Public Diplomacy
and
Internationalization of Higher Education

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Rationales for internationalization of higher education refer variously to:

... benefits derived from the global mobility of students and faculty
... development of human resources for global economy
... revenue generation for institutions
... building institutional profile and reputation
... diversifying the campus
... social and cultural development
... national capacity building through development partnerships
... enhancing international relations
In the postcolonial era (say 1960-1980s), the idea of internationalization of higher education was driven largely by values and interests linked to the promotion of good international relations -- as a tool of public diplomacy

...such a perspective was assumed in the scholarship plans such as the Colombo and Fulbright Plans, and also similar plans in the Soviet Union.

...the focus was on transfer of knowledge and skills, and local capacity building, especially through postgraduate studies and research training.

...concerned with meeting the nationalist aspirations of social and economic development of the newly independent countries.

An interest in promoting good international understanding and relations

...but also linked to the strategic interests within the ‘cold war’ politics
Over the past three decades, however, the idea of Internationalization of Higher Education has become transformed around:

- the possibilities of trade in higher education
- the importance of mobility of students, faculty and programs
- the benefits inherent in global networks and collaborations
Accordingly, since at least the late 1980s internationalization has been
...conceptualized as both an expression of and a response to the contemporary processes of economic globalization.

...as linked to the demands of the knowledge economy, and new labor markets

...as based on a conception of higher education as a private good, and qualifications as tradable commodity.

...as responding to the need to strategically position graduates in the global labor market
But beyond these rationales, the importance of transnational collaborations in both teaching and are also stressed. It is now argued that the world is becoming transnational, characterized by multiple ties and interactions linking people and institutions across the borders of nation-states.

... mutual commercial benefits can be derived from these ties, interactions, exchanges

...there have thus emerged new possibilities of collaboration and networking among institutions dealing with knowledge production and dissemination.
Transnational collaborations in higher education are now evident in the development of:

...Regularized and on-going transnational research links

...distributive systems of knowledge dissemination and development

...teaching and Research networks with both universities and industries abroad.

...the emergence of international consortia (bilateral and multilateral Links)

...new modes of sharing of income, resources and efforts

...Cross-border uses of Technology and Media
Globalization and Network Society (Manual Castells)

The Networked Society describes a global ecosystem in which widespread internet connectivity drives change for individuals and communities.

The Wealth of Networks (Yonchi Benkler)

Digital information technology permits extensive forms of collaboration that have potentially transformative consequences for economy and society.

The New Power of Collaborations (Harvey Rheingold)

In global markets, our propensity to cooperate is accelerating in line with our rapidly-evolving communications technologies.

Research Collaborations and Science Diplomacy

Knowledge collaborations among nations have the potential to address common problems and to build constructive international partnerships.
For individual researchers, international collaboration may afford:

• access to expertise, equipment, datasets, research subjects or environments that are not easily accessed in any other way;

• the ability to participate in a global network of scholars, and to monitor and tap into knowledge being developed in other parts of the world;

• the potential to align one’s work with high-status groups or institutions, and to increase one’s likelihood of publishing in high-impact journals (and of attracting higher citations per paper for one’s outputs);

• the prospect of attracting international funding streams; and

• a mechanism for establishing links to those parties that are best placed to develop or utilize the products of one’s work.
From the perspective of institutions, international collaboration in research is:

- a cost-effective way of supporting the infrastructure needs of staff, especially in capital-intensive fields;
- creates an ability to respond to government or community priorities where an institution’s own capabilities may have gaps or lack adequate scale;
- a mechanism for benchmarking staff and for helping to determine which researchers are doing internationally-significant and internationally-recognized work; and
- a tactic for enhancing global reputation (which is more likely from international collaboration than from purely domestic research), with consequences both for an institution’s positioning in global league tables and for its capacity to attract to high-quality staff and students.
From the national perspective, international research collaboration

- enables intellectual communities to build trust, mutual affection and understanding
- Enables rapid transfer of information and expertise in emergency situations
- Mitigates the consequences of terrible events
- Provides access to knowledge (and beliefs) being developed in other parts of the world
- Affords excellent opportunities for information gathering in a non-confrontational way.
- May prove critical in international arbitration on trade or disarmament
- Can ensure that aid money is well spent, and brings lasting benefit.
In these ways, transnational collaborations as a tool of public diplomacy

Public diplomacy... deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another. (Nicholas Cull 2006)

Public diplomacy through soft power: “getting others to want the outcomes that you want” (Joseph Nye 2004)

Transnational collaboration in higher education as major contributor to soft power and as an important area of public diplomacy can create a lot of advantages, such as to produce commercial value, to promote a nation’s foreign policy priorities and interests and to contribute to a country’s economic development and investment.

This has led to a rapid growth in the number of cross-border joint publications
Share of research publications involving an international co-author
In the past two decades the Australian Government and universities have invested heavily in developing research collaborations with universities in Asia, based on the belief that Australia is part of the Asian region and that its future lies in Asia.

With the rapid rise of higher education systems in Asia, Australia stands to benefit from collaborations, in attracting research funding and sharing resources.

Collaboration with Asia universities can serve to strengthen the prestige of Australian universities from which it draws most of its students.
Top Ten source countries for international partnerships of Australian universities, 2003-14
Partners on Australia's internationally co-authored papers
What this suggests is that while the number of collaborative arrangements between Australian and Asia universities have risen rapidly, they have not been greatly productive, both in terms of publications and other research outcomes. Many of these relationships are symbolic and do not deliver on their promise or potential. The most productive relationships continue to be with researchers in the English speaking countries.
Obstacles to transnational research collaboration

It has been argued that obstacles to productive collaboration have been institutional or cultural. Other reasons have been:
- Inadequate resources or capabilities at institutions
- Inadequate support by government agencies
- Differing research and academic cultures
- Bureaucratic red-tape, such as visa regimes
- Lack of understanding and interest
- Differing expectations
- Inadequate familiarity with cultural traditions and language
- Issues relating to intellectual property
- Uneven expertise
In my view, more important has been the narrow framing of the nature and scope of research collaborations, in terms that dominated by concerns of quick return on investment. This shift is illustrative of the growing hegemonic appeal of market thinking in terms of which the possibilities and challenges of higher education are now increasingly imagined and enacted.

Neoliberalization of ‘social imaginary’ (Charles Taylor 2004)
From ‘market economy’ to ‘market society’ (Michael Sandel 2008)
Growing assumptions of ‘market rationality’ (Brown 2014)
I want to argue that a new understanding of internationalization needs to be imagined, around transnational collaborations in knowledge production, acquisition and utilization are to be better aligned with the public diplomacy objectives. This implies

the need to forge new knowledge through conversations across different traditions and perspectives

the potential power of digital technologies has increasingly enabled people to learn across cultural and national borders

the fact that most of our serious problems are global in nature and demand attempts to solve them through transnational collaborations

Internationalization is best achieved through principles of respect, reciprocity and shared benefits
The role of diaspora knowledge networks in nurturing international engagement in research collaboration is crucial.

Australian Census data shows that Chinese and Indians are an increasingly significant part of the Australian researcher population. In 2006, almost 40% of overseas-born researchers in Australia came from Asia, many of them Chinese and Indian.

The role of diaspora scholars in bridging these cultural divides is significant. They are more inclined to work together with their counterparts in their home countries because they tend to have the cultural and linguistic capital to do so.

This clearly indicates that the capabilities associated with diverse cultural and academic backgrounds are strong facilitators for international collaboration, and it is something that policy makers might take more note of.
key policy questions regarding collaborations are

How do we achieve cost-effective international engagement in science and research?

How do we map, and understand the implications of, our strengths and capacities in science and research?

How can HE institutions maximize Australia’s contribution to shared societal challenges at an international level?

Which new capabilities should we seek to develop?

What sort of role in leading and facilitating international collaboration should nations in our region seek to achieve?