Dr Michael Woolf

Deputy President for Strategic Development

CAPA International Education

mwoolf@capa.org

**Internationalisation and globalisation: beyond rhetoric**

*Introduction:*

My intention is to interrogate notions of internationalisation and globalisation in relation to the idea of a comprehensive approach to international education. Any approach that aspires to be comprehensive in one way or another will need to consider two broad dimensions. The first relates to what the Europeans tend to call internationalisation at home: issues such as student and faculty recruitment, and curriculum development are particularly relevant. The second aspect of internationalisation relates obviously to mobility (virtual or real, of faculty, students and administrators).

*Internationalisation at home: curriculum, and foreigners on campus*

It is pertinent to ask to what degree international perspectives are embedded in curriculum. For example, does the course on the history of the Vietnam War integrate Vietnamese perspectives? Do we recognise that in an alternative view the course might be called, "The War of Franco-American Aggression"?

Further, what value (and values) do international students bring to the home campus? How are those values maximised?  Is it measured predominantly in terms of income? To what degree are international faculty actively recruited? What do you do with them when you've got them? Are they encouraged to use their connections overseas to develop, for example, joint research, faculty exchange and student mobility? The presence of foreigners on campus is not, of itself, a signifier of meaningful international strategy.

Another measure of internationalisation might be the degree to which international activity is a significant factor in tenure track and promotion issues. Contributions in this area are rarely a formally recognised factor in tenure review. The reverse is usually the case. If the rules of tenure

do not explicitly reward and recognise international contribution there is, clearly, a disconnect between rhetoric and practice.

Finally, almost every strategic plan produced by any US university over the last ten years has placed internationalisation (whatever that might mean) at the core of institutional development. That said, few strategic plans have matched rhetoric with action .The affair between international education and US higher education at home is a complicated and complex one, more often leading to inexpert fumbling rather than satisfactory consummation.

*The context of mobility*

It is self evident to this audience that the education of young people in global or international awareness is a challenge sharpened by an uneasy future: utopian, dystopian and apocalyptic visions co-exist in our troubled perceptions of the changing world. Our times are not without hope: we are now more mobile than at any time in the history of the planet. This mobility is both physical and "virtual". However, poverty makes sharp global distinctions. It is estimated that less than 50% of the world's population have reliable electricity let alone functioning connections to the Web, or frequent flyer miles.

We are, nevertheless, inevitably more aware of the international context as it envelops all our lives. Community is now no longer solely defined by neighbourhood or geographical proximity. The idea that geography or nation defines culture seems profoundly archaic. It has become harder and harder to remain insular in a passive manner. Insularity now has to be an active choice and a conscious rejection of the world outside. It is a political act of reaction against the future

*The limits of globalisation*

That said, the rhetoric of globalisation is not necessarily matched by reality in a number of ways. An example from the European context may serve as illustration. The "European" idea began with an economic objective which, subsequently, grew into a broader political and cultural concept of "Europe" conceived as a unified space. As the nation state, its myths and language had to be invented in the nineteenth century, so this concept had consciously to be created roughly a hundred years later. One perceived mechanism for the creation of Europe was, and is, educational mobility within the area. The true purpose of schemes like Erasmus and Socrates is, at heart, the invention of place in psyche of the young.

The notion of nation, as Italian and German history illustrates, is a relatively recent one in most parts of the world. Nations have had to seek to create their identities and their national myths against forces that simultaneously seek to pull them apart. If this is a major challenge within country, it becomes a titanic problem within the region as we seek to invent regional consciousness within Europe for example, and an even greater issue in an international context..

The creation of international alignment is no easy matter. Even in something as mundane as the structure of the academic calendar,  factors combine to make the international agenda more complex than might be immediately apparent. National holidays are frequently shaped by either religious or historical events. They reflect, for example, the difference between Catholic and Protestant Europe; they tend to celebrate events that are part of the creation of a particular national myth, go to the heart of religious and political identity ,and may not easily be moved to serve some much less tangible notion. The educational system of any given country is necessarily shaped by inherited habits and traditions.

The development of international education should not be dependent on the heated rhetoric of "globalisation" and internationalisation. There are, for example, very few  "international"  or "global" universities though lots of them use that term. The vast majority of universities still offer national degrees, are recognised and accredited as national (or sub-national) institutions and are funded through national (or sub-national) mechanisms. There is no global accreditation agency for the global university. We need to distinguish between universities with interests in international education (of which there are many) and international universities (of which there are very few). The export of one national system to another (through, for example, branch campuses)  is  not an expression of a  globalised presence (whatever that is): these are national systems recreated overseas rather than expressions of internationalism. It is not easy to export something as culturally loaded as an education system from one national context to another.

Even the export of ostensibly culturally-neutral products is by no means a simple process. Mercedes Benz, for example, makes fine cars that are sold worldwide. In almost every case, however, the model needs to be modified to meet local needs and expectations. Expectations about the quality of interior furnishings vary from Germany (where certain models are seen by farmers, among others, as robust cars for working purposes) to the UK, for example, where the car is marketed as a luxury, status-symbol.

Even a product as universally standard as a McDonald's burger is marketed differently within diverse national contexts. In China, the golden arches represent access to a "Western fashionable" experience (as the queues outside McDonald's in Beijing signify) and the target audience are students and the young. In the UK, the market is decidedly younger still and McDonald's advertising is aimed at children and families. Thus, while the product is broadly standard, the mode through which that product is perceived varies considerably. In some senses, therefore, the product is itself changed and reconstructed by its context.

In short, ostensible uniformity frequently masks diversity. If that is true of a car and a burger, it is profoundly the case in relation to educational systems that may embody history, religion, language and nation.

The rhetoric of internationalisation and globalisation may also lead to an expectation of unhampered student mobility. The dangers inherent in this context can be illustrated by reference to two theoretical models at either end of a spectrum of possibility. For the sake of shorthand they may be called the "liberal" and the "theological" model. It should be stressed that these are not specific institutions but extreme versions of certain characteristics that may be found within universities and schools in different national contexts.

The objectives and characteristics of a liberal school or university might be as follows: The curriculum demonstrates diversity and the non-unitary nature of identity or history. It debates and contests national identity and frequently creates conflicting and oppositional versions (as in USA -- Black, Gay, Native American, Women's perspectives). The faculty express and encourage scepticism and inculcate values that permit disassociation from establishment values. Paradoxically, the State, directly or indirectly, pays these faculty to perform (and perhaps, thus, to contain) this function.

At the other end of this imaginary spectrum is, metaphorically, the "theological" model. It signifies an institution that exists predominantly to enforce a given orthodoxy. It functions to some degree as a guardian of traditional values be they religious, political, moral or whatever. The primary objective of this equally mythical place is to transmit "truth" not to challenge the notion of truth itself.

A potential pitfall in terms of student mobility is, therefore, the assumption that educational systems fundamentally cohere. This fails, among other things, to recognise the variations shaped by "liberal" or "theological" tendencies. Bland assumptions of shared purpose may lead to frustration and alienation unless understood and planned for within the development of

international educational relations. The recognition of these diverse patterns is a pre-requisite for the creation of effective mechanisms for student mobility.

At a grassroots level, the impact may be manifest in conflicting notions of what constitutes acceptable classroom behaviour. American students, for example, come to a host university overseas with an expectation that the objective of the class is to create a field of debate in which opinions are proposed and challenged. In some cultures, this expectation leads to behaviour that is both intimidating to other students within the class, and inappropriate to the teaching faculty. The reverse experience is also common: students who come to the US or the UK with the expectation that the professor is the source of unchallenged wisdom and the gatekeeper of cultural knowledge have difficult times in classes where the professor, instead of being the keeper of the holy grail of learning, performs the role of devil's advocate or, indeed, agitator. Bewildered silence or hostility are potential outcomes.

*Between rhetoric and reality*

The UK offers a stark example of the gap between rhetoric and reality. International education in the UK is predominantly a commercial operation, synonymous with the recruitment of full fee-paying students from outside the European Union. This represents an important source of income for an under-resourced system and a preoccupation with the commercial imperative is understandable. That said, in an increasingly globalised labor market, universities in the UK are doing very little indeed to create opportunities for their home students and that is shameful neglect of intellectual responsibility.

There are various realities that co-exist here. Firstly, there are global forces that impact all our systems. Not the least of these is the simple fact that, like it or not, H.E is a valuable commodity that is bought and sold in an international market place. As with any other commodity, some can afford to buy at Harrods or Bergdorf Goodman, some at the corner supermarket, while some rummage around in the dustbins of the rich.

The single most significant reality in UK H.E is that the system is under severe financial stress that is a consequence of a) the recent crisis and b) of a long-term aspiration. At a moment when a strong knowledge economy is both a national and international imperative, the UK government has announced a 12.5% cut in H.E funding over 3 years. Obvious consequences are that there will be an inevitable reduction in student support, larger classes, lower quality and, simultaneously, a corresponding increase in fees. Participants in this system will, simply, pay more for worse.

These cuts are, in part of course, a (perhaps necessary) response to the recession. However, they are also probably symptomatic of a permanent reality in that UK H.E is striving to move from an elite to a mass system and that imperative creates a situation where the aim is to serve more students within, at best, a resource system that cannot keep pace with the growth of numbers and the increase in demand.

The reality is that outside of a few highly-regarded institutions, the mass of UK HE is not entirely "world class" and the discernible trends do not give cause for optimism. In the education business and the business of education, most of the UK can no longer afford to shop in Harrods.

Furthermore, credit transfer is largely a myth. There is little or no undergraduate mobility within the UK and almost no possibility of transferring credit from one domestic institution to another, let alone from an overseas institution to a domestic one. UK students can and do participate in Erasmus and other funded intra-European mobility programmes but there are a set of other factors that impact upon even those limited opportunities:

a). UK education as a whole has lamentably failed to teach other languages effectively. In that context we are, in Senator Paul Simon's words, no less "tongue tied" than our Anglophone contemporaries in the USA. This is, of course, a massive constraint on the effective development of an internationalized higher education system. The current ratio of incoming students to outgoing students in the UK is about 25:1.This is a ratio that should be cause for national shame.

b). Nevertheless, some disciplines still require students to study (or work) abroad as part of their undergraduate education. Credits earned in that context do not transfer back to the UK university. In practice, the period of study required to graduate is extended by the amount of time the student spends abroad. Learning abroad is, for the most part, not recognised as worthy of credit.

International education in the UK is about recruiting foreign students who have money so that they can help prop up an ailing system. The logical consequence of this reality is that the UK government would create conditions that would encourage those students to study in the UK rather than elsewhere. No such logic exists and the exact reverse is true. UK government policy is being driven by fearful, narrow parochialism that is certain to impoverish further the impoverished universities of the UK.

In short, in the UK international education is (except among a very few of the righteous) a commercial enterprise dressed up in pious platitudes: an empty rhetorical flourish rather than a meaningful reality.


*Conclusion*

Notions of globalisation and internationalisation are seductive to professionals in international education because they appear to offer untroubled gateways to mobility and, thus, enhanced understanding of other nations. Hoverer, it is apparent that rhetoric masks embedded fractures and disconnections. That is not to suggest that we should be cynical or dismissive of aspirations to move towards some form of internationalisation. Because we believe in the implicit value of those aspirations, we should seek specificity. Rhetoric needs to align with reality.