

Part 2:

Case Study Report

AUSTRALIA

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The Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) would like to thank Insearch, Group Colleges Australia and TAFE NSW (Southern Sydney Institute) for their assistance in developing the following case studies. DEST would also like to thank the Australian Council for Private Education and Training for their assistance.

Project Background

The project “Improving the Institutional Capacity of Higher Education under Globalization: Joint Schools Programs among APEC Economies” was approved for APEC funding by the APEC Budget and Management Committee (BMC) in August 2002. The aim of the project is to focus on the policy issues associated with the establishment of joint schools in higher education among APEC economies and specifically to:

- share experiences gained through implementing joint school programs in the higher education sector throughout APEC economies;
- analyse the present barriers and difficulties involved in the implementation of joint school programs in the higher education throughout APEC economies;
- explore possible improvements for implementing joint school programs in higher education in future throughout APEC economies;
- improve the capacity of higher education institutions in running joint schools through this study and follow-up training activities.

The project will provide useful information to groups interested in operating joint schools, including policy-making sectors, business companies, and tertiary education providers. The project will provide a comparative study from the perspectives of several developing and developed countries through a series of case studies.

At an international level, the project aims to strengthen the cooperation and exchange of information between tertiary education institutions in APEC and will directly contribute to the capacity building work of the Human Resources Development Working Group. Information on the outcomes of the project will be placed onto the APEC cyber Education Cooperation (Korea) and Learning About Each Other (USA) websites.

Australian University Collaborative Education Programs

Increased globalisation and the consequent awareness of education programs being offered around the world, has created an increased demand by consumers for access to the full range of offshore education services available to them. It has also provided the opportunity for educational organisations to join forces with education providers in other countries to jointly offer programs utilising the knowledge and skills of both.

The arrangements entered into between Australian education providers and overseas education providers vary from a loose cooperative arrangement to a formal agreement. They are variously named: twinning arrangements, strategic partnerships, joint ventures, joint schools, but they typically have the following elements:

- The program offered is taught partly or wholly offshore (sometimes including supported distance programs as well as face-to-face delivery);
- The program may be delivered by Australian teaching staff or by a combination of Australian and local teaching staff;
- If the program results in the awarding of an Australian qualification or the provision of advanced standing to an Australian higher education program, the Australian education provider is responsible for the development of curriculum and for overseeing the academic standards;
- If the program results in the awarding of an Australian *and* a local qualification, then the curriculum and academic standards are developed jointly;

- The overseas education provider is responsible for providing the premises, which are usually located within its own institution. It is also responsible for the local administration of the program;
- Either or both of the providers are responsible for quality assurance.

For the purposes of this report, the collaborative arrangements described above will be called “joint schools” – the terminology used in the original project proposal. The three Australian providers studied in the report have established joint school arrangements with Chinese higher education providers. Joint schools programs in China were selected for the following reasons:

- Currently the majority of Australian joint school programs are with Chinese education providers (approximately 425 existing programs or part-programs in May 2003). These joint school programs exist at all levels including English language, schools, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education;
- The Chinese government has recently turned its attention to the issue of the increasing number of joint venture undertakings. An education reform program which includes a new law governing the establishment and operation of foreign joint venture schools is being introduced. The new law outlines the structure of proposed joint venture schools (Chinese Foreign Cooperative Schools – “CFC Schools”) in much greater detail than was the case in previous regulations and contains many more specific provisions dealing with the establishment, approval and operation of such CFC Schools. The publication of Implementation Measures which will give operational effect to the law are expected to be announced in early 2004

This study provides an opportunity to look at joint school programs in the context of the reform currently being implemented in China.

Australian Case Studies

Three Australian education providers were surveyed and interviewed regarding their joint venture activities in China. In order to obtain a range of approaches, two private and one public provider were selected. The education providers were Insearch, Group Colleges Australia and TAFE NSW (Southern Sydney Institute).

Insearch

Insearch is located in the centre of Sydney and is a controlled entity of the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). Insearch delivers a range of programs, including academic programs in Business, Communication, Design, Architecture, Information Technology, Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Nursing and Construction; full and part-time English language courses, including the Direct Entry English Program (DEEP), Academic English, General English, IELTS and High School Preparation Program; and a range of pathway programs for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at the University of Technology, Sydney. There are 720 English students and 1400 diploma students. Many of the Insearch programs are developed and delivered by UTS teaching staff.

Insearch has been involved in joint ventures for ten years since 1994. Its first joint venture was in China, but it has now developed further joint ventures in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. The ventures in Thailand and Vietnam offer English programs only; Insearch is currently establishing a venture in the United Kingdom, which will take the form of a pathway institution, offering English and diploma programs. In the United Kingdom venture, students will be guaranteed entry into the joint venture partner university, as long as they reach the required academic entry standards.

Group Colleges Australia

Group Colleges Australia is a consortium of educational institutions which includes:

- AIMS – A Higher Education Institution that offers a Master of

Arts Management.

- Central College - A Business College that offers Certificates, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas in IT, Multimedia, Marketing, Management, Business, Tourism.
- Metro English College - An English College that offers English for High School (EHS) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP).
- St James College - a Senior High School that offers Year 11 and Year 12 High School Certificate preparation, and GAC Foundation Studies Courses.

The four member colleges combined are host to almost 1000 students from forty-five different countries including Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and North America. Students enrolled in any of the Group Colleges Australia institutions can take advantage of easy transfer between the Colleges.

Group Colleges is planning to offer post high-school foundation courses for university preparation. They are currently negotiating with a new partner near Beijing to offer courses of this type. These courses will provide a pathway into Australian higher education providers.

TAFE NSW (Southern Sydney Institute)

'TAFE' stands for Technical and Further Education. TAFE New South Wales is Australia's largest educational institution and delivers flexible study programs and services to meet the needs of over 500,000 students, industry and the community. TAFE NSW Institutes offer more than 1200 courses at over 130 locations across the state of New South Wales.

TAFE NSW offers a range of courses and pathways for school leavers, work-related and industry-based training, apprenticeships and traineeships and community courses. Through the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), study at TAFE is nationally consistent and recognised, allowing for advanced standing to other TAFE programs and university courses.

Courses are delivered in a variety of modes including face-to-face and distance education. TAFE also offers programs for those already in the workplace through flexible delivery such as part-time courses or short intensive programs.

All TAFE NSW institutes have close links with industry, universities and schools to enhance pathways and provide maximum recognition of students' knowledge and skills.

Insearch and Shanghai University

Background

The Sydney Institute of Language & Commerce (SILC) was founded in 1994 as a co-operative educational venture jointly owned by Shanghai University (SU), in China and Insearch Ltd, in Australia. SILC offers both degree and non-degree programs taught in both Chinese and English. At the beginning of the 2003-04 academic year, there were nearly 2600 students enrolled in degree and diploma programs at SILC. A business degree is soon to be introduced at SILC.

The Institute is spread across the three campuses of Shanghai University in Shanghai: The main campus of SILC is in Jia Ding, as well as the other two campuses in Bao Shan and Zha Bei. SILC currently has 70 full-time and part-time faculty members. Among them are 40 foreign teachers from Australia, Britain, America, Canada and New Zealand.

As part of the joint venture quality assurance arrangements teacher exchange programs are in place between Shanghai University and UTS.

Roles and Responsibilities

SILC has one foreign Associate Dean to coordinate the English language programs and one foreign Associate Dean to coordinate the Business programs. Professor Fang Minglun, the Executive Vice - President of Shanghai University holds a concurrent position as the Dean of SILC.

The Institute is governed by a Board of Directors which has representatives from both Shanghai University and Insearch Ltd, and which determines the direction of the Institute and makes all major policy decisions. The administration of SILC including the financial

management and reporting, the resourcing of the Institute and staffing issues are the responsibility of Shanghai University. Insearch plays a major role in quality assurance of the programs being delivered and has responsibility for the Intellectual Property.

Qualifications

Upon graduation, students receive degrees, diplomas from Insearch, or certificates from Shanghai University and the University of Technology Sydney, depending on the level of study achieved. SILC also offers its top students scholarships to enable them to further their studies in Australia at Insearch.

Quality Assurance

The four areas covered by quality assurance processes are:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Management
3. Organisational management
4. Auditing

Quality assurance measures undertaken include reviewing course outlines to ensure consistency between programs in China and Australia; reviews undertaken by the Academic board; regular reviews of performance and staff issues; setting of key performance indicators (KPIs), which are measured regularly; reviews of graduate completion rates, student grades and student attendance, as well as student surveys to assess levels of satisfaction.

Opportunities and Challenges

One of the major challenges when operating a joint venture in a foreign economy involves finding one's way around a range of unfamiliar regulations governing foreign business enterprises. It is not always clear what the regulatory requirements are, and there are often multiple layers of bureaucracy, including at the national, state

and local levels, which can increase the complexity of doing business.

Currently in China, organisations or individuals outside China are not permitted to run schools or other educational institutions on their own. In order to obtain a licence to supply educational services, it is necessary to have an agreement with a local partner who is also licensed to provide educational services. China encourages education as a not-for-profit service and thus the remittal of profits overseas is difficult. However, income generated can be used for other parts of a cooperative program. It is understood that these and other issues will be addressed through China's reform program under new joint venture legislation.

Another challenge is that of implementing a successful quality control system in an environment where quality assurance frameworks or bodies are not common.

However, joint ventures often provide a service where one could not otherwise be provided. They rely on the strengths that each party brings to the arrangements. Insearch provides the curriculum, the quality assurance and the opportunity for Chinese students to obtain Australian qualifications, whereas Shanghai University provides the majority of staff, the physical accommodation and the local knowledge and contacts. The teacher exchange programs play an important capacity building role for the Chinese partner. However, this capacity building is not all in one direction. One of the major benefits of the joint venture is the amount of "cross-pollination" between Australian and Chinese staff. An internal conference is held annually and the ensuing exchange of ideas provides a very stimulating environment for curriculum design and development. The opportunity for staff development (learning from each other and through staff exchanges) also improves service delivery.

Insights

The current regulations covering foreign education providers in China require foreign organisations to enter into a joint venture

arrangement in order to provide education services. China is a relationship-driven economy and having the right partner is critical. Both parties should carefully research the strengths that each brings to the relationship to ensure that they have a workable match.

The proposed reforms in China and any associated guidelines which can provide greater transparency for foreign organisations operating in China will be most welcome.

Insearch believes that the success of its venture in China is firstly due to its relationship with the University of Technology Sydney, which gives it credibility, secondly, to the attention Insearch devotes to appropriate relationship building and maintenance, thirdly, to the commitment by both parties to quality programs and finally to Insearch's on-ground presence in China.

Group Colleges Australia and Zibo Middle School No 18, Shandong Province

Background

The Chinese partner initiated this joint venture, as the school was looking for a way to facilitate its students' access to the Australian education system. The School had visited Australia for a study tour, and when Group Colleges Australia subsequently attended an AusTrade exhibition in Shanghai, they were approached by representatives from the Middle School. The joint venture commenced in 2001, one year from the date of the School's study tour to Australia.

Description

There are 100 students participating under the joint venture arrangements in Grades 10, 11 and 12. Grades 10 and 11 are taught in China and Grade 12 is taught in Australia. The Grade 10 curriculum is developed and controlled by the Chinese government, but the Grade 11 and 12 curriculum is that taught in the NSW High School Certificate (HSC) curriculum. All teaching is in the face-to-face delivery mode and English language classes are taught in English.

The joint venture teaching staff comprise one full-time Australian, three or four native English-speaking teachers (usually from either Australia, Canada, Ireland or the UK) and local Chinese teachers. The Chinese joint venture partner is a private company owned by Zibo Middle School # 18 (similar to an Australian Universities owning a business). Funding is in the form of government subsidised wages and facilities such as buildings, with other costs being contributed to by parents.

Qualifications

The students receive an Australian qualification, which provides an education pathway to an Australian higher education provider.

Quality Assurance

Quality is controlled through the Group Colleges staff member in China. Email has made communication faster and improved the ability to assure quality in the delivery of curriculum. All testing is undertaken from within Australia and upon arrival in Australia all students are retested irrespective of results in China.

Opportunities and Challenges

Some difficulties have also been encountered working within the unfamiliar regulatory frameworks and the various layers of the bureaucracy. A good joint venture partner is essential in these circumstances, as they are familiar with the legal requirements and the regulatory processes. The local Mayor in Zibo is very supportive of the joint venture and this is important, as it has significantly contributed to the success of the joint venture.

Staff accommodation has also been an issue for the foreign staff of the venture, as apartments do not always have typical western amenities. Zibo has refurbished staff apartments now with modern facilities which greatly assisted keeping foreign staff.

The cross cultural experience and people-to-people links which lead to increased understanding of each other and greater cooperation between China and Australia are seen as a major benefit of the joint venture.

The venture also offers the opportunity for Chinese students to study Australian curriculum and learn English while living at home in China. A further benefit is that the Chinese partner is only licensed to provide education up to Year 9, and can only provide further

schooling for students in Year 10 and 11 through the joint venture project.

Insights

Group Colleges has learnt several lessons from its joint venture in China, including the fact that it is essential to have a good understanding of the economy in which you propose to undertake a venture, its culture and people. This will assist in the selection of staff and in understanding how best to deal with situations that may arise.

It is important to clearly document all operations and keep accurate records, as well as being very specific as to any requirements and expectations. Mis-understandings can occur on both sides due to differing cultural and business practices. It can also be necessary to be persistent, in order to get things achieved, due to the unfamiliar procedures and regulatory frameworks that have to be managed. Group Colleges also advises that in any joint venture it is good to have the option of walking away from the project, should it become necessary.

TAFE NSW and Ningbo College

Background

The Southern Sydney Institute was the first TAFE NSW institution to operate a joint venture project in China, entering into negotiations with the Chinese in 1997 and commencing its first program in 1998. It now has six programs in three locations in China – Shanghai, Ningbo and Xian. Two of its partners are public institutions and one is a private university.

The Institute's current joint ventures are in Business and English and Information Technology. The venture in the field of Information Technology is being phased out and is to be replaced with a Business Diploma to meet the needs of the partner institution and student demand.

Description

Ningbo College is a long-established and growing joint venture. This venture was established through an education agent, who was responsible for sourcing potential joint venture partners, and Ningbo was chosen due to its location and reputation.

Under the joint venture arrangements, there are 370 Chinese students, with 1 full-time Australian staff member and seven teachers on short-term contracts. The Ningbo venture specialises in English and Business programs. All TAFE NSW programs at the College have an English component and the business diploma courses are delivered in English. The TAFE requirement is that students have a 5.5 IELTS English-language score prior to entry into the diploma program (this is a requirement for international students undertaking studies at TAFE institutions in Australia.) The English courses are one year in length and the diploma courses are two years. Courses are full-time and face-to-face.

Roles and Responsibilities

A Council has been established to administer the delivery of the TAFE programs at the school. The Council comprises two members of the school staff and two representatives from Southern Sydney Institute. The Institute is responsible for all curriculum development and assessment.

The Chinese joint venture partner is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school and for the financial administration including collection of fees. The partner is also responsible for the recruitment of students. Most students live on campus.

Teaching is delivered by both Australian and Chinese staff. Australian staff deliver approximately 30-50% of modules.

Qualification

Currently the qualifications provided by the joint venture are TAFE NSW diplomas. They are exactly the same as if the student had completed his/her studies in Australia. The curriculum is modified where possible to make it relevant to the Chinese students. However, as many students are looking to continue their studies at Australian universities there is a need to maintain a balance to keep the content relevant to their local needs and to meet the needs of those students undertaking further study in Australia.²

Quality Assurance

Lead teachers from TAFE travel to China to implement quality assurance measures. Under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) process, courses can be audited at any time and is it important to ensure the quality of the joint venture courses being delivered in China meets the required AQF criteria at all times. Under the joint

² The nature of VET courses, which are tied closely to local industry requirements, may lead to difficulties in developing suitable programs for implementation in a variety of locations. These programs will require substantial local input if they are to be of maximum benefit.

venture, teachers also come to Australia to undertake training programs and to sit in on Australian classes. All new teachers are required to have achieved a minimum qualification and it is a condition of the contract that all professional development and teacher training takes place in Australia.

Opportunities and Challenges

Difficulties were encountered in the initial years working within the unfamiliar regulatory frameworks and the various layers of the bureaucracy, where inconsistencies can occur. Difficulties in accessing useful information regarding regulations and requirements are abating. It has been necessary to rely to a considerable extent on the local agent, who has a better understanding of the regulations governing joint schools projects. For this reason, the choice of agent is critical. Although a national registration or accreditation system for agents is being introduced, selecting a suitable agent can currently still be difficult. The agent plays an important role in the accreditation of courses, and as this takes place only once a year, it is crucial that the agent is fully informed of all the regulatory requirements to complete the process.

Cultural differences provide challenges both for teaching and also the management of the schools. However, the Australian teachers have found the experience a very enriching one. Adapting to different learning styles and cultural differences has broadened their outlook on delivery and made them more flexible in their approach. This has also benefited the Institute by building its capability through the capacity of its teachers, and has provided valuable experience in tendering for similar projects elsewhere. Teachers have also benefited from the relationships they have established with joint venture staff and students.

An MOU was required to establish the initial relationship between the two joint venture partners and this was followed by the signing of a contract. The different cultural approaches towards negotiating the contract created some initial challenges.

Insights

The market for vocational education and training in China is, comparatively, quite small, and it is not as well recognised as a pathway to university, as is the case in Australia. Unlike Australia, a diploma is not a highly regarded qualification in China and this has also provided some challenges. The current project being undertaken in Chongqing by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), which is designed to assist the Chinese Ministry of Education's VET reform program through innovation at selected Chongqing schools and at the Chongqing Municipal Education Commission, may, over time, change this perception.

Establishment of joint ventures with universities has often encountered difficulties, possibly due to this lack of recognition in China and their preference to link with overseas universities. Successful joint ventures are primarily in the vocational colleges and in particular the "lead" institutions. New initiatives with TAFE NSW linked to University programs, which provide defined pathways into degree studies, are proving to be a way forward.

