

# Foreign affiliations, Indian sch

**CLUELESS** A number of foreign education boards are granting affiliations to schools in India, but HRD ministry, responding to an RTI by HT Education, says it has no information on how such boards operate

Jeevan Prakash Sharma

jeevan.sharma@hindustantimes.com

They are known for their excellent standards of teaching and learning. However, whether it be the International Baccalaureate (Switzerland) or the Cambridge International Examination (Britain), prominent foreign boards granting affiliations to private schools in India are not regulated by any government authority in India. The ministry of human resource development (MHRD) has no information on the number of such boards operating in India, an RTI has revealed. In its response to the RTI, MHRD has also suggested that the ministry of external affairs would be better placed to give the information.

The RTI by HT Education seeking information on the number of foreign education boards in India revealed that MHRD had no regulatory mechanism to keep a watch on the foreign boards. When asked in the RTI to name the boards and the statutory provision under which they had been granted permission to operate in India, chief public information officer (CPIO) Kundan Nath's response was: "The information sought by you is not maintained in School-3 section of the ministry. However, you may contact the concerned authorities in the Ministry of External Affairs, in this regard."

Emails by this correspondent to Vikas Swarup, spokesperson and joint secretary in the ministry of external affairs did not get a response. Various state governments, too, could not throw light on the matter. "We don't know how many foreign boards are present in Delhi. We haven't laid down any guidelines on this issue," says a senior official from the department of secondary education, Delhi government.

NK Jarag, director, secondary education, Maharashtra, says no permissions have been granted to such boards to grant affiliations to any school. However, he admits that a large number of schools have taken affiliations from the boards.

Senior education officials from Uttar Pradesh, Punjab

and Haryana also say they do not have the exact number of foreign boards because the boards do not have to take permissions from the state governments before granting affiliations to schools.

Opening a school requires, among other permissions, a no-objection-certificates (NOC) from the education department of a state government. The question as to which board is affiliating the school is never asked. "This system is followed in every state. Schools are recognised and granted NOCs after fulfilling certain requirements related to physical infrastructure, academic staff, fire safety etc. After completing all formalities they are free to choose any education board they want. It could be the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), any foreign board or their own state education board. And that's where the crux of the problem lies," says a senior MHRD education officer.

Interestingly, students passing from schools affiliated to foreign boards are also getting equivalence certificates from the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), a body authorised by MHRD to grant equivalence to foreign qualifications for pursuing higher education in India. However, experts have questioned the standards followed by AIU in granting equivalence for foreign degrees and secondary and higher secondary certificates. For a foreign degree, one of AIU's mandatory conditions is that a candidate should have appeared for the examination (for the degree) in the country where his or her university is. There is no such condition for granting equivalence for school certificates.

When questioned on the same, Prof Furqan Qamar, secretary general, AIU, says the association has in place stringent measures to check the authenticity of any certificate submitted for equivalence. AIU, he clarifies, recognises the system of education from across all countries of the world and equivalence

is granted provided that (i) the foreign system of education prescribes a minimum of 12 years of regular schooling; (ii) the school is affiliated by a Board that has been approved/recognised; (iii) the school leaving certificate has been issued by the Board that has been approved/recognised/accredited in the country concerned.

AIU has in a number of other cases obtained the following documents: (a) A copy of the Accreditation Status issued by the concerned accrediting agency; (b) Approval/recognition letter issued by the state government to the school; (c) A letter from the principal of the awarding school stating therein that candidate was a full time student on the campus of the school stating therein the period; (d) Grade 10 & 12 certificate of the concerned board and mark sheet; (e) Academic transcript and completion certificate, Qamar adds.

However, Prof Qamar agrees that giving equivalence doesn't mean AIU has granted recognition or approval to run these foreign boards in India.

## Presence in India is justified, say fo

Jeevan Prakash Sharma

jeevan.sharma@hindustantimes.com

How do foreign boards granting affiliations to Indian schools justify their presence in India? Some board representatives say their existence is legal as the certificates they award to students from affiliated schools are accepted for jobs or for equivalence. They are also aware of the fact that state government recognition and no-objection certificate (NOC) is mandatory for opening a school but affiliation to any education board is not required for getting government's NOC.

"Schools have to submit documentary confirmation of their legal status and confirmation from the local/provincial/state authorities that the school is recognised as an educational

institution when they apply for authorisation for becoming an IB school," says Priyamvada Taneja, development and recognition manager, India International Baccalaureate (IB) Organisation (Singapore Branch).

Taneja could not produce any document showing any school getting government permission for IB affiliation. Ruchira Ghosh, regional director, South Asia, Cambridge International Examination, says, "In India, our qualifications are recognised by Association of Indian Universities (AIU)."

AIU on its part says that its equivalence can't be taken as permission to operate in India. Not only that, many experts question AIU's decision to grant equivalence for foreign board certificates as these are not 'for-

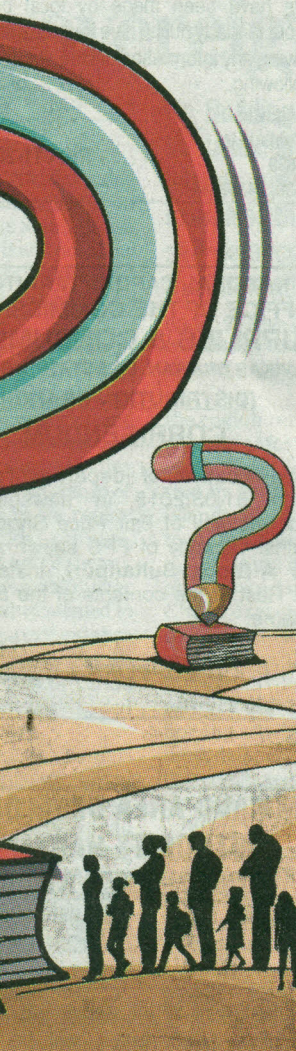
**Foreign boards are offering their programmes in India without any government permission. So how can these qualifications be treated as foreign qualifications? I think AIU is overstepping its mandate**

A SENIOR OFFICIAL, mhrd

oreign' qualification in the true sense. "In 1995, MHRD issued a notification that foreign qualifications which are recognised/equated by AIU, are treated as recognised for jobs in the Central government. But these foreign



# schools, no checks



## FOREIGN BOARDS IN INDIA

In the absence of any guidelines to maintain information on the number of foreign education boards in India, it's difficult to say how many are operating in the country. HT Education has tried to compile the list after consultations with various stakeholders.

| Foreign Education Boards                               | No of school affiliated |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| International Baccalaureate (Switzerland)              | 129                     |
| Cambridge International Examination (Britain)          | 360                     |
| Edexcel (Britain)                                      | 90                      |
| Northwest Association of School and Colleges (US)*     | 17                      |
| Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (US) | Numbers not known       |

\*Now Northwest Accreditation Commission

## Recommend a school for affiliation, get ₹1 lakh

Jeevan Prakash Sharma

jeevan.sharma@hindustantimes.com

Many foreign boards have not lived up to their 'international standards' and have employed agents to recommend schools for affiliation and get ₹1 lakh as commission.

"All foreign boards are here to do business. Those which arrived in India long ago are established with more than 100 schools in their kitty. The new ones want to catch up on the missed opportunity and have, therefore, hired commission agents. They are ready to pay as much as ₹1 lakh for getting schools for affiliation," says a commission agent who used to work for one of these boards.

Many boards are also charging large sums from schools for affiliations and for examination fees of students etc. Most of the schools cover costs through high fees.

When asked to disclose their fees, a spokesperson from Pearson (Edexcel) said: "As a practice, we don't disclose financial numbers."

Not only that, many teachers have complained that they are neither trained properly to teach an international curriculum nor are paid well. "Not all of them are as good as they claim. If we leave aside a few good schools, a lot of others have opted for these boards just to mint money from parents. Who knows if these boards are following the standards they maintain in their own country?"

Illustration: ABHIMANYU SINHA

## say foreign board officials

boards are offering their programmes in India without any government permission. So how can these qualifications be treated as foreign qualifications? I think AIU is overstepping its mandate," says a senior MHRD official.

While a lot of countries have education boards, United States of America follows a system of 12-year high school diploma awarded by schools which are accredited either by the state departments of education or six regional accrediting agencies. Out of these six agencies, the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges has opened its regional office in India in collaboration with Seri India Private Limited. When asked to provide details of the collaboration, Seyduddin, chairman of Seri, didn't respond to emails

sent by this correspondent. To prove its legal status, Seri has claimed, like many others, that it has got AIU equivalence in India.

"When the Central Board of Secondary Education affiliates schools in other countries it has to follow certain procedures. The schools have to take permission for CBSE affiliation from their respective local governments and their applications come through the Indian embassy of that country," says a senior MHRD official.

A former employee of The British School, Delhi, remembers getting lists of students appearing in the final board exams to the MHRD's U3 section for stamping by the section officer. That was in the 90s to keep a tab on schools affiliated to foreign boards. It's not done now.

## WHAT EXPERTS SUGGEST

- Government should make guidelines to regulate the entry of foreign boards, affiliation fees etc
- National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) should study and map their curriculum
- Teachers' training, salary etc should be examined
- AIU should stop granting equivalence as these are not 'foreign qualifications' in the real sense of the term