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**Abstract**

Ensuring and assuring the quality of higher education have become dominant policy discourses in many jurisdictions across the globe. Yet, the pressures of massification and its attendant problems mean that academics now have increasingly demanding roles to improve student learning, particularly so in systems ravaged by a paucity of resources. The study reported in this article explores the experiences of and the challenges faced by academics in a large public university in Ethiopia during a period of graduate education expansion. The study found that academics hold onto ‘exceptional’ and ‘transformative’ notions of quality as they made judgements about the quality of education, which they saw as declining since the onset of expansion. As well, academics associated the entire expansion effort with burden, alienation, enhanced workload and loss of autonomy for the professor. The study suggests that policies intended to improve the quality of higher education should, inter alia, attend to the concerns of front-line academics.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)