How do academics 'do internationalisation'?

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Background

In a world where the university is a 'transnational bureaucratic corporation' and those working in it are human resources, internationalisation evokes a discourse of commerce (Readings 1996: 3). Even when the focus is on improving the curriculum and teaching and learning environments (Elliott and Reynolds 2014) internationalisation emerges as a tool for attracting (more) international students, with universities competing for students (Park 2007) in the global market. Internationalisation involves strategic geopolitical and geoeconomic engagements (Sudhu 2006). It is one of many forces potentially fragmenting academic work (Barcan 2013, Readings 1996). This paper reports on evaluation of our practice of 'doing internationalisation' as female academics in research-driven universities through cross-border collaborations that evolved organically from shared goals, interests and priorities that do not fit neatly into the discourse of 'strategic partnerships'.

Doing internationalisation

We have been developing a UK-Japan collaboration for eight years in a process driven by our sense of collegiality and sustained by our shared sense of mission. Initial contact was in 2007 when Beverley invited Rowena to run an intensive course for graduate students on writing for international publication. Funding was secured through the Graduate Good Practice (GP) Project, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Beverley used her international network to identify an appropriate workshop leader, and Rowena was recommended by several sources.

We started a conversation about research and writing, with an emphasis on providing effective support structures for ourselves and our students. These informal conversations also allowed us to discuss and better understand our position as female academics working in research-intensive institutions and built trust.

Rowena has run the writing for international journals workshops every year, with funding secured from various sources. The workshops are now a credit-bearing graduate-level course. We continue our dialogue about graduate, specifically doctoral level, teaching and learning and our own research development. Academics from Osaka University have attended the workshops and writing retreats run by Rowena, expanding the core group committed to the models we developed.

The next step was a writing retreat in Kyoto in 2013. Beverley secured funding from the Global Centre of Excellence 'Takuetsu' project, which was interdisciplinary, so the retreat was open to students from all (Arts) faculties. This was the first retreat of its kind in a setting where English was not the first language of the university or most participants. Given the novelty, we decided to conduct action research on the power of the retreat model to contain anxieties of Japanese and other second-language English speakers to enable them to join international academic debates. Data were supplemented by a post-retreat questionnaire six months later. In December 2013 we presented the findings of that study at the Society for Research into Higher Education conference (Murray and Yamamoto 2013).

Following the retreat, Beverley started to run monthly Structured Writing Days for retreat participants. While a core group of doctoral students and academics regularly attend these, thesis sessions have attracted more doctoral students from Human Sciences and other schools and faculties. These Structured Writing Days not only support the academic development of graduate students and academics but also extend our research collaboration, as we discuss and evaluate their impact.

This year Rowena brought two UWS doctoral students to Japan, so that they could forge links with Osaka University students. This opened up spontaneous dialogue and exchange between students.

We submitted a proposal for external funding to extend this collaboration. The value of our collaboration to date is, for us, a factor of its organic and spontaneous nature. Finding shared values and goals, it has been easy to 'do internationalisation' in

meaningful ways that are unstructured at the policy/institutional level and in some ways unexpected.

Evaluation

In the UWS university strategy we found 'internationalisation' in a section called 'How will we attract, retain and produce successful learners?':

1. Improve the relevance of our teaching and learning;
2. Diversify our student base;
3. Increase revenues;
4. Contribute to the global development agenda as part of our corporate social responsibilities (UWS: 12).

Our internationalisation work meets the first and fourth criteria.

In Japan internationalisation and the creation of 'globally competent human resources' (*gurobaru jinzai)* are a central part of the Abe administration's 'Japan is Back' policy. Osaka University promotes internationalisation as a key part of its mission, but current policy reflects a new sense urgency and commitment. It aims to be one of the top ten universities in the world by 2031 (Hirano 2013a, 2013b). Internationalisation goals include:

1. To create a global campus, defined as one with 'a diversity of persons from all over the world';
2. To provide society with 'outstanding, internationally-minded graduates';
3. To 'develop personnel with international-mindedness, expertise, and diversity';
4. To create an environment in which 'each staff member can work with vigor and in which research and educational institutions of diversity cooperate with each other' (Hirano 2012).

We feel that our work meets all of these criteria.

We also considered the latest *Times Higher Education* internationalisation criteria:

1. attracting students from all over the world;
2. attracting faculty from all over the world;
3. international co-authoring (Baty 2014).

Our work was not about attracting students and faculty, but about developing common ground among faculty and students. Since this led to co-authoring, we meet the third criterion.

Conclusion

Curry and Lillis argue that research networks are 'a key resource for publishing … [and] participation in transnational networks' (Curry and Lillis 2010: 281, 2010, 2013a). They established the importance of local networks as a base for participation in transnational networks, with network brokers bridging the two (Curry and Lillis 2010: 294). Our internationalisation work put these principles into action, but our evaluation identified potential tensions between institutional strategy and academic work. 'Doing internationalisation' is academic work. Our collaboration defined the components of this work in terms of shared sense of mission, trust, spontaneity and unpredictability. Even if these do not appear in strategy documents, we must make it clear that these are components of internationalisation.

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