**The importance of rationales for internationalisation at a local level - university and individual**

Dr Ian Willis

*Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Liverpool,*

126 Mt Pleasant, Liverpool L69 3GW. 0044 151 794 1165

[ian.willis@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:ian.willis@liverpool.ac.uk). Corresponding author

Prof John Taylor

*University of Liverpool, Management School,*

Chatham Street, Liverpool L69 7ZH. 0044 151 795 3650

Dr Ian Willis is an Educational Developer and Director of Studies of the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. He has been involved in development programmes in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Middle East. Currently, he teaches international students on the university’s online professional doctorate in Higher Education leadership and is the UK Director of a collaborative project to ‘enhance learning and teaching in medical education’ in the Punjab, Pakistan.

Professor John Taylor is Professor of Higher Education Leadership and Management. He has had 20 years of experience as a senior manager in higher education, working at several UK universities before moving into an academic career. This combination of high level practical management experience and international recognition for teaching and research provides a distinctive approach to the study of higher education, combining a practical understanding of leadership, management policy issues with cutting edge research.

**The importance of rationales for internationalisation at a local level - university and individual**

# Abstract

This study examines rationales for internationalisation at a research intensive university in the United Kingdom. Internationalisation is often described at a macro level without reaching down to explore the individual motivations that may support or constrain internationalisation at a particular institution. The article argues that it is important to understand internationalisation at a local level as well as at the macro level. Any university’s internationalisation agenda will be both similar and different to other institutions, based on its history and immediate ambitions. There are institutional rationales and rationales across different levels of staff within the institution. Comparing rationales *within* an institution adds a richness to the picture of internationalisation and helps explain and predict a university’s internationalisation trajectory. Studies such as this at a local level can help to uncover some of the real personal motivators for action that impel academics to engage with and shape internationalisation at their university.

# Keywords

Internationalisation, local level, individual rationales, university rationales, higher education

# Introduction

Internationalisation is one of the most powerful possible responses of higher education to global economic and social change and has been widely studied (Scott, 2000; Taylor, 2010). However, in the main, studies of internationalisation have tended to focus on national or higher education sector level rationales for internationalisation, presenting the “macro” picture (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). This approach can mask the local factors that drive any particular institution to follow an internationalisation trajectory. Furthermore, the interests and contributions of individual members of staff are rarely shown in these higher level studies. In order to address these issues, this study adopts the approach of using a fine-grained, qualitative case study to consider the reasons why one research-intensive university in the United Kingdom is developing an internationalisation strategy; the “micro” picture.

This paper examines how a selection of staff within the university perceives internationalisation and the rationales for internationalisation. Staff involved in the study ranged from the senior leadership of the university to academic staff. The rationales for internationalisation identified within the university are briefly compared with existing typologies for internationalisation. Areas of concurrence and concern within the university are explored. Results from the study suggest that greater attention needs to be paid to local factors in internationalisation. Thus, whist the university may appear to be following a well established route to increased internationalisation, in common with most research intensive universities in the UK and world-wide, the particular trajectory and rationales are likely to be specific to the university and based on its unique history, traditions and current aims. In addition, the interests and concerns of local actors at the level of individual staff will influence the internationalisation trajectory. Other universities may find it informative to uncover the particular rationales for internationalisation at their own local level. This will serve to build a more nuanced and richer picture of internationalisation endeavours and will also augment the existing large scale national and sector level studies of internationalisation.

# Background

## Globalisation

Globalisation is a major force driving change in higher education. However, it is a multifaceted term with a variety of interpretations (Taylor, 2010). It refers to entrenched and enduring patterns of interconnectedness across the globe (Held & McGrew, 2003) and includes flows of capital, trade, ideas and people across national borders. UNESCO (2004) defines globalisation as

the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas .... across borders. Globalization affects each country in a different way due to each nation’s individual history, traditions, cultures, resources and priorities (p6).

These flows of globalisation entail the blurring of national borders so that flows of finance, values and ideas are mediated by transnational organisations, rather than by nation states. Barriers represented by national borders, whilst not superseded, are permeated by global flows and transnational organisations (Beck, 2005; Held & McGrew, 2003; Marginson & Sawir, 2005). Despite the diminishing importance of national boundaries, the impacts of globalisation remain strongly determined by national or local conditions. Globalisation is seen as a process that involves movement towards both greater interdependence and integration. As such, one of the major tensions in globalisation is between homogenisation and heterogenisation; between global flows and local responses (Appadurai, 1990).

The UNESCO definition illustrates a key point for this study: the idea that differing effects occur in response to globalisation. The impact is moderated by local traditions, strengths and cultures, drawing attention to the importance of attending to existing ‘layers and conditions’ (Ball, 1994; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). Universities are not simply shaped by the forces of globalisation, but, as largely international organisations and key sites of knowledge production, they are enmeshed in global processes. Internationalisation is one of the key strategies adopted by universities in response to globalisation (Maringe, 2010; Scott, 2000).

## Internationalisation

Internationalisation refers to specific policies and strategies that governments and institutions undertake to add international dimensions to their activities either ‘at home’ or overseas. It is intimately intertwined with globalisation. However, whilst they are related, they are also different processes. Internationalisation may be defined as:

The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2004 p11).

This definition was formulated in order to be relevant to both national/sector and institutional levels. It is sufficiently broad that it can be applied in a range of settings and to different countries. The definition is widely cited; it allows for an institutional focus and it supports analysis of dimensions and functions at the university. However, it does not, at this stage, identify rationales or drivers for internationalisation.

## Rationales for internationalisation

Rationales are the motivations for internationalisation; they represent the ‘why’ of internationalisation (de Wit, 2000). According to Knight (2004), internationalisation polices can be categorised in terms of rationales that are: Economic (looking for income generation), Political (seeking to retain or gain influence), Academic (aiming to enhance the quality of teaching and research) or Social/cultural (building wider, more diverse personal connections). In summarising rationales for internationalisation, Middlehurst and Woodfield (2007 p31) present an updated version of Knight’s (2004) typology of institutional rationales for internationalisation: Economic, Political, Academic, Social and cultural, Competitive and Developmental. This second model takes account of the drive for status and relative advantage, as well as pointing to the role of higher education in capacity building as well as wider social and economic development.

Clearly, these categorisations overlap. However, most importantly for the present study, neither of these typologies emphasises the impact of local factors.

## Importance of local factors in internationalisation

Studies exploring internationalisation tend to focus at the level of the international, the national or the higher education sector as a whole. Commonly, they emphasise the role of Government as both an advocate for internationalisation or as a regulator. By contrast, Qiang (2003) emphasised the role of key individuals in shaping internationalisation, arguing that different approaches reflected the stances of key individuals in leadership positions towards the delivery of international programmes. According to Marginson and Rhoades (2002), there is a need for more research at various levels, but, specifically, at the local institutional level. They call for studies that focus down to the professionals who enact and formulate policies at the local level: ‘We need work that attends to local response and reality, explores local institutions, and considers local practices’ (p286). Local is taken to include factors such as place, university traditions and the concerns and interests of individual members of staff.

Universities are not homogenous. Governments are increasingly looking to increase competition and diversity within the sector. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to expect that the understanding of internationalisation will vary, between institutions and among academic staff. A key theme in this research, therefore, is the importance of attending to local factors when considering internationalisation strategies and activities. It aims to display some of the complexities of internationalisation by showing perceptions at the various levels within the institution and the importance of attending to pre-existing local conditions (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002).

# Methodology

For this study, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data on individuals’ interpretations of their role in, and their perceptions of, the development of internationalisation at the university. Interviews were carried out with staff from three broad levels of the university, categorised as university leaders, academic leaders and academic staff. The notion of levels within the university is presented as clearly defined categories whereas some of the interviewees span the categories through their multiple roles. Nevertheless these levels do outline their major responsibilities in relationship to the university’s internationalisation agenda.

Within the context of this research, there were constraints and opportunities that delineated the choice of interviewees. This principally related to the numbers and selection of academic staff interviewed as they were drawn from a large and diverse group, in contrast to the leadership levels. At the leadership levels, both university and academic, the key respondents were all staff who held particular positions or who were responsible for relevant tasks. Seven staff in this category were interviewed. For the category of academic staff nine staff members were interviewed, three from each of the three faculties and from both professional and traditional disciplines. Selection was based on third party nominations of staff known to be informed in some way about the internationalisation process; the criterion was that they had an opinion, not that the opinion was of a particular type; for example for or against internationalisation.

The interviews were audio-taped and transcriptions sent to interviewees to ensure their views were accurately recorded. The intention was to ‘capture something important about the data in relation to the research question’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p82). Hence the approach was not solely inductive, allowing themes to emerge from the data, nor was it solely theoretically driven, testing out a predetermined framework. Rather, certain ‘themes’ were anticipated, while others were identified as important to the question posed, but not necessarily anticipated.

# Findings

Literature on internationalisation focuses at the national level and on how institutions respond to globalisation. Institutions are treated in the main as an undifferentiated category. However, globalisation theories also highlight that there will be local responses to globalising forces (Appadurai, 1996; Held & McGrew, 2003). Results from this study illustrate the importance of attending to the local specifics of an institution as well as attending to characteristics that it shares with similar institutions.

## Rationales for internationalisation at the university

Four themes were identified as rationales for internationalisation at the university:

* Economic
* Educational benefits
* Strengthening the university
* Contributing to the “greater good”.

The economic rationale was to the fore, but the other rationales were also significant and interconnected. These four main rationales illustrate some convergence with existing typologies of rationales for university to internationalise (Caruana & Spurling, 2007; Knight, 2004; Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007). They also illustrate some divergence that represents a more local expression of rationales for internationalisation.

The preponderance of the economic rationale is clearly in accord with existing typologies of rationales. It is expressed as an essential driver that is related to the survival of the university:

... economic benefit is a prerequisite for the other things we’re talking about. You can’t do things if you don’t have the money, and that’s why I want to keep saying that universities, even in the traditional sector, have to make a surplus, because if you don’t make a surplus you’re going down the tubes, you’re not going to exist (University Leader).

This comment underlines the significance of the economic discourse in rationales for internationalisation. However, no respondent had a ‘pure’ economic rationale for internationalisation; rather, all respondents either wove in additional rationales or challenged the economic hegemony.

There is no rationale expressed in this study that equates with the political rationale that is shown as an institutional rationale by both Knight (2004) and Middlehurst and Woodfield (2007). It appears that these authors have conflated the national and institutional levels when they presented their summaries and that political rationales are largely or entirely confined to national motivations. This can be seen from Middlehurst and Woodfield’s (2007) categories within the political rationale: e.g. foreign policy, national security and peace and mutual understanding. They appear primarily as national concerns rather than as motivations for individual universities.

# Responses across different levels of the university

One feature of the debates around motivations for internationalisation is that it is a complex arena (Taylor, 2010) and that its facets are interlinked. At best, this can be presented as a virtuous cycle of internationalisation where improvements in one area, (e.g. research performance), can have beneficial effects in another area (e.g. student and staff recruitment), which, in turn, may lead to other improvements (Qualter & Willis, 2011). In this environment, simple dichotomies, such as ‘lucrative returns’ versus remaining ‘faithful to a core academic mission’ are unlikely to be useful (Gaffikin and Perry, (2009).

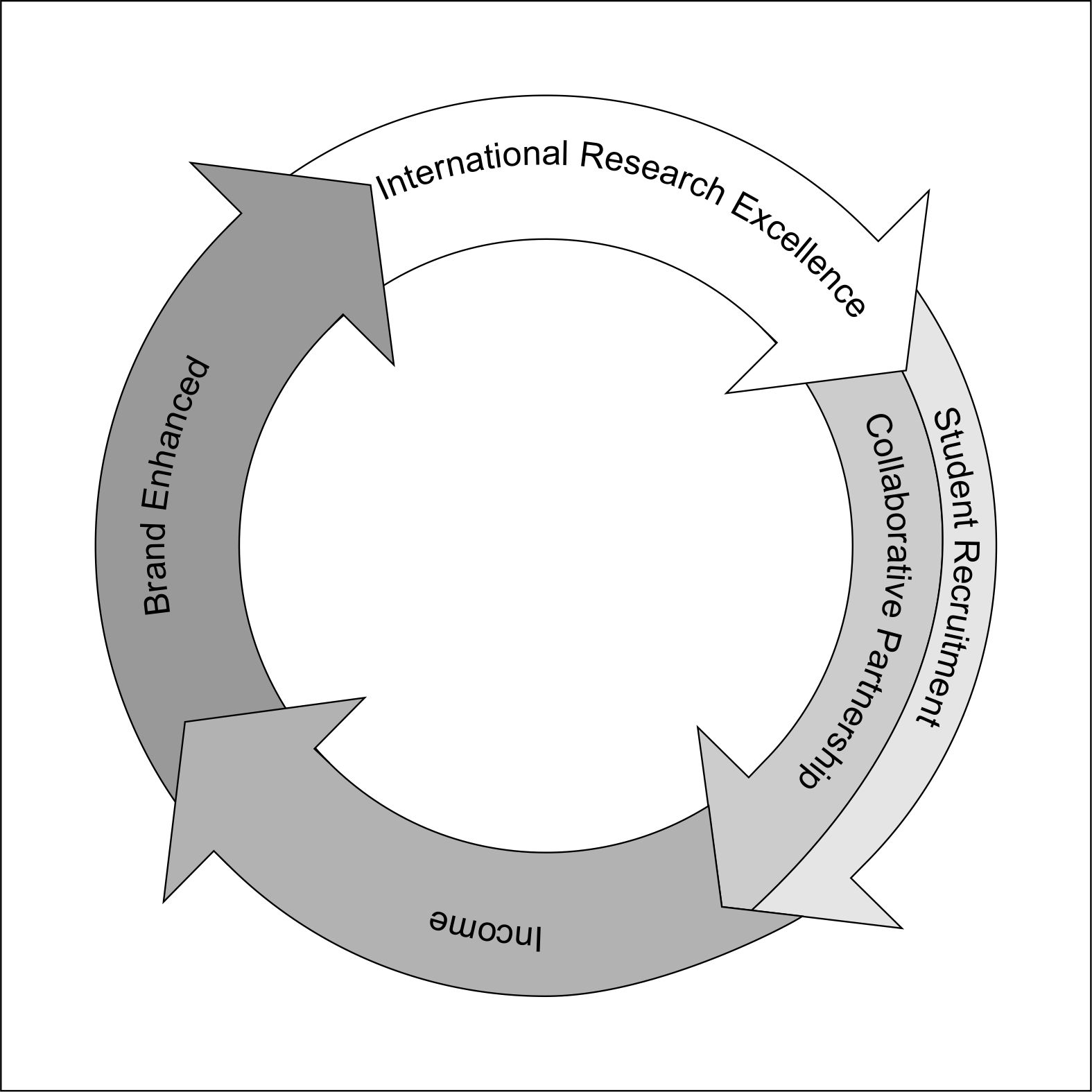


Figure 1: A virtuous circle of internationalisation (Qualter & Willis, 2011)

Nevertheless, staff at various levels within the university are likely to echo the concerns of their various roles and responsibilities. They are likely to prioritise differently and to have differing degrees of freedom to support or dispute the various unfoldings of internationalisation. The challenge for universities as a whole and for individual staff members is to articulate their own positions and acknowledge the positions of others. Here again, locally based research can help to inform decision makers at all levels in a single institution as well as adding to the sum of knowledge in the sector as a whole.

## The message from university leaders:

Not surprisingly, university leaders were primarily concerned and driven by the overall economic possibilities for internationalisation. However, this position was often balanced by an acknowledgment of academic goals:

if you’re into the management of universities, … the thing in front of you is the economy of the institution, .... and often government puts this in terms of economic impact, so I have to put it in terms of economic impact. But that doesn’t mean you’ve forgotten what the whole thing is about ..... you don’t suddenly forget thirty-odd years of teaching and research just because you’ve moved.

The challenge is to ensure, in practical terms, that the economic discourse does not dominate the internationalisation endeavour. This can be seen in the way that goals, priorities or key performance indicators are expressed and monitored. It is relatively simple to measure income, much less straightforward to track culture change or other benefits of internationalisation (Knight, 2001; Leask, 2003).

A key rationale for internationalisation put forward by senior staff at the university was the importance of using international activity to ‘Strengthen the university’. Whilst this rationale will resonate with many universities its particular expression will be linked to the local context. As such, the theme is closely related to the ideas of Marginson and Rhoades’ (2002) regarding the importance of acknowledging the local ‘layers and conditions’. Most interviewees at the university leader level clearly linked the university’s history and aims with the rationales for internationalisation.

The university is part of the Russell Group (an association of 24 leading UK research-intensive universities). As such, being research-led is a central, defining feature of the university and is integral to its past and future. Any moves to internationalisation needed to be linked to the university’s research-led tradition:

… becoming a major international player on the basis of your teaching strengths is much more tricky to manage in a lot of ways. So it had to be on the basis that we were Russell Group and research-intensive.

So, whilst it may appear that the university has taken a similar path to other research-led universities, this perspective masks the detail of the local factors that determined the actual route taken.

As might be expected, the emergence of structural factors as a rationale was largely confined to responses from university leaders given that it is part of their role to consider this type of issue. The major component that emerged in relation to structural factors was the size of the university. The university is one of the smaller Russell Group universities and needs to grow in order to fulfil its aims. This is summarised by one respondent:

We’re too small a university full stop ... for the range of studies that we do. That is one of our major structural problems at the moment … but given that being small is in itself a problem for us, it [take more international students] would seem to be a logical solution to the problem.

The argument for greater size is presented as being both economic, in order to support the practicalities of research activity, and intellectual, in order to create a critical mass and the intellectual environment for research and learning:

Big departments can have a wider range of activities they can sustain a postgraduate culture that the students themselves find very enlivening.

However, to be research-led and globally competitive was said to be ‘bloody expensive’:

… it is a global competition, and it’s fierce, and it’s relentless and it’s bloody expensive... to sustain a world class research-led university the average number of students just goes up and up and up. That’s just an economic argument, actually spreading the overhead, and a way to achieve this in a globalised higher education market is to recruit greater numbers of international students.

Economies of scale and the intellectual gains from larger departments were taken together to make the claim that growth was essential and that international student recruitment would be a central means to achieve this objective.

This section shows a seamless argument that links university structural problems with an internationalisation aspiration that connects economic and intellectual benefits. It illustrates the interlinked nature of threads in the internationalisation discussion at local level. It also indicates the importance of institutional self-perception, in this case, that the institution was too small and at a competitive disadvantage within its peer group, as a rationale for internationalisation. At this stage, it is a rather unproblematic account, partly because the ideas are derived from the leadership strata of the university, who all subscribed to the ‘size matters’, economic and internationalisation agendas. The case study revealed strong agreement among leaders at both university and academic levels on these points, indicating that such rationales can be intensely pervasive within institutions.

In addition to economic and structural rationales, university leaders also articulated the potential educational benefits of internationalisation, in terms of the university’s obligations to provide an education for a globalised world so that students are positioned to operate in a global context:

First of all, there’s a kind of moral driver that if we actually think that the world is becoming more internationalised and possibly globalised in that sense then we ought have students and give them a kind of education that actually fits them for that purpose.

University leaders are required to articulate economic and survival rationales. However, they have careers that involve research and teaching and so, like other staff at different levels, they are attuned to other rationales; academic or moral.

## Academic leaders:

Academic leaders “face both ways within the institution”; they are in a position to influence policy development and at the same time have responsibilities around implementation. As well as sharing views with university leaders and many academic staff, concerns were expressed around the practicalities of implementing change:

There is one endemic problem and that is that we are doing so many different things at the same time at this institution. The many diverse connections that spin out from one activity, creating an internationalisation strategy, and connecting those to other ongoing activities, like reorganisation for example. So there are issues around connections to other activities inevitably when you're going through such rapid change.

This group of staff were clearly aware of the challenges facing the university in the terms expressed by university leaders and were also aware of practical challenges at a time of rapid change were concerned about the capability of staff to respond to further change initiatives, thus reflecting their role in actually effecting change.

## Academic staff:

As would be expected in a university, there are a variety of opinions and the motivations for internationalisation are not uncritically accepted. This sentiment is powerfully expressed by one academic staff member:

… it seems to me what universities are doing, and [this university] is in common with the rest, really is operating like large-scale fishermen, trawler boats, they're following where the shoals are, and if the shoal disappears in one part of the world they’ll go and exploit another one and they're not at all interested in how that relates to the local community or building relationships up.

This staff member makes the case against the economic exploitation of international students purely for fee income. It contrasts with the avowed multiple motivations expressed by leaders at the university and it illustrates the opposition to crude models of student recruitment for purely economic reasons.

A straightforward perception of the university’s rationale for internationalisation is ‘getting in more overseas students to get in more fee income basically’. There is a danger that this view of the university’s rationale for internationalisation becomes the dominant discourse and hampers recognition of the other rationales. Presenting a more multi-faceted rationale for internationalisation is a key task for senior university staff in order to counter the perception that economics is the sole or overwhelmingly dominant economic rationale.

However, several of the respondents linked the rationale of the necessity of generating fee income with other threads in the pattern:

a view I have some sympathy with I must say given the underfunding in universities but it does make life very difficult for teaching for example.

Here, fee income is linked both to a wider structural issue, underfunding and to practical concerns, difficulties of teaching. This comment neatly illustrates awareness of related threads among academic staff and shows that one rationale, for example, an economic rationale, is rarely singular. Rationales may address different concerns, but they are interrelated.

This element of the research illustrated that individuals at differing levels of the university generally reflected the pressures and expectations of the positions they held and the concerns that confronted them. Also, there was clear evidence that staff at all levels acknowledged the importance of aspects that appeared part of the ‘other side’ of a simple dichotomy: income versus education.

Academic staff expressed mixed views about the problems and challenges of including international students and providing adequately for them. This is often expressed as a deficit view or as alternatives to a deficit view i.e. there are problems to solve in taking on international students (Leask, 2001; Montgomery, 2009). This paper is not primarily concerned with this debate, but the study does point to an alternative experience, where international students are helping to raise academic standards:

I would be more than happy to have more international people on board because in the lecture hall, in the practical, in the lab exercises, always they are the ones who are most keen to get additional knowledge, to engage fully and so on ... I think it’s a very positive thing to have a mixed class in front of you because the good ones will bring up the others and very often the good ones are overseas students that are much more keen on learning. So even for our UK or home students it will be a positive thing to have international people in there.

This is not an isolated comment at the university (Strivens, 2009). However, there are caveats. This experience is reported more in ‘technical’ or mathematical based subjects. It is less common in subjects requiring more nuanced language skills. In addition, the university recruits many of its international students from partner institutions that have helped to prepare them for UK higher education. Nevertheless, this study clearly problematises the deficit model of accepting international students and, although contextually specific, it provides an infrequently articulated rationale for internationalisation.

These observations may or may not be generalisable, but they do illustrate the importance of a full exploration of the context of each institution’s internationalisation project and point to the value of studies grounded in local experience. Examples of local occurrences lead to considerations of how local conditions at the university provide a context that, whilst sharing characteristics with other research-led universities, when taken together create a unique local situation with particular rationales for internationalisation.

## Personal experience

There was a striking commonality around the significance of personal experience and interests in approaches and commitments to internationalisation. Academic endeavours are also individual projects and interests and these motivate academics rather than making money for the university:

In everything I’ve said so far, I’ve not mentioned finances at all … I don’t wake up every morning with that and think to myself: I’ve got to make more money for the University and I’m going to do that by having an internationalisation agenda. I certainly don’t think that. I’m involved in fee negotiations with other universities but if that’s the driver then there’s something wrong. It’s much more in the guts than that (Academic Leader).

Comments such as this were made regularly in the interviews and across the different categories of staff:

I can’t tell you how important that period of time was for me when I was living outside the UK, because everything changed for me, absolutely everything changed. ... I just can’t help but think that if we could try to help some of the students, to experience that same thing, then that would be absolutely marvellous for them (Academic Leader).

For others it is more explicitly linked to personal/professional research agendas. It is a career area and also has personal spin offs in terms of enjoyment:

... for me one of the important things in research is contextualisation and more I understand about the country the more I understand how it works and the better the comparative research that we do. So I've had some really positive experiences of working with people in different countries. ... I think it's made my research more interesting (Academic Staff).

These types of comment illustrate the importance of understanding the views of staff at a local level, where local reaches to individuals who are in a position to influence and enact an internationalisation agenda.

## The ‘Greater Good’ rationale

The Greater Good rationale is an important finding from this research in that it is a clear demonstration of motivations that are not linked directly to economic rationales and it was consistently expressed across all levels of the university. As the economic discourse is so strongly to the fore in contemporary argument, it is an important to draw attention to the place of non-economic rationales. In addition, Greater Good aspirations connect strongly with individuals’ experiences and therefore with their sense of important work, which often includes international activities. It also draws attention to the importance of local data down to the level of departmental and individual concerns in internationalisation research.

The Greater Good role of universities can be linked to commercial imperatives. Indeed several of the respondents did that by speaking in favour of making a positive contribution, but cautioning against ‘losing money while doing it’. This tension is described by Gaffikin and Perry (2009) as being a choice of either adaptation to trends that ‘yield lucrative returns’ or that universities ‘remain faithful to a core education mission’ (p138). There is a danger that the argument is presented as a choice between two alternatives: lucrative returns or core educational mission. It is more likely that universities will need to find a more nuanced approach to internationalisation that recognises the importance of both these facets of internationalisation.

One respondent, who encapsulated this notion, quoted Martin Luther King: ‘I cannot be everything I ought to be until you are everything you ought to be’ and connected the quotation to the role of the university:

I think that’s true, not just on an individual level but also on a society level. We in this country, we in this university, cannot be everything we ought to be, unless we are helping others to be what they can be (University Leader).

Other expressions linked to ideas about the purpose of universities and reflected widely held ‘non-economic’ views:

We are part of an international community and what we're about is sharing experiences and everything else on an intellectual level rather than it just being about business (Academic Staff).

The idea of the ‘Greater Good‘ is highlighted as a rationale as it can connect a university ideal with commercial realities and shows again the interlinking of rationales for internationalisation. Within the unrelenting marketisation discourse expressed by many scholars, it is vital to articulate a view of internationalisation that combines commercial reality with a “Greater Good” role of universities. This “Greater Good” rationale is an example of the highly personal perspectives that can both motivate individuals and influence university approaches to internationalisation. Many observers are highly cynical about the motivations of universities in engaging with internationalisation. This research suggests that, on the contrary, both institutional leaders and the academic staff also subscribe to a rounded and well-intentioned approach.

It was clear from the interviews that this sense of the purpose of the university and the desire to contribute to global solutions was expressed in a heartfelt manner. This type of aspiration was present in many of the responses and across academic staff from all disciplinary backgrounds.

# Conclusions

Internationalisation is often presented as an activity and a policy pursued at a macro level without reaching down to explore the individual actions and motivations that may support or constrain internationalisation. It is clear from this research that there is a dominant economic discourse that can hardly be ignored. However, this institutional economic discourse carries risks in that it is not a motivator for many staff and a pervasive economic discourse hides local individual factors that are often the real personal motivators for action.

In comparing the outcomes of this research with other typologies of rationalisations for internationalisation, there is considerable agreement on the significance of a number of rationales, particularly potential benefits both economic and educational. There was no evidence in this study of a Political dimension, as shown by other researchers (Knight, 2004; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002), indicating that their studies combine national and institutional interests rather than focusing on the local level.

Internationalisation is one of the university’s key strategic goals. These goals were derived following an extensive consultation process. The internationalisation strategy is a high level aspirational document that was developed with more limited consultation but it does allow considerable latitude for the faculties and schools to interpret and enact it in ways that are appropriate to their own positions.

At an institutional level, this study indicated that internationalisation was being driven by concerns shared with other research intensive universities and by particular local factors and assumptions. In this case, the need to grow in size and the experience of raising standards in the classroom through recruiting international students were driving factors. In addition, the idea of ‘doing good in the world’ was very clearly articulated at different levels within the university and represented a crucial motivator both for the university itself and for individual staff members. In presenting this positive articulation, respondents did not ignore the need to remain economically viable. Unsurprisingly, university leaders were concerned with economic issues often expressed through the lens of maintaining and enhancing the university’s reputation based on research. This was a concern shared by many staff, despite both disparate views about self interested economic motivation and more immediate practical concerns as a result of increasing numbers of international students.

In this study the local level includes individual staff interests as well as institutional drivers. The freedom inherent in the international strategy for faculties to interpret according to their own positions is mirrored in the freedom provided to individual staff to respond to the strategy. The study has shown the importance of individual staff’s views and experiences that shape commitments to specific actions within the institutional agenda.

It was not the intention of this paper to examine different understandings of internationalisation by disciplinary background. Nevertheless, it can be suggested that academic staff working in areas such as science, engineering and medicine, where large, multinational research networks are familiar, have a different experience of internationalisation from colleagues working in the humanities and social sciences; different disciplinary conventions in teaching may also be significant. Academic staff themselves approach internationalisation with mixed motives, to enrich their teaching, to extend their research, reflecting personal interests and with an eye to career development. Such motives may vary between individuals but are common across disciplines; practical implementation may, however, differ between disciplines. Another local factor to be considered concerns the opportunities available. These may vary depending on funding available, the size of the academic unit (for example, the availability of other staff to provide “cover” during periods of overseas travel) and the relative priorities of departmental or school leadership. Academic staff will have their own rationales and expectations, but the local context will help to shape and refine internationalisation in practice.

At the local level, therefore, differences in motivation may exist between disciplines, between departments or schools and between individuals working at different levels within the organisation. Such differences are not necessarily a cause for conflict within a particular institution. It is, however, important for evolving institutional strategy to be sensitive to such local differences.

Future studies of internationalisation that attend to individual perceptions and actions can add another layer to the picture of internationalisation. This can add a richness beyond the pre-occupation with the economic discourse and connect more closely with issues that impel academics to engage with university agendas, such as internationalisation. In addition, future studies could seek more data on difference between departments and faculties in their approaches to internationalisation. Further research is needed at a local level to articulate an increasingly nuanced view of internationalisation that can bring together economic and ‘Great Good’ rationales.

References

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Ball, S. J. (1994). *Education reform: A critical and post-structural approach*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Beck, U. (2005). *What is globalization?*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.

Caruana, V., & Spurling, N. (2007). The internationalisation of UK higher education: A review of selected material. Retrieved October, 2008, from <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/the_internationalisation_of_uk_he?i=academyYork>

de Wit, H. (2000). *Changing rationales for the internationalization of higher education.* (). Bucharest, Romania: UNESCO.

Gaffikin, F., & Perry, D. (2009). Discourses and strategic visions: The U.S. research university as an institutional manifestation of neoliberalism in a global era. *American Educational Research Journal, 46*(1), 115-144.

Held, D., & McGrew, A. (2003). The great globalization debate:  An introduction. In D. Held, & A. McGrew (Eds.), *The global transformations reader* (2nd ed., pp. 1-50). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Knight, J. (2001). Monitoring the quality and progress of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 5*(3), 228-243. doi:10.1177/102831530153004

Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodelled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 8*(1), 5-31. doi:10.1177/1028315303260832

Leask, B. (2001). Bridging the gap: Internationalizing university curricula. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 5*, 100-115.

Leask, B. (2003). Beyond the numbers: Levels of layers of internationalisation to utilise and support growth and diversity. *IDP Australian International Education Conference,* Melbourne.

Marginson, S., & Rhoades, G. (2002). Beyond national states, markets, and systems of higher education: A glonacal-agency   heuristic. *Higher Education, 43*(3), 281-309.

Marginson, S., & Sawir, E. (2005). Interrogating global flows in higher education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 3*(3), 281-309.

Maringe, F. (2010). The meanings of globalization and internationalization in HE: Findings from a world survey. In F. Maringe, & N. Foskett (Eds.), *Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education: Theoretical, strategic and management perspectives* (pp. 17-34). New York: Continuum.

Middlehurst, R., & Woodfield, S. (2007). *Responding to the internationalisation agenda: Implications for institutional strategy and practice*. York: Higher Education Academy.

Montgomery, C. (2009). A decade of internationalisation: Has it influenced students' views of cross-cultural group work at university? *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(2), 256-270. doi:10.1177/1028315308329790

Qiang, Z. (2003). Internationalization of higher education: Towards a conceptual framework. *Policy Futures in Education, 1*(2)

Qualter, A., & Willis, I. (2011). Internationalisation policy and practice: The position of  middle managers. *ISOTL/ISL 2010 Conference Proceedings,* Liverpool, UK.

Scott, P. (2000). Globalisation and higher education: Challenges for the 21st century. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 4*(1), 3-10. doi:10.1177/102831530000400102

Strivens, J. (2009). *Personal communication based on a current research project*

Taylor, J. (2010). The response of governments and universities to globalization and internationalization in higher education. In F. Maringe, & N. Foskett (Eds.), *Globalization and internationalization in higher education: Theoretical, strategic and management perspectives* (pp. 83-96). London: Continuum.

UNESCO. (2004). Higher education in a globalized society. Retrieved October, 2008, from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001362/136247e.pdf>