

# Quality of Programs Delivery at Remote Campus. Factors and Analysis

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**Abstract:** *This paper attempts to address some very important issues which came about with the opening of the branch campuses of well established and mature universities in different countries of Asia. The main problem faced by the staff and administration is ensuring equivalent teaching quality of the approved programs to the students. A few factors which may affect the quality are: the difference in staff maturity and mentorship, some cultural differences faced in regards with the quality assurance interaction process between intercampus academic staffs, the impossibility of duplicating the laboratory experiments, student cultural differences and exposure to different learning styles, and differences in assessment expectations. This paper considers the analysis of these factors and their influence on the program delivery quality. There is a discussion of the appropriate quality assurance process implementation, which can assure that the granted degrees are identical at any campus of the university.*

**Keywords:** *branch campus, quality, teaching, assessment*

## Introduction

Higher Education is becoming more and more international. Most of the universities are encountering a large group of international students. At the same time more and more universities are opening international Branch Campuses, which operate in different countries. They offer programs that are accredited by the country of origin accreditation bodies. As they offer own degrees of different levels they need to be ensured that the programs are fully identical to those accredited. This is a very important and most critical issue.

Many foreign universities have opened Branch Campuses in Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and other countries of South East Asia. In Malaysia alone, there are four such campuses. They are Australian Universities - Monash University, Swinburne University of Technology, Curtin University of Technology, and the University of Nottingham from UK. The links between main campuses and their remote counterparts are strong as they are the campuses of the same universities. As they offer the same original programs approved by respective Australian or British institutions the quality of the offered programs is a very important issue. In this situation delivery of the courses, quality of teaching, and adequacy of assessments are the important problems. To those important issues are related also cultural difference of the students and staffs, time difference between campuses' locations and many others. If we consider the organization of the Branch Campuses operation it should reveal to these differences.

There are different ways to ensure the quality and standard of the courses delivery. They could be considered as different models of interaction between campuses.

## Models of Interaction between Campuses

In the case of the International Branch Campuses operation there are some important issues, which can affect interaction process between intercampus academic staffs.

These factors are: the difference in staff maturity and mentorship, staffs and students cultural differences and exposure to different teaching styles, the impossibility to duplicate the laboratory experiments, difference in assessment expectations and many others. These differences are intensified by the different campuses interaction models.

There are different models of interaction between campuses at different universities. They are mainly rationalizing the exchange of the teaching material delivered to the students. Depending

on the staff experience it could be either from main Campus towards to the Branch Campus or vice versa. In either case the aim is for the teaching materials to be substantially close content to the students. Another way of the interaction could be development of similar teaching material with some variations accordingly to the subject outlines and course content. In some cases even some variations of the subject outline could be considered depending on the staff experience and local requirements.

The students' assessment is playing very important role in teaching of the subjects at both campuses, which is required to be of the same standard. It is possible to consider a few different models of student assessment development. One of them is assessment done by the Main Campus staff member (the test and exam papers developed and marked). In this case the tutorial exercises should be identical during execution of the tutorial classes. The laboratory experiments could be identical or not depending on the identity of equipment at both campuses, which is usually hardly possible. The difference in the laboratory hardware makes the assessment identity of laboratory experiments to be difficult. It is very difficult to protect the assessment papers to be copied and passed to other campus students, in this type of the assessment exercise. The only way to do this type of assessment is to run the tests and exams simultaneously.

Another model of assessment is setting different but approximately of the same standard papers by either the same staff member or counterpart at different campus.

In this case the paper standard should be checked and agreed on by staff members. Good relations between the staff members involved in teaching are necessary attribute in each of the different interaction model accepted. This type of the identical programs running at different campuses requires really good staff team work.

## **Quality Assurance**

To have students satisfy the same course requirements at different campuses the appropriate quality procedure needs to be implemented. The test and exam papers are to be addressed to the same quality standard which has been accredited. This issue is very important for the programs running at the different campuses and in the different countries. The quality procedures, which could be implemented, need to have assurance that they are of the necessary standard to be achieved by any teaching staff and students at either campus. The quality assurance system allows the teaching standard to be maintained at any time of the program running.

The system may be implemented for different content. At different interaction models it needs to be addressed to the appropriate teaching arrangements existing at the certain universities.

It could be the moderation of marked students' papers in the case of the same assessment papers, or even marking of the all papers by the same staff member, who sets the papers.

In the other arrangements it could be the moderation of the prepared test and exam papers as well as students answered papers. It could be independent marking done by all the staff members involved in the teaching process as all the papers as well as some part of the exam papers done by the students.

In all the cases the quality assurance system is a very important instrument for obtaining appropriate requirements satisfaction for the program completion.

## **Conclusion**

Operation of Branch Campuses of the International Universities is very beneficial to the people of the developing nations. It helps to strengthen the economy, to increase educational level of the younger generation of the population. The mature universities are able to attract many local as well as international students, who are not able to pay tuition fees in Universities' origin countries. Very often the course cost at new locations is 3 – 4 times cheaper. These universities are strengthening the economy of the developing countries and increasing cultural level of the local population. At the same time it is necessary to have the assurance of the appropriate level of accredited programs and their quality.

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