

New public management (NPM) approaches have informed policy in the public sector in advanced countries in the last decade. Some authors suggest that the main objective of NPM at the organisational level is to change the traditional way professionals are regulated. This study examines the impact of NPM on the working conditions of Portuguese higher education academics. The empirical data are based on official statistics, and the analysis leads to the following conclusions. Changes have been slow, but already reveal a corrosion of traditional employment practices. Employment has become more precarious as professionals are increasingly employed on non-tenured contracts. This tendency is more evident in the polytechnic sector. In short, this means that the growth in skilled employment in higher education in Portugal is based on precarious employment relations.