

Internationalization of Education in India: Emerging Trends and Strategies

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Abstract

This article discusses the need and changing wants associated with internationalization of higher education in Indian context. The demand for international education is growing day by day. To cater these needs, institutions have started to take new steps. Besides traditional providers of higher education, new knowledge providers from business houses have started developing innovative models for delivery of higher education.

India has certain advantages to expand its internationalization initiative and as a result receiving interests from foreign universities for setting up campuses in the country. India needs to have a policy towards private higher education including foreign universities desirous of setting up campus in India.

Keywords: Higher education, Internationalization of education, Education providers

1. Introduction

Internationalization is a revolutionary development in Higher Education. The overall demand for higher and adult education, and professionally related courses, is increasing in most countries. There are several reasons for this: changing demographics, the increased number of secondary school pass-outs, wish for continual learning, and the growth of the information technology. While demand is growing, the ability of the traditional institutions to satisfy this need is questionable.

We need to prepare students to perform successfully in the complex, global environment. Employers expect their employees to analyze and solve problems from multiple perspectives and the students must prepare themselves to meet these challenges. Universities are adopting various plans, policies and strategies to internationalize education in response to these global demands.

UNESCO (2006) has given the following definition of internationalization of education. "It is Higher 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 and not-for-profit/ for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities in a continuum from face-to-face (taking various forms from students traveling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using technologies and including e-learning)."

Internationalization is therefore 'a process of integrating an international perspective into the education'. It needs an institutional vision to motivate people to change the whole to think globally and collaboratively. It is a way towards an ever-changing, diverse external environment that focused on global environment.

2. Streams and Modalities

The streams of internationalization of higher education have two major dimensions. One dimension is merely domestic which refers to the international and intercultural dimensions of without ever leaving their home country. The second dimension refers to the mobility of the participants across national borders. It is also called cross-border education, and this type of education growing rapidly, particularly at the higher education level. According to an UNESCO (2006) report, cross-border mobility of programs is "a movement of individual education or training courses and programs across national boundaries through face-to-face, distance or a combination of these. Foreign country provider or the affiliated domestic partner or both of them jointly award credits for the course." Franchising, double or joint degrees and various articulation models are popular methods of international program mobility. A short description of each follows:

2.1 Franchise

This is an arrangement whereby a reputed institution allows another institution in another country to deliver program in that country. The more reputed organization usually awards the qualification. Partners customize their arrangements for teaching, management, assessment, profit sharing and awarding of qualification each franchise.

2.2 Double/joint degree

In these arrangements, institutions in different countries offer a program jointly for which a student receives a qualification from each organization. Institutions customize arrangements for the program provision and the basis for awarding the qualifications for each arrangement.

2.3 Articulation

Articulation arrangements between institutions of different countries allow students to gain credit for courses offered by all the providers. This allows students to gain credit for work done with a provider other than the provider awarding the qualification.

2.4 Distance Education

In this arrangement, institutions deliver a program to students in different countries through distance and online. It may include some face-to-face support for students through domestic study centers.

The main reason of these collaborations is to improve acceptability of the programs and their creditworthiness. Who awards the degree is important depending of reputation of the institution. Recognition of qualification for employment or further study is the most important reason.

Given that several types of program delivery in these collaborations, there are questions about the ownerships of intellectual property rights associated to course design and materials, responsibilities of partners in academic, staffing, recruitment, evaluation, financial and administrative matters.

From an academic point, these dimensions in higher education affect the country's higher education institutions intellectual enrichment, and stimulate teaching and research. From the cultural angle, it helps to understand cultures of other cultures.

3. Demand for Internationalization and Initiatives

3.1 Expansion of Higher Education in India

Higher Education in India has expanded many folds in last few decades. The number of universities has increased from 20 in 1947 to 378, and students' population in higher education from 1 lakh in 1950 to over 112 lakhs in 2005. The growth in capacity of higher education has improved enrollment ratio from fewer than 1% in 1950 to around 10%. Since independence of the country in 1947, the higher education has grown 33 folds in number of institutions making availability of education to the masses. The education providers include public nonprofit, private nonprofit and private for-profit institutions and have a mixture of public and private institutions. There is no boundary between public and private institutions as many public universities now look for private financing and charge a tuition or service charge. On the other hand, private institutions are eligible for public funds and engage in social nonprofit actions.

The expansion of public universities has been slow and skewed at regional distribution. Many Universities, managed by the state governments have many affiliating colleges and academic matters are not properly managed. Thus despite noticeable growth in number of state run universities there is scope rather need for expansion in the number of institutions.

Since 1990, private higher education institutes have started emerging. These are business houses that provide education programs or services for profit purposes. They impart education and training programs than undertaking research and scholarly pursuits. Examples of some these new providers are Aptech and NIIT. These new providers are either campus based or virtual universities and they coexist with traditional education providers.

3.2 Global Trends

According to UNESCO (2006) report, the need for international education will increase from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million international students in 2025. This rise creates huge challenges as well as opportunities. Though exact figures cannot be correctly estimated, it is obvious there will be rise in the programs and institutions across national boundaries. To meet these rising demand, institutions across the globe have introduced several steps. We produce some of the Initiatives below.

- Phoenix University has become the largest private university in the U.S. (owned and managed by the Apollo Group company) and delivering courses in Puerto Rico, Netherlands, Mexico and Canada. Other Apollo institutions are offering courses in Brazil, India and China.
- The Netherlands Business School opened a branch campus in Nigeria.
- Harvard University is improving campuses in Cyprus and the United Arab Emirates.
- Jinan University will be the first Chinese university to open a branch outside China.
- Laureate Education picked up higher education organizations in Chile, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Spain, Switzerland and France.
- Dubai has developed a “Knowledge Village” in the Dubai Technology and Media Free Zone.
- The London School of Economics, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (India) and the University of Wollongong (Australia) are offering courses using franchising agreements and branch campuses.
- The University of Westminster (UK) has formed partnership with Kingdom University of Bahrain and developing similar arrangements with institutions in Nigeria, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.
- The examples confirm that globalization and global partnership among institutions are going to increase in coming years.

3.3 Internationalization of Higher Education in India

The Association of Indian Universities arranged a Round Table on ‘Internationalization of Indian Higher Education’ at the University of Mysore. They discussed the mechanisms to promote internationalization of Indian Higher Education at select Indian universities. They adopted the following ‘Mysore Statement’. (Source: International Association of Universities Newsletter July 2001 Volume 7, No. 3)

The Mysore Statement contains:

- Accepting that internationalization of higher education is a fact of life in the new ‘knowledge era’,
- Realizing that internationalization would lead to an improvement in the quality of education, promote Indian culture abroad, produce understanding and yield financial benefits,
- Recognizing that partnership and networking are essential for to enrich the teaching learning and to improve quality of research,
- Believing that it is necessary to act in earnest immediately,
- Resolved the government, academic institutions and the Association of Indian Universities take necessary steps to promote Indian higher education internationally. They recommended following actions.

After the deliberations, they recommended following actions to the Government

- Take suitable action to promote Indian culture abroad. This needs setting up a Committee for promoting Indian Education Abroad.
- Allow Indian Universities to open offshore campus abroad. Amend the University Grants Commission Act 1956 and the Acts of other statutory councils to include a specific provision allowing universities to open offshore campuses and export Indian education through the distance.
- Simplify the procedures about registration, entry test need, issue of ‘No Objection Certificate’ and the issue and extension of visas.
- Indian Embassies and High Commissions abroad must play a role in providing information about higher education available in India. They should help in the conduct of fairs, entrance examinations and student recruitment.
- Frame an open-door policy for financing students.
- They recommended creation of a central website to strengthen the information base and spread of information.
- Government and other statutory bodies’ should grant greater autonomy and flexibility to universities to admit foreign students and to enter collaborative arrangements with foreign institutions.

- Create a Task Force including representatives of different bodies like the University Grants Commission, All India Council for Technical education and Medical Council of India for admitting students to different professional programs.
- The government should consider extending financing for international education. This will enable institutions providing financial aid to Indian students going abroad, to foreign students coming to India and to educational institutions wishing to develop infrastructures for international education.
- There should be a suitable means to watch the standard of education given by foreign universities.

The committee recommended following actions for considerations of Academic Institutions:

- Universities and other academic institutions that enroll large number of international students must have enough facilities to provide needed environment.
- Evaluate strengths in different disciplines of education and identify areas that would attract international students at different levels.
- Simplify the procedure for admitting international students.
- Indian academic institutions should set up partnerships and develop networks with foreign universities in both the developed and the developing countries.
- It is better if academic environment of the partnering university is similar to that of Indian universities.
- Updating and internationalization of the curriculum will get highest priority.
- Students from non-English speaking countries often have an inadequate knowledge of the English language. Arrangement for conducting special English classes for them is necessary.
- Indian universities should develop special short-term programs for students from developing countries who would like to visit India to learn more about its culture and heritage, natural possessions, diversity, languages or indigenous technologies.

4. Advantages of Internationalization in India

India has many advantages for continuing its internationalization of education. Some of the advantages are discussed below.

As in the US, India also has a large and diverse higher education system. It is the third largest after US and China with 10 million students continuing study in about 16,000 institutions. This large higher education infrastructure serves to all the needs of the country. Formal program or training is available in almost all sectors needed for development, ranging from ancient philosophy to the advances in information-technology. The types of courses offered are comparable to courses available internationally.

Though the quality and soundness of the system as a whole may not be the best, there is no dearth of good institutions. Many institutions in India enjoy the premium status like Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and a few other universities with a global brand value. The increasing number students from the families of NonResident Indians (NRIs) who seek admission in the leading Indian institutions are a sign of comparability of the quality of education. The cost of education in India is also fairly low.

India has the advantages of medium of instructions in which education is passed on. Most of the higher education institutes use English as the medium of instruction. Some of the Indian institutes like Center for English and Foreign Languages at Hyderabad, have set up offshore campuses. Learning English throughout their educational career enables Indian nationals to take up teaching and research assignments across the world at all levels.

India also has nonuniversity postsecondary institutions that provide specialized training for the diverse needs of the country. There are many private and corporate institutions like NIIT and Aptech. These institutes work as ancillary educational providers and are quite successful.

Availability of seats in higher education institutes is also high in India. The competition may be fierce in entering the top institutes but that does not mean the admission capacity is limited. In fact, since the arrival of national private providers in the education sector, India has more 'seats' than there are takers. Because of the growth of private providers, in Engineering and Technology related areas, every year, there are many 'vacancies' in the capacity for want of seekers. This problem is even more severe in the liberal arts and science institutions. Another problem in India is the low annual rate of growth in demand for higher education from the society. In

the countries of the Asia Pacific region, it is stabilized at 2-3% level over past decade and it is 5% in India. How to continue this growth, if there is not enough number of eligible students is the major concern.

The top American universities have complex motives for entering the Indian market. Many of them are genuinely interested in internationalization, and see India as an important destination for economic growth in the 21st century. They wish to expand it in one of the world's major higher education markets and may use their Indian outposts to recruit bright Indian students, and academic staff, to come to the United States.

5. Reasons for Caution

Despite many advantages, the country must deal internationalization issue cautiously. Now Indian government is preparing to allow entry of foreign education providers in the higher education and about 50 foreign universities have evinced interest in setting up campuses in India. The interested universities, mostly from the US, the UK and Australia, have approached the ministry of human resource development. The Foreign Education Providers Bill, a proposed legislation to allow entry of foreign universities in India, is yet to be approved by Parliament. The proposed Bill is yet to be passed after being cleared by the Union Cabinet in February 2007.

The bill is applicable to deemed universities and private aided or unaided professional educational institutions affiliated to a university. Further, it defines a 'Foreign Education Provider' as a university or an Institution accredited and established under a foreign law and notified as an institution deemed to be a university by Central Government. The Bill controls the Admission structure of both aided and unaided professional educational institutions.

Foreign Education Providers will need to seek a status of a Deemed University before they can start operating in India and no foreign institution, which is not categorized as a Foreign Education Provider, can operate in India. Currently foreign universities are not allowed to offer degree courses in India, although it allows 100% foreign investment in education sector. Now, nearly 150 foreign institutes offer courses with Indian university under a twinning arrangement—part of the course in India, the remaining abroad—that is allowed by the education department. A panel set up by the government to draw up a reform road map for the higher education sector recommended that only the top 200 foreign universities be allowed to enter the country. Another report, Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education in India, suggests that only the best foreign universities be allowed to work in the higher education sector to avoid unreliable operators.

Currently, it is not possible for nonprofit companies under Article 25 of the Companies Registration Act — like industry associations — to set up an institution and get university status. Educational institutions in India can be set up only by trusts, societies and charitable companies, but the profits cannot be taken out of the institution and have to be reinvested. These controls not only hamper expansion, it also encourages promoters to resort to unethical accounting practices to take out profits.

India is one of the world's largest markets for foreign universities. The country has a significant unmet demand for higher education access. Currently only 10 percent of the age group receive university education, which is half the rate in China and well below the rate in most developing countries. Thus, foreign institutions have huge opportunity for profitable growth in the Indian market.

Why do foreign universities and education companies would enter the Indian market, the goal is clear—everyone wants to extract profits—mostly by offering programs in fields that are in high demand. Foreign providers are not interested in investing in high-cost academic infrastructures and research. They wish to maximize the profit minimizing the investment. Some countries, including the United Kingdom and Australia, have a national policy to earn profits from higher education exports. The British Council and similar organizations help British educational institutions to increase their export potentials.

Developing countries are now seen as a market for higher education and foreign universities from other countries are trying to increase their market share. As the demand for opening the higher education sector in India is increasing, providing suitable regulatory framework for international education providers is important. Effective regulatory mechanism is necessary to ensure quality higher education.

India's main contribution to global higher education is mainly through the export of students, many of whom do not return leading to high brain drain. Higher education is not purely a commodity to be bought and sold on the international market. Higher education represents an essential part of a nation's priority and a key to future prosperity.

It may also be noted that most of the prestigious institutions of America are not in the international market to sell education for profit. It is the “for-profit organizations” of the USA who are active and most of them are not reputed ones.

6. Conclusion

Higher Education in India has expanded many folds in last few decades. With the expansion in state funded institutions, private operators are also been allowed to supplement education. The road ahead for India is related to creation of quality Higher Education Institutions to meet the challenge. The Government resources for higher education are not enough and investments in this sector from private and foreign sources are welcome. India needs to have a 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, is yet to be implemented.

It was also felt that foreign universities must not be allowed to encourage in gross commercialization of higher education. Only universities of repute are allowed entry and such universities should be required to set up their full-fledged campuses in India. India needs to examine its policies on allowing foreign institutions into the country. Why foreign institutions are interested to enter the country? What is the status of the foreign institution in their country? Are they capable of offering the same quality in India as it does at their own country? Will the foreign institution be able to continue its offerings in India over time, etc?

India's ability to emerge as an economic powerhouse will depend on the enough availability of high skilled human resources, which in turn needs up gradation in the education system to international standard.

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