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The Academic Profession: changing roles, terms and definitions

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THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION: CHANGING ROLES, TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

This Digest Supplement is devoted to the changing roles and conditions of the academic profession.

John Brennan reports on an international study of the academic profession – the *Changing Academic Profession* project – a successor to the well-known Carnegie study carried out in the early 1990s. Its aim is to examine the changes experienced by academics in different countries and to consider differences and similarities between countries and between kinds of higher education institution, subjects and types of academic job.

William Locke provides an overview of a recent report by the Higher Education Funding Council for England on 'workforce trends' and offers a commentary from the perspectives of the *Changing Academic Profession* project.

A Changing Academic Profession: international perspectives[1]

*John Brennan[2] describes the aims and underlying thinking behind a new
international study of the academic profession*

Contexts

Higher education has in recent years undergone significant changes in most parts of the world. It has expanded, it has become increasingly differentiated and it has become subjected to ever rising external expectations and controls. Public financing has often not kept pace with the rate of expansion and higher education institutions have faced an increasing challenge to both do more with less and to become more entrepreneurial in their fundraising. These changes have brought about changes in the governance and management of higher education institutions, in their internal structures and in their relationships with other parts of society (Enders, 2006; Enders and Teichler, 1997; Kogan et al, 2000). In many national systems, a private sector has become more prominent and even publicly funded institutions in some countries are increasingly regulated by and dependent on market forces.

Alongside these institutional changes have come changes in the backgrounds, specialisations, expectations and work roles of academic staff (Fulton, 1996; Altbach, 2000). In many countries the academic profession is ageing, increasingly insecure, more accountable, more internationalised and less likely to be organised along disciplinary lines. It is expected to be more professional in teaching, more productive in research, and more entrepreneurial in everything. It has to balance local and national (as well as international) needs and requirements. In many places, the very definition of an academic has become ambiguous as have the boundaries between academic jobs and the jobs of other professionals, both within and beyond the walls of the academy. New divisions of labour within the profession suggest fragmentation and question the centrality of the teaching-research nexus, regarded by many as lying at the heart of the traditional academic role (Brew, 2006; Rip, 2004). They also bring pressure for the development of new

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technical and professional skills, both among the profession as a whole and for new specialists within the profession (for example, academics working in distance education or workplace learning). Some of these changes have raised questions about the attractiveness of an academic career for today's graduates (Harman, 2003).

With expansion of higher education has come increasing differentiation – of institutions, of programmes and of professional roles and statuses. Higher education faces increasing expectations from society, and an evolution of academic work that may take academics away from their original disciplines towards new forms of identity and loyalty (Henkel, 2001). At the same time, knowledge has come to be identified as the most vital resource of contemporary societies, and many nations have taken great strides to improve their capacity for knowledge creation and application. However, knowledge 'work' pervades many of the institutions of modern societies and suggests new relationships and weaker boundaries between higher education and other economic and social institutions (Gibbons *et al*, 1994; Novotny *et al*, 2001). This new devotion to knowledge has both expanded the role of the academy and challenged the coherence and viability of the traditional academic role.

Three new emphases have become particularly pervasive: relevance, internationalisation and management.

Relevance

Whereas the highest goal of the traditional academy was to create fundamental knowledge, what has been described as the 'scholarship of discovery', the new emphasis of the knowledge society is on useful knowledge or the 'scholarship of application' (Boyer et al, 1994). This scholarship often involves the pooling and melding of insights from several disciplines and tends to focus on outcomes that have a direct impact on everyday life. One consequence is that many future scholars, though trained in the disciplines, will work in applied fields and may have options of employment in these fields outside of the academy. This provides new opportunities for more 'boundaryless' forms of academic career and knowledge transfer while it may also create recruitment difficulties in some places, and especially in fields such as science, technology and engineering where career opportunities outside the academy may be especially attractive. And for some, it sees a change in status of the academic from 'autonomous professional' to 'knowledge worker' (Newson, 1993). Within the 'relevant academy', it is generally left to others – the 'clients' or the 'users' of academic work – to define the central goal of relevance. This removes – or at least severely limits - one of the defining features of the academic profession, its autonomy over goals (Clark, 1983; Becher, 1989; Becher and Trowler, 2001).

There are strong interdependencies between the goals of higher education, the rules for distributing resources, and the nature of academic work. The changes associated with movement from the 'traditional academy' with its stress on basic research and disciplinary teaching to the 'relevant academy' are largely uncharted and are likely to have unanticipated consequences. There is a need to understand how these changes influence academic value systems and work practices and affect the nature and locus of control and power in academe. There is a need to investigate how these tensions work out in higher education institutions of different types and in countries with different economic, political and cultural traditions and contemporary circumstances.

Internationalisation

National (and local and regional) traditions and socio-economic circumstances continue to play an important role in shaping academic life and have a major impact on the attractiveness of jobs in the profession. Yet today's global trends, with their emphasis on knowledge production and information flow, play an increasingly important part in the push towards the internationalisation of higher education (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002). The international mobility of students and staff has grown, new technologies connect scholarly communities around the world, curricula and credentials are required to have international currency, and English has become the new lingua franca of the international community. Competition between higher education institutions extends beyond the borders of the nation state. In particular, the research elite of institutions sees its rivals and reference groups in institutions across continents. Many institutions face the challenge of balancing the international with the local, the regional and the national.

> " *Many institutions face the challenge of balancing the international with the local, the regional and the national.* "

The economic and political power of a country, its size and geographic location, its dominant culture, the perceived and actual quality of its higher education system, and the language it uses for academic discourse and publications are factors that bring with them different approaches to internationalisation (Amaral *et al*; 2003; Enders and Teichler, 1997). Local and regional differences in approach are also to be found. Questions are therefore raised about the functions of international networks, the implications of differential access to them and the role of new communication technologies in internationalising the profession. Do such trends further constrain or rather liberate the members of the academic profession? Do they result in greater homogeneity or greater differentiation?

Management

In academic teaching and research, where professional values are traditionally firmly woven into the very fabric of knowledge production and dissemination, attempts to introduce change are sometimes received with scepticism and opposition. Universities tend to be regarded as rather conservative institutions to which change, if it comes at all, comes slowly and painfully (Cohen and March, 1974; Trow, 1994). At the same time, a greater professionalisation of management within higher education is increasingly regarded as necessary to enable higher education institutions to respond effectively to – or even to survive within – a rapidly changing external environment. The control and management of academic work helps define the nature of academic roles – including the division of labour within the academy, with a growth of newly professionalised 'support' roles and, as we have noted, a possible breakdown of the traditional teaching/research nexus. New systemic and institutional processes such as quality assurance have been introduced which also change traditional distributions of power and values within academe and may be a force for change in academic practice (Brennan and Shah, 2000). There is much rhetoric about 'managerialism' and control in today's higher education but also a need to distinguish the rhetoric from the realities of academics' responses to such managerial practices.

The tensions found in respect of the management of change in higher education are to be found both within and beyond the walls of individual institutions. Within them, they may challenge traditional hierarchies and notions of professorial authority (Enders, 2001). They may see the emergence of a professional cadre of full-time managers and a shifting of levels of decision-making between individual academics, basic academic units, faculties and central authorities. The direction of the shift seems always to be upwards! Beyond the walls of institutions, the expectations of ministries, of new intermediary bodies and of resource-bearing clients bring further pressures for change.

A number of views can be discerned about recent attempts at the management of change in higher education and the responses of academics to such changes. One view would see a victory of managerial values over professional ones with academics losing control over both the overall goals of their work practices and of their technical tasks. Another view would see the survival of traditional academic values against the managerial approach. This does not imply that academic roles fail to change, but that change does not automatically mean that interests and values are weakened. 'Compliance' may be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of managers and consumers while academic work proceeds largely unaffected. A third view would see a 'marriage' between traditional professionalism and new managerialism with academics losing some control over the goals and social purposes of their work but retaining considerable autonomy over their practical and technical tasks. The desirability or otherwise of these three different positions is also subject to a range of different views.

A research agenda

Academics are often not too good at investigating themselves. Yet at times of radical change or even transformation, questions abound – for individual academics, their immediate institutional colleagues and the larger professional community of scholars, national and international. Questions concern whether and how to respond to change, concern individual and institutional futures, concern whether to engage, retreat or exit from academic life. Nostalgia for times past is common though sometimes revealing of faulty memory! Values and self-interests can easily get in the way of clear and objective vision and may replace evidence and analysis as the basis for decision-making.

> " *Nostalgia for times past is common though sometimes revealing of faulty memory!* "

It is, therefore, perhaps timely to see the commencement of a new international research project on the 'shifting boundaries of the changing academic profession'. The new project attempts to examine the nature and extent of the changes experienced by the academic profession in recent years, drawing in part on comparisons of current developments with those documented in the First International Survey of the Academic Profession conducted in 1991 (Boyer *et al*, 1994; Altbach and Lewis, 1996). It explores both the reasons for and the consequences of these changes. It considers the implications of the changes for the attractiveness of the academic profession as a career and for the ability of the academic community to contribute to the further development of knowledge societies and the attainment of national goals. It is making comparisons on these matters between different national higher education systems, institutional types, disciplines and generations of academics.

A model of change in the academic profession

The project is utilising a six stage model for the investigation of change in the academic profession. These represent drivers, conditions, beliefs, roles and practices, outputs and outcomes.

First, *the drivers* of change. In a broad sense, these are principally the structures and ideologies of the knowledge society, leading to commodification, competition, internationalisation, expansion and differentiation, in other words to the kinds of contextual factors discussed above. These are the factors that have fuelled expansion and encouraged diversification and differentiation of higher education institutions.

Second, the *conditions* under which changes occur. These include factors such as infrastructures, salaries, institutional diversity, terms of employment, hierarchies (old and new). They include resource issues including multiple funding sources, emphasis on cost-recovery and the financial contribution of academic units to growing institutional overheads and bureaucracies.

Third, there are the *beliefs* of academics, stable or changing, confident or threatened. There are the identities, loyalties, motivations (intrinsic and instrumental), career aspirations, individual and collective orientations which drive individual academics and shape their relationships and behaviour.

Fourth, there are *the roles and practices* of academic life. These include the teaching/research nexus, the place of public service, the division of labour involving the 'unbundling' of traditional roles and the creation of new specialist roles, the need for new specialist skills, the creation of a cadre of management professionals.

Fifth, there are the *outputs* arising from these changes. These may be regarded negatively, for example, the loss of academic solidarity, declining prestige and conditions of work. They can also be regarded more positively, or at least neutrally, for example in terms of an undermining of traditional and constraining hierarchies, a shift from internal to external controls, a shift from individual to collective work, greater productivity, a blurring of boundaries (both within higher education institutions and between them and other organisations/institutions in society). Whether such changes are regarded as positive or negative depends on one's vantage point but also on an analysis of the societal impact of these changes, of their social, economic and cultural consequences.

Sixth, and finally, there are the *outcomes* of change for the academy itself. Will we find – at the end of the research - a more responsive, socially useful academy **or** an undermined academy **or** a more differentiated academy? We may, of course, find different things in different places

Conclusion

Of course, the six stages referred to above are interconnected. Methodological challenges will include the attempts to unravel these interconnections. They will also concern the extent to which the 'perceptions' of academics on these matters constitute 'hard evidence' or simply the perceptions of self-interested participants. It will also be interesting to compare the emerging picture of changes in the academic profession with what is known about changes in professional and working life more generally.

One interesting feature of the survey will be how the perceptions of individual academics differ according to the mobility of the academics concerned, including international mobility. At one extreme of a continuum lie those academics who have spent their working lives in a single university, perhaps even the university where they received their undergraduate and graduate education. At another extreme lie those who have moved on every few years and experienced working life in many institutions and, indeed, in many countries. In some fields, periods of academic life may be interspersed with periods of

professional life and employment outside the academic world. Some academics simultaneously hold employment inside and outside university, representing the 'portfolio careers' that are forecast for others within the knowledge society. Underlying these differences lie questions of academics' knowledge and understanding of their own working lives and the conditions and of the forces that influence them.

The perceptions of academics reflect, of course, the real circumstances of their working lives and institutions. But these in turn reflect the specifics of institutional and national histories and traditions. For all the rhetoric about the effects of globalisation, it is at least possible that the new international study of *the* academic profession will in fact discover *many* academic professions, each reflecting local circumstances and histories. Some of them may be 'successfully' resisting change. Others may be 'enthusiastically' embracing it. Or again, differences may cut across national boundaries and reflect such things as the type of institution, the subject area or the age and seniority of the individual academic. The new study may prove to have several stories rather than a single story to tell.

" *… it is at least possible that the new international study of the academic profession will in fact discover many academic professions.* "

The Higher Education Workforce in England: A framework for the future
Higher Education Funding Council for England, July 2006/21

William Locke[3] provides an overview of the English Funding Council's report and offers a commentary from the perspectives of the **Changing Academic Profession** *project.*

Overview

The Higher Education Workforce in England is intended to be the first annual report on 'workforce trends in HE'. Its focus is the sector as a whole rather than the institutional level, and it seeks to consider what the higher education workforce "looks like now, and how it will need to adapt in order to meet future challenges" (p3). It draws on the findings of a previous circular, *Staff employed at HEFCE-funded HEIs: trends, profiles and projections* (HEFCE 2005/23), itself an update of HEFCE 2002/43, *Academic staff: trends and projections*. The 'workforce framework' presented follows an interim report placed on the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) website in November 2005 and has been developed after informal discussions with higher education institutions and 'other stakeholders'.

The report, nevertheless, claims that the "national framework can help to inform strategic planning at the institutional level" and can be used by HEIs' "in framing their staffing and employment policies and practices to ensure they meet their strategic aims. It also provides a sector overview, identifying the overall consequences of actions by individual institutions" (p6). Acknowledging that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are autonomous employers, the report nevertheless goes on to claim that their employment strategies are in line with the Prime Minister's four principles of public sector reform. It also argues that the Funding Council itself has a role to play to "facilitate and support modernisation and ongoing development" and that "HE more broadly is relevant to public sector workforce issues because it receives substantial amounts of public money":

> This workforce framework for England is designed to complement and enhance institutions' own human resources strategies, and other related strategies, and to reinforce the value of adopting certain approaches at national level. (p6)

The Higher Education Workforce in England considers six areas of 'workforce development', each with a summary section on progress made, challenges that remain and ways in which 'the sector is meeting these challenges':

The **capacity and composition of the workforce** classifies 48 per cent of the total Higher Education (HE) staff as having an academic role, with the remaining 148,240 employees being professional and support staff, including over a third of these identified as managers,

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> "...there is a growing dependence on non-UK nationals, now accounting for 13% of core academic staff"

professionals and technicians. In the last ten years, academic staff numbers have increased by 20 per cent, although this has varied between different subject groups, and largely reflects changing student demand. HE enjoys a stable workforce with low turnover, according to the report, although the average age of academics is increasing, and HEIs manage recruitment problem areas well. There has been a steady growth in the proportion of women and people from ethnic minorities employed as academics, with the proportions growing fastest at professorial level, albeit from a low level. But there is a growing dependence on non-UK nationals, now accounting for 13 per cent of core academic staff, and the report identifies the major challenge as "making higher education a career of first resort for UK nationals and attractive to entrants from other sectors". Due to lack of data, it is not yet possible to analyse professional and support staff in the same way as for academics.

Figure 1:   Proportion of permanent academic staff who were non-UK nationals
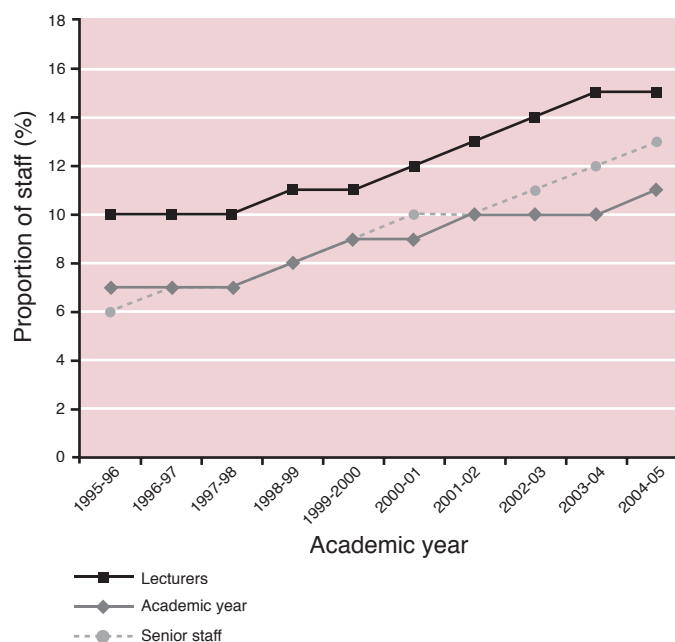
Projections of the **future need for staff** in the report suggest that the numbers of academics recruited to HEIs may need to rise by 25 per cent between 2004 and 2011, if student numbers increase in line with government projections, and other variables (eg the ratios of students to staff and academics to professional and support staff)

remain as now. The subject areas which may require the largest growth in academic staff are identified as social policy, engineering, biological sciences and medicine, many of which are current shortage subjects. In the light of the challenges that may therefore arise, the report refers with concern to the finding by KPMG (2005) in a separate

> " *the numbers of academics recruited to HEIs may need to rise by 25% between 2004 and 2011* "

study that "workforce planning appears to be the least developed area of human resource management" (p32) in HEIs.

On **recruitment, retention and progression**, HEFCE maintains that HEIs have learned to manage recruitment problems in particular subjects, having "become increasingly responsive, with flexible systems of reward that enable them to attract and retain good quality staff" (p3). However, it warns that increasing levels of student debt may impact on the supply of PhD students into the academic profession and that the sector's reliance on overseas staff may not be sustainable. Furthermore, "increasing and changing demands on academic staff could damage the pay and intrinsic reward balance that has led to traditionally low turnover rates. In particular, individual freedoms may be perceived as increasingly constrained" (p44).

> " *increasing and changing demands on academic staff could damage the pay and intrinsic reward balance that has led to traditionally low turnover rates* "

The section on **pay and pay modernisation** maintains that UK academic salaries compare well with comparator countries except the US. While there has been a significant improvement in starting salaries in recent years, these remain low compared with other highly qualified employees in the UK and are likely to discourage new entrants. There is also a widening in the range of earnings appearing, with substantial increases in the numbers of highly paid staff.

The report claims that the framework agreement on pay structures has had a positive impact in addressing inequalities and tackling low pay for support staff. However, the improvement in pay of other public service employees, such as health service workers and teachers, has also hindered recruitment in related subjects. Evidence presented on **equal opportunities and diversity** suggests progress in relation to gender and race. The report also claims that compliance with new diversity legislation has brought about cultural and attitudinal change in HEIs. However, there is a lack of data relating to disabilities, religious beliefs and sexual orientation. The report also repeats conclusions from a previous study (KPMG, 2005) of a general lack of commitment of middle managers as a key barrier to the implementation of equal opportunities initiatives.

Figure 8: Percentage of HEIs reporting implementation of retention payments by region

Region	Number of HEIs reporting retention payments	Total number of HEIs	% of HEIs reporting retention payments
East	3	9	33%
East Midlands	5	9	55%
London	12	37	32%
North East	4	5	80%
North West	4	15	26%
South East	10	18	55%
South West	3	12	25%
West Midlands	3	11	27%
Yorkshire & the Humber	6	10	60%
Total	**50**	**126**	**40%**

From HEFCE (2006)

The report suggests there is evidence that HEIs are directing more funds towards the development of **leadership, governance and management**, and suggests that human resource management has become embedded in institutional strategic planning. It claims a significant role here for the Leadership Foundation, the Committee of University Chairmen and HEFCE's own Rewarding and developing staff (R&DS) initiative, although HEFCE is concerned about losing momentum when conditions are removed from the allocation of R&DS funds. The real cultural challenges for the sector, according to this section, are embedding performance review and managing both excellent and poor performance.

The report identifies many risks to the sector and the major ones are collated in a 'risk register' towards the end of the document. The conclusion highlights the ageing population of academic staff as a key concern, given that the proportion aged over 50 has risen from 34 per cent to 41 per cent in the last ten years. HEFCE is also concerned with likely staff shortages in certain subjects and urges more detailed analysis and monitoring of these and other risks. Inevitably, the report acknowledges there are questions for which there is insufficient evidence, and so outlines future research needs in a final section, divided into areas that HEFCE is committed to investigating and suggestions on which the funding council wishes to consult further.

Commentary

The Higher Education Workforce in England follows the Government's Spending Review in 2002 which identified a number of challenges facing public sector employers in delivering their Public Sector Agreement commitments. These included: recruitment and retention to expand the workforce and increase its diversity; redesigning service delivery and working patterns to allow greater flexibility for staff and customers; and the use of pay and rewards to address specific local employment and labour market problems.

All government departments were asked to develop pay and workforce strategies to inform the aggregate picture of the public sector workforce. In his letter to the HEFCE Chairman in 2004 (under the sub-heading 'Workforce Development'), the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Charles Clarke, requested that:

From Autumn 2004, the Council should provide the Department with an annual report on workforce trends, covering sector staffing capacity, institutional HR capability and progress on embedding HR strategies, and progress on pay modernisation. The report should draw on HEFCE's existing institutional monitoring arrangements and should impose no extra reporting requirements on institutions. On staffing capacity, I ask in particular that the Council closely monitor the risk of staffing shortages within specific discipline areas, and the actions being taken within the sector to address these; and to determine whether further action is necessary. (DfES 2004: paragraph 12)

Given this original stimulus for The Higher Education Workforce in England, it appears that the report's main audience is the Government. The document even acknowledges that one of its principle objectives is "to support the Government in working to ensure that the size and quality of the HE workforce is sufficient to achieve the Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) target: to move towards HE participation of 50 per cent of 18-30 year olds by 2010" (p7). But why should HEFCE (and the Secretary of State for Education and Skills) be so concerned with 'workforce development' in higher education? Concern about 'strategically important and vulnerable' subjects in the wake of the closure of several university departments has clearly prompted anxiety about circumstances "...where the aggregate individual interests of HEIs do not necessarily meet the national interest, but where our involvement does not infringe institutional autonomy or academic freedom" (p7). Yet, "(t)his workforce framework is designed to ... reinforce the value of adopting certain approaches at national level" (p6) and thereby ensure HEIs' compliance with national policies. The justification offered for this is that institutions are in receipt of substantial amounts of public money, despite the fact that many individual English higher education institutions receive a minority of their income from the Funding Council (Ramsden, 2006) and an increasing proportion from non-public sources. Yet, the authors of this report, it seems, are all too aware of HEFCE walking the tightrope between condoning institutional self-interest and acting as a planning body at the behest of the Government.

Notions of 'workforce planning and development'

The language of the report is clearly steeped in the discourse of 'workforce planning' – what used to be termed 'manpower planning' – of sector skills development and public service modernisation. The notion of 'workforce planning' is drawn from business and the need to anticipate changes requiring new skills, knowledge and expertise and avert an impending loss of talent as an increasing number of employees retires. Recent trends affecting the English higher education sector have tended to encourage such approaches: the increased selectivity of the Research Assessment Exercise, greater competition from particular public sectors (especially schools and the National Health Service) for potential and existing academic staff, the increasing demand for 'knowledge workers' in the private sector, the extension of quasi-markets in fees to full-time undergraduate courses, and pressures to 'modernise the service' and respond to consumers' demands.

Essentially [workforce planning] helps organisations to 'get the right people in the right job at the right time'. It allows for a more effective and efficient use of workers and for organisations to prepare for restructuring, reducing or expanding their workforces. In addition to the practical benefits, the process of workforce planning aids organisations by providing overarching objectives

which integrate the various divisions and focus employees' attention on common goals for the future. (Sinclair and Robinson, 2003)

In its more ambitious forms, 'workforce planning' adopts an analytical-rationalist approach to strategic planning at the national and institutional levels and assumes that future trends can be predicted and specific targets achieved. However, fluctuations in circumstances and shifts in Government policy mean that trends rarely follow linear paths, so strategic decision-making about staffing in higher education needs to be flexible and sensitive to these changes. Nevertheless, while overarching and detailed planning is likely to lead to disappointment and even unintended consequences, there remains a need for a better understanding of the present situation and possible future trends and how these relate to institutional goals and national policies. By bringing together findings from a number of sources, The Higher Education Workforce in England makes a contribution to this understanding, but it is debatable whether this amounts to a framework for strategic planning.

Diversity and differentiation

One difficulty faced by a national report of this kind is how to acknowledge the differences between higher education institutions. While it is arguable that Government policies have tended to encourage homogeneity, the 132 HEIs in England still vary substantially in terms of reputation, resources and functional mix. The different priorities given to teaching, research and collaboration with business delineate the higher education sector and, increasingly, institutions identify themselves with one of a small number of interest groups based on mission, character, organisational culture and geography.
These differences shape staffing patterns and policies and are key to the maintenance of staff motivation, commitment and loyalty and the perceptions of the 'psychological contract' between individuals and their employers. A funding council is obliged to treat institutions on the same basis, but they are not equal and these differences tend to be underplayed in the report.

As well as differences between HEIs, there is evidence of increasing differentiation among staff within HEIs. Firstly, we know that academic staff are still stratified by gender and ethnicity with regard to pay and position. Across the UK, 40 per cent of academics are female and more than a quarter of these work part-time, compared with 16 per cent of male academics, and they are more likely to be on fixed-term contracts. On average full-time female academics earn 86 per cent of the pay of their male colleagues (AUT, 2005a). While female staff hold 35 per cent of all full-time posts in UK HEIs, the proportion of females holding professorial posts is only 15 per cent and senior lecturers and researchers 27.1 per cent (HESA, 2005). Ten and a half per cent of academics are from black and ethnic minority groups, which is similar to the population of black and ethnic minority postgraduates in the UK population as a whole. However, those with UK nationality are seriously under-represented. Black and ethnic minority academics earn 88 per cent of the pay of their white colleagues, although this gap narrows for those of UK nationality (AUT, 2005a). Only 4.9 per cent of senior academics are from black and ethnic minority groups (AUT, 2005b).

Secondly, the national policy of concentrating research spending on 'centres of excellence' has resulted in growing numbers of 'teaching-only' academics in some institutions. Even among universities, there are many that categorise around a quarter to one third of academics as teaching-only (AUT, 2005c). Approximately 20 per cent of academics in the UK were employed on teaching-only contracts in 2003-04, 24 per cent on a research-only basis and 55 per cent were employed to teach and research (the latter two being declining proportions). It has been suggested that the rise in teaching-only contracts may be partly due to the redesignation by institutions of 'underperforming' researchers as a strategy for improving success in the periodic Research Assessment Exercise (AUT, 2005c).

Thirdly, the HEFCE report also indicates that institutions are increasingly using financial incentives to recruit and retain those staff they perceive to be of high market value which include salary bonuses and retention payments. Recent HESA data (HESA, 2006) suggest that the variations in average salaries between institutions are widening, and it has been argued (THES, 2006) that this is partly a result of the growing influence of market forces which are beginning to erode national pay structures almost before the framework agreement has been adopted across the sector.

Partly because of the lack of reliable data on 'professional and support staff' to date, the report also tends to ignore the sharp distinctions made in many HEIs between 'academic' and 'non-academic' staff, expressed in different contracts, remuneration packages, rights to participate in university decision-making processes and even access to catering facilities. Yet, in the UK, some staff on 'non-academic' contracts are increasingly performing core academic functions, whether it be widening participation specialists admitting entrants, pedagogic experts contributing to curriculum development, learning support staff teaching study skills and the involvement of people external to the academy in assessing students. Fifty-two per cent of the higher education workforce has a 'professional or support role only' and it is clear that we need to understand more about the wide range of types of employee within this category, which includes managers, administrators, technicians and other support staff.

All this suggests that staff in higher education institutions are becoming increasingly stratified, and casts doubt on whether it is meaningful to refer to a singular higher education 'workforce' at all. Although the Changing Academic Profession project focuses on academic staff, the HEFCE report can be addressed in terms of the project's three themes of relevance, internationalisation and management.

Relevance

The Higher Education Workforce in England opens the section entitled 'Capacity and composition of the workforce' with a clear statement of the Government's view of the increasing importance of higher education as a driver of economic growth:

Increasingly, governments view higher education as an important driver of economic growth, both through the graduates that it develops and the new knowledge created by research. With increasing competition from developed and developing nations, and given the possibility of locating business operations anywhere in the world using communications and information technology, nations will need, through investment in people, to equip themselves to compete at the leading edge of economic activity. (p11)

It appears this is the reason why universities receive public funding, why academic and other jobs exist, and why universities and the 'higher education workforce' are important enough to warrant a 'framework for workforce planning and development'. The policies that flow from this economic imperative, for example, of expanding the proportion of young people in higher education and encouraging the transfer of knowledge to business, have accentuated the demands for greater relevance in the 'outputs' of higher education institutions. Yet the extension of quasi-market mechanisms, such as 'top-up' fees and greater selectivity in allocating research funds, can have unintended consequences when the markets – or the institutions themselves – 'do not operate in the national interest', by closing departments in 'strategic and vulnerable' subjects and being unable to improve significantly the rates of progression into HE of people from disadvantaged groups. The HEFCE report is largely silent on the impact of these increasing demands on academics themselves, despite several studies suggesting that job-related stress and dissatisfaction are directly related to features of national educational policy. High levels of psychological distress have been found in comparison with academics in other countries and with other professional groups and the general population in the UK (Kinman and Jones, 2003).

Internationalisation

The report notes the growing dependence of HEIs on academic staff from other countries, now at 13 per cent, up from eight per cent in 1995-96. The proportion of professors who were not UK nationals has risen from seven per cent to 11 per cent and of other senior academic staff from six per cent to 13 per cent. However, it is worth pointing out that almost half of all non-UK academic staff are researchers, with Chinese nationals particularly prominent. Indeed, researchers constitute three-quarters of all Chinese staff in UK HEIs. This dependence on one particular source makes UK higher education institutions even more vulnerable than they would be if the same number of foreign researchers were from a wider range of countries. Of those non-UK nationals employed to teach

> " *… almost half of all non-UK academic staff are researchers, with Chinese nationals particularly prominent.* "

and research, academics from the United States, Ireland and other European and English-speaking countries are most prominent (Ramsden, 2005).

The increasing numbers of (especially non-EU) international students over the last ten years has also impacted on staff in HEIs. Some institutions, and particularly some courses, are virtually dependent on them for their survival. Students from other countries can often constitute a majority on postgraduate courses in some subjects. Such students have to be recruited, sometimes their language skills need to be improved and courses may even be adapted to take account of the wide range of student backgrounds. Collaboration in Erasmus and other student exchange schemes is a further way in which many academic staff become involved in the internationalisation of the teaching function.

Research has always had a strong international element to it, although more so in some subjects than others. It is now more important than ever with the Research Assessment Exercise offering the greatest recognition and reward to those whose achievements are deemed to possess international excellence. However, there is some evidence to suggest that increases in research students in the UK are modest in comparison with those of non-research students (HEPI, 2004).

Management

The extension of quasi-market mechanisms into higher education has increased competition between and within HEIs and has implications for the management of institutions, often resulting in the adoption of principles and practices derived from the private sector. With the reduction in public funding per student and the introduction of the full economic costing of research activities, institutions have been obliged to become more entrepreneurial. At the same time, more sophisticated means of monitoring, judging and comparing performance have been developed that attempt to enhance the operation of the market by providing 'consumers' – potential students and their families and the users of research – with sufficient information about the cost and quality of provision. Within institutions the forms of documenting and accounting for the professional activities of teaching and research have become increasingly bureaucratised. These trends have resulted in a situation where those performing a core academic role no longer represent a majority of the higher education 'workforce'. Relationships between academics and 'professional and support staff' have altered and the former may feel that their professional judgement and authority has been weakened. They may feel that rather than administrators meeting academic

> " *... those performing a core academic role no longer represent a majority of the higher education 'workforce'* "

needs, it is academics that are in fact being coerced into meeting administrative goals. Academics acquiring management responsibilities – with increasing financial rewards – may transform their relationships with other academics creating further divisions in 'the academic profession'.

Governance arrangements are also changing. Increasingly 'business-like' management styles have tended to go hand-in-hand with more corporate-style governance arrangements in HEIs, with a reduction in the size of governing bodies which now feature a majority of external members drawn largely from business sectors. In parallel, academic self-governance has been weakened, the influence of academic senates has declined and the academic community marginalised (Shattock, 2002).

These changes in the style of management and governance in UK higher education have been characterised as a shift from professional oligarchy to managerial oligarchy, which is claimed to be re-defining the academic profession, weakening its professional influence, reducing job security and economic attractiveness, and stratifying it so that "ordinary academics are now tightly managed as employees" (Kim, 2006).

Finally, the significance of the three themes of the CAP project seem to be highlighted by several recent leadership appointments in some of the most prestigious higher education institutions in England, with appointees attracted from overseas or successful careers in business. With a significant number of vice-chancellor posts soon to become vacant in England, this is one trend definitely worth keeping an eye on.

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