

Internationalisation and the entrepreneurial university: Mutual reinforcement for maximum results

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Internationalisation and the entrepreneurial university are two concepts that have received considerable attention as separate and distinct phenomena. However, the interface of internationalisation and entrepreneurship has seen limited analysis, despite the fact that there is much to suggest important synergies between these two concepts.

A consideration of globalisation provides an important starting point for this conversation. Universities today are caught up in a complex relationship with globalisation, which serves as a catalyst for both internationalisation and entrepreneurship. On the one hand, universities are *objects* of the growing interdependence and convergence that is at the heart of globalisation. However, they become *agents* of globalisation by developing policies designed to enable strategic internationalisation, notably through the integration of “an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery” of education and research (Knight, 2003). By the same token, to remain competitive in the “roll-out of worldwide markets” (OECD, 2009) in a highly uncertain and complex environment, universities need to embrace entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial paradigm provides universities with a roadmap for coping with increasing uncertainty and complexity, encouraging them to embrace change and innovation, take risks and assume responsibility for designing and implementing development strategies essential for success in the ever changing competitive global environment. Entrepreneurial behaviour implies regarding global pressures as opportunities and as a source of continuous innovation, knowledge and technology transfer. In this way, internationalisation can become a crucial resource for a university’s entrepreneurial development. Why?

An entrepreneurial university views internationalisation as a key tool, and is able to plan and strategically manage its internationalisation, effectively assessing the environment and its

own strengths and weaknesses. It leverages the strengths found across the institution and in the context of the partnerships in which it participates; it identifies and builds on comparative advantages. Furthermore, an entrepreneurial university assesses its internationalisation strategy execution using measurements and benchmarking creatively, and amending actions when needed. It is prepared to invest in internationalisation, to take risks, and to accept and rectify failures. It remains flexible, open to innovation and new partnerships. It never considers internationalisation completed, because for an entrepreneurial university, internationalisation is a means to an end, namely, dynamic, competitive performance in the core areas it has identified as central to its mission. As new goals are set, the means and measures of internationalisation's success are amended accordingly.

For institutions working to maximise their performance in terms of international engagement and relevance, a global strategy must attend carefully to two related objectives: 1) maximising capacity and performance within the global landscape, and 2) optimising the benefits of global flows, linkages and offshore operations back home in the national and local settings. The achievement of these policy objectives depends on several factors, including a realistic understanding of the global landscape, and of the particular nation's and institution's place within that global context. Clarity with regard to the range of strategic possibilities is also crucial, as is the ability of systems and institutions to operate in cross-border settings, and their degree of effective global engagement (OECD, 2009).

GENERATING CAPACITY TO OPERATE GLOBALLY

Some institutions and systems are intrinsically well-positioned to operate globally, enjoying such advantages as linguistic and cultural 'popularity'; a strong economy; substantial government support; a large and well-resourced education system; and recognised research and innovative capacity. US, UK, Canadian and Australian universities benefit from a combination of these factors, which puts them at a distinct advantage to compete globally for talent and resources. These factors also contribute significantly to the arsenal of 'soft power' wielded by these nations.

And advantage begets more advantage: global comparisons of universities' performance enhance the status of world-class institutions and intensify competition. For example, the top 100 universities on *The Times Higher Education World University Ranking 2011* included 44 American and 10 British institutions. Australia and Canada had four and three institutions, respectively, on this list, while France and Germany each had four in the top 100, and Japan had five. Of the BRICS¹ countries, only one Brazilian and two Chinese universities made it into the top 100, with no Russian, Indian or South African universities crossing the threshold.

However imperfect, rankings provide an indication of an institution's place within the global context. An entrepreneurial university regards the international universities' ranking criteria as benchmarks and is able to plan the way forward to improve performance and reputation, build partnerships with 'reference point' institutions, invest in attainment of collectively defined internationalisation goals, and incentivise staff to work towards those goals. However, those universities that are not historically favoured by linguistic, cultural, or economic assets cannot do this hard work alone; they need consistent support from their governments.

1. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

To this end, several countries are implementing national strategies to develop their higher education systems as 'new higher education powers'. By promoting internationalisation, these investments also contribute towards building universities' capacity for entrepreneurship.

DO GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES MATTER? YES.

Governments increasingly invest in shaping their education systems and strengthening their institutions' capacity to engage and compete globally. Efforts include scaling up funding for research and education programmes; creating incentives for improving management and quality assurance, and promoting entrepreneurship; allocating grants for research and education partnerships and cross-border programmes; supporting student and academic staff mobility; and improving infrastructure. These approaches are being used (amongst other examples) by Japan, Mexico, Korea, China and recently Russia – and they have an important role to play.

In the case of Russia, the government has launched several programmes to support flagship universities with the objective of enhancing their competitiveness. The initiatives include the establishment of nine federal universities and 29 national research universities, and providing block funding on the basis of the universities' strategic plans. The 'Research and Pedagogical Cadre for Innovative Russia' programme, for the period 2009–2013, aims to create internationally competitive environments in universities through support of academic and research exchanges, joint research, and networking. Three more initiatives were launched in 2010. Support of higher education institutions cooperating with enterprises working in high-technology development and production from 2010–2012 is carried out through grants for research, development and technological projects, implemented jointly by the enterprises and Russian higher education institutions. In these cases, the grant holders are the enterprises. Support for innovative infrastructure at the federal higher education institutions between 2010–2012 aims at expanding the practice of developing innovative spin-off companies, through the provision of grants. In this instance, universities serve as the grant holders.

In addition, to attract leading scientists to Russian universities, in April 2010 the government allocated in €308 million for the period 2010–2012. Individual grants of up to €3.9 million have since been awarded from this pool of funds to leading universities for implementation of research projects supervised by top-level foreign scientists. These large-scale programmes should improve the quality of education and build the higher education system's capacity for research and innovation, thus contributing to Russian universities' global competitiveness.

So far, the results of these efforts are mixed when it comes to global rankings, publication figures, and international student attraction. Only two Russian universities appeared in the top 400 of the *Times 2011 World University Rankings* and the number of published articles coming out of Russia, as a proportion of total world output for 2005, declined to 2% from 3.8% in 1994 (with the caveat that 2005 pre-dates the launch of the key initiatives referenced here). However, the share of the world's international students who chose Russia as their destination increased to 4% in 2009 from 2.1% in 2006. Efforts to enhance the Russian higher education system's ability to engage globally will continue. This need is fully appreciated by the government, with President Medvedev saying at the expanded meeting of the State Council on 24 April 2012, "At least five Russian universities must be listed in the top 100 of the main global rankings. This will be an evidence of lifting the capacity and reputation of our education."

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

For Russia and other exemplar countries (such as China and Japan), government support to help higher education engage globally, and more entrepreneurially, has proven essential. The problem is that such national strategies tend to concentrate resources on selected universities, and this raises the thorny issue of differentiation (stratification) of higher education institutions within the country.

Despite its challenges, globalisation does imply huge opportunities for universities, academia, students, economies and societies. But the capacity to harness these opportunities is not equally distributed. There are two types of divide. First, there is a divide between the 'flagship universities' and 'second-tier universities' within a given country. Second, there is a growing divide between the world-class universities from advanced and rapidly-growing emerging economies, and universities from developing (particularly low-income) countries. One glance at the major global university rankings shows these stark geographic and economic disparities. Obviously, the academic community cannot accept this complacently. There is a fundamental issue of equity at stake and it is a cause for concern. A strong resolve from a wide range of stakeholders is needed to reverse the situation.

Clearly, internationalisation and entrepreneurship are mutually reinforcing resources for universities' development and, as such, are vital factors for individual countries and global economic growth. Universities' capacity to internationalise and innovate (both in terms of what they produce as well as how they are organised and act) should be supported and incentivised by governments. However a bottom-up process steered by the universities' community is equally vital. Furthermore, countries aspiring to become new higher education powers and established higher education powerhouses should seek the golden equilibrium between the two processes. They also have a responsibility towards developing countries and their universities, given that even for a very entrepreneurial university in a developing country it is hard to internationalise and become globally competitive without national government support and/or support from international organisations. Universities in the developing countries, unable alone to afford to steer the internationalisation processes of their higher education systems, will fail to benefit from globalisation. And given the nature of higher education as a global public good, the loss of such opportunities not only affects the citizens of these countries and their economies, but also the broader international community.

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