Are we maximising the contribution of our international staff community towards achieving institutional strategic objectives?

Lessons from IR on the recruitment and transition experiences of non-UK staff at Kingston University

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Overview of this Presentation

• Some definitions
• Context: Policy, Practice and Research
• IR Project: Rationale
• IR Project: Research approach
• IR Project: Initial findings by theme
• IR Project: Institutional impact
• Impact on the UK HE sector
• Some issues for discussion
  ▪ Methods
  ▪ Findings
Some Definitions

Who do we mean by international staff?

• Born outside the UK?
  ▪ Includes naturalised UK citizens.....

• Non-UK nationals?
  ▪ May have studied & worked in UK for a long time....

• Educational background overseas?

• Our definition:
  ▪ “Staff with a non-UK background: either born or studied mostly outside the UK”

• Not to be confused with ‘internationalised’ staff...
Context: Policy (1)

Why the policy interest in international staff?

• Sheer numbers of international staff in UK HE
  ▪ 58,115 staff are non-UK nationals (16% of all staff)
  ▪ 20 UK HEIs have a quarter or more non-UK staff

• Growing reliance on non-UK academic staff
  ▪ 2007-08:
    ➢ 27% of FT academic staff
    ➢ 36% of all new academic appts. were non-UK nationals
    ➢ 18,406 non-EU academic staff (>10%)
    • 26% of lecturers, 40% of researchers
  ▪ Concentrated in pre-92 sector & in London institutions
  ▪ ....and in Science & Engineering

1 2008-09 HESA data
Why the policy interest in international staff?

- Impact on key HE policy agendas:
  - HR: ‘Talent’
    - Academics - Teaching, Research, 3rd Stream
    - Skilled Migration: UKBA (Non-EU staff)
  - ‘Internationalisation’
    - “.... at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003)
  - Quality enhancement:
    - Rankings: THE/Thomson Reuters 2010 (5%)
    - Student Experience – tuition fees, NSS, etc.

Context: IR & Practice

What is already happening in the UK HE sector?

- Institutional projects/initiatives
  - Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Brighton, Leeds Met

- Sector-wide projects
  - [www.internationalstaff.ac.uk](http://www.internationalstaff.ac.uk) (Leeds)
    - Research-informed – qualitative & quantitative
    - HEFCE supported subscription site – UK HE, Practical support
  - HE Academy – workshop on I academic staff (2010)
  - Equality Challenge Unit (ECU):
    - Synergy between the IO and the E&D functions (Leeds Met)
    - I staff progression, retention and experience
  - Academic Workforce (HEFCE, PA Consulting)
Context: Academic Research

What research has already been undertaken related to international staff?

- Luxon and Peelo (2009) (Lancaster)
  - Academic staff in UK HEIs – teaching challenges
  - Language, HE culture, Adaptation – ‘soujourners’
- Mamiseishvilli & Rosser (2010) (Arkansas)
  - Productivity by US and international academics – R, T & Service
  - Quantitative IR – Structural Equation Modelling
  - I more productive in Research, US in Teaching
- Research & practice...focus on academic staff
  - Role in T&L, & induction and support
IR Project: Rationale

Why undertake an IR study in 1 institution?

• Cross-institutional academic interest & support
• Addresses agendas of central Depts. & Faculties
  ▪ **Academic Development Centre**: PGCert, T&L practice, & the wider student experience
  ▪ **Equality Unit**: cultural transitions, fairness (recruitment, support & promotion)
  ▪ **Human Resources**: induction, satisfaction, development and performance management
  ▪ **International Development**: contribution to internationalisation agenda (& link with int. students)
  ▪ **Faculties**: HR, Equality & Diversity, Internationalisation
IR Project: Overview

- **Research Team:** HE Policy & Practice Network (HEPP) & Equality Unit
- **Funding:** Equality Unit/International Development
- **Timescale:** March – Sept 2010
- **Research Focus:**
  - Broaden institutional self-knowledge:
    - Experiences and needs of international staff
    - Impact of international staff on key policy agendas
  - Situate findings within broader policy, practice and research contexts
  - Recommend changes to policy & practice re: international staff
IR Project: Research Questions

1. What is the demographic profile of international staff (by faculty/department) and how does this compare with comparator institutions & the HE sector as whole?

2. What is the current institutional-level policy context related to the recruitment, retention and support of international staff?

3. How do faculties and departments approach the recruitment, induction, management and systematic and integrative support of international staff?

4. What are the challenges and difficulties of recruiting, integrating and supporting international staff?

5. What are the elements of the contribution that international staff make to the institution's internationalisation strategy, cultural diversity and the overall student experience?

6. How should institutional and departmental/faculty policy and practice change in relation to international staff?
IR Project: Data Collection

• Secondary data analysis
  ▪ Institutional HR data
  ▪ Data from the 2010 Staff Survey (July 2010)
  ▪ HESA data (sector comparisons)

• Semi-structured qualitative interviews
  ▪ International staff (c.30)
  ▪ Managers of international staff (c.15)
  ▪ Student representatives (c.5)

• Desk research
  ▪ Institutional policies & strategies
  ▪ Sector-level policy reports/grey literature
IR Project: Initial Findings (1)

Secondary Data

• Kingston: 756 non-UK staff (16%)
  • Same as UK avg. but < most London universities
  • Lowest London institution in Million+ group
  • 27% of staff unknown nationality (5th highest in UK)

• Kingston International Staff profile:
  • Range of nationalities – Europe & Asia predominate
  • 50% in faculties, 50% in central departments
  • Academics (46%), Administrative staff (42%)
    • 264 temp staff (223 sts), 134 P/T lecturers, 11 senior staff
  • Slightly more likely to be female
  • Lower average age: 35 vs. 40
IR Project: Initial Findings (2)

Interviews: Recruitment

• No specific policy re: international staff
  ▪ Decentralisation
  ▪ Different recruitment processes
• No evidence of discrimination or unfairness
• Positive experience – efficient, straightforward
• Range of pathways and motivations
• Location very important – London
• Re-location – possible area for improvement
IR Project: Initial Findings (3)

Interviews: Induction

• Less positive:
  ▪ Central – irregular, sketchy
  ▪ Faculty/Departmental – limited
    ➢ “I did not have a desk or a computer available, I had to wait ten days to sort everything out, it was hardly welcoming”

• ‘On the job’ approach
  ▪ Learning from colleagues & following paper trails
  ▪ Mentoring system - variable

• Lack of information regarding UK HE context
• Managers: more could (& should) be done
IR Project: Initial Findings (4)

Interviews: Support and Development

• Colleagues & Managers: supportive & helpful
• Appraisals: patchy & often criticised as procedural
• Career development:
  ▪ Academics – positive and transparent
  ▪ Professional staff – less positive, more likely to move on
• Pastoral support a big issue – more required:
  ▪ Practical – essential services and visa renewals
  ▪ ‘Acclimatisation’ to institution and UK HE culture
• Training & support
  ▪ PG Cert L&T in HE & English language support
IR Project: Initial Findings (5)

Interviews: Internationalisation

- Academic staff
  - Encouraged to utilise international experience (case studies, reference materials, etc.)
  - Culture shock: student motivation, bureaucracy and workloads
- Professional staff
  - International expertise not used (except in IO!)
- University seen as ‘par for the course’ re: utilising international expertise
- International strategy – not embedded
IR Project: Institutional Impact

How will the project findings be used by Kingston?

• Project report:
  • Findings discussed with Faculties & Depts.
  • Exec Summary & Recommendations to Executive

• Equality Unit:
  • Single Equality Action Plan 2010-2011
  • Monitor implementation in Faculties & Depts.
  • Institutional response to HEFCE

• International Development:
  • Alignment: student and staff support/induction
  • Engage I staff in internationalisation activities
Impact on the HE Sector

Relevance of project findings to the wider HE sector

- The UK government is focused on skilled migration
  - ...however changes to Tier 1 and 2....
- Sector agencies are interested in academic mobility related to their own agendas:
  - HEFCE & UUK – ‘Academic Workforce’ & ‘Talent’
  - HEA – internationalisation of T&L
  - Leadership Foundation – managing diverse workforce
  - ECU – ‘race’ strand in Equality and Diversity agenda
- HE institutions are seeking better support staff
- HESA is seeking to improve data collection
Some issues for discussion (1)

Methods

• Sensitive subject – respondents wary/concerned
  • ‘Problematisation’
  • Fears about discrimination – differential treatment

• Ethics
  • Informed consent, confidentiality & anonymity

• Sampling & Access
  • Data incomplete & not ideal – institutional guidance
  • Demands on staff time – management support

• Enablers
  • Clear link with policy & practice
  • Cross-institutional advocacy and support
Some issues for discussion (2)

Findings

• Knowledge re: international staff is lacking
• International staff vs. international students
  • Focus & resources – induction & support
  • Adaptation – who adapts, how & why?
• Locus of responsibility – Centre vs. Faculties/Depts.
• Overlaps with Equality & Diversity agenda
  • Similarity & difference
• International experience – multi-dimensional
  • Not just international staff
  • Not just academic staff
  • How best to understand and use?
Thank you!

Please do contact me if you have any further queries:

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