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## National Priorities: Recent Trends & Future Developments India



Having favourable demographics and realizing the importance of human resource in knowledge economy, India finds the internationalisation of higher education to be an opportunity to upgrade the quality of human resource and to improve the standards of teaching and research in Indian universities. Enhancing the quality of human resources will promote the competitiveness of the Indian economy and lead to greater participation of its skilled manpower in the global labour market. The internationalisation of higher education is thus viewed to support domestic sectors of growth as well as to serve countries of the developed and developing world through the supply of skilled manpower. The Government of India has initiated a number of steps to promote internationalisation with the above objectives in mind.

There is a growing recognition that interdisciplinarity is the basis of further knowledge generation. Disciplinary knowledge is either moving toward greater specialisation or sharing the field of study with other disciplines. Networking and partnerships are the only mechanisms to explore interdisciplinarity. It is in this context that the internationalisation of higher education is not a luxury but almost indispensable for theoretical advances in knowledge and as a way to solve the practical problems of humankind.

### Research Programmes

Promoting research through collaborations is an essential aspect of internationalisation. Countries such as the U.S., Australia, Canada, the UK, China, and Singapore have bilateral agreements with India to promote collaborations in research, student exchange, vocational education, and science and technology. India has initiated steps to support the Aid Africa programme. University-level institutions are independently signing MOUs with foreign universities to promote research and education in both countries. Research Councils such as the University Grant Commission, the Indian Council of Social Science Research, the Indian Council of Historical Research, the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations are mandated to promote research collaborations with foreign countries. International networking for knowledge promotion is a vital component of internationalisation that requires much proactive policy support such as credit transfer, the creation of National Qualifications framework, centralised information, and the mutual recognition of degrees and greater understanding between quality assurance agencies. At present, such institutional processes to promote research programmes, vocational education, and knowledge networking are being promoted in India. In addition, the motivation level among teachers to promote collaborative research is being raised. Efforts are being made to attract top quality researchers by providing autonomy for them to work in newly established central universities. Research programmes at the doctoral level are being promoted through collaborations to develop the capacity of researchers. The provision of joint degrees is being promoted for this purpose.

An immediate challenge in the international arena is to move beyond bilateral agreements in research collaborations. A multilateral agreement among countries of the G20 to promote research collaboration would be a welcome step. An institutional arrangement of information sharing relating to frontier areas of research could be the first initiative in this direction. The challenge in domestic policy is to promote university-level initiatives to intensify research collaborations with foreign universities.

### Institutional and Program Mobility

At the policy level, the intention of the government to promote the provision of higher education through accredited foreign universities is contained in the "Foreign Education Providers" Bill. The bill has been placed before the Parliament of India for approval. The policy in favour of developing joint ventures in the frame work of partnership and cooperation between universities and other education in the delivery of programs with domestic institutions will be a welcome step in this direction. A joint communiqué by the countries of the G20 to promote program mobility through partnerships will help to promote international cooperation in higher education.



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Institutional mobility such as branch campus demands a long-term perspective and heavy investment in terms of FDI inflows into India. As international providers of higher education, G8 countries need to take that long-term perspective and commitment for foreign direct investment, domestic policies need to be geared toward providing autonomy to reputed research universities with minimal regulations in the national interests. Indian policy-makers are conscious of the view that restrictive regulations to restrict low-quality education providers might amount to throwing the baby out with the bath water unless we develop a mechanism to assure autonomy for the acclaimed providers of higher education. It is for this reason that the Human Resource Development Ministry of the Government of India has been leading delegations that invite international communities to invest in higher education with a long-term commitment. The Government of India will be proactive with such commitments.

While there is a need to build an international climate in favour of branch campuses, modes such as program collaboration and articulation arrangements for students to promote twinning should be encouraged. To promote twinning it is necessary to recognize and grant specific credit and advanced standing to applicants from a named programme of study pursued in the local (host) institution. Program collaboration and articulation arrangements between institutions of two countries through quality assurance mechanisms among G20 countries should be strengthened. This will enhance mutual cooperation and understanding, and will have a synergic effect on the quality delivery of program between two or more countries.

### International Mobility of Students

Traditionally the international mobility of students has been a feature of the internationalisation of higher education. The mobility of students has been a voluntary phenomenon, except of course with scholarship support. Yet its intensity has been growing over the years. In recent years the mobility of students has intensified as the competition for skilled labour and the search for talented students and top scholars for the knowledge economy has been growing. Initially the phenomenon was looked at as brain drain. Now the policy community looks at it in terms of brain gain and brain exchange, which connotes mutual gain. Yet in practice student mobility is either south to north, south to south or north to north. North to south has been lacking, even in marginal occurrences. The latest figures released from the Association of Indian universities show that around three percent of international students from North and South America study in Indian universities. This is ample proof that intercultural or cross-cultural understanding is still missing and is not congenial for an emerging international order. There should be recognition of this fact among G20 countries.

There are twofold challenges in promoting the international mobility of students. Visa regulations are highly unpredictable due to a number of reasons mainly guided by national interests. However, a lack of centralised information has been another factor. Countries that attract the inward mobility of students have tried to overcome the information problem in a number of ways, yet visa and other regulations still persist particularly on account of job restrictions during or after study, where applicable. Another challenge that India faces in attracting foreign students pertains to the existing excessive demand situation in India. Quality institutions are already flooded with internal applicants, and allowing foreign students in Indian universities and institutions of excellence faces stiff resistance. Meeting the demands of international students in Indian universities suffers also because resources are prioritised for national students. There is an existing policy to allow 15 percent of seats to foreign students above the permitted intake of students, technically called supernumerary seats. At present there are more than 21,000 foreign students studying in Indian universities, as per the information available from the Association of Indian Universities. Hence the challenge on the domestic front relates to prioritising the allocation of resources in favour of international students.



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### Future Trends

The collaboration between universities and education institutions for research, teacher mobility, student mobility for research, joint degrees, and academic exchanges through partnerships and collaboration is high on the agenda of the government. Indian universities are promoting research collaborations with foreign universities and this trend is going to continue to grow in the future. The Government of India has been prioritising resources in favour of joint research collaborations and has increased allocations to research councils. As noted above, the entry of foreign universities to set up branch campuses is still under the consideration of the Parliament of India. However, program collaboration and articulation arrangements promoting the twinning of the students enhance international cooperation in higher education. The future trend is one of intensification of program mobility rather than institutional mobility. The facilitation of mobility through credit transfer, quality assurance mechanisms and mutual recognition of academic awards should be ensured. In India there is large demand for vocational education to fulfil the needs of organised and unorganised sectors of the economy. The Government of India has initiated many steps to promote vocational education. Meeting the skill deficit through internationalisation is a major challenge and much cooperation in this direction is desired among the members of the G20 countries.

