International academic franchises: Identifying the benefits of international academic franchise provision

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This paper is an exploratory study of the benefits that institutions of higher education can gain when entering into partnerships of academic franchising, an international activity which has been increasing in popularity over the past few decades. The paper looks at the current literature on academic franchising and then goes on to study, through case studies and direct observation, franchising from the perspective of four different institutions in four different countries. The paper reveals that very often there are multiple benefits to be gained which are not necessarily sought when the institutions enter such partnerships. Contrary to previous academic literature the study also reveals that there is a much greater flow of these benefits from one institution to another and thus provides a new richer model that has changed from the 'parent child' model to that of a more evenly balanced model where both partners are benefiting from mutual cooperation.

Keywords: international academic franchise; benefit; quality enhancement; change agent; staff development

Introduction

An academic franchise can be considered to be a business partnership or alliance and a means to gain important resources not otherwise obtainable. The best resources are those that bring a superior value or benefit in order to develop competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Slater, 1997; Fahy, 2000). Currently there is very little empirical research into what actually constitutes benefits in an academic franchise. Despite this, academic franchising is increasing through the exporting of education via international collaborative projects particularly to Asian countries (Knight, 1999; Maringe, 2009).

As well as limited empirical evidence, current academic literature and research on academic franchises is fairly fragmented and often integrated into general studies of teaching and learning away from the host institution. This literature does however suggest that university education provision can be characterized by unevenness, both in terms of how the idea of internationalization is understood and how the processes are developing (Maringe, 2009).

While there seems to be no set definition of what a franchise actually is since it holds many different meanings for different researchers (Firdaus *et al.*, 2008), a survey of current literature suggests that there are four areas where research has been undertaken into the benefits of international collaboration that may logically be applied to academic franchises. The four areas are: an increase in income, especially to the host institution or franchisor; an exchange of academic expertise particularly from the host to the collaborative institution or franchisee; a raised profile in international league tables such as EQUIS resulting from the academic exchange, which should lead to a rise in student numbers for both institutions (see Figure 1).

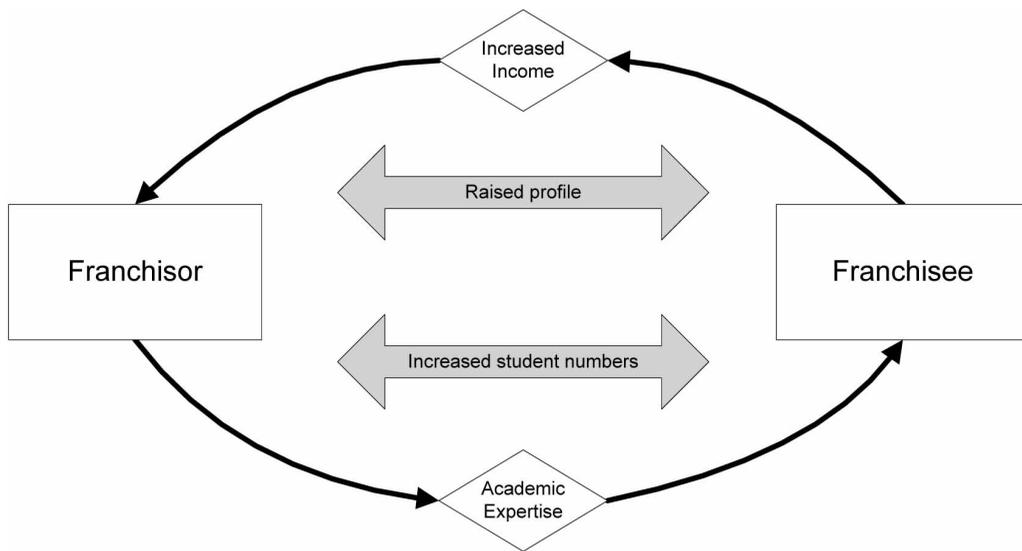* Corresponding author, Email: kpon@univ-catholyon.fr

Figure 1: Expectations of benefit received in successful academic franchises

Recently another factor, external to collaborating institutions, has arisen that is also likely to be impacting upon international academic collaboration. In many developing countries there is a lack of higher education provision both in terms of higher education institutions (HEI) and suitably qualified academics to staff them (Webb, 2000; Ng *et al.*, 2010; Anon, 2012). While this issue is being addressed by many governments (British Council, 2012) international collaborative partnerships can help to bridge this present gap in provision, as experience in Latin America and China shows. Fundamentally, as Figure 1 shows, collaboration means working together in order to gain benefit even if the benefits may be different for each partner (Golicic *et al.*, 2003). Additionally Coulson-Thomas (2005) suggests that a good collaborative partnership occurs when the benefits exceed both the costs of maintaining it and the potential value of other opportunities foregone.

The aim of this paper is to examine whether these previously identified collaborative partnership benefits apply to international academic franchises and to identify if any other previously unidentified benefits exist. This is therefore an exploratory paper that can be considered to be seeking to identify the potential parameters of a significant research question rather than a full study answering such a question. This paper reviews current literature in the area of academic franchising and internationalization. Primary research is gathered from franchisees and franchisors of successful international collaborative programmes. The data is analysed along with existing literature and the paper concludes by discussing possible previously unidentified benefits in successful academic franchises from the perspective of both the franchisee and franchisor.

Literature review

Internationalization versus globalization

Academic franchising falls into both the internationalization and globalization category of organizations. For one school of thought this may be perceived as a logical development; the internationalization of academic institutions is a response to the needs of an increasingly globalized corporate world (Altbach, 2006). This perception is heavily contradicted by scholars (Knight and

de Witt, 1997; Maringe, 2009) who posit that the internationalization of universities preceded globalization, with scholars travelling around the world since medieval times. These views suggest that globalization focuses on the transmission of technology resources and knowledge between people while internationalization focuses on the integration of an international perspective in all functions of higher education (Knight, 2001).

Rationale to internationalize

Extant research (Knight, 1999; de Witt, 2002) suggests that there are four major rationales for the internationalization of HEIs: political, economic, social/cultural, and academic/educational. It also suggests that there are three main responses/interactions with the four rationales for academic internationalization. First, different stakeholders within HEIs will attribute a different level of importance to each of the rationales (Knight, 1994). For instance, the administrators of one institution may place much importance on the economic rationale for internationalizing their programmes, while the students may put more value on the social and cultural rationale for their personal development and academic staff may value the academic rationale most. Second, there are likely to be shifts in the importance of individual rationales which will depend on the external environment (Alladin, 1992). One example is the American view of internationalization, which was highly politicized up to the end of the Cold War and then changed to an economic rationale due to competition (de Witt, 2002). The third interaction is related to whether or not the HEI wants to become proactively involved. Internationalization is becoming a process that cannot be avoided (Groennings, 1997; British Council, 2012) if an academic institution is to survive and respond to the demands of current and future potential stakeholders. However, an international partner may be a reluctant (reactive) or a proactive collaborator.

Since higher education is no longer provided solely within national borders the international aspect of many programmes is becoming more overtly embedded, including substantial growth in the number, nature, and type of education opportunities being offered abroad. With this growth of opportunities comes a growing number of terms to describe these activities, such as satellite campuses, offshore programmes, international branch campuses, and collaborative programmes (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2008). The Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE) used the term transnational education and provided the following definition:

> ... all types of higher education study programs, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. (GATE, 2004: 1)

Such a definition includes successful cooperations such as the joint undergraduate programme between Yale and Peking universities where both Chinese and American students study side by side in China (Coleman, 2007). Other more general examples include collaborations where students study for a foreign degree in their home country or when students begin their studies in their home country and move to the foreign country for the final period of study. These examples show that there are a considerable number of different methods of collaborative programme delivery. Since the terms used to describe the various methods of collaboration can be used interchangeably there is potential confusion as to the exact nature of the relationship under discussion.

International academic franchise: a definition

Any attempt at a serious analysis of international academic franchising must therefore begin with a clear definition of this potentially nebulous term. For clarity, reflecting Maringe's (2009) work and the British Council's definition (2012: 69), the term international academic franchise in this paper is used to describe the activity of exporting the academic programmes of one university in one country to another university or HEI in another country. This is defined as:

> an international activity where a university or HEI enters into a form of partnership with another university or HEI in a different country in order to deliver, wholly or partially, (a) specific academic program(s) to students of that country which leads to the academic award of the franchisor university. (British Council, 2012: 69)

This activity may therefore be undertaken wholly or partially in the host country and at any level of study, i.e. undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This definition of international academic franchises, as suggested by Figure 1, acknowledges that academic franchises, while partnerships, are hierarchical in nature, with the balance of power lying with the franchisor.

The development of international academic franchises

Although historically the internationalization and globalization processes varied in speed in different parts of the world, the Anglo-Saxon countries, particularly the UK and USA, were the first major players in attracting foreign fee-paying students. This may have been due to the dominance of English as a world language and extant bilateral trade partnerships, which are often used as a determinant of potential student mobility, but as the British Council (2012) points out, its continuation is almost certainly due to historic global and current political ties. Since the 1990s the range of international collaborative partnerships, particularly in British universities, has increased (Teichler, 1999; Ayoubi and Massoud, 2007) and Australia has become a dominant player (Pratt and Poole, 1999; Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin, 2002). New players such as France and Germany also want to compete in this seemingly lucrative market (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2008).

The reasons for such developments are numerous and can often be linked to changes in government policy concerning education: the need to undertake international collaborative research; the development of the European Socrates and Erasmus projects for student and staff mobility (Rudzki, 2000); the need to demonstrate global status and attract high quality students (Wedlin, 2010); or even the social and cultural environment of the country (de Witt, 2002). There is also an increasingly powerful need to respond to the globalization of the corporate world by providing well-qualified employees with an international perspective instilled during their course of study (Caroll, 1993; British Council, 2012). A further significant internal imperative, particularly during a time of global economic difficulty, is the additional income which academic franchises generate via student fees. As a result of all of these pressures the global market for attracting international students to universities has become highly competitive over the past ten years and is likely to remain so (Barb, 2005; Ulhoi, 2005; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2008).

Traditionally, North American universities have laid their emphasis upon the internationalization of the curriculum while European universities have put more emphasis upon mobility (de Witt, 2002). This is probably due to the fact that international mobility can take place over a much shorter distance in Europe as compared to the USA. There is less literature about the method of internationalization of education in North Africa in countries such as Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. What is available (British Council, 2012) suggests a mixture but with a higher proportion studying abroad rather than in an international programme at home.

Tensions inherent in international academic franchises

Due to the increasing success of these collaborations their numbers have been rising (Joniarto and Bititci, 2006). However there have been many failures and earlier literature laid much emphasis upon this aspect (Lewis, 2002; Elmuti and Kathawala, 2001; Zineldin and Bredenlow, 2003). Failures are often due to a lack of quality in the teaching or the lack of resources such as library facilities. In other cases students' evaluations were perceived as inappropriate, causing conflict between the two parties.

Both Van de Wende (2000) and Ulhoi (2005) identify another area of tension – that there are increased costs inherent in any increased focus on internationalization. In terms of an academic franchise these may include the initial set-up costs, such as the purchase of new teaching materials as well as ongoing costs such as facilitating visits for exam boards, staff development, and/or quality control. Additionally, where the imperative to internationalize is imposed by the national government, costs may increase disproportionally as in the case of the *Grandes Ecoles* in France (Commission Helfer, 2005). (*Grandes Ecoles* is a term for the prestigious institutes of higher education that were founded by Napoléon in order to train the nations' elite and to provide alternative education to the existing universities,)

A newer phenomenon causing tension is the potential damage to the franchisor if the quality assurance systems go wrong and the university is publicly called to account. The most prominent and dramatic case is probably that of the University of Wales in the autumn of 2011 when, as Altbach (2012) and Matthews (2012) show, the behaviours of the moderators and agents for its franchised partners, responsible for over 70,000 mainly overseas students, failed to meet the standards required by the UK government's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The university is a virtual university with no home campus, so was unable to demonstrate internal quality assurance processes and to all intents and purposes ceased to exist from that point. Leeds Metropolitan University was also called to account in 2011 by the QAA for the quality of academic provision on some of its international franchises. Since these were a small part of its academic portfolio it was able to demonstrate high quality standards in its home campus and recover. The tension therefore is that no matter how sound the initial contract, if a franchisee chooses to let academic standards slip it is the franchisor who is most likely to be highlighted in the public media.

Internationalization in a home study context

Much of this market for international students was triggered by push factors: students were being pushed out of their home countries due to lack of places in higher education and the lack of courses adapted to the modern world, as well as the desire to live and study in a foreign country. Simultaneously the push was complemented by pull factors towards Anglo-Saxon countries: there was a perceived quality of education, worldwide recognition of academic awards (see Figure 1), and flexibility in entry to courses (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). This has been accelerated to some extent by the increasing international trend to provide postgraduate education in English thereby increasing the attractiveness of programmes taught in English at undergraduate level (British Council, 2012).

It is generally accepted that the global recession which began in 2008 is having a continuing economic and political impact in many countries. One result is that the higher costs incurred by overseas students in comparison to studying as a home student becomes an increasingly significant barrier to international study. While many governments, particularly in developing countries, support postgraduate study overseas, far fewer provide financial support for undergraduate students. This has increased the economic rationale for the development of international academic franchises based around home study. In an international academic franchise the student

is often awarded both the degree of the international franchisor and that of the franchisee, a joint validation, while living in their home country. The partner institution gains an international dimension, the perception of quality of education from an internationally recognized institution plus the international recognition of their academic award, while the costs to the students are significantly reduced. As Davies (1995) points out, advances in technology such as video conferencing/lectures, blackboard, and e-discussion forums have impacted upon many teaching and learning platforms including supporting teaching and learning in virtual global 'classrooms'.

Summary

This literature review has raised several points in relation to current knowledge about international academic franchising. First, it recognizes that there is little research carried out in this field. Second, it recognizes that academic franchising is becoming increasingly popular with HEI's, particularly among undergraduate populations because of the reduced cost to the students. Third, it acknowledges that despite the fact that academic franchises are partnerships between academic institutions there is a hierarchy within this particular type of partnership. This inevitably influences partners' behaviour and this may result in tension because of differing perceptions of benefit and risk.

Research method

The aim of this research was to explore benefit within international academic franchises. It was initiated because the authors had become part of the moderation and quality assurance system for international academic franchises operated by their universities. One author had several years' experience working as a moderator, the other was a relative novice and in attempting to increase their expertise raised several of the questions discussed previously: if the number of international academic franchises is increasing why are the benefits so little understood? As the research was explorative, depth rather than breadth was considered most significant and a qualitative study was undertaken. A case study approach was adopted (Yin, 2009), enabling investigation of the rationales, expectations, and other important factors prompting potential stakeholders to develop particular academic franchises with international partners. Data were collected using three principal sources of evidence from four different franchises in Bulgaria, China, and Morocco:

1   literature review as discussed in the previous section
2   semi-structured interviews which focused on the topic of international academic franchising
3   direct observation in all the sites by at least one of the researchers.

The franchises were all for business management programmes (including hospitality management) at both undergraduate and postgraduate level (see Table 1). These franchises were validated and administered by the authors' HEIs (one in France, the other in the United Kingdom). The sample institutions were chosen for pragmatic reasons, because the authors moderated their franchised programmes and academic franchises had been run successfully for some years. This prior contact enabled a level of access and trust which might not have been available in other academic franchises. An auto-ethnographic approach, including participant observation, can successfully support a conjoint approach which increases critical depth and reflection in qualitative research (Westwood, 2005; Ritchie, 2006; Gergen and Gergen, 2007).

The themes for the interviews were developed from questions initially raised by the novice moderator and supported by a wide literature review. The themes identified were then piloted with an academic partner not included in this study. The final themes, which were discussed in all of the interviews, included topics such as the rationales for commencing such a partnership; partner identification; the benefits that the organization perceived; as well as divergence in the organization and management of the programmes.

Four semi-structured interviews were carried out with the persons directly responsible for the franchise on the franchised campus and who were also accountable to the franchisor. In order to achieve a multi-layered perspective and further depth and validity one interview was also held in each of the two franchisor institutions with a senior member of their collaborative partnership team. All primary data collection took place between the autumn of 2010 and spring of 2011. This reflects the fact that the interviews and accompanying participant observation could only take place in situ. See Table 1 for a summary of all participants.

Table 1: Profile of interviewees

Interviewee code	Franchisor	Franchisee	Country of institution	Academic level of programme's franchised
F1	√		UK	Undergraduate and postgraduate
F2	√		France	Undergraduate and postgraduate
C1		√	Bulgaria	Undergraduate and postgraduate
C2		√	Morocco	Undergraduate and postgraduate
C3		√	Morocco	Undergraduate
C4		√	China	Postgraduate

Due to the international context of the research it was necessary to conduct the interviews in either English or French. When data were collected in French, they were translated into English by one of the authors who is fluent in both languages. This enabled both to participate in the analysis as appropriate to the study. In order to maintain the integrity of the data collected, all quotations from the interview carried out in French appear in French followed by the translation in English. Once the data were collected and transcribed, the information was analysed thematically to identify all benefits discussed by the participants. Although this sample size is limited, it is considered to be sufficient for an exploratory study which future research can build upon.

Presentation and discussion of the results

The results suggest that from all the franchisees' perspectives there was a similar order to the processes undergone when engaging in an academic franchise. Initially, there was a rationale for developing a franchise, then the partner was sought and collaboration agreed upon. Finally, the results show that in these successful academic franchises both expected and unexpected benefits were identified which reinforced satisfaction with the collaboration. From the franchisors' perspective, initially there was a rationale to internationalize their HEI and while they did not seek out particular partners they accepted offers of collaboration from HEIs seen as suitable.

They too, like the franchisees, then began to identify both expected and unexpected benefits. The results and discussion are therefore presented in this order.

1. The rationale for developing an international academic franchise

As the literature review suggested, both franchisor and franchisee HEIs in these successful collaborations had a proactive philosophy of increasing the international profiles of their institutions, part of which was via academic franchising. This was intended to (*'donner une perspective internationale aux programs'*) 'provide an international perspective to our programmes' (C2). As has also been suggested, a further reason was to increase student numbers and so increase income. Reflecting the work of Knight (1999) and de Witt (2002), C4 said that there was a strong political rationale because 'it is important to show the authorities … that we are internationalising our institution.' For the franchisor, there was the additional desire to demonstrate quality and prestige via formal links with international institutions who wanted to take their programmes and degrees. For the franchisees, they wanted to be able to demonstrate a high-quality unique selling point which distinguished them from their local competitors. This reflects the model in Figure 1.

However, one further rationale was identified by the franchisees. In order to attract students, they needed to provide an academic programme that was attractive and effective in providing a quick and simple entry onto the job market after successful completion of their studies. As C1 commented 'we chose F1 as it would bring an international validation to the programme which would be hopefully well received on the job market for our future graduates.'

This aspect of increased employability was stressed by all the franchisees. The franchisees believed very strongly that gaining the international degree would significantly increase their students' employment prospects. This would distinguish them on the job market and also be a justification for the higher fees which they would need to charge to cover the higher costs of these courses. They also believed that as their alumni body developed they would benefit from being able to demonstrate this employability. This in turn would reinforce the prestige of their programmes and increase both student numbers and the quality of the applicants. It was seen as a rational, sustainable activity. Therefore in all cases there was both a strong economic and academic rationale for deciding to develop an academic franchise.

2. Partner identification

Once the rationales to franchise had been clearly identified the question of partner identification was raised. A major factor here, stressed very strongly by three of the franchisees and implicitly by the fourth, was that of language. The franchisees in this study wanted a collaborative programme in a world language rather than their own to strengthen the international core of their programmes and/or as part of the process of distinguishing themselves from their competitors. However, they also agreed on the importance of fluent, clear communication between partners; in order to work together it was necessary to have a common language. The franchisors also agreed with this point. F1 said that their institution had had some academic franchises which were not taught in English when the university first started to run academic franchises: 'we used to have them with X which was Spanish … Y ... was the moderator and he speaks fluent Spanish so that worked very well' (F1). However, the university had subsequently recognized that since the moderator 'might leave and then you can be a bit stuck', they would, as the number of franchised programmes rose, only franchise programmes taught through the medium of English. They did not feel that they could guarantee continuity or quality assurance otherwise. Therefore,

when they had been approached by C1, where several modules were already taught in English, this was seen as a positive starting point for the franchise discussions.

Two franchisees for F2 said that one of the reasons they had identified F2 as a potential partner was because many higher education programmes in their own country were taught through the medium of French due to historical ties. This meant that there were also strong cultural ties that they felt would strengthen any partnership agreement. Indeed, reflecting Knight (1999), de Witt (2002), and the British Council (2012), F2 commented that cultural empathy helps productivity by reducing cultural misunderstandings although it does not eliminate them completely. The franchisee who had not emphasized the importance of language per se, C4, said that one of the reasons for choosing a French partner was that their city was twinned with the franchisor's city and thus had past ties. Therefore, while C4 had explicitly based its choice of partner institution on a cultural and historical rationale, a linguistic link was implicit. Interestingly C1 said that because 'English is the language of business' they had sought a British HEI. Had they been looking to franchise 'technical sciences' they might have chosen a partner HEI in Germany which they believed had 'excellent technical universities'.

A second factor in the choice of partner was also identified, that of size. Both C2 and C3 commented that their prospective partner should be *('suffisamment grand pour nous donner ce qu'on cherchait mais qui était suffissament petit pour avoir un service personnel')* 'large enough to provide what we wanted but small enough to provide a good personal service' (C2). C1 did not compare themselves to the size of the whole partner university but rather to the school which ran the programmes they wanted to franchise. The necessity of matching size and having the same corporate culture had not been identified in the literature review. It was seen to be important not only in setting up a franchise but also to ensuring an ongoing and more equal partnership in which there could be future development of other collaborations, perhaps in a less hierarchical format.

3. Benefits

Expected benefits, as identified in Figure 1, and unexpected benefits were identified. All the interviewees considered that these benefits were one of the significant factors in making their academic franchises successful, particularly those which were unanticipated. The benefits were identified as:

- increased student numbers and financial impacts
- prestige/enhanced profile
- quality enhancement and staff development
- change agent.

The first two had been anticipated; the second two had not.

3.1 Increased student numbers and financial impacts

As anticipated, all the interviewees commented upon the necessity to attract more and better quality students. In all cases this had been achieved as the franchisees believed that they had attracted students into their institution who might have gone to other institutions had the franchise not been operational. The franchisor also gained via the increase in student numbers since these students are recorded as being enrolled at both the franchisor and franchisee HEIs. Additionally, in the case of F2 the students studied on the home campus for the final part of the programme thus paying full tuition fees to the franchisor institution for this part of their study.

Therefore, this increase in student numbers provided a valuable source of increased income both for the franchisee, through the payment of higher student fees, and the franchisor, through the payment of royalties by the franchisee.

On several occasions the aspect of finance was raised, particularly the need to be explicit from the outset about expectations so as to have no surprises once the franchise opened. While all commented upon their increased income through a successful academic franchise, C2 and C3 also commented upon the investment cost for new materials and new teaching staff. In all franchise HEIs those staff who taught through the medium of the franchisor language were harder to recruit, especially away from the main urban centres, and were always paid at a higher rate than those who taught in the native language. This was an ongoing cost which had to be balanced against any increase in income.

The franchisees accepted that there was a financial burden to students taking the franchised programmes as they were always required to pay more than students taking home programmes. However, they believed that this was offset in several ways. First, the students would gain two degrees, one national and one international. Second, the students could remain at home with much lower living costs. Third, the tuition fees, although more expensive than most national degrees in their home country were always lower than student fees paid in the franchisors' country.

3.2 Prestige/enhanced profile

As Wedlin (2010) has suggested, for all participants international activities were perceived as giving increased prestige and perceived status to their HEI. Representing the franchisee perspective, C1 commented that working with an Anglo-Saxon partner meant that:

> we compare ourselves not with universities in Bulgaria but global institutions like F1 … this improves the image of the institution, not only to have the British programmes but to have the British standards across the board for all programmes. (C1)

As further discussed in 3.3 Quality enhancement, most franchisees had incorporated the quality assessment procedures of their franchisor across related programmes not just those which were franchised. Pragmatically this was more convenient where courses were linked but it was also seen as enabling the franchisee HEI to demonstrate quality and so raise the status of the whole institution on the national and international stage.

From the perspective of the franchisor, academic franchising was seen as a prestigious activity in the sense that their programmes and awards were sought by other institutions. F2 commented that their international reputation had been increased because (*'nous avons eu beaucoup d'articles dans la presse et nous avons gagné des prix nationaux'*) 'we have had many press articles and we have won national prizes' for their contribution to international innovation in business education as a result of their academic franchising activities.

However, reflecting the risk noted by Altbach (2012) and Matthews (2012), F1 pointed out that franchisees could damage the host institution if the academic franchise was not operated as validated. This was particularly the case in HEIs where a very large number of programmes were franchised 'because if you've got 30,000 students [on academic franchise programmes] you're bound to get … quite a few of the ones that were likely to cause reputational damage…' Therefore while academic franchising was generally seen as a reputational benefit there was always a 'potential risk' when a partnership was first developed, particularly if the franchisor did not have sufficiently robust quality assurance programmes in place.

3.3 Quality enhancement and staff development

Although not considered prior to the start of the successful academic franchise, all participants agreed that there had been an unexpected rise in quality standards in all institutions participating in this study. While, as F1 has pointed out, there was always the potential concern that franchisees may not maintain the same standards of quality in the programme delivery as on the home campus this had not happened in any of the cases in this study. From the franchisees' perspective they had often had some initial issues, particularly fitting the franchised programmes alongside their own programmes and introducing some concepts such as seminars to support lead lectures (C3). However, as they became familiar with the quality assurance procedures, particularly double marking of scripts and examination board processes, the franchisee HEI's found that expanding these processes across linked programmes raised the quality throughout that department. 'We are now, I think, more organised and we have also higher requirements for students' (C1). This was slightly counter-intuitive since as F1 pointed out 'a number of other institutions that they may have worked with, particularly if they're from the United States, don't have quality assurance requirements like we do'. However, it is likely that if perceptions of low standards in potential partners had been observed this would have caused the potential franchisees to look elsewhere as improved quality and employability were the main rationales for internationalization, justifying increased fees. It was important to be seen to provide a service, or added value, or quality which competitor HEI's were not providing.

From the franchisors' perspective, both found that ('*nous avons été plus exigeants avec notre faculté pour la production des outils pédagogiques*') 'we have had to become more demanding of the academic staff when producing course material' (F2) so that clarity was maintained across a range of countries and that this had benefited their home students. Another unexpected benefit was that it enabled some of the academic staff from the home institution to gain international teaching and academic experiences through contact with academic staff of foreign institutions plus an insight into how foreign students were taught and how they learned. While not having empirical evidence, the franchisors believed, through personal observation, that these experiences assisted home academic staff to become more aware of different learning and teaching strategies, enhancing both academic staff development and the student experience in their home institution.

The need for staff to review course delivery was seen as one positive aspect of staff development for both franchisor and franchisee. Additionally, in all the franchises there were meetings between academic staff and this was also believed to promote staff development. In some franchises academic staff are sent to the franchisor's campus for a period of observation and participation in classes in order to transfer methods from one campus to another (C4). In other examples, academic staff from the franchisor are involved in staff development sessions at the franchisee's campus; sometimes these activities are combined with visits for the examining board. In another example, staff development sessions are held annually at the franchisor's home campus and all franchisees of all programmes are invited to attend and take part in the discussions (C1). At its most basic 'just going overseas is bound to open the mind a bit …' (F1), but where the exchange works well 'the franchise was a catalyst for many changes' (C1) which have resulted in an ('*echange de bonnes pratiques*') 'exchange of best practices' (C3), thus improving the quality. For example F2 stated that in one case the franchisee HEI had to develop team-working models not commonly used in the country. Additionally, the two of us who moderate academic franchises for their HEIs confirm that within their HEIs there is status attached to being invited to become a moderator, a public acknowledgement of academic credibility and competence. This in itself stimulates a proactive attitude by acting as an informal benchmark for future career potential.

3.4 Change agent

The second unexpected benefit related to positive development in academic processes was the benefit of a change agent. The interviewees agreed that all stakeholders in the academic franchise process needed to accept cultural changes in learning and teaching and the associated 'ways of doing things' if the academic franchise was to succeed. Change, especially when it may be perceived as being driven by an economic imperative with potential damage to quality, is often resisted within organizations and often causes tension and obstruction. However, the introduction of new procedures when a potential academic partner is being assessed or the programmes validated was identified by the franchisor HEIs to be an efficient way to encourage change. For example, as the number of academic franchises had risen in F1's HEI it had become necessary to streamline many administrative procedures because they became impractical and costly to administer in so many different countries. The systems were moderated for the academic franchise partners first and then, with a proven track record, introduced into the main systems of the HEI. F1 commented that as a result of this process they had 'reduced the number of people on [all validation] panels' throughout the HEI, and therefore the cost of validation visits to potential franchisee HEIs. Additionally, they had been able to further reduce financial and temporal costs via the introduction of e-conferencing for particular examination boards for proven partners. This had been done without any detriment to quality and therefore received the, usually tacit, support of their academic communities rather than resistance.

These changes to the academic processes were seen to be quite subtle. More overt cultural changes focused mainly on pedagogical issues: course delivery, double marking and moderation, moderation of papers and exams, resit examinations, and organization of examination boards. In particular, for academic staff the need for courses to be delivered so that the same learning outcomes could be achieved necessitated revision and precision in clarity of expression. This was essential in order to remove potential confusion arising from differing teaching methods/ environments whilst simultaneously creating space for other cultural/legal perspectives.

None of the participants in this study had actually realized that franchises were a means of bringing about change within their HEI at the outset. However, the necessity to review practice and the ability to 'test it out on the partners' (F1) before introduction throughout the whole franchisor HEI was viewed as positive both on an efficiency and on a human level. Therefore the setting up of academic franchises may be a positive agent for change at both individual and institutional level within HEIs.

Conclusions

Research was only undertaken in six HEIs: two franchisors and four franchisee HEIs. The results therefore cannot be taken as other than strong indicators of themes that would benefit from a larger study. However, we argue that the overall consensus strongly indicates that the findings have validity and identify potential areas of new understanding. This study has reviewed extant literature in the area of academic franchises and consolidated current theory but has also gone beyond this: first, by clarifying how significant the want or need of any institution to internationalize is in any successful academic franchise; second, by identifying the most significant criteria for the choice of collaborative partner from both the franchisee and franchisor perspective; and, third, by identifying both expected and unexpected benefits of successful academic franchises. As Figure 2 shows, the actual benefits received by both parties in a successful academic franchise is greater than has hitherto been identified. New benefits have indeed been identified, such as change agents and staff development for both partners within a franchise operation. However, what is even more interesting is that this research has revealed that there is a much greater

flow of resources between the partners and both partners appear to share and obtain all the resources that are obtained, Previous literature (Golicic *et al.*, 2003) has suggested that there may be divergences in the benefits sought at the outset. However, research from this study indicates that the benefits obtained can be the same and can be shared by both partners through a two-way flow, even if the objectives were different at the outset. This is nowhere more obvious than with the two initial benefits sought: academic expertise sought by the franchisee and increased income sought by the franchisor. The franchisee obtains more financial benefit through increased revenue through student fees and the franchisor obtains more academic expertise through staff development (and through academic research, which was revealed at a later date during a site visit).
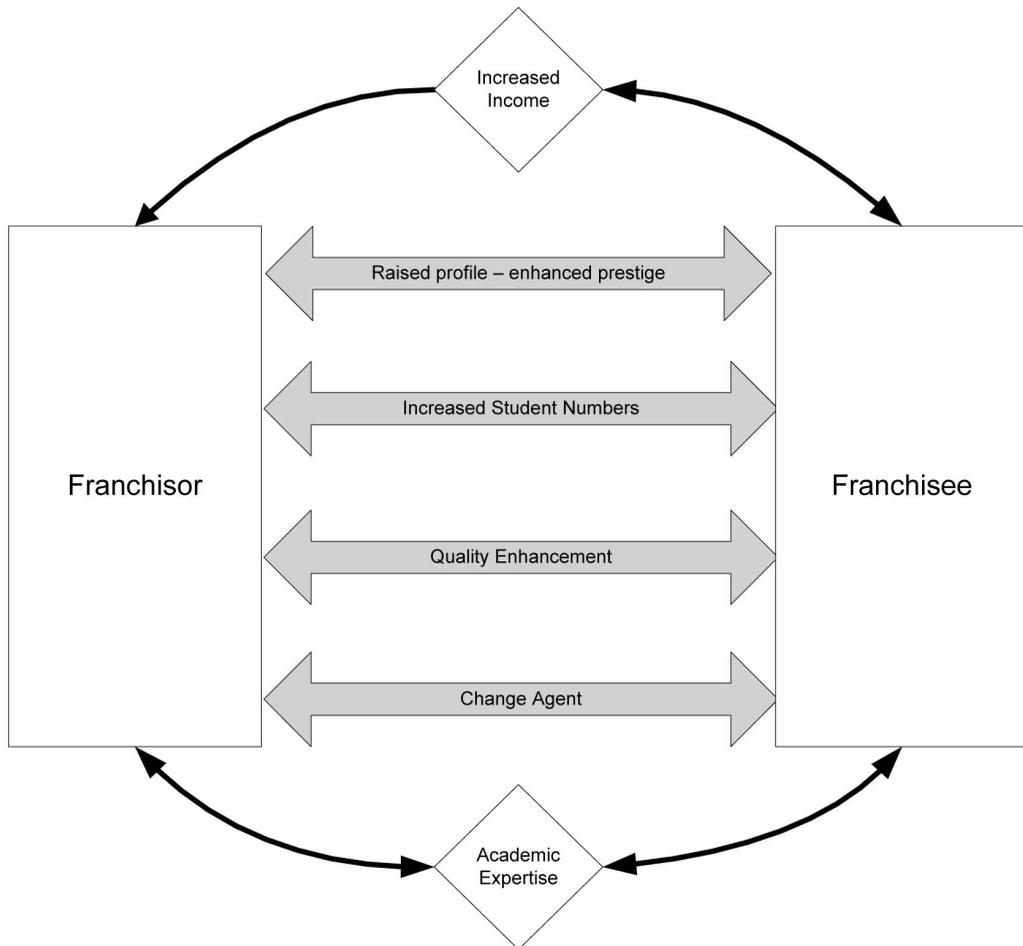

Figure 2: A new model of academic franchising and the flow of benefits

This research has shown that one of the key factors in successful academic franchises is the initial proactive desire to internationalize, along with the readiness of the HEI to support academic staff in such developments. This is usually driven by the need to sustain and improve the HEI's financial viability through the increasing of student numbers, and to raise international status. However both franchisors agreed that the value of their academic franchises is much more than the simple financial and prestige benefits identified in Figure 1. As Figure 2 shows, the proactive desire to

internationalize must link into benefits which overtly improve the quality of academic provision and the academic experience for all stakeholders across the franchisors' and franchisees' HEIs if the academic franchise is to be a success. The new model we propose has become a more collaborative model compared with the more recruitment-based models described in Figure 1.

We were only able to identify a few elements to identify the partner HEI but in all instances that we are aware of the potential franchisee made the initial approach to the franchisor through various formal and informal channels. As the data collected for this paper has shown size, language, and culture are the main drivers in identifying potential partners although financial and legal issues have some impact. However, as reflected in C1's comments, when these factors have been taken into account the crucial issue is then the international reputation of the proposed franchisor in that particular academic discipline. This is so that a competitive advantage (internationalization for the franchisee and prestige for the franchisor) can be developed. Although not specifically mentioned by participants, it is logical to assume that the potential franchisee HEI also needs to have a suitable academic reputation, albeit national and not international. This is to reduce the risk of reputational damage to the potential franchisor HEI. By linking with that specific partner both HEIs intend that there will be a qualitative and quantitative rise in academic results (and future prestige) driven by recruiting more and more able students.

However, we suggest that it is the development of the additional or unexpected benefits, in the linked areas of quality enhancement, supporting change, and academic staff development throughout their HEI, which is the key to ongoing successful academic franchises and can outweigh the tensions and failures that were described in the literature review. In particular, it may be the management of change which is the key issue here. As F1 pointed out, once their HEI had realized that they had a 'test ground' they found it less contentious when introducing change across the institution as a whole against a background in higher education where staff are notoriously resistant to change. Thus the franchisor HEI was able to become more responsive to market demand. The results do not suggest why the academic staff involved in academic franchising should be less resistant to change but it is likely that the essential introduction of new staff and teaching methods of itself introduces new ideas into the franchisee HEI. Within the franchisor HEI the benchmarking that invitation to participate in moderating implies may identify those more interested in change, or interaction with different international systems and teaching cultures may cause academic staff to reassess their own academic behaviours – the international exchange of best practice that C3 discussed.

Further research over a longer period is necessary to test the themes identified in this paper. It is also necessary to identify how academic franchising will continue to deliver desired outcomes including identifying any new models emerging as a result of further globalization of business and management, particularly the impact of new technologies upon the delivery of academic programmes. We suggest that there are two other areas that would also benefit from further study and intend to develop further research in them.

Students are also stakeholders in an academic franchise. Without their desire to study on that specific programme the franchised programme cannot be successful. However it will always be more costly to the students, both financially and in terms of the international learning environment of the programme. This study did not examine the student perspective but we believe that there would be much value in undertaking a study among student populations to establish the actual benefits and barriers to learning in international academic franchises. In particular, it would enable academia to better understand student expectations and motivations and so develop more appropriate programmes and environments in which to learn.

Additionally, we are aware that there may be other models of study not identified in this paper. For example, some HEIs participate in programmes where the language of instruction is

the language of the host country rather than that of the franchisors'. They tend to be HEIs for whom academic franchising is the major part of their programme provision and they may not have a home campus. In these cases moderators are hired by the franchisor for their academic knowledge and their linguistic skills specifically to moderate a particular franchise. None of the franchisees in this study had set up an academic franchise with a 'virtual' HEI. It may be that the rationales for and benefits received are different in these academic franchises. Therefore identifying all modes of study and the rationales for them is also a valuable area for future research.

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