

# Academic workplaces: how to advance a professional career when losing a shared vision for involvement and support

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## Context

This research looks at the participatory practices of academics at their workplaces.

For the last decade academics when entering institutions experienced a completely different system to those who joined academia forty years ago in terms of work roles and career progression.

This happened due to the existing transformations of academic workplaces and the external pressure of the market demand.

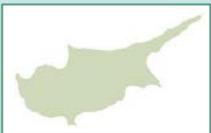
## Methodology

The research strategy and design adopted for this study is entirely qualitative. Narrative analysis was focused on exploring academics' stories regarding their lived experiences and reflections on their career in the transforming academic workplace.

This study was conducted in the form of a case study of Cypriot public tertiary institutions.

The chosen data collection method is qualitative interviewing in the form of in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The analysis of secondary data was completed through examination of the curriculum vitae of the participants and the correspondence between the researcher and academics.



Picture source: author's rights



**Protecting academic communities from being 'uprooted'**

## Research problem

The central theme that has been set out for this study is to explore how transforming academic workplaces influence career development of academics.

Academic staff have significant responsibility for sustaining their academic workplaces at the present time. However, do they do this?

Are academics interested to improve communication and relationship between themselves?

Do they facilitate their mutual interest in succeeding at both personal and institutional levels?

Are there simply overburdened employees who are trapped in their dependency on the political system of their workplaces?

## Current trends

*'We end up working in isolation'*

*'It is rare to have people who have willingness and motivation to mentor you'*

*'Coming here was a shock'*

*'The place does not allow to spread the wings fast enough'*

*'They would not hear you out'*

## Problems at academic workplaces (Cypriot context)

- Limited mutual collaboration - caused by extensive workload
- Deficit of information about workplace practices that causes uncertainty, confusion, stress
- Bullying at workplaces
- Power inequalities due to the increased role of gatekeepers of scarce resources
- Isolation - due to lack of physical presence of peers at a workplace and on-going support

These deficiencies restrict academics' participation in the mainstream of social activities of their workplaces and thus prevent them from career development.

## Solutions

In order to make changes towards a more communal rather than individualistic workplace the following practices should be considered:

- Shared activities in order to develop interpersonal relationship and mutual engagement
- On-going assessment and feedback on performance (for new academic staff)
- Systematic mentoring schemes
- Attention to cultural differences