

A Factual Analysis of Internationalization of Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Higher education has been given a dominant position in the Indian society right from pre-historic days. Contemporary India has tried to maintain those educational standards with the help of strong institutional framework. The Higher Education sector in India has witnessed a tremendous increase in its institutional capacity since Independence. Higher education is imparted in India at various levels and in various types of formal education institutions. In India both public and private institutions operate simultaneously. Education sector has to compete at a global level keeping its quality intact and at the same time the institutions have to remain profitable as well. In the era of globalization, international students play a very vital role in the education system of the country. Internationalisation of higher education is today being promoted in all countries of the world because of its academic, social, political and economic advantages. Internationalisation of education can promote values and culture, generate goodwill, enriches the teaching-learning process, increases the relevance and quality of research, encourages competitiveness and helps to generate financial resources. The paper tries to analyse these dimensions while contemplating the internationalization of higher education in India.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher Education, Exchange Programmes

Introduction

Education in India has always been valued more than mere considering it as a means towards earning a good living. Right from pre-historic days, education, especially higher education has been given a dominant position in the Indian society. Education was available in *Gurukulas, Agrahars, Viharas and Madarasas*, throughout the country. The great universities flourished in India when most of the western world was groping in the dark. Those were the halcyon days when India led the world in scientific knowledge and philosophical speculations. Great scholar Max Muller has narrated in his own words : *“If I were asked under what sky the humanmind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions to some of them which well deserve the attention of even those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India”*. Though the glimpses of the original Indian education is still felt, yet what it is today is the mix and match version of different rules.

The colonial rule in India has made the education system less innovative, non-creative and least original. Had the colonial rulers built their education on this great tradition by introducing modern science and technology into the curriculum, perhaps, Indian education system would have topped on the world map.

The hallmark of Indian higher education since independence has been its constant growth. Students' members have grown from 174,000 in 28 universities and 695 colleges in 1950 to 3,948,000 students in 144 universities and 6,192 colleges in 1989: a growth rate of almost 10 percent a year in a forty year period (Nair 1990). Expansion has taken place at all levels of the academic system – from increase in numbers in postgraduate and professional education to the massive expansion of undergraduate arts and science colleges throughout the country, including its propagation in smaller towns and even in rural areas.

The Higher Education sector in India has witnessed a tremendous increase in its institutional capacity since Independence. At the time of Independence of India in 1947, there were only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges in the country with 210,000 students enrolled in higher education institutions. In the academic year 2011-2012 the numbers have increased to 659 universities, 33,023 colleges and 25.9 million students. India now ranks second in the world in terms of enrollment of students after China; third being USA. (Planning Commission, 2013) Higher education is imparted in India at various levels and in various types of formal education institutions. These can be classified as follows:

- a) Universities
- b) Deemed universities
- c) Institutions recognized as of national importance, such as Indian Institute of Technology, and All India Institute of Medical Sciences
- d) Research institutions
- e) Institutions (colleges) for higher education.

Indian higher education has grown dramatically in the past four decades but this expansion has been largely unaffected by the many plans and proposals to guide it (Kaul 1974). India, more than any other Third World country, has attempted to plan its post-secondary development and there are at least a dozen major reform proposals which have failed (Narain 1985). At the same time the macro-planning for higher education has failed but quite specific reforms have been successfully implemented.

In India both public and private institutions operate simultaneously. In 2000-01 out of the 13,072 higher education institutions 42 per cent were privately owned and run catering to 37 per cent of students enrolled into Higher education, that is, approximately 3.1 million out of total 8.4 million. It is also likely that most of the growth in the rapidly expanding higher education sector took place in private unaided college or in self-financing institutions. Since grant-in-aid to private colleges is becoming difficult, many governments/universities have granted recognition/affiliation to unaided colleges and many universities have authorized new 'self-financing' courses even in government and aided colleges. It is felt that as of now more than 50 per cent of the higher education in India is imparted through private institutions, mostly unaided.

In such a scenario, when the education sector has to compete at a global level keeping its quality intact and at the same time the institutions have to remain profitable as well, international students play a very vital role. At present about 2 million students worldwide study outside their home countries, numbers in a recent study suggest that it will increase to 8 million by 2025 (Altbach, 2004). Flow of students across border has increased in the past couple of decades for a number of reasons. Industrialized countries are recognizing the need to provide their students with a global consciousness' and with experience in other countries to enable them to compete in the global economy. In addition, in some countries demand for access to post-secondary education outstrips capacity. In general, the direction of students'

flow is from south to north, from developing world to the rich countries of the north. Today, more than half the world's post-secondary students are in the developing world and this proportion is expected to grow in the coming decades. Many of these high-growth countries are not equipped to educate everyone at home and hence send increasing numbers overseas to study. For those countries importing foreign students, international higher education is a big business. For instance foreign students contribute more than \$12 billion to the US economy each year. In the current environment of financial constraints, these students are increasingly attracted towards countries where education is comparatively cheaper and has the same standards as in their country.

Internationalisation of Higher Education in India

International students don't just fill seats; they also contribute to the nation's global competitiveness by swelling the numbers of highly trained people in key disciplines. In some graduate specialists such as engineering, computer science, and a few others, foreign students constitute a majority of students at the doctoral level.

Presently, international students from about hundred countries are pursuing various undergraduate, post-graduate and research programmes in India. These students can be categorized as follows:

- Government of India supported students.
- Self-financing students.
- Students sponsored by foreign government and /or funding agencies such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nation Development Project, African Development Bank etc.
- Casual students and students coming under inter-university bilateral agreement.
- Children of Non-Resident Indians and expatriate Indians.

The countries that provide the international students can be put into the following two categories as follows:

- The developed countries that are technologically advanced and economically strong, and have good facilities for higher education and training (e.g. USA, UK, Canada, Australia, countries of the European Union, Japan), and
- The less developed and developing countries (SAARC countries and countries of Southeast Asia, West Asia and Africa) where facilities for education, not only in the professional courses such as engineering, medicine and management, but also in science, humanities, social science, commerce and law, are inadequate.

Internationalisation of higher education is today being promoted in all countries of the world because of the academic, social, political and economic advantages that accrue from it. Internationalisation promotes values and culture, generates goodwill, enriches the teaching-learning process, increases the relevance and quality of research, encourages competitiveness and helps to generate financial resources. One may add that Internationalisation of higher education is now a fact of life that cannot be neglected. It can both enrich the teaching-learning process as well as provide financial stability to the institutions (Powar and Bhalla, 2000).

Internalization of education is high on the agenda of most universities in the developed world. The prevailing view in these countries is that the universities that do not make major efforts to become more international run the risk of being progressively left out at the international, as well as the local, levels (Dandurand, 2000).

For the promotion of Internationalisation of Indian higher education Dr. Powar (2002) made the following points:

- Promoting student inflow from both developed and developing countries.
- Making academic programmes available overseas and establishing off-shore campuses.
- Establishing institutional linkages.
- Advertise and promote the educational wares of Indian universities to attract international students.
- Offer through off-shore centres programmes leading to diplomas and degree in the professional areas targeting students in the under developed and developing countries.
- Offer 'virtual programmes' in specialized areas via the internet.
- Promote students mobility by adopting credit-transfer mechanisms, and emphasizing the importance of international experience in higher education.
- Add international components to existing academic curricula, and develop special academic programmes for international students.
- Establish institutional linkages with universities abroad.

Young people, from different countries, may have varying reasons for wanting to go abroad. Students of developed countries aspire to join foreign universities in order to avail advance facilities for enhancing their knowledge and skills. Their preferred areas of study are science, engineering, medicine and management (Powar, 2003). Students of the developed countries largely seek to learn a language, or study social conditions, or have insight into the arts and culture of other nations. However, all students wish to broaden their vision, develop friendship, learn about history and culture, and generally imbibe the spirit of internationalism.

The students from developed countries come to India largely for programmes in India Studies and Performing Arts, and include Government of India scholars and self-financing students. It is the non-resident Indians (NRIs) and expatriates from USA, Canada, UK etc., who come to India in large number as self-financing students in private medical and engineering colleges. It is also because the facilities for education in these disciplines are not available in the countries in which they live, or of which they are citizen, and also because education in these disciplines is cheaper in India than in the countries of their residence.

Moreover, getting admission to these professional courses in Indian institutions is easier because of reservation for NRIs. They contribute a great deal to the academic and cultural environment of a campus. As Albetch (1989) states "Foreign students are amongst and the most visible aspects of the manifestation of the ways in which the knowledge network functions". He adds (p.126) "Foreign students and scholars are one the most important elements of the international knowledge system. They are the carriers of knowledge across border. They are the embodiment of the cosmopolitan culture... (and they) are one of the most visible and important parts of the worldwide exchange of ideas". And further (p. 135), "Foreign students and scholars are a key part of academic life. They constitute an important academic resource in that they provide valuable expertise and a cross-culture perspective".

Students of the developing countries prefer to come to India because the education and maintenance costs are low as compared to the Western countries. English is the medium of instruction in higher education, the cultural environment is somehow similar to that in their home countries, and the higher education that they receive in India is relevant to the needs of their countries.

International students from developing countries come for higher education in India in every discipline ranging from humanities, social science, technology, medicine, management studies and agriculture. Students from developing countries constitute a majority (about 95 percent) of international students. Majority of foreign students who come to India are from African regions, such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mauritius. During the academic year of 2000-2001, 584 Kenyan and 301 Sudanese students were admitted to the Indian universities and colleges. The total number of students from West Asian region during 2001-02 was 758 and during 2004-05 it was 4,399.

The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) in 2011-12 had reported that highest number of foreign students in India come from Nepal. Bhutan, Iran, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Sudan and Iraq contribute to the next highest number of students in descending order. This rise of foreign students is higher from Nepal and Bhutan, however students from Iran, China and United States have declined as compared to 2010- 2011 data. According to the MHRD, 2014 reports, there were a total of 983 foreign students enrolled in India for higher education and only six students from United States enrolled for the PhD programme.

The students from developed countries come to India largely for programmes in Indian Studies and Performing Art, and include Government of India scholars and self-financing students. The number of such students is, however, quite small. The international student population in India is not equally distributed throughout the country or in various disciplines. The students prefer the western and southern parts of India. During 2001-02 there were 2353 students in Maharashtra (nearly 28 per cent) (Bhalla and Powar, 2003). International students prefer to join educational institutions located in and around the metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, and Bangalore. Pune is a preferred destination for foreign students.

Exchange Programmes

From the quantitative standpoint, studying overseas has become important only since World War II. During the early postwar years, the number of overseas students remained constant and was a modest proportion of the total number of students in the world's rapidly expanding higher educational institutions. However, in recent years, while the rate of increase in numbers of overseas students has been high, the rate of increase in number of place in the world's higher educational institutions has begun to level off. Thus, since the early 1970s the number of overseas students as a percentage of all students in the world has increased somewhat: from 2.0 percent in 1968 to 2.3 percent in 1978.

Though many observers have commented on the rapid postwar increase in the number of overseas students, few have tried to explain that increase. No serious attempts have been made to explain the considerable national differences in the number of students from other countries in a given country and the number from a given country in other countries. For example, in 1978 the United States hosted over a quarter million foreign students, while many nations received fewer than 100; 67,900 Iranian nationals were registered in territory institutions outside Iran in contrast with 176 overseas students from Burma.

It is disappointing to know that at a time when international student mobility is rapidly increasing, and when developed nations have tens of thousands international students, India, which boasts of the second largest higher education system in the world, hosts less than ten thousands students. In fact, after reaching a peak of nearly 14,000 students in 1993-94 there was a steady decline in the number of foreign students in India, the trend being reversed only in 2001-02 (Bhalla, 2000). This reversal followed the initiatives taken by the Association of

Indian Universities in bringing together universities having international programmes and highlighting the need for immediate action. The universities must now act quickly otherwise they will be deprived of the many opportunities that internalization of higher education and more specifically the presence of international students offer (Powar, 2004).

After India gained independence in 1947, Indian universities started admitting students from the under-developed and the developing countries to degree programmes at under-graduate, post-graduate and even research levels. The relationships developed with the international students have been fruitful. The decline in the number of students that started in the mid-1990s can be attributed to various factors, including the development of educational opportunities in their home countries, the 'ageing' of infrastructure and its non-renewal during the process of massification of Indian higher education, the aggressive marketing by some developed countries and India's reluctance in responding with corrective measures, and the failure of the Indian higher education system to make academic changes consistent with paradigm shifts and international requirements.

For an Indian university, possibly the best and the easiest way of successfully promoting short-term student mobility would be enter into exchange agreement with universities in the developed world. From the experience of some Indian universities, like the University of Pune, it appears that it should be possible for at least few Indian universities to implement short-term student mobility programme after making some modifications in the administrative framework, and marginally improving the infrastructure. The programme could be introduced within the framework of two different scenarios. The first scenario is the one in which the international student is given a place in a regular academic programme of the host university. The university provides the usual facilities and is not required to make additional or special efforts for the student. However, it is necessary for the partner universities to come to an understanding regarding equivalence of academic curriculum (on the basis of mutually accepted benchmarks) and also regarding grading and credit transfer. A common grading scheme of the partner university provides the ideal situation. If this is not present then there has to be an agreed mechanism for the conversion of host-institution grades to home institution grades. The only requirement would be development of a credit transfer scheme. The European Credit Transfer System could be the starting point for discussion.

The second scenario is one in which special academic programmes are developed for international students and offered to a group of students from a single university, or from a consortium of universities that have identical examination and grading system. The curriculum may be modified or developed, if necessary, according to the requirement of the home university, and its assessment and grading pattern adopted by the host universities for the limited purpose of the programme. This may require a short orientation exercise for the Indian teachers.

The non-enthusiastic attitude of most Indian universities towards exchange programme is due to some inherent constraints that must be overcome. These are:-

- Lack of funds: Most students exchange programmes require that there be a waiver of fees, and the travel costs are borne by the student or a supporting agency. The first condition precludes any financial gain for the university. In the absence of support for exchange programmes by the government the second condition requires the outgoing Indian student to pay for his travel cost and living cost in the host country. Most Indian students are not in a position to pay these expenses, and in effect the exchange programmes is limited to

students from affluent families- a situation not in consonance with national policy or psyche.

- **Inflexible Academic Structure:** The academic structure of most Indian universities is inflexible with little choice regarding subject or courses to be studied. In many case the students are evaluated on the basis of an annual, end-of term examination. For effective participation in international student exchange programmes, it will be necessary for universities to introduce choice-based credit-transfer mechanisms. If the credits earned abroad are not accepted by the home (Indian) universities, then the Indian student going abroad on an exchange programme will find his visit to be unproductive so far as academic credit is concerned. Other requirements are that the curriculum will have to be in accordance with international norms. These are for, many universities, insurmountable constraints.
- **Inadequate infrastructure and facilities:** the infrastructure and facilities in Indian universities are often not up to international standards. Indian universities are usually not in a position to provide classroom. Library, residential and medical facilities that are not too short of the facilities to which students from developed countries are used to. Participation in international exchange programmes may require the creation of special infrastructure and the setting up of special administration mechanisms (like single-window operations) for the international students.

The situation is, however not as bad as what one would imagine from the above description. A survey by Association of Indian University to which 26 selected universities responded, showed that a few had already adopted the credit system while others showed a willingness to do so. Most universities indicated that it would be possible for them for to examine and evaluate students according to the norms of the home universities. Again most universities were willing to consider the introduction of credit-transfer mechanisms and also to accept the grades awarded by foreign universities. Almost all agreed to arrange for appropriate facilities for the stay of students. All, except one of the responding universities agreed to participate in the UMIOR programme. These universities could be the standing point for a systematic introduction of short term student mobility programmes (Powar 2002).

Study India Programmes

The 'Mysore Statement' issued at a conclusion of a Round-table organized by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), at the Universities of Mysore in February 2001 included, as one of its recommendation, it said that:

Many institutions of higher education in industrialized societies tried to promote cooperation with institutions higher education in other countries in order to arrange temporary periods of study abroad. The term 'Study abroad programme' seems to be appropriate for arrangement with the following four components.

- Study abroad programmes is a set of negotiated arrangements between two or more institutions of higher education in two or more countries (rather than ad-hoc cooperation).
- Study abroad programmes regularly provide students of any institution an opportunity to study at one or more of the partner institution (not just occasional exchange).

- Study abroad programmes comprise an organizational and educational infrastructure aiming to ease mobility and to promote successful educational experience aboard (not merely a regular provision of students' exchange).

The study period abroad, at least in part, should comprise a component of the course or degree programme in which each student was regularly enrolled at the home institution (successful study abroad is at least partially recognized as a substitute for study at the home institution).

Another suggestion that AIU should assist universities to develop 'Study India' programmes, and coordinate with international agencies in the matter of placement of international students in India. As a follow-up, the AIU organized a consultative meeting of representatives of select universities to consider the matter. The meeting, amongst other things, compiled a list of short term-courses, including those already offered, for the consideration of Indian universities.

Some universities in India started 'Study India' programmes that are aimed at meeting the requirements of students of developed countries proceeding out on one-semester 'study abroad' programmes. The courses offered provide foreign students an introduction to India – the land, its people and their traditions, history and culture. Also added are programmes dealing with those aspects of science, technology and medicines in which India has special aptitude or expertise. The universities that have already started 'Study India' programmes are the Universities of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, Goa University, Goa; Visva Bharti, Santiniketan; Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal and the University of Mysore, Mysore. Other Universities like university of Pune, Pune also offer similar introductory programmes.

The American institute of Indian studies, Gurgaon has been organizing language and language related study abroad programmes at various centers including Jaipur, Pune, Mysore, Trivandrum, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Patiala, Dharamshala and Gangtok for visiting students and scholars from the United States. During 2002 this institute organized the tailor - made programmes for about 120 students. These programmes provides the opportunity to the students to visit 4-5 major cities and spend a week to 10 days at each place where lectures are arranged to cover various aspects of Indian life, such as, its history, economy, governance, religion culture and languages. The students are potential American scholars who are expected to specialize in Indian studies. Additionally, the institute has been providing academic support to several American universities for arranging student-visit to India.

Exchange Programmes of Indian Universities with Foreign Universities:-

Pune University

The University of Pune has made concerted efforts to promote international education programmes. Pune University is amongst the first to establish an International Centre, introduce a single window centralized mechanism of admission for international students, provide for supernumerary seats (5 per cent for post-graduate courses in science and 10 per cent for general/non-professional courses) and bring out an International Bulletin (Powar et al. 1997).

It is mandatory for students coming from non-English speaking countries to appear for proficiency Test in English. An international student who is unable to pass the proficiency test is expected to undergo a 'Remedial English Courses for International Students' conducted by the international centre. In addition, they can join, while pursuing their studies, an 'English language Intensive Course for International Students' to increase their proficiency in the language.

The university has been maintaining a close relationship with many foreign universities. It has conducted, and is conducting; Study Abroad Programmes for the Associated College for the Mid-West, USA; and the Calgary University, Canada. It has entered into agreement, related with teaching and research, with 24 foreign universities including University of Tehran and Islamic Azad University, Iran.

University of Mysore

The University of Mysore has approximately 400 students from over 20 different countries. The university is committed to the Internationalisation of its academic activities. It has been hosting a study abroad programme for Connecticut College, USA since 1994 and has an on-going programme of cultural exchange with Michigan, USA, Rovira I Virgili University (Spain) and Tehran University etc.

Osmania University

The Osmania University has on its roll over 300 students from about 30 countries. In order to promote the international education on its campus, the university has set up a University Foreign Relations Officer (UFRO) that is responsible for the admission and welfare of international students, and for the promotion of students and faculty exchange with foreign universities. It has created supernumerary seats for foreign students in all programmes, started for them an English Language Training Centre, introduced a health insurance scheme and provided for special social cultural activities as additional provisions.

Osmania University has maintained a good track record in international collaboration, and is a university that is mostly sought after by international student from the third World (Kadaru 2000). The university in recent years signed MoUs to cover research, and faculty or student exchanges, have been signed with the University of California, University of Tehran etc.

Jawaharlal Nehru University

The Jawaharlal Nehru University is largely a unitary post-graduate and research university with undergraduate programmes being offered only in the School of Languages. The admission of foreign students is facilitated by an admission policy under which 10 per cent quota is fixed for foreign nationals (Chanana, 1996).

Currently, JNU has around 300 foreign students' enrollment in various courses. JNU has signed MoUs for collaboration programmes in various fields, with 39 university/institutions from 19 countries. The partner universities/institutions are: Otani University, The School of African and Oriental Studies, The University of London, Euroasian National University (Kazakhstan), Azzahra University, Shahid Behisti University, Esfahan University, University of Tehran, University of Sistan and Baluchestan (all in Iran)

Symbiosis International Education Centre, Pune

Symbiosis International is famous for its Management Studies and Computer Studies and Research. Symbiosis International also promotes an English Language Teaching Institute for foreign students as well as for the Indians. The university has more than hundred of foreign students including as many Iranian students. It maintains a cosmopolitan ethos with students from different parts of India and from abroad.

Today, India is known as a communication hub, and has become popular with international students from all over the world. The government and private sector within Indian higher education is also strong and steadily growing.

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