India’s confrontation with foreign higher education providers

Kim Weerts
IS Academe-Quality Education alumni
University of Amsterdam
k.weerts@gmail.com

2009

1 This working paper has been based on a master’s thesis, which is written as part of the master programme International Development Studies at the University of Amsterdam, and has led to the attainment of the degree as Master of Science in International Development Studies.
Abstract
This working paper focuses on the partnerships between Indian and foreign institutions in offering higher education, in light of the Indian government’s willingness to add higher education to the GATS negotiation rounds. By portraying ten case studies of Indian education providers in Delhi, India, an exploration has been made to describe the different types of cooperation that occur between education providers across borders. It becomes clear that, though the number of foreign education providers is relatively low at the moment, there is an urgent need for a suitable regulatory framework regarding the presence and activities of foreign education providers in India. Furthermore, the differences between Indian education providers and their foreign partners vary in areas such as quality and source of initiation, which can influence the equality between partners and can be worrying. The partnerships offer great opportunities for both Indian and foreign partners, and furthermore for the Indian higher education system, but it is important to be aware of the downfalls as well.

§1. Introduction
After the Uruguay Round negotiations in 1995 the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), a treaty of the World Trade Organization, has been entered into force. Following the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the GATS was created to extend the multilateral trading systems to services. The agreement covers four modes of supply: cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence and presence of a natural person.

The signing of this agreement has had important implications for nations and their service delivery. The list of sectors addressed is vast and includes the sector education. When focusing on commercial presence, this means for example that foreign providers may offer higher education in emerging nations such as India. This immediately raises several interesting questions such as: What is the meaning of foreign providers of higher education in emerging nations? Why do these foreign providers start such branches? Do they want to contribute to the development of the receiving country or do they want to extract the higher educated population to their own nations (brain gain vs. brain drain) or is it simply a way to make profit in an education market that cannot fulfill demands? What are possible advantages and disadvantages of this trend? How does the receiving country view this? Does the receiving county’s government have a choice in banning or influencing the actions of the foreign providers?
A short scan of the current situation in India shows that this topic has received wide attention in the public debate. Though the national system of higher education in many countries has difficulties in providing education to a growing student population and improving the quality of higher education, the general attitude towards foreign providers of higher education seems negative for a fear of losing influence and ‘Indian oriented’ education. Policies seem to be cautious and up to recently have not shown a firm position in this matter. In contrast to this cautious position is the fact that foreign qualifications are very popular with (prospective) students, whether obtained abroad or in India itself, and there seems to be a growing interest in these qualifications.

The Indian government is willing to add higher education in the GATS negotiation rounds, where it before refused to talk about it. The Indian higher education system seems to be at a crossroad, as well as the higher education systems in other countries. The absence of a long term policy perspective on higher education which should be coherent and clear, seems to be lacking in a multitude of developing countries (Tilak 2005: 164). Though the attitude towards higher education and (for-profit) private institutions seems to be changing, the introduction of a market philosophy in the education sector has lead to a culture shock for most people in developing countries (Tilak 2004: 3, 13), and India does not seem to be an exception in this.

A clear mapping of this phenomenon seems not to be published in publicly available documents. At least to my knowledge, the only known research on this subject has been conducted by Bhushan in 2004/2005, in which an attempt has been made to capture all domestic private institutions collaborating with foreign partners in India (Bhushan 2006). This research concludes that there is a relatively small but growing trend towards foreign institutional partnerships in India. A total of 131 institutions (while there are over 19,000 institutions active in India’s higher education system) were found that have established partnership arrangements with foreign institutions in offering mostly professional programmes in areas, such as business administration and hospitality management. The arrangements seem to exist most often in the form of twinning programmes and programmatic
collaboration. Nevertheless, the number and perhaps innovative forms of new cooperation remain unclear after 2004/2005.

This research will make an attempt to map up these new developments to 2008 and more specifically will go in detail into the construction of the partnerships between Indian and foreign education providers. The research will partly build on the research performed by Bhushan but will extent the area of knowledge by taking in an important new research area, which are the complex relationships between Indian and foreign education providers. This will be done by answering the following research question:

In which ways do foreign education providers offer higher education in India and, in particular, in which way do they cooperate with national education providers within India’s higher education system?

In order to answer this rather complex research question, an in-depth inquiry will be outlined which discusses the characteristics of education providers, their involvement in partnerships and the role of cooperation between them.

§ 2. Theoretical framework
The recent focus on the knowledge economy as a solution to the underdevelopment of the developing world has given higher education extraordinary importance (Tilak 2005: 162-163). Furthermore within the line of reasoning of the GATS, treating knowledge as a commodity that should be freely traded, has transformed the idea of education from a public good to a service of which profit can be made. This shift to profit making and market-drive has lead to a new era of power and influence. Politics, and extra-educational events and processes all have an impact on education (Verger 2008: 3).
§ 2.1. Altbach’s centre-periphery hypothesis

A hypothesis that can be applied to this phenomenon is Altbach’s “centre-periphery hypothesis” with regard to higher education and globalization (2004). Though the centre-periphery hypothesis is not new, Altbach has applied it specifically to higher education in a globalizing world. Recent developments have lead to the reinforcement of existing inequalities between different institutions, mainly between institutions in the North (e.g. developed nations) and the South (e.g. emerging nations). The centers which are founded mainly in larger and wealthier nations lead while other in the peripheries can only follow. Though there are also periphery institutions in the North and center institutions in the South, the general division between centers and peripheries is much distorted. Therefore, it is not possible to state that there is a distinct gap between two clearly defined worlds.

Reasons for a division between nations can be the difficulties institutions face in obtaining the same or higher quality as institutions in the centers, for instance due to high resources, investment and social capital needed. This can lead to a dependence on the centre institutions, which makes most institutions teaching oriented instead of research oriented. It is yet important to state that concrete dependency does not exist, though dependency on knowledge can occur. This dependency can lead to a loss of intellectual and cultural autonomy, which can be even more lost in the light of GATS, in which autonomy for a country can be difficult to achieve. Regulation or control over new developments in this field can also be difficult to achieve. But in times of financial scarcity and inability to meet student demands, it can be difficult to decline assistance. Nevertheless, seeing India as a periphery instead of a centre will be viewed upon by many as old fashion and not up to date, particularly when looking at a future in which India will be one of the leading forces in the world in their opinion. It is also questionable if there are multiple relationships between all institutions in the world, because this seems not to be the case in reality.

§ 2.2. Dale’s mechanisms of external effects

Important for this discussion is the distinction that can be made between the Common World Educational Culture approach (CWEC) and the Globally Structured
Agenda for Education approach (GSAE) (Dale 2000). Though both approaches are very complex and have been developed and reshaped by many scientists over the years, an attempt will be made to discuss the similarities and differences shortly in the following section. Both approaches give importance to supranational forces and claim that policy goals and policy processes are influenced by external forces. Furthermore, national frames are believed to be shaped at both a national and supranational level. But they differ in the nature of and effects on globalization and understanding education in relation to globalization and education. For the CWEC approach ‘(...) the world polity is a reflection of the Western cultural account, based around a particular set of values that penetrate every region of modern life’. For the GSAE approach ‘(...) globalization is a set of political-economic arrangements for the organization of the global economy, driven by the need to maintain the capitalist system rather than by any set of values’ (Dale 2000: 436). Furthermore, the CWEC approach sees education as a resource while the GSAE approach sees it as a topic. According to Dale, the GSAE approach can explain and take into account the CWEC approach for its adoption of the idea that capitalism is flexible in determining its institutional arrangements through which it operates and the affinity between capitalism and the characteristics of the hypothesized world culture. The CWEC cannot explain and take into account the GSAE approach vice versa (Dale 2000: 448).

Regardless which approach has more validity, it is clear that education events have a clear link to global structures or structural factors. An explanation for this is that education events and changes are the consequence of certain mechanisms that possess causality and are activated by different actors at all layers of the structure (Verger 2008: 4). The GSAE approach specifically identifies a set of external mechanisms which influence national education policies worldwide (Dale 1999). Though there have always been more traditional mechanisms of external influence such as ‘policy borrowing’ and ‘policy learning’, these new mechanisms seem more adapted to a world influenced by globalization. These mechanisms can be divided into categories by different characteristics such as the nature of the relationship and explicitness of process, and entail borrowing, learning, harmonization, dissemination, standardization, installing interdependence and imposition. Harmonization occurs when a set of countries mutually agree on the implementation
of universal policies, such as the European Space for Higher Education by which European university studies have been homogenized, sponsored by the European Union. Dissemination is a mechanism in which an international agent uses persuasion and technical knowledge to convince countries of certain policies. It is important to mention that Dale’s definition of dissemination is somewhat stronger than one might expect when looking up the meaning in a random dictionary. Standardization implies an international community defining and promoting a certain set of policy principles and standards that frame the behavior of countries.

The next mechanism is installing interdependence, in which countries agree to tackle shared problems together, such as ‘Education for All’. Nevertheless, interdependence can both work positive and negative in different circumstances. Finally, imposition occurs when external actors compel a country to decide on a certain policy direction. The World Bank is a classical example of this mechanism. However, it is questionable if this will actually occur when within a context in which two education providers work together. It can nevertheless say something about equality, which is an important dimension to keep in mind. These ‘delivery systems’ have an independent influence on the message they are sending (Dale 1999: 2). The full complexity of these mechanisms is explained in figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS</th>
<th>BORROWING/LEARNING</th>
<th>BARGAINING</th>
<th>DISSEMINATION</th>
<th>STANDARDIZATION</th>
<th>INSTALLING INTERDEPENDENCE</th>
<th>IMPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP</td>
<td>VOLUNTARY</td>
<td>VOLUNTARY</td>
<td>VOLUNTARY</td>
<td>VOLUNTARY</td>
<td>VOLUNTARY</td>
<td>COMPULSORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPRESSION OF PROCESS</td>
<td>EXPRESSED</td>
<td>EXPRESSED</td>
<td>EXPRESSED</td>
<td>EXPRESSED</td>
<td>EXPRESSED</td>
<td>EXPRESSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOPE</td>
<td>PARTICULAR</td>
<td>POLICY PROCESS</td>
<td>POLICY PROCESS</td>
<td>POLICY PROCESS</td>
<td>POLICY PROCESS</td>
<td>POLICY GOALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCUS OF VIGOURITY</td>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
<td>REGIONAL</td>
<td>REGIONAL/NATIONAL</td>
<td>INTERGOVERNMENTAL</td>
<td>DOMINANT ORGANIZATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCESS</td>
<td>BORROWING/TEACHING</td>
<td>COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT</td>
<td>PERSUASION/AGENDA SETTING</td>
<td>CONDITION OF MEMBERSHIP</td>
<td>PERSUASION</td>
<td>LEVERAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTIES INVOLVED</td>
<td>MULTILATERAL</td>
<td>INTERNATIONAL</td>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
<td>GLOBAL/BOTTOM UP</td>
<td>MULTILATERAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOURCE OF INITIATION</td>
<td>NATIONAL POLICY COMMUNITY</td>
<td>NATIONAL MODEL</td>
<td>COLLECTIVELY BY MEMBERS</td>
<td>COLLECTIVELY BY MEMBERS</td>
<td>MULTI-LEVEL, CIVIL SOCIETY</td>
<td>SUPRA-NATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION OF POWER</td>
<td>CONSCIOUS DECISION</td>
<td>AGREEMENT SETTING</td>
<td>AGREEMENT SETTING</td>
<td>RULES OF GAME</td>
<td>RULES OF GAME</td>
<td>AGREEMENT SETTING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATURE OF EFFECT ON EDUCATION</td>
<td>DIRECT ON SECTOR OR ORGANIZATION</td>
<td>VARIETIES</td>
<td>VARIETIES</td>
<td>DIRECT - REGIME AND SECTOR</td>
<td>DIRECT - REGIME AND SECTOR</td>
<td>DIRECT - REGIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE FROM EDUCATION</td>
<td>NEW ZEALAND</td>
<td>UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND</td>
<td>DIRECT - REGIME AND SECTOR</td>
<td>DIRECT - REGIME AND SECTOR</td>
<td>DIRECT - REGIME AND SECTOR</td>
<td>DIRECT - REGIME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Mechanisms of external effects (Dale 1999: 6).

Figure 1: Mechanisms of external effects (Dale 1999: 6).
When discussing these mechanisms of external effect on education, Dale only mentions the effects on a macro level, namely the influence on national education policies. For the purpose of this research, I would like to investigate whether these mechanisms can also be implied to a micro level, in this case to cooperation between national and foreign education providers in India. This will be clarified further along in this paper, but first an overview of literature which discusses the current situation and research setting in this area in India will be given.

§ 3. Introduction to research setting

Though in India the number of students has expanded massively the last decades and its higher education system is the largest in the world, funding by the government has not increased in line with this expansion. This has important implications for the higher education system in many ways, such as the possibilities for prospective students to enter the education market. This lack of funding has lead to a very fragmented higher education system with extreme variation in quality levels, consisting of government institutions (publicly owned and financed), government unaided institutions (publicly owned but privately financed), private aided institutions (privately owned but partially publicly financed) and private institutions (privately owned and financed), though the distinction between privately and publicly funded is generally vague. Private institutions are run by charities and religious groups, as well as by powerful families. Though by law offering education has to be not for profit, especially the powerful families run their institutions as businesses, charging exorbitant fees and applying strict, sometimes discriminatory, application procedures. These powerful families are often also involved in politics and have large influence in policy making. The distribution of capacity and fields between public and private institutions is uneven: the public system offers programmes particularly focusing on knowledge in fields such as arts and science, which do not sufficiently prepare students for the job market. The private sector offers professional programmes in engineering, technology, management and teaching, which increase the chances of finding employment after graduation. This combined with unmet demand and the (not always justified) better reputation of quality make private institutions very popular (Agarwal 2007: 4-16).
A recent trend, influenced by GATS and globalization, is the interference of foreign providers of higher education in India. Though the number of institutions involved with foreign partners is relatively low when compared to the higher education system as a whole, it appears to be a new trend that might grow in the near future. There are different types of programmes being offered by foreign education providers but the general focus is on professional or vocational courses, mainly in the areas of Business Management and Hotel Management (Bhushan 2006: 11-12). Due to declining government subsidies, public institutions are searching for cooperation with foreign providers, increasing tuition fees and starting self-financing programmes as well (Powar 2005a: 133-138).

§ 3.1. Lack of regulatory framework
These initiatives and cooperation take place outside the regulatory system, for these trends are not part of current legislation (Agarwal 2007: 15). The growth of transnational higher education is unregulated, over-hyped and under-examined (Bhushan 2006: 2), for instance due to the generally weak oversight by the University Grants Commission (Agarwal 2007: 4). The government has still not implemented any legislation in this respect, which creates an uncertain space for foreign providers to invest in. This might be a reason, besides the high costs of investment, why there are no offshore campuses until so far (Bhushan 2006: 13). Public-private-partnerships seem to become more common (Agarwal 2007: 5). Nevertheless, whether the state can counterbalance the power of the market and implementation of regulation is possible, is questionable to Tilak (2004: 18). Furthermore, accreditation is problematic and often not performed, though this is the case with most private institutions in general (Agarwal 2007: 8).

Because the cooperations between private institutions and foreign providers are not part of a legal framework, the institutions are not legally bound to maximum tuition fees and non-discriminatory application procedures. This makes this form of higher education beyond the reach of poor students, though due to the market value of foreign programmes student loans are becoming a new trend (Bhushan 2006: 2). Furthermore, this might mean that this trend goes against the national interests of the country (Tilak 2004: 17). Even for students who have no choice but follow
programmes offered by public institutions, there might be difficulties in the nearby future. Though the government favors equity and access over excellence, and has a tradition in liberal education where a student learns for its own sake, this might mean that higher education becomes even more elitist (Agarwal 2007: 8), where is has become less elitist in the past according to some academics (Tilak 2004: 18).

§ 3.2. Improving quality

It is said that the interference of foreign providers might have a positive influence on the Indian education system in general (Powar 2005a: 146). It is a solution to many to solve the gap between demand and capacity, and meet the objected goal of increasing the number of students in higher education set by the government (Bhushan 2006: 2). This gap between demand and capacity could be attributed to lack of resources of the government, though it is important to note that involvement of the market might not be the sole solution to this problem (Tilak 2004: 10). Furthermore, the private education providers reach niches in the market, which the public system does not reach and can give quality levels a boost (Bhushan 2006: 5-6). The economy needs graduates from professional programmes, which are mostly offered by private institutions (Agarwal 2007: 17). There is also a perceived global relevance to programmes offered by foreign institutions and they have a reputation of being more cost competitive (Bhushan 2006: 13). Besides an unmet demand in general, there is also a demand for foreign qualifications by students themselves. Not every student can afford going abroad, so Indian institutions cooperating with foreign institutions might give them a foreign qualification. Noteworthy to mention is that most foreign institutions do not offer official qualifications comparable to the programmes in their own country. But these programmes might be a way of keeping students in, because many students who obtained their qualifications abroad eventually stay abroad, possibly leading to brain drain (Bhushan 2006: 7, 14).

Private institutions, especially when they work together with foreign providers, have the reputation of catering to the needs and expectations of the labor market. This can be an important motive for students to choose for certain institutions. Though quality assurance at the moment seems to be insufficient, the reputation of private institutions in general is better than the reputation of public
institutions. Another reason for their popularity is the use of different didactic methods. India’s higher education system is traditionally theory oriented and teacher centered, while foreign providers try to use different techniques to enhance the quality of their programmes (Bhushan 2006: 12, 16-17). The public and private institutions can learn from this and use this in their own export of education (Agarwal 2007: 29). It is important to mention that India has immense potential to export their knowledge on subjects such as computer application to other nations. A means of doing this could be virtual education, which has not grown into its full potential yet (Powar 2005a: 135). India has the potential to not just be an importer of education, but also an exporter to other nations. For example, the Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala has opened a franchise arrangement in the United Emirates (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education 2002: 2). In this manner, India can function as a semi-periphery between the developed and emerging nations.

Though quality and the possibilities of improving the quality of Indian institutions is an important argument for accepting foreign providers in the education system, in reality it becomes clear that the quality level is not always higher at foreign universities (Tilak 2004: 16) and of expected standards in India. One third of foreign providers are not universities, which is also the case for their Indian collaborators. While some might hope that only the best universities and institutions seek collaboration with Indian institutions, this is not the case. This can perhaps be explained by the profit making goal behind these collaboration, which in some cases is more important than offering good quality education (Powar 2005a: 133, 143). Because there is no quality assurance mechanism active in this area, institutions thrive largely on reputation. Foreign institutions have a better reputation in general, whether they live up to this reputation or not.

§ 3.3. National interests
Due to the high costs of education offered in partnership with foreign education providers, the institutions only seem to cater to self-financing students from upper middle and upper class families. There is much debate going on about admissions and tuition fees, areas free of binding laws for foreign providers because they are
not part of any regulatory framework (Agarwal 2007: 22). Concerns are being expressed that narrow selectivity of these institutions will lead to a super elite class of graduates, which might encourage caste-based education (Kamat 2007: 102, 129). It is questionable if the capacity gap will be filled if the institutions are not accessible to a large part of the student population (Powar 2005a: 146). Furthermore, there is a fear the public system will be left with non-profitable subjects (Bhushan 2006: 7) which will make their financial position even more difficult. Due to this development the public higher education system might be forced to adapt to market demands and by this forsake broader national interests (Kamat 2007: 123).

As mentioned earlier, it can be difficult to guard national interests when foreign providers are operating in the education system. Besides lack of local or national relevance of foreign curricula, there is a danger to the traditional conception of education as a ‘public good’ (Bhushan 2006: 7). This is very important in India and the current trend might form a danger to the social fabric of the nation (Powar 2005a: 146). Cultural sensitivities should be taken into account, and it is questionable if this is a priority on the agenda of foreign providers (Agarwal 2007: 24).

Furthermore, the structural space at the moment is not stable (Bhushan 2006: 2). For there is no regulatory framework for foreign providers and no effective quality assurance mechanism in place, institutions can organize cooperation as they please (Bhushan 2006: 14; Agarwal 2007: 23). The fact that there is no effective mechanism to control greed creates a poor image of foreign providers only filling their pockets at India’s sake. This threatens their ability to build public trust. Though some claim the Indian higher education system is overregulated and new, strict regulations will encourage corruption, the current situation without any regulation and control is also not ideal (Agarwal 2007: 26).

As mentioned earlier, the types of institutions that work together seem to be private institutions active in offering professional and vocational courses to their students. However, it is important that a clear mapping of the types of institutions, their activities and their partnerships become apparent, which is the objective of this investigation.
§ 4. Research methodology

There are three major concepts important for this research, which are education, education providers and cooperation. It is important to state that these particular operationalizations are chosen in the purpose of this research. Clearly there are other operationalizations possible, but in my view these operationalizations suit this research and specific context the best. The first operationalization is education, which is higher education offered by national and foreign education providers to the Indian student population. This education can be offered in different manners, such as joint degree programmes and twinning arrangements. The next operationalization is education providers, which consists of both national and foreign actors. The providers can be considered to be universities as well as colleges. Some providers might have formal accreditation, though this is not obliged within India’s higher education system. Furthermore, there are also different forms possible such as privately-owned or publicly-owned. Finally, cooperation in this investigation will be limited to the cooperation between national and foreign education providers. An investigation will be made into the different types of cooperation and influence mechanisms, based on the earlier mentioned external influence mechanisms of Dale, which is part of the theoretical framework of this research.

The data collection of this research has been conducted in India’s capital Delhi, for this is a region where the phenomenon is common and the targeted stakeholders have been interviewed. It is expected that Delhi gives a representative image of the situation in India as a whole, based on earlier research by Bhushan (2006). At the moment, there appear to be no off shore campuses set up on Indian soil at the moment and because this research focuses on partnerships between Indian and foreign institutions, the subject of off shore campuses will be given less attention in the following chapters.

The primary units of analysis are Indian and foreign education providers, examined within the Indian education system. An attempt has been made to map up the activities of these providers and portray their partnerships in detail by visiting the Indian institutions, speaking to their representatives, taking a critical look at provided documents and their websites. These institutions in Delhi have been
selected on the base of a directory coming from Bhushan’s research (2006), which lists all institutions found in 2004/2005 in India that have partnerships with foreign institutions. Though there are limitations to the representativeness of this sample, because in four years and in the light of this growing trend the current situation can be different from Bhushan’s data collection, due to the limited amount of time available for data collection the choice has been made to solely use this directory for contacting institutions. Though this directory has been used as a basis for the starting up of contacts, all results about the institutions and their partnerships mentioned in the next chapter are based on the data collection for this research. In this way this research extends on the research conducted by Bhushan in 2004/2005 and changes the focal point from mapping the extent of foreign education providers present in India’s higher education system to the partnerships between Indian and foreign education providers, which is a relatively new research area.

The directory mentions a total of 22 Indian institutions in Delhi, which were actively involved in partnerships with foreign institutions in 2004/2005. Numerous attempts have been made to contact all of these institutions and 19 attempts prove to be successful. Of these institutions, not all institutions were relevant at the moment of data collection for some partnerships had ended since the initial measurements in 2004/2005. It is interesting to discover why these partnerships have ended, and short interviews were held with these institutions. It became clear from these interviews that the reasons for ending partnerships were specific reasons, such as a change in direction in offering programmes in certain areas, which are not relevant for this research. After excluding the institutions with ended partnerships and institutions not willing to be interviewed, the remaining ten institutions were made into case studies by visiting the institutions, interviewing their representatives and taking a critical look at their provided documents and websites, as well as the websites of their partner institutions. The interviews were guided by the use of a structured questionnaire, constructed on the basis of relevant literature (Parvu & Ipate 2007; Martensen et al. 2000; Detch et al. 2001). These interviews have been transcribed and intensely analyzed shortly after each interview and a second analysis has been executed after visiting all selected institutions.
Before discussing the data and results derived from this data collection it is important to state that due to the restricted amount of time, means and experience of the researcher this research might be somewhat limited, as well as due to the fact that the interviews conducted by the researcher might be somewhat biased due to her background which has had an influence on the data by both herself as well as the respondents. However, the intention has been to entangle this complex situation by a relatively short explorative investigation that might give rise to some new ideas and view points to the current research projects available.

§ 5. Data analysis and findings

§ 5.1. Foreign education providers active in India’s higher education system

The partner institutions of Indian institutions in the sample used for this research seem to be relatively large institutions and in several cases with good reputations. Their country of origin is diverse, though there are no African, Asian or Latin American partners in the sample present. The United States and United Kingdom are mostly represented, as well as France, Germany and the Netherlands in a few cases.

According to their Indian partners, these institutions are of good quality and in most cases recognized in their own country. This recognition of their foreign partner in their country of origin is being used by some Indian institutions to give their own reputation a boost and perhaps make up for the fact that they themselves do not have received recognition in India. According to some representatives, the recognition also helps them to attract more students to their institution because it portraits some degree of quality in the eyes of prospective students. It is also clear that the mere fact that an Indian institution works together with a foreign partner is reason enough for some students to choose that institution, for the reputation and popularity of foreign diplomas or degrees is higher than most other Indian diplomas or degrees. Whether this reputation and popularity are accurate with reality seems to be of lesser importance. Understandably when, according to some representatives of Indian institutions spoken to for this research, employers also give higher value to foreign diplomas and degrees. In a society in which it is difficult to obtain employment because of greater supply than demand on the job market, it
might help to stand out from the group with a foreign or even merely foreign influenced diploma or degree.

Though the foreign partner institutions seem to be of relatively large size and good reputation they are not the top institutions on the world ranking list, though it has to be said that there are a few exceptions. However, the institutions are also not low quality institutions simply present to make as much money as possible in India’s tight higher education market with all types of negative consequences, as some people might fear. This does not mean that there is not some motivation of profit making behind their presence and activities in India. Though it is not my impression that these foreign institutions are just ‘in it for the money’ and use an opportunity caused by the struggles of India’s education market solely to meet their own profit making demands, it is hard to believe that they are there for purely altruistic reasons. After all, some profit has to be made to sustain a healthy institution. Losing money or breaking even just to help enhance India’s knowledge economy is not realistic in the hardening trade of services in higher education. And there is some evidence that profit making is the objective behind partnerships, at least in the opinion of several representatives of institutions in the sample.

§ 5.2. Quality of foreign education providers
As can be understood, quality in general is a difficult indicator to measure. The size and means of this research do not attribute to the precise measurement of the quality of the foreign education providers. However, an attempt has been made to give a general overview of the quality of the Indian institutions by visiting them and speaking to representatives. In the case of foreign education providers, visiting these institutions and speaking to representatives was not possible in the time span and means available for this research. Therefore, assessing their quality is based on the opinions of their partner institutions in India and their websites.

In the opinion of the representatives of the Indian institutions, their partners are in general regarded as institutions of high quality and of importance to the quality of the Indian institution. These institutions are often seen as examples and seem to be the ultimate goal to be achieved by the Indian institutions. Interesting is that the way quality of the partner institution is assessed and given importance, has
an impact on the equality between the partners. Though most institutions are not mentioned on important ranking lists such as the Times Higher Education Supplement, it can be cautiously stated that most foreign partner institutions of Indian education providers are of good quality and the anxiety of some critics of this trend that only lower quality institutions will enter the Indian higher education market seems to be ungrounded.

§ 5.3. Indian education providers in partnership with foreign education providers
Without exemption all Indian education providers involved in partnerships with foreign institutions seem to be private and unaided. This means that they are privately owned and do not receive any funding by the state or government. Logically it has become clear that some institutions have been set up and funded by wealthy business people, mostly Indian but in one case American, which invest in several areas besides education. Especially the involvement of an American businessman is very interesting and it can be expected that these types of investment will occur more often in the future in light of the GATS, globalization and the emerging economy of India.

Besides the fact the institutions in this sample are private and unaided, most of them are also not recognized by any state or government. They have not received accreditation, though some of them are actively trying to obtain recognition and accreditation. Others claim they would prefer the situation in which they are recognized and have received accreditation because they claim it would attract more students but are not actively pursuing this at the moment. Though institutions are not recognized some do have affiliation with recognized and accredited Indian universities. This offers them the possibilities to grant degrees in cooperation with their affiliated universities, which is favorable for students.

Though so far only similarities have been mentioned about the Indian education providers, there are more differences between them. First, they vary greatly in size, both in student population and the size of their facilities. There are also differences in tuition fees, which can range from 80,000 Rupees (approximately 1196 Euros at the current exchange rate) to 500,000 Rupees (approximately 7477 Euros at the current exchange rate).
Many proponents of the presence of foreign education providers within India’s higher education system use the argument that foreign involvement and activities will help to meet the gap between supply and demand. Nevertheless, the tuition fees are at a level that cannot be met by most Indian prospective students.

§ 5.4. Quality of Indian education providers

As mentioned in the previous paragraph most institutions are not recognized and have not received accreditation. There are many reasons why this is the case and these do not have to be automatically linked to quality. The following indicators have been used in this research in order to make a statement about the quality of the Indian institutions: number of teachers, number of fly-in teachers (either from partner institutions or from other areas), number of teaching hours per week, number of preparation hours per week, academic level of teachers, training of teachers (basic and extra training on the job), sort of teaching activities, use of audiovisual aids, facilities such as libraries and computer labs with internet access, student teacher ratio, student computer ratio, teacher computer ratio, percentage of graduates and percentage of graduates that finds employment in their field after graduation. There has also been an attempt to look up these institutions on the Times Higher Education Supplement but none of them are present on the current list.

When looking at the indicators while examining the sample of this research it became clear that all Indian institutions suffice to a basic level of quality. But there are logically different levels in quality based on these indicators. For instance, in the opinion of one institution one small bookcase can suffice as a library while another institution strives and in their opinion succeeds in having the largest library in their field in India. Of course this is also influenced by the area in which programmes are being offered.

What has become clear while visiting the institutions and speaking to their representatives in this sample is that is very common for institutions to be strict in attendance rates and focus on the goal to make every student eventually graduate. Some even claim that almost 100 percent of their students eventually graduates which seems to me portraying an unrealistic image because there are always
students dropping out for various reasons, some not related to the (quality of the) institution. But the ‘hands on’ mentality of the institutions does not end here. Almost all institutions offer assistance in obtaining placement within their own field after graduation in some way or another. Some institutions have close links with the business market and can offer direct positions in cooperation with companies while others refer their students to certain branches and companies. This leads to high levels of placement after graduation which makes the institutions additionally popular with prospective students. Perhaps these types of involvement make up for the fact that students do not obtain a degree that has been recognized with all institutions. There seems to be a difference between government recognition and social recognition of diplomas.

§ 5.5. Partnerships between foreign and Indian education providers
In this research a few institutions seem to appear to fall under the category of offshore campus though the differences between them are present and when taking a closer look they are not offshore campuses. When asking on in interviews and taking a good look at their website it became clear that the establishments in India who claim to be offshore campuses are learning centers for long distance education, which are also present in other countries such as China. It is interesting that institutions speak with much pride in terms of being an offshore campus or branch, though in reality they are not. Perhaps this is a way to catch the attention of prospective Indian students and in this way enlarge their student population. Distance education is in terms of domestic regulation less problematic than other types of presence of foreign education providers. The legal status of learning centers are difficult under current legislation. Therefore it is important that this type of partnership and its status become part of further legislation in the future.

The difference between a learning centre and a franchisee is perhaps difficult to observe but the difference is distinct. As a franchisee an Indian institution is allowed to execute a programme in name of a foreign partner with the foreign curriculum and evaluation methods. This is done under direct supervision of the foreign partner.
Of the interviewed Indian institutions only one meets the criteria of a franchisee. In this case, the foreign partner has many authorized centers all over the world. Important to mention is that the examinations are checked and assessed by the foreign partner after which a diploma in their name is send to the Indian partner. They sign the diploma as well though the certificate is solely in name of the foreign partner. This way of working also occurs in other partnerships with Indian education providers which are part of the sample used in this research, though they function mostly under the terms of programmatic collaboration instead of franchisee. Nevertheless, as will become clear the distinctions between different types of arrangements are not always that easy to distinguish for both education providers as researchers.

Twinning and link programmes differ from the previously mentioned arrangements because they allow Indian students to follow part of their programme with the foreign partner institution abroad. With twinning programmes students have the option to follow part of their study at the foreign institution while the other part is followed in India. In this way students can obtain a foreign degree combined with international exposure with the least amount of costs. But the part of the study completed in India is not awarded with a specific diploma or degree in India. This is indeed the case with link programmes. Despite difficulties with diploma and degree recognition there are no difficulties with current domestic regulation because the foreign institution is not present in India’s higher education system. This type of arrangement does not occur in the sample of this research. In several cases there are possibilities for student exchange with foreign partners and though this is popular among students, strictly speaking it are no twinning or link programmes. In some cases credits are awarded but not diplomas or degrees are part of the arrangements. Nonetheless, student exchange without degree or diploma awarding is still beneficial in the eyes of the students for it is popular among them.

In the case of programmatic collaboration the study is completed in India with the Indian partner but the student receives a joint degree, both in name of the Indian and the foreign partner. This type of programme is interesting for students who do not have the means to go abroad for (part of their) study. There are various possibilities for programmatic collaboration such as teacher exchange and joint
curriculum development. Most of the institutions interviewed for the research are involved in programmatic collaboration. However, as mentioned earlier the possibilities for programmatic collaboration are varied. There are for instance differences in intensity of collaboration. In some cases the foreign curriculum is completely transferred to the Indian partner, most of the time after some revision to the Indian context and the demands of the Indian market. In other cases the Indian institution adapts their own curriculum to the standards of the foreign partner. But not only with the curriculum can differences be seen between partnerships; also with visits and training by the foreign partners are differences present. It occurs that the foreign partner comes to train the Indian staff to ensure they are up to their own standards, sometimes on a regular basis. Though the regularity varies greatly; some come only at the beginning of the partnership, others come on a regular basis. Of course these types of collaboration can say something about the equality perceived by the Indian partners in the partnerships.

Besides the types of partnerships already mentioned the Indian education providers also outlined other forms of exchange. Next to the already mentioned student exchange in the case of several institutions there were also occasions in which faculty staff visited the partner institutions. In most cases the foreign faculty staff would visit the Indian partner for the purpose of training because of programmatic collaboration or franchising as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

§ 5.6. Types of programmes
The institutions in the sample of this research are actively involved in offering professional programmes to their students in subjects such as hospitality management, business administration, beauty and fashion, which are in general more often offered at private institutions than at public institutions. In addition, due to the lack of recognition and accreditation, they are not in the position to offer academic programmes such as bachelor’s and master’s programmes. However, the misunderstanding or misuse of the title degree has been found in the sample. Some institutions speak of offering a degree to their students while they are not in the position to act in this way because they are not recognized or have received
accreditation. This can be subsided by an affiliation with a recognized university which is the case with the United Education Institute.

§ 5.7. Cooperation between partners
The cooperation between Indian and foreign education providers will be discussed by applying Altbach’s centre-periphery hypothesis and Dale’s mechanisms of external effect.

§ 5.7.1. Applying Altbach’s centre-periphery hypothesis
When comparing the results found in this investigation with Altbach’s centre-periphery hypothesis with regard to higher education and globalization, it is clear that due to India’s size it might be seen as a centre to some. However, it seems its higher education system is lacking in many fields such as meeting the demands of the prospective student population. Furthermore in general it can be said that India does not have many institutions that might act as centers to institutions in the developed nations. But it is important to state that there are some very high quality institutions which are renowned all over the world though there number is, particularly when looking at the total number of Indian higher education institutions, fairly low. But this does not mean Indian institutions are not considered centers by institutions in other nations. Altbach’s hypothesis only focuses on the relationship between the developed and emerging nations but there are also relationships between emerging nations occurring. In the context of this research it is clear that Indian institutions do not only have ties with Altbach’s traditional centers in the developed nations but also with institutions in Asia and the Middle East. Through the contacts with partner institutions in these parts of the world both can benefit and learn from each other’s experiences. And it can be said that some Indian institutions might function as a center to a periphery in nations in Asia and the Middle East. Altbach’s hypothesis might hold some truth but it is clear that it is not adapted to a more complex reality and set of relationships between institutions in the world.

But not only the relationships between Indian institutions and institutions in other nations are more complex than the hypothesis predicts. Altbach states that it can be difficult for institutions to obtain the same or higher quality institutions as in
the centers because of a lack of resources, investment and social capital. Though it is clear that India’s higher education system in general might be suffering from some of these difficulties again reality is somewhat more complex. For instance some of the institutions in the sample of this research did not face problems with a lack of resources and investment. In fact they make use of partnerships with other institutions to obtain a high quality level and are finding their independence from solely learning from experiences from institutions in Altbach’s traditional center.

The third difficulty Altbach mentions is a lack of social capital which also does not seem to be correct when looking at India’s higher education system. In absolute terms India has a large intellectual elite that influences, stimulates and challenges itself which can lead to growing intellectual capital and innovation. And this influence does not end at India’s borders for these intellectuals are part of a wider international elite. Perhaps the influx of foreign institutions might lead to some loss of intellectual and cultural autonomy but the gains of this development are also present, particularly for India.

§ 5.7.2. Applying Dale’s mechanisms of external effects

When following the order set by Dale and looking at the indicator nature of relationship, it is clear that all relationships are voluntary. Though some might claim that a number of institutions can feel a need to set up a partnership with a foreign partner because of difficulties in attracting students or handing out diplomas with a good reputation, no institution is forced to set up a partnership with a foreign institution. While it might benefit them in a great manner it is in fact not obligatory at all. The second indicator which is explicitness of the process is also unproblematic. All processes around partnerships are explicit and clear between partners. In all cases the responsibilities and tasks of both partners were clearly determined and compliant. The same goes for the scope of the relationships. When looking at the areas the relationships have an influence it is almost solely on the area of education. As mentioned earlier these partnerships are not part of a national or international level but only influence the institutions involved which describes the locus of viability. Nevertheless, these developments do have an impact on the national level,
especially on the Indian national level for they influence the higher education system.

When applying the indicator process to the results it is difficult to distinguish one specific process going on in all partnerships. Of course persuasion is not present for the partnerships are voluntary but there are many other forms apparent. There are four forms which became clear from the results: borrowing/imitation, learning, teaching and collective agreement. Though the borders between these processes can be vague they can be distinguished in the case studies of this research. However, it is impossible to state which process is most common for the institutions and partnerships are very different. The distinction between learning and teaching can be difficult to make which is also the case for this research. In the opinion of representatives of some Indian institutions they are being taught the best practices of their foreign partners, which is clearly different in perspective from learning. In my opinion this says something about the equality between partners which is not, at least not explicitly, an indicator in Dale’s mechanisms.

In general only the Indian and foreign institution are involved in the partnerships though there are some institutions that have several partners. The partnerships are between one Indian institution and one foreign institution; there are no multipartner-partnerships in the sample. Discerning the source of initiation, which is the next indicator, appeared to be somewhat difficult in the data collecting. In some cases the representatives of the institutions were not informed about the initiation process for they were not part of this process. Though most representatives spoken to for this research were part of the management of the institutions, it has become clear during the research that most initiation occur in the top of the management and often on basis of personal relationships.

When looking at the dimension of power Dale distinguishes three dimensions which are conscious decision making, agenda setting and determining the rules of the game. As has become clear when discussing the indicators nature of the relationship and explicitness of the process, these relationships are voluntary and clear. Though equality between partners is a different story it is apparent that conscious decision making occurs in all partnerships. And the final indicator nature of effect on education is regarded by all Indian institutions to be very positive. In
their opinion the partnership offers both their students and their educational programmes an international exposure and perspective which is believed to be in the benefit of the students. Furthermore some institutions suppose that the quality of the educational programmes of their foreign partners are higher than their own quality and see the partnership as a way to enrich their programme and eventually institution. Also their didactic methods are being copied which in their view are more interactive and therefore better compared to the Indian teaching methods. There are some institutions involved in programmatic collaboration that almost literally copy the foreign institution’s programme complete with curriculum but most institutions adjust the programme to the Indian context and demands of both students and job market. Of course, with technical programmes it can be logically to copy programmes and curricula for hardly any adjustments might be needed.

As mentioned earlier in my opinion there is an indicator missing from Dale’s list of indicators. Though equality can be deducted in some form from other indicators such as the source of initiation, dimension of power and the nature of effect on education, actual equality between partners does not always become very clear. Equality is a difficult and sensitive indicator to measure, not in the least because of the fact that for this research there has been a larger focus on the Indian education providers. For the purpose of this research, I define equality as seeing each other as having the same value and status, and by this assess the other’s input and views as just as important as your own. But it is difficult to ask and even more obtain an answer when asked about equality between partners to an Indian education provider, let alone when asked by a researcher from a foreign and (in most cases compared to their own institution) higher quality institution. Logically the representatives feel some degree of pride and self respect, and will not answer by stating that they are unequal to their partner. Yet when cautiously analyzing the data and (even more cautiously) taking the impressions of the researcher in mind there does seem to be some form of inequality between some partner institutions, though it is very important to state that the differences between institutions are also in this area clear.

Taking in mind that the indicator equality is partly missing from Dale’s list of indicators that sum up to deciding on the correct mechanisms, there are several
mechanisms active in the sample for this research. Clearly borrowing and learning are mechanisms present in this sample as can be understood from the collected data while dissemination and imposition are clearly not. The three remaining mechanisms which are harmonization, standardization and installing interdependence are somewhat more difficult to apply to this research. It can be said that there is some form of harmonization present in some partnerships but it does appear to be present in a one way manner. Mainly the educational programmes and perhaps the teaching techniques of the teachers of the Indian institutions seem to undergo some form of harmonization with the foreign educational programmes and teachers. Stating that this might also be the case for the institutions themselves might be taking it a bit too far but some might claim this is the case. However, what is clear is that harmonization appears to be largely in one direction; coming from the foreign institutions and going to the Indian institutions. Whether this also means there is a mechanism of standardization as well is difficult to establish but matter of the fact is that there seems to be some degree of standardization in for example curriculum in several institutions. And finally the mechanism of installing interdependence seems to tie back to Altbach’s centre-periphery hypothesis. In my opinion stating that interdependence is installed even when only looking at the situations in which the Indian institution learn from their foreign partner but not vice versa is taking it too far. Though the Indian institutions in their own opinion might learn from their partners and the partnerships give their quality a boost, they are not solely dependent on their partner for their functioning and existence.

§ 6. Conclusions and reflection
It has become clear that there is an urgent need for a suitable regulatory framework regarding the presence and activities of foreign education providers active in India’s higher education system. Whether or not their presence and activities are appreciated it is clear that they are active and at the moment fall outside any domestic regulations, which is worrisome. In addition it is important that these domestic regulations reflect a long term vision for higher education in India in order to ensure the possible meeting of objectives set by the Government. In a world where boundaries are becoming vaguer and services are traded, it is difficult to hold
on to national objectives. Therefore it is important to clearly outline objectives and ways of obtaining them, instead of reacting ad hoc to occurring situations. But it is also important to have a clear image of the way this trend might develop. At the moment, the number of foreign education providers active in India appears to be relatively low, and perceptions about what will happen in the near future differ between actors. It is also important to mention that clear monitoring seems to be lacking, which can influence the perceptions of possible future scenario’s that have to be addressed in different manners.

When looking at both Indian and foreign education providers it has become clear that there are many difference between the providers, as well as between Indian providers as a group. Though all Indian providers seem to adhere to a basic level of quality the differences between them are significant. These differences also have an impact on the types of relationships they have with foreign partners, especially on the level of equality between partners. The partnerships seem to be clear and open, and in my opinion to some degree equal though there are differences between institutions. Learning from partners can be a positive development though it must be said that there is mostly learning from the foreign partner by the Indian institution and not vice versa. In an ideal situation, in a world that is becoming more and more globalized and in the light of GATS, a situation would exist in which all partners would learn and benefit from each other, and in this manner improve all higher education system around the world while at the same time being competitive to ensuring innovations and improvements. Still, this does not seem to be the case at the moment, not in the world and also not in India.

When linking back to the research question posed in this paper and looking at the findings it can be said that foreign education providers offer higher education in several forms and mostly in partnership with national education providers, though this is still on a relatively small scale when comparing it to the higher education system as a whole. Nevertheless, this trend poses many opportunities but also challenges for Indian institutions, the higher education system, the Government and India in general that have to be addressed in a manner that ensures the best possible gains for Indian students and Indian society as a whole.
It has become clear that there are many opportunities and justified worries about involvement of foreign education providers coming into the country but India itself can benefit from the liberalization of the trade in services as well. It has very specific knowledge in areas such as ICT which it can use to start up its own institutions on foreign soil. It might be able to learn from the head start of foreign education providers in India and use the best practices adapted to the suitable context to expand their own activities abroad. Developing countries might see the signing of the GATS in the area of higher education as problematic but there are also possibilities arising, especially for a country as India with specific knowledge and skills to export. Awareness about strengths and weaknesses as a country are important to benefit from the possibilities of a changing and globalizing world, instead of focusing on the possible threats and dangers.
Literature list

• Powar, K.B. (2005b). *WTO and Education: Preparedness of India’s Education Sector for the Hong Kong Ministerial*. Patil Deemed University, Pune, India.


• Robertson, S. & R. Dale (2003). This is What the Fuss is About! The Implications of GATS for Education Systems in the North and the South. Paper presented to the Colloquium on Education and GATS What Does the Future Hold?


