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# International Experiences of Human Resource Management in Higher Education

**A report to HEFCE by Nicola Dowds**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the time generously given to this project by the interviewees.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

1. This report presents the views of current or recent senior administrators in publicly funded higher education institutions (HEIs) with strategic responsibility for human resource management (HRM). It was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in spring 2009 to inform its development of a Higher Education (HE) workforce framework. It examines international perceptions of recent, current and future challenges for HRM in HE.

### **Scope of Research**

2. The findings are informed by eleven interviews with personnel in: Australia (2); Canada; Germany; Hong Kong; India; Ireland; Malaysia; New Zealand; South Africa; and the United States. No attempt was made to limit discussion to challenges current in UK HE today. Instead we invited participants to speak to their self-defined priorities and challenges in their own context.

### **Findings**

3. Overall we can say that senior HRM managers are spending their time on a range of issues including: development of the HR function; recruitment and retention; workforce planning; leadership development; organisation development; performance management; employment relations; and cost-reduction. When comparing the volume of discussion around these issues what we also observe is:
  - the high level of current and future concerns around recruitment and retention;
  - the concentrated attention given to the development of the HR function in recent years;
  - the recent appearance of workforce planning on the priority list.
4. The following sections provide a thematic overview of the activities HRM strategists are engaged in and the related challenges.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

#### ***Current Perceptions***

5. Taking a high level view of the interviews as a whole our impressions are:
  - a) Recruitment is getting harder, but not impossible, and that there is a need to develop and promote incentives as well as minimise the time spent between making a general job offer and securing the recruit's contractual commitment. There is some acknowledgement of specific staff shortages but no evidence to suggest that these were common across the locations.

- b) In an increasingly competitive market, whether national, regional, or international, there is a recognition that it is no longer sufficient to rely on salary incentives alone. There is significant pressure to think 'more creatively' about how to attract and retain staff.
- c) Relatively more attention may be given to retention issues than in the past because of increasing awareness of the cost of losing good staff especially when more is being invested in their development.

### ***Future Fears***

#### ***Demographic Changes***

6. An important foundation to the concept of a 'war for talent' is the impact of the large-scale and relatively en masse retirement of the experienced post-war baby-boomer generation. However, HEIs experience this impact very differently according to their national context. While it remains a very serious issue for some countries, and has a potential impact on all locations because of the overall global supply of HE staff, it cannot be described as the dominant challenge per se.

#### ***Asian Expansion***

7. There is evidence of competition for academics between more established international HE providers. But a stronger concern emerging from the data is the potential impact of the expanding Asian market in HE. This includes concerns from within Asian countries about their market share of the regional as well as international market. Of most concern is the speed of growth in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and India – but Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia are also seen as important and growing regional players. The precise nature of the concerns was not always specified but where it was, it touched on either or both of two areas.
  - Potential changes in the flows of international students and where they choose to study. A reduction or expansion in the numbers of foreign students will also affect income – particularly significant in a period of economic recession.
  - Potential changes in the mobility patterns of HE academic staff. More academics may be attracted to work in different parts of Asia, and at a time when the overall pool of experienced academics may be declining due to rapid retirement rates in some of the more established HE provider markets.

#### ***Economic Recession***

8. Many HEIs in different locations were anticipating new budget announcements that they felt might be unfavourable. But without a sense of the scale of the changes many felt unable to fully consider the implications. There was some reflection on worst case scenarios such as radical re-structuring at the institutional level in order to downsize operations and, at best, cutbacks in staff services like HRM – including staff development. There was also some consideration of the potential for re-structuring at the national level to achieve more economies of scale – in terms of increasing shared services and formalising collaborations.

#### ***Strategies***

9. Some examples of recruitment and retention strategies being developed in response to greater competition for staff are listed below.

- a) The development and promotion of non-salary benefits to employment in a university – often described as ‘total reward’ or ‘alternate reward’.
- b) Development and active promotion of stronger, value-driven, identities which people can relate to on an emotional as well as intellectual level, and critically, which will encourage them to make longer-term commitments.
- c) Greater use of e-recruitment strategies and recruitment consultants.
- d) More effective promotion of the non-financial benefits of an academic career and/or the positive aspects of HEIs as employers when compared to other sectors.
- e) Provision of counselling, either career orientated or more personal, to help people define personal/professional goals and/or improve performance.
- f) Systematic monitoring of both the relative value of remuneration packages compared to competitors and the overall ranking of their institution.
- g) Clear succession planning in shortage areas.
- h) Commitment to continuous development of all staff through provision of opportunities for clear career progression paths and/or to upskill.

### **Development of the Human Resources (HR) Function**

10. The way in which the HR function interacts with the rest of the organisation is changing in terms of the content of the work and its place in the institutional structure. A strong emerging theme was the concept of HR personnel acting as ‘business partners’ for the rest of the organisation – injecting the HR dimension into all business decision-making.
11. The development of the concept of the ‘business partner’ role for HR often co-existed with the view that more HR personnel need to enhance their capacity to think strategically and to move away from a rule enforcement culture. New style HR units need to have enhanced capacity in, for example: analysis of complex workforce data; job re-design linked to organisation development; and acting as change agents.
12. One of the keys to the transformation of the HR function is perceived to be the implementation of electronic Management Information Systems (MIS). There are two dimensions to what people can describe as an electronic MIS and often they mean both. At one level it can be the linking of HR data to other data systems to allow the production of more sophisticated management information and at another level it can be the automation of processes which previously required substantial time commitment from HR personnel.

### **Performance Management**

13. Performance Management (PM) is an important, common strategic challenge but there are significant differences between the approaches to PM seen in different locations. Nevertheless

we see a general pattern of evolution towards merit based pay systems based on PM outcomes that will eventually be applicable to all staff, even if different versions are used for academic and non-academic staff. There is also evidence of debate on the relative merits of different approaches to measuring performance – including on qualitative versus quantitative and behavioural versus output orientated data. The incentive to address poor performance is also increasing in the context of fiscal pressure, regardless of which tools are used to execute this.

### **Workforce Planning**

14. The definition of ‘workforce planning’ is not straightforward. It is still evolving in the HE context. It could be described as a systematic, data-based approach to identifying the optimum mix of skills and people needed to operate the institution efficiently and effectively within a fixed budget and in line with its strategic goals. Those who understand workforce planning in these types of terms deem it an essential area for development for HRM in HE. Although this particular emphasis is at one end of the spectrum of viewpoints there also seems to be a broader shift away from staff development as a scattergun approach, only geared around the needs/desires of the individual, towards development that also links to real operational need and performance management in the institution.
  
15. Leadership development is the most prominent example of skills being fostered to enhance organisational effectiveness. Most programmes described were run inside institutions, designed specifically for their own purposes. There is no clear definition of leadership development emerging, either in terms of who undertakes it or the objectives of the exercise.

### **Employment Relations**

16. Employment relations were predominantly identified as a priority where pay and conditions were negotiated by the individual institution, at the local level, through collective bargaining. The types of issues raised included the following.
  - a) The workload associated with the cyclical renegotiation of local agreements, or in response to changes in the industrial relations environment.
  
  - b) The union strategy of ‘pattern-bargaining’ and the risk that it promotes uniformity rather than diversity in institutional agreements. Pattern-bargaining refers to attempts by unions to use gains made in one set of negotiations as a precedent to demand the same conditions of other institutions.
  
  - c) The critical need to manage the expectations of staff in future. In particular, reconciling the need to reduce costs in a period of recession with employee awareness of increasing competition for their labour.

# International Experiences of Human Resource Management in Higher Education

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## Introduction

17. This report presents the views of current or recent senior administrators in publicly funded higher education institutions (HEIs) with strategic responsibility for human resource management (HRM). It was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in spring 2009 to inform its development of a Higher Education (HE) workforce framework. It examines international perceptions of recent, current and future challenges for HRM in HE outside the UK.

## Scope of Research

18. The findings are informed by eleven interviews with personnel in ten countries: Australia (2); Canada; Germany; Hong Kong; India; Ireland; Malaysia; New Zealand; South Africa; and the United States (U.S.). Interviewees were selected for their interest in international perspectives on HRM in HEIs.
19. We invited interviewees to speak from their own institutional experience. Most felt that there was significant common ground with other publicly funded peers in their country. Two interviewees felt they might not be representative, either because they had embarked on major institutional change management programmes and/or they had a very specific constitutional position.
20. No attempt was made to limit discussion to challenges current in UK HE today. Instead we invited participants to speak to their self-defined priorities and challenges in their own context. This gave us the potential to capture information on issues that might become more important in the UK.
21. The research did not include a literature review. We did invite interviewees to make us aware of any literature which might have informed their views. Responses were relatively limited, reflecting both the specific nature of HRM in the HE context and the value of professional networks in developing and holding collective knowledge that may not be recorded in written form. Some helpful references to websites and papers are provided at the end of this document. One paper that provides an overview of HRM in many of the locations touched on in this report is the Association of Commonwealth Universities' "Human Resource Management in Commonwealth Universities"<sup>1</sup>.

## Findings

22. The table below provides a crude summary of interviewee views on HRM priorities in HE.



<b>Issue categories</b>	<b>Noted as area of achievement in recent years</b>	<b>Noted as a current priority</b>	<b>Noted as a likely priority in 5 years time</b>	<b>Total comments on each issue</b>
Development of HR function	14	5	4	23
Recruitment and retention	3	11	6	20
Organisation development	6	3	3	12
Workforce planning	0	7	4	11
Leadership development	3	5	3	11
Performance management	6	3	1	10
Employment relations	3	2	2	7
Cost-reduction	1	2	2	5
<b>Total comments per question</b>	36	38	25	

23. When comparing the volume of discussion around these issues what we also observe is:

- the high level of current and future concerns around recruitment and retention;
- the concentrated attention given to the development of the HR function in recent years;
- and the recent appearance of workforce planning on the priority list.

24. The following sections provide a thematic overview of the activities HRM strategists are engaged in and the related challenges. The sections do not correspond exactly to the issue categories in the table. Cost-reduction and leadership development formed sub-categories of larger themes and organisational development proved too specific to the individual institution to allow comparative analysis.

## **Recruitment and Retention**

25. Substantial contributions were made around the themes of recruitment and retention. These have been organised to provide an overview of the following areas: current perceptions; future fears; and recruitment and retention strategies in a more competitive market.

## **Current Perceptions**

26. It is very difficult, and somewhat disingenuous, to generalise about the current state of the HE market because this work has emphasised how the context in different locations is so diverse in many ways. One of the most important distinctions between HEIs, and their countries as a whole, is whether they are driven more to develop their home supply of staff, a supply of foreign staff, or both. Another important distinction is a HEI's capacity to buy staff, whether national or international in origin. Quite aside from the individual institution's own relative status and wealth, capacity to buy can be limited by the national salary structures and/or the supply of staff suitable for what can be highly specific needs. Taken together, these distinctions create multiple combinations of factors that shape each location's individual 'market'.

27. Taking a high level view of the interviews as a whole our observations are:

- a) Recruitment is getting harder, but not impossible, and there is a need to develop and promote incentives as well as minimise the time spent between making a general job offer and securing the recruit's contractual commitment. There is some

acknowledgement of specific staff shortages but no evidence to suggest that these were common across the locations. Various examples given included: administrative staff; finance and accounting; blue-collar workers; specialist sciences; medicine; and history.

- b) In an increasingly competitive market, whether national, regional, or international, there is recognition that it is no longer sufficient to rely on salary incentives alone. Some locations have HE salary structures that are tied more or less tightly to public sector pay which may or may not be competitive with their own private sector and/or international competition in HE. But HEIs in other locations with greater freedom to set pay levels still have concerns about attracting staff – due to affordability in an economic recession and/or the belief that remuneration isn't always enough to make people change homes or country. There is significant pressure to think 'more creatively' about how to attract and retain staff.
- c) Relatively more attention may be given to retention issues than in the past because of increasing awareness of the cost of losing good staff especially when more is being invested in their development. One interviewee noted the increasing volume of research coming out of the private sector on this point<sup>2</sup>.

## **Future Fears**

### **Demographic Changes**

- 28. An important foundation to the concept of a 'war for talent' is the impact of the large-scale and relatively en masse retirement of the experienced post-war baby-boomer generation. However, HEIs can experience this impact very differently according to their national context. For example, our German interviewee felt that they had already survived the major wave of retirees and that the issue no longer dominated.
- 29. In contrast, the issue is still very important now, and for the immediate future, in Australia, New Zealand and Canada<sup>3 4</sup>. Neither Australia nor New Zealand (nor seven of the Canadian provinces) has a mandatory retirement age, so although they know they will have a significant problem over the next 5-10 years it is difficult to know when the gaps will appear and to plan for that. There is also a concern that the U.S. is struggling with a similar academic staff demographic but might have more capacity to pay attractive salaries. However, there is also some literature to suggest that the rate of staff renewal offers some opportunity in that it can provide more flexibility to recruit in response to changing enrolment patterns, or modernise curricula<sup>5 6</sup>.
- 30. The challenge of increasing retirement rates has currency in South Africa but much less impact per se than the legislative requirements on universities to develop a staffing profile that reflects the race and gender demographics of the country as a whole. This means both that South African HEIs are limited in their ability to replace retiring staff with foreign nationals, and that there is strong competition for the relatively small pool of currently qualified nationals that can enhance staffing profiles. The problem is magnified by the rate of death in service due to AIDS. The rates are expected to increase over the next 2/3 years but because there is no requirement to declare infection, HEIs are limited in their ability to predict or manage the impact on their personnel or their institutions as a whole.

## Asian Expansion

31. There is evidence of competition for academics between more established international HE providers. But a stronger concern emerging from the data is the potential impact of the expanding Asian market in HE, mentioned by seven interviewees across Australia; Canada; Hong Kong; Ireland; Malaysia; and New Zealand. This includes concerns from within Asian countries about their market share of the regional as well as international market. Of most concern is the speed of growth in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and India – but Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia are also seen as important and growing regional players. The precise nature of the concerns was not always specified but where it was, it touched on either or both of two areas.
- Potential changes in the flows of international students and where they choose to study. A reduction or expansion in the numbers of foreign students will also affect income – particularly significant in a period of economic recession.
  - Potential changes in the mobility patterns of HE academic staff. More academics may be attracted to work in different parts of Asia, and at a time when the overall pool of experienced academics may be declining due to rapid retirement rates in some of the more established HE provider markets.
32. In Hong Kong the target is that the HE system as a whole should move from a 3 to a 4 year undergraduate structure by 2012, resulting in considerable expansion of staff capacity<sup>7</sup>. The key challenge is sourcing more professoriate to secure a good quality leadership that will also help them increase their world ranking. The HEIs in Hong Kong look to competitor countries to fill such posts and they are also having some success in drawing back their own nationals who had re-located to other countries in anticipation of the hand-over to Mainland China.
33. In Malaysia the HE sector is committed to rapid expansion that will enhance the regional and international standing of the sector as well as the country<sup>8</sup>. One means to deliver this is the internationalisation of both the student and staff bodies. The interviewee noted that their institution had a target of increasing the proportion of foreign academics to 15% in all subject areas, which they had not yet achieved. To achieve this aim they had undertaken targeted recruitment drives in many countries, including to date: India, Pakistan, Jordan, Syria, and Australia.
34. India has already gone through a massive period of expansion of its HE system and this is expected to continue<sup>9</sup>. But at the moment the focus is on the development of its national supply of staff. Our interviewee noted that the current proportion of foreign nationals in the national staff profile staff is approximately 1%. Universities currently find it difficult to compete with the Indian private sector and it is very hard to both attract and retain talent.
35. There is good evidence to demonstrate the rate of expansion of HE in China and the critical need for staff<sup>10</sup>. One specific concern was the scope of China's capacity to invest in research infrastructure for the longer-term, making it potentially very attractive for academics.

## **Cost-reduction and Economic Recession**

36. This research was carried out at a time when many HEIs in different locations were anticipating new budget announcements that might be unfavourable. But without a sense of the scale of the potential changes many feel unable to fully consider the implications. In Asia there is a relatively unformed concern about the implications of managing cost-reduction while committed to a course of expansion.
37. There was some reflection on worst case scenarios of radical re-structuring at the institutional level in order to downsize operations and, at best, cutbacks in staff services like HRM –including staff development. There was also some consideration of the potential for re-structuring at the national level to achieve more economies of scale – in terms of increasing shared services and formalising collaborations. It was notable that some locations had in recent years already been through national re-structuring exercises with the attendant concerns to reduce costs (Germany, Hong Kong, South Africa).
38. In Ireland the economic implications for HE are already becoming clear. Ongoing consideration is being given to a range of strategies to reduce costs including: retirement schemes; redundancy; flexible working; and targeted recruitment. A more general fear is that the sharp downturn will promote migration, exacerbating the attempt to replace the retiring baby-boomers.
39. In the U.S. the economic recession has, ironically, been of some benefit to institutions since the devaluation of pension investments has encouraged more of the professoriate to extend their working life longer than was expected even a year ago. This has somewhat postponed the rate of retirement challenge.

## **Strategies**

40. There is already evidence that in recent years universities have increasingly employed a combination of financial and non-financial incentives to aid recruitment and retention<sup>11</sup>. Some examples of recruitment and retention strategies being developed by interviewees in response to greater competition are listed below. Most are in place but a few are still under consideration.
- a) The development and promotion of non-salary benefits to employment in a university – often described as ‘total reward’ or ‘alternate reward’. These were considered both in the context of recruitment and in rewarding the performance of existing employees where promotion was not an option. The rewards developed might or might not be of financial benefit to the individual. Some examples were in place in the interviewees’ institutions and some were reported as taking place in other institutions. The following list is not exhaustive.
- Medical benefits through use of the university’s teaching hospital.
  - Help in identifying good schools or funding day-care for younger children.
  - Help with identifying and paying for accommodation and/or maid service.
  - Generous allocation of leave for vacation or conference purposes.
  - Provision of cars and drivers.

- Investment in research infrastructure (people or funding) for the academic concerned.
  - Providing opportunities for non-academic staff to study at reduced cost.
- b) Development and active promotion of stronger, value-driven, identities which people can relate to on an emotional as well as intellectual level, and critically, which will encourage them to make longer-term commitments. This could refer to an institutional identity (U.S.) or to a national identity (New Zealand).
- c) Greater use of e-recruitment strategies (Ireland and Australia) as well as recruitment consultants – particularly to ‘woo’ top tier staff (Australia, India, and New Zealand). The way in which jobs are described will also become more sophisticated – promoting outcomes rather than tasks, and making links to performance management systems (Canada).
- d) More effective promotion of the non-financial benefits of an academic career and/or the positive aspects of HEIs as employers when compared to other sectors (Canada, India, and Ireland).
- e) Provision of counselling, either career orientated or more personal, to help people define personal/professional goals and/or improve performance (Malaysia and India).
- f) Systematic monitoring of both the relative value of remuneration packages compared to competitors and the overall international ranking of institutions (Hong Kong and Malaysia).
- g) Clear succession planning in shortage areas. This was effectively applied to non-academic staff areas in Hong-Kong. In the U.S. they had designed in-house apprenticeship schemes to cope with shortages in blue-collar workers.
- h) Commitment to continuous development of all staff through provision of opportunities for clear career progression paths and/or to upskill (Canada and U.S.).

## **Development of the Human Resources (HR) Function**

41. The way in which the HR function interacts with the rest of the organisation is changing, both in terms of the content of the work and its place in the institutional structure. Participants from nine out of ten locations made observations on this theme. In Germany and India we see the setting up of new centralised HR roles or units, with the objective of developing a framework of systems and processes that will promote more effective management. But more of the interviewees touched on the concept of HR personnel acting as ‘business partners’ for the rest of the organisation – injecting the HR dimension into all business decision-making. This took the form of:

- advising the senior management team more effectively, sometimes through new strategies or structures (Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa);
- and/or devolving more decision-making power to the faculty level, perhaps through the permanent location of HR personnel in, or dedicated to, those faculties alongside the

continued presence of core HR experts at the centre of the organisation (Australia, Ireland, Malaysia, and U.S.).

42. The development of the concept of the 'business partner' role for HR often co-existed with the view that more HR personnel need to enhance their capacity to think strategically, and from a more customer-service perspective, and to move away from the rule enforcement culture consistent with managing processes. New style HR units need to have enhanced capacity in, for example, analysis of complex workforce data; job re-design linked to organisation development; and acting as change agents (Australia, Canada, Ireland, and U.S.). A few interviewees touched on the problem of recruiting and retaining HR staff with this type of skill base and/or the difficulties in persuading HR personnel with mainly transactional experience, to upskill.
43. One of the keys to the transformation of the HR function is perceived to be the implementation of electronic Management Information Systems (MIS). Implementation of MIS was listed with the following frequencies: four times as a recent significant achievement (Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and South Africa); four times as a current priority (Australia, Ireland, Malaysia, and U.S.); and once as a future priority (Hong Kong).
44. There are two dimensions to what people can describe as an electronic MIS and often they mean both. At one level it can be the linking of HR data to other data systems to allow the production of more sophisticated management information – for example, the linking of staff, student, and finance systems, or the linking of performance management data to salary and workforce planning systems. At another level it can be the automation of processes which previously required substantial time commitment from HR personnel – for example, use of e-recruiting or on-line self-service inputting of annual leave/changes to pay records. Several interviewees noted that improved efficiency and effectiveness in handling core processes was the crucial foundation on which HR's reputation rested and from which they could more justifiably extend their reach into more strategic areas.

## **Performance Management**

45. Performance Management (PM) is an important, common strategic issue for interviewees. Only India did not identify implementing a PM scheme as a key issue in their country at this point in time – however this was in the context of its much broader concern with enhancing performance within a strong framework for overall quality and standards.
46. There are significant differences between the approaches to PM seen in different locations. Key issues are:
  - whether the approach is designed more to promote professional development or to underpin merit based pay;
  - whether a PM system has been applied to both academics and non-academics – or only to newer staff on more modern contracts;
  - to what extent the same or different processes are used to identify and actively manage poor as well as good performance;
  - the nature of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to measure performance;

- whether the results of the PM process are being plugged into wider institutional questions such as skills gaps analysis and attempts to measure overall institutional productivity.

47. It is beyond the scope of this research to evaluate the relative worth of different approaches. What we seem to observe though is a pattern of evolution towards merit based pay systems based on PM outcomes that will eventually be applicable to all staff, even if different versions are used for academics and non-academics. Currently only four of the eleven interviewees (Germany, India, Ireland, and South Africa) haven't yet linked pay to performance in their institutions and two of them (Ireland and South Africa) expect this to change over the next few years. The incentive to address poor performance is also increasing in the context of fiscal pressure, regardless of which tools are used to execute this.

48. If more HEIs across countries do gradually move to a norm of performance based pay then it will be interesting to see what type of measures are used for assessment and how these might impact on institutional identity and activity. There is already evidence of reflection on the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative measures of productivity, especially with regard to academic work (Australia, Malaysia, and New Zealand). Some interviewees are also considering integrating a more value-based approach into assessment, encouraging behaviours as well as outputs (Malaysia and U.S.), and explicitly linking this to leadership development in a specific institutional context (U.S.).

## **Workforce Planning**

49. To define what is meant by 'workforce planning' is not straightforward. It is still evolving in the HE context. In its most complete form, the model might be described as one of a systematic, data-based approach to identifying the optimum mix of skills and people needed to operate the institution efficiently and effectively within a fixed budget and in line with strategic goals. We have evidence of adherence to some aspects of this type of model but within the scope of this research it is difficult to understand what the whole of it looks like within any one institution. Some examples of the different activities, currently being undertaken by interviewees, that exemplify aspects of this type of approach, are listed below.

- Analysing staff demographics in order to identify and plan for future staff shortages so that the subject and/or skills profile of the institution is maintained.
- Identifying gaps in the existing skills base of the institution following organisation re-development and/or job redesign.
- Linking PM measures to the type of skills the institution is trying to foster.
- Looking outside the institution to engage with local and national communities to identify new skills and knowledge that the institution needs to provide through research and teaching.
- Analysing projected wage bills to determine the capacity to buy what is needed.

50. Those who understand workforce planning in these types of terms deem it an essential area for development for HRM in HE. HR personnel with the analytical skills to undertake such work in the HE context are considered quite rare at the moment and relatively expensive compared with more traditional HR personnel roles.

51. It may or may not be coincidental that the interviewees who had most to say around this issue were from countries facing significant challenges in staff renewal (Australia<sup>12</sup>, New Zealand, South Africa, and U.S.). In addition, approximately 50 HEIs from three out of these four countries have come together to attempt benchmarking HR data. Although the programme aim is about promoting good practice it collects a range of information potentially relevant to workforce planning per se – including, for example: recruitment efficiency and sources; staff turnover rates; staffing ratios; academic promotions; central administration ratios; age profile; and employment costs as % of revenue<sup>13</sup>.

## **Staff Development**

52. Although this approach is at one end of the spectrum there also seems to be a broader shift away from staff development as a scattergun approach, only geared around the needs/desires of the individual, towards skills development that also links to real operational need and performance management in the institution. Indeed, 'staff development' was a phrase used very infrequently throughout the interviews. Examples of skills that institutions would like to systematically develop in their staff to promote more effective organisational performance include: IT; project management; and teaching methodologies. However the most prominent example of skills being fostered to enhance overall organisational effectiveness is in the area of leadership development.

53. Seven of the eleven interviewees elected to talk about the issue of leadership development and programmes that were in place in: Australia; Canada; Germany; Ireland; New Zealand; and the U.S. Other participants may have had programmes in place but did not choose to talk about them as priority areas. Most programmes described were run inside institutions, designed specifically for their own purposes. The exception is a 'Future Research Leaders' programme being developed jointly by research-led universities in Australia (Group of Eight) for early career researchers.

54. Amongst contributors there is no clear definition of leadership development emerging, either in terms of who undertakes it or the objectives of the exercise. Based on the examples provided in this research it might variously be described as one, or a combination of, the following objectives:

- promoting the art of leadership to leaders;
- enhancing the management skills of leaders, or people who will be leaders, or those who are deemed to have pivotal middle management roles;
- embedding better management skills in all managers and supervisors;
- encouraging a more 'human-centric' management culture in the way the institution as a whole operates.

There was also some discussion of how critical it was to identify the new skills needed by the next generation of academic leaders and apply that to selection processes.



## **Employment Relations**

55. Employment relations were predominantly identified as a priority where pay and conditions were negotiated by the individual institution, at the local level, through collective bargaining (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa).

56. The types of issues raised included the following.

- a) The workload associated with the renegotiation of local agreements, either as part of the normal cycle or in response to changes in the environment – for example, due to: mergers; change in legislation regarding specific staff groups; or overall changes in the direction of industrial relations due to change of Government.
- b) The union strategy of ‘pattern-bargaining’ and the risk that it promotes uniformity rather than diversity in institutional agreements. Pattern-bargaining refers to attempts by unions to use gains made in one set of negotiations as a precedent to demand the same conditions of other institutions. It usually has more impact where the number of unions is relatively small and distributed fairly evenly across employers. Pattern-bargaining was explicitly outlawed in Australian industrial relations in 2006.
- c) The critical need to manage the expectations of staff in future. In particular, reconciling the need to reduce costs in a period of recession with employee awareness of increasing competition for their labour.

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