

Introduction to CGHE project 3.2

# The future higher education workforce in locally and globally engaged HEIs

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*The implications of a diversifying workforce for higher education systems, institutions and individuals*

The purpose of this four-year research project is to investigate the implications of the **diversification** of the academic workforce in the UK and to indicate how higher education institutions might **plan strategically** for their future staffing needs, and how sector bodies could support this.

1. In what ways are academic roles and identities diversifying?
2. What are the implications for individuals and institutions, locally and globally?
3. What tensions and/or synergies arise from this diversification, for instance between individual aspirations and institutional missions, structures and processes?
4. How are such tensions being managed and resolved in optimal ways for individuals and institutions?

- Significant numbers of staff have worked in other sectors
- Portfolio careers - from career 'ladders' to 'pathways'
- Dissonance between formal understandings of institutional policy and ways in which these are interpreted in practice
  - e.g. lack of clarity around T/R/KE proportions
- Promotion pathways introduced for teaching (and other activities) but belief that it is research that counts
- Therefore those on teaching focused contracts find ways of doing research (with tacit agreement)
- Insecurity early on, but mid-careers can also get 'lost'

- Individuals want security but also flexibility, therefore work around structures at local level
- Keeping options open and having “exit plan”
- Activity out-with direct disciplinary role (eg community, professional bodies) often highly motivating (“succour”)
- Issues over performance and “stealing” of academic time eg transfer of workload from poor to good teachers
- Criticality of line manager - influence can be disproportionate, positively and negatively

- Sense of being lucky to work in higher education and yet of “living on a knife edge”
- ‘Wilderness years’ can be seen as a ‘rite of passage’ if successful (but not unless)
- Uncertainty and strain: being “disappointed and relieved” if application for research funding fails
- Fluidity and ambiguity may suit institutions and individuals eg about promotion criteria, if policies can be flexed locally
- Academic autonomy seems less attractive if no support from line manager or mentor