

Chapter 2

Academic Work at the Periphery: Why Argentine Scholars Are Satisfied, *Despite All*

Mónica Marquina and Gabriel Rebello

2.1 Introduction

The academic profession in Argentina can be differentiated from those in the industrialised nations, but it shares some common characteristics with other Latin American countries. Academic staff in the region have traditionally been dominated by part-time staff; therefore, most teachers do not conduct research in addition to teaching. The low teaching salary levels have been another feature of Latin American university conditions. But beyond these characteristics, there are others related to the dependence on the centre. The academic profession in Argentina, in the context of Latin America, is a profession at the periphery. Patterns of academic work in industrialised countries set the standards worldwide, and Latin American academic systems are influenced from the north. Thus, Argentine scholars, like those of other peripheral countries, are dependent on the main centres of knowledge and scientific networks worldwide, with great inequality regarding resources and infrastructure. Academic staff around the world is increasingly becoming part of a global academic community. In this context, developing countries are at the bottom of a global system of unequal academic relationships (Altbach 2004).

A quick glance at the international scene shows that Argentine academics, despite these conditions, have an average level of satisfaction compared with the rest of the countries in the Changing Academic Profession (CAP) survey. Argentina ranks third among the countries whose academics perceive that working conditions had improved when compared with the beginning of their academic careers. These data must be analysed in context and in depth in order to find explanations for these perceptions.

The purpose of this chapter is to link the level of satisfaction of Argentine academics with the characteristics of the academic profession in a peripheral country.

M. Marquina (✉) • G. Rebello
Instituto del Desarrollo Humano, Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento,
Los Polvorines, Argentina
e-mail: mmarqui@ungs.edu.ar

Why, despite these conditions, are the academics in Argentina quite satisfied? Which are the most satisfied? To what extent are satisfaction levels linked to the degree of approximation of their working conditions to international standards?

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study of the satisfaction of academics in Argentina is an unexplored area, unlike other countries in the region such as Mexico (Galaz-Fontes 2002; Padilla González et al. 2008). Studying the emotional state resulting from the appreciation of the work or from the work experience (Locke 1976) of university professors not only allows us to know more about the academic profession but also provides insights for improvement of institutions of higher education. Although it has been shown that there is no direct relationship between employee satisfaction and specific consequences such as productivity or staff turnover, more satisfied workers tend to show more pro-organisational behaviour (Kalleberg 1977), including greater adaptability, cooperation and openness to change. Therefore, knowing their perceptions of their work helps to detect problematic areas in the organisation and to develop relevant alternative solutions (Galaz-Fontes 2002).

Depending on the point of reference, job satisfaction can be studied comprehensively, such as when examining the work as a whole, or specifically, when exploring particular aspects of the work. This chapter considers both forms of approach to the study of satisfaction. Hagedorn (2000) used several individual and environmental characteristics to construct a conceptual framework of academic job satisfaction. She divided the variables that contribute to job satisfaction into two main categories: mediators and triggers. In this chapter, we consider individual and environmental variables of the ‘mediator’ component of Hagedorn’s model, which function as predictors of satisfaction. According to Sabharwal and Corley’s (2009) classification, we can also distinguish three types of variable: demographic, institutional and career.

Within this background, we considered variables that construct three different groups of scholars: two groups belonging to what we have called for Argentina the ‘elite circle’, that is, young and mature scholars who, because of their work situation, are part of the global academic world and take advantage of external incentives, and the remaining vast majority of academics who are part of the periphery (Altbach 2004). The ‘periphery’ group are there for two reasons: they are Argentineans, and they are not part of the Argentina’s elite academic circuit. These variables were cross tabulated with perceptions about the environmental conditions of academic work (Hagedorn 2000).

2.3 The Academic Profession in Argentina

The academic profession in Argentina belatedly begins to take shape towards the middle of the twentieth century. The period 1955–1960 constituted a stage of highly significant qualitative growth that had a profound impact on what at that time could

be described as a clearly identifiable academic profession. It was a time notable for scientific and academic advances, whereby the academic profession clearly advanced towards a strong identity in terms of its disciplinary relevance more than the merely institutional. Heterogeneity, successive institutional disruptions and government interventions in university life, plus the unplanned expansion of the teaching body as a product of the expansion of student enrolments, appear as the main features of the Argentine academic profession.

Another characteristic of academic staff in Argentina is related to the majority presence of part-time teachers (10 h weekly), the proportion of which reached more than 60% and are supposed to devote their time only to teaching tasks. More than 20% have a semi-full-time position (20 h/week), and only 15% are full-timers (40 h/week).

Unlike other countries in the world and also in the region, the possession of a graduate degree is not a generalised condition among Argentine academics. Only 23% have doctorates and the possession of a master's is the case for a similar proportion (Marquina 2009).

The chair¹ is the type of organisation of academic work which predominates in universities, above all in the most traditional. Under this scheme, an academic career is composed of a series of five positions organised hierarchically, distinguished principally into the categories of junior academics or 'auxiliary staff' and senior academics or 'professors'. In theory, the first group takes responsibility for coordinating the work of groups of students' practical assignments and at the same time attends theory classes which are under the supervision of professors.

In general terms, access to positions is decided on by a mechanism termed 'contest of work record and opposition', in which the institution makes an open call for the occupation of a position and selection is made by a board of evaluators composed of peers with positions higher up the hierarchy. In the case of professors, duration of the obtained position extends to 6 or 7 years, at which time an open contest is called to refill the same post. In the case of auxiliary teachers, the time period is shorter. The teaching contest gives to the teacher 'regular' status, or stability, for the duration of the position. This status implies that the teacher cannot be removed – except in extreme circumstances – and that she/he has acquired 'university citizenship', which allows her or him to choose and to be chosen to be on the different bodies or to occupy positions of university governance. Thus, the complexity of this 'contest' mechanism lies in its double impact of quality for academic activity and its political consequence.

Another feature of the Argentinean academic profession is the low level of salaries. Although, on average, university institutions dedicate more than 85% of their budget

¹ 'Cátedra' is the Latin word for chair as in the ones used in medieval universities from which to give lectures and is the traditional organisational way of being employed in universities. Every academic, from assistants to full professors, takes part in one or more cátedras and has different tasks assigned to them according to their rank. Full professors are heads of cátedras and are entitled to determine subject curricula and give lectures ('teóricos'), while assistants usually carry out laboratory duties or small-group discussions.

to personnel expenses and that in recent years teacher remuneration has increased substantially after being frozen for a long period, academic salaries continue to be low today. In spite of this panorama and the limited resources available for research, the greater part of the scholarly output in the country, which translates into more than two-thirds of articles published, is produced in national universities.

On the basis of the neoliberal paradigm, the government which took office in 1989 implemented a political agenda for the sector which was clearly set within the international trends of the era, placing the emphasis on the efficiency of the institutional administration and improvement in educational quality. These policies have modified academic work, their socialisation mechanisms and their practices. Thus, a 'type' of academic began to be fostered, characterised by having a high level of graduate education and the requirement that teaching and research duties be developed (Marquina and Fernández Lamarra 2008).

Within this framework, academic activity started to be evaluated according to criteria of productivity in research – more than in teaching – with different incentives and regulations being introduced, which have begun to form themselves into an academic work model that was previously limited to certain specific disciplines. Since then, new options appeared for obtaining research funds or for the specific development of programmes, assigned competitively to institutions or research teams. Even with changes in the national administration and their political paradigms, the new academic model has gone on to form part of practices already imposed on the sector by the Ministry of Education. Thus, the new courses of action for assigning funds had an influence on the activity of a minority of academics. This is because the multiple 'calls' for competitive funds have begun to generate the practice of the design of projects, the filling in of forms and the preparation of reports, arising from initiatives that do not necessarily have anything to do with the mission or institutional priorities but do have a connection with government policies.

2.4 About the Sample and How Satisfaction Was Measured

The Argentina CAP survey comprised all academics in public universities, that is, those teachers in any position and time devoted to work, as the target population. This demarcation is justified by the fact that the private sector is marginal both in terms of students and of teachers, that the information on this reduced number of teachers is non-existent, and that on the whole these teachers also fulfil duties in public universities. As for these, the wide nonuniversity spectrum of higher education acquires characteristics far removed from what is considered academic activity since they have contracts per class hour, they do not carry out research, and their activity is closer to that of a secondary school teacher than to that of an academic. Defining the sample of 826 respondents occurred in a single step, on the basis of the official database of 119,000 teachers available from the System of University Information (SIU) of the National Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 2007.

The distribution of respondents in the sample was similar to that of the total sample except in the case of full- and part-timers, where there was a bias towards full-time teachers among the respondents. Although other variables such as gender or position were weighted in the international database as a decision of all CAP teams, this specific characteristic of Argentine academic profession remained unmodified, so the existence of a small bias has to be considered in international studies such as this.

Satisfaction in this chapter has been measured by considering responses to 33 questions grouped into 8 items, as outlined in Table 2.1:

These questions were answered on five-point Likert scales for 30 of the questions and a four-point scale for the other three. (The three questions regarding personal influence were stated with a four-point scale of value as well as a 'not applicable' option which was different from 'not influential at all' (one of the valid answers)). The 'not applicable' option was not chosen in Argentina survey, so it was not considered. The answers were rearranged to give the highest scores to the highest levels of satisfaction. Thus, a general index could be made by adding all responses, resulting in a scale of 0–162 points, where observed cases range from a minimum of 31 points to a maximum of 125. The sample has a mean of 76 and a standard deviation of 16.28. As shown in Fig. 2.1, total satisfaction has a similar distribution to normal (with kurtosis of 0.361 and skewness of 0.131) that is slightly above the middle of the scale:

For this chapter, responses were analysed according to a series of variables which are considered important in the Argentine system and might define a specific academic profile of people who benefit most and, therefore, belong to an elite academic circle. In particular, we wanted to find out if two of the groups of academics might be adaptative to recent policies and more satisfied with changing conditions. Those variables characterise the position reached within university ranks (academic rank, full- or part-time employment and highest degree obtained) and involvement in research (actual research participation, collaboration with peers, research-teaching preference). In addition, age was taken into account to profile future high-rank academics. These variables showed similar patterns in correlations with the indexes used in order to measure satisfaction. While most of them showed a significant correlation – ($p < 0.05$) using both Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau-b – with research-related and influence-related satisfaction, two of the variables in the first group (rank and time) also display significant correlation with indexes used to describe satisfaction with physical, teaching and research-related conditions (and overall satisfaction too).

The first group, identified here as 'Group A', comprises academics who have the highest scores in variables which represent immersion in academic life and institutions. Group A members are those aged more than 35 years old who are seniors, have a full-time position, have a graduate degree, take part in research, prefer research over teaching and collaborate with peers abroad. This group, referred to here as the 'consolidated' group, represents 12.1% of the total.

The second group, 'Group B', consists in the younger academics (up to 35 years old) with up to an assistant professor position, who have expressed a preference for

Table 2.1 Grouping of 'satisfaction' questions

Item	Sub item	Questions
Overall Satisfaction/improvement conditions [#]		How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your current job? Since you started your career, have the overall working conditions in higher education improved or declined?
Physical job satisfaction	Physical infrastructure	How would you evaluate... ... classrooms? ... computer facilities? ... office space? ... telecommunications?
	Service provision	... technology for teaching? ... secretarial support? ... teaching support staff? ... research support staff?
	Teaching related issues	... classrooms? ... technology for teaching? ... teaching support staff? ... laboratories? ... library facilities?
	Research related issues*	... research equipment? ... research support staff? ... research funding?
Influence = satisfaction		How influential are you, personally, in helping to shape key academic policies at department level? ... at faculty/school level? ... at institutional level? Top-level administrators are providing competent leadership. I am kept informed about what is going on at this institution.
Support = satisfaction		At my institution there is... ... good communication between management and academics. ... collegiality in decision making. ... a strong performance orientation. ... a cumbersome administrative process. ... a supportive attitude towards teaching. ... a supportive attitude towards research. ... professional development for administrative/management duties for individual academics.
Would I do it again?		This is a poor time for a young person to begin an academic career in my field. If I had it to do over again, I would not become an academic. My Job is a source of considerable personal strain.

[#]The question on overall job satisfaction in research institutions does not apply to sampling conducted in the country

*This item and the previous one have a question repeated each, as they consist of indicators used for more than one item

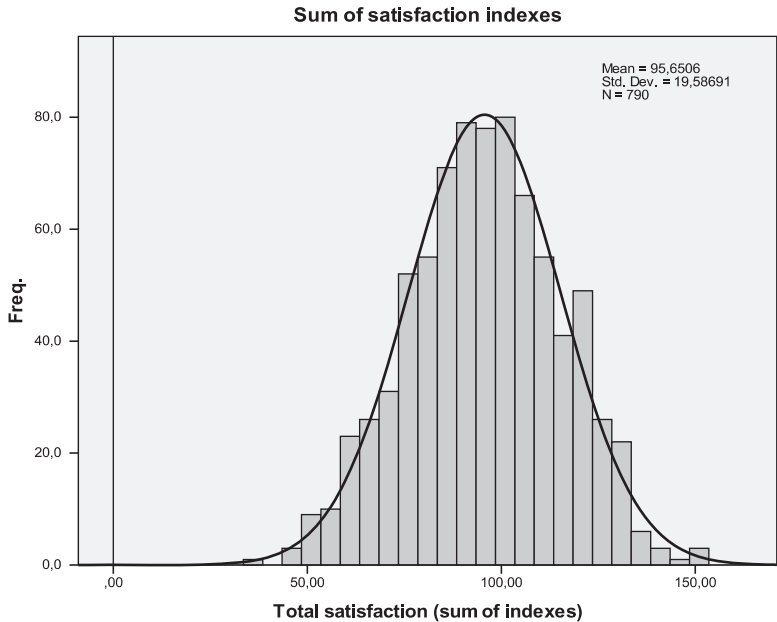


Fig. 2.1 Satisfaction indexes

research over teaching, who were at that time working in research and who have obtained a graduate degree. This group accounts for 3% of the sample and is referred to here as ‘the heirs’.

2.5 Argentina’s Academic Job Satisfaction at a Glance

As can be seen in the tables below, while the general perception about satisfaction seems positive, particularly concerning recent improvements, academics in Argentina do not perceive specific aspects of their jobs as an important source of satisfaction. Physical conditions, service provision, teaching and research issues and institutional support are regarded as unsatisfactory. However, they would choose to be academics again in significant numbers. This may indicate a vision of the academic profession as negative in terms of working conditions but having a favourable reception of recent policies, such as salaries and other benefits. Both factors (historic conditions and recent changes) might be tipping the scale to opposite ends, resulting in a balanced opinion (near 2.5) for most of those specific items (Table 2.2).

Compared with other countries, Argentina has an overall satisfaction value similar to the international average, and it is significantly above that average when considering career improvement. It is also well ranked regarding influence on

Table 2.2 Argentina satisfaction percentages and indexes

Item	Argentina value	Internat. average	Argentina rank
Overall satisfaction high or very high (%)	64.80	64.20	9
Career is improved or very improved (%)	45.60	30.30	5
Physical infrastructure index ^a	2.82	3.46	18
Service provision index	2.55	2.89	18
Teaching-related index	2.76	3.24	18
Research-related index	2.37	2.64	15
Influence index	3.14	2.92	2
Support index	2.84	2.88	14
Do it again index	3.87	3.34	3

^aThis and following indexes are expressed in a 1–5 scale. For comparisons among countries, influence questions were converted to a five-point scale with ‘not applicable’ as a value

institutional decisions and also in attitudes about choosing the academic profession again. However, there are other items where values are significantly lower than the international average. In three of the items, Argentina is placed last (physical infrastructure, service provision and teaching-related issues), while in a fourth it is among the last three (research-related issues).

2.6 Going Deeper: Differences Between Academics

Although responses indicate a general trend, they vary according to the place academics occupy within universities. The hypothesis behind the recognition of the two groups mentioned above was that their members may be more satisfied than the rest because they take more advantage of new opportunities linked to the ‘academic world’. However, we also wanted to look at possible differences between them, that is, different levels of satisfaction in accordance with their young or mature trajectory. Therefore, considering these people as a benefited minority (near 15% of total), they raise the mean satisfaction level of all academics, most of which are less satisfied. With this hypothesis on hand, we analysed data and found the results that follow. For comparison purpose, the following tables present data divided by medians in order to render the variable as dichotomies and to contrast which percentage of individuals within groups is placed nearer the top or bottom.

Overall Satisfaction: Considering all indexes aggregated and differentiating by the two identified groups, a significant difference can be observed between Group A (consolidated academics) and Group B (the heirs). More than 60% of Group A are above median, while a significant 57% of members of Group B are below. This shows that younger academics, those located on the road towards a promising academic

Table 2.3 Sum of satisfaction indexes by belonging or not to elite circle

		Elite circle (%)		The rest (%)
		Group A	Group B	
Sum of satisfaction indexes	Below median	38.8	57.1	50.6
	Above median	61.2	42.9	49.4
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.4 Overall satisfaction compound index by belonging or not to elite circle

		Elite circle (%)		The rest (%)
		Group A	Group B	
Overall satisfaction compound index	Below median	38.8	61.9	56.4
	Above median	61.2	38.1	43.6
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.5 Academics with very high or high overall satisfaction (by belonging or not to elite circle)

Elite circle (%)			
Group A	Group B	The rest (%)	Total (%)
74.8	52.4	62.1	64.8

career, are less satisfied, even in relation to the majority of academics that are not going down that road (Table 2.3).

This trend is maintained when considering overall satisfaction and perception about improvement conditions. Indeed, more than 60% of Group A, the more consolidated academics in the elite circle, is satisfied above the median. However, heirs of Group B show exactly a reverse satisfaction level: more than 60% are below the median. This group is less satisfied than their elders and even less than the rest of the academics who are out of the academic elite circle, whose overall satisfaction level is 56.4%, below the median (Table 2.4).

Therefore, analysis of the first item linked to overall satisfaction partly confirms our hypothesis. While consolidated academics have a considerable level of satisfaction that assists in raising the general level, young people who are entering the circle elite, are apparently less optimistic about their career, are less satisfied. Indeed, distinguishing between groups makes it possible to question the significance level of overall satisfaction that is presented in an aggregated analysis of the total sample (Table 2.5).

Physical Job Satisfaction: Another trend can be recognised in the analysis of data related to the physical conditions of academic work. Both groups show satisfaction over the median for physical infrastructure conditions in which they work. Even though younger academics show a lower percentage (52.4%) compared to

Table 2.6 Satisfaction with physical infrastructure conditions compound index by belonging or not to elite circle

		Elite circle (%)		The rest (%)
		Group A	Group B	
Satisfaction with physical infrastructure conditions compound index	Below median	40.8	47.6	51.0
	Above median	59.2	52.4	49.0
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.7 Satisfaction with service provision compound index by belonging or not to elite circle

		Elite circle (%)		The rest (%)
		Group A	Group B	
Satisfaction with service provision compound index	Below median	56.3	66.7	53.1
	Above median	43.7	33.3	46.9
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

their older colleagues (59.2%), both are above the rest of the academics who do not belong to the elite circle. This positive perception is probably linked to the increased availability of resources in recent years for research aimed at this small privileged academic sector, which undoubtedly is marking a clearly perceived ‘before and after’ in relation to resources for research (Table 2.6).

Perceptions of service provision (which includes technology for teaching, secretarial support, and teaching and research support staff) present a different scene. Neither privileged group is satisfied with this provision, a view that is represented by 56.3% below the median for the case of consolidated scholars and 66.7% for the youngest. While for the rest of academics – that is, those that are not in the elite circle – opinion about the provision of services is more evenly distributed between positive and negative responses, most academics of the elite circle believe that this service should be better. And in this context, younger scholars are those who are most dissatisfied (Table 2.7).

On the contrary, it is interesting to point out that these two groups have a positive perception of working conditions related directly to teaching. While 53% of most scholars, outside the elite circle, show a level of satisfaction over the median, this positive perception is located between 60 and 63% for academics from both elite circle groups. In this item, our hypothesis is confirmed: the academic elite circle raises the aggregate satisfaction level on issues related to teaching (Table 2.8).

This trend of increased satisfaction of academics belonging to the elite circle manifests more sharply on issues related to research. While 54% of academics who are outside the elite circle are satisfied above the median regarding the conditions for research, consolidated academics are in more than 60% above median. And surprisingly, this percentage rises to 66% in the case of ‘the heirs’, that is, young people in the academic track (Table 2.9).

Table 2.8 Satisfaction with teaching-related issues compound index by belonging or not to elite circle

		Elite circle (%)		
		Group A	Group B	The rest (%)
Satisfaction with teaching-related compound index	Below median	39.8	38.1	47.0
	Above median	60.2	61.9	53.0
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.9 Satisfaction with research-related compound index by belonging to elite circle cross tabulation

		Belonging to elite circle (%)		
		Group A	Group B	The rest (%)
Satisfaction with research-related compound index	Below median	38.8	33.3	45.3
	Above median	61.2	66.7	54.7
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.10 Satisfaction with personal influence compound index by belonging or not to elite circle

		Elite circle (%)		
		Group A	Group B	The rest (%)
Satisfaction with personal influence compound index	Below median	41.7	85.7	53.2
	Above median	58.3	14.3	46.8
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Satisfaction = Influence: When considering the level of academics' individual influence in the decision making of the institution, a different picture shows up. Although Argentine academics were well positioned compared with academics from other countries on this item, things look different when distinguishing between groups. As expected, consolidated academics see themselves as more influential (58.3% response rate above the median). On the contrary, influence is seen as extremely low in the group of the young 'heirs' in their way to belonging to the elite circle. They regard themselves as little influential (only 14.3% of responses were above the median). Of the remaining majority of Argentine academics whose institutional affiliation is weaker due to their part-time positions, 53% locate their responses on influence below the median (Table 2.10).

In this particular issue, further differences between the two elite groups can be seen, and data might show an alarming low level of institutional integration by the current young academics, who in a few years will be the successors of academic elite.

Table 2.11 Satisfaction with managerial support compound index by belonging or not to elite circle

		Elite circle (%)		
		Group A	Group B	The rest (%)
Satisfaction with managerial support compound index	Below median	57.3	66.7	49.1
	Above median	42.7	33.3	50.9
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.12 Satisfaction with 'would do it again' compound index * belonging to elite circle cross tabulation

		Elite circle (%)		
		Group A	Group B	The rest (%)
Satisfaction with 'would do again' compound index	Below median	35.0	52.4	44.4
	Above median	65.0	47.6	55.6
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Satisfaction = Managerial Support: We note that our two groups differ from the majority when considering coordination of their work with the administrative area, which involves communication, collegiality in decision-making processes or difficulties in administrative processes, among others. While most teachers that do not belong to the elite circle show a standard 50.9% response rate above the median, 57% of Group A consolidated academics are below the median, which would show a lower level of satisfaction, and it is further accentuated in the younger group (66.7%) (Table 2.11).

It is likely that these results are the consequence of increased contact and interaction between the two groups and those at the administrative level of the institutions. This highlights coordination problems between the academic and the administrative levels that are less obvious for the scholars who spend less time in the institution and are less involved with bureaucratic requirements needed to overcome them and be part of the elite circle.

Do It Again?: Argentine scholars are among the top three countries with favourable responses when asked if they would choose the profession again. These overall results vary when considering the elite groups. Consolidated scholars (Group A) declare a level of acceptance of 65% above the median, while young people on their way to 'belonging' to the elite (Group B) have a response 47.6% above the median. Again, these data would show the difficulties that young people perceive in their race to enter the elite circle. And distinctions between the groups demonstrate that the overall level of satisfaction with the profession is maintained for the remaining majority of Argentinean university teachers, whose responses are above the median at 55.6% (Table 2.12).

2.7 So, Are They Satisfied?

To summarise, high levels of academic job satisfaction in Argentina are in some ways influenced by a benefited minority of scholars who belong to an elite circle and probably because of their increased likelihood of gaining access to the academic world. This raises the mean for overall job satisfaction by almost three points. Although this difference might be considered to be small, it places Argentinean academic job satisfaction below or above the international mean, according to whether this minority is included or not. Moreover, this difference defines if Argentine academics' job satisfaction is ranked 9th or 13th among participating nations (Table 2.13).

Differences also appear in perceptions about career improvement. Forty-three per cent of the vast majority of university teachers who do not belong to the elite circle consider that their careers have improved or considerably improved in recent years, but this percentage arises by two points when the elite circle is included.

There are few important differences when specific aspects of physical satisfaction are considered. However, variations appear regarding institutional job satisfaction. Positive perceptions about influence in decision making are higher when the elite groups are included. And, as we have seen above, the consolidated group of academics is the one that causes the evolution to this positive level. This difference is so crucial that it moves Argentina from the second to the sixth position in the international rank when the elite groups are not considered. Excluding the opinions of the elite groups is also crucial in relation to perceptions about administrative support, although in an opposite way. The elite groups' negative perception about this item places Argentina in the 14th position in the international rank, a position that rises to the 10th position if the opinion of these groups are not considered.

Finally, aggregate levels of satisfaction remain similar whether elite groups are considered or not regarding willingness to choose the profession again. As was shown, this is a consequence of opposite perceptions between the consolidated and heirs groups, which balance results and maintain the aggregate levels.

2.8 Concluding Remarks

Analysis of Argentine data seems to confirm the widespread assumption that working conditions have suffered a profound transformation in the recent past. Such changes are influenced both by the homogenisation of the academic field in different countries, as comparative analysis seems to show, and by the impact of recent local policies. However, the effects of these trends are not equal. Even though there is a perception of improvement in working conditions, some policies which started in the 1990s but are nonetheless still in place have left a clearly differentiated academic profession, with elite groups linked to the international science and academia circuit, and the vast majority playing a whole different game.

Table 2.13 Argentina satisfaction percentages and indexes (without elite groups)

Item	Argentina value	Argentina value (without elite groups)	Internat. average	Argentina rank	Argentina rank (without elite groups)
Overall satisfaction high or very high (%)	64.80	62.10	64.20	9	13
Career is improved or very improved (%)	45.60	43.60	30.30	5	5
Physical infrastructure index	2.82	2.80	3.46	18	18
Service provision index	2.55	2.56	2.89	18	18
Teaching-related index	2.76	275	3.24	18	18
Research-related index	2.37	2.34	2.64	15	15
Influence index	3.14	3.09	2.92	2	6
Support index	2.84	2.87	2.88	14	10
Do it again index	3.87	3.86	3.34	3	3

Data show that the closer environmental and career conditions are to international standards, the greater is the satisfaction with academic work. For example, some variables seem to affect the levels of satisfaction within the national average. These factors include having obtained a higher academic degree, holding a full-time position, having more interest in research rather than teaching, being part of international networks and all factors that define a more international academic profile. These attributes belong to a minority in Argentina. At the same time, the policies governing the academic work of the past 15 years have been aimed at promoting a 'type' of academic in line with international trends, in the framework of a model that sought academic efficiency and productivity.

The contrast between these two groups, the consolidated and the heirs, raises the question of what the future local academic landscape may be. Negative opinions about institutional involvement and quite non-satisfaction with the profession chosen in young scholars tell something about the future of the Argentinean academic profession. It would be interesting to investigate through other means the institutional variable as a predictor of job satisfaction, that is, the reasons for young academics' low levels of perceived institutional influence and satisfaction. If perceptions stem from lack of interest in institutional involvement and a focus on taking part of a competitive race towards individual academic success, the academic elite for institutions in the coming years could face a risky future, a situation that could result from current government policies to increase academic research productivity. These kinds of results could indicate to institutional managers the need to implement policies that aim at institutional inclusion of these young people that, in a few years, will be part of the academic elite in Argentine universities.

Although Argentina traditionally prides itself of having one of the most advanced educational systems in the region, a long-term crisis has taken its toll, as the country is located towards the bottom in all but three indexes. Overall, positive perceptions about institutional influence may be linked to traditional patterns of interaction within universities, that is, high levels of academic freedom as well as high levels of political participation. Positive perceptions about recent improvements and willingness to do it again might be a reflection of recent policies (i.e. salary increases). Excepting these, the rest of the items associated with the environmental variable place Argentina in the lower positions of satisfaction in the world.

However, this generally gloomy environment has not stopped the elite group from achieving results comparable to those in richer countries with comparatively more resources. As benefits are distributed according to the new regulations, it has been possible to associate the high level of satisfaction and perceived career improvement with a specific group of academics that were undoubtedly the beneficiaries of the recent changes.

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