

International strategies of universities in England

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The 'internationalisation' of universities has recently become a keyword in many countries. With the progress of globalisation, the mobility of students and academic staff at universities has drastically increased in the past few decades. As a result, more universities are now trying to bring an international dimension to their institutions. While some universities are focusing on internationalising their curricula to meet the needs of a globalised society, others are emphasising the establishment of new collaboration agreements with foreign universities to raise their profiles further. These changes have made universities main players in the age of global knowledge competition, and consequently it has been important for universities to create solid international strategies in order to survive. In this context, the United Kingdom has probably been one of the most proactive countries in this field. This paper will examine the underlying concepts of internationalisation of universities in England. The aim of the research is to examine the different attitudes towards internationalisation between pre-1992 ('old' universities) and post-1992 (former polytechnic) universities, and to explore what kind of factors influenced their international strategies. This paper will also attempt to provide a possible explanation as to why higher education institutions in England are heading for internationalisation.

Introduction

The 'internationalisation' of universities has recently become a keyword in many countries. The mobility of students and academic staff at universities has drastically increased in the past few decades, and as a consequence universities are now becoming main players in the age of global knowledge competition. With this growing trend, many researchers have shown their interest in the field of internationalisation of higher education (e.g. Scott, 1998; Bartell, 2003; Bok, 2003; Kehm, 2003; Huisman & Wende, 2005).

This paper is concerned with universities in England (not the United Kingdom), and will look into their international strategies and examine the underlying concepts of internationalisation. The purpose of the research is to investigate the different attitudes towards

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internationalisation between pre-1992 universities (the so-called 'old' universities) and post-1992 universities (mainly former polytechnics), and to explore what kind of factors influenced the formulation of their international strategies. This paper will also attempt to provide a possible explanation as to why higher education institutions in England are heading towards internationalisation.

Research methods and organisation

Ten English universities were contacted regarding the feasibility of their participation in this study. Sample institutions were selected based on their institutional profiles (the enrolment number, subject mix, level of study, balance of research and teaching), mission and policy statements, and reputation for international activities. The regional demographic of the universities was also taken into account as much as possible. Five pre-1992 and four post-1992 universities agreed to take part in the study. The number of participating institutions provided here seems sufficient to discern, at least in outline, trends in the two different types of universities. A list of questions was sent to each institution in advance and then interviews were conducted. Questions which investigated the following six subjects were considered: (1) policies and strategies, (2) international students and researchers, (3) organisation and function, (4) relations between the Government and universities, (5) evaluation method and (6) others. The interviewees were usually directors or their equivalents who were responsible for international student matters and marketing. It was considered that directors were appropriate interviewees as they are situated at senior to mid level management in their universities and thus know about top-down policies as well as more bottom-up operational matters. Interviews took place between late March and mid-May 2006.

Policies and strategies

Europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation

There are significant discussions regarding the terms and concepts which are often used to explain some of the important challenges that universities are now facing: Europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation. It is important to remember that these are more than just words, and the qualitative differences among them show the extent to which there are differences. Kehm (2003) and Luijten-Lub *et al.* (2005) start their discussion by clarifying these differences. Kehm characterises these three terms by quoting Teichler's (2002) and Scott's (1998) definitions as follows:

Europeanisation is seen as 'internationalisation light', as a space which is characterized by a common and shared history and culture, and finally as an economic, political and cultural alliance vis-à-vis the rest of the world, i.e. 'Europe as a fortress'.

Internationalisation reflects a world order which continues to be characterised by national states but leading increasingly to transnational and strategic relationships of exchange and cooperation.

Globalisation, finally, reflects an emerging world order in which the borders of nation states and national steering are beginning to play a less important role, or even to erode, and in

which processes of global competition start to dominate. The concept of globalisation is also linked with the emergence of the knowledge society which trades increasingly with immaterial goods like symbols, brand names, images and technological know-how. (Kehm, 2003, p. 110)

Considering these clarifications, it can be argued that the concept of Europeanisation is included in internationalisation, and globalisation is wider than internationalisation. Moreover, whilst internationalisation is recognised as nation states' activities with an emphasis on cooperation and exchange, the role of nation states in globalisation has become blurred, with globalisation being associated more with economic-related activities, focusing on competition. Luijten-Lub *et al.* (2005) admit that there are no precise distinctions among these terms and they are sometimes used in an incoherent way due to the complexity of these concepts. However, these authors have also attempted to provide definitions of these terms and concepts to draw a distinction among them. According to them:

'Europeanisation' is often employed for describing the phenomena of internationalisation on a 'regional' scale. Cooperation between EU countries and economic, social and cultural activities crossing their national borders are expanding quickly based on the notion that such cooperation is required for stability and economic growth within the region. This regional cooperation is also intended to enhance the global competitiveness of the European region as a whole.

'Internationalisation' assumes that nation states continue to play a role as economic, social and cultural systems, but that they are becoming more interconnected and activities crossing their borders are increasing. Cooperation between nation states is expanding and national policies are placing a stronger emphasis on regulating or facilitating border-crossing activities.

'Globalisation' emphasises an increasing convergence and interdependence of economies and societies. In contrast to internationalisation, a de-nationalisation and integration of regulatory systems as well as a blurring role of nation states are taken for granted. The liberalisation of international trade and global markets are often viewed as the strongest move in this direction. (Luijten-Lub *et al.*, 2005, p. 12)

There are certain similarities between these arguments and those of Kehm (2003). Luijten-Lub *et al.* (2005) argue that Europeanisation is a phase of internationalisation, which contains common cultural values on a regional basis and, in the process of internationalisation, nation states play an important part where cooperation is emphasised. On the other hand, however, in the globalisation process, the role of nation states has become less important because of the high intensity of interconnectedness among nations. Consequently, Luijten-Lub *et al.* (2005) use the term 'internationalisation' in their research to illustrate governments' and higher education institutions' policies and activities for the purpose of 'making higher education (more) responsive to the challenges of internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation' (p. 12).

Based on these analyses, it seems reasonable to use the term 'internationalisation' when investigating the international strategies of English universities as well. The reason for this is that the current process of internationalisation in English universities has also been affected by government policies at each phase, and has a remarkable dimension of exchange and cooperation. It is clear that universities in England have participated in all three aspects—Europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation—but I propose that

it is globalisation that is becoming the fundamental premise and driving force of their internationalisation. Yet, as Held *et al.* (1999) conclude, current globalisation does not respond to 'a single causal process but involves a complex configuration of causal logics' (p. 436). The magnitude of globalisation in politics, economics, culture and technology has moulded today's internationalisation, and the rapid change of global patterns has made internationalisation more difficult to conceptualise and define. The term 'Europeanisation' is used here only when shared European values need to be emphasised.

When the interviews were conducted to investigate these terms and concepts, it became clear that most universities did not make a clear distinction between them. Most of the pre-1992 and post-1992 universities stated that there was no need to draw a distinction between Europeanisation and internationalisation, because they were the same in terms of bringing international dimensions into their universities. One pre-1992 university replied that it had never heard of the term 'Europeanisation'. Yet it is worth noting that two sampled post-1992 universities mentioned that different offices dealt with Continental European student recruitment and other international recruitment. This is interesting because even though they do not make any distinctions between these terms, they see significant differences between European and non-European recruitment, which bring in considerably different incomes.

Most universities prefer to use the word 'internationalisation' to explain their international activities rather than 'globalisation', because it seems that internationalisation usually suggests positive gains from other countries and cultures. All universities responded that the term 'globalisation' had negative connotations associated with cultural imperialism and big business. One pre-1992 university mentioned that they did not use any of these terms, but used the term 'global thinking' when discussing their international strategies. A post-1992 university, which has two international recruiting offices, one for non-European students and another for European students, also indicated this different view by using 'international engagement' as a synonym for 'internationalisation'. It is also important to note that while the term 'globalisation' is thought to induce negative images, the adjective 'global' does not have such a bias and is likely to be perceived in a positive way when universities describe their activities or vision. The reasons for the differing images regarding these two terms are not entirely clear, but may well be a reflection of usages adopted by the media generally in recent years.

Definition of internationalisation

The research revealed that the definition of internationalisation varied depending on the universities questioned. However, it can be said that for both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities, the term 'internationalisation' of universities just meant the recruitment of international students, although its definition has expanded to become more sophisticated. One post-1992 university explained that they now have three different ways of approaching internationalisation. They adopt an approach which considers internationalisation in terms of the student population, the faculty and the curriculum. That is, they bring international students into their taught and research programmes, exchange their faculty members with universities across the world, and emphasise the international relevance of

the curriculum. Another post-1992 university also showed a similar view but added that internationalisation is about 'ensuring [that they] remain internationally a leading professional university'.

A pre-1992 university described 'internationalisation' as:

raising our profile globally, forming meaningful alliances with institutions all over the globe for the purposes of research and teaching collaboration. It also means ensuring that we have a curriculum that is internationally relevant. It's about interacting with international faculties [and] recruiting high quality students.

This kind of answer could be generalised among most pre-1992 universities. Some of the factors in this definition overlap with views from post-1992 universities, but there was a tendency among pre-1992 universities to put an emphasis on promoting research collaboration and increasing their international profile through internationalisation. For all universities there was a common perception that having an internationally relevant curriculum, such as international business or law, was important in terms of internationalisation. It is also worth mentioning that all interviewees agreed that internationalisation was 'a good thing' for their universities.

Motivation and incentives

What are the key motivations and incentives for internationalisation of universities? All the pre-1992 universities replied that their motivation was recruiting the best students and staff from all over the world, in order to become better known internationally as a world-class university, both in teaching and research. One pre-1992 university, where international students comprised about 15% of its student body, said that the prominence of international factors in university ranking systems was one of their incentives. This university also added that their motives were to give the best possible student experiences and to prepare both British and international students for their future employment. This view was very intriguing because no other university discussed their motivations and incentives from the perspectives of fostering students' employment ability. Two other pre-1992 universities, which are noted for their research partnerships with foreign institutions, admitted that financial benefits formed part of their motivation for pursuing internationalisation.

However, post-1992 universities expressed different opinions. All but one post-1992 university claimed that financial reasons were their primary motivators. One post-1992 university said: 'Finance is the key thing ... [the] matter of educating our students to be international students is important but not a primary function of my office ...'. Two other post-1992 universities also mentioned that the recruitment of international students is encouraged for financial reasons, and it is a 'prime income generation source'. One post-1992 university said that they wanted to be 'a leading professional university with a relevant curriculum and to create graduates who can make differences to the modern economy'. One post-1992 university that did not mention financial matters described the importance of diversifying students' experiences and creating international links with foreign institutions as their main motivators for internationalisation.

Formulation of policies and strategies

All but one of the sampled universities now have international working groups or similar teams to respond to world competition among universities in terms of research and the recruitment of students and staff. They also mainly use top-down approaches in developing their international strategies. In each university, senior members of the university, such as the vice-chancellor, vice-president or pro-vice chancellor, take the initiative by forming working groups which usually consist of heads from different schools or units with the aim of implementing policies and strategies. One pre-1992 university with an unusually high proportion of international students indicated the necessity of proactive attitudes in formulating international strategies. In this university, top-down and bottom-up approaches were quite mixed. Another pre-1992 university mentioned that working groups needed to report their regional strategies to an external affairs committee. One post-1992 university, which did not have an international working group, responded that 'international policies were broadly set up by the senior management but strongly influenced by the international office'.

Role models

Internationalisation of universities is a challenging task for the following reasons: internationalisation of universities is a new phenomenon; there are some external factors that affect or accelerate their internationalisation; and there is always room for improvement. Therefore, most of the universities claimed that finding the most appropriate role model was very important in this field. Two pre-1992 universities took the University of Nottingham as a role model for their international strategies. The University of Nottingham, which is usually ranked in the top 10 universities in the UK, is well known for its offshore campuses in China and Malaysia, and so offers a good example of the implementation of an international strategy. They also considered Monash University and the University of Melbourne in Australia, and the University of Toronto in Canada, as role models as to how internationalisation can be achieved. Three other pre-1992 universities responded that they do not have any role models and are proud of being individual. Three post-1992 universities also mentioned that they do not have any role models, inside or outside the UK. However, they all agreed on the importance of looking for best practices and benchmarking. A post-1992 university, which said that they have role models, took one of the successful schools in their university as a role model inside the UK; and Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the University of Singapore and Monash University as role models outside the UK. It was also apparent that many of the universities surveyed regularly checked the web sites of other universities and tried to collect as much information about other countries' universities as possible.

Public good or entrepreneurs

As noted earlier, some pre-1992 and post-1992 universities accepted that their key motivation for internationalisation was financial. Thus, it can be assumed that the philosophy of entrepreneurship has, more or less, been the basis of English universities' work in the international arena. Three pre-1992 universities answered that they thought that English

universities both serve the public good and also act as entrepreneurs. A common view in this group was that university 'should serve a public good and respond to a market'. Two post-1992 universities also said that English universities could include both factors and that there would be no conflict between them. They stated that having a mind for business was important for universities in order to meet students' various needs in the modern economy. One post-1992 university mentioned that English universities are much more commercialised these days, and that this was reflected in their international activities.

International students

Perception of international students

The recent sixth report in the 'Patterns of Higher Education Institutions in the UK' series, made by Ramsden (2006) on behalf of the Longer-Term Strategy Group of Universities UK (the group that represents UK higher education), highlighted that the number of non-EU and EU students from outside the UK had increased significantly from 111,480 to 218,295, and from 84,666 to 100,005 respectively between 1995–96 and 2004–05. The report also showed that the enrolment rate of non-EU and EU students from outside the UK in 2004–05 was 9.5% and 4.4% respectively (p. 27). In light of this, it is safe to say that international students are the most important factor in the internationalisation of universities. In the strict sense of the word, international students in the UK are non-British students. However, since the EU framework ensures that European students are treated as British students in terms of their tuition fees, it seems reasonable to suppose that the usual sense of 'international students' implies non-EU students, although all the universities accepted the idea that EU students will also bring international dimensions to their institutions. Indeed, when the interviews were conducted, most universities used the term 'international students' to indicate non-EU students, revealing their influence on the universities' internationalisation efforts.

All but one university responded that the number of international students had increased in the past decade, with only one post-1992 university saying that their number of international students had not increased. One post-1992 university said that they had increased the number of international students by 700% over the last 10 years. One pre-1992 university with a large proportion of international students said that 'we couldn't exist without having international students'. The mix of students' nationalities was different in each university, but all the universities answered that they wanted to diversify their student population as much as possible. When questioned about their preventive measures against large and sudden falls in income from international students, many universities mentioned that developing institutional links internationally, having active recruitment programmes and diversifying their student body were all key issues.

All the pre-1992 universities expressed a wish to increase their number of international students, in particular postgraduate students. One pre-1992 university said that Master's-level students are more attractive since they enter the job market more quickly than undergraduates, and can become good ambassadors for the university. This university also mentioned that undergraduate students are more welcomed in financial terms. Thus, the question arises: what are the costs and benefits of recruiting international students? Are

these tangible or intangible? Staff at one pre-1992 university admitted that they never measured costs and benefits in a systematic way, but most of the pre-1992 universities took marketing, recruiting and staff training as examples of costs incurred in internationalisation. As for benefits, one pre-1992 university mentioned that having international students enabled them to offer greater varieties of courses, especially at Master's level. Another pre-1992 university considered that having a broad international dimension was one of the benefits.

Post-1992 universities also see costs and benefits in recruiting international students. One post-1992 university, where the student body is 4% international, presented the actual cost when they recruit an international student. According to this university, it costs approximately £1500 per student, slightly more expensive than the average cost reported in Australia of around £1300. This figure was calculated by dividing all the costs for student recruitment, including staff costs, agency commissions and students' support fees, by the number of new international students. The international student tuition fees for the 2006 entry at this university ranged from £7000 to £12,150, depending on the level and subject of study. Thus, we can assume that net income per student for the university will be around £5500 to £10,650. This university considered the financial costs worthwhile as they eventually resulted in benefits for them. Three other post-1992 universities also touched upon recruitment fees as part of their costs. One post-1992 university mentioned, in a discussion of the merits of recruiting international students, that 'benefits are not only income but that international students also boost courses which are not very popular'. In contrast with pre-1992 universities, most of the post-1992 universities preferred recruiting international undergraduate students rather than postgraduate students, because they can usually stay for a longer period of time at university. Another post-1992 university warned that the demographic of young people has already started declining and the increase in revenue by attracting international students will face a severe shortfall by 2009–10.

The effect of Research Assessment Exercise scores and university rankings

There are considerable differences in the principal activities of pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in England. In particular, while many pre-1992 universities are recognised as research-intensive institutions, post-1992 universities tend to be teaching led. This premise was verified when the question of Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) scores was raised in the study. All the pre-1992 universities described RAE scores as an extremely important measurement of their success. Since RAE scores have a huge impact on many aspects of the university, such as profiles, rankings, income from the government, and recruitment of the best research staff and students, all the pre-1992 universities took them very seriously and tried to increase the RAE scores. However, no post-1992 universities claimed RAE scores were vital to their institutions. Three post-1992 universities agreed that RAE scores were important to them to some extent and could be a tool for attracting students, but in general, their views were relatively restrained compared to pre-1992 universities. One post-1992 university said RAE scores were not important to them at all.

Three pre-1992 universities said that university rankings, including the *Times Higher Education Supplement* rankings, were important to them in international recruitment. One

pre-1992 university showed a sceptical view on the rankings themselves, while the remaining pre-1992 university did not pay attention to rankings because they did not have undergraduate programmes and their postgraduate courses were too specialised to be affected by the rankings. Only one post-1992 university mentioned that university rankings were important.

Studying in the United Kingdom

There are pros and cons for international students who study in the UK compared with studying in other English-speaking countries such as the USA, Australia and Canada. Both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities explained the advantages of studying in the UK as follows: (1) the existence of a high standard of universities based on a national quality assurance system, (2) the short length of degree programmes and (3) the UK's long-standing history of solid higher education institutions. These factors make the UK an attractive destination for international students, and some of the universities emphasise these merits when recruiting students at 'UK University Fairs' which are organised by the British Council worldwide. There were few comments expressing the disadvantages of studying in the UK, though one post-1992 university replied that the UK's weather could be the 'con' for international students compared with Australia or the USA.

It is noteworthy here that, from the viewpoint of internationalisation, most of the sampled universities are trying to increase the number of their British students who study abroad. However, they find it very difficult, primarily because of the reluctance of British people to study in non-English-speaking countries. In fact, the report by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research and the Centre for Applied Population Research (2004) concluded that UK students' lack of language ability was one of the major reasons for their low outward mobility to non-English-speaking countries. However, the data also showed that the UK students' mobility was higher than that of students from other English-speaking countries, such as the USA and Australia.

International researchers

Perception of international researchers

According to the 2003 UK government White Paper on the future of higher education (Department for Education and Skills, 2003), one of the concerns in UK higher education is how to recruit and retain the best international researchers. The results of this study clearly showed the different attitudes towards international researchers between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. Whereas all pre-1992 universities were actively involved in recruiting international researchers of a high calibre, most post-1992 universities showed little interest in this activity. It seemed that the post-1992 universities' focus was more on attracting international students rather than researchers.

Three pre-1992 universities responded that they had tried to attract outstanding international researchers, but two of them had experienced difficulties in recruitment mainly because of their locations: one was located in London and the other was in the north of England. Interestingly, both universities gave contradictory answers as to why this was

the case. The pre-1992 university in London mentioned that the high living costs in London became an obstacle, while the one located in the north of England said that their inconvenient location, away from London, caused the problem. One pre-1992 university answered that they are also interested in recruiting high-calibre researchers but the high costs involved make it difficult for them. All the pre-1992 universities agreed with the hypothesis that success in attracting internationally outstanding researchers will lead to an increase in the number of top-level international students, and will ultimately increase a university's prestige. However, most post-1992 universities were not so sure about this hypothesis.

Although pre-1992 universities usually considered themselves as research intensive, all of them answered that teaching and research were both equally important. One stated that their vice-chancellor emphasised the importance of being a 'research-oriented university'. In this context, research might be more important than teaching, but it can be said that both factors should be compatible. One post-1992 university mentioned that, for them, teaching is much more important because they are not a research-intensive university. This study also revealed that many pre-1992 and post-1992 universities are now concentrating on their postgraduate education.

Appointment of foreign chancellor or vice-chancellor

There are some English universities that have appointed foreign chancellors or vice-chancellors. These appointments seem to be good tools to internationalise universities and contribute to attracting outstanding international researchers and students. When this was presented at the interviews, many universities responded that the most important thing is to appoint the right person regardless of their nationality, and who is familiar with the UK's academic culture. One pre-1992 university mentioned that the role of the vice-chancellor is much more important in this sense. Another sampled pre-1992 university, which already has a foreign chancellor, did not express a view on this matter, but it can be assumed that in many respects they are taking full advantage of the appointment. This university's web site indicates that the most significant decision in terms of developing its international strategy was made when it appointed its foreign chancellor, who is considered to be a distinguished academic. It should be emphasised here that after the appointment of this chancellor in 2001, they were invited by the chancellor's home country to become the first foreign university to open a campus on its territory. It is certain that this appointment definitely created better relations with their target country and, more importantly, made it easier to develop solid links with its central government, local authorities and communities. Lastly, one post-1992 university opposed the premise and said the 'roles of the chancellor and vice-chancellor are to network in the UK's political, economic and university system'.

Organisation and function

Foundation and budget

The history of having international offices or their equivalent at English universities is not long. Among all the sampled pre-1992 universities, the oldest international office was

founded in 1985. In this pre-1992 university, only one person was working at the conception of the office but the number of the staff has now significantly increased to 30 people, and they also have three people who are based in foreign countries. Other international offices at pre-1992 universities had histories of between 10 to 20 years. The functions and responsibilities of such offices usually covered international student matters, student exchange programmes, institutional links, research collaboration and internationalisation of the curriculum. Many pre-1992 universities responded that their international offices' responsibilities had expanded with the rise of internationalisation, although they still have a small number of staff.

There was no clear-cut tendency among post-1992 universities. The oldest international office at a post-1992 university was founded 15 years ago, and since then it has been dedicated to international student recruitment. Another two post-1992 universities mentioned that they have offices to deal with international matters depending on the scope of the mission. One post-1992 university had an international development office for student recruitment and an international advisory group for student support and internationalisation of the curriculum. The other post-1992 university had a more decentralised structure with an international office, an international project office and four marketing offices in four different campuses which coordinate their internationalisation work. The situation was different at the remaining post-1992 university. They mentioned that they closed their freestanding international office a few years ago, but now have several offices such as a marketing office, an educational partnership office, a commercial partnership office and a collaborative agreement legal office, coordinated by a pro-vice chancellor, replacing their international office.

Budget issues can sometimes be commercially very sensitive, but some universities hinted at their annual budget for international activities. One pre-1992 university, which has approximately 12% international students (2000 out of 17,000 students), answered that their annual budget is approximately £250,000 per year excluding staff costs. A small pre-1992 university with a large proportion of international students spends roughly £150,000 on student recruitment. One post-1992 university, which has 4% international students (1000 out of 27,000), mentioned that their annual budget is £1 million per year. Although it was difficult to determine exactly what such costs cover at each university, and thus to compare their efficiency, it can still be said that these budgets represent substantial investments towards internationalisation.

Overseas representation

The number of overseas branch offices or representatives is one of the indicators for measuring how active universities are towards internationalisation. Four pre-1992 universities stated that they do not have any branch offices abroad and have no plans to set them up in the future. Nonetheless, they all had educational agents in foreign countries that work primarily for student recruitment. This study found that working with agents is becoming important for universities from the viewpoint of international recruitment and marketing strategies.

One pre-1992 university mentioned that their educational agent is active in China, India and Taiwan; another university had agents in Taiwan, China, India, Korea, Japan, Thailand

and Malaysia. Another pre-1992 university said that they have over 80 agents in the world and they frequently visit them to check on their work. This university suggested that approximately 40% of their incoming international students use their agents' services provided in their countries, although there are significant differences depending on countries. This university also said that agents are not involved in the admission or selection process of students, but that each agent works closely with individual people in their International Office. Agents were rewarded based on their performance and were paid commission ('an agreed percentage of tuition fees'). It should be noted that the British Council also plays an active role in the relationship between agents and UK universities. They consider agents as their marketing partners and therefore provide considerable services to increase agents' quality of work.

As for the post-1992 universities, one had branch offices in Delhi and Tokyo and the other had 50 to 60 representatives in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria. The remaining two universities responded that they had no overseas offices nor future plans for them. However, one of them had previously had an overseas campus in South Africa. More detailed knowledge of which universities have international bases and agents in which countries would certainly reflect their international strategies focus.

Relations between the Government and universities

UK government policies in the 1980s and 1990s

Williams and Coate (2004) describe the discontinuities in UK government policies of higher education before and after the 1980s, and the remarkable changes in UK higher education policies during that period. The important part of this argument for this paper is that during the 1980s, the government's decision to cut the 'public subsidy for the recruitment of foreign students or any other international activity' (p. 114) triggered aggressive international activities from individual universities. It seems reasonable to argue that the 1998 Act of Parliament on student fees also marked a shift in universities' internationalisation activities because at most universities it resulted in an upper limit for tuition fees that first-degree UK and other EU students had to pay. As a consequence, UK universities increasingly discovered the importance of recruiting full tuition-paying international students in order to secure their funding. Thus, universities in the UK began to develop a strategy of internationally marketing themselves.

One of the interesting findings from Williams and Evans' work (2005) is that the UK Government's solid funding until the 1980s made it possible for universities to turn their face away from seeking other income resources. As a result, until the early 1980s, UK universities were not keen on attracting students outside the UK. Their recruiting of international students was 'exercised passively rather than actively' (p. 68). However, with the end of direct government subsidies to universities for international students in 1980, UK universities began to realise the importance of recruiting international students. Although Williams and Evans do not place emphasis on this shift, it is important to recognise that the changes of government policy greatly influenced the path of international strategies in UK universities thereafter.

When the research was conducted, there were common views on UK government policies in the 1980s and 1990s. All the universities agreed that the government policies at that time became the cornerstone for UK universities' planning. One pre-1992 university mentioned that government policies during that period completely changed the culture of UK higher education and brought about a big impact on the marketisation of universities. Because of those policies, 'the university had to become an entrepreneur'. One post-1992 university also said that government policies 'stimulated the commercial growth of education and the idea that education is an export industry'. Undoubtedly, these financially led government policies triggered and then accelerated the internationalisation of universities. Interestingly enough, all the universities admitted that these changes were necessary for the UK higher education system, and that even if the UK Government went back to the funding regime existing before the 1980s, they would still continue to place emphasis on international strategies. In conclusion, both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities viewed the UK government policies and activities positively.

Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI)

While all the post-1992 universities responded that they need strong leadership in the UK Government to make English universities internationalised, or, alternatively, to become more competitive in the world, most pre-1992 universities opposed this idea. They argued that each university should decide if they are to internationalise their university by themselves, without any government intervention. One pre-1992 university, which emphasised the need for government leadership, answered that the Government should show the value of the work that universities are doing.

In terms of the UK Government's vision for the future of higher education, most universities replied that they could see a clear vision for the future. It should be mentioned that the second phase of the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) for international education was unveiled on 18 April 2006, during this research. This is a five-year plan based on the success of the first PMI (1999–2005), which was primarily aimed at increasing the number of international students to the UK. In the second PMI, although the recruitment of more international students is still important, it seems that the focus has been placed much more on developing and strengthening partnerships with targeted countries such as India and China. This is consistent with what some of the sampled universities are now trying to achieve. The new PMI for global partnerships over the period between 2006–07 and 2007–08 is backed up by more than £27 million, distributed by UK/Africa partnership initiatives, UK/Russia partnerships and UK/China scholarships and other partnerships, and the UK/India Education and Research Initiative with £3 million, £2 million, £4 million and £7.5 million respectively (see the DfES website, now the Department for Innovation, Universities and skills, www.dius.gov.uk). Another feature of the new PMI is 'ministerial-led export missions' to targeted countries, highlighted from the strategic viewpoint. This mission will surely give targeted countries a strong message of the UK's commitment to international education.

Finally, it must also be said that the PMI, which was launched in 1999, was the first joint effort of working together on a project of this type with government departments and other education organisations, including the British Council and Universities UK. This type

of approach still continues in the second phase of the PMI, and is expected to increase the value of the UK brand.

Evaluation method

Evaluation is an important process in reviewing international activities. Most of the pre-1992 universities used the number of students and institutional links as their performance indicators. One pre-1992 university explained that they used peer groups of similar-sized research-intensive universities to evaluate their international activities. Three pre-1992 universities said that they adopted benchmarking against other institutions as one of their evaluative methods. Post-1992 universities showed similar results, but it seemed that their answers were more concrete than those given by pre-1992 universities. Their indicators were typically the number of international students and staff, exchange programmes, agreements with other institutions and RAE performance. Two post-1992 universities adopted peer review methods in addition to benchmarking.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that 'internationalisation' has been a key element in the success of both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in England. After the Government's funding system for international students changed in the 1980s, English universities had to find new ways to generate income, which triggered their international strategies. This certainly became the biggest external factor that contributed to this shift. Due to this change, individual universities also faced the need to set up new offices which are strongly involved with internationalisation to adjust to the increasing challenges of globalisation. Throughout this study, some pre-1992 and post-1992 universities admitted that recruiting international students was primarily for financial reasons and was considered a good source of income. Although other elements, such as increasing universities' recognition internationally, developing international links with other institutions and diversifying students' experiences, were also emphasised in the process of internationalisation, it is reasonable to suppose that the changes of government policies brought a shift in the perception of universities from serving the public good, to a more entrepreneurial role. It is safe to say that financial matters have become a driving force for English universities.

This research also revealed that the definition of 'internationalisation' varied between universities. This is because each university now has its own goals and mission for the future. Nevertheless, there were common perceptions that bringing in international dimensions by recruiting international students and internationalising curricula were important for both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. It is also important to note that, lately, the definition of 'internationalisation' is expanding from tangible and visible measurements, such as the number of international students recruited, to intangible measurements, such as the provision of additional values to students through international experiences. Competition with other English-speaking countries is also a factor in accelerating universities' international strategies.

Differences between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities' strategies towards internationalisation emerged in this study. Since most pre-1992 universities consider themselves to be research-intensive universities, their international strategies were strongly dependent on increasing their RAE (research quality) scores and recruiting outstanding international researchers. This related not only to the recruitment of high-calibre international students, but also to university strategies more widely. It can be said that pre-1992 universities were working to develop international strategies based around their research. On the other hand, it was difficult to see a clear tendency among post-1992 universities. This might be because some post-1992 universities consider themselves to be research-active universities, while others accept that they are teaching-led universities.

Another finding was that most universities are now particularly looking at India and China as the most promising markets from the economic and demographic perspectives. Both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities considered collaborations with these two countries to be significant. Global partnerships and ministerial-led missions to targeted countries, described in the Prime Minister's Initiative, clearly reflect this tendency. This shows another aspect of how the UK Government can have an impact on the internationalisation of UK higher education institutions.

Note on contributor

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