

lege a commission for supplying bulk admissions.

Students: Students pay for, and expect to earn a degree, but do not expect to attend classes. They often refer to themselves as “nonattending students.” The institutions honor, so to speak, that expectation. The reasons for their non-attendance vary. The college may be located far from students’ hometowns, or students may have work obligations. Students may appear when exams are given or do what is minimally required. Teachers, for example, e-mail lessons to students. Sometimes students come to the college if they are able, according to their own convenience. They take notes, show their work, take work home, and try to understand the lessons. The teachers then give them a final grade that will enable them to take the university examinations. The pass percentage in the college is mostly 100 percent.

Institutional Leaders: Institutional leaders often manipulate the system to maximize their financial gain. One strategy involves keeping teachers and the college principal “on paper” to meet the staffing norms set by the regulating authorities. Thus, teachers may be listed as full-time employees, but are actually not. A teacher gets a full salary on paper, but returns a substantial amount to the college. The institution’s books appear to have a full complement of teachers, and the teachers receive an income for doing virtually nothing.

In addition, teachers and/or college principals may be involved in the university recruitment process, which creates revenue for the college and the recruiters. The “*jaan-pehchaan*” (social network) system allows institutional leaders to access levers of opportunity and sustains their business interests. The principal may act like an agent by supplying students, taking a commission from students, and, in return, negotiating a lower admission fee and proxy-attendance.

Visiting Committees: College management works hard to ensure that their institution complies with a plethora of regulations concerning daily management. When government-specified committees visit to rate, review, or rank the college, management rolls out the red carpet. Site-visit committees are paid an official amount. However, on visits to weak (or entirely nonexistent) institutions, members of the site committee might solicit more than ten times the official amount of the “*shraddha*” (a gratuity based on trust).

Colleges that do not exist are those without any buildings or that have a building, but it is empty. At times, inspection teams are taken to an entirely different building so they do not see an empty space. These colleges are able to function because of an exchange of money. That is, the institutions pay a significant amount of money to the authorities to gain the license to operate. Once they receive their initial permits, they then turn to paying visiting teams in order to provide a positive report.

CONCLUSION

The challenge in India, or for any country facing systemic corruption, is that a cultural ethos pervades individual actions. If a student cheats on an exam and the institution condemns cheating, the process of rectifying aberrant behavior is clear. However, reform is more difficult in a culture where “everyone does it.” If black money is the norm rather than the exception, there is little incentive to change. The casual use of phrases such as “nonattending student” underscores a system that is rigged so that individuals can pay for degrees. When individuals get paid for no work—or receive payment for providing a particular score on a site visit or exam—corruption is endemic.

The first step in systemic reform is recognizing that a problem exists. India has a storied history of excellence in higher education. The world’s first residential university was an Indian institution—Nalanda in the fifth century. India has generated eight Nobel Prize winners and a literary tradition that extends over thousands of years. To overcome the corruption that impairs confidence and quality, India’s epic history should serve as an archetype for a postsecondary system that promotes research and workforce development. At the moment, the ethical base underpinning India’s educational system is being eroded, undermining the very basis of mutual trust and educational standards. ■

How Much Autonomy Do International Branch Campuses Really Have?

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In the past two decades, the governments of several developing nations including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and China have used public funds to support the establishment and on-going operation of international branch campuses (IBCs). They are not sponsoring IBCs to support a foreign institution’s interest in internationalization, or to

boost its international rankings. These governments justify the use of public funds because of the contributions IBCs make to their human capital and economic development. In particular, IBCs help host nations increase higher educational attainment, meet the demands of local labor markets, and decrease brain drain. It is about what makes sense for the host nation. The goals of the home campus are secondary.

Because these IBCs are expected to serve the objectives of their host nations, there are often specific requirements and regulations that the campuses must meet. Malaysia, for example, has required IBCs to offer specific academic programs and work with local partners, and has restricted their use of profits. While the parent institutions may negotiate these terms, some of the IBC's most fundamental financial, academic, and governance decisions are determined, or heavily influenced, by the host nation. Parent institutions pursuing IBCs therefore rarely have full autonomy in making core decisions that at the home campus would usually be under their full control.

The restrictions on autonomy start with how the opportunity to establish an IBC is constructed. Partnership requirements bring the interests of another entity into the mix. Financial autonomy is constrained and academic autonomy, despite assurances, always needs to reflect the host country's agenda.

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OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION

The process by which most institutions identify IBC opportunities establishes a dynamic that limits independent decision-making from the beginning. Countries seeking to host an IBC typically offer resources, such as land, operating expenses, or facilities to institutions willing to meet their objectives and requirements. South Korea, for example, built a full campus with the capacity to serve 20,000 students to host several branch campuses. Parent institutions were expected to accept the terms and conditions of the campus, including its location two hours outside of Seoul. While the parent institution actively negotiates to protect its own interests, and may walk away from a bad deal, what the host country brings to the table in the early stages of the process restricts the IBC's autonomy from the start.

PARTNERSHIPS

Moreover, if the parent institution chooses to pursue a given opportunity to establish an IBC, it rarely does so without local academic, government, or private partners. In countries such as China, local partnerships are even legally required. These partners help parent institutions navigate the complex academic, legal, business, and cultural landscapes of the host countries. But they also ensure the host country's interests in the venture are maintained. Accordingly, the success of the IBC is often contingent upon the ability of their partner to uphold the terms of the agreement and provide continued guidance. Institutional autonomy is therefore further tempered by the IBC's necessary reliance on a local partner.

FINANCIAL AUTONOMY

Restrictions on financial matters also support the notion that IBCs are not fully autonomous. Some host countries set limitations on how much tuition IBCs can charge or how profits can be used or repatriated. These financial matters are key elements of financial autonomy and are important to promoting the quality and sustainability of the institution.

The financial support host governments and partners provide, moreover, also has both explicit and implicit effects on the institution's autonomy. Explicitly, the agreement may outline specific requirements and regulations in exchange for funding. Implicitly, funding can encourage complacency that might impact the IBCs choices. In Qatar, for example, the government provides such generous financial support that IBCs do not have to worry about protecting themselves from potential financial losses. Such situations may create disincentives for IBCs to think independently and proactively identify ways to enhance the quality and sustainability of the IBC.

ACADEMIC AUTONOMY

Perhaps one of the most concerning areas of limited decision-making capacity pertains to the IBCs' academic affairs. This is particularly the case when host countries solicit parent institutions to establish IBCs in specific fields of study. The Qatar Foundation, for instance, invited Georgetown University, Texas A&M University, and Virginia Commonwealth University to offer programs in foreign service, engineering, and the arts, respectively. The Qatar government—not the parent institutions—drove the selection of academic programs.

In other cases, host countries restrict the IBC's ability to offer new academic programs or have an independent admissions process. China treats many of the branches it hosts as a division of an existing university, and allows that institution to determine the programs and students that

enroll. Under such scenarios, IBCs have only limited opportunity for curriculum development and can never become full-fledged universities. This limits their growth and makes them more vulnerable to changes in the academic and labor landscape.

CONCLUSION

The restrictions highlighted in this essay violate several key forms of autonomy that academics have come to expect at a world-class institution. IBCs will continue to have difficulty attracting and retaining high-quality faculty and administrators if they are perceived as being lesser institutions. Because of this, the IBC will struggle to achieve quality at par with its parent institution.

Restrictions on autonomy may pose problems for the host country's goals as well. While host countries are focused on promoting quality and ensuring alignment with their objectives, they may find potential partners declining to open a branch campus because of a lack of sufficient autonomy. This could actually threaten the success of the host country's overall vision.

Most notably, diminished autonomy threatens the sustainability and quality of IBCs. Limiting their flexibility to make operational or academic changes in response to the needs of their students and the local economy may increase their susceptibility to failure.

Given these challenges, IBC leaders should consider an approach that emphasizes a shared set of goals, with flexibility in how to achieve these goals. Otherwise IBCs may become mere providers of education, dependent on their hosts, rather than institutions of higher education capable of setting their own path. ■

Singapore's "Global Schoolhouse" Aspirations

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The "global schoolhouse" vision was outlined by Singapore's ministry of trade and industry in a 2002 report. One of the sections in the report focused on the education industry. The ministry claimed that Singapore was well placed to gain a piece of the estimated US\$2.2 trillion world

education market. An ambitious target of 150,000 international full-fee paying students was set for the year 2015, up from the then estimated figure of 50,000.

Several economic advantages for pursuing this vision were outlined. For instance, the increase in institutional spending and the spending of the foreign students would fuel economic growth and create high-paying jobs. Secondly, the influx of foreign students would contribute human capital to knowledge-based activities such as research and development, patent generation, and enterprise development. Next, an increase in the number of educational institutions as well as a greater diversity of courses would help stem the outflow of domestic students to overseas universities. Lastly, foreign students would boost Singapore's pool of talented individuals and form a network of international alumni around the world.

The report recommended a three-tiered system of universities form the core of the global schoolhouse. At the apex would be so-called "world-class universities." These universities would focus primarily on postgraduate education, and would be "niche centers of excellence" contributing to research and development. The second tier would be the three preexisting, publicly funded universities—the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and the Singapore Management University—the so-called "bedrock" universities, which would carry out research and development activities, supply the bulk of domestic university-educated manpower to meet national needs, attract regional students through scholarships, and fulfil the concept of education as a public good. Forming the base of the pyramid would be "additional private universities." These universities would focus on teaching and applied research, and cater to the bulk of the additional 100,000 foreign students envisioned in the global schoolhouse.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

The global schoolhouse vision was the latest in a string of policy initiatives that trumpeted the key role played by education in supporting national economic competitiveness. It also represented a move towards the marketization and commodification of education. In 1996, the then prime minister announced the government's intention to turn Singapore into the "Boston of the East," with Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology serving as role models for NUS and NTU to develop into world-class institutions. Next, the state-affiliated Economic Development Board (EDB) announced in 1998 its intention to attract at least 10 so-called world-class universities to Singapore within the next decade. This initiative managed to attract prestigious institutions such as Johns Hopkins University, the University of Chicago, and INSEAD, a French