

# Chapter 13

## Developing and Supporting the Internationalisation of Research Capacity

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### ABSTRACT

*The internationalisation of education is a common and perhaps overused term that is still little understood. Developments have been made in the areas of recruitment, overseas delivery, and branch campus creation, but the extent to which our institutions are truly “international” is debatable, especially in light of the fact that few can agree on what is meant by the term itself. The need to collaborate, discuss, reflect, and learn from others is vital for developing nations and developed nations alike. It is in the process of sharing best practice that best practice can itself be developed and further enhanced. Engagement, on a glocal scale, can support integrated learning, contextual understanding, and the internationalisation of research capacity and as such, is an area for further review and reflection.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine the impetus, challenges and merits of developing Transnational Higher Education (TNE) collaboration. The author will draw upon the past three years of work in the field of TNE initiatives and discuss activity in Kurdistan (Iraq), Malaysia, Thailand and the UK and examine the impetus, discussion and direction of potential future collaboration of this nature.

All activity, both research and training delivery, has been undertaken by the author directly, supported by colleagues from the University of Nottingham UK Campus. The research and findings in question have been developed from recent activity funded and supported by British Council DelPHE-Iraq, the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, British Council Thailand and the Thai Research Council.

This chapter will outline the value of transnational higher education collaboration, set this collaboration within the wider context of university strategy and discuss the challenges and obstacles

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inherent within the process. This chapter will provide practical and empirical findings; highlight the opportunities for shared learning and integration and ground the findings within the wider debate and context of global educational development.

## **BACKGROUND**

International expansion of institutions runs, at times, parallel to the decentralisation of higher education and can both promote and direct change within a national educational system. The pressure to open up one's borders to external influence can come at the cost of complete control and while it is possible to exert pressure upon the international presence in terms of course accreditation and approval, there will naturally be areas of recruitment and knowledge transfer that cannot so easily be controlled and therefore require clear understanding and management.

The introduction of *foreign* ideas and practices provide, not only a connection to the international market and knowledge economy, but also an opportunity to revise and develop internal policies and practices. The globalisation of higher education, particularly in SE Asia, serves to promote the decentralisation of agenda setting and the ability to respond to the ever-shifting landscape of education and employment. What is critical here, however, is the manner in which this degree of expansion either complements or contradicts the national agenda and therefore, to what extent it will be supported, regulated or prevented.

The growth of international education providers in SE Asia marks a transition in the approach to education, its delivery, and mechanism for future sustainability. There is considerable scope here to examine the role of internationalisation within higher education, the potential for future development and collaboration, and the impact this will have on a national and regional level, if for no other reason than to more accurately define and ground the terminology within the debate.

*For more than 20 years now, there has been much discourse and debate about defining internationalization. Internationalization is not a new term. It has been used for centuries in political science and governmental relations but its popularity in the education sector has really only soared since the early 80s. Prior to this time, international education was the favoured term and still is in some countries. In the 90s, the discussion on using the term international education centred on differentiating it from comparative education, global education and multicultural education (Knight, 2004, p. 8).*

The extent to which the responsibility for definition, or more accurately direction and control, lies with the host nation is an element for serious debate but one that can only take place within the parameters of cultural and geographical awareness. The desire to internationalise and open education provision provides equal opportunity for abuse and development. The necessity to attract external and international institutions can come at a price, both in terms of control but more importantly, of quality. Serious consideration must be given to the spirit of opening up the academic forum within a nation versus the need to ensure quality assurance is met. As the arena of international education expands, it will bring with it new challenges and opportunities. The aim of this chapter is to examine existing trends and motivations in order to provide a reflective framework for future debate.

## **MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER**

### **Essential Components of a University Internationalisation Strategy**

The notion that all education will become international reflects a reality that universities face both at home and abroad. A salient point to consider is that institutions not treat the development of

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