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**INTERNATIONALISATION OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
GLOBAL TRENDS AND INDIAN INITIATIVES**

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# **INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **GLOBAL TRENDS AND INDIAN INITIATIVES**

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*No country in the world can remain isolated from global developments in knowledge production and academic influences they exert on national education systems. Knowledge is produced nationally but shared globally. International collaborations and cooperation in knowledge production and its sharing becomes an important step towards enhanced visibility to gain international academic credibility. Internationalisation is a process by which nationally produced knowledge is transmitted to people and countries other than where it is produced. The most common direction of cross-border student flow is from developing to developed countries. The developed countries and their knowledge economies rely on migration of the highly skilled personnel from developing to developed countries. This 'internationalisation' promotes interactions within and between cultures so that the curriculum becomes cross-national and intercultural in nature. India envisages to enrol an increasing number of international students in its universities. The target is to attract 500,000 international students by the year 2024.*

## **EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

The universities were conceived in the medieval period as international institutions. The Paris model served as a common global academic model attracting international students, professors and following Latin as the common language of academic discourse (Altbach, 1998). The newly independent countries in the post world war II period were committed to nation building and relied on universities to promote national development. Nationalising development in the new nation states implied replacement of expatriates in administration, developing capacities to design strategies for economic and social development, and developing a national education system. The higher education system helped national governments to achieve these objectives in the post-colonial period.

The governments in developed countries relied on education as one of the means to build and sustain diplomatic relationships with the newly independent countries. These developed countries maintained their engagement with developing countries by internationalising higher education. The most visible forms of internationalisation implied cross-border education taking place through cooperation projects, academic exchange programmes, and scholarships (Knight, 2006). The scholarship programmes

such as USAID and the Fulbright programme, Colombo Plan, British Council and Commonwealth scholarship programme, and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) are examples of schemes initiated to promote internationalisation of higher education.

## **GLOBALISATION AND THE BATTLE FOR BRAINS**

The development strategies in the 1980s relied on market forces to globalise production. The globalised production relied on higher order skills and competencies such as:

- a) theoretical knowledge to design;
- b) technological knowledge to develop production;
- c) technical knowledge to produce; and
- d) vocational skills to support production (Hansen, 2008).

No single country in the world had adequate number of workers with the required skills and an education system with capacity to produce requisite number of graduates with these skills.

Countries were left with two options (Varghese, 2011): a) educate citizens at home; and b) hunt for talents abroad. The former was very expensive and time consuming. The latter option was easier, faster and cheaper. The developed countries and their knowledge economies relied on migration of the highly skilled personnel from developing to developed countries. The hunt for global talent intensified the 'battle for brains' (Chanda, 2002) to promote national competitiveness and global production. Many countries introduced new visa formats to encourage the flow of highly skilled personnel to their countries. The H1B visa of the USA, the Blue Card visa of the European Union, and point-based emigration policies followed in countries such as the UK, Australia and New Zealand are examples of new strategies to attract the best brains and bright minds from developing countries.

The battle for brains promoted globalisation of higher education. It was felt that the best way to attract talent to a country was to 'catch them young' and train them as per the requirements of the global labor market. Expanding the scope of study abroad programmes and promoting student flows became important strategies to promote faster growth of knowledge economies. In other words, cross-border education became a source of future labor supply in the developed world since an overwhelming majority of those who enrolled as students in the universities of the developed world did not return to home countries after their studies. Many countries liberalised post-study visa provisions to retain global talents within the confines of the host country boundaries.

## INTERNATIONALISATION IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

Internationalisation is a process by which nationally produced knowledge is transmitted to people and countries other than where it is produced. Internationalisation of education implies the imparting of knowledge, skills, and values that have a universal application. It is a process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, service), and delivery of higher education (Knight, 2004). Internationalisation promotes interactions within and between cultures so that the curriculum becomes cross-national and intercultural in nature.

Internationalisation can take place both at home and abroad: at home, it is a campus-based activity and does not involve the movement of persons or programmes across borders, whereas abroad implies cross-border activities or cross-border education involving the movement of people (students and teachers), programmes, and providers across national boundaries (Knight, 2006). Internationalisation involving cross border flow of services is more in discussions than internationalisation at home.

In the context of globalisation, education became a commodity to be traded under the GATS framework. A university became a provider, an educator became an investor, and the students became clients and customers in the market mediated framework of trade in education. Economic rationality and commercial interests became the driving force to promote cross-border flows in education and in the production of graduates for the global labor market.

The priority concerns of universities shifted from focusing on national development to imparting globally accepted standardised skills and promoting international language. Qualification frameworks and instruction in English language became a commonly accepted feature of internationalisation of higher education in a period of globalisation. English became the language of profession, the ‘Latin of the 21st century’ and a lack of its knowledge “seriously disenfranchised” (Mathews, 2013) graduates from seeking jobs in the global market.

Internationalisation of higher education in the context of globalisation became a market mediated process traded through four modes under the GATS’ framework:

- a) Cross-border supply of service where consumers do not cross borders. E-learning-based distance education programmes: online universities and massive open online courses (MOOCs) are good examples of this mode of trade;
- b) consumption abroad where the consumers (students) cross the borders. The study abroad programmes are the most visible form of this mode of trade;
- c) the commercial presence of the provider in another country in the form of branch campuses or twinning and franchising arrangements between cross border universities; and

- d) presence of persons in another country to provide the service. The most visible form of this mode is the mobility of professors from one country to another.

While the most visible mode of cross-border education traditionally has been through student mobility, institutional mobility acquired importance in the first decade of this century and programme mobility, especially through MOOCs, became common in the second decade of the present century. The commercial interest and profit motivations have been best served through student mobility and institutional mobility. At times, students and institutions move from different countries to converge in a third country destination as seen in the case of education hubs.

## **INTERNATIONALISATION THROUGH STUDENT MOBILITY**

According to UNESCO sources (UIS, 2018) more than 5.09 million students crossed national borders in 2017 to pursue higher education. The most common direction of cross-border student flow is from developing to developed countries. A group of nine countries in North America and Western Europe continue to be favorite destinations for most students. They host nearly 60 per cent of the cross-border students followed by East Asia and the Pacific region accounting for more than 20 per cent of the internationally mobile students. It seems there is an increase both in the number and share of students moving to East Asian countries (UIS, 2018).

The USA continues to host the largest share of international students, although its share has been declining in the recent years. The USA is followed by the UK, Australia, France and Germany. The regional flow of students is interesting. The most favorite destination for Arab students is France; Germany for Central and Eastern European students; Russian Federation for Central Asian students; and the USA for Asian and Latin American students.

The most important sending countries are China, India, Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Korea. These countries together account for more than one-fourths of the international students in 2015. Among these countries, China has been making the highest increase in sending students abroad for studies. Their share in total internationally mobile students increased from 6.8 per cent in 1995 to 17.4 per cent in 2015. India too has increased its share of international students from 2.3 per cent to 6.0 per cent. India sends around 305 thousand students abroad for studies. Five countries USA, Australia, Canada, UK, UAE and New Zealand host more than 70 per cent of the Indian students going abroad.

Japan is one of the few countries which has consistently reduced the number of cross-border students. Although it used to send a large number of students and remained a major contributor to cross border education, there is a decline of 33 per cent of cross-border students from Japan between 2004 and 2016. A recent survey found that 53 per cent of Japanese students are not interested in study abroad programmes. The high cost of education abroad and easy opportunities for high paying jobs without

foreign degrees (due to labor shortages) make many prospective students keep away from study abroad programmes (Economist, February 29-06 March 2020).

It seems post-study visa facilities and employment opportunities are factors influencing student decision to choose a destination country. This is evident from the decline in student flow to UK when the post-study visa rules changed and increased dramatically when the UK revised its post-study visa rules in 2019. A foreign degree enhances employment opportunities and higher returns to investment when the student is employed in the host country. The foreign degree holders enjoy premium in the labour market in the country of origin. For example, information on the return plans of doctoral graduates from US universities indicates that nearly 90 per cent of Chinese and Indian doctorate students would like to stay in the USA after their studies (Kapur and McHale, 2005). This shows that cross-border education, especially student mobility, becomes fertile ground for recruiting future highly skilled workers in many developed countries (Tremblay, 2002).

### **CROSS-BORDER INSTITUTIONAL MOBILITY AND EDUCATION HUBS**

Institutional mobility takes place through different forms –branch campuses, franchising or twinning arrangements. The branch campuses primarily provide face-to-face instruction leading to award of a degree from the parent institution or jointly with a partner institution (ACE, 2009). Franchising denotes the delivery in-country by an authorised domestic institution; and twinning denotes the joint ownership and delivery by institutions in the home and host countries (Cao, 2011).

The decade of 2000s has seen the rapid growth of US, UK, and Australian higher education institutions offering degree programmes and establishing branch campuses abroad. Many countries establish branch campuses that act as education hubs attracting students seeking cross-border education within the country and abroad. Development of education hubs has become an objective of some of the national governments in developing countries. Countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Doha, Qatar, Mauritius, etc., are good examples of education hubs.

Malaysia has developed an international educational hub targeting the graduate education market. Dubai Knowledge Village (DKV) and Dubai International Academic City (DIAC) house over 20 international universities. Qatar has established an education hub attracting academic programmes from US universities with a view to reduce the outflow of Qatari students. The Qatar Foundation provides loans to attract foreign students and will write off the loans if the students stay and work in Qatar after their graduation. Hong Kong has promulgated the notion of Hong Kong as a regional education hub. Bhutan is building a US\$1 billion education city to encourage prestigious foreign universities to establish n branch campuses. Mauritius has already developed collaborations with prestigious foreign universities of the USA, the UK, France, India, South Africa, etc., to establish a ‘knowledge hub’.

Some branch campuses receive financial or material support from their host countries except in Europe. The support very often came in the form of facilities, such as land leases at a discounted rate or on rent-free basis. Some of the branches in the Middle East received financial support from the government. Students attending three of the seven branch campuses in the Middle East were eligible to receive financial aid from the local government.

The ACE survey (ACE, 2009) showed that business programmes continue to dominate the branch campuses in Asia and Europe. IT courses occupy the second position followed by international courses common in Europe and Computer courses in Middle East. The field of International Relations was common in Europe but not in other regions. Almost half of all degree programmes in the Middle East were offered in STEM fields.

A survey among students in branch campuses in the UAE found that students prefer studying at a branch campus in the UAE to a Western university for reasons of financial benefits (less expensive), a 'hassle-free' life, personal safety, religion, familiarity, comfort with the local culture and lifestyle, and improved prospects in the local/regional labor market after graduation (Wilkins and Balakrishnan, 2012).

### **CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMME MOBILITY AND MOOCS**

Correspondence courses offered by the traditional universities existed as a form of distance education programme. The open universities emerged in the 1960 and became popular with the Open University of the UK. The online courses and fully accredited online universities came into existence by the turn of this century. The Open Educational Resources (OER) facilitated provision of digitized materials free of cost to all. The MIT Open Course Ware project of 2002 and the Open Learn Programme of the Open University, UK in 2006 extended free access to their online courses popularised OER. Programme mobility has assumed unimaginable heights with the emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the 2010s as the major form of learning without boundaries (Varghese, 2017). The expansion of enrolment in MOOCs has been exponential. MOOCs have become an event changing the landscape of global higher education provision (Yuan, et al., 2008).

The fast expansion of MOOC courses and technological advances have encouraged introduction of online courses by many governments in the developing countries (Varghese, 2014). The investors are also influencing national governments and their policies to accommodate the changes to take advantage of the opportunities provided by MOOCs (Levine, 2013) since online education opens immense scope for cross-border trade. With the increasing popularity of MOOCs, universities and colleges are also readjusting their curriculum, courses and delivery modes. The flexible learning pathways have become a way to incorporate these changes in the higher education system.

## **INTERNATIONALISATION AND INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Higher education in India is in a stage of revival. The growth in student enrolment within the country and abroad is an indication of the revival of the sector. Indian higher education has transited from a slow growing and low enrolment sector to a fast growing massified system. In this century the growth rates in domestic enrolment in higher education accelerated to reach two digits, student numbers increased by more than 4.5 times to reach 36.8 million, the number of colleges more than quadrupled to 40,000 and the gross enrolment ratio reached 26.2 per cent in 2018 (Varghese, 2019).

### **INDIAN STUDENTS ABROAD**

The number of Indian students abroad increased by 5.2 times – from 66.7 in 2000 to 305 thousands in 2017– accounting for an average annual rate of growth of 9.4 per cent. With more than 305 thousand Indian students studying abroad, India is the second largest student-sending country after China. The USA remains the leader in hosting Indian students, although its share declined over a period of time.

Four countries, namely, USA, UK, Australia and Canada accounted for 73 per cent of the Indian students abroad in 2000 and the same countries account for the same share in 2017. However, the relative share of students hosted by these countries changed during this period – the student share decreased from 59 per cent to 45 per cent in case of USA; increased from seven to 15 per cent in case of Australia; one to seven per cent in case of Canada; and remained stable at six per cent in case of the UK (Choudaha, 2019). These changing trends in Indian student flows indicate a close association between choice of study destination and immigration policies followed by the countries.

Ever since financing of study abroad programmes have been mainly from household budgets, Indian students have become ‘highly-price-sensitive’ and ‘value-maximisers’. Cross-border Indian students look for options that lower cost and increase career opportunities. The surge in Indian student flow to Canada can be attributed to the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP) introduced in 2006, which allowed students to gain permanent residency in Canada. Similarly, the point-based immigration policies increased Indian student flows to Australia. The student flow to the UK declined when it abolished post-study work visas (Choudaha, 2019). Further, when the UK revised the post-study visa rules, the flow of Indian students to UK increased by 93 per cent in 2019.

India ranks second in enrolment in MOOC courses after USA. Similarly, a large number of Indian professors teach in foreign universities. However, the country does not permit foreign universities to open and operate independent branch campuses in India. As per the indications in the draft policy on education (NEP, 2019) this position may be revised to permit foreign universities to operate independent branch campuses in India. It needs to be noted that as of now India is very favourably



placed in terms of three out of four modes of cross border mobility, namely, student, programme and teacher mobility.

## **FOREIGN STUDENTS IN INDIA**

Indian universities have traditionally been international institutions in their orientation. The ancient Indian university of Nalanda in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD had a strength of 10,000 students and 2,000 professors. The Nalanda University attracted international students and teachers from China, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Persia and Turkey. The international influence on Indian higher education continued even after independence since many of our universities are modeled after the Euro-American universities, relied on foreign trained faculty, imported laboratory equipment and facilities, and continued active collaborations with institutions abroad.

India attracts only around 46,000 international students. While Indian students abroad account for six per cent of the total, foreign students studying in India accounts for less than 1 per cent of internationally mobile students. Although there is provision for enrolling 15 per cent foreign students in some of the Indian higher education institutions and 10 per cent in all higher education institutions, these targets remain a distant dream. The low enrolment of international students in Indian institutions is an area of concern for Indian policy makers.

## **INDIAN APPROACH AND INITIATIVES FOR INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Internationalisation of higher education under the GATS framework is a market mediated process to trade education. Indian approach to internationalisation of higher education stems neither from commercial interest nor from revenue generation motivation. Internationalisation of higher education is seen in India mainly from two premises:

- a) as a means to extend soft power and diplomatic relationship with foreign countries; and
- b) as a means to enhance the quality of domestic higher education to improve India's position in the global ranking of universities.

The government has initiated various steps to expand the scope and operations of internationalisation of higher education. The country's efforts to develop India as an education hub is part of this strategy. To attract international students and to make India a favourable destination for international students, the government launched the 'Study in India' programme with 2500 scholarships. The study in India programme attracted around 6,000 students from over 30 countries in 2018. More and more countries are expected to be covered under this programme in the near future.

India envisages to enrol an increasing number of international students in its universities. The target is to attract 500,000 international students by the year

2024. The government is also expanding student support facilities. For example, the number of student scholarships will be to 50,000 by the year 2024. India is also exploring possibilities of legislating to permit foreign universities to establish independent branch campuses in India. This may have an added incentive to attract foreign students to India.

Although India has a comparative advantage in terms of low fees and low costs of living, the student flow to India has been slow. It seems the quality of higher education offered and the future employability of international students play a more crucial role in influencing their choice of study destinations. Unfortunately, India is not an attractive destination on both these counts. A majority of international students in India come from South Asian and African countries partly because of the relatively better quality of higher education in India compared to that in their own countries. Some of the private universities in India attract good number of foreign students.

The other factors that constrain foreign students seeking education in India are absence of an internationally relevant curriculum, poor teaching methods, limited number of foreign faculty in the institutions of higher education, and limited exposure of the local faculty members to international context. The inordinate delay in administrative processes including declaration of results is also an important concern for many international students.

Another programme was launched to in 2017-18 to attract foreign faculty members to teach for short durations in Indian universities. The Global Initiative for Academic Network (GIAN) attracted around 1800 scholars from 56 countries to offer courses in 2017-18 and 2018-19. In its extension in GIAN II, the government intends to promote mobility of Indian faculty members to teach in the universities abroad.

Several programmes such as 'PM Scholars Return to India' are initiated to bring back Indian scholars settled abroad. This will increase the number of internationally trained professors offering courses in Indian universities. Similarly, the Scheme for Promotion of Academic Research and Collaboration (SPARC) is launched in 2018 to promote research collaboration between reputed institutions abroad and Indian institutions.

The collaborations with foreign universities help internationalization in several ways. The institutional collaboration enhances academic credibility of domestic institutions, increases the number of international publications of Indian faculty members, gains international exposure and experience which self-pressures to maintain international standards in teaching and research, and helps developing a comparative perspective and enhanced analytical competencies. All these will certainly contribute to enhance quality of higher education institutions in India.

India developed its MOOC platform Study Web of Active Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) and is gaining popularity. The SWAYAM courses are offered to foreign students. Similar to open universities in the UK and UNISA in South Africa, SWAYAM has the potential to attract enrolment of foreign students in large numbers.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

No country in the world can remain isolated from global developments in knowledge production and academic influences they exert on national education systems. Knowledge is produced nationally but shared globally. Therefore, there is a need for Indian education institutions to remain globally connected and engaged. International collaborations and cooperation in knowledge production and its sharing become an important step towards enhanced visibility to gain international academic credibility. It is important is to take advantage of the opportunities provided by international collaborations to place Indian higher education in the global context. This will certainly help India to play a more promising global role in education.

Most of the discussions on internationalisation of higher education center around cross-border mobility of students, programmes, institutions and teachers. Cross-border mobility forms only a small part of the broader issue of internationalisation. For example, less than 1 percent of Indian students in higher education cross borders and more than 99 per cent of students study in India. If internationalisation is to be a broad-based experiment and a successful experience, we need to focus on the students studying in Indian institutions. In other words, India needs to focus not only on internationalisation abroad but also on internationalisation at home.

Internationalisation at home takes place through curriculum changes, changes in teaching methods, learning strategies, student evaluation methods and socialisation process that takes place in the campuses. The NEP 2019 envisages to produce globally competitive and nationally grounded university graduates. The new initiatives such as GIAN and SPARC may help promote internationalisation at home by the foreign trained professors and by establishing collaborations with foreign universities, by revising curriculum to make it globally relevant to produce globally competitive graduates from institutions of higher education in India.

Internationalisation needs investment – investment in institutions and facilities, on individual faculty members and students. It seems that India plans to invest Rs. 93 billion (around USD 130 million) on internationalisation initiatives. This investment may help India emerge as an important global player in education if we succeed in internationalising curriculum contents and curriculum transaction methods.

**Note:** The opinions and views expressed in this paper are of the author and hence should not necessarily be attributed to the institution where he is employed.

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# The Biography of the Authors

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Professor N V Varghese is an internationally renowned Educationist. Currently, he is the Vice Chancellor of the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. Earlier he was the founding Director of the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE/NIEPA), New Delhi (2013-2019); Head of Governance and Management in Education at the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP/UNESCO), Paris (2006- 2013); Head of its Training and Education Programmes at IIEP, Paris (2001- 2006) and Head of Higher Education and Specialized Training, at IIEP, Paris (1999-2001). He was responsible for designing and introducing the IIEP Master's programme in educational planning and management. While at IIEP, he was the Secretary General and responsible for the Secretariat of the International Working Group on Education (IWGE) which is a network of funding agencies in education.

He was responsible for managing the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning (ANTRIEP) and was Editor of its Newsletter. He has been member of several International Boards/Committees and Editorial Boards of Journals. He is also the Chief Editor of the Journal for Educational Planning and Administration. He has directed several national and international research projects; carried out research projects in several countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and CIS region; published more than 30 books with publishers like Springer, Sage Francis and Taylor etc. and more than 200 research papers and articles in academic Journals in the areas related to educational planning, financing and higher education. Just as his other publications, his latest book 'Governance and Management of Higher Education in India' coauthored with Garima Mallick is receiving very good reviews.