Does the academia instigate excellence?

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Does the (Croatian) academia instigate excellence?

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What is excellence in higher education?
The 2015 Academic Ranking of the World Universities (ARWU)
ARWU adopts six objective indicators to rank the world universities, including the number of the alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, the number of Highly Cited Researchers, the number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science, the number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index - Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index, and per capita performance.

Altbach (2004): characteristics of leading universities

- Excellence in research;
- *Top quality professors*;
- Favourable working conditions;
- Job security, good salary and benefits;
- Adequate facilities;
- Adequate funding, including year-to-year predictability;
- Academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement;
- Faculty self-governance.
What do we do in order to improve ARWU ranking?

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
What do we think we should do in order to improve ARWU ranking?

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What do I do in order to improve ARWU ranking?

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What Germany has been doing in order to improve excellence? (1/2)

German Universities Excellence Initiative (2005)

- to promote cutting-edge research
- to create outstanding conditions for young scholars at universities
- to deepen cooperation between disciplines and institutions
- to strengthen international cooperation in research
- to enhance the international appeal of excellent German universities

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What Germany has been doing in order to improve excellence? (2/2)

- two rounds of funding: 2006/07-2012 and 2012-2017. (2.7 billion euros)
- three lines of funding: “Graduate Schools,” “Clusters of Excellence,” “Institutional Strategies” (project-related buildup of top-level university research)
- the title “University of Excellence” is awarded to universities that have successfully established at least one Cluster of Excellence, at least one Graduate School and a promising “Institutional Strategy.”
Excellence Initiative fails to produce diversity

In competition German universities become equal

The Excellence Initiative has not reached its goal: Universities have barely managed to sharpen their profiles and develop their distinguishing characteristics. A team led by WZB researcher Dagmar Simon came to this conclusion. In the most recent WZBrief Bildung, the scholars explain that the political demands on and support of the process of developing institutional profiles does not lead to intentional differentiation, but rather to a structural equalization of the universities.
Multibillion-Dollar Program Has Had Little Effect at German Universities, Report Says

By Aisha Labi | JULY 23, 2012
"Everything was encouraged in the direction of research, especially basic research," to the detriment of teaching, entrepreneurship, and other activities, says Mr. Flink.

Bernd Huber, president of Ludwig Maximilian University, a Munich institution that expects to receive more than 460 million euros (about $559-million) as part of the Excellence Initiative, says the program has enhanced the visibility of his university, nationally and abroad, and helped to attract donors.

"I was shaken by the result," says Mr. Flink. He says it demonstrates that the Excellence Initiative, for all its emphasis on institutional strategies, has had little impact on how academics function.
The group believes that the concept of excellence should be inclusive. It should encapsulate the values and social benefits of higher education and advocate the need for objective enquiry and the pursuit of knowledge. (8)

Approaches to excellence:

- excellence in management
- excellence in research
- excellence in teaching
- excellence in student performance
Excellent faculty – a key to excellent higher education?

The work of recruiting, developing, and retaining outstanding faculty and staff is critical in any college or university. Perhaps more so than in many other organizations, the people who work in higher education determine the quality of the programs and services that can be offered. Faculty expertise forms the basis for teaching/learning, scholarship, and service/outreach. (Ruben, B.D. (2007). Excellence in higher education guide: an integrated approach to assessment, planning, and improvement in colleges and universities, pp. 57)
Excellent faculty = competent faculty?

Research projects:

• *The Academic Profession in Europe: Responses to Societal Challenges* (EUROAC); a part of the EUROCORES „Funding initiative in the field of Higher Education and Social Change (EuroHESC)“, European Science Foundation (ESF)/Croatian Science Foundation; 2009-2011.

• Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between New Requirements and Possibilities (APROFRAME); Croatian Science Foundation; 2014-2017.
A PROFRAME project/ research; **Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities**

What are the competencies academics need at the beginning of their senior academic career?
Changes in the academic profession, academics’ roles and competencies

Changes in the academic profession
(Enders, 1999; Honan, Teferra, 2001; Kovač, Ledić and Rafajac, 2002; Altbach, 2006; Kogan and Teichler, 2007; Cummings, 2008; Pedro, 2009; Scott, 2009; Ledić, 2012; Turk i Ledić, 2014; Turk 2015a, 2015b; Turk i Ledić, 2016)

Appearance of new and restructuring of existing jobs; Meeting new demands and performing new activities
(Musselin, 2007)

Demands for new, and redefining the existing competencies

Teaching and research - part of a broader range of activities

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Examine the attitudes of Croatian academics on the importance and mastery of academic profession competencies for successful accomplishment of academic tasks at the beginning of their senior academic career.
### Quantitative Research

#### Variables
- Research field
- Organizational form of the university
- Academic position
- Sex
- Age

#### Sample
- 1,130 research participants
- 7 Croatian universities

#### Procedures and Instruments for Collecting Data
- On-line survey
- Survey questionnaire
- 45 items - competencies of the academic profession
- Likert scale

#### Data Processing
- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 20.0.)
- Univariate, bivariate and multivariate statistics
- Statistical significance tests, post-hoc tests

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Research results and discussion: importance (ranking)

- Evaluation of importance → most important and least important competencies

**MOST IMPORTANT**

- General IT literacy (Windows, Microsoft Office, Internet, e-mail) (M=4.71, SD=0.53),
- Oral and written communication in mother tongue (M=4.68, SD=0.56),
- Planning and carrying out teaching (M=4.42, SD=0.75),
- Familiarity with the basic principles of scientific writing and publishing (M=4.41, SD=0.73),
- Using efficient strategies of searching through scientific and profession-related literature (M=4.35, SD=0.73).

**LEAST IMPORTANT**

- Having basic knowledge about intellectual ownership (M=3.09, SD=1.11),
- Participating in public discussions of general social importance from the professional perspective (M=3.07, SD=1.12),
- Managing financial resources of the institution/department/course (M=3.04, SD=1.28),
- Cooperation with the civil sector (M=2.94, SD=1.16),
- Adjustment of the teaching process to students with special needs (M=2.89, SD=1.19).

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Research results and discussion: factor analysis (1/3)

- Factor analysis results → 5 groups/ factors of academic profession competencies

**TEACHING COMPETENCIES**

- Planning and carrying out teaching
- Applying various methods of teaching harmonized with the learning results
- Setting clear objectives and achieving results in the process of teaching and learning
- Understanding and applying theories on which learning and teaching processes are based
- Applying various procedures of assessment and evaluation of students’ success harmonized with the learning results
- Creating an environment that will encourage students to learn
- Applying active learning techniques in the teaching process
- Educating students to be socially responsible and active citizens
- Familiarizing oneself with negotiation and conflict resolution principles
- Familiarizing oneself with ethical principles in teaching and research
- Presentation skills
- Implementing research findings in teaching
Research results and discussion (2/3)

**RESEARCH MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES**
- Implementing projects which are significant in terms of community’s needs
- Familiarizing oneself with program/project management (writing, applying for and managing programs/projects)
- Managing financial resources of the institution/department/course
- Leading teams and individuals
- Familiarizing oneself with financing opportunities for projects in the field of one’s own research interest
- Familiarizing oneself with the principles of strategic planning
- Creating and maintaining (international) research networks

**THIRD MISSION COMPETENCIES**
- Encouraging students to participate in volunteer programs and programs that contribute to the development of the community
- Cooperating with the civil sector
- Participating in the volunteer and philanthropic programs and other activities in the community
- Participating in public discussions of general social importance from the professional perspective
- Adjusting the teaching process to students with special needs
- Cooperating with the public sector and the economy (institutions and companies from the related field)

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Research results and discussion (3/3)

COMPETENCIES FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING AND INNOVATION

- Monitoring and advising junior academic colleagues in relation to teaching work
- Introducing changes into syllabus
- Monitoring and advising junior academic colleagues with regard to research work
- Implementing review procedures in one’s own research field
- Creating teaching syllabus
- Introducing innovations and changes in the work of the institution/department/course

COMPETENCIES FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING AND INNOVATION

- Familiarizing oneself with the basic principles of academic writing and publishing
- Using efficient strategies of critical assessment and literature analysis
- Keeping up-to-date with professional development and committing to constant personal growth with regard to basic academic activities
- Working in an interdisciplinary environment

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Research results and discussion: importance (1/7)

- Research field → perception of importance

COMPETENCIES VARIABLE
Teaching competencies

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Humanities and social sciences
Arts

> 

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Natural, technical and biotechnical sciences

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Research results and discussion: importance (2/7)

- Research field → perception of importance

COMPETENCIES VARIABLE
Third mission competencies

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Humanities and social sciences
Arts

> 

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Natural, technical and biotechnical sciences
Biomedicine

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Research results and discussion: importance (3/7)

- Research field → perception of importance

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
Research results and discussion: importance (4/7)

- Senior academics/junior academics → perception of importance

COMPETENCIES VARIABLES

Teaching competencies;
Scientific management competencies;
Third mission competencies; Advisory and innovatory competencies; Research development competencies

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Junior academics

<

Senior academics

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Research results and discussion: importance (5/7)

- Age → perception of importance

COMPETENCIES VARIABLES
Teaching competencies; Scientific management competencies; Third mission competencies; Competencies for academic advising and innovation; Research development competencies

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Age 24 – 29
Age 30 – 39

<

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Age 40 – 49
Age 50 – 59
Age 60+

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
Research results and discussion: importance (6/7)

- Sex → perception of importance

COMPETENCIES VARIABLE
Teaching competencies;

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Women > Men

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Men

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Research results and discussion: importance (7/7)

- Sex → perception of importance

COMPETENCIES VARIABLES

Scientific management competencies; Competencies for academic advising and innovation

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Women

<

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Men

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
Research results and discussion: mastery (1/7)

- Research field → perception of mastery

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COMPETENCIES VARIABLE
- Teaching competencies

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
- Humanities and social sciences
- Arts

> 

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
- Natural, technical and biotechnical sciences
Research results and discussion: mastery (2/7)

- Research field → perception of mastery

**COMPETENCIES VARIABLE**

Third mission competencies

**RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

- Humanities and social sciences
- Arts

> [Natural sciences]

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
Research results and discussion: mastery (3/7)

- Research field → perception of mastery

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Research results and discussion: mastery (4/7)

• Senior academics/ junior academics → perception of mastery

COMPETENCIES VARIABLE
Scientific management competencies;

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Junior academics

> 

Senior academics

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
Research results and discussion: mastery (5/7)

- Age → perception of mastery

COMPETENCIES VARIABLE
Teaching competencies

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Age 24 – 29

<

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Age 30 – 39
Age 40 – 49
Age 50 – 59
Age 60 >
Research results and discussion: mastery (6/7)

- Age → perception of mastery

COMPETENCIES VARIABLES
Scientific management competencies

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Age 30 – 39

> 

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Age 40 – 49
Age 50 – 59

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
Research results and discussion: mastery (7/7)

- Sex → perception of mastery

COMPETENCIES VARIABLES

- Teaching competencies;
- Scientific management competencies;
- Third mission competencies;
- Research development competencies

This research is a part of a research project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME), supported by Croatian Science Foundation.
Qualitative part – research question

To understand how implicit and explicit elements of academic profession are acquired through professional socialization
Quantitative background of the qualitative research

- Disciplinary differences
- Junior/senior academics
- Sex differences

Professional socialization of junior academics
Qualitative methodology (1/2)

- two approaches: narrative analysis and phenomenology
- narrative analysis - collecting historical experiences, that is, biographies of the research participants
- phenomenology - provides insight into the personal experiences of the research participants during professional socialization and insight into the meanings belonging to individual experiences
- sample (36 participants) was selected using maximum variation technique to obtain the greatest possible diversity of experiences (based on the database developed for the purposes of the quantitative research)
- research participants from all scientific fields with at least five years of experience in higher education
Qualitative methodology (2/2)

- due to the sensitivity of the research subject, institutions did not participate in the selection of participants (they were not informed about the research)
- contact with research participants was established directly (and with the help of colleagues)
- interviewing was conducted in the period between October and December 2015
- informed consent form was submitted to participants before the interview
- confidentiality and ethical handling of collected data (participants were assigned passwords, audio materials and the identity of participants were known only to the research team members)
- the duration of interviews was between 60 and 90 minutes; collected using face to face method and recorded using voice recorders
- transcribing interviews (research team members)
- the approach to data analysis was consensual, thematic, on the level of the whole sample (12 MAXQDA software for qualitative data analysis)
Research is the most important criterion of excellence
Research and teaching are equally important for excellence
Excellence has more dimensions
Teaching is not a criterion of excellence
Excellence is not pursued, the system is ideal for the underachievers
"Excellence" is associated with negatively connotated networking
Excellence is being eradicated, the system is corrupt
Research is the most important criterion of excellence

- *I think the emphasis should be on research and that we should engage more in research because that is what will differentiate us.*

- *Successful people are those who are strong in research.*

- *Research productivity is what is most important for excellence.*
Research and teaching are equally important for excellence

- Research must be well developed, as well as high quality teaching.

- Perhaps some will disagree, but the emphasis is on the research because it is what is evaluated for promotion. Of course, these other criteria must be met as well, at an institution of higher education that definitely isn’t a research institute, and the teaching part also has to be of great importance.
Excellence has more dimensions

- Regardless of everything, I think the focus is on how much you work, to what extent you are engaged in any field, but primarily research - papers, projects ... that is the number one, but also to what extent you are engaged in mobility, did you teach somewhere else, held workshops for students and so on... a number of things, especially if you're hard working, that's that.

- So things like research, teaching, some sort of initiatives by individuals, such as organizing conferences, publishing volumes of some sort, getting projects, cooperating with other institutions, individuals ...
Teaching is not a criterion of excellence

- To us teaching is not primary. No one will ask me what my teaching load was in these two past years, my future here doesn’t depend on my teaching load, but on the number of papers I wrote and the number of conferences I attended, and the cooperation I achieved.

- In the end, what is actually measured, the points that are later added in the tables for promotion, is the research activity.

- Will you be a good teacher, will you teach properly - it’s a matter of your own personal satisfaction.

- At our department’s meetings, when we get the analysis of this evaluation... The fact that your evaluation was the best, or that someone else’s was the worst, comes down to a discussion at the meeting, some evaluations are a little better and some are worse. We don’t strive to make those with worse evaluations better and neither will someone be called upon, nor will the best ones be praised or asked for their experience regarding their work.
Excellence is not pursued, the system is ideal for underachievers

- From the outside, the institution looks much more serious. (...) That was my impression at first, but then when you eventually enter the system you realise that’s not quite so. So those who are underachievers, can be underachievers, practically do the minimum of the minimum.

- No one complies with those six years. There were a couple of times, calls to a meeting with the management - this should be completed blah, blah, blah, this and that should be done, we will sign the annex to the contract so that if you fail to complete what is required, you will be required to return the funds paid for the doctorate, travel expenses, tuition and all that, but none of it ever happened...

- It’s not that nothing is evaluated. If someone started some sort of study programme - that is evaluated. If someone’s been organizing a conference three years in a row, that is evaluated. Probably not in a tangible way, but in conversations with people when the conversation is about someone who has some kind of a career, who takes his/her work seriously... It can be informally felt. That one there is doing nothing, he just walks around, just let him be... He does his job, and on top on that he's great, we should give him more work. That's that attitude. He is reliable, you should turn to him when you need something done, he is good when you need to entertain someone, when someone from the outside comes... It’s all informal. Nothing formal, for example, that the reliable one will, I don’t know, get a 10 percent higher salary or that someone will publicly commend his work or something. And to the other one they will say - don’t just walk around, you have to work a little, too.
"Excellence" is associated with negatively connotated networking

• My promotion there was difficult and slow, because I had the impression that they gave priority to others who were there from...

• After six years, he obtained his doctoral degree and four months after he obtained his doctoral degree he was made assistant professor. I obtained mine in 2009 and I still haven’t been promoted to the position of an assistant professor. Because he is a part of some sort of advanced group, which supports his advancement. If you're solo, it’s difficult.

• They support each other. For example, when members of that group write a project proposal, they have support from within the university management, it is a part of this group, so the project is supported, they get the support and funding and work. I do not know, in the employment process, people are being employed upon their suggestion. They are supported, whatever they propose gets the votes.

• You can get the Nobel Prize, but if that group doesn’t recognize you, you still won’t be good enough for them. That is how it works...

• I think it is based on the principle - I give to you, you give to me, I think that they are self-sufficient. Some are members of political parties, some are not. Maybe they know each other privately, outside the higher education institution, I think that they do, but I’m not sure...
Excellence is being eradicated, the system is corrupt

- It took six months of fighting with them to allow me to obtain my doctoral dissertation. Just because I was, apparently, rushing things. At the same time, a colleague whose deadline for obtaining a doctoral degree was expiring, submitted a proposal to the Faculty Council for an extension of the deadline - and that went smoothly, that is normal, he is the normal one and I am the freak, I'm the problematic one.

- Wait a minute people, why am I the criminal here? How? Why? Am I doing something wrong because I do my job? You told me that I need to obtain a doctoral degree and I have obtained it, what's wrong with that?

- There's all sorts of things. There are people who are great, who are brilliant, whose knowledge and dedication to work I admire, but there are, there really are criminals. People who are criminals and should be imprisoned, stealing money from the research projects, who are not doing their job... and there is no system that would punish that.

- There is still a decent number of people who are doing research work, a small number who really care about teaching and about students, a number of them care about the research - and the rest just exist. A number of nasty people use all that for their own power struggles and stealing money and, unfortunately, they always orchestrate the whole story, they are always the ones who are the loudest, who always oppress the others, and others must play by their rules. We do not play by the rules of those who are capable and successful, that is, successful in research and teaching, but we play by the rules of those who only scheme and search for a way to take over the power and to take a thousand HRK for themselves.
Does the (Croatian) academia instigate excellence?
Challenging issues: teaching

• ‘Teaching excellence is a multidimensional concept and its different dimensions call for different forms of recognition and reward;

• If teaching quality is to be maintained and enhanced, teaching excellence must be recognized and rewarded;

• The criteria for individual teaching excellence are no more difficult to enunciate and to evaluate than those for research excellence. They are however considerably more sophisticated than is appreciated by traditional academics, and they cannot be applied fairly as long as those who judge excellence lack the training for their task;

• A prerequisite for real teaching excellence at the individual level is a trained teaching profession. A way forward, which links staff development directly to the process of analysing teaching excellence, has been indicated;

• Individual teaching excellence is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for an excellent student learning experience. In addition there must be excellences at departmental and institutional levels. They can however be developed on the foundation of individual excellence. (Elton, 1998)
Lewis Elton, THES Lifetime Achievement Award
Dies Academicus 2016
More about teaching at the ICIE conference:

- Nena Rončević, Marko Turk, Bojana Vignjević:
  Research Papers are what Counts: Excellence in Teaching is Neither Supported Nor Properly Evaluated
VELIKO ISTRAŽIVANJE NA FAKULTETIMA POKAZALO
Svaki drugi profesor vjeruje da bez veze nema zaposlenja

PEK MIRELA

Svaki drugi ispitač, član akademskih zajednica, o čemu se u govoru na svim fakultetima često ističe, je takav profesor. O svakom profesoru koji je lako razmijenljiv, a između njih veze su teške da se razviju i napreljene. Iako je to poznato, ovo sada je izrazito stvarno.

Na fakultetima se obično ističe da se profesori ne mogu jedini da se odvajaju s fakulteta, a već se odvajaju s fakultetima. Tako se treba očekivati da će se na fakultetima, ovisno od obataka, razvojno, razvijati i razvijati profesionalnu i osebju korporacijsku zajednicu.

REKORD: BORAS

Kad vedem nepotizam, reagiram

Priznati nepotizam i nepotizanj ključno je pravo na rješavanje znanstvenih pitanja. Uz podršku kolega, profesor iz Hrvatske, uveo je pravilnik za nepotiziranje i nepotizanje. Iako je to bilo teško, dok je pronašao rješenje u znanstveni zajednici, postao je veliki pravnik.

Problem s nepotizmom tako je lakše da se rješava znanstveno. Znanstveni rješavanje znanstvenih pitanja jest vrlo važno za razvoj sveučilištenog sustava.

Politička nema nezavisnog izbora. Iako su profesori istina najveći, lako su se prebacivati i ne mogu se učiniti nezavisnim. Ovo je jedna od veličina koja je svržena na područje političko znanstvenog istraživanja.

Na FTZG-u poslova je dobio sin profesora Marka Grgića, te je sve do danas uveo nezavisnost. Ali je to samo zato što je bio najbolji kandidat.
• In the period from 2002 to 2009, the average success of junior researchers from public research institutes in obtaining their PhDs was around 66%, while the average success of junior researchers from universities in obtaining their PhDs was about 23%. About 14% did not publish a research paper, and 38% of them were without international publications (Brajdić Vuković, M.; 2013)
Does the (Croatian) academia instigate excellence?
Thank you for your attention and...