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Managing Human Resources in Higher Education: The Implications of a Diversifying Workforce

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Human resource capacity has become a critical issue for contemporary universities as a result of increasing pressures from governments and global markets. As a consequence, particularly where the institution is the employer, changes are occurring in the expectations of staff and institutions about employment terms and conditions, as well as the broader aspects of working life, and this is affecting academic and professional identities. Even under different regimes, for instance, in Europe, with the government in effect as the employer, institutions are giving greater attention to ways in which they might respond to these developments. This paper considers key issues and challenges in human resource management in higher education, and some of the implications of these changes.

Introduction and Background

The paper builds on themes arising out of an international conference on *Trends in the Management of Human Resources in Higher Education* organised through the OECD programme for International Management in Higher Education (IMHE) in Paris in August 2005. Despite systemic differences across nations, it was apparent at this meeting that workforce development had become a critical issue in enabling universities to deliver multiple agendas in complex environments. While national context exerts significant influence, institutions can, and do, in the fine detail, sometimes of marked inter-institutional variance, respond distinctively to common macro-forces. These local behaviours reflect an admixture of institution mission, tradition and meso-culture and are, in turn, the outcome of managerial and collegial preferences and mores. However, whatever the national circumstances, it was evident that the management of human resources involved a combination of "hard" issues such as recruitment and retention, rewards and incentives, and "softer" issues such as motivation, work-life balance, and career development. Bringing together these two sets of issues at both institutional and local levels was a challenge, especially in devolved organisational structures with distributed management and leadership.

Historic, systemic differences in relation to human resource management continue to exercise significant, although arguably changing, influence. A simplified dichotomy remains between institutions that have power and responsibility as employers of staff, and institutions where this authority rests with the government. In the former instance, the institution can appoint, grade and, at least to a degree, determine the reward of staff, aspects of their conditions of employment, their development, and the building of capacity. In the latter situation, human resources operations in institutions are constrained in scope, and many key areas (such as recruitment, reward and promotion) require external approval and authorisation. In reality, the picture is even more complex, and change is taking place as governments seek to encourage transformation, but the simple model outlined above captures the broad parameters of different perspectives on the issues and challenges faced by institutions.

As one UK Director of Personnel, who was consulted as part of this study, observed, institutions in the United Kingdom see discussions of human resources as increasingly central to the organisation, and as a partnership for capacity building. For example, increasingly clear views are held about the linkage between institutional performance and the ability to attract, retain, reward and develop staff to perform the multifarious roles required of a contemporary university, and to do so in a responsive, expert and flexible manner. That vision resonates with Clark's (1998) concept of the entrepreneurial university, and with his subsequent work on sustaining change (2004). The first study used several European examples, all institutions with a considerable degree of autonomy, but the latter work ranged more widely, geographically and systemically.

Care should be taken over conflating a tradition of the administration of the higher education institution operating in a "civil service" mode, with senior academics as the equivalent of the government ministers in setting policy and administrators serving their needs and policies, and structures where staff are formally employed by government with the terms and conditions of civil servants. Of course, such arrangements can change, as happened in Japan (Oba, 2005) where in April 2004 the national universities became incorporated as autonomous bodies rather than as a service of the Ministry of Education. Oba noted that:

> "This policy was obliged to make personnel management more flexible, enabling teachers to engage in a variety of activities and making it possible to recruit qualified academic and non-academic staff, including foreigners" (Oba, 2005, p. 108).

In an initial evaluation of the changes, Oba highlighted a blurring of the boundaries between public and private sectors of higher education, wider opportunities for recruitment, greater potential for conflict within institutions between management and staff unions, and the need to professionalise management and to learn from experience elsewhere. In relation to the final point, Oba likened the process of incorporation of the national universities in Japan to the contractualisation policy adopted in France in the 1980s.

Many studies show that the role of faculty is becoming more complex and fragmented (Halsey, 1992; Coaldrake and Steadman, 1998), and more pressured (McInnis, 2000; National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). Likewise, whilst detail differs between and within higher education systems, many boundaries between categories of staff are becoming more blurred. Thus, whereas human resource management was once something that was "done" by the most senior managers and professionals to rank-and-file members of the workforce, the majority of institutional managers are now likely to have responsibility for staff on a day-to-day basis, across a range of functions, including teaching, research, business partnership and project work. Furthermore, as distinctions blur between academic work and the contributory functions required to contextualise that work in global, mass higher education systems, individuals move increasingly between contiguous academic, quasi-academic and management domains. As a result, the composition of institutional workforces is changing, and mixed roles emerging (Whitchurch 2006a; 2006b).

Thus, in the university's transition from a "community of scholars" to a "community of professionals" (AUT, 2001), the university is developing new kinds of contracts with its workforce, both in the formal sense, and in terms of the relationships and networks that constitute the "lived environment" (Knight, 2005) of day-to-day interactions. However, as noted by McInnis, these developments have not been well documented, in contrast with, for instance, issues around policy and governance:

> "the impact of shifts in job profiles, values and behaviours at the workface has received less attention than issues such as governance and senior academic leadership" (McInnis, 1998, p. 161).

Hereafter, this paper concentrates on the issues and challenges arising, rather than further pursuit of detailed nuances of systemic implications. Some may view that as introducing undue bias towards a particular model of governance and management. That is not the intention, nor the philosophy being espoused. Rather, the stance arises from an intentional focus upon pressures for change and adjustment, associated responses and human resource implications. While national systems can, and do, seek to moderate or translate the nature of these pressures, many forces and pressures for change are viewed in the literature as being pervasive, almost a-spatial.

Institutional Contexts: Pressures for Change

Global markets mean that universities need increasingly to compete globally with other knowledge providers for highly qualified staff. Whereas, in the past, relatively homogeneous conditions of employment and linear career structures offered stability and predictability, contemporary universities are now part of "a very complex knowledge producing game" (Gibbons *et al.,* 1994, p. 65), which obliges them to seek new and different skills in a volatile environment (Wood, 2005). There has been a shift, therefore, from an environment that was secure and low maintenance, to one that is increasingly high maintenance and high risk, albeit the extent and pace of that shift differs depending upon where institutions sit in their relationships with government, and the powers devolved to them.

In some systems such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, public funding bodies have sought strategies that will mitigate the effects of uncertainty and maximise the performance of staff. In the United Kingdom, for instance, there have been initiatives by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding the development of good practice in Rewarding and Developing Staff (HEFCE, 2005), and in Leadership, Governance and Management (HEFCE, 2003). At the same time, a Higher Education Role Analysis scheme (HERA) (www.hera.ac.uk) is being implemented to enable the incorporation of all staff on a single, national pay spine by August 2006. This is to ensure compliance with European Community equal opportunities directives, and to meet government and funding council policies. It has focused attention on the comparability of role content, as well as on pay and conditions (Prudence and Deer, 2005).

Universities are also faced with conflicting pressures. For instance, even allowing for international variance, they face encouragement to both collaborate and compete with each other and this has led to operational as well as disciplinary complexities (Barnett 2003, p. 184-185). These complexities relate not only to structures and systems, but also to the organisation and development of staff, both in terms of workforce planning and the local management of individuals. The regulatory and policy background for higher education systems has also become more complex, particularly in respect of legislation relating to employee and employer rights and obligations, and equity issues around, for instance, disability, race and gender.

At the same time, approaches to work and working life are changing. Staff in their 20s and 30s are said to value access to information, opportunities for networking, and a balanced lifestyle as much as the traditional milestones and status offered by a professional career. Additionally, a proportion of younger staff do not necessarily anticipate a career for life, and look to acquire experience that will be distinctive, equipping them for a future that is more uncertain than it was for their predecessors (McCrindle, 2005; 2006). Globalisation has, therefore, contributed to changed individual expectations and work styles. However, despite an expanding literature on the effects of these changes on universities' teaching and research activity (Scott, 1995; Readings, 1996; Blake *et al.,* 1998; Douglass, 2005), and contractual and employment issues (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Rhoades, 1996; 1998), there has been less focus on their implications for human resource management.

Professional contexts

Academic staff

This evolving environment is impacting on higher education institutions around the world, although there are substantial geographical and intra-sectorial differences in the pace of change, the precise nature of the implications for staff, and the reactions of staff and other stakeholders. What some may see as threats, others may perceive as liberating or legitimising developments. Much has been written on the intensification of academic work (Harman, 2003; McInnis, 1999), pressures to adapt roles and practices, resistance to such forces (Shattock, 2000), and a tendency to favour change strategies of accumulation and accretion (Coaldrake and Stedman, 1999). Perhaps not surprisingly, given the foregoing points, the literature also reports growing concerns about workloads, stress, issues of work-life balance, and widespread opposition to a perceived increase in unwanted bureaucracy.

Kogan, Moses and El-Khawas (1994) noted increasing diversification of academic tasks (teaching, scholarship, research, consultancy, community service and administration). Thus, the range of roles that an academic may be expected to undertake can include: "teacher, scholar, practitioner, demonstrator, writer, model, discoverer, inventor, investigator, designer, architect, explorer, expert, learner, developer, collaborator, transformer, facilitator, enabler, evaluator, critic, assessor, setter, guide, colleague, supervisor, mentor, listener, advisor, coach, counsellor, negotiator, mediator, juggler, manager, leader, entrepreneur" (Gordon, 1997: 67-68). These can be clustered under six overarching core functions: teaching and student support; research; community service; professional service; leadership, management and consultancy; and developmental project work.

Thus, the historical trilogy of academic work: teaching, research and administration, would appear to have been expanded, although some suggest that erosion has also taken place of the broad balance between the tripartite functional roles of an academic (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2006, p. 374). Moreover, a growing minority of academics may spend a substantial proportion of their time on functions such as leadership and management, consultancy, and professional or community service. While they may do this to serve the needs of their institution or department, such activities may also match the interests and aptitudes of the individuals concerned, or their perception of positive opportunities. Here, attention will focus on three aspects of the effects on these trends on academic staff: management responses in terms of recognition and reward; academic identities; and development and support activity.

Management responses in the recognition and reward of staff

Management responses vary between institutions and sectors, but they can be broadly divided into responses which address career paths, implicitly or explicitly; and responses which provide additional finance for additional responsibilities or for performance in relation to the broader academic functions outlined above. There can be considerable overlap between those two groupings, which are not necessarily polarised as alternative strategies. In the dynamic environment outlined earlier, any system that inhibits changes to academic career pathways, or additional financial payments for extra responsibilities, will be confronted by distinct challenges. In such circumstances, the options could involve additional demands on academics without extra pay or formal recognition, and the creation of new professional support roles to perform tasks such as learning support, project management, instructional design or student advice and guidance. However, in many cases, institutions may have developed implicit and, more recently, explicit ways of addressing the career development and career pathways of academic staff.

A common starting point has been for institutions, which have such authority to define new posts and titles, to attach particular salaries to such posts, or to pay a responsibility component, sometimes performance-related. Many of those responsibilities entail what could be viewed as leadership and management functions, for example in relation to teaching, research or entrepreneurship; academic quality assurance and enhancement; or another key institutional objective. These posts can be centrally based or pan-institutional. If based in faculties, schools or departments, they may have a narrower locus of responsibility. For example, institutions with schemes for encouraging some individuals to focus on learning and teaching have articulated semi-explicit career structures, in which individuals might seek to progress from an institutional teaching fellowship to a broader leadership and management function, such as the role of associate dean or of director of teaching in a department or school. Increasingly, institutions have adjusted promotion criteria to enable progression on the basis of a broader range of academic activities, even though the perception on the ground may continue to be that performance in research outweighs other criteria. These trends in the United Kingdom and elsewhere could be seen as analogous to established practice in the United States. However, in the United Kingdom these individuals normally continue to be classed as academics, whereas in the United States many of them, at least temporarily, become categorised as administrators.

The position of early or mid-career researchers who do not hold full academic posts is also attracting management attention in higher education institutions; bodies responsible for funding research; and, particularly in continental Europe, research institutes which are major employers of research staff. In 2005, the European Commission published recommendations on the European

Charter for Researchers, and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. A decade earlier, in the United Kingdom, the Research Councils had published a Concordat jointly with other key stakeholders, aimed at enhancing conditions of employment, career development, and management of contract research staff, that is, those on fixed term contracts. On career development, the European Charter urged:

> "…a specific career development strategy for researchers at all stages in their career, regardless of their contractual situation, including for researchers on fixed-term contracts. It should include the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers, thus motivating them and contributing to reducing any insecurity in their professional future" (European Charter for Researchers, 2000, p. 10).

Other examples of action in relation to research staff include:

- The introduction, in 2003, by the French research agency INSERM, of interface contracts and supplementary remuneration, aimed at motivating full-tenure researchers and enhancing scientific productivity and the transfer of knowledge in biomedical and health research (Bréchot, 2005).

- Action by the Italian Rectors Conference and the Spanish Ministry for Research to implement the EC Code and Framework for Career Development of Researchers (Gruber, 2005).

- A three-year training programme for middle management staff at the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Recerche – Instituto Nazionale per la Fisica della Materia* (CRN-INFM) in Italy, aimed at the development of academic and research staff (Strazzeri, 2005).

- The Marie Curie Fellowships, which has created some 3 000 members of the Marie Curie Fellowship Association, a body formed by current and former fellows.

Meyer (2005) suggests three principles for making academic careers more attractive: openness in recruitment, criteria for appointments, national and local funding policies and support for mobility (geographic, inter-sectorial and interdisciplinary); respect in the way institutional governance and reward systems value researchers, and the guidance provided in relation to the balance between independence and apprenticeship; and supportiveness along the lines expressed in the European Code. Both Meyer (2005) and Strazzeri (2005) stress the importance of encouraging a sustainable work-life balance and of developing a culture taking a long-term view of investing in the future.

As stated in the Introduction, contexts may vary considerably between countries. Thus, the situation in the United Kingdom is affected very significantly by the cyclical Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and by the absence of the tradition of clustering researchers, especially in expensive fields of investigation, in independent or largely independent research agencies. Whilst much research in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world, occurs outside the academic setting, in business, research within the sector occurs predominantly in universities and bodies closely affiliated to them. Thus, a large research-intensive university in the United Kingdom would typically employ more than 1 000 staff on various research grades, usually on fixed term contracts. Universities in the United Kingdom are addressing the terms, conditions and career development of researchers, partly in response to European Community directives and limitations on fixed-term contracts, and partly in recognition of the importance of investing in the continuing development of a talented and specialised component of the workforce.

As the RAE has progressively sharpened the criteria for research selectivity and excellence, and the associated financial rewards to institutions, so the latter have sought to optimise their prospects of success. Over time, the average scores have improved substantially, so it can be argued that numerous individuals, departments (units of assessment) and institutions have succeeded. However, since the financial resources available have not increased in line with that shift in performance, the net effect has been to skew the reward progressively toward the highest level of achievement, as judged by panels of peers.

As well as financial consequences for institutions, these developments have had significant consequences from a human resource point of view, including:

- the need to retain, promote and reward research stars;

- the need to recruit productive researchers, with potential distortion of the balance of recruitment criteria;

- the decision to omit some staff from RAE returns, with related issues of motivation and adjustment of balance of duties and roles, and even titles and contracts;

- the danger that cumulative effects of these strategies might be to send a signal, intentional or otherwise, that performance in research is the major, even the only issue; with the consequent danger that research within the sector can challenge the importance of other duties, roles and functions, especially teaching, service and good academic citizenship;

- potential for distortion of research agendas and for undervaluing certain types of research, such as interdisciplinary or applied research. Concern has been expressed that the RAE can inhibit speculative projects, because of the risk to departments and individuals of perceived non-performance or non-achievement (The Royal Society, 2003). This would be exacerbated by the proposed introduction of a "metrics" system of assessment (The Higher Education Policy Institute, 2006).

Senior managers and human resources professionals in United Kingdom institutions have been endeavouring to address these challenges and to develop coherent strategies, including revised criteria for promotion, more flexible short- and medium-term ways of agreeing the balance of duties and responsibilities; and relating these to broad re-articulations of career pathways.

Academic Identities

Notwithstanding increasing pressures upon institutions, Henkel (2000) concluded that academic identities had largely remained intact, with her interviewees adapting conceptions of their identity, rather than transforming them in response to various policy stimuli and other forces for change. Another important message from Henkel's (2002) research surrounds the centrality of identity to academics, and the ways in which they perceive and value work, and presumably, by inference, the work of the academic profession. However, Henkel did not investigate the nature of the identity of those engaged exclusively in research, teaching, student support or some other function. There is no reason to believe that such identities do not exist, or that they will not be equally significant to the life and value systems of the individuals concerned, although they represent subsets of the total "academic" population.

Henkel discusses the perceptions of self-identity of her respondents, and particularly how the roles of teaching and research impact upon and create that identity. Whilst identity is influenced by external factors and pressures, internal coherence and sense-making remain dominant. What is less easy to detect is how individuals respond to the perceptions of their peers and others who exert influence upon them, and the ways, often subtle and almost undetectable, in which such inter-personal influences impact upon or shape any shifts in identity. There is experiential and anecdotal evidence to suggest that individuals react strongly when their academic identity is challenged or threatened. That can include questions about their level of expertise, competence, or performance in particular duties or functions or, occasionally, their suitability for the role or specific aspects of it.

Positive outcomes can also present challenges to identity. For example, individuals promoted primarily on teaching or management criteria may struggle to accept that interpretation of their identity and strengths, and continue to believe that their real strength is in research, especially if that is the prized ability in their peer community. Thus, the complexities of academic identity present many challenges to senior managers and human resource professionals. Often, the associated tensions are relatively minor problems, but they can escalate into much more serious hurt or dispute, sometimes leading to protracted and acrimonious formal disputes.

Development and support activity

Dunkin (2005), outlined six core elements of a human resource strategy that enable institutions to address the challenges of competing for and retaining high quality, creative people in the increasingly dynamic environment in which knowledge workers function. The core elements are:

- determining how many people are needed, what they need to do, how they need to do it, and how to configure and manage them;
- analysing skills needed and addressing any shortfalls;
- attracting and retaining high quality staff;
- managing their performance;
- rewarding and acknowledging performance;
- developing staff.

There is a large literature on the development of academic staff (Kogan, Moses and El-Khawas, 1994; Webb, 1996; Ketteridge, Marshall and Fry, 2002; Blackwell and Blackmore, 2003; Eggins and Macdonald, 2003; Kahn and Baume, 2003; Adams, 2005). Several, sometimes conflicting, messages can be distilled from that output. Development provision is increasing and diversifying. Traditionally the focus was on the initial preparation of academics for the key functions of research and teaching. The former was seen as being addressed primarily through postgraduate training, and latter through short programmes designed for graduate teaching assistants or new entrants to the academy. There was, and continues to be, contestation over the definition of the professional expertise of academics, and how it is acquired and developed.

Effective development strategies have to reconcile individual and organisational needs and expectations. From the perspective of individual academics, prime concerns tend to be relevance, timeliness, format and contextualisation. That echoes the findings of research by Becher (1999) into attitudes to, and preferred approaches for, continuing professional development. Several trends complicate the scene. The range of academic roles has expanded, segmented and fractionalised. There has been significant growth in practice-oriented disciplines, which often need to recruit experienced, mid-career practitioners to enhance the credibility of academic programmes. Indeed, overall the entry profile into academia is becoming more diverse. This presents additional challenges for the provision of coherent and relevant development programmes and frameworks. Whilst not necessarily negating the broad utility of progressional models, that is those organised around conceptions of initial and continuing development, these trends mean that any model needs to be capable of flexible interpretation and tailored responses.

External factors exercise significant, if contested, influence. That contestation stems from objections to external intrusion into, and occasionally imposition upon, the autonomy and authority of the academy (Adams, 2005). In the United Kingdom, for example, institutions have had, increasingly, to provide formal training and development on topics and issues so as to satisfy legal requirements, directives or "guidance" from funding agencies and government. Those requirements can sit uncomfortably alongside provision which addresses self-identified individual development needs, that is, where an academic recognises that development or training will help them to handle a new or expanded role or task, to undertake the job more effectively, or to acquire or improve skills.

Typically, institutions in the United Kingdom now offer an initial programme in learning, teaching and assessment, accredited by the Higher Education Academy. Many expect new entrants to academia to complete the relevant programme. They also make provision for the induction of staff who are new to postgraduate supervision. Gradually, they are implementing ways of facilitating continuing professional development of academics through optional modular structures and other means. Other common strands in formal provision are leadership and management programmes, for both heads of department and more senior staff, and a widening array of specialised provision to support those undertaking particular roles and duties (enterprise, research management, student support, or e-learning).

New entrants to academia, who have personal experience of the approaches to professional development in industry or the professions, increasingly expect similar support within higher education. Development is not, however, solely a matter of programmes or courses. A great deal is informal, and occurs within the individual's day-to-day work setting and peer community. Conference attendance and sabbaticals are properly part of the development support that institutions provide, and development strategies are extending to more formal usage of mentoring and coaching.

Professional Staff

The term "professional staff" is used in this paper to refer to staff who are not employed on academic contracts, but who undertake professional roles, either in general management; in specialist areas such as finance or estates; in niche areas such as quality or widening participation; or in quasi-academic areas such as learning support. This distinguishes them from academic managers such as pro-vice-chancellors or deans, although as will be shown, boundaries are blurring. It is not, however, intended to imply that academic staff are not also professionals in their own right. Because contemporary institutions are obliged to operate simultaneously in both global and local settings, they have become complex organisations (Scott, 1998; Barnett, 2000; Bauman, 2000; Hassan, 2003; Urry, 2003). This means that they increasingly require people who are able to contextualise academic activity against fluctuations in the external environment, be it in relation to, for instance, schools outreach, regional business development or overseas campuses. Professional staff who have understanding of this broader terrain undertake interpretive roles at the boundaries between academic work, internal constituencies and external partners, forging links between them, and undertaking what might be described as quasi-academic work. This has led not only to greater diversity within the workforce, but also to a blurring of traditional divisions between academic and professional staff.

There has been, as a result, a coalescence of staff groupings whereby, for instance, academic and professional staff collaborate on specific projects in multi-functional teams, as well as an emergence of mixed roles that cross the boundaries of academic work and professional support. On a day-to-day basis, individuals may relate more to tasks and teams than to formal organisational structures and hierarchies. Thus, the separation between academic activity, and a distinctive infrastructure that supports it, has become less clear-cut, fostering "the replacement of 'bureaucratic' careers by flexible job portfolios" (Scott, 1997: 7). In addition to mainstream academic staff who undertake full programmes of teaching and research, the workforce also now includes, for instance:

- academic managers such as pro-vice-chancellors, deans and heads of departments, some of whom are appointed full-time as professional managers on permanent contracts;

- teaching and learning professionals providing technical and pedagogic expertise in relation to academic programmes (Gornall, 1999; 2004);

- professional administrators and managers providing expertise in functional areas such as student affairs, finance and human resources.

- professional managers in "niche" areas specific to higher education, such as quality and widening participation;

- project managers, either of one-off projects such as the delivery of new facilities, or in relation to larger projects stretching across, for instance, student services or enterprise activity (Whitchurch, 2006a);

- contract workers assisting with academic and other projects.

Significantly, a growing number of staff *not* having academic contracts have academic credentials paralleling those of their academic colleagues including, for instance, doctoral qualifications and experience of teaching and/or research at tertiary level. Such staff are moving into mixed roles, sometimes having academic titles, such as that of pro-vice-chancellor with responsibility for administration, quality, or staffing. In this they might work alongside a mainstream academic manager such as a pro-vice-chancellor for academic affairs. Institutions, therefore, are dealing with a more mobile workforce, as well as a growing number of staff who do not fit into established employment categories (Whitchurch, 2006b).

This diversification of professional staff has changed the nature of the workforce map, in which relationships are increasingly lateral, as well as hierarchical, so that:

> "The professional … terrain of … universities is far more complex than our current categories allow for. Such terrain has direct implications for how we can better organize our work and collective efforts." (Rhoades, 1998, p. 143)

Managing this diversity in a positive and proactive way has become a critical business issue, and is seen by one commentator as a means of linking competitiveness with outcomes in a knowledge environment:

> "In relation to labor rates, and when combined with the 'war on talent', the only possible path is greater diversity in job roles with varying pay rates, and the time of those higher paid professionals focused on the 'value-added' iterations with students, those 'moments of truth'

> that will ultimately affect the effectiveness of students' learning and/or their satisfaction." (Dunkin, 2005, p. 13)

While considerable attention has been paid to the impact of globalisation and the communications revolution on academic staff (Henkel, 2000; Becher and Trowler, 2001), it is now also beginning to be recognised that professional staff are:

> "experiencing the same pressure and internal shift of orientation that academics are experiencing in terms of the commodification of research and education.." (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004, p. 295)

Thus, recent commentators such as Duke (2003), Rhoades (2005), and Sharrock (2005), increasingly see higher education as an integrated "project", in which the delivery of multiple agendas in a knowledge environment can only be achieved through a range of contributions from different groups of staff:

> "Breaking down disciplinary barriers, and also enhancing collaborative teamwork between classes of workers (administrative, professional, academic, technical) is … required by and grows with the external networking on which universities depend to play a useful and sustainable part in networked knowledge societies." (Duke, 2003, p. 54)

Co-ordinating strategy and operations in the management of human resources

In contemporary environments, particularly where institutions are the employer and accept full responsibility for human resources, it is a challenge for institutions to balance system wide issues, such as a global market for staff, increased international mobility, and skill shortages, with the needs and expectations of individual employees. There is a relationship to be managed between institutional policies relating to the workforce as a whole, such as contractual issues, and the translation of these into day-to-day operations by line managers. This requires a blending of "hard" and "soft" approaches: the former including, for instance, maintaining a competitive edge in terms of recruitment, retention, and being an employer of choice (Fazackerley, 2006); and the latter including local management of employee motivation, work-life issues, and career development. On the one hand, human resources departments have become more involved with institutional strategy than day-to-day line management issues (Archer, 2005). On the other, devolved organisational structures, involving distributed management and leadership, have created increased demand, and provision, of formal management and leadership programmes for those having direct responsibility for staff.

Whilst "hard" responses to rapid environmental change are likely to involve the restructuring of teaching and research programmes, and the staff associated with them, evidence is emerging of "softer", more flexible approaches to enhancing staff and, therefore, institutional potentials. For instance, some institutions are seeking to distinguish themselves as the employer of choice for high quality staff, not only through extensive diversity programmes in relation to race, gender and disability (Merisotis, 2005; Paddock, 2005; Strebler, 2005), but also by establishing work-life offices and managers to develop family friendly policies and environments (Nolan, 2005). Thus, while each university represents a major resource of intellectual capital, talent and expertise, both in terms of academic and professional staff, individual institutions vary in their ability to build on this capacity. Whilst many institutions may consider that they operate under government constraints, which limit their freedom to pursue such strategies, they may still be capable of exercising influence over some aspects of the employment "package", especially the work environment.

Globalisation, combined with an increasingly mobile workforce, means that human resource management cannot rely solely on "one size fits all" solutions, whether at institutional or sub-institutional levels. Resolving "hard" issues, such as recruitment and retention, often requires the design of flexible and individual solutions in the field. For instance, it has been suggested that support for networking, an understanding of institutional cultures, and a linking of internal and external considerations "must be addressed by 'management' in a much wider sense than can be exercised by top leadership alone" (Duke, 2003, p. 54). While to some extent this has always been the case, mechanisms for facilitating this are now being recognised formally and brought into the public domain.

For instance, one institution in the United Kingdom has responded to revised pay and grading structures by introducing a career pathway scheme to replace traditional hierarchical academic and research ladders. A new scheme envisages career strands for those following a traditional balance (research and teaching); a teaching-oriented balance; a research-oriented balance; and an enterprise-focused profile; within a framework of three career tracks for Education, Research and Enterprise. Thus, on the teaching pathways, individuals might progress from teaching assistant to teaching fellow, senior fellow and director of education. The roles are differentiated by "competencies for role holders or standards of output" (Strike, 2005, p. 6). This more complex map of pathways provides transfer points, so that individuals can shift across strands and progress as their interests adjust over time and their careers develop. Other institutions are also considering broadly similar versions of this framework of multiple strands within the academic "family" of roles.

Challenges emerging from such arrangements are to define clear criteria for these strands, whilst enabling some crossover points, and also to achieve acceptance of these criteria by unions and, more generally, by the staff affected. Strike concludes:

> "Europe can see England as an island where career adaptation is taking its own curious and perhaps temporary evolutionary path, or seek to more closely observe and evaluate the results. Like all evolutionary changes, not all of the resulting variations will survive and be successful and so reproduce elsewhere. The traditional academic ladder and titles may survive and resist novelty, especially if England is in a unique context with particular nationally specific stimuli." (Strike, 2005, p. 7)

However, the literature suggests that not all of the stimuli are specific to the United Kingdom, and that there are wider pressures for adjustment and accommodation. The loosening of employment categories in the context of the national re-design of pay and grading structures may, therefore, accelerate new forms of role, and contribute to emergent aspects of academic identity, whereby:

> "the capacity to develop business/earn one's own salary/manage 'client' relationships, once missing from academics, is now part of the skills repertoire of our next generation of academics." (Dunkin, 2005, p. 8)

Conclusion

A picture emerges, therefore, of a diverse and mobile workforce, for whom the content of roles is changing, sometimes by default, and sometimes via policy interventions by governments or institutions, such as the modification of terms and conditions. At the same time, crossovers are occurring between academic and management fields of activity, creating mixed roles between the two, including professionals who assist in the contextualisation of institutional activity in complex knowledge environments. This is a situation that is beginning to be documented (see for instance, in relation to academic staff, Middlehurst, 2004; to teaching and learning professionals, Gornall, 1999;

2004; and to professional managers, Whitchurch, 2006a and 2006b). Nevertheless, the challenges created are demanding and there is, therefore, scope for further research, particularly in respect of the changing career paths of both academic and professional staff.

Rapid and ongoing developments in the workforce map are likely to demand greater flexibility than is offered by traditional organisational structures and processes. Examples of good practice in this environment include specific arrangements for new entrants to the profession, such as career booster schemes; mid-career fellowships and training in relation to both teaching and research; and more flexible approaches to career paths and work-life balance (www.uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/care/eldercare). Furthermore, human resources and staff development professionals are also considering how they might interface most effectively with line managers, at all levels, in the field (Knight, 2005). In developing their human resource strategies, therefore, institutions may wish to take cognizance of examples of good practice that are beginning to emerge.

Notwithstanding differences in national systems that affect their autonomy, higher education institutions are facing similar challenges in terms of the global environments in which they work and the roles expected of them. To meet the demands of governments for mass higher education, a strengthening of the national research base, and institutional involvement in partnership and enterprise, an increasingly diversified workforce is required. This means, for instance, that career structures are no longer necessarily homogeneous or linear, and that boundaries are blurring between academic and professional roles. Individual institutions are, therefore, likely to become increasingly creative and innovative in their approach to human resource management, which has become critical in the building of institutional capacity for the future.

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