Teaching Note - Consulting Higher Education in Africa: A Strategic Case Study

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While some would think the focus might be on this specific African college and its unique situational outcomes, the central focus of this paper is the development and implementation of a consulting model, the Katzenstein Inter-Culture Consulting Model (KICM), that provides for an equal relationship, and allows for cultural relevance, between a rich US college that is transferring capability, and a poor Ethiopian college that wishes to upgrade its administration and pedagogy. As this is a real-world case, the ultimate outcome is still very much in the future but here we have discussed the process.

Case Synopsis:

This paper is a case study of US College (USC), a new entrepreneurial private college based in Shashamene Ethiopia, and its developing relationship with California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH). USC delivers instruction in business management and various trades. They are struggling to create sustainability by improving classroom pedagogy and administrative processes in a profoundly underdeveloped but rapidly growing economy. Ethiopia's higher education enrollment grew by 800% between 2000 and 2010. "Ethiopia's higher education sector has grown from two public universities just over a decade ago to 22 today, with another 10 due to open. At the same time the number of students in each university has doubled and is expected to double again." (Ashcroft and Rayner, 2011).

CSUDH is attempting to assist USC in transferring and incorporating world-class curriculum and standards in order to remain competitive as Ethiopia's economy progresses. The challenges of developing an entrepreneurial twinning relationship between the two universities, to the mutual benefit of both, are

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explored in this case. How will CSUDH faculty help a struggling Ethiopian college entrepreneurially develop the ability to deliver a first-world level of education; and do so in a reciprocal relationship that also enhances CSUDH?

Many Western efforts to help African institutions have failed or faltered, possibly due to both attempting to "do-it-for-them" as well as a "show-them-how-its-done" approach. The low-cost business model at USC, based on budget constraints, lack of managerial expertise and faculty with academic qualifications above bachelor's degrees; and the lack of modern facilities, technology, internet access, and reliable electricity make implementing a quality curriculum and pedagogy difficult.

Here, an approach, called the Katzenstein Inter-Culture Consulting Model (KICM), was created to transfer capacity that provides for an equal relationship in a context of cultural relevance. It creates a sustainable client consultant system structure composed of ad hoc and permanent face-to-face problem-solving groups.

Target Group:
This case is best for a graduate seminar or undergraduate senior-level special-topics classes concerned with developing countries, economic development, and Africa.

Learning Objectives:
This case should enable students to:
1. explain why a "superior" approach from a rich Western university might not work well towards a poor college in a developing African country.
2. explain the five essential elements of the KICM consulting model and why they are needed.
3. explain the terms and concepts of CCSI, twinning relationship, structural coupling, and action research.
4. demonstrate understanding why both equality of leadership and reciprocity are needed for successful transference of capability.
5. explain how transferring capability is different from a "telling-them-how-its-done" approach.

Teaching Strategy:
A teaching strategy that would be particularly appropriate for this case would be intercultural role-playing with separate groups playing the US and Ethiopian colleges. The overall point would be to demonstrate the need for a special approach such as KICM and also to begin to learn to employ this model.

An effective starting point would be to first ask student teams to answer the question of precisely how they would design a basic college management degree for Ethiopia, listing the required courses and what the exact pedagogy would be in teaching them. They should also determine how best to implement the new

program in an poorly self-funded, private Ethiopian college. Questions could then follow concerning how textbooks could be introduced if they are too expensive for students, how technology in the classroom could be effective in an environment with only intermittent internet and electricity, and how to raise the level of teaching with instructors who only have a BA degree in the subject.

This would be followed by reading and discussing the case in separate groups. The groups would then role-play the African and US teams and, using the KICM method, make joint recommendations.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are President Tolla's long-term and short-term goals, and how can a relationship with Dr. Katzenstein help achieve his goals?

- President Tolla is worried about long-term sustainability as Ethiopia's higher education system develops. His private for-profit institution uses a low-cost strategy that may not remain competitive without significant quality improvement.

- A relationship with Dr. Katzenstein, and his American college, will expose President Tolla, and his staff and faculty, to world-class best practices. Although implementing change may be very problematic, this exposure is a fundamental first step. Additionally, this association carries with it a great deal of prestige. A partnership, especially if formalized between the two institutions, can confer legitimacy far beyond what was previously possible. Status in Ethiopia is very important and directly valuable.

2. Dr. Katzenstein has had a long, successful business career and is now in the middle of a university teaching career. If you were Dr. Katzenstein, why would you bother working with US College in Ethiopia, and what would you and your American college get out of the relationship?

- US College is a very poor (and low quality) school that has the lowest tuition cost in Ethiopia. It is thus a good candidate for significant and quick quality improvement. It serves perfectly as both an African education case study and a test bed for transferring educational capability. The US college will be able to create student and faculty abroad experiences that will be culturally immersive.

- Dr. Katzenstein is interested in transferring educational capability to Africa while creating globalization opportunities for his US institution. The involvement of individual American faculty in an Ethiopian

project confers international legitimacy as well as research data leading to publications. International outreach helps the American university achieve the globalization goals that are explicitly a part of its mission statement.

3. What's different about KICM? Why not just use a conventional expert model of consulting, give Tolla the solution and move on?

- There is a long history of ineffective and failed Western efforts to create schools and medical clinics in Africa. It is widely recognized that paternalistic approaches are not very effective at transferring sustainable capabilities and many efforts are abandoned after the outside experts have gone home.

- KICM is different as it recognizes that local administrators and practitioners are the only experts in local political and economic factors which control long-term success or failure. It also explicitly recognizes the overriding effect of culture differences in transferring any type of professional expertise or capability.

4. Would simply providing classroom technology make a difference in educational level? What would be the main human issues in implementing technology?

- It has been seen that simply providing technology, such as classroom computers, projectors, PowerPoint, on-line distance learning, and other applications, will not result in effective implementation. Often, use of the provided technology will be abandoned as soon as the Western experts depart.

- Effective use of newly introduced technology requires a shift in the mind-frame of those who are intended to use it. This requires a change in organizational and professional culture that must be self-initiated to succeed. Staff and faculty that have never incorporated educational technology will be resistant to doing so.

5. What could technology in the classroom (projectors and PowerPoint) and in the college (flash-drives and computer labs) do to help leapfrog a poor Ethiopian college to Western levels of pedagogy? How could problems with intermittent electricity and internet be handled?

- In Ethiopia it is common for college courses to be conducted without student textbooks as they are far too expensive. An instructor would

work from photocopied text material and copy relevant work onto a chalkboard. Students will copy this onto scraps of paper. This writing will occupy most of a class session. Flash-drives, in conjunction with computer labs, can contain digital textbooks. Thus, the quality and quantity of learning materials could be vastly upgraded and disseminated in this way. It is also possible to use cell phones for the purpose of distributing textbook material.

- The main advantage of PowerPoint in the classroom is to relieve the instructor from chalkboard writing. Class time can be spent on lecture and discussion. PowerPoint files can also be used as the primary text material and distributed via flash drives or cell phone internet connections.

6. Which Western management class (or other field) and textbook might be most culturally appropriate or inappropriate for Ethiopia and why?

- Textbooks that describe universal issues, ideas, and practices might be effective anywhere. However, textbooks that assume a cultural basis may be wildly inappropriate depending on culture. Even if culture is not an issue, Ethiopia's low national level of development could make Western assumptions completely impractical and even non-understandable.

- Generalized Strategic Management theory or Project Management textbooks could be universally adapted as they are not based on any one cultural basis. Human Resource and Organizational Behavior textbooks have very specific approaches which are based on American research (and culture) and are likely to not be relevant to Ethiopia's tribe, class, and religion-based society.

7. What impact on strategic improvement might undereducated Ethiopian faculty have?

- It must always be kept in mind that all transfer of capability rests on the shoulders of those who actually implement change. For US College that would mostly be faculty and students. To implement any digital distribution of textbook material, students must be able to easily use and accept the change from notes and photocopies but if faculty did not fully integrate digital textbooks into the course, completely substituting for the former method, students would not bother using them.

- Faculty in Ethiopia mostly only have an undergraduate education (from colleges that didn't use textbooks). Any change in technology or educational approach would first need to be fully accepted by faculty or else it will simply not be implemented in the long-run. Even when accepted, the impact of new textbooks and technology will be severely limited by the low level of education faculty can bring into the classroom. Current world-class textbooks will tend to contain material far above what the average instructor will have encountered previously.

Background Reading:

Asress, A. (2016), *Private Higher Education in Ethiopia -Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Riga: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Milkias, P. and Kebede, M. (2010), *Education, Politics and Social Change in Ethiopia.* Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers.

Yirdaw, A. (2017), *The Role of Governance in Quality of Education in Private Higher Education Institutions: Ethiopia as a Case Study*. Author: Amazon.