

The Future of Branch Campuses

Description

by Susan Gatuguta Gitau

A [recent article](#) featured in [University World News](#) highlighted Qatar's aspiration towards developing a hub of academic excellence in the Arab world through the proliferation of foreign universities in the country. The growth of satellite universities in developing countries attracts arguments, for and against them. Of particular interest is the impact of foreign universities on the nation's brain drain dilemma.

Brain drain refers to the emigration of well-educated, skilled professionals from their home countries. This problem is most prevalent in developing countries. By setting up satellite universities in these countries, it's believed that local talent will be persuaded to stay and more local students would enrol. In Qatar's case, it is argued that brain drain has been stemmed by adopting these institutions. In addition, the nation is now attracting international students. These institutions equally provide an opportunity of brain gain as promising academics are attracted back home.

However, the picture is not so rosy in [India](#). There's a huge argument surrounding foreign universities being set up in the country. Currently the Foreign Education Providers Bill, tabled in April 2010, is in parliament and hasn't seen any progress yet. The blogosphere has a number of articles from opposing parties, each drawing a unique point of view. One argument is that branch campuses would attract top students away from national universities in turn activating internal brain drain. A different point of view offered is, "Instead of bringing the foreign schools to India we should see how we can improve our society and the educational system so that it is attractive to very smart engineers, doctors and other professionals who currently want to leave India."^[1]

Ben Wildavsky^[2] offers a different argument, "popular Western Universities are acting more like businesses- moving closer to their customers by establishing satellite campuses in Asia and the Middle East, and teaming up with overseas universities to forge strategic alliances that offer scholarly and marketing advantages on both sides." He observes, "Amid this rush of academic activity around the world, an even more consequential shift is taking place: increasing numbers of countries have an urgent wish not to send students to the United States, or to host 'branch campuses' on their own soil, but to build world-class universities on their own. That desire explains why nations from China, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia to Germany and France are engaged in expensive and ambitious projects to create U.S.-style research institutions designed to be competitive at the highest levels."

Looking at these two contrasting scenarios, both for and against foreign universities, the future of branch campuses is worth keeping an eye on.

^[1] India First-hand: [Foreign University in India is not the Solution](#)

^[2] *The Great Brain Race: How global universities are reshaping the world*