

Quality Regulation of International Branch Campuses in Asian Nations: Divergence or Convergence?

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Feb 27, 2017

2015 MOST Project

**MOST 103-2410-H-030 -052 –
From 2014/08/01 to 2015/07/31**

“A Comparative Study of Branch
Campuses in Malaysia, Singapore
and China and its Framework of
Quality Assurance System”

Introduction

- Branch campuses are sprouting around the world, particularly in Asia.
- A popular type of cross-border higher education, the international branch campus is a relatively new phenomenon that has seen a dramatic increase since 2000.
 - In 2002, there were only 24 international branch campuses,
 - In 2014, this number had risen to more than 200 worldwide

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE)

- “An international branch campus is an off-shore entity of a higher education institution operated by the institution or through a joint venture in which the institution is a partner (some countries require foreign providers to partner with a local organization) in the name of the foreign institution.”

Three key features

by American Council of Education (2009)

- it is an institution operating in a country **outside** of the home campus.
- it awards **degrees** that bear the home institution's name.
- it provides **face-face instruction** supported by a permanent administration team.

Exporting and Importing Countries of International Branch Campuses

- Currently, the largest source countries are the United States (US), Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), France and India
 - US 78
 - UK 25
 - Australia 14
- China and Singapore and Malaysia were three top host countries of international branch campus in Asia
 - 52 in China,
 - 18 in Singapore
 - 9 in Malaysia.

Rationales for its establishment in Asia

- Enhancing Domestic higher education quality
- Developing human capital
- Being an education hub

Five major models in Asia

- self-funded
- external funding from host countries
- support from private companies or organization
- facilities lease from private sectors
- academic collaboration with local partner

Comparative analysis of goals, national policy and regulatory framework in Malaysia, Singapore, China and South Korea

	South Korea	China	Singapore	Malaysia
Goals	economic growth / retain local talents/ talent hub	improve domestic higher education quality	economic growth/ attract global talents/ knowledge hub	improve education resources/ education hub
Establishment	Special Act On Establishment And Management Of Foreign Educational Institutions In Free Economic Zones	Regulation of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-foreign Cooperative Education	Private Education Act, Revised Edition 2011	Private Higher Educational Institutions Act (PHEIA)
Regulations/ investment	Deregulation / investing 40 billion USD	1. Deregulation 2. Partner institution is required	Taxation and rent reduction	1. Cooperation with local company or local institutions. 2. The land is owned by the local company and the rents are very cheap.
Candidates	By invitation the top 200	Foreign universities with highly recognized academic reputation	By invitation and application both	By invitation and with help of alumni
Location	At Economic Free zone	Joint campus or independent campus	Lease and own campus	Independent campus
Award Degrees	The same as home campus	"Degree certificates" are awarded by the host universities and a "diploma of graduation" in the official format of MOE, China	The same as home campus	The same as home campus

Quality regulation in exporting and importing countries

- Exporting countries
 - US, UK, Australia
- Importing countries
 - Liberal regulation with minimal quality assurance
 - liberal regulation with comprehensive assurance
 - restrictive regulation and minimal quality assurance model
 - restrictive regulation and comprehensive quality assurance

Two Purposes of the research

- To explore national policies and regulatory frameworks for international branch campuses in *Malaysia, Singapore, China and South Korea*.
- To realize *quality assurance approaches* of international branch campuses in both exporting countries and importing countries

Research Method

- Qualitative Research
- Interview Questions
 - 20 academics from branch campuses in four nations
 - management of branch campuses, their perceptions of the characteristics of branch campuses, the strategies for developing branch campuses, development of internal quality assurance mechanism, and the challenges they faced in the sustainability of a branch campus.
 - 14 experts from quality assurance agencies
 - the regulation of transnational higher education and the approaches of external reviews over branch campuses

Major Findings

I. Internal quality assurance and autonomy of international branch campuses

- (1) International branch campuses in four nations have developed a sound internal quality assurance mechanism
 - Monash University in Malaysia and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in China
 - A professional QA office
- (2) International branch campuses have greater autonomy over student admission and faculty recruitment than curriculum and student learning assessment.
 - Integrate Asian experience into curriculum

II. External QA approaches in four nations

- (1) Four nations adopt different policies including *exemption, redundancy, international accreditation and home accreditation.*
- (2) Korea and Singapore tend to be in the category of *Liberal regulation with minimal quality assurance*
- (3) Malaysia and China are more likely to be in the category of *Liberal regulation with comprehensive assurance*

III. Divergence or Convergence: Who should take QA responsibility?

- Convergence Model for Internal QA
 - Most branch campuses in Asia *implemented home campus' system and rules into their internal quality mechanism*, particularly quality manual use, curriculum approval, teaching materials import, the same faculty qualification, etc.
 - lead to a loss of autonomy of branch campus as an independent institution in the host country.
- Divergence Model of External QA
 - Quality assurance agencies at exporting and importing countries both tend to believe that the home accreditor should take major responsibility
 - *Collaboration between home and host accreditors*, including information sharing, is a recent development.

IV. Role of international quality assurance networks

- UNESCO/ OECD, APQN Guidelines
- CHEA “Seven Principles” (2015)
- ENQA “Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education (QACHE)” (2015)
 - Toolkit “practical advice to quality assurance agencies, regardless of their specific approach to quality assuring cross-border higher education, on how they may be able to realize the mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation required to facilitate the quality assurance of cross-border provision”

Conclusion

- Both home and host countries are required to *share responsibility* for ensuring the quality of international branch campuses
- Conducting *a joint review* is considered as one of the best strategies
- *Developing “trust”* among quality assurance agencies of home and host countries will take time and require greater effort in the future.
- *Over-reliance on sending countries* and local accreditors' *lacking international capacities* are big challenges

Altbach (2010)

Establishing a real branch campus that provides an education the same as at the home institution is not an initially easy task, and it is much more difficult as time goes on. Sustainability should be a central concern when establishing a branch campus, but there is little evidence of such a concept

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