



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Higher Education with Collaboration: A Study

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Abstract

A goal of the education system in India should be the creation of a knowledge based society including developing world-class universities so that young Indians do not travel abroad to pursue a degree but stay in India and contribute to Indian's economic development. Broadly speaking, there is every reason to be optimistic about the continued globalization of higher education. If knowledge is not seen as a finite resource but as a public good open to all, educational institutions that generate knowledge should be welcomed everywhere. In this manner, many Indian universities have signed a number of memoranda to collaborate with International universities. It will give the global exposure to students by conducting a part of the course at the foreign campus. With the importance being given to producing industry ready engineers these courses are sure to provide not only technical skills but also open the mind of the student to where he stands at a global level. It means, collaboration with foreign universities is the need of present scenario. This paper is focused on the role of AIU, collaboration of Indian higher education with abroad universities, possible areas of collaboration at higher education level, need and reasons of collaboration with foreign universities etc.

Key Words: Higher Education, AIU, Foreign Universities, Collaboration

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INTRODUCTION

Across the world, the profile of higher education is changing. Globalization has opened up global markets for employment and students are eager to grasp them. The need for students to become 'global citizen' is recognized by all education providers. In some developed-country institutions, higher education is being recognized as a for-profit activity, with campuses being set up abroad, as part of the new economic domain. For some, enrolling international students is proving to be a source of revenue that helps to balance the dwindling budgets of institutions. The student is becoming the driving force for promoting international education. In India, however, this is not how internationalization of education is perceived. The country is still debating how to react to the process of internationalization. The role of international partnerships in India's international strategy is constrained by domestic considerations. With growing demand for higher education and a low gross enrolment rate of about 19%, the national concern is to expand the available pool of higher education institutions. But the resources required are beyond available budgets. Increasingly, the country is appealing to private and international higher education providers to add to national capacity. The market is economically attractive to private higher education providers. But the doors for entry of foreign higher education institutions are still not fully opened. It could be useful to look at all means of partnerships at the government level.

REASONS OF FOREIGN EDUCATION

There is a great demand for foreign education among Indian students. The reasons include:

1. Difficulty in getting the desired course domestically,
2. Additional access to education for young people.
3. Not offering the desired course or specialization domestically.
4. Due to a shortage of available places.
5. Offer more enrolment capacity at the bottom of the system.

6. Offer some financial benefit to India.
7. Meet the challenges of equity.
8. Develop a 'global perspective.
9. Attain individual as well as common goals.
10. Perception on foreign education as high quality.
11. Campuses bring much in the way of academic innovation.
12. Earn and live with dignity.
13. Belief on the foreign qualification gives greater prestige to the graduate.
14. Benefit of improving foreign language skills especially English.
15. Sharing the available resources and cooperation with others.
16. Take-up of technologies.
17. Belief on getting more highly paid job.
18. Greater chances for migration to the country that has awarded the degree.
19. Increase the gross enrolments ratio (GER) in India.
20. Being foundation to knowledge.
21. Increase the contribution of private players.
22. Contribute by granting scholarships to students in their region, city or village to have equal opportunities for all.
23. Sensitize the youth for understanding the multicultural world and maintaining peace and harmony in the world.
24. Help both the nations in research work besides it making knowledge global.
25. Make cross-border association and sustaining complex communities.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES FOR COLLABORATION

The following can be possible areas of foreign universities for collaboration:

1. Campus Setting in Indian Universities
2. Dual Degree or Joint Degree Programmes
3. Exchanging Faculties
4. Distance Education
5. Virtual Education
6. Offsite Campuses
7. Vocational Training
8. Meaningful Developmental Programmes for People at Every Level
9. Research Work in Abroad
10. Learning Resources
11. Introducing new courses and programmes

EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION WITH AMERICA

At this stage, it may be interesting to see how India has benefited from international partnerships in the past and whether some of those models are still relevant. India's experience with the United States in selected areas of education, such as agriculture and science and technology is a good example. In the agriculture sector in the 1950s, the introduction of the 'Green revolution' in India can be traced back to Indo-US collaborations in agricultural sciences. This helped to sustain research and education in agriculture. Agriculture education in India greatly benefited from government-level collaboration in education through these colleges.

In the 1960s a consortium of American universities facilitated the establishment of educational institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, and the National Council of Educational Research and Training in New Delhi— both founded with academic partnerships under the umbrella of the two governments. Both institutions are now totally Indian in terms of faculty and governance. But question is arise that- can one use this model to help the Indian government's efforts to increase the number of colleges and universities through private and public initiatives? Can some of the new institutions be partnered by the two governments?

If the older models have proved effective, it is clear that government-level partnerships can be more effective than leaving the expansion programme totally in the hands of private initiatives. It is

also possible that through mutual agreements, an education institution in India could be set up jointly by an Indian and an American university. According to a report by the Association of Indian Universities, more than 1000 foreign higher education institutions were operating in India. Almost all of them are unregulated and not recognized by the Indian government to offer degrees. Students obtaining degrees from these institutions are not in a position to get jobs in the public sector and/or cannot enrol in Indian graduate programmes. The national legislation expected in future will necessarily demand that these institutions get registered with the Indian government. Their fate is uncertain. Such foreign education providers have, in a way, tarnished the image of internationalization of higher education in India.

COLLABORATION FOR TEACHING FACULTY WITH FOREIGN

Due to an overall shortage of good-quality lecturers, the Indian government has stepped in to consider internationalization strategies in the new plan. Government schemes have been announced and arrangements are being worked out with advanced countries to accept Indian faculty and train them to international standards of teaching and research.

While the initiative is useful, the basic problem still remains— filling the large number of vacant faculty positions in even good-quality Indian institutions, like the Indian institutes of technology. Government policies do not support the regular appointment of foreign faculty at Indian institutions. Moreover, the salaries that can be offered would not be attractive to such faculty. With no solution yet to filling vacant academic positions from within or outside the country, internationalizing higher education merely through faculty training abroad is not going to be an effective strategy.

JOINT DEGREES TO CATER THE NEEDS

The government is attempting to encourage Indian institutions to enter into partnerships with foreign universities and offer joint degrees to Indian students. The foreign universities do not have to open campuses in India, but their faculty would teach approved courses in India. The student would spend part of the four-year bachelor degree programme in India and the remaining period at the foreign university.

This is an attractive approach to internationalization, giving an opportunity for 'global immersion' to Indian students, who also get a foreign degree at a reduced cost. The academic quality, financial implications and administrative arrangements for recognizing joint degrees have yet to be worked out between partnering institutions.

Yet even before institutions were able to explore this opportunity, the government has come up with a caveat over the choice of institutions with which private institutions in India can collaborate. The government insists that Indian institutions can only select a 'partner' institution abroad that is in the top 500 of international rankings. As is well known, hardly any Indian institutions are ranked within the world's top 500 institutions.

So are top-ranked foreign institutions expected to partner with non-ranked Indian institutions? This is not an attractive offer for a partnership. Unfortunately, this approach to internationalization does not seem to be workable, either.

NO FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The final area of an internationalization strategy pertains to sending Indian students abroad and attracting foreign students to India. The government has left it free for Indian students to study anywhere abroad. It has no plans unlike Brazil to provide scholarships for study in countries such as the United States. There are also no plans to promote cultural understanding of other countries by supporting Indian students to study, for example, in China or Brazil. One has seen President Barack Obama's '100,000 strong' initiative supporting American students going to China. India also has no major schemes to attract foreign students. The infrastructure required to host international students, in terms of good hostels, trained staff and adequate student advice services, does not exist in the majority of higher education institutions.

The numbers of international students many from Africa in the early days have reduced in recent years and India has not shown any interest in attracting them back. A student focus, in India's internationalization strategy, is totally missing.

ROLE OF ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN UNIVERSITIES (AIU)

Keeping pace with Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education, AIU has enhanced its international interface further by collaborating with various national and international agencies. To assist universities in obtaining recognition for their degrees, diplomas and examinations from other universities, Indian as well as foreign; to coordinate and facilitate these activities, AIU upgraded the International Cell to International Division in 2009. The Division has become fully functional since June, 2010. AIU keeps a close eye on the international scenario of Higher Education and maintains a strong networking with international organizations to cope with the changing scenario. American University is a member of different important international organizations and represents them in different capacities. International cooperation constitutes a major activity of AIU. Canada, Australia, Scotland, France, Taiwan, Mauritius are some of the major countries with which AIU has a strong interface. AIU has facilitated interaction of Indian Universities with their counterparts abroad by creating umbrella arrangement with major countries known for excellence in education & research. AIU also facilitates to participation of international conferences organized by its member universities. The following areas have been proposed by AIU for the future academic cooperation:

1. Mutual Recognition of Qualifications
2. Faculty/PG/UG Students/Research Scholar Exchange Programme
3. Information Sharing
4. Staff Development Workshop
5. University Management
6. Joint Collaborative Researches
7. Sharing of Infrastructure
8. Joint Publications

CONCLUSION

India has fiddled with the various stakeholders of internationalization– students, faculty and institutions– in a lackadaisical manner, using its administrative and regulatory framework. In 2004, the government set up two academic committees under the aegis of its apex body, the University Grants Commission, to promote Indian higher education abroad and in 2009 prepared an Action Plan for the Internationalization of Higher Education. Unfortunately, the strategies recommended by both these committees have not been reflected in India's internationalization strategy. The new plan proposes that a professional national agency, the India International Education Centre, be created to undertake internationalization activities. It is expected to support selected institutions in establishing dedicated internationalization units. Hopefully, this proposed new agency will not become a non-starter in the bureaucratic maze that is the Indian higher education system.

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