

The International Business of Higher Education - a managerial perspective on the internationalisation of UK universities

Abstract

This paper employs a managerial perspective to examine the internationalisation of higher education (HE). Using four case studies of United Kingdom (UK) universities, the research identifies the differences between organisations that are making good progress toward implementing their internationalisation strategy and those that are finding it more difficult. The literature review combines three sets of literature on: the internationalisation of HE, management of HE institutions and strategic management. Based on the literature three main challenges to UK universities implementing organisation wide internationalisation are identified and a set of organisational prerequisite qualities are suggested, which if put in place will provide should produce sound basis on which to implement an internationalisation strategy. The literature suggests that contemporary universities are international businesses and as such should give more serious consideration to how their internationalisation strategy is managed. The research indicates that some UK universities are struggling to come to terms with their new operating environment and whilst they nearly all have international strategies, they need to pay more attention to the implementation of those strategies.

Key Words: Internationalisation strategy, management and leadership, UK case studies.

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1. Introduction

The international business of higher education (HE), or academic capitalism as it has been labelled by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) is based on information, ideas and people moving across international borders. HE has always had an international dimension (Marginson and Rhodes 2002, Gacel-Avila 2005) and scholars have a long history of cross border movements. However in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century the global movement of students, staff, programmes and even institutions reached a new level (Naidoo 2006). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that there were 2 million international students studying outside their country of domicile in 2000 (OECD 2012). This number had more than doubled by 2010, to 4.1 million and is estimated to grow to at least 7 million by 2020 (Ryan 2013). In the United Kingdom (UK) the international student population also grew significantly over the same period, growing from 231,000 (11 per cent of the total UK student population) in 2000 to 370,000 (15 per cent) in 2009 (HESA 2011).

International HE is a significant industry in all the Anglophone countries (Van de Wende 2001, Poole 2001, Caruana and Spurling 2007) and is increasingly important to the economies of those countries, for example it is the fourth biggest export earner and is vital to the whole economy in New Zealand (Bennet 1998, Li 2004).

International HE is also increasingly important to universities and HE institutions (HEIs) in continental Europe (Enders 2004, Smemby and Trondal (2005) as well as some key educational nodes around the world; cities like Hong Kong, Singapore and

Kuala Lumpur, that play host to multiple international branch campuses (Naidoo 2006, Koutsantoni 2006a).

The growth in the international business of HE, parallels a similar period of unprecedented growth in the levels of world trade (Friedman 2005, Guest 2011); leading to the observation that HE is at the same time both an agent of globalisation (encouraging the sort of student movements referred to above) and a business that must respond to the consequences of globalisation. For example UK universities now compete with aggressively marketed global competitors and an increasing number of on-line challengers (Healey 2008, Collini 2012). In the UK the response to this international competition expresses itself in two main ways, firstly there is an emphasis on boosting university reputations, through developing international research (and the university's position in league tables that measure research output) and secondly redoubling efforts to attract fee paying international students who are often regarded as key to the financial survival of HEIs in the UK and elsewhere (Scott 2002 and De Vita and Case 2003). Perhaps as a result, staff working in HE in the UK perceive that the internationalisation of UK universities is purely market seeking (Peng 2009) with a near universal emphasis on recruiting international students (Turner and Robson 2007, Bennett and Kane 2011).

However, not all university internationalisation strategies have to be so commercially focussed; for example, Scandinavian institutions tend to concentrate their internationalisation activities on the needs of their home students, preparing them for work in a globalised society and job market by focussing their efforts on study-abroad options (Dobson and Holta 2001, Tossavainen 2002). Leading French and many other European business schools concentrate their internationalisation efforts on meeting the requirements of the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) accreditation body (Perrin-Halot and Thomas 2012) while South Korean institutions have focussed their internationalisation strategy on switching to English as the medium of instruction (Piller

and Cho 2013). The internationalisation experience of UK universities is therefore somewhat different to that in other parts of the world.

Market seeking internationalisation strategies in the UK and other English speaking nations have not generally been challenged by academic staff (De Vita and Case 2003) or student groups (NUS Scotland 2010). This may be because they believe their universities need the income from international student fees, but it could also be because staff and students groups alike neither have a shared understanding of what internationalisation is nor what it means for them (Healey 2008). Therefore there is no common cause to question and criticise (Docherty 2013). In contrast, in South Korea (where all staff and students think of internationalisation as teaching in English) there has been a much more widespread debate and criticism of internationalisation strategies of the South Korean universities (Piller and Cho 2013).

Whether we like it or not, twenty-first century universities, their academic staff and students work and study in an increasingly competitive global HE industry, in which HE providers compete to recruit the best staff, produce the best research and develop strong international reputations (Healey 2008, Shattock 2010). This study takes this competitive business environment as its context and employs a managerial lens to examine the internationalisation of UK universities. Three literatures are referred to: HE management, the internationalisation of HE and strategic management. Based on these literatures three major challenges to UK universities seeking to internationalise their activities are identified. Towards the end of the literature review, best practice guidance from the three literatures is synthesised to create a list of suggested pre-requisite qualities for organisation wide internationalisation.

The research that informs the second half of the article takes the form of four case studies of similar UK universities going through the process of internationalising their activities in rather different ways. After the research methodology is explained

the results are described and then analysed thematically and with reference to the pre-requisite qualities mentioned above.

The next section comprises a review of the main relevant literatures, starting with definitions of the terminology employed.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definitions and context

What is internationalisation? Does globalisation mean the same thing or something different? Is internationalisation something that can be managed by an organisation or is it something that happens in the environment, external to the organisation or in the mind of an individual person?

For the purposes of this paper a university is international if it has a presence, profile or reputation in more than one country. A global entity has a worldwide reach and globalisation is conceptualised as the intensification of economic, social and cultural relations across international borders (Friedman 2005, Guest 2011). Transnational activities are processes and/or institutions that exist or work across borders (Holton 1998) so transnational HE implies the provision of HE by one institution in more than one country. While these definitions are similar to those used in literature on international business they are not universal across academic disciplines.

Globalisation in particular is a loaded word which can and does imply something quite different for historians, economists, geographers, sociologists, politicians and political activists (Holton 1998).

In a HE context globalisation is an external process and a catalyst for changes to HE systems and institutions. The process of internationalisation is how individual HEI's respond to the globalisation of their operating environment (Van der Wende 2001,

Briguglio 2007, Bennett and Kane 2011). This distinction is consistent with the most commonly referred to and most widely accepted definitions of internationalisation in HE as developed by De Wit (1998) and Knight (2003). De Wit (1998: 1) defines internationalisation as:

“...the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution”.

Knight built on this by suggesting that a definition of internationalisation should reflect 21st century challenges and issues and should be appropriate to a broad range of contexts.

“Internationalisation at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post secondary education” (Knight 2003: 1).

Knight is keen to identify internationalisation as an ongoing process that requires continuing effort, rather than a one-off policy statement. This definition also implies that internationalisation should be embedded within the universities delivering HE.

Although these definitions, particularly Knight's, are supported and used in several key texts on the internationalisation of HE (for example Carroll and Ryan 2005, Jones and Brown 2007, Turner and Robson 2008), neither De Wit or Knight's definitions are at present commonly shared or understood by the majority of academics or academic managers (Healey 2008). Many students, staff and even institutions remain rather confused and uncertain about what internationalisation is (Turner and Robson 2007, Lunn 2008). This lack of shared understanding is the first of three major challenges for internationalisation in HE, namely that there is little agreement or understanding about what internationalisation is, what its implications are and what needs to be done to implement it.

2.2 How well is internationalisation progressing?

Done well, university internationalisation as a process will enhance the learning environment for all students; it will give a more international focus to research and through the vehicle of an internationalised curriculum will help graduates to develop a global rather than blinkered domestic focus as they prepare to enter employment in the global economy. If universities are to equip their students with the skills and knowledge to work with flexibility in international and cross-cultural environments (Green 2003, Crosling et al 2008) institutions need an internationalised curriculum (Leask 2007) and to provide opportunities for students to experience cross-cultural communication and life in an international environment. To update the curriculum appropriately, academic staff need to develop a global mindset that will enable them to adequately respond to globalisation in their teaching and research (Aggarwal 2011). In future, if they want to attract students, institutions will have to demonstrate relevance to the contemporary global environment. Internationalisation is one way they can do this.

A series of reports over the last decade indicate that progress with the wider internationalisation agenda in the UK has been slow with internationalisation efforts concentrated predominantly on international student recruitment. In 2006, Koutsantoni's survey found that half of the UK HEIs had an internationalisation strategy (Koutsantoni 2006b); however the survey went on to suggest that for most the focus of the strategy was on student recruitment. Similarly, Turner and Robson (2007) and Lunn (2008) found there was a disjuncture between the espoused values of the institutions and the reality of what internationalisation actually meant for academic staff. Others found that universities in the UK and beyond have been slow to close the gap between what is needed and the reality of what is delivered (Childress 2009, Grant 2013). Although some new modules have been developed and new programmes created with international or global in the title; adding a few international case studies does not amount to an internationalised curriculum (Brunner and Iannarelli 2011, Aggarwal and Goodell 2011). It seems that a clear gap exists between website pronouncement and classroom delivery. Put another way "*...there is a tendency to talk the talk but to baulk at the walk*" (Grant 2013:

3). Implementing the internationalisation strategy and managing the required organisational change is the second major challenge of university internationalisation.

2.3 Managing the change process in a complex environment

Universities operate in complex environments in a rapidly evolving globalised economy (Shattock 2010). They have multiple external stakeholders and often operate in a form of quasi-managed market (Collini 2012), factors which lead to significant management and leadership challenges (Dearlove 1998, Ryan 2006, Woodfield and Kennie 2007, McRoy and Gibbs 2009, Winter 2009). It has been suggested that a consumer paradigm now exists for students and universities (Healey 2008, Kok et al 2010); in this paradigm, study choices are informed by university rank, reputation and price, rather than academic endeavour (Scott 2002, Jiang 2008, Gibbs and Murphy 2009, Winter 2009). This is a somewhat alien environment for many long serving academics (Docherty 2013).

The external environment is more turbulent and more rapidly evolving than ever before, at the same time, managing the institutions themselves is not getting any easier. Most UK universities are at their heart, professional service organisations (Whittington et al 1994, Jarzabkowski 2003) in which academic staff are generally more loyal to their discipline (or sub-discipline) than their employer. In this environment, change has to be negotiated rather than imposed (Jones et al 2012) and new strategies are reliant for their success on voluntary adoption rather than coercion (Ramsden 1998).

Shattock identified several universities which he thought had successful management arrangements and leaders who did much more than simply administer the university and maintain the status quo (Shattock 2010), but the author also noted that this type of institutional management is not the norm. Poor implementation of strategy is a common contemporary organisational weakness (Rumelt 2011a) and universities

appear to be no different in this respect (Tossavainen 2009). The knowledge, skills and competencies, of top business leaders, their ability to communicate a vision and orientate the organisation to achieve that vision are becoming an increasingly important pre-requisites for academic managers and university senior management groups (Boyett 1996, Breakwell 2006). Nevertheless, research conducted at five UK universities (Breakwell and Tytherleigh 2007) and at highly regarded universities around the world (Goodall 2006) shows that universities continue to appoint senior managers from a small pool of prominent researchers. In 2007 over 50 per cent of Vice Chancellors (VCs) in the UK were white men in their 50s, most of whom had a science background and generally they had worked or studied earlier in their career at Oxford or Cambridge Universities (Breakwell and Tytherleigh 2007). These senior academic managers are skilled academics, very capable and persuasive communicators but often not used to leading large complicated organisations with multiple objectives and a disparate workforce (Boyett 1996).

Upper Echelon Theory (Hambrick and Mason 1994) suggests that it is possible to predict a firm's strategy and performance by assessing the social and cultural background and perceptions of their senior executives. A narrow range of backgrounds like those identified in Breakwell and Tytherleigh's research (2007) can limit the knowledge and understanding of the organisation and leads to bounded rationality (Buchanan and Huczynski 2010). Global business organisations now deliberately seek out managers with international cross-cultural experience and backgrounds, with a view to more successful operations in the global market place (Hong and Doz 2013). Universities that aspire to be more successful on an international stage might wish to consider a similar recruitment strategy, appointing their VCs and senior manager team from a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities with appropriate management as well as academic expertise (Boyett 1996, Deem 2003, Preston and Price 2012). In addition, they should consider equipping their organisations with governance structures that allow for rapid change

while still involving the academic staff in the decision making processes (Kennedy 2003).

Something that appears to be missing from university internationalisation strategies is *sense-giving* (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). Explaining and promoting the internationalisation strategy document to and for the organisation, giving staff, students and other stakeholders a clear understanding of what internationalisation will mean for them; providing guiding policies that plot a route through the required change. University staff would have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them, if they understand the series of actions that are needed for the organisation to become an internationalised institution (Rumelt 2011b).

Managing the implementation of an internationalisation strategy can be even more difficult at middle management level, given that universities do not tend to have in place either the systems or the managers to implement complicated strategic change (Dearlove 1998, Breakwell 2006, Kok et al 2010). Dearlove (1998) and Preston and Price (2012) portray many UK academics in middle management roles (particularly those at Departmental or Faculty level) as player managers, poorly equipped with the type of managerial skills required for their role. These player managers struggle to understand the necessary linkages between their actions and the desired outcomes. Wide ranging change is not often successfully implemented (Huy 1999), instead academic managers tend to focus on short term changes at a more local level (Goodman and Rousseau 2004). So, the third major challenge for university internationalisation that emerges from the literature is not the willingness of senior managers to internationalise the institution, but the lack of management and leadership skills, knowledge and experience to successfully communicate, and orientate the organisation to the change agenda.

Summarising the findings so far, three literatures have been synthesised leading to the identification of three major difficulties that currently impact on the internationalisation of UK universities. Firstly there is little shared understanding of what internationalisation is and its implications for individual stakeholders in the organisation. Secondly, implementing internationalisation strategy in complex organisations in a fast changing business environment is a significant management challenge. Thirdly, many universities do not have the middle management capabilities or senior managers with the knowledge and experience to oversee the internationalisation process. As a result it is hard for universities to move away from a model of internationalisation that remains focussed on recruiting students and promoting an international research reputation.

2.4 Successful internationalisation

To successfully internationalise, universities must not only develop a strategy that can work for them but also overcome the difficulties highlighted above. One of the main issues is negotiating and managing the required changes with the staff who will enact the change. HE is people intensive; therefore university staff particularly academic staff are key to the successful implementation of internationalisation strategy (Rudzki 1994). McNichol et al (2008:3) note that *“staff are the engine which must drive the initiative.”* However it cannot be assumed that staff know what internationalisation is, or that they know how to respond to it (Weldon et al 2011).

In order to successfully internationalise the curriculum and develop inter-cultural learning, academic staff must possess the necessary expertise. If it is not available then some staff development initiatives may be necessary (Leask 2005). For example in Australia, staff development programmes as described at the University of South Australia (Gelade 2003) and Monash University (Crossling et al 2008; McNichol et al 2008) all helped to pave the way for the introduction of an internationalised curriculum. Similarly, in another Australian study, Taylor (2004) suggests that a human resources

strategy should link to the internationalisation strategy, stressing the importance of recruiting staff with international experience or from overseas.

In all these Australian universities an attempt was made to develop the organisation's capabilities as an integral part of their internationalisation strategy, what De Wit and Myer (1998) would call inside-out strategy. There is very little evidence in the literature of UK universities taking a similar approach, with the exception of Jones and Brown (2007) and their work at Leeds Metropolitan University.

Taking the inside-out approach to internationalisation a little further, Knight (1994) suggested that internationalisation strategies must go through six clear stages of development before they can be truly integrated within an organisation. These stages include: raising awareness, generating commitment, detailed planning, operationalising through the organisation, systematic review of the strategy once operationalised and demonstrating top level commitment; the emphasis throughout the stages being on a step by step managed implementation within the organisation. Building on this idea, Crossling et al (2008) advocate local initiatives and pilot schemes which they suggest can contribute to an evidence-based approach to incremental internationalisation, aimed at overcoming possible resistance to an imposed and overly managed internationalisation strategy, at the same time increasing the level of ownership among stakeholders. As a further alternative approach, middle-out internationalization is advocated by Caruana and Hanstock (2008). Here time and resources are given to academic developers and or support staff to work with staff at departmental level to develop an internationalised curriculum and review approaches to teaching and learning. Initiatives can then be disseminated and communicated to the rest of the organisation, using the resources allocated to the development team.

By combining the best of the above ideas, in particular building on and adapting Knight's (1994) list of stages of internationalisation and then adding some important

strategic management considerations, a list of eight pre-requisites for the successful university internationalisation have been identified. These stages have an emphasis on inside-out strategy and with the HE context in mind they are intended to steer clear of an overly imposed top down approach to implementing internationalisation. It is suggested that a university should have:

1. A formal systematic approach to strategic management, which retains some flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances in the external environment (Kennedy 2003, Shattock 2010, De Wit and Myer 2010).
2. A constant focus on the outcome and vision for internationalisation (Shattock 2010).
3. A close link between the organisation's resource capabilities and its external environment, maintained through on-going organisational development (De Wit and Myers 2010, Rumelt 2011b).
4. A clear understanding of and plan for how the internationalisation strategy is going to be implemented and supported within the organisation (Knight 1994, Ryan 2006).
5. Effective two way communication routes with staff, allowing for the sense-giving referred to by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991).
6. Appropriate and on-going staff development opportunities to support internationalisation and parallel systems to disseminate good practice developed in local level initiatives and pilot schemes (Taylor 2004, Childress 2010).
7. On-going commitment and support for internationalisation and its underpinning values from the top of the organisation and leadership of the internationalisation agenda from senior academics throughout the organisation (Knight 1994, Ryan 2006, Shattock 2010).
8. A review system which can monitor and evaluate progress and revise the strategy as necessary (Knight 1994, Rumelt 2010b, De Wit and Myer 2010).

In addition to all of the above suggested qualities, universities must have a senior management team and academic managers throughout the organisation who have the required skills, knowledge and experience to formulate and implement the strategy.

As a final addition to the literature review, it should be noted that international partnerships are an increasingly important driver of the internationalisation of HE. They are not a short-cut to internationalisation, but an alliance with the right partner can package several aspects of the internationalisation strategy in one relationship. Therefore they offer an important and useful tool for successful internationalisation (Heffernan and Poole 2005). Partnerships can provide: a way of recruiting international students and staff, an opportunity to improve the international profile and reputation of the university and an ability to strengthen research and promote international knowledge and understanding (Dixon et al 2013). Partnerships can help universities become more internationally relevant and help academics gain some of the outlook, experience and contacts they need to internationalise the university (Beamish and Calof 1989).

Concluding the advice on successful implementation of internationalisation, it is clear that the management perspective may have something to offer. This perspective suggests that there is the need to have in place strong, committed and visible leadership of the internationalisation agenda. A senior management team that can work with and encourage staff to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to deliver the international teaching and research that is at the heart of the internationalisation strategy. The list of eight pre-requisite organisational qualities offers organisations a checklist of capabilities that should be in place to facilitate the successful introduction of internationalisation strategy.

The following section offers a brief explanation of the case study methodology employed in this study. The cases provide insights into the position of internationalisation in four UK universities. The research then informs a discussion of the results including a brief analysis of the state of internationalisation in UK universities in 2010-11. Finally the results are reviewed with reference to the list of pre-requisites for successful internationalisation identified above, to determine if any interesting patterns emerge.

3 Research methodology

The objective of the research was to examine the extent of internationalisation and perceptions of internationalisation in UK universities during 2010-11. In particular the aim was to identify to what extent approaches to implementing university internationalisation strategy had been successful. A secondary aim was to investigate if there were any recurring inhibitors that were preventing universities from implementing their internationalisation strategies, or any factors that were repeatedly leading to a positive outcome.

A multiple case study methodology was selected (Yin 2009). As suggested by Eisenhardt (1989), the case study subjects were selected with a view to minimising the impact of context on the research findings. Seven UK campus universities with very similar origins were chosen: Sussex, York, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Warwick and Lancaster. This group were all founded in the early 1960s and are often referred to as the Plateglass Universities (Beloff 1968). Whilst Warwick is now more highly ranked and has grown to be significantly larger than the other six, the rest were all in the range of 11,500 – 18,000 students (Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) 2009) and ranked in between 10-40 in the main domestic UK rankings in 2009, when the research strategy was developed.

The study was conceived as an exploratory piece of research, employing a modified form of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 2008) to build understanding. A cross-section or diagonal slice (Blake et al 1964) of staff and student representatives including Pro Vice Chancellors (PVCs), heads of department, academic, administrative staff and representatives of the Students' Union were interviewed at four of the seven plateglass universities, using semi-structured interviews. In all, 25 students and staff were interviewed. All interview data were anonymised by giving each university a colour code (Brown, Green, Red, and Yellow universities) and the use of generic job titles. To further develop the case studies, the interviews were supplemented by gathering secondary data from university websites, HESA and other third party sources.

Each university was written-up as a separate case using a form of narrative analysis (Riessman 2008). At the same time a thematic analysis was developed as patterns emerged within and across cases. The results section which follows highlights the main themes arising from the interviews and issues which emerged from analysis of the case studies.

Like all case studies the research has its limitations, in particular the extent to which the cases are representative (Robson 2002). The sample of four universities in this study are not claimed to be representative of the sector as a whole and the findings are only indicative of the state of internationalisation in the UK rather than generalisable. Ideally, additional research would be conducted with a wider sample, preferably other groups of institutions in the UK and a range of institutions outside the UK, to further triangulate these preliminary findings.

4 The Findings

Despite the four universities all being in the same country, having a similar history, similar size and similar types of campus locations (outside small provincial cities); they

have chosen contrasting approaches to internationalisation. Yellow has emphasised its Europeaness, developing satellite locations in European cities, while working on the international student experience at the home campus. Green concentrated on developing collaborative teaching partnerships in several Asian countries. Red has developed a satellite campus in London, aimed at attracting international students to the UK and Brown highlights its research reputation with its domestic and international ranking, its perceived main asset.

Yellow and Green Universities developed fairly detailed key performance indicators and present evidence of internationalisation initiatives that link into other activities such as teaching and learning and student experience. The other two have a more stand-alone approach to internationalisation concentrating on international student recruitment. However even within the Plateglass group comparisons are not straight-forward because, as predicted by the literature review, they have all developed a very different understanding of what it is to be internationalised.

The case studies illustrate how UK universities, define internationalisation in very different ways, making it difficult to judge relative success. Some UK universities retain a narrow definition of internationalisation linked to recruiting international students while others have developed a broader view, moving some way toward Knight's internationalisation as a process definition mentioned earlier in the paper (Knight 2003).

In the sample of four institutions, Green University has been relatively successful at setting up international teaching partnerships using flying faculty to teach modules in Asian centres (at Green University internationalisation is synonymous with teaching at the partners institutions); Yellow University initially concentrated on European connections but more recently has put most of its efforts into enhancing the experience of international students on its home campus. A lecturer in the Business School described Yellow's approach as "*...not just about bums on seats*". While both these two

have achieved some management targets and were arguably doing better than Brown or Red Universities, their approaches are very different and their actions only relate to specific aspects of Knight's (2003) definition of internationalisation

To add to the difficulty in judging progress, some interviewees at the four locations held a narrow view of what internationalisation entailed and so for example, one interviewee (the Student's Union Officer) at Red University believed their university's internationalisation strategy was making good progress (because it had recruited significant numbers of international students) while another interviewee, sitting down the same corridor felt that Red had made very little progress, because of her own much broader view of the internationalisation agenda. Assessing the success of internationalisation strategies therefore proved to be a significant challenge.

Approaches to implementing internationalisation also varied across the four case studies. Seeking to avoid too much imposed change on their academic staff, three of the four have tended to avoid top down implementation of internationalisation and instead have relied on module and programme level bottom-up initiatives. Bottom-up internationalisation was particularly observed at Brown and Red Universities, where a series of ad-hoc small scale projects were described; these were led by enthusiasts without any significant additional resources. Their actions had led to small incremental changes rather than whole organisation shifts in practice. Childress (2010) argued that at least 25 percent of staff needed to have a favourable attitude and Knight suggested 15 percent should be fully committed to internationalisation before it has a significant impact on the whole organisation (Knight 1994). At neither Brown nor Red University did it appear that anything approaching this proportion of staff was involved in internationalisation activities. In fact, "...some academic staff feel they have already been internationalised because of the number of international students being taught in their departments" (International Officer Red University).

There was only limited evidence of a formalised middle-out approach as suggested by Caruana, and Hanstock (2008). This type of approach was being used at Brown University to boost international research activity and something similar in approach was observed at Yellow University where an internationalisation task group had been formed. At Red and Green, there did not appear to be the investment in organisational development that this type of approach requires.

Anecdotal evidence collected from interviewees and informal discussions at the four locations told of a common perception that internationalisation (defined as the recruitment of international students) was being pursued for economic motives at institutional level. At BU a lecturer in the Education Department summed-up her view of internationalisation as “...*they are just after the money*”. At the same time thinly spread groups of enthusiastic staff did their best to introduce a series of small local level initiatives, in an attempt to make their academic programmes more international and relevant for the increasingly diverse student population.

The common feature behind the more successful attempts to internationalise (at Green and Yellow Universities) was the visible and consistent commitment of a senior academic manager at PVC level or above. One individual or a small senior management team was the main driver of organisational change. In contrast to this, Red University was described as “...*a headless chicken of an organisation*” (Professor of Accounting). From this perhaps we can infer that where someone (or a group) with a degree of power and influence at the top of the organisation is continually and consistently pushing the internationalisation agenda over a period of two or three years, there is a much better chance that an internationalisation strategy will be implemented.

The diagonal slice approach to interviewee selection meant that staff and students at different levels of the universities were interviewed. Some patterns did emerge across the groups in the four locations. The PVC level staff and some of the student representatives interviewed were more convinced of the centrality of internationalisation to their university's future than academic staff who tended to be more cynical about the motives for internationalisation (most staff assumed internationalisation was simply about student fee income). At all locations there seemed to be problems communicating and executing the internationalisation strategy.

Enthusiasts for internationalisation at the four sites were frustrated with their institutions and with many academic colleagues who appeared happy to leave action on internationalisation to somebody else. The staff who were not engaged by the internationalisation agenda tended to be the most cynical about the issues believing internationalisation to be all about income from international student fees and very little else. Where student representatives were involved in internationalisation working groups they were positive about the motivations for and importance of internationalisation at their institution. "...UK universities would be foolish not to internationalise" (Students' Union Officer, Green University). Where they were less involved, they tended to share the cynicism of the academic staff.

A further recurring theme from the interviews was the gap between the organisation's espoused internationalisation strategy and the inclination of senior staff in the organisation to enact this strategy. In those organisations where a PVC level member of staff was seen to be actively leading internationalisation staff perceived that some progress was being made. Where this was not the case staff remarked on inactivity and an apparent lack of interest from all but a small number of academic colleagues who actively participated in internationalisation initiatives. Typically the content of the strategy and the implications for staff were not being successfully communicated to or understood by those people in the organisation who

might be expected to be putting the strategy into action, this was leading to a very patchy pattern of implementation. In addition, and as predicted by the literature review, it appeared that the universities were experiencing difficulties implementing internationalisation strategy. *“I read the stuff that the University puts forward and the internationalisation strategy is beautifully worded but I actually think they are just after the money”* (Lecturer Education, Brown University).

In summary, comparing the institutions suggests very few patterns apart from a lack of leadership for internationalisation, cynicism of staff and a general tendency for UK universities to be poor at implementing strategy. The results from this research sample are remarkably similar to those referred to in Koutsantoni’s (2006b) survey, referred to in the literature review. Whilst nearly all UK universities now have an internationalisation strategy, the perceived focus of many remains on recruiting international students to off-shore centres or home campuses (with or without the help of partner institutions) and not on a broader range of issues that can be associated with the process of internationalisation. The financial imperative of recruiting international students is generally a must-do activity and is prioritised ahead of the nice-to-do softer issues such as developing an international culture in the university. This finding is consistent with the observations of Turner and Robson (2007) and Bennett and Kane (2011). In the period since Koutsantoni’s 2006 survey, UK universities have continued to produce internationalisation strategies, but they remain weak at putting most aspects of these strategies into action.

The research did not identify any new or different approaches to internationalisation that were seen to be effective in the HE context. However, it was more successful in identifying inhibitors to the implementation of internationalisation strategy. The main distinguishing factor between the case study organisations that were more or less successfully at internationalising, related to the management and leadership of the internationalisation agenda. Those institutions with the clearer more visible

management arrangements for internationalisation were doing much better at implementing their strategy.

5 Performance against pre-requisite qualities

Building on these observations about management capabilities, the four case study organisations were then compared with the list of pre-requisite qualities identified towards the end of the literature review section. If this comparison shows any association with the possession of organisational qualities and organisations making most progress with their internationalisation strategy, then the list could prove to be a useful indicator of how and why different universities are making progress with their internationalisation strategies.

Appendix 1 lists the pre-requisites in the left hand column, with a commentary about the position of each quality at the four universities located in the columns to the right. The institutional status of the pre-requisite quality was judged on a descending scale as either: strong, partial coverage (partial), developing, limited or weak based on the evidence of each case study. Finally, in the bottom row of the table, the component elements are combined into an overall assessment. It is acknowledged that this overall assessment is based on perception, but it is a useful comparator. As already discussed Yellow and Green Universities perform much more strongly than Red University. Brown University is assessed better than Red because of the systems in place to support international research collaborations but remains some way behind Yellow and Green Universities

To add some detail, Green University performs relatively well, mainly because of a more managerially led approach to internationalisation at the time the research was undertaken. By concentrating on developing international teaching collaborations Green scores well on formal systems and review systems even though there is little

attempt to engage the hearts and minds of the staff working at the University. Yellow University on the other hand aims to enhance the international experience of its students and therefore requires a much higher level of engagement from all university staff including the sometimes reluctant academics. Yellow's strength is the leadership of the internationalisation agenda, which in turn ensures a favourable assessment for: focus, implementation and communication. Brown's international research collaborations lead to the assessment of partial organisational coverage for several pre-requisites. However, it suffers from lack of leadership, structure and communications which mean that it is not as well placed as Yellow and Green Universities. Red University, without clear leadership, communication channels or a published internationalisation strategy, is the weakest performer of the four against the pre-requisite measures.

Green and Yellow Universities perform equally well against the full set of pre-requisites, with the same overall assessment. They are both relatively more successful than Brown and Red University. This result is congruent with the perceptions gained from the interviewees. Arguably, Yellow University has more chance of long term internationalisation advantages because of the greater effort put into developing organisational capabilities, communications and leadership of the internationalisation agenda, whereas Green University has taken a top down, more imposed approach to introducing the changes needed to set-up teaching collaborations.

Conclusions

This paper has identified that there are three main challenges to be overcome if universities are to successfully internationalise their activities. Firstly, there needs to be a shared understanding of what internationalisation is. What it means for the university and all its stakeholders and what needs to be done for internationalisation to be implemented. Internationalisation is often misunderstood, the senior management team needs to ensure that they communicate their vision for an internationalised university to all stakeholders (this cannot be done by fine tuning the wording of a written document).

The second challenge is implementing the internationalisation strategy in complex professional service organisations operating in fast moving and changing external environment. The list of organisational pre-requisites developed towards the end of the literature review and applied to the four case study universities in Appendix 1 provides a check list of the qualities the organisation will need to have in place, if it is to successfully implement the required organisational transformation.

The third challenge, applicable to UK universities in particular, is the lack of managerial skills, knowledge and experience of international business management. Comparable international businesses operating in other sectors seek out talented managers with wide-ranging international business experience. UK universities tend to recruit to their top management team from a relatively small cadre of research-orientated academics. Middle managers tend to be appointed, often unwillingly, to short-term rotating posts with little prior experience. The result is not so much a reluctance to internationalise, but a lack of insight about how to accomplish the task. Change cannot be imposed on an organisation like a university, it has to be communicated, demonstrated and sold to the organisation. Many UK based academic managers lack the skills knowledge and experience to undertake this task.

Groups of internationalisation enthusiasts can and have taken universities a certain distance towards internationalising the organisation, however without a critical mass of colleagues to support their activities, they cannot take the whole organisation to the desired state. Without some form of organisation wide transformational change, internationalisation will remain a marginal activity, with the majority of academics assuming it is someone else's issue. Done well, university internationalisation, will enhance the learning environment for all students; it will give a more international focus to research and an internationalised curriculum will help graduates to develop a global rather than blinkered domestic focus as they prepare to enter employment in the global

economy. Unfortunately, this research suggests that internationalisation is not being done well in many UK universities at present.

To move the internationalisation agenda forward, universities need to build on the work done by international enthusiasts but they must also develop robust systems to disseminate this work through-out the organisation. They will need to adopt at least some management techniques to ensure that internationalisation strategy impacts on the whole organisation rather than allowing it to remain the province of a handful of enthusiasts.

Whilst this study is centred on UK institutions, the findings may be generalisable and have some relevance to universities in the United States and other countries where there are similar challenges inhibiting progress with the internationalisation agenda (Brunner and Iannarelli 2011, Aggarwal and Goodell 2012). The limitation that is the UK focus of the current study, presents an opportunity for further research focussing on the implementation of internationalisation in a wider range of countries and institutions. In particular it would be useful to identify universities in a number of different international locations that are judged to have successfully internationalised their activities, and then to examine the extent to which they have taken a managerially or professionally-led approach to their internationalisation efforts. If they have in place many of the pre-requisite qualities identified in this paper then the checklist of pre-requisites could be offered as a generalisable list of requirements for universities seeking to internationalise their activities, in a range of international contexts.

Pre-Requisite Organisational Qualities for Internationalisation (descending scale = strong, partial, developing, limited, weak)

| Pre-requisite organisational qualities | Universities | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| | Red | Yellow | Green | Brown |
| 1) A formal systematic approach to strategic management with some flexibility | Some evidence of formal planning evidenced by outsourcing to third party provider, but Department staff suggest there is no consultation or communication about content and international students are imposed on Departments. Weak | Clear lines of accountability for internationalisation within broader strategic management process, allows targets to be developed for internationalisation by the PVC in consultation with a representative group. Partial | Formal strategic planning system much in evidence in formal publications and plans for internationalisation. Senior academic managers seem to have some flexibility but other academic staff are not clear about the plans and have little if any input. Strong | Top team seem to have a systematic approach to developing strategies but implementation does not seem to be managed. Flexibility may exist but there may be a gap between the perceptions of PVCs and those of HoDs academic staff. Partial |
| 2) Maintain a focus on the agreed outcome of internationalisation | Strong focus is on two issues, the recruitment of international students and the development of international research collaborations Partial | Clear focus, owing to presence of a forceful PVC with a strong commitment to internationalisation of all aspects of university life Strong | A clear focus on the development of international teaching collaborations. Other aspects of internationalisation are present but without the same degree of backing from DVC. Partial | Mixed messages. Academic staff in departments believe the priority is international student recruitment, PVC level see a broader agenda linked to research reputation and student experience. Limited |
| 3) Maintain a close link between the organisation's resource capabilities and its external environment | Tensions have resulted from increasing RUs ability to recruit international students, but with little thought put in to how to teach and support the larger numbers once they are in on their courses Weak | There are some links between internationalisation strategy and capabilities e.g. the development of facilities in European cities. Focus on student experience means student support issues are being developed Developing | Development of capabilities related to securing and managing international teaching collaborations. Some work on student support issues. No coordinated effort to develop teaching and learning capabilities. Research links left to individual academics. Limited | Internationalisation strategy largely based on research reputation, the development of which is supported by the centre. No coordinated effort to develop teaching and learning capabilities. Limited |
| 4) Develop a clear plan for how the inter'n strategy is going to be implemented and supported within the organisation, including the use of appropriate incentives | No evidence of any plan. Some local initiatives in place. In the absence of other guidance the income from international student recruitment becomes the main measure. Weak | Detailed annual targets for internationalisation and a steering group to oversee the implementation. Some incentives e.g. international travel opportunities. Developing | Clear targets for collaboration and research, although incentives are in the form of continued employment. Strong | No clear targets or implementation plan. Top team assumes departments are implementing intern'n. In the absence of other guidance the income from international student recruitment becomes the main measure. Weak |

| Pre-requisite organisational qualities | Universities | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Red | | Yellow | | Green | | Brown | |
| 5) Develop, maintain and use effective two way communication routes with staff | No evidence of staff communications centred on internationalisation with staff and no opportunity for feedback on plans except via HoDs. Weak | | Steering group and consultative group, regular newsletters about internationalisation, feedback patchy but can go via consultation groups. Strong | | Communication about internationalisation strategy appears to be based on managerial targets. Broader staff groups not involved and don't seem to have a mechanism to feedback. Partial | | Informal communication links are important owing to flat structure. Research committee important in communicating the research agenda but no formal channels for discussion of broader internationalisation. Partial | |
| 6) Provide appropriate and on-going staff development opportunities to support internationalisation and allow incremental progress through feedback and dissemination | New academic staff cover internationalisation as part of their programme. A small amount of informal staff development through department initiatives. Limited | | New academic staff cover internationalisation as part of their programme. Some centrally organised sharing of good practice. A small amount of informal staff development through department initiatives. Developing | | No formal staff development initiatives. Some support for 'flying faculty' and new arrival international staff. Limited | | New academic staff cover internationalisation as part of their programme. Significant support and some incentives the development of international research. Partial | |
| 7) Provide clear and visible leadership and an on going commitment to internationalisation from the top of the organisation and from senior academics through-out the organisation | Red is weak in this area. No clear and visible leadership, confusion about who leads the agenda and variable support in departments. Weak | | Clear and visible leadership from PVC. Strong support from HoDs but evidence of some concerns about workload issues evident at departmental level. Strong | | Clear and visible leadership at the top of the organisation for internationalisation involving research and teaching collaborations. Less clear support and commitment to other aspects of the internationalisation agenda. Partial | | Whilst commitment from the top of the organisation is evident, there is confusion about the implementation of the different strands of the internationalisation agenda. This leads to cynicism in parts of the organisation. Weak | |
| 8) Adopt a review system which can monitor and evaluate progress and revise the strategy as necessary | Only review system seems to relate to the recruitment targets. Limited | | PVC led annual programme and review of progress. Formalised system in place. Partial | | Targets relating to numbers, publications and university research rank. But no evidence of review of soft issues. Partial | | Only formal review system seems to relate to the recruitment targets. No evidence of review of soft issues. Limited | |
| Relative strength of performance measured against pre-requisites | Strong | | Strong | 3 | Strong | 2 | Strong | |
| | Partial coverage | 1 | Partial coverage | 2 | Partial coverage | 4 | Partial coverage | 3 |
| | Developing | | Developing | 3 | Developing | | Developing | |
| | Limited | 2 | Limited | | Limited | 2 | Limited | 3 |
| | Weak | 5 | Weak | | Weak | | Weak | 2 |
| Overall position | Weak | | Partial coverage | | Partial coverage | | Limited | |

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