

Internationalization 2011: An Overview

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Abstract: The author provides an overview of internationalization in higher education since 2008 to the present. The essay is a partial follow-up to Bone's 2008 paper on internationalization.

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When I wrote a report on Internationalization for the then UK government at the end of 2008 the financial crisis was underway, but its effects were even harder to predict than they may be now in 2011. However, if there was a fear that the crisis might disrupt the rapid growth of the international student mobility we had seen in the previous decade, this has most certainly not materialised – quite to the contrary. As a case in point between 2008 and 2010 of nine major subject areas in first year taught postgraduate degrees in the UK none has grown by less than 24%, and at least two by over 50% (HESA, 2011). But some things have changed. Possibly the most significant for the long term is a shift in the western developed world's conception of international Higher Education as a one-way movement of students in its direction to a much broader conception of exchange – this was beginning in 2008, but has become the default position in 2011, in theory if not yet in practice. The cynical view might be that this has been driven by the facts of the market-place—namely that former exporters of students (and importers of higher education) have now become importers of students (and exporters of higher education)—though in practice this idea of flow-reversal needs unpacking - but there has also surely been a genuine shift in the understanding of what the benefits of internationalization are to both institutions and countries.

An interesting marker of this development has been the increasing interest in the internationalization of HE by policy makers at a national level as well as by Universities. In the first years of the century, if such policy existed at all at national level it existed as a come-on PR initiative from the west (such as the UK Prime Minister's Initiative to dramatically increase the number of overseas students) and a consequent reaction in some quarters to keep their young at home for fear of currency movements and more importantly loss of talent. Both developed and developing world have changed their stances. While policy can still be driven (sometimes perversely) on both sides by immigration and emigration concerns—one thinks of the USA post 9/11, the UK under its current government, India's protectionist policy in the face of huge under-capacity - it is also increasingly formulated to maximize the national benefit, socially, politically and economically, from higher education systems which interact in all possible ways with societies and businesses, not just Universities, overseas. "Internationalization... is closely linked with economic competitiveness, the great brain race, the quest for world status, and soft power" (Knight, 2011). A proxy for this development is the British Council's Education Intelligence Unit's decision to construct a league table of such policies, the first results of which were seen at this year's Going Global conference in Hong Kong—and the fact that this UK organization held this conference for the first time outside the UK is of course itself significant. The country which came out top of this provisional assessment was Germany (Australia 2nd, the UK 3rd, China 4th, and the USA 6th), but more significantly, the reasons behind this assessment lay with Germany's 'well

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balanced' policy framework, its overall policies on the promotion of outbound as well as inbound mobility, and in its policies to sustain its international role over the long haul. In other words, what is now considered important in national policy is not by any means simply that which maximises inward flow of students. Whatever one might feel about the Council's International Education Index in detail its existence is not accidental but indicative of a real shift. Similarly, the global interest at a national level (for example in Germany, Australia, New Zealand, China) in i-Graduate's surveys of student feedback such as the International Student Barometer, while no doubt fundamentally driven by a competitive instinct in a traditional market, reveals a much more developed and subtle understanding of the value of student mobility than the simple economic model considering direct revenue which dominated ten years ago.

While the DOHA negotiations have gone distinctly quiet since the crisis, and globalization has suffered a considerable political backlash as a result of a general suspicion of the capitalist model, many governments have nevertheless been effectively opening their educational markets as part of their educational internationalization strategies—these strategies themselves a sub-set of economic development strategies which see Universities in the round (and not just as exporters of higher education simply) as key. One thinks of Malaysia and Korea first perhaps, but Vietnam too, perhaps with a simpler view of addressing its under- capacity, and Singapore has of course been in the game for some time, with varying success. Others remain suspicious, or send confusing messages which make outsiders nervous—India and Nigeria, to take two very different examples, the first finding it hard to cross the Rubicon politically and the latter setting unrealistic prior conditions for outside providers. Some analysts see that the major shift in Chinese education in the last years of the last century and the first of this lay in the “restriction of government control and an acceptance of linkages with other countries” (Kuroda & Passarelli, 2009). In the UK there are fairly unmistakable sounds of an opening market – which was never actually closed, but which was not very tempting either – for reasons unconnected with internationalization, and all to do with the government's view of its balance sheet, but which nevertheless will have significant knock- on effects on internationalization, since UK degree-awarding powers are perhaps the most exportable of all. The UK's motive for opening its market is one which is to be found round the world – a mass system of higher education is too expensive for many tax systems to bear. This has of course resulted in an explosion of private provision, by far the greatest growth in HE considered globally – notably in Latin America and India. The growth of TNE (Trans National Education) as a consequence of market liberalization, provided by both private and traditional providers, has also been stunning, to the extent that some studies (not necessarily in detail reliable but certainly indicative) suggest that for example the UK now has more students studying for its degrees overseas than it has overseas students studying in the UK.

But it is not only or even primarily governments which have moved from selling a simple product delivered at home-base to developing increasingly holistic strategies. As the Observatory on Higher Education's Borderless Report 2011 comments, again in the words of Knight (2011), “University strategic plans, national policy statements, international declarations, and academic articles all indicate the centrality of internationalization in the world of higher education.” Universities have in the last five years, but especially rapidly in the last three, been developing

longer-term international strategies, which spread beyond traditional in-country student recruitment. An IAU survey suggested that 78% of Universities thought internationalization had increased in importance over the last three years, and 87% had some form of strategy, even if most still centred on student mobility. Volatility (some of it predicted to be greater than has so far materialised—by me, amongst others!), the cost of open-field recruitment, and the cost of teaching entrants with varying skills and knowledge from their diverse backgrounds have encouraged more and more Universities to work with partners in long-term collaborative arrangements. These partnerships have their own costs of course, still often under-estimated, and they are higher in network arrangements than in bi-laterals if the full range of advantages possible in these sort of arrangements is to be exploited. But the spin-off benefits of strategies are measurable. For example, the British Council's Education Intelligence Unit study shows a statistically significant link between national policy and the number of co-authored peer-reviewed academic articles – and it must be assumed that this would be reflected in studies of individual institutions, where the link should *prima facie* be more immediate (Beall, 2011). Staying with research collaborations 32.5% of peer-reviewed publications are now co-authored with foreign researchers (Germany leading the way once more), with Australia, the UK and Malaysia not far behind, and both the USA and Japan (the market leaders) have over 165,000 patent applications involving another partner (many of course with each other) (2011). The main task for Universities is not to increase this naturally occurring collaboration, but to ensure that they know that it is happening at an institutional level, and can exploit the use of such connections elsewhere—in student mobility or business contracts. The possibilities of such multi-way collaborations, allowing year to year imbalances and asymmetries in any one field of activity is one of the main attractions of the increasing number of networks, despite their management costs. The immense possibilities of a network of 650,000 students under a single owner such as the publisher of this Journal can only be guessed at, and Laureate is beginning to exploit these in its vertical integration strategy in certain subject areas (notably art and design, health sciences, and hospitality), but there must be a lot more that can be done, and certainly the networks of traditional Universities one feels are only at the beginning of such exploitation themselves.

And student expectations have also changed, and continue to change, helped along by social networking, and by a greater awareness of the return (or lack of it) on the financial investment involved. The importance and complexity of student reaction to provision has led to the growth of detailed surveys such as the International Student Barometer, though whether Universities make the best use of such information is debatable. Moreover, responses should not be mechanical. I argued in my 2008 paper that Universities should take greater care genuinely to use international students to benefit their own home students, which would mean guarding against ghetto-ization both in the class room and in accommodation, but such action will often run against at least the initial wishes of the visitors. Encouraging visitors to discuss pedagogic and cultural differences, and wherever possible to open up the structure of courses to international influence would be less controversial with the incoming students perhaps (though again sometimes counter-cultural) but might be seen as impractical by faculty. Though now, I am happy to say, commonplace, what action follows from these views is thus more difficult to assess. The OBHE report quoted above, now quoting Chakma from the University of Western Ontario (2011): "While

the idea of internationalization has captured imaginations in many of the world's prominent institutions as an important aspect of educating well-rounded global citizens, only a handful of these institutions have taken serious action to make it a reality". Similarly, in a genuinely international environment careers advice would be international in scope and multi-cultural in delivery, as would student services (welfare, social) in general. It may be too that more students in the developed world are beginning to realise themselves that experience beyond their own borders (achieved either through contact with overseas influence in their own country or actually by moving overseas themselves) is a highly valuable career resource, as well as intellectually and personally interesting. But while many continental European countries show a relatively balanced flow inward and outward, both the USA and the UK still sadly lack outward mobility. Meantime, as I have already said, traditional importing countries – China, Malaysia, Korea, and India – are rapidly increasing their role as exporters, with rapidly rising numbers of incoming students – particularly noticeable in Malaysia. The rapid growth in Asia however is mainly intra-regional and "is not driven by a new and statistically significant influx of students from the West" (Kuroda & Passarelli, 2009). But, if the logic of internationalization as it is now conceived is to be realised in practice, there will need to be a real effort on the part of some countries to persuade students to spend time overseas, since, if for no other reason, collaborative ventures require some sort of reciprocity.

So "...we can easily imagine a future where Chinese and Indian students stay at home, learning from their elite institutions and over a period of twenty years even imagine Western students migrating to the Asia-Pacific for higher education learning.... While equity remains a critical issue, especially in India, education for Chindia remains an investment. Not a cost" (OBHE, 2011, p. 12). And yet, some of the resources to deal with the capacity shortfall in these and other BRIC countries (only in some in terms of physical investment but in more, inevitably, in terms of human resources) will come from the developed west, which is indeed increasing its in-client-country delivery at a rapid pace. The most dramatic examples are the growth of overseas campuses, with British Council figures noting significant penetration of China and Malaysia, but almost nil of India, which nevertheless faces an almost insurmountable personnel gap if it is to fulfil its ambitions for 2020. Meantime Japan's uphill struggle to internationalize is evidenced by its lack of penetration by overseas providers (both culture and demography are against them), though there is some growth in inward mobility (which for the same demographic reasons the Japanese government is very anxious to encourage – sadly recent events will not help). The growth of the reality of significant overseas presence is also understated by some surveys of overseas campuses, which do not include Universities with significant overseas backing, or indeed ownership (the University of Liverpool's joint ownership of XJTLU is a case in point), and one needs also to look at such reports as OBHE's on Foreign Backed Universities (Lanzendorf, 2008). Very interesting questions underlie this distinction (between overseas campuses and foreign backed institutions), based on the nature and particularly the locus of quality assurance and regulation - which relatively simple issues can ignore the more complex facts of pedagogic method and course construction (these for example can be, but may not be, in the manner of an overseas institution even where the institution is legally local and operates under local regulation and quality assurance). There are now so many variations on TNE – leave aside the various gradations of distance delivery from wholly on-line, to mixed mode with various kinds of partners, to paper-based

– and new ones appearing every other week it seems – NYU’s portal initiative possibly not even the latest – that the most one can venture is its overall enormous growth. One suspects that many students in some overseas owned or part-owned institutions are unaware of the status of their place of study or even the final regulator of their degree – a not-always healthy situation. Whether this export of investment and talent will simply increase the pace at which the west loses its market leadership is a moot point, but as cost of travel and western fees increase, in-country delivery is bound to be promoted to meet capacity shortfalls, and this delivery will surely be a mix of traditional and private providers, the latter itself a mix of charity and for-profit providers. It is hard to see protectionist or quasi-protectionist policies surviving. But whether intra-regional arrangements will be preferred to truly global ones is another matter. The conclusion of the initial Bologna process, officially marked in 2010, can either be seen as a victory for internationalization, or, as it is by some, even in Canada and the USA far less Asia, as the erection of an intellectual and employment rampart around Europe. And the model certainly has its attractions as a promoter of strictly regional trade – as we have noted above in Asia the growth in international movement is primarily intra-regional, and this growth “along with the perceived economic, social, and cultural benefits of hosting international students has led government officials to more closely consider the possibility of establishing a comprehensive regional framework (by 2015) for higher education” (Lanzendorf, 2008) based in fact on Bologna. Meantime back in Europe the Bologna process is now at pains to work on its own internationalization strategy in the next phase up to 2020, and has set a challenging target (challenging at least for some countries, the UK very much included) of seeing 20% of all students having overseas experience as part of their undergraduate degree.

In trying to update my 2008 report then, I might suggest the following. The growth in international student mobility as a whole has not been significantly disrupted, there is less volatility than I had suspected, but there are clear signs of changing patterns in that mobility which have already changed the old western model of student recruitment to western home- based institutions. The concept of regional blocs looks like growing. TNE has indeed expanded, partly as a reaction to changed or potentially changing student flows, partly to fill capacity shortfalls– and this has a long, long way to go. Private-sector initiatives, sometimes in partnership with traditional providers, will play a large part in the expansion of higher education as governments find the cost of tax-based funding too high, and yet insist on a mass system to feed the knowledge economy and for its wider social benefits, together with high quality nodes to carry country prestige. Partnerships and collaborative models seen as an integral part of an institution’s overarching strategy have indeed been seen as the most effective way forward long-term, mainly but not only by the traditional University sector, though they are sometimes still viewed with suspicion on the grounds of short-term cash efficiency. A classic example of this last is the difficulties encountered by a recent initiative to put some flesh on the Sexton-Trainor report on USA-UK collaboration with third countries – money spent on this is money diverted from single institution spend – though with luck these will be overcome in due course. Student and University understanding of what an international experience should mean has significantly increased and will continue to do so–one hopes the two in tandem. And governments have around the world become much more engaged with Universities in forming international strategies for higher education. These national strategies

can have an odd relationship with the increasing autonomy of institutions, at once empowering and rendering more accountable, and in some cases can run quite counter to other government policy initiatives (notably on visa issues). Market liberalisation has increased and shows no sign of going into serious reverse, but in-country and regional regulation, for reasons intellectually and socially both good and bad, remains complex and its effects in the medium term difficult to predict.

Interconnectedness, the symptoms of complexity, these are the realities of the higher education world –where ‘the world’ really does mean ‘the world’. These realities should mean improvements in access to higher education, improvements in research output, improvements in global citizenship, improvements in University and national economies. But we all know what can go wrong in highly inter-dependent systems. Keeping a close watch and trying as best we can to understand this interconnectedness will be crucial. And there this Journal can certainly help.

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