

# **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*

**3rd Annual HEIR Conference**, Dublin City University,  
29th June 2010

## **Steve Woodfield**

Senior Researcher in HE Policy & Management,  
Kingston University, UK

Steve Woodfield's university web pages: <http://tinyurl.com/y8l2gwx>

# 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<sup>1</sup>
  - 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

<sup>1</sup> 2008-09 HESA data

# Context: Policy (2)

## Why the policy interest in international staff?

- Impact on key HE policy agendas:
  - HR: 'Talent'<sup>1</sup>
    - Academics - Teaching, Research, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> Universities UK (2007) 'Policy Briefing: Talent wars'

# 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 – ‘sojourners’
- Mamiseishvili & 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 (5<sup>th</sup> 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
  - 'Problematization'
  - 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:*

## **Steve Woodfield**

Senior Researcher

Vice-Chancellor's Office

Kingston University

River House

53-57 High Street

Kingston upon Thames

KT1 1LQ.

**Tel:** +44 (0) 20 8417 3032

**Email:** [s.woodfield@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:s.woodfield@kingston.ac.uk)

**Twitter:** [@sjwku](https://twitter.com/sjwku)