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This paper addresses an issue that has been the subject of intense debate over the last decades: what is the main activity that university professors should perform?

what is the university professor supposed to do: to teach or to do research?

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how can we accommodate the idea of a student-centered higher education and the idea that the academics should be exceptional researchers?

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Thus the quality of the work done by faculty staff is not necessarily related to the quality of the education system since it is not focused on student needs.

This is because although the main purpose of higher education is *passing on* old knowledge (teaching), the most rewarded activity of academic workers is *finding* new knowledge, that is, research.

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There are mainly three important activities that count in academic evaluation: teaching, researching and service to the institution. Ideally, the academics should be good professors and good researchers.

Given the limited time resources, all academic workers, regardless of their rank (the teaching assistant, the lecturer, the visiting professor or the full professor), find themselves in the difficult position of choosing between the two..

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This way, they will neglect research in order to prepare the classes because the topic of research does not match the topic of the classes he/she is about to teach or they will neglect the classes in order to do better research.

As we all know, most of academic institutions value research more than teaching.

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There are several reasons that make this practice seem legitimate:

1. Teaching is an activity that is targeted to the less informed people – the student – while research is targeted at higher-status audience, that is, the other professors and researchers.
2. The second argument for this particular preference is related to what our society values most : the new knowledge is valued more than old knowledge (cultural relativism)

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Faculty members are seeking ways to boost productivity and to publish more and more articles. There are several problems related to this academic habit:

1. First of all, the quality of higher education has more to do with the actual process of educating people, that is teaching, that it has to do with the number of publications and of citations.

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2. Secondly, this way of evaluating academic achievements has important consequences on the institutional hierarchy. That is, the less trained faculty members are assigned to do most of the teaching activity.
3. Thirdly, the actual criteria of getting a promotion do not involve the teaching activity.

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The difficulties of defining “quality”

The Webster Dictionary indicates there are almost twenty different meanings of “quality”:

“An essential and distinguishing attribute of something or someone”;

"the quality of mercy is not strained”;

„A degree or grade of excellence or worth;

"the quality of students has risen”,

„Of superior grade; "quality paper"

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This is the reason why those in charge of elaborating the laws had to give a clear and specific definition of “quality”.

Thus, quality of higher education means the conformity to certain officially established norms

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Furthermore, let's take a closer look to some of the criteria for getting promoted in a Romanian university:

“1. First Criterion: Teaching activity: The evaluation of the teaching activity is presented by the head of department in an evaluation document containing:

The self- evaluation

The colleagues evaluation

The student's evaluation

The list of published learning materials and other teaching activities

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2. Second criterion: Research activity: a grant, research contract gained in the past five years, in a competition as grant manager
3. Third criterion: Scientific contribution:
 - a. 2-4 articles/studies/patent act – depending on the situation, elaborated in the last five years as main or second author. At least two scientific contributions from the 2-4 have to be ISI indexed or indexed in international databases.
 - b. a book in his area of competence as first or unique author
4. Forth criterion Professional prestige
 - a. Two scientific relevant contributions
 - b. The presentation in 2-5 pages of a research contract/grant
 - c. Proofs of the recognition of his merits by specialists and institutions by citing papers in the ISI system, by coordinating of professional and scientific structures; being a member of national and international professional organizations, member of prestigious editorial boards, receiving distinctions and contributing to forming new specialists

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So, one of the main problems concerning higher education quality is the contradiction between quality assurance and the promotion criteria.

Academic workers are asked to do quality education but higher standards of research are also imposed.

Since getting promoted and being appreciated are far more attractive objectives than improving the teaching activity, it is clear that this way of conceiving the laws governing the academic world could not lead to better results in improving the quality of the education the student gets in a Romanian university.