Talent Management in Transnational Higher Education:
Strategies for Managing Academic Staff at International Branch Campuses

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Abstract

The study investigates the practices of academic staff talent management at international branch campuses, with the aim of identifying a range of practical strategies that may address the unique challenges of managing talent in campuses located far away from the home country. These strategies are intended to improve service quality and add value to institution profiles. Based on an online questionnaire, ad hoc email correspondence and publicly available information, five case studies are presented. Talent management emerges as a key strategic area, directly managed at dean/president level. Referrals and online portals are commonly utilised as channels to attract talent, and the need to sometimes uplift local packages to recruit and retain talent is recognised. It is concluded that the development of academic staff should be viewed as an investment, and the availability of research funding and teaching awards on campus may be used to attract, develop and retain talent.

Keywords: transnational higher education; international branch campuses; talent acquisition; talent management; talent development; talent retention.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, the rapid establishment of international branch campuses has been one of the most remarkable developments in the international higher education sector. At the end of 2017, there were 263 such entities operating in the world (OBHE/C-BERT, 2017). An international branch campus may be defined as 'an entity that is owned, at least in part, by a specific foreign higher education institution, which has some degree of responsibility for the overall strategy and quality assurance of the branch campus. The branch campus operates under the name of the foreign institution and offers programming and/or credentials that bear the name of the foreign institution. The branch has basic infrastructure such as a library, an open access computer lab and dining facilities, and, overall, students at the branch have a similar student experience to students at the home campus' (Wilkins & Rumbley, 2018).

Setting up branch campuses abroad requires considerable investment and is a risky endeavour, facing complex and challenging contexts (Wilkins, 2016). Although these campuses operate in foreign countries, they remain tightly linked to the respective home country institution. Consequently, international branch campuses are in need of balancing the

often conflicting requirements of various stakeholder groups (home and host country regulators, governments, academic deans, teaching staff, students, and local communities). Among the managerial challenges they face are the management of academic quality to a level consistent with that of the home country institution and the adaptation to and incorporation of the host country's quality assurance framework. Additional challenges entail the management of academic staff and student bodies with diverse backgrounds, culture, teaching and learning styles, retaining talent, the management of the curriculum (content, pedagogy and assessment), the satisfaction of local and global institutional requirements and adding value to the branch campus profile.

Despite this growing phenomenon, we know relatively little about the problems of managing international branch campuses and even less about talent management, in terms of recruitment, development and monitoring of highly qualified individuals who can deliver quality lectures and conduct cutting-edge research in this specific context (Healey, 2015a). This study is concerned with discovering the challenges faced by international branch campuses in the talent management of academic staff, in particular how it is perceived and practiced in its main dimensions of talent acquisition, development, retention and exit.

Over the last decades, the topic of talent management has gained the interest of both companies and higher education institutions across the world. Furthermore, globalisation, economic difficulties, increased competition, the war for talent and the changing nature of work in the 21st century have made talent management a strategic issue. While the debate on managing talent has gained momentum in the business field, it is lagging in transnational higher education, and appears to need frameworks to support international branch campuses.

Talent attraction, development and retention are among the main practices of talent management, while research has given less attention to the exit or dismissal of staff whose performance remains ineffective or marginal, despite the challenges and risks faced by international branch campuses. Furthermore, the nature of talent remains widely debated. In practice, talent often refers to employees in key positions or high-potential individuals and organisations tend to formulate their own definitions of what constitutes talent in their specific context. Considering the high risk and investment involved in establishing and managing international branch campuses as well as the strategic importance of managing talent, the fact that so little is known about talent management in overseas campuses is surprising. So far, studies have focussed on aspects of talent management concerned with staffing branch campuses abroad, and analysing the challenges administrators face with (primarily) expatriate staff (Healey, 2015a, 2015b; Salt & Wood, 2014; Wood & Salt, 2017).

Studies show that business organisations struggle to develop effective talent management practices and often fail to manage employees' talent effectively despite the care taken to recruit them (Al Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014). Research has also highlighted factors that might represent an impediment to effective talent management (such as competition for and shortage of talent, particularly in international management). However, research on talent management in international branch campuses beyond the practice of staffing, that is identification and attraction of talent, is scant.

Some studies on staffing strategies have focused on the management of talent to gain and sustain institutional quality (Chandler, 2010; Healey, 2015a, 2015b; Selmer & Lauring, 2011;

Shams & Huisman, 2012; Wood & Salt, 2017). Little is known about other dimensions of talent management practices in international branch campuses (e.g. employee development, retention and the exit), despite their importance in managing talent, the associated costs and risks, and the significance of international branch campuses in the higher education industry. It is therefore of critical importance to examine the main aspects of managing talent (attraction, development, retention, as well as exit) and investigate how international branch campus administrators perceive and manage their academic staff talent pool.

This study goes beyond the debates on talent management and international branch campus terminologies and gets closer to the actors responsible for managing talent at international branch campuses, by asking them how they perceive and practice the management of talent, what the key challenges in this domain are, and how they are addressed.

There is much to be discovered about the acquisition, development, retention and exit of talented academics in campuses located far away from home country institutions, which are often immersed in institutional and cultural environments very different from the home country. Improved understanding of the perspectives of international branch campus' actors in the specific field of talent management is an important step in identifying a range of practical strategies adopted by branch campuses in the area of talent management in international higher education and in contributing to building a theory of talent management in this specific context. By expanding our knowledge in this field we also aim to support and inform international branch campuses as they formulate and implement strategies in this important area.

In the following sections of the paper we review the literature at the intersection between talent management and transnational higher education. Next, we describe the research methodology (case studies of five international branch campuses) and report and discuss the results of the study, which highlight the centrality of academic staff talent management to the branch campus strategy, the importance of managing by performance and merit, and the challenges in managing the academic staff talent pool. We conclude by highlighting the talent management perceptions and practices of this sample of international branch campus administrators located in foreign countries.

Literature review

Given the existence of a long tradition of scholarly study of talent management in business organisations, but the lack of attention in the context of international branch campuses, this section first discusses the talent management landscape in business, then, secondly, it outlines the context of international branch campuses, and, finally, it reviews the literature on talent management in this context.

Talent management in business organisations

According to the vast literature on talent management in business organisations, this area belongs to international human resources management and it includes talent attraction, development and retention (Hedayati Mehdiabadi & Li, 2016; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Thunniessen, Boselie & Fruytier, 2013), although the nature of talent remains widely debated (Dries, 2013). Research has mainly investigated recruitment practices for top positions and the attraction of the most capable and intelligent individuals to support business organisations,

while less attention has been given to exiting or dismissing talented employees who, despite being managed and trained, are ineffective or display marginal performance (Al Ariss, Cascio & Paawe, 2014). Over time, the focus of studies has expanded to incorporate talent retention and development in local and global contexts (Vallman, Scullion & Collings, 2012).

The landscape of talent management in business entities is facing drastic changes mainly due to technology, innovation and social media, which enable new relationships and types of collaboration between users and suppliers of talent (Al Ariss, Cascio & Paawe, 2014). Furthermore, the changing nature of work and employment in the 21st century entails the growth of contingent and project-based work, often for only a short duration (Barley, Bechky & Milliken, 2017).

The context of international branch campuses

International branch campuses are immersed in a variety of institutional contexts ranging from supporting and enabling governments – for example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – to those encouraging a degree of cooperation between local and international institutions under strictly regulated types of partnerships (e.g., China) to those prohibiting the establishment of international branch campuses (e.g., India) (Wilkins, 2016). Influential scholars advocate that international branch campuses are very visible forms of international higher education and that staffing branch campuses is among the top challenges these institutions face next to managing quality (Edwards et al., 2010; Kinser & Lane, 2015; Healey, 2015a; Shams & Huisman, 2012, 2016; Smith, 2010; Wilkins, 2016; Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, 2018).

Researching international branch campuses is bedevilled by difficulties, mainly due to their relatively recent development, the commercial sensitivity and secrecy that characterises their management and disclosure of financial information (or the lack of), as well as their geographic locations (mainly in Asia and the Middle East). These conditions specific to international branch campuses create an access challenge for researchers, both in terms of access to actors and to data (Healey, 2015a). International branch campuses typically require considerable financial investment and face a multitude of risks (Shams & Huisman, 2016; Wilkins, 2016). As other transnational enterprises, international branch campuses aim to gain a competitive advantage in their markets by leveraging their brand name, experience, prestige, intellectual capital and property (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Teaching the curriculum often rests at the core of the international branch campuses' reason for being, at times in conjunction with research.

The quality of these services is dependent on the quality of the people behind them, therefore academics, support staff, curriculum and research (where applicable) are among the key assets of international branch campuses. When international branch campuses fail, it is mainly due to lack of appropriate market research and overestimation of student enrolment numbers (Wilkins, 2016). When they remain in operation, they face the challenges of managing host governments, various partnership forms, types of curriculum and learning (online, offline and blended), mechanisms for awarding degrees, the continuous pressure of academic quality requirements both locally and in the home country, the necessity to meet or exceed student enrolment targets, and to recruit and manage staff (Healey, 2015a).

In a recent study of international branch campuses' managers in China, Malaysia and the UAE, Healey (2015b) highlighted three key sets of dimensions of their managing activities: localisation, stakeholders and managers' characteristics. First, managers feel under pressure to localise staff, curriculum and research. Second, they face students, the host and home country regulators, joint venture partners and competitors as key stakeholders. Third, the characteristics and level of professional maturity of the international branch campuses' managers themselves (reported in the study as generally lacking any significant prior management experience) plays a key role in the management of the international branch campus and in the development of its own culture and degree of self-determination.

The fact that international branch campus managers face complex dimensions of localisation and stakeholders in their management activities, that they have been found to often lack significant management experience, and that they operate far beyond their comfort zone in settings alien to their own culture is striking. Such findings contribute to raise legitimate questions about how talent at the international branch campuses is perceived and managed in terms of attraction, retention, development and exit.

Talent management in international branch campuses

While the debate on talent management has gained momentum in the business field, academic discourse on the topic in the context of international branch campuses has been lagging behind and appears in need of reference frameworks to support higher education institutions in their strategies (Al Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014). Studies have started to recognise that international branch campuses will face drastic changes over the coming years similar to those facing business organisations. In particular, research shows that qualified and experienced local academics are a scarce resource, their existence being directly affected by the development stage of the country hosting the international branch campus (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2009; Shams & Huisman, 2012). Furthermore, international branch campuses increasingly utilise contingent work (typically adjunct staff) to deliver curriculum teaching, often as a result of institutional and financial pressure (Tham & Kam, 2008).

In the context of international branch campuses, the predominant focus of talent management studies has so far been on staffing strategies (particularly talent attraction), which is widely regarded as a key means by which an international branch campus can gain and sustain institutional quality (Wood & Salt, 2017). Shams and Huisman (2012, 2016) argue that striking a balance between global integration and local responsiveness (I-R dichotomy) in staffing, as well as curriculum and research, is a key managerial complexity facing branch campuses. Staffing issues include tensions between expatriate and local staff (Smith, 2014); the perceived limited scope for career development at the international branch campus location (Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, 2017); teaching students with different learning styles and cultural values (Hoare, 2013); and the management of academic tourism or flying teaching staff (Healey, 2015a).

Furthermore, the little that is known about staffing practices in international branch campuses originates from recollections of expatriate staff sharing their own experiences, practitioners' literature, and a still limited yet growing body of research focussed on strategic aspects of international branch campuses (Cai & Hall, 2016; Czinkota et al., 2009; Hughes,

2011; Shams & Huisman, 2016; Wilkins, 2016). Other research has investigated the effects of individual commitment (Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, 2017) and organisational identification (Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, 2018) on employee behaviour. Retention and development, as well as exit, represent under researched areas (but see Al Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014; Cai & Hall, 2016; Tarique & Schuler, 2010; Wilkins, 2016). Given the risk and cost of staffing international branch campuses, it is surprising that the development and retention of talent, as well as its exit, have so far remained below the scholarly radar (Hedayati Mehdiabadi & Li, 2016). Since managing talent is seen and practiced as a comprehensive system (rather than a set of standalone practices), which is aligned to the overall organisational strategy, the talent management perceptions and practices of international branch campus managers are important (Hedayati Mehdiabadi & Li, 2016).

Method

This study adopts a multiple case study approach to conduct an in-depth investigation of the perceptions and practices of international branch campus managers on the topic of talent management, with the aim of identifying a set of practical strategies adopted by each campus to address its specific set of issues. This approach is justified by three factors. First, by the study aim, being explorative and descriptive in nature; second, by the novelty of the phenomenon of talent management in the context of transnational higher education; and third, by the main constraints of the study, such as access to the case campuses and to the data (Healey, 2015a).

The study was conducted among five international branch campuses: Lomonosov Moscow State University (Armenia campus), Alma Mater Studiorum-Universitá di Bologna (Argentina campus), Hult International Business School (Dubai campus), Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (Vietnam campus), and University of Nottingham (Malaysia campus). The cases were selected to offer a good range of institutions in terms of home (Australia, Italy, Russia, UK) and host countries (Argentina, Armenia, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam), branch campus year of establishment, and size (by number of academic staff employed). The cases are presented in order of international branch campus size, from the smaller to the larger, so that different aspects of talent management and their respective challenges can be appreciated in the context of the number of academic staff employed. Table 1 presents the profiles of the five cases.

Data were collected through a combination of an online survey questionnaire developed by the authors, publicly available information and email correspondence with senior campus managers. The targeted respondents to the questionnaire were purposefully selected to include a sample of six deans and/or presidents, with strategic and/or operational responsibility for academic staff talent management. The questionnaire featured eleven questions intended to gain insights on perceptions, practices and challenges faced in managing academic staff, and a further five general questions that collected data about the respondent and their institution.

Examples of questions on talent management include:

- What are the HR objectives of your campus?
- Is the talent management of academic staff a focus area? How is it understood in your institution?

- How do you attract and recruit talented academic staff?
- To what extent are you able to recruit your ideal academic staff?
- How do you develop your academic staff?
- What do you do to retain your academic staff?
- What challenges do you face when you need to exit academic staff?

Table 1. Profiles of case participants (academic year 2016/2017).

Branch campus name	Year founded	Host country	Home country	Home institution	Number of academic staff[a]
Hult International Business School, Dubai Campus	2008	UAE	UK	Hult International Business School	27
Lomonosov Moscow State University, Yerevan Campus	2015	Armenia	Russia	Lomonosov Moscow State University	35
Alma Mater Studiorum-Universitá di Bologna, Buenos Aires Campus	1998	Argentina	Italy	Alma Mater Studiorum-Universitá di Bologna	50
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Vietnam Campus	2001	Vietnam	Australia	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	150
University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus	2000	Malaysia	UK	University of Nottingham	281

[a] Number of academic staff includes full-time, part-time and fly-in employees.

The general questions referred to the respondent's job title, the name and country of the home institution, the country where the branch campus is located and the number of faculty members employed at the campus. The questionnaire generated four usable responses, which represented three campuses, as one campus featured in this study has two deans. The remaining two deans/presidents preferred to address the questions via email correspondence and one of them proactively shared the questionnaire with the campus quality manager who became an indirect email respondent and whose views where reflected in the dean/president's email correspondence. The email correspondence covered the main topics addressed in the questionnaire and also included some follow-up questions aimed at clarifying statements or words. The information collected from public sources included general data on the campus history, home institution and/or campus annual reports, press releases and higher education policy reports.

The data were analysed through thematic analysis to identify concepts, patterns and relationships, requiring an initial phase of understanding of the collected data, followed by a search for themes within each case and among the cases.

Results

This section highlights the talent management perceptions, practices and challenges in each of the five international branch campuses that constitute the cases of this study.

Case 1: Hult International Business School, Dubai campus

The Dubai campus is one of six global campuses of Hult International Business School, the others being Boston, London, New York, San Francisco and Shanghai. The institution has grown into the mature stage, and human resource strategic objectives are fully aligned across campuses. Academic staff talent management sits at the core of the campus strategy; it is aligned with the institution's global strategy and is appreciated as a key driver of the school brand and of the overall quality delivered by the campus, next to the staff teaching and research contributions. In regard to the academic staff, the Dubai campus's goal is to become the favourite campus for teaching and conducting research. Efforts aim to attract talent from other institutions through the use of professional platforms (such as LinkedIn) as well as personal referrals from existing staff members. The campus faces some challenges in recruiting academic staff for subject areas where very specialised international expertise and experience in teaching, research and management practice are required (for example, international consumer and business marketing; finance; derivatives; and mergers and acquisitions).

Financial conditions reflect the competitiveness of the local market and are aligned with market rates. The campus is still dependent on flying teaching staff although there is a clear shift toward local adjuncts contracted on an annual basis, while the number of full-time employees on three-year contracts is kept at a minimum. Adjunct teaching staff contracts allow flexibility for campus administrators in terms of teaching schedules and rotation across the different campuses. Some employees prefer these flexible contracts, as teaching schedules can be tailored to fit with personal circumstances and because Hult offers competitive rates of pay (generally higher than other international branch campuses), and the opportunity to teach at different international campuses. However, for other staff these contracts entail precarity, typically associated with uncertainty, lack of security and limited protection and benefits (ILO, 2012).

Adjunct teaching staff are managed through performance and merit. Academic staff are viewed as a fundamental element of the Hult brand and reputation, as well as a key dimension of quality and accreditation. Cases of suboptimal performance or negligence are managed and may lead to dismissal. Full-time staff are generally shielded by early termination, unless for gross negligence, for which an exit clause features in the local employment contracts.

Academic staff development needs relate to in-class teaching (blending lecturing with experiential learning and the adoption of the case study method across a range of disciplines, and with case subjects relevant to Hult's global curriculum), rather than cultural adjustment to the country, the campus environment, or the diversity of the student body. As the campus developed, talent development has grown into a focus area, with central support provided by

the home institution and a range of development activities in pedagogy, new teaching methods and innovative in-class experiences being offered.

Case 2: Lomonosov Moscow State University, Armenia campus

One of the oldest Russian institutions of higher education, dating back to 1755, Lomosonov Moscow State University established its Armenia branch campus in Yerevan in 2015. Handled directly by the dean, talent management has been a key priority from the outset and is perceived as the most important dimension of the university's brand. Recruitment activities are channelled via academic recruitment sites (such as highredjobs.com or the Chronicle of Higher Education), giving the branch campus relevant exposure and allowing it to reach a wide audience of potential candidates. Salary packages are generally competitive locally and are similar to those offered by the home institution; however, the benefits elements reflect local standards, at times below the level of the home institution. To compensate for this, and to continue attracting and retaining talented academics, the Yerevan campus has offered research funding from its inception, making both research and teaching two key areas of engagement for academic staff.

All contracts have an annual term, with an option for renewal, giving the campus flexibility and the ability to exit members for performance issues or negligence. Performance is managed and promotions are linked to merit both in teaching and research. Neither turnover nor recruitment have so far been an issue, due the novelty of the campus, and the history and reputation of the home institution. Nonetheless, it is expected that recruitment might become more challenging as the campus grows into a more mature stage and naturally loses its novelty characteristic. It is expected that research funding and the availability of development across a wide range of areas will contribute to keeping the campus attractive to new staff members. Training and development programs replicate the practices of the home institution, with an element of localisation where needed. In addition, visiting staff from Moscow offer local employees the opportunity to exchange ideas about best practices in teaching, class management, and research, as well as how to enhance the student experience.

Case 3: Alma Mater Studiorum-Universitá di Bologna, Argentina campus

The Buenos Aires campus is the only international branch campus of Alma Mater Studiorum-Universitá di Bologna, one of the oldest higher education institutions in the world, dating back to the year 1088. Handled directly by the dean, academic staff talent management is a key campus priority and features among the strategic human resource focus areas, next to the creation of a positive and multicultural academic environment, the implementation of a framework for assessing talent performance and potential, as well as bringing more flexibility to employee tasks. Talent management is perceived as a fundamental aspect of the university's reputation and brand, and as one of the key factors affecting the overall quality delivered by the campus. Teaching staff are expected to demonstrate cultural awareness, as well as high quality teaching and research contributions. Recruitment is highly competitive, with talent being scouted mainly through public announcements in the media and social sites, as well as through referrals via existing staff on campus or in Italy.

Preference is given to candidates with previous experience in research and teaching, with a strong academic profile in their respective discipline. In this respect, recruitment practices differ from those of the home country institution, where previous experience and the evaluation of the overall profile of the candidate play a less important role than the result of the public examinations that constitute a mandatory milestone in academic staff recruitment in Italy.

Talent attraction and recruitment benefit from the nine hundred years of history and reputation of the home country institution, making the brand appealing and competitive in South America, despite the campus being relatively new. Packages reflect local terms and conditions, offering more flexibility than those in the home institution, where recruitment is subjected to strict regulations embedded in the Italian legal system.

Talent development practices also differ from those of the home institution as local regulations set the overall reference framework. Staff development needs relate to nurturing a sense of belonging to the home country institution, and sharing its values and processes despite being located abroad (cf. Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, 2018). Retaining staff can be challenging, given limited budgets (for fixed and performance-related compensation), limited on campus career opportunities, career expectations and cultural differences between the branch campus and home country staff members.

In regard to employee dismissals, the branch campus has more flexibility than the home institution where exiting staff is legally and culturally deemed inadmissible, due to a combination of strong unions and legal protection. In the Argentinian campus, however, local regulations contemplate the possibility of dismissal, even without just cause. In recent years, despite some degree of cultural resistance at the local level, the campus has had to exit staff to adjust to economic and inflationary conditions of the host country.

Case 4: Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Vietnam campuses
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) operates two campuses in Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City). Almost all teaching staff are expatriates, either Australian or international, to meet students' expectations to be taught by individuals originating from Western countries. Talent management is a strategic area under the three pillars of RMIT Vietnam's future strategy, namely growth in student enrolment, quality (of programs, teaching and learning, infrastructure and staffing) and differentiation (in the international dimension of the student experience). Talent management is appreciated for its direct impact on the overall quality delivered by the campus. Attention is given to teaching styles and cultural awareness that are attentive to students' needs, and staff teaching and research contributions are regarded as fundamental dimensions of overall quality delivered to students

Many teaching staff are attracted to work at RMIT's campus in Vietnam because of the favourable reputation of RMIT in Melbourne, which is Australia's largest university. However, the Vietnam campus also faces some recruitment challenges, particularly relating to the financial terms on offer (significantly lower than those in Australia), and the lengthy local process of obtaining work permits. In addition, for employees with children, local school fees in Vietnam are extremely high and usually not covered by the local packages, creating an issue for staff attraction and recruitment.

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Teaching positions are advertised across relevant media channels to maximise exposure. All new employees, whether recruited from the home country, internationally or locally, are expected to meet the campus's high expectations in terms of quality, workload, teaching style, and support for students. The induction program helps new employees recruited from outside the host country to adjust to the challenges of living and working in a new country and a different campus environment. The campus supports all teaching staff with a week-long professional development program, which is offered three times a year. The workshops in this program cover the key aspects of teaching and learning, as well as research training.

All teaching staff are recruited on two-year contracts, as per Vietnamese law, renewable according to performance. Compensation levels, holiday and family leave conditions might vary for specific cases; however, the same university-wide promotion scheme applies and all employees are eligible for teaching awards across RMIT. Staff exits are managed according to contractual terms and suboptimal performance may result in contracts not being renewed. Talent development and the need for continuous upgrading of teaching staff competencies and skills is a key focus area of the campus. Learning and development opportunities are regularly offered, to expose staff to key initiatives and best practices in teaching pedagogy, so that students' expectations can be exceeded.

Case 5: University of Nottingham, Malaysia campus
Among the pioneers of the international branch campus model, the University of Nottingham Malaysia campus has now developed into a mature institution. Being a joint venture between the University of Nottingham and local partners means not only that the branch campus has an obligation to follow national guidelines in regard to academic staff talent management but also that issues such as salaries and promotions at the branch are also governed by the local partner's policies (Hill & Thabet, 2018).

In regard to attraction and recruitment, in the early stages of development, the campus heavily relied on seconded teaching staff from the home institution, missioned to teach rather than conduct research, with minimum training being available to support the cultural and environmental adjustment. As the campus has matured, it has faced fewer challenges in attracting and recruiting academic staff, and it now needs to offer a well-balanced load of teaching and research opportunities to the increasingly locally recruited employees.

However, recruitment and retention remain impacted by local regulations on children's enrolment in local or governmental schools, making the choice of international (and more expensive) schools the only option for some staff, although only the packages for seconded employees cover school fees. The campus is shifting from terms and conditions of employment negotiated on a case by case basis toward a common framework of job descriptions and salary levels to guide recruitment efforts.

Talent development remains focused on the delivery of the student experience, on cultural awareness and understanding as well as English language training, to ensure there is consistency of language quality across the academic staff body. Terms and conditions for exiting staff depend on the type of employment contracts. Foreign staff are tied to a two-year visa and no probation period, with dismissals applicable across the contract duration, while

locally recruited staff have a probationary period of 3-6 months, beyond which dismissals can be pursued only in exceptional circumstances.

Discussion

The picture emerging from the case studies indicates that talent management is a strategic area, typically managed directly at dean or president level. Managing the academic staff talent pool forms part the campus's human resource strategy and the overall strategic plan, regardless of the lifecycle stage of the branch campus. This offers new evidence that staffing branch campuses is far from being the only concern of international branch campuses, as attraction, recruitment, development, retention and (when necessary) exits occupy an important part of the campus leadership's agendas. The key results for each case study campus are presented in Tables 2-6, and Table 7 presents the overall results in summary form. Table 8 provides an overview of the key talent management issues emerging from this study.

The key changes in technology and social media faced by business organisations appear to also affect international branch campuses, which seem to embrace such changes as opportunities for attracting, recruiting and developing talented academics. Evidence from four of the five cases featured in this study indicates that attraction and recruitment activities are supported by professional and social platforms, offering campuses and their brands broad exposure to a wide community of potential staff members at minimum or no cost. Referrals from existing staff also used to identify candidates whose academic and/or professional profile, personality and cultural affinity might best fit into the campus and country environment.

Table 2. Case 1 – Hult International Business School, Dubai campus.

Language of Instruction	• English
Recruitment	• Social platforms and Hult referrals. • As a high-profile business school, it offers salaries that are often higher than other international branch campuses. • Recruitment is challenging for specific subject areas (i.e. finance, derivatives, mergers & acquisitions).
Academic Staff Typology	• Locally recruited blend of full-time and adjunct expatriates already living in the host country. • Seconded expatriates for specific courses as needed.
Contract Terms & Conditions	• Local contracts for 1-2 years. • Shorter terms on a course-by-course basis. • Packages aligned across campuses.
Development	• Development activities in pedagogy, new teaching methods, innovative in-class experience. • Research incentives, support and funding.
Performance Management	• Meritocracy (course and academic staff evaluation by students and dean). • Research output.

Retention	• Development activities.
	• Branding.
	• Opportunities to teach and conduct research at other Hult campuses.
	• Research incentives and funding.

Table 3. Case 2 – Lomonosov Moscow State University, Armenian campus.

Language of Instruction	• Russian
Recruitment	• Academic recruitment channels.
Academic Staff Typology	• Locally recruited blend of local academics (full-time and adjunct).
	• Visiting academics from home institution as needed.
Contract Terms & Conditions	• Local contracts with annual terms (with option for renewal).
	• Local salary packages aligned with home institution.
	• Local benefits reflect local terms.
	• Packages for visiting academics negotiated with the home institution.
Development	• Research funding.
	• Development programmes for best practices in teaching, class management and research.
	• Development programmes reflect those of the home institution, with some localisation elements where needed.
Performance Management	• Meritocracy in teaching and research output.
	• Dismissals are possible in case of lack of performance or misconduct.

| Retention | • Research funding. |
| | • Home institution branding and history. |

Table 4. Case 3 – Alma Mater Studiorum- Universita' di Bologna, Argentina campus.

Language of Instruction	• Spanish
Recruitment	• Public announcements in the media.
	• Social platforms and referrals from staff.
	• Focus is on a candidates' previous teaching and research experience.
Academic Staff Typology	• Locally recruited, full-time academics.
	• Local adjunct staff only for specific courses or projects.
	• Seconded and visiting academics from the home institution when needed.
Contract Terms & Conditions	• Full-time contracts with local terms and conditions.
	• Salary and benefits reflect local conditions.
	• Salary items includes fixed and performance-related elements.
Development	• Programmes to develop a cultural affiliation with the home institution.
	• Programmes on processes and procedures shared with the home institution.
Performance Management	• Meritocracy.
	• Dismissals are legally and culturally permitted, while they remain inadmissible at the home campus.

Retention	• Home institution branding and history. • Opportunity to teach in or be exposed to home campus.

Table 5. Case 4 – Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Vietnam campuses.

Language of Instruction	• English
Recruitment	• Advertisements through local and international media channels.
Academic Staff Typology	• Full-time. • Mainly expatriates, some local academics.
Contract Terms & Conditions	• Local, 2-year, full-time, renewable contracts as per Vietnamese law. • All contracts feature salary and benefit elements (i.e. holiday and family leave) in line with local norms and significantly lower than those at the home institution.
Development	• Programmes aim to develop cultural awareness, competencies in teaching and in-class experience, best practices in pedagogy and research. • Professional development programmes offered each semester.
Performance Management	• Meritocracy. • Dismissals are managed according to contractual terms. • Contract renewal based on performance.

Retention	- Teaching awards. - Home institution branding. - Development opportunities.

Table 6. Case 5 – University of Nottingham, Malaysia campus.

Language of Instruction	English
Recruitment	- Institution websites in Malaysia and the UK. - Advertisements through local and international media channels. Increasingly local recruitment.
Academic Staff Typology	- Increasingly locally recruited, full-time academics. - Seconded academics from home institution as needed.
Contract Terms & Conditions	- Local contracts. - School fee tuition excluded from the benefits but included for seconded academics. - Conditions for locally recruited academics include a probation period of 3-6 months. - Conditions for seconded academics include two-year visa and exclude probation.
Development	- Delivering the student experience. - Cultural awareness and understanding. - English language training.

Performance Management	• Meritocracy (teaching and research). • Dismissals of seconded academics are possible across the contract duration, while locally contracted academics can only be dismissed for exceptional circumstances (beyond probation period).
Retention	• Home institution branding. • Well balanced load of teaching and research opportunities. • Research funding.

Table 7. Summary of study results.

Languages of Instruction	• English, Spanish, Russian.
Recruitment	• Social platforms, advertisements in the media and referrals.
Academic Staff Typology	• Increasingly locally recruited, full-time and/or adjunct academics. • Seconded and/or visiting academics from home institution as needed.
Contract Terms & Conditions	• Local contracts. • Packages tend to be aligned with local market conditions to remain competitive in the host countries. • Seconded/visiting contracts aligned with home campus conditions.
Development	• Pedagogy and best practices in delivering the student experience. • Cultural awareness and understanding.
Performance Management	• Meritocracy (teaching and research). • Poor performance might lead to dismissals as per contract and home country norms.

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Retention	• Home institution branding.
	• Teaching opportunities (at home campus or in other campuses where applicable).
	• Research opportunities and funding.

Table 8. Key academic staff talent management issues emerging from the international branch campus cases.

Talent management issues		Examples
Recruitment	• Use of referrals, online recruitment channels and social media platforms	• Potential candidates are identified via referrals from existing staff at the branch campus or home institution.
		• No agencies or head-hunters are utilised; rather recruitment is channelled via LinkedIn, highereducationjobs.com or The Chronicle of Higher Education.
	• Evaluation of the overall profile of candidates	• Candidates are evaluated according to education, teaching and research experience, overall fit with the campus and host country culture and values.
	• Terms and conditions	• To attract the best individuals in host countries, and in some cases internationally, it is necessary to budget for uplifts in local salary packages.
	• Brand reputation and prestige	• The home institution's brand and history is used as a tool to attract candidates.

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	• Onboarding	• Induction programs are essential for a smooth integration of new staff members into the campus and country life.
Development	• Sense of belonging and students' in-class experience	• Teaching staff need to develop a shared sense of purpose and belonging with the home institution through common processes and pedagogic approaches.
	• Budget	• Limited campus budgets for academic staff development can be an issue. However, this can be balanced by offering research funding on campus and teaching awards across branch and home institution.
Retention	• Career opportunities	• Limited career opportunities on campus can be balanced by secondments to the home institution or campus rotation where applicable.
Exit	• Terms and conditions	• Branch campuses need flexibility in managing suboptimal performance and in adjusting to changing economic conditions.
		• Host country legislation may limit management freedom to exit staff.

The key changes in technology and social media faced by business organisations appear to also affect international branch campuses, which seem to embrace such changes as opportunities for attracting, recruiting and developing talented academics. Evidence from four of the five cases featured in this study indicates that attraction and recruitment activities are supported by professional and social platforms, offering campuses and their brands broad exposure to a wide community of potential staff members at minimum or no cost. Referrals from existing staff also used to identify candidates whose academic and/or professional profile, personality and cultural affinity might best fit into the campus and country environment.

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The international branch campuses in this study appear to have moved away from the historical reliance on seconded or flying teaching staff, toward a blend of locally recruited full-time and adjunct staff, employed on annual or biennial contracts with local terms and conditions. This finding indicates that striking a balance between the two ends of the I-R dichotomy, or standardisation and localisation, remains a central issue in the strategic development of branch campuses. However, increased focus on local staffing does not necessarily entail financial terms that are lower than those of the home institution. Continuous improvement of local packages is viewed as necessary to gain or maintain competitiveness for academic staff talent in the host country market, and to nurture the campus's and university's brand.

In Asian countries, where school fees are high and access to local schools is reserved to local children, recruitment is more challenging, as school fees are normally not covered by local employment terms. Thus, the campuses strive to compensate this downside with training and development activities in support of the individual's professional and academic growth. The ability to offer research funding on campus as well as teaching awards on or across home and host campuses are also important mechanisms adopted to attract, recruit and retain academic staff. Such initiatives contribute to branch campuses offering supportive environments for research and teaching duties.

As argued by Hattie and Marsh (1996), the improvement of the nexus teaching-research should be a goal for higher education institutions. Evidence from the cases indicates a perception that the quality ultimately delivered by the campus, which represents a key dimension of the university's brand, is dependent on the academic staff, and their teaching and research contributions. In line with previous studies predicting greater emphasis on the performance of academics in managing higher education institutions (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), performance management is increasingly used as an overarching approach to talent management, with the introduction of more formal processes to monitor, evaluate and reward staff against job descriptions, objectives and evaluations, which are common across the campus. Cases of staff delivering suboptimal performance might go through a process of performance management, which may involve various training, development and support initiatives, but which may ultimately result in early terminations or (more commonly) contracts not being renewed.

Conclusion

Although setting up and managing international branch campuses remains a risky endeavour filled with complexity and challenges, academic staff talent management emerges from this

study as an area appreciated and managed by deans and presidents for its strategic relevance, direct impact on the quality delivered by the campus, effect on brand reputation and on the overall prestige of the campus and home institution. Despite the specificity of local institutional settings, attracting and recruiting talent are not the only talent management activities in focus. The process of onboarding emerges as an important step to ensure a successful integration of new staff members in the campus environment and local culture. Time, effort and funds are also directed at developing and retaining talent who meet or exceed performance expectations.

Employee performance is managed through frameworks and procedures that enable career progression for the best individuals. In this respect, meritocracy appears to be adopted across branch campuses, notwithstanding the specific campus' development stage or the economic context of the host country. Limited career opportunities on campus can be counterbalanced by the availability of research funding, teaching awards, secondments and development opportunities to create a shared sense of purpose, direction and unity with the home institution.

The international branch campuses in this study appear to be less dependent on seconded or flying staff, as they have shifted toward local recruited adjunct and full-time employees. This strategy may increase the flexibility to continuously align academic staff talent management to the campus's needs; it may reduce the total staff labour cost; and it may minimise the risk of employing individuals who struggle to adjust to the local culture. However, this strategy may expose the campus to retention issues in the future, and to knowledge gaps (of the home country institution and norms, typically reinforced by the presence of expatriate academics). For every potential policy, practice and procedure related to academic staff talent management, institutional leaders need to consider and evaluate both the possible benefits and drawbacks, in the context of the local culture, norms and operating environment, as well as the parent institution's objectives, goals and values.

This study has a number of limitations that also provide avenues for future research. First, although the study is unique in featuring a selection of international branch campuses (including two host countries rarely featured in previous studies, namely Argentina and Armenia) and in examining the challenges of talent management from the perspectives of campus deans and/or presidents, the sample is small and does not allow for cross-case comparisons. This limits the results to a range of practical strategies adopted by each campus rather than a set of best practices adopted across the sample. Future studies with larger samples may identify a set of best practices that are common among campuses located in various institutional environments. Second, future research might capture the evolution of talent management challenges and best practices over time to further expand our knowledge of the development of this strategic area. Third, our research is limited to the area of talent management and the managerial complexities revolving around this dimension of the I-R dichotomy. Future studies might expand this focus to include the other I-R dimensions of curriculum and research, potentially building a more complete picture of the balances that branch campuses strike in these areas.

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