Spheres of Influence: Collaborating with Shanghai International Student Recruitment (ISR) Team

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Outline

Introduction

- Foucault, Power, Universities & EAP
- Collaboration with Shanghai ISR Team
- Context & Reasons
- Collaboration Activities
- Impact
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Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

Institutions & Disciplinary Power

- a form of invisible social control

- subjects individuals to patterns of behaviour to construct their thoughts, desires and interests

- can be seen in institutions which teach a certain way of thinking & behaving

- 3 tools of disciplinary power: exams, hierarchical observations, normalising judgement

- not an oppressing but **a productive** form of power

Foucault (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings*

Foucault, Power & Universities

Universities as

- a block of **'capacity–communication–power'**

- spaces where students & teachers promote, internalise & maintain socially desirable modes of behaviour & forms of knowledge

- multifaceted amalgamations of economic, political, & epistemological power relations

- constantly recreated through a series of activities & processes which are themselves contingent & so in a state of flux

Foucault (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings*

Foucault, Power & EAP

- EAP units **increasingly prominent & important as an HE technology of power** as Universities respond to new global demands for English-speaking, multi-skilled and self-regulated citizens

- EAP as **a tool of disciplinary power** and of 'capacity-**communication**-power'; maintains power relations by normalising certain ways of speaking, writing & thinking

- As EAP practitioners, we both uphold & are subjected to HE power relations; but also have a degree of agency within the University, exercised through micro or local strategic aims & initiatives

- U of Nottingham EAP's dual strategic aims: increasing internal visibility in relation to other academic units & exerting influence over external student recruitment

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'From application to graduation'

- Established 35 years ago
- Part of the School of Education, but collaborate with & support students across all University Faculties & Schools
- International & home students (mostly postgraduate)
- Annually support 4,500 international students (pre-sessional, in-sessional, electives, partners' programmes)

Summer pre-sessional provision

- 10Wk and 6Wk courses
- Online & on campus
- EGAP & ESAP (Business, Education, Engineering, Architecture & Built Environment, Law)

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Collaboration with International Student Recruitment (ISR) Team

- **University strategy**: to support UoN as a global University 'without borders'; **ISR teams in Nottingham & in Shanghai**

- **Necessity:** to increase student numbers post-pandemic

- **Geopolitics:** to minimise uncertainty & disruption to some student recruitment pathways (e.g. decrease of sponsored students from the Middle East)

- **Future-proofing:** to adapt to the changing space of the university: *more permeable boundaries … to achieve institutional academic and organisational agendas* (Whitchurch, 2006)

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Collaboration with ISR UoN Team - Recruitment Targets

- Each year, ISR and CELE set targets for T4 /summer courses

- Ask ISR colleagues to project based on UoN targets for international PGT students & CELE internal data (applications, offers, accepts, conversion rates, successful students joining UoN post-pressessional courses)

- Soft negotiation: too conservative or too ambitious projections; important to get projections right for staffing

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Collaboration with ISR Shanghai Team - Promotional Webinars

- Prospective applicants & offer-holder 'conversion' events

- WeChat experience

- Transition to Teams' webinars

- Delivery in English & Mandarin

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Collaboration with ISR Shanghai Team - Promotional Webinars Data

- 2021-2022 **3 sessions, no attendance recorded**

- 2022 – 2023 **7 sessions; over 437 attendees**

- 2023-2024 **8 sessions; so far 337 attendees**

- Student Ambassadors involvement

- Questions from students

- Videos of class activities & tutorials

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Collaboration with ISR Shanghai Team - FAQ document

- Creating FAQ document: pre/post sessions (ISR Shanghai team suggestion)

- Applicants' questions around courses, admissions and visa

- Managing the number of questions; tailoring responses to students' needs

- Opportunity for information-sharing in English & Mandarin

- Live Chat FAQs

Collaboration with ISR Shanghai Team - Impact

Increased influence over recruitment strategies & a more ethical recruitment:

- monthly engagement with prospective applicants and offer-holders

- ability to respond to questions around courses, admissions and visas **in real time**

Increased visibility & inclusivity:

- different teams within the University (recruitment numbers; marketing PEAP info)

- engaging with prospective applicants & offer-holders in English and Mandarin (ISR colleagues in China) before they apply to UoN/ accept UoN offer

Collaboration with ISR Shanghai Team - Impact

Increased Relationship-building:

- establishing a relationship with future students & their parents

- putting (friendly) course leaders' & teachers' faces to names on website

- strengthening relationship with ISR Shanghai colleagues to create a sense of common goal

Increased Recognition/awareness:

- opportunity to demystify pre-sessional courses

- opportunity to showcase difference between what we offer (academic literacy

  skills' development) and English Language Tests (e.g. IELTS)

Conclusion

Collaborations with ISR Shanghai colleagues is a promising way of exercising agency within the HE block of **'capacity–communication–power'** by:

- positioning our EAP centre in a more influential position in terms of recruitment & in relation to other University units

- moving away from the *margins of academia* (MacDonald 2016)

- establishing a non or semi-mediated relationship with potential students

- managing students' expectations (tests versus PS course)

- a shifting of perspective & acceptance of the multi-professional approach (Whitchurch 2006) to achieve University Strategies

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Thank you