



INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

UNESCO has defined internationalization of higher education as “education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, program, institution or provider and course materials cross-national jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education may include higher education by public or private providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities in a continuum from face-to-face to distance learning” (UNESCO, 2006). The cross-border higher education, if provided by the best institutions, can be the source of much needed quality education in professional disciplines and emerging specializations. The cross-border providers can energize local institutions through both example and competition. Also that their involvement can result in multiple benefits like the internationalization of curricula, improvement of infrastructure, development of a quality culture and a general uplift of academic standards. At the same time there is the over-riding apprehension that cross-border higher education can have a deleterious effect on indigenous higher education systems and that the education imparted may not be in consonance with national policies and national interests.

Though India has a well-developed educational set up in terms of range of programs and their acceptability in local industry, in the context of globalization India needs to have more higher education institutions which maintain international quality standards to meet the global challenges. Since the Government resources for higher education are insufficient to meet the required demand, investments in this sector from foreign sources can be welcomed with great caution. This paper makes an attempt to analyze to what extent the entry of foreign educational institutions would be beneficial for Indian higher education and what are the major apprehensions while welcoming Foreign Education Providers to this sector.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Globalization, Cross-Border Higher Education.*

INTRODUCTION

India has a very long and impressive intellectual tradition. The Buddhist Centers of learning at Takshashila and Nalanda are cited as examples of ancient Indian residential universities. Since the establishment of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras universities in 1857, we have come a long way as far as quantitative expansion of higher education system is concerned. In the year 1947, the number of universities in India was 20 with about 500 colleges affiliated to them. During the post-independence period, there has been a phenomenal expansion of higher education in the country. Today, we have one of the largest higher education systems of the world, next only to United States of America and China.

Although, Indian higher education system is large in terms of numbers, yet it is very small in the sense that it caters to the needs of only 12.4 per cent of the total estimated youth population of over 120 million in the age group of 18-24 years. While Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is 12.4 per cent at the national level, there is wide state wise variation with the States of Kerala and Nagaland having GERs between 18-19 per cent and that of Arunachal Pradesh having only about 3 per cent (UGC, 2008). The average Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for developed countries is 55 percent (82 for USA, 72 for Australia, 60 for UK, 60 for UK 58 for Canada, 56 for France, and 55 for Japan). In terms of number of institutions also we are far behind some of the developed countries. For rapid socioeconomic development, India needs to expand higher education system almost to the point of doubling it within shortest possible time. Moreover expansion has to be inclusive of giving due importance for regional, geographical, social and economic disparities. Since the Government resources for higher education are not enough, investments in this sector from private and foreign sources are to be welcomed with great caution. India needs to have a well defined policy towards private higher education including foreign universities desirous of setting up campus in India or entering joint ventures. The Foreign Education Providers



Bill, a proposed legislation to allow entry of foreign universities in India, must strictly regulate the entry, operation and standards of Foreign Education Providers, providing quality assurance, preventing commercialization, protecting students from fly-by-night operators and promoting educational tourism.

The Foreign Educational Institutions Bill 2010 was approved by the Cabinet on 15th March, 2010. The Bill (No. 57 of 2010) has been introduced in the Parliament on 3rd May, 2010 by the Human Resources Development Minister, Kapil Sibal, for discussion and its approval (Sibal, Kapil, 2010). The aim of the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill 2010 is to formalize the globalization of higher education sector in India. The Foreign Education Providers (FEPs) already have a presence in India. In 2009, 156 Foreign Education Providers were operating in India. Of these, there were 90 universities, 20 colleges and 46 training institutions. There were 225 collaborations, delivering 665 programmes. These consisted of 168 on management and business administration, 144 on engineering and technology and 132 on hotel management. The Foreign Educational Institutions Bill 2010 eliminates the provision that prohibits Foreign Education Providers conferring degrees in India. This Bill if passed by the Parliament would fully open up country's education sector to foreign educators and investment. In view of this, it has become a matter of intense debate and great concern that whether there is a need of foreign educational institutions in India and to analyze to what extent the entry of foreign educational institutions would be beneficial for India and what are the major apprehensions while welcoming Foreign Education Providers.

ADVANTAGES OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

1. UNESCO's Global Education Digest 2009 indicates that India sends the highest number of students abroad after China. The number of Indian students enrolling in foreign universities has increased sharply from 123,000 in 2006 to more than five lakh in 2009. Students going abroad cost the country a foreign exchange outflow of US \$ 10 billion annually (UNESCO, 2009). If foreign universities establish their campuses in India to grant degrees, it is expected that the increasing number of Indian students going abroad for higher studies will be declined. Establishment of campuses of foreign educational institutions in India will also arrest the outpouring of foreign currency.
2. As per the estimates of National Knowledge Commission, India needs at least 800 more universities and 35,000-40,000 more colleges to increase the percentage of students going for higher education in the country from the present about 12.4 per cent to 30 per cent (NKC, 2008). For economies growing at eight to nine per cent per annum, the demand for quality manpower is high. Due to non-availability of sufficient financial support for higher education sector in view of the size of the population of the country, it becomes difficult to achieve the desired results in terms of gross enrolment ratio. At present, only 6.0 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product is spent on education sector and out of it, close to 1.0 per cent is spent on higher education which is inadequate. Considering the issue of lack of funds for higher education, it would be pertinent to suggest that our Government should make all possible efforts to invite renowned foreign universities such as Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, Stanford, Columbia, Kellogg Berkeley's to set up their campuses in India.
3. The entry of foreign educational institutions in India may be beneficial for students and teachers. Students would be getting opportunity of access in terms of cost and choices to world class higher education while teachers would find opportunity of interaction with the renowned and eminent foreign faculty which will help to expose them and in turn will improve the quality of higher education in the existing higher educational institutions in India. Good international universities can help in improving the quality in Indian universities through increased partnerships and sharing of best practices in teaching and learning. It is believed that the quality of higher education will improve following the unification of university education on worldwide level.
4. Cultural, scientific and technological integration by way of internationalization of higher education in India may lead to economic uniformity.



5. Brain Drain will be checked and Brain Gain will result through Internationalization of Higher Education in India.
6. Internationalization of Higher Education will boost competition among overseas and national education providers. Competition at a global level would be the tool that would help shake the system out of its complacency which has been induced by a skewed demand supply gap. Competition will make pedagogy creative and exciting.

APPREHENSIONS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Despite many advantages, the country must deal internationalization issue cautiously. The apprehensions regarding the internationalization of higher education in India are the following:

- Domestic universities, which have been chronically under-funded, would not be able to face competition from well-established public and private universities from developed countries, which have become “efficient” after receiving many years of public funding. To the extent that these universities from developed countries continue to receive public funds, it is easier for these foreign universities to penetrate in to developing countries like India and establish a strong presence.
- Foreign providers will tend to focus on the “job-oriented” and “professional” courses, leaving aside the basic sciences where there are externalities for long-term development that the country should take into account. At the same time, while domestic institutions may be inefficient and ‘non-competitive’ in internationally marketable higher education, they play a role in national development and preservation of cultural heritage.
- Though foreign universities will have good infrastructure and new technology for innovative teaching but it is uncertain whether they will impart their top faculty to reach here. If foreign providers recruit faculty from existing Indian universities at somewhat higher rates than the existing remuneration in Indian universities, they would be able to enjoy the benefit of acquiring experienced faculty at a cheaper rate than hiring faculty from their home countries. At the same time, this will make it more difficult for domestic institutions to attract better faculty.
- It is also feared that foreign providers may set up undergraduate courses to feed postgraduate courses at their home country, in effect creating a pipeline of graduate students who pay higher fees in the future. It may also lead to the loss of potential research students from India.
- It is a wishful thinking that internationalization of higher education in India would bring foreign investment and bridge the gap between demand and supply in the professional fields. But there are only remote chances of foreign investors coming in any real sense and invest money in the higher education sector. Top tier institutions like Harvard University, Yale, Princeton and MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] will only be interested in collaborating with India’s outstanding institutions of research and that to public sector institutions. There is little possibility that they will offer their degree programmes in India. It is highly misleading to think that such institutions will cater to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged section.
- An analysis of the profile of the foreign institutions present in India gives a clearer picture that in the last 10 years though large numbers of odd programmes are being offered but none of them invested money in India. Most of them came through the “automatic route” under the rules framed by Foreign Investment Promotion Board and offered what are known as “twining programmes”, studying partly in India and partly abroad or franchising their degree programmes for hefty fees without any proper supervision and quality control. Another unfortunate aspect of the functioning is that many of the programmes offered by these institutions are not accredited and unrecognized in their own countries.



- Although the Association of Indian Universities has laid down guidelines for twinning arrangement to ensure genuine partnerships and protect consumers, these guidelines are often violated. There are instances of foreign institutions partnering with unapproved domestic institutions. Degrees awarded under such programmes are not recognized in India. There are also instances of false marketing of foreign programmes, wherein institutions claim to have resources that they don't really possess or give employment guarantees when there's no international equivalence of degrees. At times, students in twinning programmes have not been able to obtain visas to study abroad at the foreign partner's campus.
- Richer students may be "creamed off" by external providers, while poorer students are increasingly accommodated in domestic universities, intensifying the problems of unrestricted competition for the latter. External providers tend to be located in urban areas with higher purchasing power; their courses are self-financing and higher priced and hence attract the richer segments of the population. Urban areas are more preferable for the external providers because of the ease of recruiting faculty and better communications and infrastructure facilities. Thus rural areas and economically backward students will not be benefited much by the influx of foreign providers in the higher education sector.
- Foreign providers are often strictly regulated neither by the authorities in the home country nor by those in the host country. As a result, students in developing countries like India, lacking information on the quality of foreign providers, are vulnerable to aggressive marketing campaigns, sometimes of "fly by night" operators, leading to a waste of private resources.
- It is feared that internationalization of higher education in India can adversely affect national sovereignty and boost hegemony of the West and English language.
- Indigenous art and culture of India will face a threat of loss in the hands of foreign providers. The foreign universities would distort the already elitist educational structure in the country and make education more commercial.
- It is feared that the foreign universities may not provide every one the rightful access to world class education and there is absolutely no guarantee that they pass on the intellectual climate of Oxford and Cambridge or Yale and Harvard University's to India.
- The foreign universities would distort the already elitist educational structure in the country and make education more commercial. Social justice would become a casualty in the higher education sector because the constitutionally mandated reservations for socially deprived sections will not be implemented by the foreign universities. The below average students belonging to rich families easily get admission for professional courses in the foreign universities since the admission is on the basis of money.
- The ignorant parents and students may fall victim to the attraction of foreign courses and programs and in the process the students may get uprooted from their own national links to the employment and higher education sectors and may not be competent enough to compete in the world market. Internationalization of higher education in India may impact on the nature and quality of research and its relevance to the local needs, which is supposed to contribute for strengthening the civil society and national development.

CONCLUSION

In India, higher education was traditionally looked after by the government. In view of lack of resources to meet the increasing demand, private sector has been allowed to share the responsibility. Higher education institutions managed by private sector emphasize more on commercial aspect than creation of knowledge which leads to deterioration of quality of education in India. Though the country has a well-developed educational set up in terms of range of programs and their acceptability in local industry, in the context of globalization India has to create more higher education institutions which maintain international quality standards to meet the global



challenges. Since the Government resources for higher education are not enough to meet the required demand, investments in this sector from private and foreign sources can be welcomed with great caution. For that India needs to have a strong national policy towards private higher education including foreign universities desirous of setting up campus in India or entering joint ventures. Foreign universities must not be allowed to advance in gross commercialization of higher education. Only renowned foreign universities such as Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, Stanford, Columbia, Kellogg Berkeley's should be welcomed to India and such universities should be required to set up their full-fledged campuses in India that are really competent to maintain international standards. Foreign universities must offer courses of study which should be in conformity with the standards laid down by the statutory authority and is of quality compared to those offered in the main campus of the university in the country in which it is established. Foreign universities should not be allowed to repatriate surplus revenues. Eighty per cent of the revenues generated should be used for development of the institutions in India and twenty percent need to be deposited into the corpus fund. It should be made mandatory for the foreign universities to establish world class research centers along with the degree courses to strengthen their academic ties with India. Indian government should have a strong monitoring process with greater transparency in respect of admissions, fee structure, curriculum, methods of teaching, evaluation and examination system, recognition of degree etc. of the foreign universities.

Internationalization of higher education should aim at fostering intercultural understanding and respect, and tolerance among people. It should be embedded with vision of preparing future leaders and citizens to address global issues and challenges like shaping sustainable development. The internationalized curriculum must be committed to the pursuit of the notion of global citizenship. It represents a commitment to international solidarity, human harmony and helps to build a climate of global peace. Low-priced and high quality education of university has to go down to all classes of people and makes Indian society as a harmonious and intellectual bastion of the Globe. India has to attract more foreign students by providing better facilities, high quality and inexpensive among universities, instead of sending Indian students abroad. Indian universities should go competitive and complementary way for generating new creative knowledge and to bring peace and welfare to all.

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