

Internationalisation of HE: A Ten-Year View

This review has been put together with the help of the International Unit based in UUK, the Europe Unit based in UUK, and following conversations, meetings, or written input from the British Council, HEFCE, CIHE, JISC, i-Graduate, HECSU, the Observatory on Borderless Education, the ACU, UKTI, the CBI, the Royal Society, NUS and the British Academy. Various universities independently and as interest groups within UUK have also commented, as have UUK and Guild HE. Many formal reports have been written within the past year on this subject, and where practical within the timescale these have been consulted, and are listed in the appendix. I have not sought in this brief review to repeat the arguments of the extensive reviews on which it is based, nor to repeat their tables of statistics, and urge readers to consult these. The views expressed are mine alone, and while I have made every effort to be as objective as possible, they no doubt show some personal bias.

This review concentrates on non-EU issues. The most recent work on the EU market is the Analysis of the UK's Competition for International Students from Selected European Countries produced by OBHE and Kingston University which raises a number of similar issues to those raised in this review. This work is due to be published at the same time as I write.

The key argument which emerges in this present review is that both to avoid instability in the recruitment market and to best promote the interests of the UK at large, its universities and their students, universities should focus their international efforts on a long term programme of internationalisation and avoid the temptation of short-term mass recruitment to traditional study in the UK. To do this will require a considerable investment of time, effort and finance. Government, the universities and the wider business community must decide how this is to be incentivised, organised, and funded.

This view is explicitly supported by the British Council which believes also that the level and mode of student recruitment to the UK is “unsustainable in the longer term ... institutions must move from equating international strategy with student recruitment alone to a much wider internationalisation agenda where there is a balance in overseas activity between recruitment, partnerships, research and capacity building”.

Sustainability of Recruitment

The figures for a massive increase in international trade and education based on the British Council's 2020 study are no longer tenable. They were based fundamentally on demographic projections, and as we all now know the last 13 years or so have seen an extraordinary expansion of global trade in general, and an extremely benign financial environment relatively speaking, neither of which can be relied upon in the future. The necessity of projecting forward on a multi-factor basis has been recognised in the recent studies commissioned by UUK (The Future Size and Shape of the HE Sector in the UK), but also probably most dramatically in the recent study done by the British Council in partnership with the Economist Intelligence Unit and initially focussing on China. This latter report takes into account household income distribution, demographic changes across age bands, the cost of international education across countries and a view of the overall political and macro-economic factors. As the UUK report points out, the enrolment of non-EU

students in institutions within the UK is “unpredictable, and is not in any clear way related to the demography of these countries”. In the 2004 study the British Council base projection was that the UK market for international students would increase by some 4.7% between then and 2020. The UUK study provides 3 different scenarios all to some extent starting from the British Council study. Looked at in gross terms they suggest that undergraduate numbers could rise to 95,000 non-EU student enrolments in the UK by 2026 as against the base British Council projection of 86,500 by 2020 in scenario 1; to 77,900 in scenario 2; or 86,500 in scenario 3. However both scenarios 2 and particularly scenario 3 hide a huge swing from full-time to part-time and non-traditional delivery which would have a significant effect on finances, while scenario 1 I find frankly unlikely in current circumstances both economic and political. At postgraduate level the corresponding figures are 123,000, 106,000 and 100,000 in round figures, with the British Council’s base-line projection to 2020 standing at 112,000.

While the recent OECD Education at a Glance Reports both show the UK share of international trade in Higher Education, so far as student movement is concerned, holding up at 11%, the second highest behind the United States, it is now growing at a significantly lower rate than some of its main competitors. Of these Europe has to be taken much more seriously than in the past, as the extraordinarily rapid increase in Chinese postgraduates in Germany shows. A study by the Australian Education International in 2006 quoted by HEPI in their recent report on The Bologna Process and the UK’s International Student Market priced the total cost of an undergraduate degree in the UK (in US\$) at \$93,382 compared to Germany’s \$66,623. While this is not as great as the difference in fees would suggest (due to the high proportion of cost which is living cost and the relatively short duration of UK courses) we are nevertheless still clearly expensive. UK fees may in fact be in some subject areas significantly understated since in a recent UUK Survey the vast majority of respondents admitted to extra costs for books and course material, field trips and excursions, a smaller majority to extra costs for equipment and lab fees and very nearly half to extra costs for graduation. It is also worth noting at this point that while the one year masters has traditionally been competitive because of its short length and hence relatively low cost, the global feeling may be turning against it. In China specifically, perhaps under German influence, there seems to be a growing concern amongst employers over the value of the one-year masters. Moreover, tailored and industry-specific masters are increasingly in demand, and inevitably have high development costs. This market, so important to the UK, is far from stable. It will be necessary for the UK to remain flexible on masters’ length provision should global employers insist on a 2 year degree, but we must note that this would seriously disadvantage us in cost terms.

Moreover with German universities now providing well over 300 courses in English, mostly at postgraduate level, the European challenge is very real. Demographic pressures in other parts of the world could drive new competition too – there will be surplus capacity in Japan and Korea, for example, while Singapore and Malaysia, not to mention Adelaide, have clearly articulated ambitions to be centres of internationalised education. Our strongest competitor may well however continue to be the USA, and the Prime Minister’s recent call for more collaborative activity may indeed be timely. If we are thinking of holistic institutional collaboration involving all aspects of university activity, it would be foolish to

ignore the importance of the USA. Our obsession with recruitment alone sometimes blinds us to this.

If we now turn to the much more sophisticated British Council/ Economist Intelligence Unit's study in China we note that whereas there is a continuing increase in the number of UK students from China up until about 2011, growth not only flattens out after that but in the most pessimistic scenario numbers return by 2015 to current levels. It will be interesting to see how this model plays out with India. While there is no reason to assume that the UK share of the overseas market will collapse (the OECD shows that our share has fallen by only 0.5% in the last 8 years) we should not bank on a significant increase long term in the market, and certainly not in market share. We are vulnerable on price and on the modernisation of the European system (France's percentage of the market has grown from 7.2% to 8.5% and is not now far behind Germany's). The British Council/ Economist Intelligence Unit for example notes that previous studies have understated the importance of price-sensitivity for Chinese students. There is little reason to suppose that this would not be true of other markets.

The OECD's 2008 Education at a Glance Report notes that the level of investment in infrastructure in the UK as a proportion of the sector's income is at 4.8% significantly lower than the OECD average of 9.5%. This may help explain why the i-Graduate International Student Barometer consistently shows that student facilities such as learning spaces and sports facilities rank relatively poorly in the UK compared to our international competitors.

Responses to instability in international student movement

Longterm partnerships

If we look at surveys such as the i-Graduate International Student Barometer it is relatively easy to pick out certain areas as well as the under-investment in student facilities mentioned above, in which UK universities are, taken *en bloc*, weak. These are almost all bundled in soft issues such as host culture, social activities, informal welcome atmosphere, local orientation and friendship together with matters relating to money; not only the actual cost but financial support and the workings of the UK banking system. But from the point of view of overseas governments and perhaps at least as importantly the press overseas, the main problem with the UK is a perception that our universities are solely interested in international students as a source of revenue. While in most cases this is blatantly not true – and in terms of cash if not the ability to attract extra numbers, the balance of overseas fees and home fees plus block grant is now pretty neutral – it is a hard perception to overcome. Those of us involved in setting up the UKIERE initiative will be only too well aware that a very sharp contrast was drawn by our Indian colleagues between this generally collaborative initiative and the perceived behaviour of UK universities. As the British Council China Study suggests, a longer term collaborative view of internationalisation is probably the only safe way forward. Such an approach would dampen the inherent instability of the open market from year to year, and while short-term and in a bull market it might increase cost and indeed not maximise numbers, in a bear market it would clearly provide a safety net. And the unknowns in the near future at least are even greater than those listed in the UUK study - Climate Change, Energy and Food Costs and possible Media Escalation of Terrorist Activity

- which were set aside in that study's projections. To these we must add the tottering state of the global financial system, the likelihood of recession in a substantial part of the globe, and the radical consolidation of the international airline industry.

This approach is essentially long-term and may in some ways be deemed conservative. But the fact is that rapid and uncontrolled growth in overseas students is not necessarily in our interests either. And by its very nature such a market and "selling-based" growth would be uncontrolled. Overseas students of course provide an experience of the world at large to our home students, and greatly enhance their intellectual experience. They are also critical to the research work done particularly in STEM subjects in the UK, as has been pointed out by the Royal Society in their recent paper The International Competitiveness of UK HE" drawn from their major report A Higher Degree of Concern. But we have also recently seen serious concerns over rapid increases in some specific areas, and the serious danger in some subjects of ghettoisation, even if we ignore the more outlandish claims of some critics that standards are lowered to encourage international participation. If however collaborative and long-term partnerships are the engine of growth as opposed to aggressive selling, growth is likely to be both more gentle, and more stable, and inside the UK universities' overall institutional strategy rather than appearing as a financial target for recruitment offices.

What kind of collaborative activity is imagined?

There is of course the obvious arrangement whereby an overseas institution acts as a feeder institution for the UK either on a 2+1, 2+2, or 2+1+1 basis at undergraduate level, or for Masters and subsequent postgraduate research. But the quid pro quos of such arrangements have to be carefully considered. Unless the overseas university is of decidedly lower quality than its UK partner, what is the incentive for such partnerships, particularly at postgraduate level? Such arrangements are only likely to be successful if the partnership is based on some kind of exchange, even if that exchange is asymmetric, possibly even symmetric as a whole but asymmetric among different subjects. Such arrangements have the added benefit, which I shall return to, of moving UK students overseas. If we look at such arrangements between UK universities and the USA (somewhat the inverse of the normally envisaged arrangements), USA private universities, by continuing to charge their students fees while they are abroad, can in fact subsidise the visiting UK student, and/or the living costs of their own student overseas. It is perhaps worth thinking about such arrangements in the context of the UK and the developing or BRIC countries. More interesting are the larger network arrangements such as Universitas21 or the World Universities Network. A clear lesson of experience here is that if these are to work, they need to be properly funded and resourced in human terms. Where there is or has been no Directorate to drive these networks, their progress has been painfully slow. Where there is, the model clearly has considerable potential. A significant variant of this model is the connection of UK universities to global for-profit networks which have the necessary resources to run the network and the advantage of very considerable scale. The downside of course is that the UK institution would have to be very careful in terms of its branding match with such a network if it intended to swallow it whole. But all of these models have their attractions, particularly so where they involve not only student activity but the business of the Universities in general.

There is nothing which leads to the stability and success of such relationships as much as faculty belief, and research and intellectual property relationships are often key to this kind of understanding. This can facilitate general faculty exchange, and the movement of staff, to which I shall also return, is every bit as important a factor in internationalisation as the movement of students. Apart from anything else the involvement of University management in such all-embracing partnerships is surely key to the long-term nature of a University's international activities.

While the role of collaborative partnerships is viewed in the sector as a more or less necessary development, the attitude to provision overseas on a physical basis (we shall return to other forms of *TNE* later) is more contentious. By the nature of these ventures, there is usually an overseas partner involved, though not necessarily from the University sector, and certainly not necessarily from the University public sector. My own view, while somewhat more bullish than his, is shared by Michael Shattock, namely that such ventures will be few and far between. They are capital and management-time intensive, and while they can be very successful in raising an institution's profile any optimistic projections of financial return would have to be very carefully scrutinised. However, they have again the advantage of being impossible without the involvement of the senior management and importantly the governing body of the institution. Even their consideration therefore can be heuristically interesting in concentrating the institution's mind on what it wants from its international activities. It is interesting that in the material submitted to me for this review, all of the interest groups and many individual institutions cited the importance of long-term collaborative relationships overseas, while many themselves admitted that the organisation of their own institutions was effectively set up to deal with the recruitment model only.

The international environment within the UK

Careers and professional services

The UK has one of the most internationalised student populations in the OECD, international students accounting for 14.1% as opposed to an OECD average of 6.9% , only Australia and New Zealand having higher figures. There is a question however whether simply having a high proportion of international students means that the learning experience on campus is truly internationalised, and, another arm of the same question, whether we in fact offer the best service to these international students. We have already noted that in a number of soft measures we do not seem to be very friendly. However, perhaps surprisingly, the i-Graduate's survey rates us very positively in terms of both work experience and, less surprisingly perhaps, in careers advice. Discussions with HECSU members on the other hand suggest that on their own admission there is still some considerable way to go in handling careers advice for overseas students, and that even more importantly in terms of the international experience there is a considerable way to go in advising UK students on the importance of and the possibilities for internationalising their own career prospects.

Careers advice is of central importance to the whole internationalisation project since the fundamental assumption is that in the global village, markets are international, sources of supply are international, and careers are international. Studies such as that carried out by HECSU and funded by PMI2 on the labour market in Hong Kong need a wider audience. If

students do not understand the international context, there is no fundamental reason why, other than in countries where there is a shortage of capacity, international education should be seen as desirable. If it is not desirable for students, there is little point in universities investing in it. Since the longer-term broader internationalisation strategy which we are advocating in this review will inevitably be expensive, there has to be a market incentive for universities to follow this path. Within the UK therefore it is very important that not only university careers advisors but schools career advisors make it clear to students that the possibilities for international experience, both in terms of meeting others from overseas and travelling overseas themselves, should be a basis for choice of University. Without an element of market differentiation driven by demand, the long-term perverse incentive of maximising short-term profit from overseas students is unfortunately persuasive. For other similar reasons, internationalisation of curricula is also important. It is important not to project the UK as insular, metaphorically as well as literally, in our approach to overseas students. It is also important for our own students to understand that there are other pedagogic perspectives than our own. In this, the subject centres could be of enormous help to individual universities, for whom the cost of curricular development is very real. In fact the whole panoply of academic and professional services within institutions needs to be developed in the light of the Universities overall internationalisation strategy – union services, welfare support, estates and buildings etc. All of this requires capacity building inside the UK. For example, UUK recently undertook a survey of the NUS response to integration of international students. A summary of the findings was that unions needed to be specifically resourced for international students work; the university and union had to work in partnership on international issues; traditional social events adapted for international students do not work; support for specific countries' societies does work; and that there was a long way to go to get integration right at many institutions. Virtually no one could identify specific actions taken as a result of students being asked about integration issues. This is not to say that there is not a lot of good work being done, but it is patchy and it is not driven by a comprehensive view of good practice. I use this as just one example of the capacity building necessary. Welfare and student counselling are two other very obvious examples where questions need to be asked about the general availability of expertise in other cultures. There are other capacity building requirements in terms of outward mobility which are also significant and will be introduced below.

Management

A repeating theme in the above is the requirement that university management and governance take on board the internationalisation agenda. This is recognised for example in the CIHE report Global Horizons for UK Universities where it notes that “the governing body has a role in approving the overall strategy and in exercising the necessary overview of risk.... Beyond this some direct management support is needed and a growing number of top-tier posts with ‘internationalisation’ in their title are emerging.” I would only take issue with the word “some” – in fact internationalisation needs the wholehearted support and involvement of management at the highest level, and resource needs to be spent on that growing number of top-tier posts with internationalisation in the title. The drift of the CIHE report is very similar to this review, drawing a distinction between a strategy which concentrates on the recruitment of international students and one which covers all the activities within an institution. As would be expected from such a body, it emphasises the

need for employers to make their views on the worth of international experience more strongly known. This echoes the views expressed above from HECSU – alarmingly some employers actually favour overseas students since de facto they have that international experience. UUK’s study The Practice of Internationalisation: managing international activities in UK Universities makes the same point - it should be said that it shares an author with the CIHE report - that the internationalisation strategy “is a fundamental element of the corporate strategy and is fully integrated with all the other institutional strategies”. The ten points of good practice in this report are in some ways obvious, but as has become clear from institutional responses they are not by any means universally applied. Yet another study with the same message is the Global University: the role of Senior Managers from Bournemouth University in which Robin Middlehurst argues strongly along the same lines.

But all of this comes at a cost, and universities need to decide on their own priorities. There are particular concerns in the management of collaborative networks. Whether driven by common cause or ownership such collaborations do not readily add value unless they are actively managed by a team dedicated to and dependent on their success. The same indeed could be said for other kinds of collaborative initiatives, such as UKIERI, to which governance and management arrangements have been crucial. Not only do these have a cost, but the integration of network management and the management of contributing institutions is not easy, and internationally can be fraught with both small p political and large P Political. Arguably we need specialised capacity in the UK for this kind of work, and there may even be cases where a liaison officer within each institution is necessary to shadow the network directorate.

The CIHE report mentioned above commends the USA for its JYA programmes, and for its overseas campuses. Just how international the latter are, in a protected environment largely socially and pedagogically American, is a moot point. JYA programmes were often set up for pragmatic reasons even if institutional - I can think of one Ivy League college which on its admission of women simply had to send approximately one third of its students overseas in order to accommodate its numbers. The best JYA programmes are often built on long-term collaborative arrangements which moreover spin off into other areas of the University. And in many cases of course, as we have previously noted, they are funded by the private fee system. The attitude of USA institutions is not actually very international in the sense I am promoting although it is changing – a recent report by Blackboard Inc. “Unlocking the Global Education Imperative” urges an international perspective on US institutions even beyond its own very obvious commercial interest. The overall point that needs to be made is that internationalisation, though it can only happen with the involvement of all departments, both academic and those providing professional services within a university, must be promulgated by management and governance, and stem from the institution’s core values and priorities.

Outward Mobility of Staff and Students

I have already suggested that long-term collaboration with overseas institutions will inevitably involve outward student movement. This is however surely desirable in its own right from the UK’s national standpoint, networks built overseas by home students being just as valuable as networks built in the UK by overseas students. There is also an ethical

issue: as David Milliband pointed out, there is a human necessity to understand what it is to live in India, or Southern Africa. Another driver for action is that there is considerable evidence that the majority of outwardly mobile students come from the higher socio-economic classes, and with a higher than expected proportion of women amongst them.

Policymakers in other countries, notably the USA, Australia and Canada, are as keen as the UK Government to increase mobility overseas and this itself creates a competitive situation since some universities (notably in China) are the targets for a great deal of overseas movement. One of the basic problems is that it is rather hard to know how many UK students study abroad, and there is some evidence of significant under-reporting, particularly where UK students study or enjoy work placement in other Anglophone countries. We should note that some other countries, e.g. Australia, do have a better statistical grasp of student movement – it may therefore be the case as has been suggested by at least one study that while movement in the Erasmus scheme has declined by roughly a third since the mid-1990s (a decline mirrored by inward mobility to the UK but still leaving the UK with a serious shortfall of movement outwards), this has been compensated by exchange links and work placements in the USA, Canada and New Zealand. It would certainly seem to be the case that work placement and vocational mobility schemes have not shown the same level of decline as the Erasmus scheme, and may well be the main driver of student mobility. This is an important point to grasp – universities can make use of their institutional collaborators' own business networks in order to find placement opportunities for their students, which are more likely to attract student mobility than simple educational exchanges. This of course would require reciprocal arrangements in the UK, which are always hard to find. However work placement overseas monitored by a university with which the UK university is familiar is a very attractive way of increasing mobility.

The shape of the English three-year degree makes simple educational outward mobility much more difficult than it is for example in the USA, or indeed Scotland, where the four-year degree, with a more general opening year, provides much more flexibility. This is another reason why relatively short-term mobility linked to work experience might be attractive. But of course a rapid turnover of students is even more expensive not only in direct cost but in management time. It may also be less attractive to employers, though the evidence on this is mixed. Managing outward mobility if it is properly done is a serious cost on universities and this might have to be taken into account if the Government is serious. Whether work placement is really the way forward, or whether more traditional academic mobility, universities will need to have dedicated staff both working with their partners overseas to create opportunities and mentor students, and also, particularly for work placement, to create many more opportunities for overseas students and indeed home students within the UK, and to mentor these too. This would also require, as the CIHE report on [Global Horizons for UK Universities](#) makes clear, much more involvement from British business and industry.

There is also a school element to this as well, which we have briefly touched on above. Leaving aside the vital language issue (which one would have thought was self evident but clearly is not), schools, and business and industry representatives within schools, need to promote early the advantages of an education with an international scope. This has to become an element to be considered in students' choice of universities in order to provide

any kind of motivation for universities to act themselves, whether through JYA-type programmes, short academic visits, or work placements. The CIHE report contains a useful list of obstacles to overseas mobility and possible solutions.

Staff mobility is however almost a precursor to increased student mobility. Relationships have to be built with universities and with business, and these can only really be achieved by reciprocal mobility. This is high cost but potentially high gain - the lessons of SOCRATES and ERASMUS programmes suggest both its efficacy and the necessity of maintaining such movement if student mobility is to continue to be motivated by staff. The key idea is “short term”. Staff movement cannot be about the wholesale disruption of families for year-long periods. Yet again it is easier to organise such exchanges, symmetrical or asymmetrical, and whether academic or professional service staff, within the context of a long-term collaboration – and a network collaboration provides much more flexibility than a simple bi-lateral arrangement, though with the caveats on the necessity for management already noted.

Trans-national Education.

There are two recent studies on TNE, one from DIUS itself and the other from the OECD – Cross-Border Tertiary Education, The DIUS study Trans-national Education and Higher Education Institutions notes both the wide variety of types of provision of TNE (everything from distance learning of various kinds to franchise, dual award and partial credit and the very large numbers of institutions involved (65% of all institutions in the UK offer some form of TNE with post-92 institutions being significantly the largest providers with 63% of the TNE programmes identified.) The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education has recently published a report on a special case of TNE, the so-called Foreign Backed Universities. This describes the case where a foreign-backed university is “a legally independent Higher Education institution of the country where it is located but which is academically affiliated to one or several universities in another country” from which it may well also receive funding. Perhaps the most significant part of this report is the emergence of Germany alongside the US and the UK as a main player in this field.

In the globalised world where there is pressure on funding and on ease of transport, some forms of transnational education are almost bound to grow and may indeed grow very quickly. But the very speed of such growth will almost inevitably bring with it dangers and reactions. As in any boom situation quality may be the first casualty. Here international quality regulators, whether the likes of the OECD or those agencies on the new European Register, should have some credibility independent from the “selling” country, and indeed independent from the “receiving” country where of course regulation can become a pseudonym for protection. But pan-national bodies of course have their own dangers and it would be important that their standards are standards of principle rather than rules of content or delivery. So far so good as far as Europe is concerned, but one must remain vigilant. The regulatory question may become even more critical in the light of the financial crisis, and the increasing question marks being placed over the Anglo-Saxon freetrade model.

I have noted above that forward projections of overseas student numbers show a considerable swing towards part-time study. Some of this, and perhaps a significant percentage of this growth, will be delivered online. One of the immediate effects of the credit crunch and the toll it has taken on student loans seems to have been a rapid increase in enrolment in distance learning programmes, in the US up 12% over last year. This is driven both by the difficulties of some student loan companies and also by high oil prices (see the FT July 14 and August 6, 2008). Arguably these effects could be transitory, much like the effect of 9/11, but combined with environmental concerns they might well not be. This is an area of course in which the for-profit sector is very active and there are significant questions about its relationship to traditional non-profit HE providers. There are of course a number of “private” providers operating inside the United Kingdom. BPP and the College of Law provide specialist education in the law. There are feeder organisations which have partnerships with mainstream UK universities to offer foundation programmes for international students, most notably Kaplan and INTO but also the London International College of Business and Technology, StudyGroup and INSEARCH. A number of these also have university interests overseas. There are also two overseas providers; University of Chicago Business School and Limkokwing University, active in different ways in the UK, and Richmond University, which as well as being accredited in the UK by the Open University has accreditation from a US regional body. At least one UK university also has a major partnership with a global provider of online education. The question that has to be asked is whether the wider networks of these global for-profit providers can be exploited by UK institutions to widen their own global reach. This can obviously be attractive since it brings built-in mass, capital, and management expertise. However, there are brand issues, and in some markets and with some partners there may be ethical issues too. Two ethical issues are obvious - first the hegemony of western culture spread through trans-national education and secondly the effect it has on in-country capacity building. The latter is of course even more true of traditional recruitment of students from developing countries to the UK, where there is a significant loss of talent from the donor country. Arguably TNE reduces the loss, but it may actually increase the erosion of the host culture. It is therefore probably in the UK’s interest long-term for an element of capacity-building to run alongside the expansion of trans-national education. Yet again however this is a direct cost on universities and a disincentive to think long-term.

Overseas governments’ attitude to cross-border education is mixed. The OECD study suggests that the newer forms of cross-border tertiary education have had surprisingly little impact on overall capacity development one way or the other. Malaysia for example “views cross-border education provision at home as an important and positive component of its capacity development. Foreign providers offer 34% of the 899 bachelor and post-graduate programmes in Malaysia’s private education sector in 2006”. China has in a more limited way also welcomed overseas providers. On the other hand the plight of the Foreign Educational Institution’s Bill in India is well known. And the situation in India could scarcely be more confused at the moment, (see the [UUK International Unit’s News Bulletin](#) 30.07.08).

Open-access educational content is a newer element in TNE not explicitly covered by the DIUS report. This is defined in a recent JISC paper as “teaching, learning and research

resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an Intellectual Property Licence... Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks...and any other tools...used to support access to knowledge". Alongside the Open University the most famous example of open courseware is the MIT initiative started with an initial investment of £5.5 million from the Hewlett Foundation. And Johns Hopkins amongst other United States universities also provides some courseware on open access. Internationally, the Universities of Kyoto and Tokyo offer free and open educational resources and there are significant examples in China, Australia and New Zealand. The Institute of Public Policy Research has called for British universities to make all their course materials freely available online and for the Government to set up a central hub where the general public can access these resources. The cost and complexity of such an arrangement is mind-numbing, and everyone in the sector will remember previous ventures, but as an argument it is stimulating. It is certainly true that as a ploy in brand promotion the MIT initiative has been a resounding success. It creates exposure and goodwill. The JISC paper suggests a major role for subject centres and this may well be a suitable way forward. Universities should not necessarily fear such an initiative, since they retain control of not only their tuition but crucially certification. What is almost certainly needed to raise the awareness of benefits and pitfalls is a facilitation operation which encourages but which leaves initial construction at a grassroots level. The wrong way to go about this would be to create a purpose-built national body and then expect it to be filled with content from the institutions. This view of my own is not far removed from the JISC paper presented to the HEFCE Board in June 2008.

Research

There is clearly a major overlap here with another area under review. There has also been a spate of recent publications – the OECD's Recent Trends in Internationalisation of Research and Development, International Research Collaboration Opportunities for the UK Higher Education Sector published by the International Unit at UUK and DIUS' International Research Collaboration in UK Higher Education Institutions (all published within two months of each other in 2008.) The growth in international research collaboration over the last ten years has been very considerable. Based on Thompson ISI Web of Science data the UK is holding its own in terms of growth rate and places a close third behind the USA and Germany in terms of the numbers of international research articles published. A survey of EU Member States' senior science and technology officials leaves national motives for internationalisation research in no doubt – 60% said that it was to improve competitiveness in market access, significantly less said that it was to increase the quality of research and development, and significantly less again said it was to tackle global issues and international development. Universities tended to feel that world-class research was inherently international and that the career experience of not only research students and post doctoral researchers but also undergraduates was affected beneficially by international research contacts. For all its success the UK still has some way to go, and as well as the United States and Japan, Germany is a major competitor in the BRIC countries. Recent developments in links with India and in the siting of RCUK offices overseas, as well as Gordon Brown's insistence on more collaboration between the UK and the USA (not only in research but significantly in research) are positive signs. But the key question is how individual universities and the UK nationally captures the immense amount of activity underway, to

gain added value by synergy. As the DIUS study records, less than half our institutions hold information on international research collaborations centrally, only 25% collate a report on such information and 14% do not record the information at all. 42% record this information at a more local level.

The problem of course is that inter-departmental and inter-faculty synergies are unlikely to be best exploited in this situation, and indeed the possibilities for inter-institutional links may not be spotted where originating links are in different faculties. How much more true is this of UK plc, where it is extremely rare for it to be suggested that there would be value in specific inter-institutional collaboration with overseas institutions, although the funding of collaborative initiatives within the UK has grown significantly in recent years. Having said that it is by no means unknown and recent Wellcome Trust initiatives in Africa have put together consortia of UK institutions in an attempt to manage our involvement in capacity building. There are also of course the high profile cases such as CERN, but they are somewhat sui generis though examples of what is possible if the will is there. Arguably the development of research council expertise overseas and the cross-fertilisation of their knowledge of separate institutions could have a very significant role to play here in ensuring that the UK makes the best use of its resources overseas. Within institutions the ways in which research collaboration overseas can encourage not only student recruitment but the development of the kinds of wider connections I have already discussed are only exploited in a patchy way at best – with the exception of the already established university networks who, where these are centrally managed, have a much better handle on what is happening and which activities can help drive others. This is another very good reason for going down the managed network path. It is possible also that UKTI through its global network could be of assistance in making connections from university to business. This could be particularly useful where it is possible to connect overseas potential investors with university R&D capacity. In order to do this of course it would be necessary for UKTI and the universities to have an open line to each other and to RCUK's understanding of the sector as a whole.

Closely linked of course is the issue of postgraduate research recruitment. A significant study by the UK HE International Unit [The UK's Competitive Advantage: The Market for International Research Students](#) has a useful list of recommendations both nationally and institutionally. Visas for older students with families are a problem, as is the level of scholarships available, particularly compared to the USA. The desirability of overseas research students, particularly in STEM subjects, sometimes becomes confused with arguments about the paucity of home research students – and it should not be a part of that discussion at all. As the USA discovered through its post 9/11 visa policy, overseas research students are a vital part of the research engine. There is no trade-off involved. For obvious reasons of capacity, postgraduate research is likely to be the longest-lived of the one-way movement in HE students to the developed countries. The fact that the UK PhD is different in nature from that in continental Europe and the USA is both a market advantage and a potential disadvantage. As with masters level courses the UK would do well not to become too entrenched in debates defending its traditional form, while nevertheless making the most of its intellectual advantages.

Trade Issues

There are significant trade implications lurking in the internationalisation and research agendas. These have already begun to emerge in the EU proposal on an Open Market for Services, and in many ways GATS is the elephant in the room of this whole review. The OBHE provided a useful survey in 2003 and there is a recent update from UNESCO's Institute for Educational Planning in 2007. Significant progress – if it is judged to be progress – on free trade in education could seriously alter the market. At the moment GATS is stalled and the EC in particular has not placed anything on HE on the table. Other countries, notably the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada are of course more eager. Other countries still, (notably India) are fiercely resistant. Within the UK, UCU and NUS have fixed positions against developing free trade, but UUK has always taken the view in the long run that the UK could be a winner through trade liberalisation. However we are not invulnerable and open access specifically to research services - as opposed to the carefully controlled bi-lateral access which exists with a number of countries and in EU schemes at present – would be a very significant de-stabilisation of the current situation. We should note that the playing field within Europe is at the moment anything but level, and that arguably industry is subsidised through the university system in many European countries. This has become a very real factor since the introduction of FEC in the UK university sector.

The same arguments apply to the subsidy of the overseas student recruitment market. The subsidy by, say, the German taxpayer of education for Chinese postgraduate students is real, and as HEPI pointed out in a recent study might actually still be profitable in financial terms to the German economy through the indirect effects of such students living in Germany during their course of study. It can also be seen as a form of aid to countries where educational capacity is limited. The ethical dimensions of this are not as one-sided as some make them appear – subsidised education in the West can have serious counterproductive effects on capacity building in the developing world, as well as providing high quality education where it might not otherwise be available. It can also oil the wheels of the emigration of highly skilled workers from developing to developed countries.

But in research terms specifically it is certainly arguable that the UK would do well if the playing field was actually neutral. Results from both the EU framework programmes and the initial uptake of the ERC's programmes, suggest (as can be seen from the EUA's Trends Reports) that the UK is extremely competitive, even though at the moment there is arguably not much financial incentive for UK participation. It will be interesting, and perhaps alarming, to see how the current financial crisis, and the discrediting of the Anglo-Saxon system that may well follow, plays out in education. It is unlikely to play out in our favour. The culture represented by our education – particularly business education – will be under a critical spotlight, and some quick thinking not only in curricula might be necessary. But medium term regulation (and protection) may for better or for worse become more fashionable, leading to further instabilities. Longer term I personally find it rather difficult to believe that in the 10-15 year time frame of this review we will not see further liberalisation of educational trade, and further globalised provision of one kind or another, probably a mixture of all the various kinds of trans-national education I have commented on above.

I cannot emphasise enough that this is an area in which government thinking across various departments needs to be joined up much proactively than it is at present. We have not been good at understanding the ways in which research decisions (such as the recent Physics fiasco) can affect our basic research and trading relationships and we have been passive in the face of subsidised competition for students. In provocative summary, while it may be in continental Europe's interest, it is not necessarily in our interests to keep HE off the GATS' agenda.

Alumni Networks

These are run by individual universities, usually support fund raising and recruitment, but also increasingly support networks to benefit former students in their careers, and indirectly the marketing of lifelong learning. The British Council also separately runs events for UK alumni overseas. Unfortunately the key word here is "separately". There could be much to be gained for the UK in focusing alumni activity around particular disciplines or career paths. This would also I believe be greatly appreciated by the alumni themselves – this is particularly the case in South-East Asia. There are of course various difficulties – there are some data issues and universities are naturally protective of their own influence on their alumni. But the possible value added through the business and commercial networking which could occur is barely touched on at the moment.

Government and the British Council

Government should develop a strategy which is stable but flexible, and crucially extends across all its departments. Too often – much too often – the HE sector is not considered in the knock-on effects of government policy or government dealings with the media. Recent examples affecting internationalisation include the way in which visa charges were radically increased, the announcement on funding for Physics, the announcement of the cuts in ORS funding, some statements on radicalisation in universities, and from an agency within the sector itself, comments on the legitimacy of the degree classification system. But as I have hinted above, the need for connected thinking goes much wider than these real but arguably transient problems. If overseas collaboration involving the movement of both staff and students is to grow, it is quite clear that this must become a priority for the departments and agencies involved, not least in visa regulation. The RCs, UKTI, the TSB and the major charities need to work with universities to understand how overseas research can best be developed to add value to the work done by individual universities and the few networks which already exist. Schools policy where it impacts on the possibilities for internationalisation at the HE level needs to be thought of in the same framework.

As already noted, the British Council's most recent thinking, published at the same time as this review, has much the same outlook as that expressed here. But the British Council still faces considerable suspicion in the university sector. Whether justified or not, the perception is based on the British Council's own commercial activities, on its sometimes ambiguous position as a service agent for individual universities, the university sector at large, and UK policy. There is also the variable nature of the service it provides from country to country. If the British Council is to become the promoter of the UK as a constructive partner in the improvement of global education and research, and for example to add

national value to individual university alumni networks, as I certainly believe it should, yet more work has to be done to align policy, agent and delivery sectors. This is not to disparage the progress that has been made over the past few years.

Where multiple government departments, the British Council, universities and indeed the private sector are involved together in specific initiatives, great care has to be taken over governance and management. UKIERI is a success story, and PMI2 has skirted disaster. This is not just about levels of funding and initiative focus, though it is certainly about these. It is about transparent governance and dedicated management teams. It is the same story as with university networks – such initiatives need governance, but also management whose first responsibility is the success of the initiative.

Conclusions

- 1. UK and UK institutions will need to broaden their perspective on overseas work. Even if recruitment of students to study in the UK remains an objective, it will increasingly have to take place in a context of bi-lateral and multi-lateral internationalisation.**

A number of actions fall out of that premise:

Some, but probably not many, universities may choose to build campuses overseas or otherwise be the prime movers on overseas sites.

More will enter into partnerships in which overseas partners or multinational private-sector partners deliver courses or degrees which are in some way developed or quality-controlled in the UK

More will develop distance learning options, either wholly or partly on-line and either solely or in partnership

More will be part of partnerships (either with traditional universities or with new multinational providers) which allow easy recognition of credit from other universities overseas, and short term movement of students, as well as research and technology transfer collaboration and easy movement of staff. These partnerships require dedicated management to be effective.

At home the environment must encourage mobility of home students and staff. This environmental development might involve development of curricula, development of support and mentoring systems for students and staff both before and during overseas experience, and development of careers advice appropriate for overseas students who might wish to stay on in the UK and for home students to understand the opportunities overseas. All of these are human-resource intensive.

Work placement for both students and staff overseas should become a normal part of student and career expectations in many fields.

University networks overseas, including alumni networks, must add value to the University's long-term presence in a country, rather than being simply UK focussed. They should also be used to create value for the UK as a whole.

- 2. These actions have management resource and financial resource implications. The government needs to work with the funding councils and the sector to see how it can best support internationalisation by building capacity. In return the government will need to find ways of maximising the benefit of the universities' leading role in internationalisation for the good of the UK as a whole.**

There is the option of creating a fund similar to HEIF to build capacity. Reaction to this across the sector would be mixed, and the allocation of the fund inevitably controversial. Some small specialist institutions for example are much more developed in the ways this report advocates than many larger institutions. And large institutions with already developed capacity might well feel they would be taxed to remedy the lack of investment elsewhere. My own view is that incentivisation by other means will be both more acceptable and more effective long-term. Thought should be given to targeting financial incentives to staff and students moving overseas, for example, rather than institutions. Could established networks have streamlined visa procedures? And as I will repeat below, international experience needs to be a part of the reasons behind school-leavers' choice of university.

- 3. Internationalisation demands prioritisation at institutional level, and must be a part of the university's long-term strategy, owned by management and governing body alike. Both government and universities have to consider the relative underinvestment in teaching infrastructure and student facilities.**
- 4. Employers have a responsibility to work in their own long term interests in a global market, by providing placement opportunities, and by giving forward-looking careers advice.**

Schools need to make it clear to students that they should consider the international opportunities offered by universities as part of their reasons for choice. Language provision must be available and must be part of a normal core curriculum

- 5. RCUK should extend its overseas presence, working with universities to build opportunities through synergies invisible to them individually.**

Universities must have a better grasp centrally of research work they undertake overseas themselves or with overseas partners.

- 6. The government must proof its actions across departments as they might affect the international presence of UK HE. The prime focus of government initiatives and ambassadorial activity, in which the British Council should have a clearly defined role, should be the promotion of the "brand" as an exciting and reliable partner, whose aim is to improve through collaboration the global provision of HE and the advancement of knowledge through research. The "selling" model must be superseded.**

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