ABSTRACT

In the process of making Singapore the intellectual hub of the region, the government has taken steps in identifying and inviting 10 leading educational institutions from around the world to set up branches here (Figure 1). The purpose is to make Singapore's education system comparable to the best in the world. In doing so, local students will be able to enjoy greater exposure through learning from different teaching techniques provided by these institutions and thus widening their knowledge and expertise.

These foreign institutions will not be operating independently instead they will be closely linked with local institutions, as quoted by Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan:

'The ten world-class institutions will be brought in to collaborate and compete with local varsities'

One good example of such collaboration efforts is the offering joint PHD programs between the NUS and the foreign institutions (Figure 1). This collaboration implies greater chances for interaction among the academics (both students and educators alike) and at the same time achieving the primary objective of raising the standard and performance of the local institutions. As interaction increases, there will be more involvement through daily activities and the students and educators will be able to have a better understanding each other's culture and background.

Of the ten institutions to be set up, two have confirmed and will begin the construction of their campuses shortly - French Business School Insead (figure 2) and John Hopkins University of Baltimore USA. These two foreign institutions will be located at Buona Vista where the new Science Hub (Figure 3 and 4) will be set up. The Science Hub is a $5 billion dollar development by the government and will be a self-contained place for research and development; it is also a conducive environment for evolving techno-entrepreneurial culture. Driven with the aim to encourage the young minds to put their ideas into products in reality, this scientific community will be supported by businesses and services that cater to its needs.

"The Science Hub will be to research what Raffles Place is to business."
The decision to locate the first two 'world-class' institutions within the Science Hub is a deliberate one. This move is to allow the best minds in the business, research and education fields to come together for further advancement. As the Science Hub is not purely for economic objectives, it recognizes the importance of linking itself to other education institutions, both foreign and local. This close proximity not only helps to broaden and facilitate research work, it also enables companies within the Science Hub to tap younger talents from the institutions; providing an environment that will prepare them for a mind for innovation and research at a young age.

What do these developments imply, in particular to the education system here? There will be an increase in the foreign student's population as they are attracted to pursue their studies in the foreign institutions given the high standards of education and rich and illustrious backgrounds that these institutions have. Similarly, there will be more foreign teaching professionals who will bring with them their families as they provide their services at the institutions. This influx of the academics (both students and educators) will subsequently change the profile of the entire student population in Singapore from the way they learn to their way of life.

Evidently, the local students will have a greater chance to be enrolled into these foreign institutions to attain the best education that the institutions can provide. They will definitely benefit immensely from the knowledge and advanced teaching methods that the foreign educators will impart to them. Besides the quest for knowledge, it is important that both the local and foreign students learn and understand the different cultures. To help them to understand the different cultures, they will have to interact with one another and interaction should not be restricted to the classroom and in the academic sense, but be extended to the social aspects in particular from the way they live and their everyday environment.

Already practiced and evident in places like Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford, this culture of learning calls for an endless pursuit to better one's knowledge through interaction with people of different fields and disciplines. This cultures of learning from everything and everyone around one will not only be practiced by the students and educators per se but also will be manifested through the researchers and innovators which the Science Hub brings with it.

Such is the 'investments' that the government has for the Buona Vista area. It is only logical that the existing institutions in the area be linked to the new educational
institutions so as to form an Education Hub. Much like the Science Hub, the Education Hub can be a place with a clear objective for a more complete academic learning. Coupled with facilities and services which enhances the learning process, the Education Hub will encourage and attract students both local and foreign and also more institutions to be set up and eventually forming a close community contributing to the overall improvement of education system in Singapore.