

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: THE CASE OF INDIA

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Abstract

Existence of educational opportunities in India for learners from other nations can be traced back to at least sixth century B.C., the Era of Takshashila University. India and Indians being strong advocates of spreading education across national boundaries, globalization in the context of India is not a new concept. The major developments in higher education are a paradigm shift from Teacher-centered instruction to Student-centered learning, the acceptance of the concept of life long learning and the emergence of distance and flexible education as a viable and in some cases the preferred, mode of education. Above all, there has been an internationalization of higher education characterized by numerous institutional linkages, dramatic increase in student mobility, and the offering of a large number of programmes across international boundaries. The internationalization of higher education exposed so far is at two levels: at home and cross-border. The cross border education is an inward or outward movement of students, faculty member, physical, and virtual commercial presence. This paper puts forth the case of India with SWOT analysis.

Keywords: Higher Education, Globalization.

Introduction

The nineties of the last century has been a decade of transition during which education systems, the world over, have witnessed paradigm shifts, and have undertaken academic reforms and administrative restructuring. The change represents a response to Globalization; a process that itself was initiated by the breakdown of political barriers and to unprecedented developments in information and communication technologies.

The major developments in higher education during this eventful decade are a paradigm shift from Teacher-centered instruction to Student-centered learning, the acceptance of the concept of life long learning and the emergence of distance and flexible education as a viable and in some cases the preferred, mode of education. Above all, there has been an internationalization of higher education characterized by numerous institutional linkages, dramatic increase in student mobility, and the offering of a large number of programmes across international boundaries. Further; Internationalization is not to be the transplantation of a foreign program as is it but rather its adaptation to the local culture and needs. Interaction is thus needed between the importer and exporter to avoid educational monopoly.

Existence of educational opportunities in India for learners from other nations can be traced back to at least sixth century B.C., the Era of Takshashila University. India and Indians being

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strong advocates of spreading education across national boundaries, globalization in the context of India is not a new concept.

Globalization defined as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas, etc. across border” (Knight & Wit, 1997) has tremendous impact on every aspect of human life including higher education. Some scholars describe the twenty first century as the century of “educational mobility” and global schooling (Lee, 2001).

The term internationalization of education is used a lot these days by educators and is at two levels: internationalization at home and internationalization abroad. Internationalization at home means the “international and intercultural dimension of curriculum, the teaching/learning process, research, extra-curricular activities, in fact a host of activities which help students develop international understanding and intercultural skills without ever leaving the campus” (Knight, 2005). Internationalization abroad means the movement of students, teachers, institutions, curriculum, or programs across the borders and is also known as cross border education. Moreover, education in the twenty first century could be in several cases characterized by “the campus-less college, book-less library, and professor-less classrooms” (Lee, 2005) due to distance learning. Using distance education processes students complete part or all of their studies far away from the provider/teacher. They use printed, audio, and video material or the internet to get the material and communicate with their providers (Insung, 2005).

\The efforts are put to examine if India has the necessary framework to face the new challenges imposed by globalizations in the field of higher education.

Role Needed from the Universities and Other Agencies

Higher education institutions are undergoing a paradigm shift and trying to cope with this changing environment. Universities are expected to prepare graduates to be global citizen fully equipped to work in a global market. To serve the globe rather than a nation, universities are recommended to switch from a closed to an open system. In the open system, regulations governing a student from acceptance to graduation are flexible enough to serve a variety of students. The students' body is becoming more diversified coming from different nations, cultural background, age groups, including fresh high-school graduates as well as life long learners, full time as well as part time working students. Universities frameworks need to be dynamic enough to continuously overview and update the curriculum keeping an international perspective to match a fast changing international job market. Some scholars even recommend universities administration to strategically manage the institutions by adopting the “student-centered” rather than “teacher-centered” concept in the sense of tailoring their services to match the needs of a diversified students' body (Lee, 2005).

Universities are no longer the only provider of higher education; the sector has changed tremendously during the last fifty years to include a variety of providers across the borders (Knight, 2005).

Two groups of higher institutions provide education across borders, the public, private, or religious institutions which are part of the national education system thus accredited by the home nations; and the non-recognized higher education institutions which are private, profit-oriented and not part of the national education system. Some providers from the second group are of low quality aiming simply at maximizing profits. Since the second group is not part of the national educational system, controlling quality becomes a challenge. Others include profit-oriented commercial companies offering courses, programs and support services across the borders. These could be private or publicly traded companies, usually not part of the national education system of the home-nation. Moreover, several companies and higher education institutions could form affiliations to provide education across borders.

The last category is the virtual institutions that are one hundred percent virtual, profit-oriented which may or may not be part of the national education system and not easily monitored by the system due to their distance delivery methods.

The physical or virtual movement from a nation to another to offer its services is known as provider mobility and could take several forms (Knight, 2005). A provider from India let us say could establish a branch campus in another nation and award qualifications from India. This provider could on the contrary establish an independent institution in the other nation to offer its services. A third way is for the Indian provider to purchase a share from a provider already established in the other nation, thus merge. A fourth way is to establish abroad a study center rather than campus to support students. The possibility of offering education across borders is also possible via distance learning by establishing virtual universities.

Education mobility involves programs as well as providers (Knight, 2005). Franchising is one mode of program mobility where a provider from a source country (I) authorizes another from a host country (II) to offer its courses and programs. Students are awarded qualifications from the source country provider (I). In the case of twinning, students can take courses in the source (I) or host (II) country and be awarded qualification from the provider of the source country (I). Providers from many countries could agree on a common program. Students studying this program will receive a qualification from each provider or a joint degree from all of them. If providers from different countries sign articulations, they give students credits for studies done with any of the providers. A provider from a host country (II) could sign validation agreements with another from a source country (I) allowing it to offer its qualifications. In the distance learning case, students have access to the courses and programs of the source country provider (I) anywhere in the world mainly on-line.

The Role of the World Trade Organization (WTO)

Internationalization in education existed long ago especially with respect to students' mobility traveling across borders to study. However, the issue was accentuated when the World Trade Organization (WTO), the only international organization in charge of regulating trade between nations and consisting of 146 nation members, discussed in the Uruguay Round the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) which came into effect in

1995 (WTO, 2007). GATS has three parts. The first part is the framework Agreement containing 29 Articles, second part consists of national schedules that list a country's specific commitments on access to the domestic market and the third part consists of a number of annexes, Ministerial decisions, Schedule of Commitment etc. Presently GATS covers 161 activities falling within 12 services, education being one of them.

The agreement served as a wake up call for scholars to start actively thinking about the consequences of the liberalization of education. Trade in education is organized into five categories including primary, secondary, higher, and adults (outside the regular system) education in addition to a fifth category entitled "other education" which includes all other education services not covered elsewhere. In 1995 when the initial commitments of GATS were made, 44 countries (if we consider the European Union as one country) committed to the liberalization of education of which 35 committed to the liberalization of higher education (Knight, 2005). When a nation agrees to liberate its education sector it has to offer equal and consistent treatment of all trading foreign partners thus it needs to treat all WTO member nations equally. Moreover, domestic and foreign supplier will be treated equally under this agreement. A nation could decide not to commit all its services sectors and put some limitations on the degree of market accessibility it allows to other. However, a nation is obliged to commit to the progressive liberalization. This means that with each negotiation round a nation needs to cover more sectors and eliminate more trade barriers in the already covered sectors (WTO, 2007).

The GATS defines four modes of supply of any service (Knight, 2005). The cross border supply mode which consists of providing a service across the nation borders. This mode includes, if applied to the education sector, distance learning, e-learning, and virtual universities. A second mode is the consumption of the service abroad and this is the case of student mobility. The third mode is the commercial presence mode. In this case, the education provider establishes its presence in the host nation by opening a local branch, signing twinning or franchising agreements. A fourth mode is the presence of the natural person which means the movement of the teachers and researchers across the borders. The cross border education sector is expected to grow even if a nation refuses to commit to the GATS and this is mainly due to the e-learning and the increasing number of virtual universities.

Cross-Border Mobility

Nations nowadays could be classified according to cross-border education into four groups. With respect to the provider/program mobility, a first group consists of developed nations with a strong higher educational sector that are mainly exporter of education such as USA, UK, Australia, and Canada (Insung, 2005). A second group is of importers of mainly English-language-education such as Japan and Korea (Molly, 2005). A third group of nations plays the role of both exporters as well as importers. A fourth group of mainly underdeveloped nations are still not active at both import and export levels.

Major Views on the Internationalization of Higher Education

The internationalization of higher education is debated by scholars all over the world. Some academics fully support this trend, others oppose it, and a thirds group admits that it is a fact to be dealt with (MED, 1999).

The group fully supporting this trend argues that the internationalization of education both at home or abroad will help create a knowledge society thus help further develop the human capital. Education providers will be triggered to continuously update their curriculum to prepare their graduate to work in a diversified international job market. Researchers would select topics with an international scope and will be capable thanks to the information technology development to collaborate with scholars across the glob. Information will spread fast creating a kind of "knowledge web" across the world (Lee, 2005). Students and teachers will be more innovative and knowledge will be the most valuable resource of any nation. The world will be moving towards the knowledge economy. Knowledge emphasized is mainly the know-how (ability to do things and gain skills), the know-why (about the natural world, society, and human mind), and the know-who (social relations) rather than the know-what (knowledge of facts) (MED, 1999). Learning will be continuous at the level of the organization and firms are to create a learning environment and appreciate its intellectual capital, the intangible asset, as they appreciate its other tangible assets. A nation will also diffuse its culture and benefit from others experiences too.

A second group of academics fully opposes the liberalization of education. They are averse of the creeping of the mentality of the business to the sector of education and refuse that education would be considered as a service like others to be traded. The sector will be dominated by profit-oriented providers who will be concerned by profit rather than quality which put the students at risk of dealing with "rogue" providers since the nation cannot always control the quality offered by the cross-border providers. Moreover, the trade in education will create a new center-periphery situation since it will mostly be unilateral. Developed countries will mainly be the exporters whereas developing countries will play the role of importers. Exporter countries will diffuse their culture and mode of thinking and threaten the importers heritage, culture and national sovereignty. For this group education is a public good and needs to remain a public responsibility.

The internationalization of education is a fact that could not be avoided. A nation needs to prepare itself to gain from the advantages and avoid the disadvantages. The opening up of the education sector is not an instant action; it is rather a long process that a nation needs to undertake to ensure the quality of the service and maintain its cultural identity. Work is needed for the mutual recognition of degrees between the nations. Internationalization is not to be the transplantation of a foreign program as it is but rather its adaptation to the local culture and needs. Interaction is thus needed between the importer and exporter to engage in a win-win situation and avoid educational monopoly. The UNESCO is playing a key role in preparing with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) the global standard of Accreditation of higher education entitled "The UNESCO-OECD Joint-Guidelines (Lee, 2005). The guidelines are prepared jointly by around 40 countries and have two main concerns: to protect

students seeking cross border education from receiving low quality services and to stress the importance of the retention of national sovereignty of higher education which needs to be cultural specific (Stella, 2005).

Since the internationalization of education is a reality to be dealt with, the coming section discusses the readiness of India to gain from the internationalization of higher education and to face the possible threats arising from the new environment.

The Case of India

Existence of educational opportunities in India for learners from other nations can be traced back to at least sixth century B.C., the Era of Takshashila University. India and Indians being strong advocates of spreading education across national boundaries, globalization in the context of India is not a new concept. The internationalization of higher education exposed so far is at two levels: at home and cross-border. The cross border education is an inward or outward movement of students, faculty member, physical, and virtual commercial presence.

It is important to mention first that India is a member of the GAT amongst other 146 members.

Strengths

The strength of India is that it has the third largest higher education system in the world comprising of about 330 university-level institutions, about 16,000 colleges (including some 4,500 professional institutions), over 9.5 million students and approximately 350,000 teachers. Though the number of students, in absolute terms, is high it represents only about 7 per cent of the population in the relevant age group of 18-23 years. The objective is to increase enrollment to about 14 million by the end of the Tenth Five-Year Plan period, i.e. by 2007-08.

Besides this, India has eleven open universities and 102 centers of distance education in dual mode universities. They provide education at about 40 per cent of the cost of education through the formal mode. The possibilities of India (or the other Asian countries) importing education from the developed world, through this mode, are low. On the other hand, some Indian universities have recently started offering degree programmes, through the distance mode, in countries having a large Indian Diaspora. The Indira Gandhi National Open University is the prime example. Some well-known training institutes based in India offer, globally, further education programmes, in professional areas like computer application (software development). NIIT offers Programmes in 44 countries where it also has study centers.

The private sector is also making a significant contribution to professional education. In 2002, there were 977 colleges providing education, at the under-graduate level, in engineering and technology, of which 764 (78.20%) were in the private sector. Likewise, out of the 1,349 institutions offering degree programmes in different branches of medicine and health sciences, 1,028 (76.20%) were in the private sector. In that year, out of the

505 institutions for management education, offering programmes leading to a Masters degree, 324 (64.15%) were in the private sector. Additionally, there were over 400 private institutions offering post-graduate diploma programmes in different areas of management. Colleges for teacher education have also expanded considerably in the country. There were, in 2002, 1,541 colleges in this discipline of which 1,038 (67.35%) were in the private sector (Powar and Bhalla, 2004). The expansion of professional higher education, especially in the private sector, continues. For example, in 2004 there were 800,000 students in technical education, of whom 380,000 were in degree-level programmes.

The academic structure of Indian universities is similar to that of the universities in the Commonwealth (except Canada) and European countries. The basic eligibility is successful completion of twelve years of schooling (Senior Secondary Certificate Examination or equivalent programme). The Bachelor degree programme is of three years in the liberal arts and four to five years in the professional disciplines. The Master degree programme is of two years. The doctoral degree involves a minimum of two years of work, but normally takes about four years.

Weaknesses

The major weakness in the Indian higher education sector facing globalization is quality assurance in distance learning in particular. The number of international students coming to India is depressingly low. In 2000-01, India sent out 54,664 students to the United States, against only 4,302 to United Kingdom, 1,412 to Germany and 239 to France. Australia attracted a larger number (4,578) than the three European countries. While the number of Indian students, in foreign countries, was 61,812 only 7,480 students went to Europe. In contrast, India received in, 2000-01, only 7,791 students of whom 240 were from the United States, 51 from the United Kingdom, 19 from Germany, 23 from France and 44 from Australia (Bhalla, 2002). In the following years, there has been a steady growth in the number of students going to the developed world from India. In the case of the United States the number had increased substantially to 74,603 in 2002-03 and 79,736 in 2003-04 (Institute of International Education, 2004). In 2002-03 the numbers had also increased to 3303 in Germany and reportedly to about 9,000 in United Kingdom. All nations around the world are working on improving their quality control measures. The flourishing of cross border education changed the rules of the games by introducing new types of providers and new modes of supply thus necessitate the review of the existing quality control practices. When a student moves across the border to study, the quality of the service he /she gets is controlled by the government that controls the provider. However, when a student gets the service via a distance learning program, he/she is at risk of dealing with a "rogue" provider since the provider is beyond the scope of the control of the nation in terms of the licensing the institution and the accreditation of the programs. Moreover, there is a need to work on the international recognition of degrees to help graduates from a nation to work in another.

Opportunities

The opportunities offered to India are tremendous if it could succeed in finding itself a new role mainly as an importer as well as exporter of education to the region.

Since most nations are opening up more and more their higher education sector, India is to grasp the chance to cross the borders and practice outward provider/program mobility. Indian universities could establish their presence mainly in the Asian countries via opening branches, franchising, or merging. India has to work now on two modes, not only attracting more foreign students to India but also moving to serve these students in their home country now that the chance is offered.

Moreover, India needs not only recognize and control virtual education as a new mode of supply, but also seek to become a provider of such type and cater for an increasing demand. This goes hand in hand with a continuous development of telecommunication to support this task.

Threats

India is playing the role of a median between the eastern and western civilization and the uniqueness of India was long ago due to this specific role of imparting of education. The cultural diversity existing creates a dynamic society capable of fast adaptation to the changing environment.

The major threat however is believed to be in India failing to find itself a new role in this changing environment. The number of foreign students coming to India might decline since these students will have access to different types of providers/programs at home. In 2000-01, India sent out 54,664 students to the United States, against only 4,302 to United Kingdom, 1,412 to Germany and 239 to France. Australia attracted a larger number (4,578) than the three European countries. While the number of Indian students, in foreign countries, was 61,812 only 7,480 students went to Europe. In contrast, India received in, 2000-01, only 7,791 students of whom 240 were from the United States, 51 from the United Kingdom, 19 from Germany, 23 from France and 44 from Australia (Bhalla, 2002). In the following years, there has been a steady growth in the number of students going to the developed world from India. In the case of the United States the number had increased substantially to 74,603 in 2002-03 and 79,736 in 2003-04 (Institute of International Education 2004). In 2002-03 the numbers had also increased to 3303 in Germany and reportedly to about 9,000 in United Kingdom.

Relying on the inward students' mobility is not enough anymore. India considered itself in the past as the provider of education and other services to the region. This role could be sustained if and only if India succeeds in importing as well as exporting higher education.

Conclusion

After exploring the new trends in higher education worldwide, we conclude that it is moving more and more on the way of internationalization at home and across the borders. Curriculums are made to form an international citizen and students, faculty, and providers are moving across the borders. The distance learning mode is flourishing due to the development in telecommunication. These trends are emphasized by the WTO listing education among the traded services. The challenges facing nations are mainly to ensure the quality of the education provided across borders and to keep education culture specific with an international outlook.

India could benefit tremendously from the global inclination if it could find itself a new role of importer as well as exporter of higher education. It could benefit of its long experience of internationalization at home and of student mobility as well as its cultural diversity and dynamic society to become a provider of education across the borders, both physical and virtual, serving the near region.

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