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Global Academic Movement: Wandering Scholars or Tradable Commodities?

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Abstract: Academic movement across the globe has a vital history from the wandering scholars of the middle ages to the current European Union researcher mobility projects. In this paper, we briefly examine the historical forces that have prompted academics to venture around the world. We then focus on the current phenomenon of 'internationalisation' and examine its rebirth as academic policy. In particular, we ask how interpretations of 'internationalisation' have affected academics' inclinations to tread a global campus.

Keywords: Internationalisation, Academic Mobility, University Policy

Introduction: Yesterday's Wandering Scholars and Today's Global Academics

NEW GLOBAL MIGRATION HAS brought with it an increased scale of mobility that includes academics and students – scholars in a world widened for many by advances in access and opportunity. This increase, which Hugo (2006) associates with what he terms, “the 3 Ds”, Demography, Development and Democracy, has resulted in significant increases in movement by academics and students (Asia-Pacific Education Ministers, 2006; Youn & Kirkness, 2003), with new wealth and capacity for borrowing against wealth opportunities opening education beyond its scholarly mantle into a major economic force for nations and regions. The mobility factor includes both students seeking education away from home, and academics willing to travel in order to acquire and contribute to scholarship. In many cases the latter group present a scenario akin to the “wandering scholar”, a description originally used for makers and singers of lore, poetry and traditions in the medieval age (Symonds, 1884; Waddell, 1938).

The medieval wanderers included both those whose diligence lay with the discovery and construction of new and useful ideology and others, known as Goliards after the Friar Tuckian-like Bishop Goliard, a wanton (and likely fictitious) priest, whose song and primary attention were to gambling, fighting, wine and women. From records such as Symonds' (1884) translation and Waddell's (1938) accounts of wanderers, both serious and goliard scholars were productive through their verse, though the relative self-centeredness of the latter group and their satirical attitude toward authority (typically the Church and its clergy) may have made it more report-

able. Their poems show an innovatory and communicative exploration of real and abstract issues. It is reasonable to see this as a mantra for the wandering scholars as their approach to scholarship generally reflects direct, constructive and reconstructive thinking and composition.

This approach together with the wanderers' communication of work through public conference and writing is very much like what we as academics currently seek to do with our work. Doubtless, carousing wanderers from near and far are part of the academic tapestry of any campus today. However, in this paper we have resisted a temptation to single them out in studies of differential style and contribution. That attractive undertaking beckons as a future project. Rather, it is our intention to theorise an evolution of the historical wandering scholars into the current notion of “global academics” (Bauman, 1998). In doing so we will explore the more social and global benefits associated with academic mobility and the modern wandering scholars who are its actors. Additionally, we will ask how institutional changes to higher education, particularly in terms of the internationalisation phenomenon, have added to the push-pull effect on individuals as they pursue a globally-relevant academic pathway.

A Wandering Scholar

People in positions of social and political influence have from time to time provided encouraging contexts from which teachers and students have drawn support in pursuit of scholarship to movement across universities, nations and continents. Often, this took the form of attracting thinkers and doers away from their homes to a key location, typically with the lure of fame, money or opportunity. For example, in the



16th Century, Michelangelo, a sculptor, painter, poet and architect was enticed amongst others, to move between Florence, Venice, Bologna and Rome by powerful and wealthy figures such as the Medici in Florence - and later the new republican government and away-from-home prelates, Popes Julius II, Clement VII and Paul III in Rome. In each of these locations, he contributed to the extant art and culture. He also was absorbed and developed by it. He too was a beneficiary because of the mobility factor in his work and Michelangelo established people-to-people links that lasted throughout his long life. He also made institution-to-institution connections that directly influenced what he did, when he did it, and how well - for example, when the Medici popes in Rome sidelined his Vatican commissions allowing him to complete works in their native Florence. Michelangelo reformed artwork in Rome also, for example, with his insistence on emphasising the comparative utility of body parts such as the hands in human expression. He spread his style in planning and implementation across the artistic and sponsor communities of Florence, Venice, Bologna and Rome, setting notions of standards and excellence often confronting convention such as in challenging the briefing planning papers and drawings provided by Pope Julius II for a sarcophagus, redesigning them himself and working to his own design – a blow struck early for academic freedom. He provided impetus to selectivity and quality assurance in the completion of works by collaborating with authorities about priorities and time-allocation for tasks seen as critical in each of the four centres, and occasionally across them.

Global Academics

While Michelangelo's kings and popes five centuries earlier concentrated their sponsorship on individuals, ministers of state attending the recent Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' Meeting of the International Education Forum (2006) in Brisbane, Australia, have established a platform to encourage more general academic mobility throughout the region. They considered that "mobility and exchange lead to increased transferability of skills, and facilitate participation in the global workforce" (p. 1). Further, they conceptualised a key advantage in mobility as establishing linkages, observing that these "include the development of strong research links, teacher exchanges and partnerships and scholastic networks" (p. 1). In a communiqué released during the conference, they noted the massive scale of mobility that had followed sustained increases over a number of years and resolved to further facilitate it. They said they had done so in the interests of "friendship, mutual respect and understanding, just as education is

the key to prosperity, security and peace in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond" (p. 1). Their statement of likely outcomes of such facilitation reflects a perception of domains of influence that are very like those we have attributed above to Michelangelo's artistic contributions, viz.:

- *building people to people links and institution to institution links;*
- *promoting reform and improved education and governance;*
- *enhancing mutual understanding, knowledge and innovation; and*
- *helping to address regional needs.* (p. 2)

In promoting academic mobility as a source for such positive change, the ministers formed common goals to (a) increase student and academic mobility and transferability of qualifications, and (b) establish greater integration or exchangeability of education frameworks. They agreed to collaborate on:

- *quality assurance frameworks for the region linked to international standards including courses delivered online;*
- *recognition of educational and professional qualifications;*
- *common competency based standards for teachers, particularly in science and mathematics; and*
- *the development of common recognition of technical skills across the region in order to better meet the overall skills needs of the economic base of the region.* (p.1)

Clearly, the ministers' financial and infrastructural support to home and visiting scholars will add to a general accessibility to international transport and widening of information and communication media, as sources of take-up for scholars on the move. Such movement is metaphorically (Cohen, 1997) an intellectual diaspora in a global knowledge society. Brennan, Locke & Naidoo (2007) noted that there had been:

"a substantial growth in the proportions of foreign nationals among the academic staff of English higher education institutions, the largest growth rates being from eastern and central Europe (193 per cent), Western Europe and Scandinavia (146 per cent) and China, Japan and East Asia (108 per cent) over the ten year period. However, the vast majority of movement takes place among junior postdoctoral staff, and this is largely positive for the UK, with much less movement among staff later in their careers allaying any residual fears of 'brain drain'. Nevertheless, there is a growing

dependence on non-UK nationals, now accounting for 13% of core academic staff, a growth from 8 per cent in 1995/96” (p. 4).

Whether global academics return to their country of origin to enrich its social and cultural intelligence and capability or set up new homes in their host countries makes for questions about the value of such a diaspora, particularly for developing countries from which skilled and talented people have emigrated. Many have concerns about “the brain drain” not for the host country as Brennan et al (2007) describe, but for the country left behind. Bekhradnia & Sastry (2006) for example, in studies of highly successful academics in the UK and US concluded that, “Those who advocate the brain drain as good for humanity as a whole need to show that moving makes a migrating scientist do better science” (p. 12).

However, there is support for a view that with the opportunities of a relatively resource-rich culture, such people are better positioned to make positive contributions to their home – either on return or through accessible global communication networking. For example, using statistics from the National Science Foundation of the United States on emigration of scientists and engineers, Meyer & Brown (1999) pointed to the quantitative and qualitative importance of Science and Technology diasporas, because they “constitute for developing countries a huge potential of additional resources ... it is a realistic scenario, conceptually grounded and based on evidence” (p. 2).

Australian evidence tends to support the prospect of frequent home contact by expatriate academics, at least with one large group of internationals currently working in its universities. Hugo (2006) surveyed Chinese academics on-line to find 64.4% of his 239 respondents reporting that they visited China at least once per year and 56.5% contacted China at least once a week. Additionally, 40.2% said they had research projects in China. While 47.7% said that they planned to stay permanently in Australia, which might alarm those who see returning home as the only or best means to add to their home culture, there are others who see a Pygmalion Effect applying for some returnees. Speaking of Australians, Doherty (2004) said, “Bringing highly qualified Australians home can be problematic. Returning to the much smaller Australian pond is not always easy, especially as some of the pond life may not be comfortable with these differently evolved life forms” (p. 1). Size of pond may not count so much for China, but the development and attendant social and psychological issues remain. As Westcott (2005) observed,

“... in the current area of globalisation, global links may be more important than the human capital “stock” in a particular country. A

professional thus may contribute more value to the home country by residing overseas than returning permanently” (p. 268).

Elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region, researchers have found that “International Academic Staff (IAS)” have not had the same level of research or internal support as international students (Yourn & Kirkness, 2003). In describing IAS staff in New Zealand, they noted that “many have English as their first language and come from a range of countries that includes South Africa, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. Other academics have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and come from countries such as Russia, Fiji, India, Malaysia and China” (p. 2). The authors recognised the rapid increase in mobility that has occurred since 2003, and predicted further increases.

There is both congruence and divergence in the notions of ‘wandering scholar’ and ‘global academic’. Mobility is the means imagined and used to explore new intellectual terrain. Mobility as a mindset and as an action are matters of personal choice, an academic freedom to be savoured in all its aspects. Mobility encourages people-to-people links and enhances understanding, intellectually and culturally. Mobility supports national agendas in terms of both political and economic alliances. However, the new model of a global academic is perhaps a bit edgier, a little more strategic in its faster, neo-liberalised construct of academia. The nature of higher education institutions is rapidly changing with notions of the “entrepreneurial university” (Clark, 1998, 2004 in de Zilwa, 2007) and the McDonalds-style, corporatised “McUniversity” identified by Ritzer (1998, 2004 in de Zilwa, 2007). A contributing factor of this changing construct is internationalisation. In what follows, we provide a brief overview of internationalisation as academic construct and higher education policy. A specific focus for discussion is the impact of internationalisation on academic mobility and how this is constituted under higher education policy frameworks, with particular reference to the Asia-Pacific.

Internationalisation and Academic Mobility

Academics working in the field have had difficulties stabilising their definitions of internationalisation. It is a “slippery concept” (Trevaskes, Eisenclas & Liddicoat, 2003, p. 1) and attempts to define internationalisation found the dynamic to be so rapidly evolving that “internationalisation has occurred in a rather ad hoc and incremental fashion with policy and reflection occurring after the fact” (Welch & Denman, 1997, p. 6). Indeed, the *fact* of “current global academic movement” is occurring and the

work of this paper is reflection *after the fact*. As established in earlier work (Bridges & Bartlett, 2007), we remain in much the same position with the internationalisation paradigm continuing “to make rapid shifts in response to local and international forces – both market and political” (p. 16).

Definitions from the ongoing work of Knight and de Wit (Knight, 1994, 2004; Knight & de Wit, 1995) have provided insight into the evolving nature of internationalisation as a paradigm. Their earliest definition highlighted it as central to the core work of a university and alluded to intercultural understanding as critical.

“Internationalisation is a process of integrating an international, intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution... distinct commitment, attitudes, global awareness, an orientation and dimension which transcends the entire institution and shapes its ethos” (Knight & de Wit, 1995, p. 15).

More recently, Knight (2004) built on findings from her report *Internationalization of Higher Education Practices and Priorities: 2003 IAU Survey Report* (Knight, 2003) conducted on behalf of The International Association of Universities (IAU) to redefine internationalisation in the light of the rapid, evolutionary changes in global higher education. She saw it as part of “an era of transformation” (p. 2) where universities are no longer the only “players” on the global higher education market, and so a broader description was required if the significant issue of internationalisation’s multiple local, national and cross-border contexts and agendas was to be addressed. Her revision is:

“Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional level is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11).

The process view of the phenomenon is repeated here. Her use of the construct is about “integrating”, an attempt to connote depth, breadth and sustainability. In adding “global” she captured the scope of the phenomenon. Her terms, “purpose”, “functions” and “delivery”, identify overall roles and objectives, core undertakings, and modes of courses, respectively. Additionally, in her 2004 re-interpretation, Knight argued that internationalisation can be viewed as both an “actor and reactor in the new realities facing education” (p. 28). This is significant for our purposes. The key question of how internationalisation’s infusion into academic policy corresponds with academic mobility is, *How has internationalisation*

‘acted’ and ‘reacted’ in the light of global academic exchange, both as national and institutional agendas?

One reaction has been the market-driven response of institutions in deliberately recruiting fee-paying students, typically from beyond normal catchments. Changing demands have led to a rapid diversity in the models of higher education provision in order to help pay the bills. In a historically short time, modes of provision have changed from the predominantly on-campus models provided by “sandstone universities” (Marginson, 2004) to more flexible course delivery with a radical growth in distance learning. Recent Australian data (IDP Australia, 2007) indicates both the current modes of study across higher education institutions and their relative ranking with the dominant mode remaining “onshore full degree” (65%). Pertinent to this discussion, however, is the sizable portion (35%) of programmes utilising flexible modes such as “offshore on a campus” (24%), “offshore distance or online” (6%), “onshore study abroad” (3%), and “onshore exchange” (2%).

Distance education programmes that are based with a local, host institution are offered in most countries for local (onshore) and international (offshore) student enrolments. This trend began in higher degree programmes, particularly coursework masters’ programmes, but now reaches to the full spectrum of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. The Open University in the UK as an institution based on “supported open and distance learning” illustrates this flexible delivery while Australia’s Deakin and Central Queensland Universities have a strong distance education focus. Knight’s (2003, p. 22) survey results indicated that distance education was seen “in most regions as an area of increasing interest” with African, Asian, Latin American, North American universities rating this as their top priority (of eight choices) with the Middle Eastern universities rating it as their second priority. The exception to this trend was European universities. They rated “Regional Programmes and Bologna Process” as a top priority with “Mobility” as a second priority. None of the other regions rated “Mobility” as a *top three* priority – an anomaly when considering the top rationale. However, the Middle Eastern universities did cite “Academic Mobility” as one of issues for international attention, though in what respect was not elaborated.

With regard to our focus in this paper on global academic mobility, programmes that are offered via distance from the host country may not seem to impact greatly on academic movement. However, interaction with offshore students does impact upon an academic’s global thinking. This can be seen by the growth in higher education articles exploring patterns of student exchange, cultural differences and learning

styles in recent years (Bourke, 1997, Carr, 2001, Dolby, 2005, Hashimoto, 2001). Academics are asked to work more frequently than before with students from other cultures in multiple modes, be it face-to-face, or virtually in their home countries, or in offshore delivery of courses (Dolby, 2005, Hyam, 2002, Exley, 2003). In terms of movement, flexible course delivery sees many opportunities for short-term academic mobility as they provide offshore 'intensive' classes often of 2-3 week's duration held in combination with distance courses, or as longer-term delivery as stand-alone courses (Bodycott & Crew, 2001, Bridges, 2007, Wang, 2003). This is now accepted practice by many higher education providers with an institutional requirement that the offshore element be cost-effective.

Under the heading "top ten reasons for internationalisation", the IAU survey results placed "Mobility and Exchanges for Students and Teachers" as the highest, institutional level rationale for internationalisation (Knight, 2003, p. 8). Knight's (2004) later analysis classed these as existing and emerging rationales. The former encompassed both national and institutional levels and included "socio-cultural, political, economic and academic" rationales (p. 23). She separated the latter into national and institutional levels. Emerging national rationales included "human resource development; strategic alliances; commercial trade and socio-cultural development" while emerging institutional rationales were focussing on "international branding and profile; income generation; student and staff development; strategic alliances; and knowledge production" (p. 23).

Current Trends in Academic Mobility

Australian researchers have been concerned about these emerging institutional rationales in conceptualising internationalization within university policy. Leask's (2003, p.4) work on policy development at the University of South Australia argued that internationalization should be seen in terms of the "different layers within an institution.... than those associated with marketing, student recruitment and balanced budgets". The aim of such a perspective is that it "constructs internationalisation as being concerned with academic and socio-cultural issues as well as with recruitment and revenue generation" (*ibid*). The focus to date has clearly been on the first two of Knight's emerging institutional rationales of international branding and profile; and income generation.

The inherent tensions between these and the other emerging institutional rationales may have influenced academic mobility. Working under more neo-liberal agendas concerned with international competitiveness, institutions may encourage mobility in order to enhance performance measures in exercises such

as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the UK and New Zealand and the recent Research Quality Framework (RQF) in Australia. Institutional motivations for increased mobility in these instances follow the 'corporate headhunting' model with high performing researchers, especially in terms of competitive research grant income and publications, invited to take up attractive positions. This can be seen as a market-driven approach to academic mobility, and one that imposes some obvious external identity and constraint on the nature and quality of academics' work - an issue that differentiates today's mobile academic from descriptions (Kerr, 1990) of yesterday's relatively constraint-free wanderer.

National-level rationales in the IAU survey reflected this market approach but Knight (2004) also noted the issue of "strategic alliance" as a significant rationale for "international mobility of students and academics" whereby "collaborative research and education initiatives are being seen as productive ways to develop closer geopolitical ties and economic relationships" (pp. 23-24). In a recent analysis of the discursive construction of internationalisation as a national policy in Australia, the authors also noted the political motivations for "a discursive shift towards a political and humanitarian portrayal of internationalisation" as per the ministerial statement below (Bridges & Bartlett, 2007, p. 27).

"The benefits flow two ways. International students contribute intellectually to Australian education and society, and provide diverse social and cultural perspectives that enrich the educational experience of many Australian students. Engagement in international education strengthens Australian democracy and multiculturalism and the tolerance that underpins it." (Nelson, 2003, p. 3)

However, we found that "the issue of market placement and competition in a global knowledge market is clearly the main priority" (Bridges & Bartlett, 2007, p. 27), suggesting that in situations of competing priorities, cash-flow may matter more in what encouragement and support scholars and students receive from institutions when considering and acting on intentions to move between universities in exploration of real and abstract issues. To the extent that such support may effect greater or lesser access to such things as travel, scope of experience within and across new learning contexts, living costs, fees and charges, maintenance of contact with family and friends, it is a critical factor in scholars' considerations of their places in the global academy and the panache with which those who mobilise actualise the potential of the decision.

Conclusion

Historians recount the idealised notion of “intellectual utopias for the wandering scholar” as places and times where the “free spirit of intellectual curiosity knew no national barriers” and where scholars and students were intellectually “fully autonomous” (Kerr, 1990, pp. 6-7). While acknowledging the complexity of each nation’s geopolitical state, such utopias of the past were framed in terms of minimal national intervention:

“Scholars and students were drawn from within the entire orbit of the civilisation of the time and place without reference to nationality, and they studied what they wanted to study without intended external guidance or constraints by nation states. These were the worlds of the wandering scholar and student, now here and now there.” (Kerr, 1990, p.6)

Modern higher education has changed in response to a conceptualisation of academic work influenced significantly by market demands and the internationalisation paradigm. While the original notions of ‘wandering scholar’ still hold in several ways, and perhaps in both the aesthetic and Goliard formulations, modern geopolitical, economic and societal imperatives have combined to reformulate this notion into the ‘global academic’ where external guidance and constraints are more obvious than in earlier times. These modern scholars are both global and mobile on a faster and more complex scale. Their innovatory and communicative exploration of real and abstract issues is little changed from the medieval mantra. They join an international community of scholars though contribution to peer-reviewed journals, though attending conferences both physically and virtually, though maintaining international networks with web-based interactions in email groups and specialist discussion lists, part of the new the “scapes” of higher education’s “global flows” (Marginson & Sawir, 2005).

In aligning the notion of ‘wandering scholar’ to ‘global academic’ we have considered what consti-

tutes ‘mobility’ for the modern academic. In this paper, we have identified three key aspects of mobility as it relates to the notion ‘global academic’. First, we have explored how mobility has been re-constituted in the current context of higher education provision. Second, we have explored how the profile of higher education institutions/providers has changed in the light of internationalisation initiatives and the effect this may have on academic mobility both physical and virtual. Finally, we have considered how changing national and institutional rationales for mobility may affect strategic career planning and academic profiles.

In the modern landscape of academic mobility, the junior global academic may complete doctoral qualifications or take up post-doctoral fellowships or short-term contracts at overseas institutions to add value to their career profile. Senior professorial staff may take up senior fellowships or be ‘headhunted’ for contracted appointments at prestigious or ambitious universities, especially as these institutions jostle for status in competitive rankings. Research quality exercises have encouraged mobility as ‘star’ academics have been encouraged to transfer to boost institutional research profiles. For those who respond by moving, ‘internationalisation’ materialises where the scholar shifts in time and space. They move by plane rather than by mode of communication to create an international profile and to market themselves accordingly though personal and institutional profiles. Yet, with rapidly-broadening technology and communication systems, others may find staying at home more attractive. They, too, have opportunities to be both modern and global as they teach into a world-wide campus with an increasingly diverse student body, and research in collaborative networks into the global village. For them, ‘internationalisation’ materialises in virtual realities where time and space shift to suit the scholar.

It may well be that the actuality and virtuality of travellers and stay-at-homers represent the newest iteration of what once distinguished two groups of us.

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