A Multi-Campus Approach of Mobility and Quality Assurance of Higher Education: The Synthesis of an Australian Case

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ABSTRACT

The Central Queensland University (CQU), Australia operates multiple campuses, where the students of various campuses undertake the same programs, to the same standards, utilize the same teaching and learning materials that ensure the consistency and transparency across all campuses. A case study is undertaken to recognize how the CQU have been delivering quality higher education concurrently in their multiple campuses. In association with the Campus Group Holdings (CGH), CQU established C Management Services (CMS) in 1994. Underlying the CGH’s management expertise, CMS implement the University’s academic programs in the international campuses. More recently, CQU have acquired the CMS from their partner CGH, where CMS continue to implement academic programs in the international campuses. The findings outline the innovative effort of CQU, which appears as prolific to deliver quality higher education concurrently in multiple campuses, as CQU have earned and sustained five star ratings in various aspects of higher education.

Keywords: Academic Standard, Central Queensland University, Higher Education, Multiple Campuses, Quality Assurance

INTRODUCTION

Central Queensland University (CQU) is a Queensland based government university in Australia. It is one of the most engaged, supportive and responsive universities in Australia, focused on making higher education and research more accessible and relevant to all people. As a consequence, along with the main campus at Central Queensland’s Rockhampton, CQU operates thirteen other campuses in various regional areas of Queensland, other states of Australia (Victoria and New South Wales) and in Singapore, Hong Kong and Fiji as overseas campuses. With the vision of becoming one of Australia’s truly great universities through extensive engagement with community, industry and government, CQU has diversifies their presence in various regional and global locations. Students at various campuses of CQU undertake

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the same programs, to the same standards and using the same teaching and learning materials in order to ensure the required consistency and transparency across all campuses.

A case study has been conducted on the CQU to realize how prolifically they have been delivering quality higher education and research support to various diversified groups of local and international tertiary students and researchers, concurrently in their several campuses. The key challenges identified in the study are the maintenance of academic standards and the implementation of quality assurance manner. The findings outline that the CQU provides access and support of industry integrated learning to all local and international students through on campus and distance learning, along with their continual effort of developing contemporary industry-based programs, which facilitate the University’s unique academic standard in their multiple campuses. In the partnership with the Campus Group Holdings (CGH), CQU established C Management Services (CMS) in 1994 to manage their international campuses, where CMS implement CQU’s academic policy and programs in the international campuses, utilizing CGH’s management experience. Following several years of successful academic and management partnership, more recently, CQU has acquired the CMS from their partner CGH in 2008. As a wholly owned subsidiary of the University, CMS continue to implement academic structures and protocols in the international campuses, with the aim of meeting the University’s vision (The Australian, 2008; Hawkins, Ramm, Hamilton, Clayton, nd). Such an innovative effort of the CQU has appeared as prolific to deliver quality higher education in various regional and global locations, as the University has earned and sustained five star ratings in various aspects of higher education in Australia (Be what you want to be, 2011; People and Culture Directorate, nd), which emerges as a benchmark practice of quality assurance of higher education concurrently in different campuses focusing on various groups of local and international students.

EVALUATIVE VIEWPOINT, AIM AND METHODOLOGY

“Multi-campus universities are complex organizations that require carefully crafted and detailed management systems to govern the many-faceted relationships of the main and regional campuses” (Tong & Kisby, 2009, p. 133). Schneider (2001) described that there was little known about how the regional, metropolitan and other campuses of a multi-campus university offer their services to the community, alongside their main campus. Since 2001 the body of knowledge in the area of dealing with the issues relevant to a multi-campus approach has been expanding (Tong & Kisby, 2009).

However the quality assurance is a challenging effort in the higher education, especially for a multi-campus university, Scott, Grebenikov and Jhonston (2007) described that many researchers (Elson-Green, 2006a; Wimshurst, Wortley, Bates, & Allard, 2006, Harman, 2006; Davis, 2005; Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Gamage & Mininberg, 2003; Harman & Harman, 2003; Blunden, 2002; Calvert, 2001; Bundy, 1998) illustrated the success stories of the organization of multi-campus approach of some institutions in their analysis from the perspective of quality and diversity in higher education. Scott, Grebenikov and Jhonston (2007) further demonstrated that the ways in which universities are organized geographically, as well as they classified them into three main categories, such as a university with:

- The single-campus;
- The main campus and one or more small campuses; and
- The multi-campuses, where multiple campuses dispersed geographically.


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