

Chapter 29

Building a Case of Student Experience for Sustainable Higher Education in Transnational Environment

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ABSTRACT

This chapter sets ground to realize the exceptional significance of students to international branch campuses, which is a popular mode of transnational higher education. Mission statements of different international branch campuses are analyzed that converge on the fact that most of these institutions irrespective of the host country perceive student as their priority. The chapter then moves on to explaining student choice, in a situation where number of international branch campuses co-exist in a home country, such as the case of United Arab Emirates that hosts 19% of the world's current branch campuses (Observatory, 2012). This information is then employed to expound how international branch campuses can progressively build student experience. Within this chapter, readers can find steps to build student experience in the first year of operation, followed by fine steps that can assist in progressively developing student experience. The chapter then addresses the significance of students in transnational higher education and how this can be developed, leveraged, and converted to be a potent tool such as to ensure sustainable branch campuses (a form of transnational higher education).

INTRODUCTION

Start Up Operations at Transnational Higher Education (TNE)?

The growth and rise of TNE is due to change in the dynamics of internationalization. Both the major stakeholders in a TNE arrangement: the student and the degree offering institution have

altered the traditional approach. The traditional approach being 'study abroad' for students and 'recruiting students from overseas' for Higher Education Institutions (HEI). From the degree offering institution's side internationalisation agendas have pursued students to study towards an international qualification at their home base. Thus, the willingness to travel to overseas to study as the only option on offer available earlier is now shifted into the column of choice for students.

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The globalization of higher education manifests itself in many different forms; transnational education¹ is perhaps the most evident. The wide choice available in transnational delivery needs to be studied individually. Within the premise of this chapter, branch campuses, as a mode of transnational education will be looked into.

The Start Up Process and Student Experience

When Higher education providers decide on an internationalisation agenda, operations need to commence cross borders from home to host country. The foremost decision taken is; “which programs should be launched first?” This is determined keeping in mind factors such as:

1. Local demand in the host country.
2. Provider higher education institute’s expertise and reputation.
3. Cost of setting up and availability of resources. Under the resources caption the two salient deciding factors are the:
 - a. Location (Many TN-HE institutions tend to start small).
 - b. Faculty teaching on the program. Once a provider has an assurance on these two measures, a go ahead is uncomplicated.

Generally, new transnational higher education institutes tend to start small i.e. a minimum number of student enrolment is forecasted on the programs offered, this is generally seen as the number that makes the program viable to run at the initiation stage. ‘Viable’ can be seen as an expandable term and its meaning can encompass various subjects such as financial viability, operational feasibility, etc.

Once the operations are rolled out, marketing and recruitment team gets involved in an entire science of numbers that works on projecting student numbers needed to enroll on the offered programs. Such forecasts help indicate viability of offered programs in the long run.

This sounds straight forward, however, easier said than done! There are numerous elements that are involved in building an organized start-up. The list of these constituents keeps growing as operations of transnational campus direct efforts to foster sustainability. These range from efforts in high-quality learning and teaching, market value of the degree in terms of employability, institution’s repute in the new environment, faculty teaching on the program, facilities offered on campus and the list grows as new dimensions are considered. If one had to pick the central factor around which all these constituents are cultivated, it is indisputably, ‘the student’. Having established ‘student’ as the nucleus of any operations at a transnational higher education institution, in this chapter the overlooked side will be elaborated. That is, how the parallel development of student can be worked to the advantage of the higher education institution, so as to convert the value of the student element in to a win-win situation for both the student and the higher education institution will be put forward.

Simply put, the operations that lead to campus and student development can be fed back into the system to benefit the higher education institution. Thus, in the premise of this chapter, the importance associated to ‘the student element’ and how this can be enhanced to the advantage of higher education institutions operating in transnational environment will be explored.

This chapter is organized in four sections. In the first section, the generic value of higher education through literature review will be explored and extend the understanding to reflect whether transnational higher education institutions withhold similar ideals as well. The next section shall classify students based on what drives their choice whilst seeking admissions to an international branch campus (a form of transnational education). Following this, elucidate how prospective student’s choices build on with the growth of the institution shall be elucidated and how and why student experience ought to grow with the campus. Then a very important discussion will be taken up within which how an institution can

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