



Higher Education, Career Opportunities And Student Migration From India:

Mandeep Grewal (Ph.D Scholar) School of Humanities Social Sciences and Education GD. Goenka University, Gurgaon Haryana.

Dr. Pallavi Beri (Assistant Professor of Political Science) School of Humanities Social Sciences and Education GD. Goenka University, Gurgaon Haryana.

ABSTRACT

There is a consistent increase in the number of mobile students looking for better educational and skills-based opportunities and in this Indian and Chinese student lead the way. However, in 2022, the number of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad exceeded 7,50,365 surpassing China as well its own figure of 444,553 in 2021. The primary challenge concerning Indian students opting for higher education abroad is the lack of quality education, academic commitment, and exposure provided by universities in India as compared to the universities in Western countries. This paper is an attempt to understand the demography of outward mobility of Indian students- their region of origin in India, their socio-economic conditions, and background. Secondly, the research aims to comprehend the underlying factors that drive Indian students to pursue higher education in a particular destination country. The paper also seeks to identify the push factors which are influencing Indian students' decisions to pursue higher education overseas in the last few years. The paper investigates the challenges and opportunities in the outward migration of Indian students for education. The methodology employed for data collection in this study involves both- qualitative and quantitative approaches through an empirical study of surveys and interviews to be conducted with Indian students who have studied abroad or planning to do so. By examining the push and pull factors, this study aims to gain insights into the areas of concerns that do not align with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (inclusive and equitable education). Consequently, it examines the initiatives implemented by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to address these issues and highlights potential solutions.

Keywords: Migration, Pull factor, Job opportunity, Quality education, India and Students.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's quality of life, as it equips him/her with the necessary knowledge, skills, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The divergent quality and extent of education systems across the globe exert a significant influence on individuals, shaping their future opportunities, socioeconomic standing, and overall welfare. Throughout history, the pursuit of knowledge through international travel has been prevalent, even during the reign of kings. In the present era, this trend continues, with an increasing number of students travelling to different countries for higher education. The decision of Indian students to study abroad for higher

education is driven by a combination of academic, personal, and professional aspirations, as well as the desire to experience new cultures and broaden horizons. The upsurge in Indian students opting for overseas higher education serves as a catalyst for introspection and reform within our domestic higher education sector. This transformative period underscores the criticality of harmonizing our educational ecosystem with global standards, while concurrently harnessing the spirit of SDG 4 to ensure that access to quality education is universally accessible.

Therefore, this paper aims to examine the factors contributing to the migration of Indian students to Western countries, including both push and pull factors. It also sheds light on the challenges and opportunities associated with outbound migration, the demographic characteristics of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad, and the initiatives implemented by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to retain Indian students in India and align the higher education system with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) focusing on inclusive and equitable education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To comprehensively examine the drivers that compel Indian students to pursue higher education abroad, as well as to discern the diverse factors that attract them in general and to specific countries for their overseas studies.
- To comprehend the demographic composition of students from states that have been the primary sources outbound Indian students for higher education in recent years.
- To examine the opportunities and challenges associated with outward migration of Indian students and examine how these challenges can be aligned with the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The methodology employed for data collection in this study involves both- qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is illustrated through an empirical study of surveys and interviews conducted with Indian students studying abroad or planning to do so. The survey and interviews with these students who are from different states and different education boards enabled us to evolve an understanding and analysis around the decision-making about moving abroad in the future.

These interviews and discussions were important to understand the pattern and phenomenon in a systematic and evidence-based manner. A total of 50 Indian outbound students were taken as a sample for the study. The data was collected from the students through survey, google forms, as well as a few telephonic interviews were also conducted.

Data Analysis

The techniques used for data analysis are statistical and thematic. Statistical analysis is employed to understand the different patterns and trends within the data and make meaningful inferences and predictions whereas thematic analysis helps uncover the key themes, issues, and experiences related to Indian outbound student migration.

For statistical analysis, quantitative method was adopted to collect data through a structured questionnaire administered to two groups of students: those who are planning to go abroad for further studies and those who are already studying there. Few of them were interviewed through telephone. For thematic analysis, qualitative methods were used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns (themes) within a dataset. Thematic analysis of qualitative data involves a thorough examination of the data and relevant literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. This comprehensive understanding facilitates the identification of emerging themes by recognizing recurring patterns, connections, and topics within the dataset and literature. A holistic perspective in-depth reading and analysis provides a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

The paper is divided into 6 sections. First section will explore the various push and pull factors, forcing and alluring Indian students to leave India and study in a foreign country. Second section will get into the details of the demographic profiles of outbound Indian students. The third section will be findings and analysis based on the interviews and surveys conducted with outbound Indian students as well as on the study of literature review. The fourth section of the paper will investigate the challenges and opportunities of outbound migration of students from India. The fifth section will be recommendations on the study conducted and the sixth section will be discussion and conclusion.

SECTION 1: THE PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

In the first three months of 2022, 133,135 students left India for academic pursuits, an increase from 2020 when 259,655 students studied abroad. In 2021, there were 4,44,553 Indians – an overall increase of 41% in just one year (Oxford International, 2022). According to a report by Redseer, it is projected that by 2024, a staggering 1.8 million Indian students will have invested USD 85 billion in their overseas education endeavours. Notably, the younger generation, commonly referred to as Gen Z, is motivated by the ideals of “self-independence” and a desire to live life on their own terms.

The decision to pursue higher education abroad is a transformative journey for many Indian students, shaped by a complex interplay of push and pull factors. This section explores the circumstances or conditions in India that propel Indian students to seek educational opportunities elsewhere called the Push factors. Simultaneously, the section will explore the Pull factors, the attractive aspects of studying abroad that entice students to venture beyond their borders. There are several reasons behind this trend.

One prominent reason is the pent-up demand that arose during the pandemic. As per Piyush Kumar, regional director, South Asia, and Mauritius, IDP Education, the closure of international borders led to a significant decline in the number of Indian students going abroad for studies (Anand,2022). However, with the gradual reopening of borders, many students who had previously postponed their plans are now seizing the opportunity to pursue their education abroad across various destinations.

The Indian economy is experiencing a resurgence, and many individuals recognize that education is a reliable pathway to be a part of this positive trajectory. Bhaskar Chakravorti, Dean of global business at The Fletcher School, Tufts University, highlights that the best jobs and opportunities are highly competitive, and the top academic institutions in India are limited in number. Therefore, obtaining a

degree from a well-recognized international institution not only provides graduates with distinguished credentials but also broadens their worldview (Anand,2022).

Moreover, the middle class in India now possesses more disposable income compared to previous years, and their exposure to travel has expanded their horizons.

The rise of the middle class and their progressive mindset has played a crucial role in encouraging more girls to pursue higher education abroad. This shift in attitude has led to a significant increase in the number of female students opting for overseas education.

The accessibility of study abroad loans has facilitated the realization of foreign education aspirations for students from middle-class backgrounds. Over the past decade, a significant number of students, amounting to 4.61 lakh, have availed loans from public sector banks to fund their overseas education. This number has witnessed a notable increase from 20,366 in 2012-13 to 69,898 students in 2021-22.

A significant number of individuals hold the belief that educational institutions abroad offer superior programs, state-of-the-art facilities, and abundant resources. The availability of advanced technology, research opportunities, and highly skilled faculty members are seen as major advantages. Consequently, studying abroad provides students with a wider selection of subjects, courses, and fields to explore, enabling them to pursue their academic interests more comprehensively.

Moreover, employers tend to view candidates in a positive light who have received their education from renowned international institutions. This is primarily due to the reputation of these universities for offering exceptional education and producing graduates with sought-after skills that are highly valued in the job market. Additionally, an international degree presents students with the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in diverse cultures, fostering the development of cross-cultural communication skills.

The increasing number of Indian students graduating from schools each year has resulted in a shortage of quality colleges and universities to accommodate them. In addition to this, several other factors contribute the growing trend of Indian students pursuing education abroad. These include appealing post-study work rights offered by many countries, easy accessibility to educational loans, and various scholarship options.

Numerous countries are eager to welcome international students and are making diligent efforts to clear visa backlogs. Countries like the US and Canada are implementing innovative measures, such as hiring new staff and modernizing their services, to efficiently process a higher volume of visa applications.

The availability of scholarships and financial aid has made studying abroad more feasible for students. Many universities offer financial assistance to international students, which can significantly reduce the cost of tuition and living expenses. In some cases, students may even receive full scholarships. Furthermore, the ease of travel and access to information have played a role in the increasing number of students pursuing higher education abroad.

Among Indian students, there is a preference for studying in English-speaking countries such as the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Ireland. In fact, both the US and UK witnessed a record number of visas issued to Indian students in 2022. The popularity of these countries can be attributed to the presence of renowned universities, specialized courses, and favourable post-study work opportunities.

Australia, Canada, UK, US, and New Zealand currently boast the best post-study work rights for international students. These countries have implemented exceptionally liberal policies, allowing students greater flexibility in pursuing employment opportunities after completing their studies. Furthermore, Australia and Canada have eliminated restrictions on part-time work for international students, enabling them to work more hours while pursuing their education. This change has proven beneficial for many overseas students, as they can now repay their education loans at a faster pace and enhance their overall student lifestyle (Shally Anand, 2023).

The prevailing political, economic, and cultural landscape in India has played a significant role in driving increased migration for higher education. The visibility of success stories of individuals of Indian origin in foreign countries has had a profound impact on the aspirations of the youth. They believe that achieving similar success is more attainable in a liberal and competitive environment abroad, as compared to staying in India (Nirmal Jovial, 2023).

Chairman, Dhanuraj, Centre for Public Policy Research, highlights another viewpoint regarding higher education in India, stating that there is a perception that our institutions lack independence and autonomy and are lagging in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). This perception is fueled by the concerning number of vacant seats in higher education, particularly in STEM courses. In 2021-22, approximately 34% of engineering seats remain unfilled. Even prestigious institutions like IITs, NITs, and IIITs had over 7000 vacant seats in PG courses and more than 3,000 vacant seats in PhD programs (Nirmal Jovial, 2023).

Aneeshma Peter, a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Alberta, made the decision to migrate to Canada in 2017 due to what she perceived as an “unfavourable atmosphere” in Indian universities. According to her, completing a PhD degree in India typically takes a minimum of five years, whereas in countries like Canada, Europe or Australia, it can be completed within 3-4 years. Peter highlights Canada’s appealing research environment, which encompasses factors such as time, funding, work culture, and relationships with fellow researchers, in addition to its multicultural space. She also notes that in India, she observed individuals experiencing mental stress due to pressures from supervisors, sometimes having to compromise their work ethic to appease them. In contrast, students’ rights and well-being receive high priority in Canada (Nirmal Jovial, 2023).

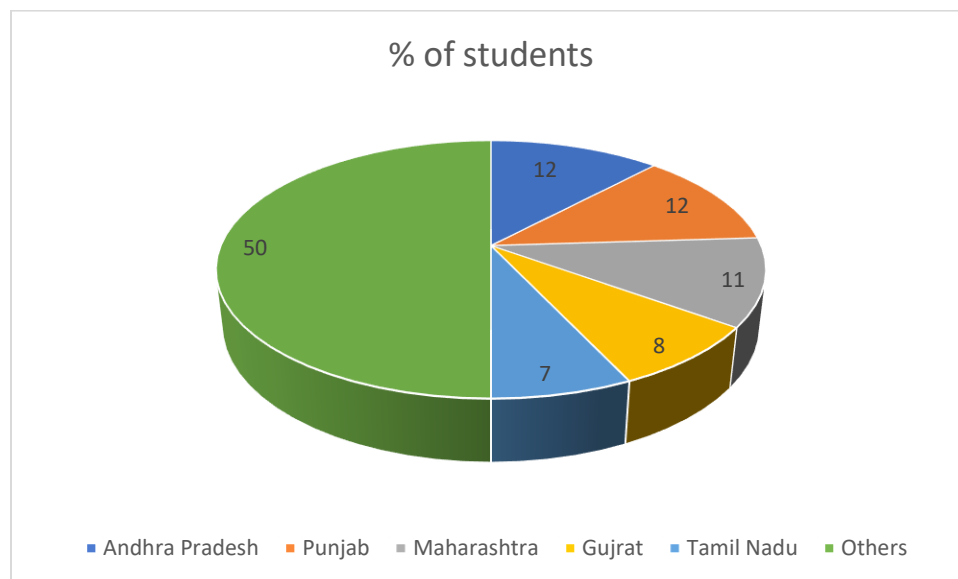
SECTION 2: DEMOGRAPHY OF OUTBOUND INDIAN STUDENTS

Having gained a comprehensive understanding of the push and pull factors driving student migration from India, it is imperative to examine the demographic characteristics of Indian students and determine their respective areas or states of origin.

The Indian outbound students originate from diverse states and regions across the country, showcasing the wide reach and aspiration for international education. Major states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi have consistently contributed a significant number of students over the years. However, the demographic profile of Indian outbound students extends beyond these regions or states.

Most students in 2021 were from Andhra Pradesh (11,790) and Maharashtra (10,166), while Punjab, Gujrat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka also saw hundreds leave Indian shore. In 2016, nearly 22 lakh Indian students went abroad to study and nearly a quarter of them were from just Andhra and Punjab together. In fact, in 2021 just six states- Andhra, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujrat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka- together account for 56% of all students going abroad (Chethan Kumar,2021).

In the year 2022, the maximum number of students who went abroad for higher education were from these states-



(Oxford International, 2022)

The pie chart reveals that a significant proportion of students opting to pursue higher studies abroad hail from affluent states in India, including Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Maharashtra. These states, known for their economic prosperity, exhibit a presumed high level of awareness regarding the advantages of foreign education (Oxford International, 2022).

In the year 2022, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab emerged as the leading states that contributed the highest proportion of students for pursuing higher education abroad. This observation considers the demographic profile of these two states.

PUNJAB- STUDENT'S DEMOGRAPHY

Recent surveys conducted in Punjab shed light on an emerging trend where an increasing number of farmers, particularly, small, and marginal ones, are selling their lands to finance their children's migration for higher education overseas. This highlights the financial considerations that drive

students from Punjab to seek educational opportunities abroad. Furthermore, Punjab's drug crisis plays an important role in the substantial outflows of young students to foreign countries like Canada, US, or UK. The drug crisis creates an unfavourable environment, particularly for the youth, pushing them towards seeking better prospects abroad. The present Chief Minister of Punjab, Bhagwant Singh Mann, has acknowledged the connection between the drug crisis and the migration of students, suggesting that if Punjab were to become a drug-free state, parents would no longer feel the need to send their children abroad (Lilach Marom, 2022).

Most students from Punjab represent the first generation in their families to pursue higher education, originating from farming backgrounds and growing up in villages or small towns. Given their parents' limited education, there is a strong desire to provide their children with access to education and the opportunity for a better life. In Punjab, a significant portion of students fall within the age group of 19-21, primarily opting for undergraduate programs in colleges that may not be widely recognized but serve as a means to obtain a degree. However, their primary focus lies in acquiring work experience alongside their studies.

Punjab, known for its high rate of emigration from India, has fostered a culture where the youth aspire to study abroad. Also, for them, studying abroad is a matter of privilege and prestige in society (Mohammad Asif Khan, 2023).

ANDHRA PRADESH- STUDENTS DEMOGRAPHY

Students from Andhra Pradesh who choose to pursue higher education overseas generally come from the upper-middle-class segment, characterized by their ability to financially support their children's education in fields such as computer science, data science, cyber security, and related disciplines. These students often hail from families whose parents are primarily in white-collar professions within India. These students opt for undergraduate as well as post graduate programs at foreign universities, leveraging the opportunities available to them. Upon completion of their studies, they secure prestigious white-collar positions in multinational companies abroad. Their parents, well-informed and proactive, actively participate in educational fairs and exhibitions, ensuring they stay updated with the latest information and opportunities in the international education landscape.

In response to the growing trend of students pursuing higher education abroad, the state government of Andhra Pradesh has implemented new initiatives that work in synergy with the increasing demand. The complementary nature of these efforts has contributed to the rising number of students opting for higher education overseas. One such initiative is Videshi Vidya Deevena scheme, which facilitates foreign education for students, focusing on merit-based opportunities. Under this scheme, the state government will cover the study expenses of students admitted to the top 200 universities listed in the QS World University Rankings (DECCAN Chronicle, 2022).

In conclusion, the demography of Indian students studying abroad reflects a diverse range of backgrounds, aspirations, and circumstances. Students from various states such as Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra, are driven by different push and pull factors, including socioeconomic conditions, limited opportunities in their home states, and the desire for better educational prospects and career opportunities.

SECTION 3: FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

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A. Findings based on Statistical analysis.

Based on the information gathered through comprehensive surveys and in-depth telephonic interviews conducted among prospective students preparing to pursue higher education abroad, as well as those who are already enrolled in educational institutions overseas, the ensuing outcomes were uncovered regarding the rationale behind their selection of particular countries and the compelling factors that attract them to designate these countries as their favoured academic destination:

United States of America

Indian students studying in the USA are provided with a promising opportunity called Optional Practical Training (OPT), which grants them a 12-month work authorization. Furthermore, the United States is renowned for hosting some of the world's top research laboratories, including 350 at UCLA and 1,200 at Yale University.

United Kingdom

Following the introduction of the Graduate Route visa by the British government in 2019, there has been a notable surge in the enrollment of Indian students at universities in the UK.

The UK government has made immigration liberal for Indian undergraduate and postgraduate students. It launched a new graduate visa on January 1, 2021, enabling them to work for 2 years in the UK after completing their studies (3 years for PhD students). A job offer is not required for the permit.

Canada

Canada's Post Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP) attracts Indian students in hordes. The PGWPP allows them to earn points for the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS)- opening a path for permanent residency (PR). An additional finding emerged during the data collection process. Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver hold strong appeal for Indian students due to their inclusive and diverse environments. These cities, characterized by a well-established Indian community, provide a sense of security and comfort. Furthermore, the availability of healthcare services enhances the overall well-being of international students during their stay in Canada.

B. Findings based on Thematic or qualitative analysis.

After a thorough and repeated examination of various literature sources, a noteworthy finding emerged, revealing a new trend among Indian outbound students. It was observed that a growing number of students are opting to migrate for studies to lesser-developed countries, diverging from the conventional preference for established developed nations that had been prevalent for many years.

There is a growing inclination among Indian students to explore opportunities in countries that are less developed than India, such as Uzbekistan in Central Asia, Mozambique in Africa, Philippines in Oceania, Russia, and Ireland in Europe. The motivation behind this shift can be attributed to the aspirations and anxieties of the younger generation. Students perceive advantages in pursuing

education in less developed countries. They believe there is less competition, and if they choose to stay in these countries after their studies, they can potentially build successful businesses and earn a good income. Anecdotal evidence supports this notion, particularly regarding opportunities in African countries.

Another factor influencing the choice of smaller countries is the cost of education which includes tuition fees and cost of living. Students like Mohammad Abdul Raheem, studying medicine in Moldova (one of the poorest countries of Europe) highlight that the tuition fees they have to pay at state-run universities in these countries are lower compared to fees charged by private universities in India. However, it is important to note that lower fees in such countries do not necessarily indicate low educational standards, as pointed out by Joe Sharon, another student at the Nicolae State University of Medicine and Pharmacy (Nirmal Jovial, 2023).

Several key factors contribute to this shift in student preferences.

Firstly, the availability of generous scholarships and financial aid in some lesser developed makes pursuing higher education more financially viable for Indian students with limited resources.

Secondly, the ease of admission process in certain lesser developed countries is noted to be less competitive and less cumbersome compared to the highly competitive nature of admissions in prestigious institutions in the Western countries.

Thirdly, the allure of more favourable post-study work opportunities allows them to gain valuable work experience.

Moreover, cultural affinity plays a significant role in influencing the choice of destination. Some students prefer countries with cultural similarities or closer proximity to India, creating a more familiar and comfortable environment for their academic pursuits.

Additionally, the increasing recognition that western developed countries are not the sole options available is leading Indian students to diversify their choices. Lesser developed countries offer unique academic programs and cultural experiences which may not be as prevalent in traditional western countries.

Finally, the impact of global events, such as geopolitical factors and changes in visa policies, including those triggered by events like the Covid-19 pandemic can significantly influence student mobility patterns. Changes in visa regulations in western countries may pose challenges for Indian students seeking education there, prompting them to consider other options in lesser developed countries.

Another notable discovery arising from this study is that while the majority of the respondents express a preference for highly developed Western nations as their primary choices for pursuing higher education, it has been found that other advanced countries, comparable in development to Western counterparts, also provide commendable and cost-effective educational opportunities.

For instance, Malaysia's growing industries, and New Zealand's renowned education system and thriving sectors collectively create an enabling environment for students to bolster their career potential.

The study's findings underscore that the rising trend of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad is the result of a nuanced interplay of push and pull factors. Push factors predominantly drive Indian students overseas due to limitations in specialized courses within India and the inadequate infrastructure of domestic educational institutions. However, beyond these push factors, a range of pull factors emerged. Notably, the ascent of a new upper-middle class in India, financially capable due to prosperous urban careers, propel parents to favour foreign universities. This shift in parental mindset, marked by increased liberal attitudes compared to previous generations, is particularly evident in the encouragement of daughters pursuing higher education abroad. The pull factors are further catalysed by the appeal of accessing world class institutions, enhanced career opportunities, exposure to diverse cultural contexts, and a desire for international experiences. This intricate interplay of push and pull dynamics illuminates the multifaceted motivations driving Indian students toward overseas higher education pursuits.

Looking at these numbers and trends, Indian outbound student migration has witnessed a significant upswing in recent years. The increasing trend of Indian students to pursue higher education abroad and seeking employment opportunities beyond their homeland borders is a matter of concern that requires attention and intervention.

SECTION 4: Outbound Migration of Indian Students: Opportunities and challenges

The projected young population in India by 2030, estimated to be around 140 million in the college-age group, presents both opportunities and challenges in light of the evident shortcomings in the higher education infrastructure and the increasing preference for foreign universities among Indian students.

Outbound student migration offers a plethora of opportunities. It exposes students to a diverse spectrum of cultures, ideas, and perspectives, thereby enriching their global awareness and aptitude for cross-cultural engagement. The return of these students often entails the infusion of international experiences, knowledge, and expensive networks into their home country, thereby catalyzing its developmental trajectory.

Moreover, studying abroad nurtures self-reliance, analytical thinking adeptness in problem-solving, adaptability, and effective communication skills, attributes that hold paramount significance in the professional sphere. Additionally, those who have undergone international education can play a pivotal role in fostering international collaborations, foreign research partnerships, and attracting foreign investments to their nation, thus contributing to its advancement and global integration.

In a globalized world, pursuing university education in another country has become a viable choice. Employers increasingly value individuals with international exposure, cross-cultural competence, and language proficiency.

While outbound student migration offers a range of opportunities, it is important to acknowledge that these opportunities are accompanied by certain challenges that warrant careful consideration.

One significant challenge is the financial cost associated with this trend. This substantial drain on our resources is particularly significant considering it exceeds the funding allocated to many of our major federal social support programs. In the fiscal year 2022, Indian remittances for overseas education

surpassed USD 5.17 billion, marking a substantial 35% rise from the previous year's USD 3.83 billion in FY 21. Notably, during FY20, remittances for international education stood at nearly USD 5 billion (Tripathy, 2022).

Another challenge associated with outbound migration is Brain Drain. The preference for foreign universities among Indian students can contribute to brain drain, as talented individuals seek educational and career opportunities abroad. This can result in a loss of skilled workforce and intellectual capital for the country. While this may benefit the individual's personal development and skill acquisition, it raises a fundamental question: Should we allow students to study abroad, acquire skills, migrate, and support host countries, or should we encourage them to return to India and help address the workforce shortage in our country?

SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing this issue requires careful consideration of policies and incentives that can encourage students to return to India after studying abroad, thereby utilizing their acquired skills, and contributing to the workforce shortage. It also necessitates efforts to enhance the quality of higher education in India, provide attractive career opportunities, and create an environment conducive to the growth and development of young talent within the country.

The idea of implementing twinning programs with local institutions, seamless credit recognition and transfer from local university to international university and vice-versa, as well as recognition of prior skills are worth trying.

The next worth exploring area is the co-designing of long duration programs delivered jointly with faculty from collaborative institutions leading to dual certifications. By leveraging modern educational technology, these programs can be delivered in a blended mode, reducing costs while maintaining high quality standards.

Another area that requires attention is faculty exchange, which is currently mostly unstructured. It is important to encourage foreign faculty to teach in Indian universities and vice-versa, particularly in the fields of research and technology. This exchange of faculty will not only facilitate cross-pollination of ideas but also bring in best practices from world-class institutions, thereby strengthening the delivery and quality frameworks of Indian universities. Though the initiative has been started by introducing University Grants Commission New Draft, 2023.

By focusing on both international collaborations and domestic educational advancements, India can harness the benefits of migration while creating opportunities for growth and excellence at home (Ambarish Datta, 2018).

SECTION 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In a move towards aligning the higher education system in India with Sustainable Development Goal 4, of inclusive and equitable education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced the UGC New Draft, 2023, which emphasizes a collaborative approach between international and

domestic stakeholders. This initiative marks a significant step forward in promoting inclusive and equitable education in India.

The aim of this New Draft, 2023, is to enable Indian students to pursue foreign education at affordable costs while simultaneously positioning India as an appealing global study destination in the years to come. These efforts also seek to address the issue of brain drain, where talented individuals leave India in search of opportunities abroad.

The current state of education in India indicates that only a select few, either from the privileged segment of society or those who migrate abroad, are able to receive quality education. This disparity undermines the concept of equality, as access to quality education is not universally available. The situation also highlights the failure of India in achieving SDG 4 and raises concerns about the limited number of high-quality universities in the country.

To address this issue, it is crucial for India to focus on improving the accessibility and quality of education at the university level. Efforts should be made to increase the number of reputable universities, enhancing funding and scholarship opportunities, and implement policies that ensure equal access to education for all individuals.

Consequently, UGC's Draft Regulations-2023 was released by UGC to allow foreign universities to enter India. Under the new draft norms, foreign universities establishing campuses in India are permitted to offer only full-time programs through offline modes, excluding online or distance learning. To set up their campuses in India Foreign Higher Education Institutions (FHEIs) will require approval from the University Grants Commission (UGC). The initial approval will be granted for a period of 10 years, and the renewal of approval in the ninth year will be subject to meeting specific conditions (The Economic Times NRI, PTI, 2023).

The idea of Indian campuses of foreign universities has garnered mixed opinions among subject experts and students. Some have concerns that such campuses may not be a preferred choice for those who view a foreign degree as a pathway to migration. These students and experts believe that studying in a foreign university offers more than just the acquisition of an international degree. Some students and experts may still view Indian campuses of foreign universities as a viable option, considering factors such as cost savings, proximity to family, or the reputation of the foreign university. Additionally, autonomy granted to these in terms of admission procedures, fees, and fee structure may attract students who prioritize affordability and flexibility. Ultimately, the decision to pursue education in a foreign university, whether through an Indian university or abroad, depend on individual preferences, career goals, financial considerations, and personal circumstances.

UGC Chairman, M Jagadesh Kumar, however, has a different view on this.

“(The number of) Indian students who want to study abroad will be more than a million in near future. Campuses of foreign universities in India can admit only a fraction of students who are going abroad. Therefore, those who go abroad for possible immigration after studies will continue to go abroad,” he told PTI.

“Other students who do not plan to immigrate may choose to study in the campuses of FHEIs in India. Therefore, both categories of students will continue to make their choices and I do not see any problem in this.” he added (The Economic Times NRI, PTI, 2023).

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