**

In relation to the private sector there is not even any statistical data about the number, roles or qualifications of non-teaching staff. However, some insights about this group might be gathered when analysing statistical data concerning public institutions which are by far the largest and most prestigious in the Portuguese higher education system.

**Lack of studies**

According to official statistical data from 2011 (the most recent year with complete and comparable information concerning both teaching and non-teaching staff), Portuguese public higher education institutions employed around 39,600 professionals, 59.6% of whom were teaching staff and 40.4% non-teaching staff (Table 2). Unlike in other countries, most of the research activities are developed by the teaching staff, since personnel dedicated solely to research constitutes only 2% of the non-teaching staff in higher education institutions.

**Comparison with other European countries**

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<sup>2</sup> In order to more fully address the complexity within teaching and non-teaching staff's careers, we have performed an analysis assuming two more groups within them. Assuming those who are more senior and in top positions have more possibilities to attain management/administrative roles, and have distinct perceptions of power and control, we proceeded to create a subdivision in each group between junior and senior staff. However, the analysis reveals that in our subset there are no statistically significant differences between these groups.

	Universities	Polytechnic	Total
Teaching	14,679	8,920	23,599
%	62.2	37.8	100
Non-Teaching	11,883	4,173	16,056
%	74	26	100
Total	26,562	13,093	39,655
Total %	67	33	100

**Table 1** Distribution of Teaching and Non-Teaching staff among Portuguese Universities and Polytechnics (Source: Directorate General of Education and Science statistics, 2011)

	Universities	Polytechnic	Total
Teaching	14,679	8,920	23,599
%	55.3	68.1	59.6
Non-Teaching	11,883	4,173	16,056
%	44.7	31.9	40.4
Total	26,562	13,093	39,655
Total %	100	100	100

**Table 2** Percentage of Teaching and Non-Teaching staff in Portuguese public HEIs (Source: Directorate General of Education and Science statistics, 2011)

Universities are not only responsible for employing teaching and non-teaching staff (67%, Table 1), but also have a considerably higher proportion of non-teaching staff (44.7%, Table 2) when compared to polytechnic institutions (31.9%, Table 2).

Non-teaching staff represents a somewhat lower proportion of overall staff in Portuguese higher education institutions when compared to other countries with more mature systems, namely Anglo-Saxon countries and some northern European ones, where the percentage of non-teaching staff is usually estimated to total around or over 50% (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Dobson, 2000).

In addition, whereas the recent rise in the number and power of non-teaching staff in academia in these countries has usually been associ-

ated with the inclusion of highly qualified personnel in technical and managing positions, the great majority of non-teaching staff in Portuguese higher education institutions still have relatively low qualifications (around 60% of them don't even have a college degree) and only around 4% of them work as middle or top managers.

### 3. Methodology

The empirical data used in this paper is part of a set of indicators developed for a wider research project focussed on studying the changes occurring in recent years in a comprehensive set of dimensions of Portuguese higher education institutions. In order to be as representative as possible the data was gathered through an online questionnaire distributed among the teaching and non-teaching staff of all public and private higher education institutions, resulting in a fairly solid sample of almost 2,000 valid respondents (over 350 of which were non-teaching staff in technical and managerial positions). We have opted to include only non-teaching personnel in higher responsibility positions since these are the ones supposedly more affected by the changes described in the introduction.

**Source of  
the empirical data**

In order to address the questions raised in this paper, namely whether and how reforms in higher education institutions inspired by New Public Management (NPM) are changing the relationships between teaching and non-teaching staff in the academia, we have selected two sets of indicators (Table 2). In the first group we try to understand how these two professional groups perceive the changes occurring in higher education institutions concerning non-teaching staff, such as their crescent visibility and the increase in their qualifications. For the second set of indicators, we question whether those changes altered the relationships between teaching and non-teaching staff, namely through the perceived amount of power and control exercised by each group upon the work developed by the other and the degree of collaboration between both groups.

**Two sets of indicators**

The data was gathered through five point Likert scales (from 1 – “totally disagree” through 5 – “totally agree”) with which we aim to analyse the differences between teaching and non-teaching staff's perceptions about these indicators. An additional divide between the respondents was made through based on higher education subsector of the institution where they work. It is our contention that given the differences between universities and polytechnic institutions, which, both historically and by statute of law, have slightly different objectives and characteristics, the effects of the changes occurring in the higher education system might be somewhat different.

**Gathering through  
'Likert' scales**

Dimension 1 Changes concerning non-teaching staff	Dimension 2 Power and control in working relations
1. Increase of non-teaching staff's qualifications	1. Reduction of autonomy in one's own work
2. Increase of working hours	2. Non-teaching staff holds the control in one's area
3. The work carried out by teachers could be done by non-teaching staff	3. Non-teaching staff controls teachers' work
4. Non-teaching staff's work is invisible in the organisation	4. Teaching staff controls non-teachers' work
5. There are strong hierarchical relations between teaching and non-teaching staff	5. Non-teaching staff has a collaborative attitude towards teaching staff
	6. Teaching staff has a collaborative attitude towards non-teaching staff

**Table 3** Dimensions and indicators selected for this study

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Changes in the Academic Profession

**Two major conclusions concerning the first dimension**

In this subsection we will discuss the results of the first dimension of this study. Looking at the indicators that compose this dimension (Table 3), there are two major conclusions that may be advanced and that will be further analysed in more detail: (I) Teaching and non-teaching staff have significantly different perceptions of the changes occurring in higher education institutions; and (II) these differences are usually felt in somewhat distinct ways in universities and polytechnics.

		Universities							Polytechnics						
		1	2	3	4	5	tot	$\chi^2$	1	2	3	4	5	tot	$\chi^2$
Increase of non-teaching staff's qualification	T	32	104	174	291	69	670	*	27	78	155	302	116	678	-
	%	4.78	15.5	25.9	43.4	10.3	100		3.98	11.5	22.8	44.5	17.1	100	
	N-T	23	34	23	82	39	201		9	23	27	65	20	144	
	%	11.4	16.9	11.4	40.8	19.4	100		6.25	15.9	18.7	45.1	13.8	100	
Increase of working hours	T	20	52	114	294	250	730	*	13	59	109	276	286	743	*
	%	2.74	7.12	15.6	40.2	34.2	100		1.75	7.94	14.6	37.1	38.4	100	
	N-T	19	13	17	50	105	204		8	10	21	61	45	145	
	%	9.31	6.37	8.33	24.5	51.4	100		5.52	6.9	14.4	42.0	31.0	100	



The work carried out by teachers could be done by non-teaching staff	T	12	56	89	296	259	712	*	7	58	80	269	292	706	*
	%	1.69	7.87	12.5	41.5	36.3	100		0.99	8.22	11.3	38.1	41.3	100	
	N-T	16	33	36	61	27	173		14	38	29	39	12	132	
	%	9.25	19.0	20.8	35.2	15.6	100		10.6	28.7	21.9	29.5	9.09	100	
Non-teaching staff's work is invisible in the organisation	T	88	415	114	71	18	706	*	83	411	121	65	15	695	*
	%	12.4	58.7	16.1	10.0	2.55	100		11.9	59.1	17.4	9.35	2.16	100	
	N-T	17	72	38	51	18	196		17	52	33	29	7	138	
	%	8.67	36.7	19.3	26.0	9.18	100		12.3	37.6	23.9	21.0	5.07	100	
There are strong hierarchical relationships between teaching and non-teaching staff	T	31	209	247	183	42	712		39	305	229	108	19	700	
	%	4.35	29.3	34.6	25.7	5.9	100	*	5.57	43.5	32.7	15.4	2.71	100	*
	N-T	3	31	39	67	44	184		1	34	36	44	23	138	
	%	1.63	16.8	21.2	36.4	23.9	100		0.72	24.6	26.0	31.8	16.6	100	

**Table 4 Working changes by teaching and non-teaching staff in universities and polytechnics<sup>3</sup>**

As for the first of these indicators, the increase in the qualifications of non-teaching staff is generally recognised as a trend by teaching and non-teaching staff in both universities and polytechnics. However, there is a more dispersed distribution among non-teaching staff. Non-teachers who either totally agree (19.4%) or totally disagree (11.4%) with this notion are twice that of teaching staff sharing this perception. This is probably due to a better understanding of people from within the group of non-teaching staff who may recognise that this increase in qualifications has not yet fully manifested or at least does not meet the current requirements. An increase in worked hours in recent years is generally felt by most personnel universities and polytechnics alike

**Increase in non-teaching staff's qualifications**

<sup>3</sup> Likert scales are coded as: 1 "totally disagree" through 5 "totally agree". Absolute number and percentage (italics) of respondents are shown. Chi squares mark the differences between teaching (T) and non-teaching (N-T) staff and are flagged as "\*" if below p<0.05 level.

(over 70% agree or totally agree with this claim). However, while this increase is more sharply felt by the non-teaching staff in universities (51.5% totally agree compared to 34.3% of teaching staff), the situation is reversed in polytechnics (31% and 38.5% respectively). As for the perceptions about the degree of work carried out by teachers that could be done by non-teaching staff, there is, as one may expect, a significant difference between teachers and non-teachers.

The great majority of teachers in universities (around 78%) believe that they perform tasks that could be done by non-teaching staff. This basically implies that there is nowadays a strong pressure on scholars to perform administrative tasks that they would happily unload on non-teaching staff. The distribution among non-teaching staff is much less skewed toward the affirmative opinion, but nevertheless a slight majority affirms that they agree with this notion. In other words, in universities even the non-teaching staff often declare that they could perform more tasks that are currently assumed by the teaching staff. The degree of work carried out by teachers that could be done by non-teaching staff is an item that reinforces the previous evidence about the peculiarity of polytechnics, since the differences found here are more pronounced than those seen in the universities. In polytechnics around 80% of teachers believe that some of their tasks could be carried out by non-teaching staff, whereas only 39% of the non-teaching staff share this belief.

#### **Invisibility of non-teaching staff's work**

The invisibility of non-teaching staff's work in one's university is agreed on by 26% of non-teaching staff and another almost 10% totally agree with this affirmation. The difference from the teaching staff is significant, as more than 70% of them disagree or totally disagree that non-teaching contributions are not recognised. This point lets us argue that there might be a problem of status recognition in many Portuguese universities, since teaching staff strongly see the emerging role of non-teaching staff, but the latter do not detect this. The visibility of teaching staff in one's polytechnic tells a coherent story if we take into account the previous items discussed. Here, non-teaching staff are more visible compared to universities: only a quarter of non-teaching staff complain about this invisibility and about half disagrees or completely disagrees that there is a problem of invisibility (12.3% + 37.7%).

Lastly, academic personnel were asked to what extent they believe the relations between teachers and non-teachers are hierarchical. Again, non-teaching staff feel much more often that this is the case in comparison to teaching staff in both universities and polytechnics. However, the percentage of both teachers and non-teachers that agree with this is considerably higher in universities (around 60% of non-teachers and 32% of teachers) than in polytechnics (48% and 18% respectively). This may signify that for teachers in polytechnic institutions the bureaucratic roles do not let them have the same leeway in everyday work that scholars might have in more traditional higher education institutions.

These results reveal that the analysis of the changes in professional boundaries and power relations between different professional groups must take into consideration the type of institution where these groups interact. Additionally, based on these data one can raise the hypothesis that younger institutions (i.e. polytechnics) may be characterised by a less hierarchical environment where, as a consequence, the redefinition of power relations can occur more easily.

**Results depend on the type of institution**

#### 4.2 The Autonomy and Control of Teaching and Non-Teaching Positions in Academia

In this subsection we will analyse the differences in the perceptions of teaching and non-teaching staff about the working relationships in Portuguese universities and polytechnic institutions (Table 5). When asked if they felt a decrease in their autonomy in decision-making in their work, there were no significant differences between teaching and non-teaching staff's answers, regardless of where they worked. In both cases, about half the respondents of each group felt that there was a diminishing degree of autonomy, in accordance with more recent literature on the topic (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Carvalho & Santiago, 2010; Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007; Enders & de Weert, 2009).

Universities									Polytechnics						
		1	2	3	4	5	tot	X <sup>2</sup>	1	2	3	4	5	tot	X <sup>2</sup>
Reduction of autonomy about one's own work	T	36	151	187	230	132	736		34	157	197	216	131	735	
	%	4.89	20.5	25.4	31.3	17.9	100		4.6	21	27	29	18	100	
	N-T	11	47	47	60	38	203	-	7	30	37	48	22	144	-
	%	5.42	23.2	23.2	29.6	18.7	100		4.9	21	26	33	15	100	
Non-teaching staff holds the control in one's area	T	187	324	103	76	18	708		202	321	86	63	15	687	
	%	26.4	45.8	14.6	10.7	2.54	100	*	29	47	13	9.2	2.2	100	*
	N-T	24	56	31	55	31	197		18	33	19	54	13	137	
	%	12.2	28.4	15.7	27.9	15.7	100		13	24	14	39	9.5	100	
Non-teaching staff controls teachers' work	T	129	312	164	84	26	715		125	305	142	101	29	702	
	%	18	43.6	22.9	11.8	3.64	100	*	18	43	20	14	4.1	100	
	N-T	55	82	30	11	1	179		29	68	19	15	1	132	
	%	30.7	45.8	16.8	6.15	0.56	100		22	52	14	11	0.8	100	

Teaching staff controls non-teachers' work	T	100	255	223	120	4	702		129	311	177	66	9	692	
	%	14.3	36.3	31.8	17.1	0.57	100	*	19	45	26	9.5	1.3	100	*
	N-T	8	30	39	77	23	177		4	47	26	42	10	129	
	%	4.52	17	22	43.5	13	100		3.1	36	20	33	7.8	100	
Non-teaching staff has a collaborative attitude towards teaching staff	T	15	62	180	388	70	715		25	74	176	375	50	700	
	%	2.1	8.67	25.2	54.3	9.79	100	*	3.6	11	25	54	7.1	100	*
	N-T	0	11	29	110	29	179		2	7	21	89	13	132	
	%	0	6.15	16.2	61.5	16.2	100		1.5	5.3	16	67	9.9	100	
Teaching staff has a collaborative attitude towards non-teaching staff	T	15	89	284	271	23	682		10	96	261	281	33	681	
	%	2.2	13.1	41.6	39.7	3.37	100	*	1.5	14	38	41	4.9	100	*
	N-T	14	66	59	38	0	177		18	48	35	33	0	134	
	%	7.91	37.3	33.3	21.5	0	100		13	36	26	25	0	100	

**Table 5 Working relationships and representations by teaching and non-teaching staff and by universities and polytechnics<sup>4</sup>**

The next three indicators focus on power relations between teaching and non-teaching staff in the academia. For the first indicator, we asked respondents from both groups whether they felt that their own work was controlled by non-teaching staff with responsibilities in the area (namely managers). As for the subsequent two indicators we asked respondents whether they felt that the teaching staff controlled the work of the non-teaching staff in their institution, and vice-versa. The analysis of these three indicators reveals some interesting conclusions. The first of these is that there is a very resilient autonomy of teaching staff in Portuguese academia. The great majority of teachers in both universities and polytechnics feel that non-teaching staff are unable to exert any type of significant control over their own work or over teachers' work in general in their institution.

<sup>4</sup> Likert scales are coded as: 1 "totally disagree" through 5 "totally agree". Absolute number and percentage (italics) of respondents are shown. Chi squares mark the differences between teaching (T) and non-teaching (N-T) staff and are flagged as "\*" if below  $p < 0.05$  level.

As a result one may say that even though the teaching staff feels that their autonomy has decreased in the last years, this is not due to a re-definition of power inside HEIs, and even less to an increase in the power and control of non-teaching staff, and especially of managers, over their work.

In fact, contrary to what happened in other sectors of the public domain, as in health, the reforms in higher education did not involve the presence of professional managers within higher education institutions. The major changes were related to the increasing presence of stakeholders, but they only represent a minority and there is still discussion regarding their real power within academia (Bruckman & Carvalho, 2014). What seems to be happening is that academics feel their autonomy has decreased due to a greater intervention of the state. Academics' autonomy is thus indirectly limited. As the way the state controls higher education institutions has changed, based on ex-post mechanisms and framed by the evaluative state, academics' control has changed as well. The emergence of new mechanisms of accountability (which include individual and institutional performance assessment or evaluation) make academics feel that they lose autonomy not within their institution in particular but at a more macro level (Carvalho & Santiago, 2015). Consequently, academics feel that they lose autonomy as the state increases its control over the system.

**Greater intervention  
of the State**

For the non-teaching staff the situation is somewhat different. Whilst a significant proportion of non-teaching staff (around 43% in universities and 49% in polytechnics) agree that their own work is controlled by other non-teaching staff in positions of responsibility, an equally great number of them also feel that in general terms the work of non-teaching staff in their institution is significantly controlled by the teaching staff (over 56% in universities and around 41% in polytechnics). And yet, the teaching staff to a large extent reject this power-holding position over non-teaching staff, particularly in polytechnics where only 10.8% of teachers agree with this claim, but also in universities where this number rises to a still relatively low proportion of 18%. The last conclusion that might be gathered along this analysis is precisely that the power relations in Portuguese polytechnics are still somewhat less pronounced than in universities. In the polytechnics the non-teaching staff both feel that their own work is more controlled by other non-teaching staff and that in general the teaching staff exerts less control over non-teaching staff's activities. This may be related to the fact that these are more recent institutions in Portugal which have distinct cultural-cognitive frameworks since they are more vocationally oriented.

**Asymmetry of power**

The next two variables show to what extent teaching and non-teaching staff display a cooperative attitude towards one another. In this regard, both teachers and non-teachers consider the latter cooperative or very cooperative towards the teaching staff (around 64% of teachers and 78% of non-teachers in both universities and polytechnics). Likewise,

**Differences between  
universities and  
polytechnics**

both teachers and non-teachers acknowledge that the teaching staff is considerably less cooperative towards the non-teaching staff. However, while there is a still very significant number of teachers that consider the teaching staff cooperative or very cooperative towards the non-teaching staff (43% in universities and 46% in polytechnics) only 21.5% of the non-teachers in universities and 25% in polytechnics share this belief (and absolutely none of these consider that the teaching staff display a very cooperative attitude towards them). It is thus clear that in Portuguese higher education institutions it is still the non-teaching staff who are more frequently acknowledged as the personnel who are expected to help the teachers, whereas the collaboration in the other direction is seldom present, even if teachers express a different perception of their attitudes towards non-teaching staff.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

Summing up the main results, we may claim that in some aspects the importance of the non-teaching staff's work has been growing in Portuguese higher education institutions in recent years. Non-teaching staff are nowadays recognised as more qualified, more able to perform administrative tasks currently in the hands of the teachers (particularly by the teaching staff) and as having a higher degree of visibility in these institutions. However, the most striking conclusion that we may draw is that in spite of these changes the traditional roles assigned to both the teaching and non-teaching staff are still predominant, namely in terms of the clearly asymmetric power relations between these groups. This is particularly felt (even though not exclusively) by the non-teaching staff and more noticeably in the universities where these hierarchical relations are more evident and where teachers are more often seen as controlling the non-teaching staff's work (but not the other way around as in some other countries). In polytechnics on the other hand this power asymmetry, even though present, is somewhat less clear, a further hint that universities are domains of more resilient traditional relationships rather than, on average, smaller and more recently established institutions like the polytechnics. To sum up one can say that in spite of the changes promoted in the last years in Portuguese higher education institutions, the professional boundaries and the existent power relations were not called into question, especially within universities.

In light of these conclusions it is possible to suggest that institutional leaders still have some latitude to address the division of work between teaching and non-teaching staff as well as to promote a better understanding in both groups of the other's roles and importance within the academia. Simultaneously, policy makers should rethink higher education institutions' autonomy in order to assure that the academics maintain their focus and freedom to develop their work.

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