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Article

Different Preferences or Opposite Directions? Reforms and Job Satisfaction at Public and Private Universities in Spain

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Abstract: Recent decades have witnessed how both in Spain and elsewhere, legal reforms have helped to transform the management and governance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These transformations have changed the conditions in which academics work, with a knock-on effect on their job satisfaction. Although these legal developments in Spain have basically been the same for both the public and private sectors in Higher Education, the evidence gathered in this article shows that the rate of cases of loss of job satisfaction is higher in public institutions than in private ones. The article provides an initial explanation for this situation, whereby the legal reforms have been met with different organisational solutions in these two kinds of institutions.

Keywords: higher education; reforms; public universities; private; job satisfaction

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1. Introduction

Over the past thirty years, higher education in the developed world has undergone a profound reform process. It has been referred to by terms such as 'transformation' (Ernst & Young 2012), 'market-like policy instruments' (Dill 1997), 'proletarianization' (Harvie 2000), 'managerialism' (Deem 1998), 'New Public Administration' (Musselin 2021), and 'McUniversity' (Parker and Jary 1995). The new developments are varied and involve different spheres of economic, political, and social reality. They include, for example, sea changes provoked by the New Public Administration, the sector's ongoing internationalisation, the creation of supranational arenas for higher education, and the dissemination of new technologies that question traditional teaching methods (Van Der Vende 2007; Jakobi and Rusoni 2009; Capano et al. 2016). Doubts over the ability of Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) ability to adapt to the new scenario (Middlehurst 2013; Ernst & Young 2012) have led political decision makers to introduce legal reforms that favour a transition with far-reaching consequences, as confirmed by the analyses of the legal reforms themselves (Shattock 2013), of the organisational changes in HEIs (Gornitzka et al. 1998; Croucher and Woelert 2021), and of academics' opinions (Kok et al. 2010).

Concerning the consequences of reforms, some say that academics' working conditions have been seriously undermined (Barry et al. 2001; Harley et al. 2004; Bryson 2004; Pritchard 2005; Fowler 2005; Rhodes et al. 2007). Those who defend this approach point to the replacement of a collegiate governance style by a more management-focused one, or to the erosion of the professional nature of academics' work (Serrano-Velarde and Stensaker 2010; Mather et al. 2009; Harley et al. 2004). In both cases, it is understood that the origins of the transformations lie outside academia, and that their content comes into conflict with academic culture and the values of the academics themselves (Smeenk et al. 2008). A more

recent approach contends that academic culture has been contaminated by certain values specific to managerialism, and that the new culture's hybrid nature explains academics' lukewarm reaction to the new scenario (Teelken 2015).

Previous research (Fowler 2005; Olaskoaga-Larrauri et al. 2015; Olaskoaga-Larrauri et al. 2020) confirms that, in general, recent reforms in higher education have been accompanied by reductions in academics' job satisfaction. However, this evidence is consistent with the fact that the intensity and direction of the transformations vary from one institution to another (Parker and Jary 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997), even when they take place as a consequence of the same legal dispositions.

In the Spanish university system, the Organic Law 6/2001 began a period of legal reforms designed with the aim, among others, of renewing the governance and management of university institutions. Broadly speaking, the new regulations affect public and private universities equally. However, the consequences in terms of loss of job satisfaction have been different in both subsectors, with more remarkable effects in public institutions than in private ones.

Two hypotheses are feasible to explain these differences. The first affirms that the effects of the legal reforms have not been homogeneous, and that the changes in governance and management in public universities are more harmful than those in private universities for academics. The second hypothesis, instead, explains the differences by the fact that the academics who work in private universities participate in a culture that is more favourable to the new models of management, so that in this subsector, changes of the same intensity have milder consequences on teachers' job satisfaction.

This article aims to gather empirical evidence on the relationship between organisational transformations of academic work in Spanish universities, public and private, and the prevalence of declarations of loss of job satisfaction among scholars. The paper also seeks to determine with which of the two outlined hypotheses is this evidence more conciliable.

However, the interest of the article goes beyond the mere description of the differences between public and private universities in Spain. The analysis also aims to understand the mechanisms through which changes in the organisation of academic work exert consequences on such a transcendental factor for the functioning of higher education institutions as academics' job satisfaction.

2. Higher Education Reforms in Spain and Their Context

The latest batch of legal reforms affecting Spanish universities began in 2001, with the passing of Organic Law 6/2001 on Universities (LOU, in its Spanish acronym). The law was enacted for the purpose of furnishing university structures with greater 'flexibility' and improving their ability to 'respond to the dynamism of an advanced society'. The passing of the LOU reinforced the vice-chancellor's role, who had hitherto been elected by the senate, as this office is now elected directly by universal suffrage among the university community. This meant that the law weakened the senate's power, and 'presidentialised' (Martínez 2012) the system of university governance. More power was also vested in the Social Council, a body through which society is involved in university governance, and which, following this reform, is responsible for approving the budget, drawing up multiannual plans, and supervising an institution's monetary management. The Social Council has thus become a body that plays a similar role to the board's at universities in English-speaking countries, albeit without matching their prominence and influence. These measures were designed to make university management more decisive, quicker to react, and more capable of responding to social demands.

Some of these provisions were revoked through Organic Law 4/2007. The new law stipulated that each university would decide, through its statutes, whether the vice-chancellor was to be elected by the senate or by direct, universal suffrage. Nevertheless, the reforms introduced by the LOU and by Organic Law 4/2007 on the matter of governance have not been particularly profound (Vidal and Vieira 2014), being far removed from those that certain agents are requesting for Spanish HEIs (Comisión Técnica de Gobernanza

Universitaria (2011) [Technical Commission for University Governance]; Fundación CYD y CRUE (2010) [Knowledge and Development Foundation and Conference of Rectors/Vice-Chancellors of Spanish Universities]). Certain demands have so far been ignored, such as the appointment of deans by the vice-chancellor's office. Much the same has occurred with the proposal of converting the Social Councils into true boards with full powers to appoint the vice-chancellor and lay down the guidelines for university policy.

The reforms consider other matters with an impact on the way academic work is organised and managed. One is the new systems for quality assessment and accreditation. The agencies responsible for assessing and accrediting higher education apply evaluation criteria that act as standards that universities must comply with. These evaluation criteria include mandatory paperwork (Lasagabaster 2013), usually falling to teaching staff.

Since Organic Law 4/2007, candidates need to be accredited before they can join the teaching staff. The presence of different rating agencies (a national one and one in almost every autonomous community) and the scant co-ordination between them (Marcellán 2011) has multiplied the candidates' work, as they tend to apply for several recruitment calls and to more than one agency at the same time.

Apart from the reforms themselves, other circumstances have impacted the working conditions of academic staff. The reforms were implemented within the context of the crisis of 2008 and the governmental measures designed to mitigate its impact on the public coffers. The budgetary adjustments began to be felt especially after 2009. Discounting the effect of prices, public spending on higher education fell by 20% between 2009 and 2015, returning to figures close to those recorded in 2006. The main items of expenditure followed a similar trend: nonfinancial investment fell in real terms by 38%, while personnel costs did so by 10%. As of that year, public spending in constant euros increased again, although much more slowly, and by 2020 it had increased by 8% compared to 2015, although its values (in nondeflated values) were still far from those of 2009.

It is simply impossible for this growing precariousness in finances not to have had some impact on the development of teaching activities. (All data comes from the Spanish Ministry of Education; EUROSTAT data on the harmonised index of consumer prices was used for deflation).

Despite the budgetary adjustments, the increase in teaching staff outpaced the rise in student numbers throughout the whole of the university system between academic years 2006/2007 and 2020/2021. (Data on the number of teaching staff and students are from the Ministry of Education.) The number of students enrolled per lecturer fell from 13.7 to 10.3. Nevertheless, the figures were not the same in the public and private subsectors: public universities started off in a better situation (13.5 students per lecturer in the 2006/2007 course) than the private ones (15.7). However, these figures had been reversed by the 2014/2015 course: public universities had 12.6 students per lecturer, while private ones had only 11.8, and were very similar in 2020/2021, with 10.2 in public universities and 10.9 in private ones. Furthermore, these figures did not take into account that the number of part-time lecturers increased over the period considered at both public and private universities. In the former, full-time teaching staff accounted for 73% of the workforce in 2004/2005, falling to 67% in 2014/2015, and to 61% in 2020/2021. At private universities, the figure jumped from 45% to 40%, then to 42% over the same period. It may be posited, from these data, that the increase in staff was more apparent than real, and in any case, insufficient to meet the demands arising from the implementation of the teaching methods agreed in Bologna and embraced as a priority goal by the Spanish university system (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (2006) [Ministry of Education and Science]).

The data allude to a worsening of working conditions at universities, at public ones at least. In this subsector, the increase in the proportion of part-time teachers has gone hand-in-hand with the reduction in the number of tenured staff, which fell from 58% to 49% between 2004/2005 and 2014/2015, and to 38% in 2020/2021. Teaching staff have also had to face the consequences of the budgetary adjustments in their salaries. In 2010, the government reduced the pay packet for public sector employees by 5% per year. A further

measure had to be adopted in 2012: the withdrawal of the 'extra' salary payment made in December to which all public-sector employees were entitled (salaries in Spain are often paid in 14 instalments, with an 'extra' payment in June and another one in December).

Another aspect of the working conditions at universities involves the lack of supporting admin staff. The increase in the burden of paperwork required by quality assessment and accreditation has not been reflected by an increase in admin staff: in 2004/2005, Spanish universities had 52.2 office workers for every hundred lecturers; by 2014/2015, the figure had fallen to 51.9; and in 2020/2021, to 50.4. Once again, albeit only slightly this time, the situation has worsened for public universities (from 52.4 to 52.1, then to 50.0), whereas it has improved, but again only slightly, for private ones (from 50.1 to 50.7, then to 52.3).

Overall, the phenomenon described has triggered a general feeling that working conditions have worsened in academia. As proof of a consolidated discourse along these lines, the printed press has highlighted the minimal rate of coverage of positions following the retirement of academic staff (El País, 26 September 2014), or the difficulty in accessing the profession due to the freezing of calls for the recruitment of teaching staff (Expansión, 30 October 2012), or the precarious working conditions of individuals in the early stages of their academic careers (Público, 3 July 2014). Meanwhile, analysts of the higher education sector have used dedicated journals to describe the precarious situation of academic work, and the demotivation of the staff (Marcellán 2011; Andradas and González 2012; Lasagabaster 2013; Sepúlveda 2014).

3. Reforms and the Job Satisfaction of Academic Staff: Two Hypotheses on the Differences between Public and Private Universities

In Spain, most of the reforms described apply equally to Higher Education's private and public subsectors, although these two subsectors are appreciably different to one another (Subirats 2001; Aldás Manzano et al. 2006): there are fewer private universities than public ones (34 compared to 50 in the schoolyear of 2020/2021), although this gap is narrowing quickly. Private ones are newer, with only four of them being founded before 1981; they are smaller and geographically concentrated in the country's two largest cities: Madrid and Barcelona; they focus more on teaching and less on research compared to their public counterparts; and they have relatively more postgraduate students.

All these differences support the premise that the effect of these legal reforms may have differed in these two subsectors. In fact, according to a survey conducted by the authors of this article, the rate of statements of loss of job satisfaction regarding sundry aspects of academic work has been significantly higher at public universities than at private ones (Table 1).

Table 1. Relative number of individuals that report a loss of job satisfaction regarding five aspects of their job and regarding their job as a whole since 2001.

Aspects of Academic Work	All	Private Universities	Public Universities	p [a]
Teaching duties	52.7%	33.9%	54.8%	0.000
Salary	71.2%	44.1%	74.3%	0.000
Openings for promotion	60.5%	42.4%	62.6%	0.000
Behaviour of superiors	34.1%	35.6%	33.9%	0.713
Behaviour of colleagues	27.5%	16.1%	28.8%	0.003
Job in general	47.3%	34.2%	48.7%	0.003

[a] p is the significance of a Chi^2 test of independence in which individuals are divided into two groups depending on whether or not they have expressed a loss of job satisfaction (the latter group includes those that have reported no change in their job satisfaction), and at the two types of universities: public and private.

Two hypotheses may be formulated that either jointly or separately explain the differences observed.

The first hypothesis involves whether universities may be reacting differently to the new scenario, whereby the organisational adjustments made in public institutions could have been more aggressive toward lecturers' working conditions.

In the light of the literature, it should come as no surprise that the rules designed for the system as a whole end up being implemented in a heterogeneous manner by the organisations involved in it. The seminal work by Parker and Jary (1995) on the reform of higher education in the United Kingdom affirms that the study of the changes affecting higher education has three levels of analysis: policies, organisations, and academics, and the outcomes of the reforms should be considered at each one of these levels without assuming that the sole consequences of the policies are those that their planners explicitly sought.

The empirical literature also supports this hypothesis. Prichard and Willmott (1997) have studied the scope of management practices at universities in the UK, concluding that the local contexts in which the managerialist culture seeks to introduce itself are more or less permeable, depending on the resistance they put up through the discourses prevailing in them and their common practices (Prichard and Willmott 1997, 311 ss.). Yokoyama (2006) investigated whether the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) led to some form of change in the organisational culture of four different universities and concluded that the effects were very different, ranging from the consolidation of a traditional collegiate model through to the transition toward a managerial model.

The second hypothesis is based on the fact that the cultures of the organisations in these two subsectors differ from one another. If the culture of private institutions were more aligned with the reforms than that of public universities, then the changes prompted would have a lesser impact on the job satisfaction of their workforces. This approach is similar to the one used by Birnbaum (2004, p. 9) to explain the different way in which HEIs are able to accept alternative takes on traditional forms of shared governance. According to Birnbaum, HEIs are located on a continuum whose two extremes are 'academic' and 'market'. The culture of the former jealously safeguards academic freedom and encourages academic work to be guided more by the search for the truth or freedom of expression than by strict operating rules, by the exigencies of financial backers, or by students' own demands. By contrast, it is normal in market-driven HEIs for stakeholders to view education and research not as an end but as a means for achieving other goals. Lecturers, for example, may be willing to surrender decision-making power or professional autonomy if this secures their income and they are released from the task of drawing up study plans or materials for their lectures.

This article will seek to discover which of these two hypotheses fits better with the evidence gathered.

4. Data

The data used in this article have been gathered from the opinions of 1252 lecturers working at Spanish HEIs that provide face-to-face teaching (encompassing almost the entire higher education sector in Spain).

We applied multistage sampling for sample selection. First, we randomly selected 338 university departments, ensuring that each Spanish university, public or private, was represented by at least one department. The number of departments chosen in each university was proportional to the number of people teaching at it. The number of selected departments was between one, in the smallest universities, and 19, in the case of the Universidad Complutense of Madrid, which is one that employs a greater number of academics. Finally, a selection was made, also randomly, of ten individuals in each chosen department. The final selection involved 3380 individuals and 1252 responses were obtained, which translates into a response rate of 37%, slightly higher than what is usual in online surveys in the academic field (Cardoso et al. 2013; Kleijnen et al. 2013).

The characteristics of the lecturers surveyed are summarised in Table 2. The sample is bigger than needed to ensure the representativeness of the population considered (which is estimated to number around 110,000 lecturers).

Table 2. Characteristics of the individuals in the sample.

Mean Values (Years)	
Age	48.3
Length of service at the university institution where the person is currently employed	17.5
Length of service in the university sector	19.2
Distribution	
By Sex	
Male	58.7%
Female	41.3%
By branch of teaching	
Arts and Humanities	16.0%
Sciences	19.7%
Health Sciences	14.6%
Social and Legal Sciences	33.9%
Engineering and Architecture	15.9%
Currently in academic office	
Yes	15.8%
No	84.2%
By type of dedication	
Part-time	18.0%
Full-time	82.0%
By Employer	
Public university	90.6%
Private university	9.4%

The survey was conducted with the help of the "encuestafacil" platform (thanks to the agreement between "encuestafacil.com" and the UNIVERSIA Foundation). The contact information had previously been obtained on the websites of the universities. The selected teachers received an email informing them about the objectives of the research. In the email, we included information about the purpose of the research work and any other relevant information. The anonymity of the responses was guaranteed by the platform used, and the individuals surveyed were made aware of this.

The questionnaire was first discussed by a panel of higher education experts belonging to various departments of the University of the Basque Country and subjected to a trial test among professors from different departments and disciplines. The participants in the test were subsequently interviewed and their opinion was asked about any difficulties they had encountered in understanding the items. Some of them made suggestions that resulted in some adjustments in the wording of some items.

The questionnaire includes a battery of thirteen statements that describe organisational changes and thirteen more on the way in which each one of the changes observed (the questions are only put to individuals who had admitted that the corresponding change is taking place) has affected their job satisfaction. These thirteen circumstances can be grouped into three trends in organisational transformation recorded in the literature (Olaskoaga-Larrauri et al. 2019). A confirmatory Principal Component Analysis (PCA) suggests that the changes that point to a specific tendency tend to occur at the same time. We tested the internal consistency of both the set of questions in this section (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.602$) and each of the groups of items that arose from the PCA analysis (see Table 3), i.e., standardisation ($\alpha = 0.628$), loss of autonomy and authority ($\alpha = 0.650$), and teaching co-ordination and assessment ($\alpha = 0.619$). The scores on each of these three components were used as a measure of each of the trends in the regressions described in the methods section.

Table 3. Relative frequency (in %) of individuals who agree with each item [a].

Description	N Valid	All	Private Universities	Public Universities	p [b]
My teaching duties are increasingly more subject to rules and procedures.	1243	86.2	71.2	87.7	0.000
I now devote more time to purely administrative tasks.	1240	74.4	65.8	75.3	0.025
The new IT applications and systems for academic management are sometimes too inflexible and condition my way of working.	1245	56.5	41.5	58.1	0.001
The new working conditions mean that I need more support from administrative staff.	1230	52.6	50.4	52.8	0.620
Standardisation (mean)		67.4	57.2	68.5	
Academic principles and values are losing validity and are being replaced by the specific rules of the university I work for.	1210	63.5	40.9	65.8	0.000
In general, academics have lost our power of influence in our university's governing bodies.	1152	51.4	51.4	51.4	0.993
I no longer have the same freedom to make decisions on my teaching duties.	1234	48.1	40.2	48.9	0.073
My authority over students has diminished.	1236	21.0	18.8	21.3	0.534
Loss of autonomy and authority (mean)		46.0	37.8	46.9	
The university now has more methods for the quality assessment of the functions I perform.	1235	55.1	68.6	53.7	0.002
There are now more opportunities for academics to co-ordinate with each other in order to reach a common agreement on the conditions of their work.	1210	26.1	36.3	25.1	0.010
It is now easier to co-ordinate with teaching staff in other departments or faculties.	1229	23.0	31.0	22.2	0.031
Teaching co-ordination and assessment (mean)		34.7	45.3	33.7	
The organisation I work for is now more focused on achieving predetermined goals that are formally established.	1191	59.9	56.5	60.3	0.430
The university's administration has become more professional. There are more professionals in its governing bodies or they have more influence on academic matters.	1166	37.1	50.4	35.7	0.002

[a] It is the sum of frequencies related to those individuals that answer 'agree' or 'highly agree' to each one of the statements. [b] p is the significance of a Chi^2 test of independence in which the answer options have been cut to two; 0 for the answers that express disagreement or neutrality, and 1 for those expressing agreement. Low values of p (e.g., <0.05) indicate a significant difference between the response rates at public and private universities.

Finally, the questionnaire also contains six questions on how the lecturers perceive that their satisfaction has changed over the period coinciding with the reforms. Two answer options express a loss of job satisfaction and two an improvement; the last option is neutral. Each of the first five items refers to a particular aspect or dimension of academic work (teaching duties, salary, openings for promotion, behaviour of superiors, and behaviour of colleagues), while the last one is related to general job satisfaction. The internal consistency of the answers was satisfactory ($\alpha = 0.798$). However, in the analysis described in this article, we did not use PCA to summarize the information contained in the six items in a single variable. On the contrary, we preferred to work separately with each one of the aspects of job satisfaction and use dichotomous variables that distinguish between individuals who declared a worsening of their job satisfaction from those who did not. Like Bozeman and Gaughan (2011), we consider that this method is less contrived than any other that tries to quantify the gain or loss of satisfaction declared by each teacher. However, it has been verified that the results of this article do not meaningfully vary when PCA is used to summarize all the responses of the individuals regarding changes in their job satisfaction.

5. Statistical Methods

Several methods have been used to compare the differences in the answers in the public and private subsectors. Some of them involve comparing relative response rates and applying Chi^2 tests to verify whether the differences are significant. Additionally, use is made of logit regressions to discover whether the probability of a lecturer reporting a loss

of job satisfaction in any one of the five aspects of their work considered (teaching duties, salary, openings for promotion, behaviour of superiors, and behaviour of colleagues) is greater in public or private universities. In the specification of the models, the effect of organisational changes and other variables are controlled, including the variables employed in the literature on job satisfaction within academia (Lacy and Sheehan 1997; Oshagbemi 2003; Bozeman and Gaughan 2011; Castellacci and Viñas-Bardolet 2021).

Step-wise procedures were applied in the specification of the models. The method involves removing regressors when they do not reduce the quality of the fit according to F significance tests (a sensitivity of 0.1 was used). Step-wise methods have been accused of concealing the researcher's ignorance as to which the model's relevant variables are (Leamer 1985); a certain amount of doubt has also been raised over the suitability of the standard significance tests used in these kinds of models (Pope and Webster 1972). Nevertheless, the use of these models has been considered expedient here because they have been applied solely to the variables of an individual nature, where the aim is to control for their influence.

All methods were applied with SPSS (version 26.0.0.0).

6. Findings

6.1. Opposite Directions? Organisational Adjustments in Spain's Public and Private Universities

The responses of the academic staff suggest three trends in the organisational transformation of Spanish universities (Olaskoaga-Larrauri et al. 2019), each one of which involves moving away from the traditional collegiate model for managing HEIs (Millet 1962; Hoy and Miskel 1996).

The first trend is defined by the introduction of process standards in teaching tasks. This trend reflects HEIs' move toward what one researcher refers to as machine bureaucracies (Mintzberg 1979), and involves both the extension of the technostructural units (Rhoades and Sporn 2002)—which are the ones responsible for setting the standards—and the reinforcement of their authority at HEIs (Szekeres 2011; Avenali et al. 2022; Briody et al. 2022). The standardisation of procedures is generally linked to the formalisation of relationships inside organisations and an increase in the paperwork that lecturers are required to do, together with the need to have more admin staff (Newton 2002; Coccia 2009).

The second trend involves the loss of authority among teaching staff (Halsey 1992). This means less autonomy for academics in the performance of their work through to a reduced presence and influence in HEIs' governing bodies. The replacement of academics by professional managers, the concentration of power in bodies outside the influence of teaching staff, the spread of a managerialist discourse favourable to the professionalisation of management, and the introduction of business management tools into the academic arena have been described by several authors (Dearlove 1997; Deem and Brehony 2005; Mather et al. 2009). Finally, academics' authority may also be affected by the spread of a discourse that considers students to be customers of the educational process (Sharrock 2000; Pounder 2007).

The third trend involves reinforcing a fairly uncommon function at HEIs that work with the traditional collegiate model: the co-ordination of teaching activities. According to Bess (1988), the lack of interest in co-ordination among HEIs is due to the prevalence of research over teaching at leading universities that act as a benchmark for all the others. Traditionally speaking, research has not benefited from co-ordination across teaching staff or communication between disciplines, which means no one has seen a need to reinforce the mechanism of intra- or interdepartmental co-ordination. Nevertheless, the dynamism of multidisciplinary research (Gibbons 1998) and advances in teaching methods raise doubts about this principle and call for an urgent development of new mechanisms of co-ordination that engage lecturers and even other stakeholders (Harvey 1995; Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2007).

Table 3 summarises the lecturers' answers arranged by the three trends described. These data reflect several circumstances.

- Standardisation is the most widely pursued trend in organisational change at Spanish universities, albeit significantly more so at public universities than at private ones. Standardisation is encapsulated in a feeling among lecturers that purely admin tasks take up more of their time, and that some of the software applications for the management of academic duties reduce their room for manoeuvre.
- Most of the individuals surveyed also think that lecturers are steadily losing their autonomy and the authority they traditionally had in the design and performance of their teaching duties. Nevertheless, in this case, there is less evidence of differences between the public and private subsectors.
- Finally, the deployment of measures designed to improve the co-ordination of teaching duties is much less than in the two previous cases and the perception of this change is more ubiquitous in private universities than in public ones.

Perhaps one should not speak of opposite directions, but the data seem to confirm that the public and private subsectors in higher education are not adopting the same organisational solutions, or are not doing so with the same intensity. It seems that there is more bureaucratisation at public universities, while the exploration of new methods for co-ordinating teaching tasks applies more to private institutions. This evidence supports the first of the hypotheses considered in this article, although it remains to be seen whether the changes really do have an effect on staff job satisfaction, as suggested by the literature (Baron 2000; Barry et al. 2001; Chandler et al. 2002; Bryson 2004; Rhodes et al. 2007; Olaskoaga-Larrauri et al. 2015).

6.2. Different Preferences? Impact among Teaching Staff of the Organisational Changes at Public and Private Universities

The second hypothesis explains that the differences in the impact on the loss of job satisfaction at public and private universities is because the academics working in the former are more affected by the organisational changes taking place for reasons related to their culture or their expectations.

Table 4 contains the answers the individuals surveyed gave to the question on how their job satisfaction was affected by each one of the trends observed in their work context. In general, organisational transformations have the same effect on job satisfaction, regardless of whether the institution where the academic is employed is publicly or privately owned. There are only three exceptions to this general rule. Firstly, teaching staff at public universities are more prepared to report a loss of job satisfaction when they perceive that the organisational changes involve a greater need to rely on admin staff. Nevertheless, it is probably not the need to seek the support of admin staff that leads to dis-satisfaction, but instead the extent to which this need is unfulfilled. If this is the case, the differences in the answers in the public and private subsectors are easily explained by the fact that the number of admin staff has increased in private institutions, but not in public ones, as noted earlier. The second exception involves the statement on the deployment of mechanisms for evaluating lecturers. Once again, the teaching staff at public universities are more prone to state that this trend leads to job dis-satisfaction. Yet this difference cannot be automatically attributed to the presence of different cultures in one or another of these institutions; it may also be due to the different methods used across institutions. Finally, the teaching staff at public universities are also more aware of the formalisation of organisational goals. This tendency toward formalisation is fairly strong in Spanish higher education: today's approaches to strategic planning, which involve discussing and stating what organisations' goals are, have become standard practice at Spanish universities. Ir-respective of whether this shift comes from legislation or, at least in part, from pure mimicry, the majority of teaching staff have noted this tendency (Girotto et al. 2013). In this case, there are no reasons to prevent us from thinking that teaching staff at private and public universities do indeed have different preferences.

Table 4. Influence on job satisfaction of the organisational changes perceived (relative frequencies of individuals stating that the change described 'has affected their job satisfaction for the worse' or 'for much worse').

Description	N Valid [a]	All	Private Universities	Public Universities	p [b]
My teaching duties are increasingly more subject to rules and procedures.	1054	95.2	92.9	95.4	0.305
I now devote more time to purely administrative tasks.	917	99.2	98.6	99.3	0.544
The new IT applications and systems for academic management are sometimes too inflexible and condition my way of working.	695	96.7	100.0	96.4	0.184
The new working conditions mean that I need more support from administrative staff.	624	85.7	73.2	87.0	0.005
Standardisation (mean)		94.2	91.2	94.5	
Academic principles and values are losing validity and are being replaced by the specific rules of the university I work for.	758	98.5	95.7	98.7	0.090
In general, academics have lost our power of influence in our university's governing bodies.	581	99.1	98.1	99.2	0.396
I no longer have the same freedom to make decisions on my teaching duties.	588	95.7	97.8	95.6	0.483
My authority over students has diminished.	256	98.0	100.0	97.9	0.489
Loss of autonomy and authority (mean)		97.8	97.9	97.9	
The university now has more methods for the quality assessment of the functions I perform.	672	61.5	50.0	63.0	0.025
There are now more opportunities for academics to co-ordinate with each other in order to reach a common agreement on the conditions of their work.	309	30.7	30.8	30.7	0.997
It is now easier to co-ordinate with teaching staff in other departments or faculties.	282	23.8	16.7	24.8	0.284
Teaching co-ordination and assessment (mean)		38.7	32.5	39.5	
The organisation I work for is now more focused on achieving predetermined goals that are formally established.	697	82.4	69.8	83.6	0.006
The university's administration has become more professional. There are more professionals in its governing bodies or they have more influence on academic matters.	416	80.3	70.4	81.8	0.050

[a] Note that the number of answers is clearly lower than in Table 3. This is because the question was put solely to those individuals that agreed or very much agreed with each statement. [b] p is the significance of a Chi^2 test of independence in which the answer options have been cut to two; 0 for the answers that express more or the same job satisfaction, and 1 for those expressing less job satisfaction. Low values of p (e.g., <0.05) indicate a significant difference between the response rates at public and private universities.

6.3. Organisational Changes and Job Satisfaction: Differences between Public and Private Universities in Spain

The evidence gathered so far is favourable, albeit not conclusively so, toward the hypothesis that the loss of job satisfaction is more extended at public universities than at private ones because they have responded to legal reforms by focusing on different aspects of their organisations.

We shall complete this analysis by exploring whether the type of university employing an academic has an influence on the probability that they will report a loss of job satisfaction, even when controlling for the effect of the dis-similar organisational changes between public and private universities. This involves the use of logit-type regressions. When the dummy variable that identifies public universities has a significantly different effect than zero, it may be affirmed that these universities have specific circumstances that induce their academics to provide a different opinion on their job satisfaction. These circumstances may or may not be related to the organisational culture of public universities (as opposed to private ones) or to the preferences of the academics employed by them. Nonetheless, knowing in which aspects of job satisfaction there may be differences due specifically to the organisation's ownership may be a step forward in understanding the phenomenon.

Table 5 shows the results of the five regressions made (one for each one of the aspects of job satisfaction considered). These results confirm that teaching staff perceiving that their

teaching duties are tending to become more standardised, or that they are losing authority and autonomy, are more prone to feel a loss of job satisfaction in all the aspects considered. For its part, the development of co-ordination mechanisms and assessment systems has the opposite effect on teaching staff.

Table 5. Logit regression for the reported loss of satisfaction among academics with regard to five facets of their work and regarding work in general [a].

	Teaching Duties	Salary	Openings for Promotion	Behaviour of Superiors	Behaviour of Colleagues	Job in General
Public ownership	0.186 (0.499)	1.306 (0.000)	0.830 (0.001)	−0.728 (0.005)	0.074 (0.804)	−0.067 (0.804)
Perceived standardisation	0.863 (0.000)	0.270 (0.001)	0.371 (0.000)	0.413 (0.000)	0.295 (0.000)	0.710 (0.000)
Perceived loss of authority and autonomy	0.998 (0.000)	0.386 (0.000)	0.588 (0.000)	0.580 (0.000)	0.452 (0.000)	0.964 (0.000)
Perception of teaching co-ordination and assessment	−0.722 (0.000)	−0.208 (0.006)	−0.377 (0.000)	−0.461 (0.000)	−0.454 (0.000)	−0.633 (0.000)
Sex: Female			0.433 (0.004)		0.394 (0.012)	
Years of service in the university sector		−0.027 (0.000)		0.014 (0.070)	0.039 (0.000)	
Branch of teaching [b]	(0.017)					(0.092)
Arts and Humanities	0.387 (0.157)					0.371 (0.164)
Sciences	0.529 (0.042)					0268 (0.289)
Health Sciences	−0.337 (0.231)					−0.348 (0.210)
Social and Legal Sciences	0.164 (0.477)					0.098 (0.663)
Professional category: Tenured			−0.868 (0.000)			
Academic office: Yes				−0.660 (0.001)		
Dedication: Full-time			−0.459 (0.047)			
Constant	−0.204 (0.512)	0.365 (0.119)	−0.239 (0.485)	−0.813 (0.008)	−2.495 (0.000)	−0.202 (0.507)
Nagelkerke R^2	0.389	0.126	0.201	0.190	0.169	0.342
Omnibus test (*p*)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Valid N	977	980	979	972	980	977

[a] The table shows Beta coefficients; *p*-values from an individual significance test based in Wald statistics are between brackets. [b] 'Engineering and architecture' is the branch of teaching used as a reference.

Nevertheless, the results indicate that, even when the effects of organisational changes are controlled for, the likelihood that an academic will report a loss of satisfaction with their salary and promotion prospects (but not with the rest or the aspects of their job) is greater at public universities.

The simplest explanation for these results is not related to the cultural differences between public and private universities, but instead involves the salary cuts adopted as of 2010 in the public sector. The budgetary cuts have also helped to delay the filling of places made available by retirements, and have meant that public universities have resorted more to the use of employment contracts that are cheaper for them and less stable for academics, thereby dashing the hopes of a professional career for many academics.

In contrast to salary and promotion prospect, the lecturers at private universities are the ones most likely to report being less satisfied with their relationships with their supervisors. It should be remembered (Table 3) that the loss of autonomy among lecturers and their reduced influence on the decisions made by governing bodies are two of the organisational changes that appear to be widespread in both private and public universities; in other words, both subsectors have seen a shift in power and decision-making ability

away from lecturers to managers. Nevertheless, the fact that this shift has a smaller impact in public universities should be interpreted while bearing in mind that workers in the public sector tend to have more options and instruments for defending themselves against what they consider to be arbitrary acts and abuses of authority by their supervisors, including in some cases the protection they are afforded by their status as public-sector workers, who in Spain are almost guaranteed jobs for life, among other things.

7. Conclusions and Limitations

Different circumstances have appeared in the last two decades that have meant that a significant number of teaching staff at Spanish universities report a decrease in their job satisfaction. This situation, which would be a cause of concern in any company, is even more serious when one considers the key impact that lecturers have on the perceived quality of teaching activities (Trivellas and Santouridis 2016).

The loss of job satisfaction is closely linked to the changes made in the way academic work is organised, particularly in relation to teaching. Previous research (Olaskoaga-Larrauri et al. 2019) shows that standardisation of teaching tasks and the feeling of loss of authority and autonomy that academics sense make their work in general—and also different facets of it—less rewarding than at the beginning of the century.

Nevertheless, there are certain facets of academic work in which that feeling of dwindling satisfaction can be linked to circumstances other than changes in the organisation of their work. The economic crisis and budgetary cuts have meant that some of the terms and conditions of employment for lecturers at Spanish public universities have objectively worsened; specifically, the adjustments have led to lower salaries and higher barriers for those seeking to advance their academic careers.

In this research, we have carried out a survey on a representative sample of the Spanish teaching staff who work in universities offering face-to-face teaching. The results show that almost half of the teaching staff (47.3%) declare that their satisfaction with their job in general decreased coinciding with the last stage of reforms in the university sector. The incidence of loss of satisfaction is even higher in specific aspects of their jobs, such as salary (71.2%) or promotion opportunities (60.5%).

On the other hand, the survey shows that the feeling of loss of satisfaction has spread more in public universities than in private ones. In this paper, we propose two hypotheses in order to explain these differences. The first refers to the fact that the legal reforms have had different impacts, causing different adjustments in the management of academic work, depending on the ownership of the universities. This hypothesis is consistent with the perception on how reforms affecting governance and management in higher education institutions work (Parker and Jary 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997). The evidence gathered in our research shows that, in effect, there are differences in the way public and private university institutions have transformed their governance and management models. In particular, public universities have resorted relatively more to standardisation, coinciding with some forecasts (Walsh and Lee 2015; Bozeman and Jung 2017), while private universities have resorted to other mechanisms of co-ordination between teachers and university departments.

The second hypothesis posits that the differences are due to the fact that public university teachers are more sensitive to the changes made in the way their teaching duties are organised. The evidence gathered shows, instead, that the standardisation of teaching tasks and the loss of authority and autonomy in their work displease lecturers in both the public and private subsectors similarly.

In short, the evidence collected in this research is more favourable to the first than to the second hypothesis. However, this does not mean that the direction of the organisational changes fully explains the phenomenon of job dis-satisfaction. On the contrary, when the effect of the transformations in the organisation of academic work is removed, the variable "public ownership" continues to have an influence, as shown by the results of the logit regression models presented. This is particularly the case with regard to satisfaction with

salary, openings for promotion, and the behaviour of superiors. In our opinion, this result is linked to specific measures related to the economic crisis and the measures adopted by the Spanish public administrations.

The results of this work can be interpreted as a warning to the management bodies in private and public universities, especially to the latter, who should make an effort to adapt to legal changes without the need to intensify the bureaucratic character of the management and work processes in their institutions. Furthermore, the urgent economic policy measures adopted since 2009 are, in our opinion, partly responsible for the differences observed between public and private universities. In this case, it is more difficult to find alternatives to fiscal adjustments. However, public decision makers should be aware of the effect that these types of measures have on academics' satisfaction and their foreseeable impact on the intensity and quality of academic work.

This research provides an initial approach to a complex and subtle issue, which will undoubtedly require more varied tools of analysis than those described in this article. Job satisfaction stems from a twin exercise of introspection and interpretation that each individual makes of their environment. Hence, we understand that the phenomena affecting job satisfaction can only be properly understood when use is made of instruments that capture the interpretations made by individuals. It would also be more expedient in Spain to conduct a more thorough investigation into the differences in organisational culture to be found across higher education, and more so into whether that culture has changed, and how, following the influx of a new generation of academics.

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