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OTHERS

Evolving concept of Internationalisation in Indian higher education



Anirban Chakraborty @AnirbanSpeaks
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Internationalisation in higher education is a phenomenon that has emerged over the last 30-40 years. The proper definition or concept of internationalisation is debatable for higher education researchers and is a predominant critique of scholarship. It can no longer be explained by a tiny number of ventures and programs run by one or two outlying offices at a university, as it was in earlier years. Today, internationalisation among higher education institutions has expanded into a crucial element of organisational planning, driven by a dynamic combination of political, economic, socio-cultural and academic rationales and stakeholders. Although economic rationales, revenue generation, competition, reputation and rankings still drive the agenda of internationalisation, more emphasis is now being placed on other motivations for internationalisation, such as quality, equity, contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals, etc. Thus, developing internationalisation strategies at the institutional level face various challenges such as cost escalation, struggling for talent, global branding and reputation, internationally connected research and scholarly work, recruiting international staff and students. Notably, there is a stress between a short-term, neoliberal approach, concentrating primarily on mobility and research, and a long-term, comprehensive approach, focusing on global learning for all.

India has a long history of global interface in education. The ancient Indian universities: Nalanda and Taxila were truly international hubs. The British rulers also established universities and colleges in India during the colonial period modelled on British universities. These universities and colleges had relied heavily on foreign countries (mainly UK) for foreign faculty and training of Indians as teachers and researchers and laboratory equipment and facilities. After independence, India adopted a planning framework for self-reliant development. Five-year plans were formulated to define the direction of change and growth.

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To establish new higher education institutions, internationalisation took the form of the cross-border flow of students, teachers and financial flows. IITs, IIMs at their early days drew faculty members, received experts and substantial financial support from developed countries (US, USSR and several European countries) within a non-alignment political context. Although in the initial years after the colonial era, internationalisation of higher education was reflected in the political commitment to technologically self-reliant economic and industrial development, India had lacked a long-term strategy for such internationalisation. The internationalisation of education was not considered as an essential domain or priority area in the first two National Education Policies (in 1968 and 1986).

Deliberate policy and strategy about internationalisation have evolved during the formulation of the 10th five-year plan (2001-06). The UGC articulated the need for internationalisation, focusing on the cross-border flow of students. The UGC 12th five-year plan (2012-17) included proposals for faculty and student exchange programmes and collaborations for teaching and research. But many of these initiatives lacked solid political support, administrative direction and financial backing and consequently did not come to fruition. The government has been actively pushing for reforms through several policy initiatives and schemes (GIAN, SPARC, 'Study in India') to promote internationalisation in higher education in recent times. The Indian approach to the internationalisation of higher education is not motivated by commercial interest or revenue generation. Rather, it is seen by the government as a means to extend soft power and diplomatic relationships with foreign countries on the one hand and to enhance India's position in the global ranking of universities on the other. The new National Education Policy (NEP) -2020 strongly suggested moving towards a more holistic and liberal higher education system with a strong focus on 'Internationalisation at Home'.

Universities worldwide are now striving to become "world-class" institutions and constantly aim to improve their global rankings. Global university rankings are thus perceived by many as an ultimate tool for assessing the level of internationalisation at individual universities. Ranking parameters such as 'International Faculty and Student', 'Exchange Student (Inbound, Outbound)', 'International Research Network' have also enhanced many Indian universities' eagerness to promote internationalisation. Many Indian universities (IITs, IISc) have now expanded their global outreach, focusing on global rankings, developing teaching and learning processes and enhancing research and

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innovation capabilities. As a positive result, in the latest QS Asia University Rankings (2022), India stands at the second position in terms of number of universities listed on the table, with 118 universities. IIT Delhi, Jadavpur University, University of Delhi have scored high in 'International Research Network' indicator. Ashoka University has secured top rank (in India) on 'International Faculty' and University of Madras on 'International Student' indicators. Thus, focusing on internationalisation may be the stimulus for many more Indian universities to position themselves in the global university rankings.

Various recent studies have highlighted that higher education development in India and Asian countries have been affected by the current pandemic and the changing geopolitical situation in the region driven by the rivalry between major world powers like China and US. Internationalisation acts as one of the major operators of change facing the modern university. Further, for India, the stimulus of universities to carry activities in internationalisation lies in the benefits that follow effective and systematic quality up-gradation, economic development, global outreach, knowledge acquisition, development of internationally relevant courses and curriculum, global ranking etc. Given the uncertainty, this pandemic effectuates opportunities to re-think Indian higher education internationalisation to mitigate the potential changes in a post-pandemic educational landscape with an adequate risk-management plan to increase sustainability and resilience of this sector in the future.



Dilip Roy

cross border exchange of faculty and student is needed for higher education.

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ENVIRONMENT

Wheeled giants? – for moving or mowing?



Sekar T @CallfromWild

NOV 28, 2021, 14:34 IST

The nation became a mute witness to yet another gruesome mowing down of a group of three elephants, an adult female, a makhna (tusk less male) and a sub-adult by a locomotive on the night of the 26th November 2021 at Mahendramedu near Navakkarai in Tamil Nadu. Autopsy revealed that the female was pregnant, which meant that the potential casualty was

four. This time, the Mangaluru- Chennai express train ran over the pachyderms in the Walayar-Madukkarai section passing through Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, a well recognized theatre of rail-elephant conflict, where 14 deaths have been recorded in the past decade. Nearly 30 to 35 km stretch of the railway line between Palakkad and Coimbatore that either run through the Reserve Forest or close to its boundary has become a bone of contention between the Railways and Forest departments, because of frequent incidents of trains running over elephants. Along this stretch, about 4.5 km is identified to be extremely vulnerable, where there are six 'deep cuttings' and 15 sections that in railway parlance are known as 'open tunnels'. These sections have a clearance of only 3 metre on either side of the track. The elephants that get trapped in these sections are run over by the locomotive. Despite identifying the problem zone, why and how these poignant stories of elephant killing get repeated on and off?

Road and rail connectivity, combined with the transportation they support are no doubt agents of human progress and harbingers of development that bring all round economic prosperity to any region. India boasts of the third largest rail network in the world, with a running track length of 126,366 km over a route length of 67,956 km as on March 2020. Rapid expansion of the rail network, uni-gauge conversion agenda, and increase in frequency and speed of trains with electrification have exacerbated the impact of railways over the years.

Railway lines pass through 1500 km of the country's sensitive wildlife habitats, including protected areas, wildlife corridors and traditional elephant migratory routes in many Indian states such as Assam, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with about 1200 trains crossing through them daily. These apparently benign linear alignments are causing havoc to wild animals. Elephants in these landscapes come in conflict with rail, which occur with regularity. Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MOEF & CC) reports reveal that accidents on railway tracks resulted in killing of 186 wild elephants between 2009-10 and 2020-21 and train-hit elephant mortality ranked third among anthropogenic causes, after electrocution and poaching. It is ironical that Indian Railway's mascot 'Bholu' is also an elephant. In some incidents, the severe impact of collision with these enormously large animals resulted in the derailment of the locomotive and the coaches.

MOEF & CC identified various factors that contribute to the elephant mortality from train hits. These are ecological factors (food, water, shelter, vegetation and movement of elephants), physical factors (steep

Sekar T

@CALLFROMWILD

Dr. Sekar Thangamuthu, a doctorate in Environmental Science is a member of Indian Forest Service. He had his professional forestry training in Indira Gandhi National...

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embankments, curves and blind turnings along the track), technical (speed of train, frequency and time of passage, unmanaged disposal of waste and garbage) and lack of awareness among drivers, passengers and planners.

Recognizing that there is a general lack of coordination between the railways and the forest department in the matter, the MOEF &CC constituted a permanent coordination committee comprising of the Railway and Forest Ministry officials at Government of India level and similar committees of the Railway and State Forest Department officials for addressing issues connected with elephant deaths in train accidents. A host of engineering and management solutions have been tried that include clearing of vegetation along railway tracks to enable clear view for loco pilots, signage boards at suitable points to alert loco pilots about elephant presence, moderating slopes of elevated sections, widening of deep and narrow embankments, illuminating the deep cutting areas, construction of underpasses, overpasses and ramps to facilitate elephant crossings, barricading off vulnerable stretches, speed restrictions in vulnerable stretches from sunset to sunrise, awareness workshops for train drivers and regular patrolling of vulnerable stretches of railway tracks by frontline staff of the Forest Department.

Certain local level initiatives are also forthcoming. For instance, an infrared sensor-linked alarm to the forest staff about the presence of elephants along the railway track, a follow-up message to the railway control room for eventual alert to the loco driver was attempted in Coimbatore forest division with some avail. The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) introduced 'Plan Bee', involving installation of an audio device with a range of 600 meters, which produces the buzzing sound of a swarm of bees, a sound that scares elephants off the tracks. In Uttarakhand, drones are deployed to track elephant movement along railway lines. If only implemented in right earnest, these steps would avert such incidents. Implementation of a package of above mitigation measures by the Uttarakhand's Rajaji National Park administration in coordination with the railways brought down elephant mortality from train hits to zero in the last decade.

Such impressive results notwithstanding, the situation hasn't changed much in many parts of the country and the elephant death toll continues unabated. With the Forest departments, starved of funds to meet the installation of engineering infrastructure in this regard, the Railway Ministry can do well by expending their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for this cause. Despite well-intentioned cooperation between the departments of forests and railways, lot of misunderstanding crops up

once an accident happens. From the forest department's perspective, elephant death caused by negligent act of railway staff is liable for prosecution under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the officials attempt to slap the concerned loco pilots with a legal proceeding. The railway officials, claiming exclusive right of way for the running of trains in the designated width, often quote their powers under Section 147 of the 1989 Railways Act and call the elephants and their forest department custodians as trespassers into the railway property.

Even while the debate continues, a question arises as to who is the loser in the ultimate analysis- is it the wild behemoth or the mechanical giant? Another dilemma haunts the conservation minded people- When a locomotive chugs its way through a forest reserve next time, is it for moving the train or mowing an elephant? Of course, both the questions demand the Governments' urgent attention.



Krishan Kumar Kaushal

sir, excellent write up on butchering of our gentle giants by railways.

REPLY



Asheem Srivastav

death of wild elephants or for that matter any wild animal leaves every conservationists in pain. more so when it is avoidable. in the instant case th...

REPLY



Sekar T

the latest news is that the two loco pilots have been booked under section 9 of the wildlife (protection)act.

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