

pool dramatically. These international faculty, whose reputations rest on the assessments of academic peers around the world, naturally publish their research in English, limiting its exposure in the region. They strive to meet the specialized standards of their disciplines and fields, selecting research questions and methods with an eye toward academic tastes and techniques, as measured in all-important citation indexes and impact factors, rather than harder-to-measure social value or public consequence. The universities in turn reward these well-published faculty because their work contributes to raising institutional rankings—and high rankings draw funding, applications, government approvals, and international esteem. In the self-contained system of global higher education, it all makes sense.

#### WHAT THEY DO NOT DO

But from the regional perspective, this also means a chasm between the international institutions introduced to improve higher education in the Arab world and the societies they were supposed to benefit. In fact, the audience for these universities—their applicants, the visitors to their on-campus art exhibitions and musical performances, the employers of their graduates, their alumni and donors—is a cosmopolitan elite quite distant from the communities outside their walls, more comfortable in New York or London than downtown Cairo or suburban Beirut. Indeed, because they are often intended to anchor new development—technology hubs, new residential areas, cultural centers—some of these university campuses are closer to the nearest international airport than they are to the urban centers whose names they bear.

And, today, this isolation is exacerbated by the collapse of the popular uprisings of 2011 throughout the Arab world in brutal restorations and vicious civil wars. After all, few host governments want their foreign guests in harm's way, while among the universities themselves there is little appetite for risk taking. Thus, from Cairo to Beirut, Doha to Dubai, universities increasingly look past the region to a global horizon that seems both more promising and less perilous. Some of the long-established institutions still note their regional foundations: AUB declares among its purposes “to serve the peoples of the Middle East and beyond.” AUC is “dedicated to making significant contributions to Egypt and the international community(…)” The American University of Sharjah, one of the Emirates’ oldest international universities, is “grounded in the culture of the Gulf region.” But many others are far less securely anchored in their locale. The American University of Iraq prepares its students for “a modern, pluralistic society and a global environment.” NYUAD equips its students “for the challenges and opportunities of our interconnected world.” The American University of Kuwait simply “enriches society.”

There is much to be said for providing the best possible education for the global elite to whom we entrust our future. But, as our bewilderment about the Arab world today suggests, that education will be incomplete if it is not grounded *in*—or born *of*, or even aimed *at*—the cities and communities where its institutions are located. ■

## A Chinese Branch Campus in Malaysia—Adjusting Fundamentals

BONNIE YINGFEI HE AND ALAN RUBY

*Bonnie Yingfei He is beginning a career in international education and intercultural communication. E-mail: yingfeih16@gmail.com. Alan Ruby is a senior scholar at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, US. E-mail: alanruby1@gmail.com.*

Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM) opened in February 2016, describing itself as “the first overseas campus established by a renowned Chinese university and the first Chinese university branch campus in Malaysia.” The Malaysian government invited China’s ministry of education to establish a branch campus to strengthen bilateral relations. Xiamen University (XMU) was chosen to lead the initiative because its founder, Mr. Tan Kah Kee, was a successful businessman in Malaysia, and the university has well-established programs in Southeast Asia studies and traditional Chinese medicine. XMUM is to be a not-for-profit entity, with any surplus revenues reinvested in research and student scholarships in Malaysia. The project is expected to cost US\$315 million and is being financed largely by a loan from the China Development Bank. Private donations helped with initial construction, including a US\$30 million gift for XMUM’s library.

#### CONTEXT

XMUM is of interest as the first branch campus of a Chinese university and its role as a flagship of China’s international engagement strategy in higher education. A late entrant to a region with many branch campuses—nine in Malaysia and 14 in Singapore—XMUM offers some insights into how to attract enrollments in a well-served market—but a market where there have been failures, such as the withdrawals from Singapore of the University of New South Wales and New York University’s Tisch School. How XMUM adjusts

and adapts to the local environment will be instructive for other Chinese universities seeking to establish branches.

#### **ADAPTING TO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT MAY CONSTRAIN VIABILITY**

XMUM opened with 200 undergraduate students and expects to grow to 1,200 students by the end of 2016, with a target of 5,000 by 2022 and a long-term goal of 10,000 students. XMUM's first cohort of Malaysian students started in February 2016, followed by its first group of 440 Chinese students in September 2016. Rather than mirroring the policies and practices of the home campus, XMUM has adjusted some key features, including the language of instruction, length and type of academic programs, level of tuition fees, and entrance requirements.

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#### **At XMUM, as required by the Malaysian government's Qualification Agency, most courses are taught in English.**

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The most obvious difference between the two campuses is the language of instruction. At XMUM, as required by the Malaysian government's Qualification Agency, most courses are taught in English. The exceptions are two degree programs, Chinese studies and traditional Chinese medicine. On the home campus, most courses are taught in Chinese. By offering classes mainly in English, XMUM has faced difficulties in recruiting faculty from the home campus because not many XMU faculty are proficient in English. To entice faculty to XMUM, it has offered financial incentives and arranged for the main campus to recognize four months of Malaysian service as meeting the requirement of a year's international experience for promotion to full professor at XMU.

The second significant adjustment is the academic calendar. At XMU, student intake occurs in September and most first-degree programs are four years in length, with medicine and architecture being five-year programs. At XMUM, there are two intakes a year, in February and September, and greater variation in program length: arts and social science degrees take three years, while science degrees take four. The differences in academic cycles will constrain student and faculty mobility between the two campuses.

A further difference is the establishment of foundation year programs at the Malaysian campus. With the Malaysian government's approval, XMUM offers one-year

science and arts and social science foundation programs. Successful completion will qualify for admission to XMUM undergraduate studies.

There is no foundation year or courses in XMU's undergraduate programs—or in China's public secondary schools. The different level of academic eligibility may further constrain the flow of students from the China campus to Malaysia, and may make it difficult for Chinese high school graduates who enroll at XMUM to be academically successful. These programming decisions may limit the attractiveness of the Malaysian campus for mainland Chinese students.

Similarly, the cost of the Malaysian campus programs may deter students from China, particularly when comparing tuition fees. For example, a software engineering student at XMUM will pay more than seven times the home campus tuition for the same degree. The price difference is the same for international students. It is cheaper for them to study at the main campus in China than at XMUM; humanities majors would pay around US\$3,700 annually at the main campus, roughly 50 percent more compared to US\$5,600 at XMUM.

To alleviate the price disadvantage, XMUM will offer academic scholarships, needs based grants, and bursaries to enrolled Malaysian students. Until policies for Chinese students and other international students are developed, price will limit the attractiveness of the Malaysian campus. The fee "discount" inherent in need and merit aid will also reduce XMUM's net revenue and impede its path to financial viability.

Conversely, there are some aspects of the academic program that may attract students from China, Malaysia, and neighboring nations. The opportunity for English language immersion is a ready example. For students majoring in Chinese studies, some may be attracted by the reduced emphasis on linguistics in Chinese language and literature courses, and by the absence of compulsory political courses and military training. Others may come for culture-related elective courses like "International Relations of Southeast Asia since WWII."

Students may also be attracted to XMUM by its nine different enrollment pathways. Most of these are to recruit Malaysian students to different undergraduate programs and to accommodate the different assessment schedules in Malaysian secondary schools. XMUM has designed its more flexible admissions policies and practices to make its programs more attractive, to respond to the local environment, and to attract students from neighboring countries. But the Chinese government has limited XMUM's flexibility by requiring Chinese nationals resident in Malaysia to take the *gaokao* as a path to enrolling at XMUM. Similarly, any mainland resident Chinese student seeking to enter

XMUM has to take the "Big Test."

#### LOOKING AHEAD

While it is too early to assess XMUM's long-term viability, its first steps are informative. The XMU/XMUM partnership illustrates that a branch campus is not a simple mirror site of the home campus. In this case, adjustments have been made to fundamentals like language of instruction, academic calendar and program, admissions policies and practices, and price. Some of these decisions may limit the flow of students from China in general and from the home university. Yet these adjustments, made in response to local context and prevailing educational practices, may impact the longer-term viability of the branch campus. ■

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## Foreign Higher Education in India: The Latest Developments

RICHARD GARRETT

*Richard Garrett is director of the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education. E-mail: richard.garrett@i-graduate.org.*

India is a classic case of TNE confusion and complexity. TNE refers to "transnational education," higher education institutions or programs from one country established or offered in another. Examples include international branch campuses, joint degrees, or partnerships between local and foreign institutions. Motives on the part of the foreign institution include increased international student recruitment and pursuit of an international identity; while host governments and local partner institutions tend to focus on access to high quality and specialized programming.

The national government in India worries about domestic higher education capacity and quality, and the number of students who study abroad never to return, but is suspicious of foreign providers who offer help. A comprehensive regulatory framework for TNE in India has long been promised. The patchwork of guidance that exists, split across different government agencies, is both frustratingly vague and laboriously detailed. Quite a bit of TNE goes on in practice, but must contend with lack of recognition, poor data, and unpredictable enforcement of the rules.

On 23 June 2016, then Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Smriti Irani unveiled amended regulations for collaboration between Indian and foreign institutions.

The big change is that Indian institutions may now apply directly to have a foreign collaboration approved. Under the old rules, formalized in 2012, the foreign partner had to apply. The minister revealed that not a single foreign institution had filed an application, and blamed perceived bureaucracy. Irani vowed that applications—to the University Grants Commission (UGC), an HRD agency—would be acknowledged within a month and processed within two.

#### BREAKTHROUGH OR FALSE DAWN?

An important factor is the kinds of collaboration that are permitted. On that point, the minister announced no change. The 2012 regulations ban forms of TNE that are commonplace elsewhere. Franchising (i.e. a foreign institution allowing an Indian one to offer degrees in its name) is not permitted, nor are joint degrees.

The regulations promote "twinning" programs, where the student in India enrolls at a local institution and spends part of the program on the campus of the foreign partner. But unlike twinning arrangements elsewhere, the student obtains a degree from the Indian institution, not the foreign one. Under the amended rules, the degree transcript may include the name and crest of the foreign partner, but no foreign or joint degree may be awarded.

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In another change, the minister said that Indian students associated with a collaboration may now get academic credit if they spend part of their program on the home campus of the foreign institution. Undergraduates who opt for this path must spend at least two semesters overseas. For postgraduate students, the minimum is one semester. The same opportunity is now available for foreign students who want to spend time in India. The two-semester minimum for undergraduates to receive credit may be impractical for many students, in both directions.

Why is the government against joint degrees? The reticence may be due in part to dependence on a regulatory, rather than legislative, route to reform. The government may be of the opinion that the right to award a degree in