

## Monique Fouilhoux

Monique Fouilhoux has been involved with Education International (EI) since its creation in 1993, and is currently the Deputy General Secretary. She works on various areas, in particular Higher education and research issues and the impact of GATS and Trade agreements on education, with EI affiliates, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organisations. She is particularly engaged with the most pressing issues concerning academics and researchers, such as working conditions, careers, academic freedom, mobility. She started her career as a Civil Servant in the ministry of Internal Affairs and joined the University of Clermont Ferrand in 1973 at the creation of the Department of Further Education and Adult Education. Involved in the Trade union movement she was elected Deputy General Secretary of SNPTES and in 1987 became elected National Secretary of the French Education Union FEN, known today as UNSA-Education. She has a Bachelor and Master degree in law from the University of Clermont-Ferrand (France).

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### **In your view, what is the most probable or desirable future scenario for academic's role in higher education?**

The most desirable future scenario is one that is not considered in those provided - a "public service" university. The main characteristics of this scenario would include the following:

*Public Service Mandate:* Higher education and research is recognized as a vital public good that contributes to the social, cultural and economic development of communities, regions, and nations. Consequently, universities operate according to clearly defined public service principles: equality of access, comprehensiveness, affordability, high standards of quality, and public responsibility. Institutions provide a learning environment that is student-centred and that promotes quality pedagogical relationships between students and teachers.

*Funding:* Institutions are primarily publicly-funded to ensure they are of consistently high quality, and are universally accessible by all qualified students of all ages. While funded by governments through the tax base, universities are autonomous from government. Institutions are accountable for exercising responsible financial stewardship, but have autonomy in developing educational programs and curricula. Public financial support means that tuition fees, where they exist, are kept very low and no one is denied access for financial reasons. No or low tuition fees promote higher participation rates and increased participation from non-traditional students. Stable, predictable, and long-term public funding ensures that institutions can provide sufficient spaces and a range of programs to fulfill their academic mission, and to meet student demands. In research, the predominance of public funding also ensures greater autonomy for academic researchers and drives basic, curiosity-driven research that leads to important but unanticipated new discoveries that boost productivity and growth.

*Academic Freedom:* The public interest is best served when university research and teaching is independent of any special interests. To safeguard and promote free inquiry and the integrity of university teaching and research, academic freedom is vigorously protected and promoted by governments, administrations, and academic staff associations. Academic freedom is understood as including the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion; freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof; freedom in producing and performing creative works; freedom to engage in service to the institution and the community; freedom to express freely one's opinion about the institution, its administration, or the system in which one works; freedom from institutional censorship; freedom to acquire,

preserve, and provide access to documentary material in all formats; and freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies.

*Tenure:* Academic freedom is protected through tenure or its functional equivalent. Tenure or its functional equivalent, awarded after rigorous peer review, ensures secure continued academic employment. It is not, however, protection against professional incompetence or misconduct. Rather, it is the means by which academic staff are protected against personal malice, political coercion, and arbitrary actions by their institutions, governments or other special interests. Strong protections for academic freedom and tenure make academic careers highly attractive, ensuring that universities can recruit and retain highly skilled and motivated staff.

*Working Conditions:* In addition to iron-clad guarantees for academic freedom, universities ensure that there are sufficient numbers of qualified and regularly employed academic staff. The salaries of staff are such that the university can attract and retain able scholars and researchers. Openly agreed and fair collective agreements between employers and staff are in place so that standards of compensation, promotion, tenure and discipline are fair and transparent.

*Quality and Collegial Governance:* The quality of higher education is recognized neither as a measurable product nor an outcome subject to any simple performance-based definition. Quality is dependent upon the conditions and activities of teaching, research and free enquiry. The quality of higher education institutions is assessed through rigorous and regular peer reviews. What constitutes quality teaching and research is debated, established, and reassessed at the institutional level through effective academic governance (such as academic senates or councils) with meaningful representation from staff and students. It is primarily the responsibility of higher education institutions to assure the quality of their programs through these collegial processes.

*Teaching and Research:* By integrating teaching and research, universities help prepare students for work, citizenship and further learning. Research is produced in open ways and the accumulated knowledge of universities is made freely available in the public domain. Recognizing that most on campus students desire a face-to-face educational experience over technologically mediated learning, institutions widely employ e-learning as a supplement to, but not a replacement for, in-class instruction. As universities have always done, they continue their commitment to distance education for those unable to attend campus-based programs.

*Local and global collaboration.* There is strong collaboration and cooperation between universities and the local community. These collaborative links foster a dialogue that helps the academic community anticipate and respond to changing social and economic demands and priorities, thus ensuring the development of high quality programs. The strength of these local links help universities develop local and global partnerships that are founded solidly on academic principles, not commercial gain. Partnerships with institutions in developing countries are motivated by a desire to help build domestic capacity. In their international collaboration, institutions and governments actively seek ways to mitigate the damaging effects of the brain drain of talent from the developing to the developed world. Such strategies include providing financial compensation to countries losing skilled people, assisting developing countries in building their domestic higher education systems, developing student and staff exchanges to promote two-way knowledge transfer, and encouraging collaborative projects and research networks with less developed nations.

### **In your opinion, what is or should be the most important objective for higher education in the future? Why?**

The most important objective for higher education is to contribute to the quest for knowledge, truth, and understanding so that society receives the fullest possible analysis and the broadest

range of critical and independent recommendations regarding policies, programs, technologies and products.

**What do you consider to be the main future challenge(s) for higher education systems? Why?**

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The main challenges facing higher education systems including funding/financing, equity/access, and protecting the integrity of academic work. In order to achieve their most important objective, higher education institutions must receive adequate public funding to assure they serve the common good and are not beholden to private interests. Greater reliance on tuition fees threatens to limit access and undermine equity of participation. Finally, the autonomy, integrity and academic freedom of academics must be vigorously defended against political interference or economic pressures to assure that they are able to serve the broader public interest.

**In your opinion, what would be the worst, but possible, way to tackle these future challenges? Why?**

The privatization of financing and commercialization of higher education institutions would be the worst way to address these challenges. The greater reliance on private fees threatens to erect financial barriers to higher education at a time when promoting greater participation is paramount. The commercialization and marketization of higher education threatens to undermine institutional autonomy, academic freedom and the integrity of academic work.

**What do you consider to be the best possible way to tackle the above mentioned future challenges? Why?**

Governments need to make a renewed commitment to adequately fund higher education. Higher education institutions need to do more to improve working conditions of staff, and to vigorously defend their academic freedom. The development of "public service" universities as outlined above would promote equality of access, comprehensiveness, affordability, high standards of quality, and public responsibility.