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Collaborating across organisational cultures:

a study of international campus marketing

Bridging the Gap: Research and Practice in TNE
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Structure of presentation

- Positioning of international campuses within TNE landscape
- How this theme (collaborating across organisational cultures) emerged from a research study of international campus marketing
- Approaches and behaviours underpinning effective collaboration between home and international campuses
- Guiding principles, conclusions and further research

TNE landscape: frameworks and success factors

- TNE framework: collaborative vs. independent (Knight 2015)

- Operating effectively across organisational cultures:

key success factor for **collaborative** TNE (Fielden 2011, British Council 2015, Lindsay and Antoniou 2016) – especially with transition to multinational education (Healey and Bordogna 2014, Healey 2016)

- **International campuses**: minority but high-profile

(especially when things go awry) form of 'independent' TNE

- Differences between home and international campus

culture can play an important role here too

What happens behind the façades?

Why undertake research into international campus marketing?

- 27 international campus closures to date – some linked to over-ambitious targets and underwhelming reality

- Clear need for market-informed approach and effective marketing and student recruitment operation

- Lack of academic research and practical guidance on embedding marketing in international campus development

- Opportunity to generate evidence-based recommendations, based on insights from those directly involved

What the study involved

- Narrowly focused – single host country; single sending country; small number of institutions and participants
- Malaysia selected as host country
  - Favourable environment for TNE (British Council)
  - Global education hub agenda
  - 9 international campuses (UK, Aus, Irish) + 3 pending
- Interviewed 8 UK and Malaysia-based senior managers
  - At 3 of the 5 UK universities with Malaysia campuses
  - Between Nov 2014 and Feb 2015
  - All had some degree of responsibility for marketing
- Main output:
  - Set of recommendations on embedding marketing expertise (see Lewis 2016)

Emergence of underlying theme

■ Home campus
- risk averse, set in ways, slow, obstructive
- large, established organisation
- operating in stable, familiar environment
- focused on delivering corporate strategy

■ International campus
- rash, headstrong, eager to experiment
- small, dynamic start-up business
- entering new, competitive marketplace
- focused on meeting local needs

Family relationships - and space travel
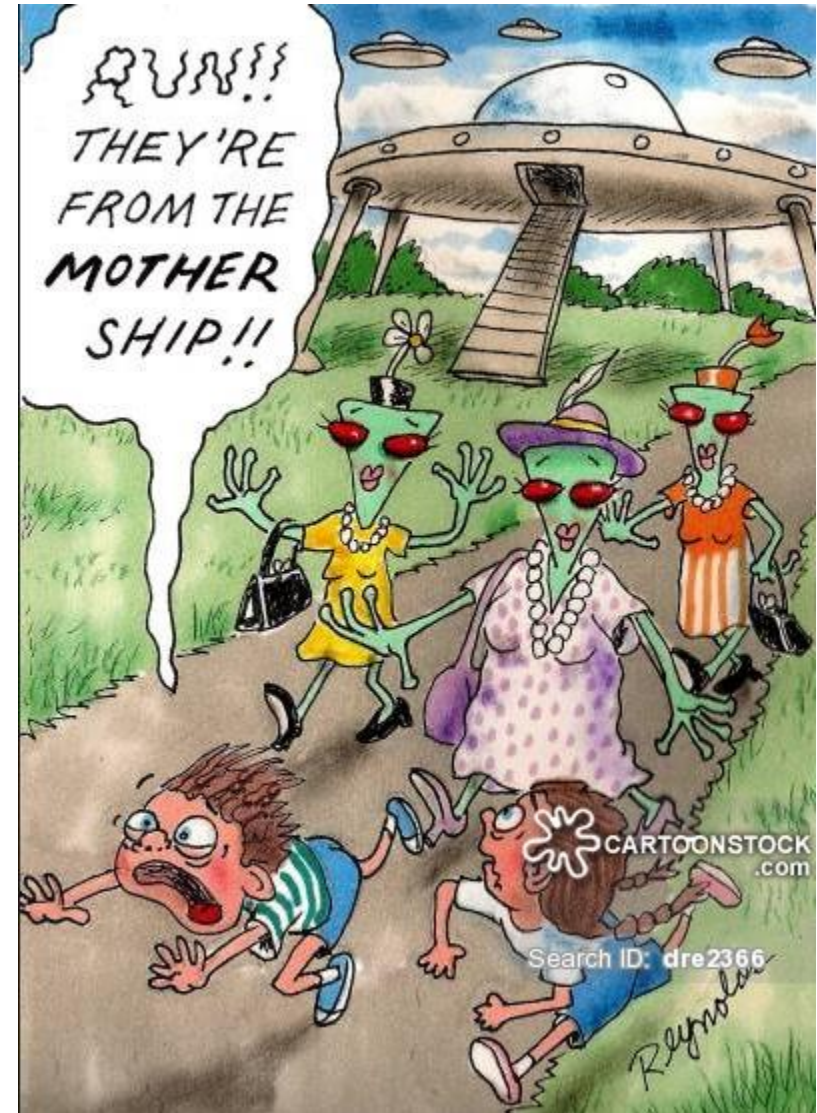
What it felt like to some of those involved

"At the outset I had assumed that all the problems would be in the local market. However, that's been predictable and manageable. The biggest difficulty is with the parent. There are constant issues."

[In-country manager, HEI A]

"The perspective from [the international campus] was that anything coming from here was bureaucratic, an imposition, even a criticism."

[Home-based manager, HEI A]

'The home university wants to be involved – and that is genuine – but it is easy for other priorities at home to divert its attention.'

[In-country manager, HEI B]

Nature of home-international campus relationships

■ Parent-child analogy familiar (e.g. Healey 2014)

■ Even where intention is for egalitarian relationship or network approach, new kid will be 'junior'

■ Linked to stage of development and maturity (age gap lessens with time)

■ Healey's (2015) 'self-determination' cluster (tendency to seek greater autonomy)

■ Having a child affects parent profoundly: **both** will (and should) change and evolve

Making the relationship work

■   Given these initial power dynamics, what is needed at the outset to make the relationship work?

■   Can an investigation of inter-campus collaboration in one professional area (marketing and student recruitment) generate some broader guiding principles which might apply in other areas?

Three themes – and two golden threads

- **Theme 1**:

Establish shared understanding of vision, values and mission

- **Theme 2**:

Actively develop a cross-boundary single team ethos

- **Theme 3**:

Clearly allocate responsibility and accountability

- **Golden thread 1**:

Be willing to adapt (individually, organisationally) as campus evolves

- **Golden thread 2**:

Be willing to harness diverse perspectives and use as an asset

Making it work: Theme 1 (a)

Establish shared understanding of vision, values and mission

- Internal positioning of project
- Risk of 'poor relation' or 'pet project' syndrome if not presented as central to institutional mission
- Need for open discussion (at early stage) about drivers, goals and risk appetite – with wide stakeholder group

Making it work: Theme 1 (b)

Establish shared understanding of vision, values and mission

'Senior management have to show absolute commitment. They need to explain why the campus is being developed – in the context of the university strategy… Without that, an international campus can be a "woolly" concept.'

[Home-based manager, HEI A]

'There is a big engagement piece and persuasion job.'

[Home-based manager, HEI B]

Making it work: Theme 2 (a)

Actively develop cross-boundary single team ethos

■ Clarify and agree service delivery expectations

■ Recruit staff for attitude: resilience, ability to innovate, cultural intelligence, adaptability, team orientation, self-reliance

■ Foster team culture regardless of work location (cross-campus induction, training, secondments, planning, team-building, celebration of success)

■ Set up channels / mechanisms to facilitate communication across organisational boundaries – and encourage a **culture** of communicating

Making it work: Theme 2 (b)

Actively develop cross-boundary single team ethos

'Apportion time for staff to be involved both at home and overseas, and set aside time to build relationships between… teams at the different campuses.'

[Home-based manager, HEI A)

'The Malaysia team can't and shouldn't be expected to do this on their own. Everyone is now more open to working together.'

[Home-based manager, HEI B]

'There is sometimes a communications vacuum so we need to improve communications mechanisms and infrastructure.'

[Home-based manager, HEI B]

Making it work: Theme 3 (a)

Clearly allocate responsibility and accountability

■   Work out which functions / activities best directed from which location initially - develop expertise (and review location of functions) over time.

■   Be transparent about how resources are allocated, where key decisions are taken and who has ultimate accountability

■   Understand which processes should be transferred to international campus, which adapted locally, which fundamentally rethought – and how this may change over time.

Making it work: Theme 3 (b)

Clearly allocate responsibility and accountability

'The CEO is ultimately responsible… but there is a lack of clarity on roles.'

[Home-based manager, HEI A]

'We have to operate a form of matrix management.'

[In-country manager, HEI B]

'We started off by saying that we would outsource a lot more than we do in the UK. This gives us greater flexibility, agility and speed.'

[In-country manager, HEI B]

'We will see greater decentralisation when people are more settled.'

[Home-based manager, HEI B]

Golden thread 1: <u>individual</u> willingness to adapt

■ Individual flexibility and willingness to change approach

'Context really matters. There should be an effort to work across boundaries and take a global approach, but it's important to be prepared to adapt to the local context when required.'

[In-country manager, HEI C]

'One cultural thing I've noticed is that you have to learn how to ask questions.'

[In-country manager, HEI B]

'There needs to be more flexibility to try different approaches'.

[Home-based manager, HEI A]

Golden thread 1: <u>organisational</u> willingness to adapt

■ Institutional flexibility and willingness to embrace change as relationship evolves

'Our initial vision – about providing choice for students, extending access to different groups, being research-active – that all remains. However, there are certain changes as the campus evolves and you learn from this.'

[In-country manager, HEI C]

'It wasn't linear. After th[e] initial set-up phase, there was more input from the UK. This was partly also because the UK institution was changing. There was institutional evolution – co-evolution – going on in both places… After a period of increased input from the UK, this then reduced again.'

[In-country manager, HEI C]

Golden thread 2: willingness to harness diverse perspectives

■ Ability to turn differences in perspective into productive and creative collaboration

'In some areas, a hybrid approach is needed.'

[Home-based manager, HEI B]

■ Home-based interviewees emphasised need for strategic planning; in-country interviewees stressed need to understand local context.

'This may just be different ways of thinking about the same problem'

(e.g. ensuring campus viability)

[In-country manager, HEI C]

Guiding principles for making the relationship work

- ■ Position project as central to university mission and encourage early open discussion of challenging issues.

- ■ Recruit staff who will thrive in a start-up setting; create and nurture teams to collaborate across campus boundaries and sustain effective two-way communication.

- ■ Determine which functions are best directed from which location, establish effective matrix management structures and be transparent about where decisions are taken and who is ultimately accountable.

- ■ Actively review and adapt policy and practice as both institutions mature and evolve.

- ■ Ensure differences in perspective are used constructively to develop creative approaches

Conclusions

■ Establishing a new campus is as much a partnership as other forms of, more explicitly collaborative, TNE – but the need for effective preparation for partnership working can easily be underestimated.

■ Similar guiding principles apply as with other long-term collaborative relationships between institutions with different organisational cultures.

■ Further research: What specific success factors apply in international collaborations between institutions whose organisational cultures are **very different**? Could strategic use of frameworks derived from Cultural Intelligence theory help smooth the path of such relationships?

Comments and questions

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