

Abu Dhabi's historically ambivalent stance toward its non-national demographic. Relative to Dubai, Abu Dhabi has leaned on smaller influxes of culturally similar Arab and Pakistani workers. A more cautious approach to the diversification of the local economy has been enabled by Abu Dhabi's massive oil reserves, over 90 percent of the United Arab Emirates' total supply. Former United Arab Emirates' president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, is on record as saying that a majority expatriate population would continue to pose "a grave problem which threatens the stability of our society and the prospects for future generations."

Indeed, these anxieties are reflected in present-day Abu Dhabi as well as in the development of the local tertiary education structure. The government declared 2008 "The Year of National Identity," and apart from the selective pairing with two elite branch campuses (Paris Sorbonne University-Abu Dhabi being the other), it has only allowed powerful indigenous families to open its private universities. Prominent examples of this include ALHOSN University (established in 2005 with the university slogan, "Global Knowledge with Local Vision") and Abu Dhabi University (established 2003, with the motto "Universal Knowledge, Timeless Truth"). Admissions standards for these universities are relatively low, with the end result being that Emiratis are able to enroll locally in large numbers.

*Since 2001, Education City has played home to the Academic Bridge Program, which provides up to two years of preparatory work for students hoping to qualify for otherwise unattainable Education City admission.*

#### LINKS TO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

If New York University-Abu Dhabi succeeds it will assuredly become the premier tertiary institution in the Gulf region. Yet, in its present form, its enrollment strategy is likely to inspire dynamic tension between the availability of world-class education—comprehensively funded by the Emirate—and its relative inaccessibility to the local population.

Questions about Education City's interconnection with the rest of Qatari society are common. Its officials and academic administrators have been sensitive to charges of elitism and isolation, particularly when coupled with an expressed concern that Qatar University—the institution representing over 90 percent of Qataris in tertiary education—is being forgotten. The Qatar Foundation has attempted to counter these accusations with demonstrable links between the branch campuses, the local business community, and the national university. One of the major benefits of Education City is understood to be the ready supply of experts at the disposal of Qatar University faculty. In short, Education City acts as a long-term, local consultancy.

New York University-Abu Dhabi is already making comparable inroads—in 2008 inaugurating its Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed University Scholars Program with collaboration from the Abu Dhabi Education Council. The program identifies a handful of the most talented upper-year students from the United Arab Emirates' national universities, who then participate in select academic and leadership programming provided by New York University. Given the projected enrollment aims of the branch campus and some of the cultural unease that pervades a demographically imbalanced Abu Dhabi, reaching out and expanding tangible links to the community and its existing universities will be of paramount importance. ■

## Transnational Higher Education: Why It Happens and Who Benefits?

VIK NAIDOO

*Vik Naidoo is a strategy adviser to the Enterprise Connect Division of the Australian Federal Government's Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. E-mail: viknaidoo@gmail.com. He was previously the associate director (international relations) at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Australian federal government.*

Transnational higher education programs have become an increasingly integral part of the internationalization of higher education. The students are located in the receiving country rather than the source country where the awarding institution is based. While not an entirely new phenomenon in the tertiary education landscape, the scale of the global expansion of contemporary transnational developments is substantially different. Until my recent article entitled "Transnational Higher Education: A Stock Take of Current Activity" (*Journal of Studies in International Education*, September 2009), an understanding of the growth of transnational developments was largely based on anecdotal evidence, given a dearth of comprehensive statistics. Through an analysis of secondary data, synthesizing a range of intelligence scattered around books, academic journals, newspapers, and institutional Web sites, the article quantified the scale of contemporary transnational higher education in mid-2008. This sector involved approximately 3,800 to 4,300 programs.

While transnational higher education is not a new phenomenon, the pace of its global expansion, however, is. This growth has taken place amidst liberalization of foreign direct investment policies in the education sector. However, foreign direct

investment liberalization is a facilitator of transnational education, not its catalyst. In the following discussion, four rationales are highlighted to help explain the growth in transnational higher education. These rationales are derived from research undertaken by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.

#### MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

The mutual understanding rationale emphasizes academic, cultural, social, and political grounds for the internationalization of education and does not consider education as part of an articulated economic policy. Under this concept, the internationalization policies for higher education are based on strengthening ties between countries through the creation of networks of political and business elites. For example, a number of Spanish institutions, especially Catholic institutions, have apparently developed transnational higher education programs to extend Spanish influence in the developing countries of Latin America.

#### SKILLED MIGRATION

Under the skilled migration rationale, internationalization is meant to attract foreign students who are then encouraged to stay in the source country post graduation and contribute to its knowledge economy. Germany is a country where the skilled migration rationale is being employed. This approach is more devoted to bringing students to the source country rather than taking transnational programs to receiving countries. However, transnational programs can serve as a feeder strategy to facilitate student mobility to the source country (e.g., twinning programs).

#### REVENUE GENERATION

The revenue-generation rationale highlights the market and trade approach of transnational higher education. It reflects income as an important rationale for recruiting international students. In the United Kingdom, for example, the prime minister's initiative has highlighted offshore education to diversify the export of education services, which currently focuses primarily on student mobility. Similarly, some traditional receiving countries have, in recent years, shown an interest in developing their transnational delivery to take advantage of the export revenues thus provided to the internationalization of education. Singapore is a key example of this strategy.

#### CAPACITY BUILDING

Lastly, the capacity development rationale views transnational higher education as a means of fulfilling the unmet demand for education from local constituents and building capacity and capability for quality education. This rationale is especially important in countries such as Malaysia, where the higher

education system does not meet domestic demand for higher education.

#### THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS

These four rationales for the growth of transnational higher education are not mutually exclusive. For example, a source country might benefit from revenue generation, while the receiving country is promoted through capacity and capability building. In both the popular media as well as academic literature, transnational higher education has received much criticism regarding its benefits largely accruing to source countries, to the detriment of receiving countries. In other words, these programs have often been referred to as a North/South (developed countries/developing countries) or West/East phenomenon. Given the mutually nonexclusive aspect of the different rationales, there is a danger in analyzing transnational higher education through such North/South polarized lenses. Instead, a more balanced debate needs to be highlighted to consider that the impacts of transnational higher education may be wide-ranging and accrue to both receiving and source countries.

*Under the skilled migration rationale, internationalization is meant to attract foreign students who are then encouraged to stay in the source country post graduation and contribute to its knowledge economy.*

Such a balanced debate would present a more positive picture of transnational higher education, although it needs to be acknowledged that developments are not risk free. For example, providers who are just profit minded and not concerned about the delivery of quality programs, will undermine the benefits as a capacity and capability instrument. However, providers can be controlled through proper management and governance of regulatory mechanisms. Disregarding all transnational developments at the outset because of these rogue providers would be an injustice to the benefits that properly implemented programs can deliver. The case of Singapore and Malaysia are good examples in this respect. Not all countries, however, have the same level of regulatory power as Singapore and Malaysia to manage the growth of transnational developments. Countries with a lack of regulatory capacity and enforcement may need to reinforce their institutions when engaging with such programs. Thus, while uncontrolled developments do have their dangers, the exercise of regulatory frameworks can minimize these risks. Both the popular press and the academic community share a responsibility to represent a more balanced debate on the issue of who benefits from transnational higher education. ■