

MOBILITY AND BRAIN DRAIN IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: A BRIEF DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education has induced rapid transformation in student mobility and institutional mobility internationally as well as in India. The ongoing reforms for improving the standards of Indian higher educational institutions and simultaneously introducing competition in India for improvement of the system by privatisation and inviting foreign service providers is so far not wholly successful. The paper discusses policy perspectives about these issues in the context of present policies adopted in the country. The paper seeks to focus on policy gaps and has tried to discuss on the issues relating outward student mobility/emigration, development of India's own institutions of higher learning, brain drain and brain circulation debate etc. Brain drain is not a dead concept, because of loss of skilled expertise in critical areas in India like science and technological R&D as well as medicine. However, brain circulation is still relevant to some extent among skilled professionals in business/management and information technology.

KEYWORDS: Brain drain, Higher education, Globalisation, Student mobility.

INTRODUCTION

SKILLED EMIGRATION

According to Agarwal (2009) India is deficient of a "critical mass" in tertiary education. A gross enrollment ratio (GER) of 11 percent is a poor comparison vis-à-vis China's 20 percent, Korea's 91 percent and 83 percent in the case of the United States (US). India does not have anything like the Bologna process of European Union, that has greatly enhanced faculty and student mobility, also contributed to brilliance in higher education systems in Europe. In India the faculty salary structures plus career advancement schemes are still undergoing reforms. The system in India sometimes does not remunerate the excellent. Student mobility between institutions carrying credits for finished coursework with the ease with which they do so in the western developed education system and nowadays even in China is still in nascent stage in India. Since 1990s, skilled labour migration has been a rapidly increasing. Skilled migrants – mostly defined as those possessing a tertiary degree or wide-ranging specialised job experience –

include architects, financial experts, accountants, technicians, engineers, scientists, researchers, teachers, chefs, health professionals, and experts in information technology (IT, including computing experts, computing engineers, management professionals etc.) (Vertovec, 2002). In effect mobility is not all-embracing, and its freedoms and extensions are not unproblematic goods. From the outlook of both national together with global goods, two diverse policy objectives seem to be imperative, that is the rationale of open academic movement in and out of all nationwide higher education systems, and the plan of intensification of the educational competence of each national system (Marginson et al. 2007). The OECD views that in a professional labour market situation, qualifications has to be accredited globally with as hardly any anonymity as possible. Owing to the national and cultural entrenchment of teaching-learning processes, national power over qualifications will persist to be essential, making approval of foreign qualifications very significant. Recognition has to be logical, obvious, just and reliable and mete out little load to mobile professionals (OECD, 2004).

Student mobility is nothing new concept in India as well as internationally. However, globalisation of society and economy is followed by increasing number of students moving overseas for higher as well as technical education. Widespread diversification of various disciplines has resulted in increasing enrolment of students in specialised courses. Some of these courses are not readily available in developing countries like India; hence the foreign institutions cater to these services. Besides, other pull factors like the prospects of living in prosperous countries might have influenced increasing student mobility – often resulting in permanent migration of students from India. The exodus of human capital is often the cause of vehement political debate in India; in spite of the modern views like brain circulation benefitting both India as well as the developed countries. In fact, brain drain is still relevant in even in 21st century context, because of huge lack of skilled manpower in several key sectors in India like many other developing countries.

The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations, Maintenance of Quality and Prevention of Commercialisation) Bill 2010 is anticipated by its proponents to unwrap a new outlook for international education providers to launch campuses in India followed by long-drawn-out political antagonism and legal impasse. The foreign universities in India is not a new concept, since educational joint projects between Indian institutions and foreign establishments exist in many cases, typically in profit making fields corresponding to business as well as technical education. The endeavour is to manage student mobility from India to abroad for pursuing higher studies, which is conservatively deemed to be brain drain associated with exodus of capital. In opposition, the motivated policy goal is to make India a destination for intercontinental students in India's potential top-notch universities in a transformed set up. Accordingly, institutional mobility in the form of the existence of global institutions in India and controlling outward student mobility in addition to the setting up of Indian university campuses in foreign countries point toward an explicable trend towards transformation of geographies of tertiary education in a shrinking planet, linked by a literally developed telecommunication network. In keeping with the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) estimate, the number of internationally mobile students got better by 3.4 million students in 2009, an increase from 2.1 million figure in 2002. UIS identifies international students as those “who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are

now enrolled outside their country of origin.” The OECD countries are chief pull factor for global students. The United States is the most well-liked destination for Indian students. This mode encompassing student mobility which was advocated in GATT agreement is today adopted by mostly elite people who can afford to the high expense of foreign education. Twinning procedures, cross border franchise strategy, corroboration, sub-contracting along with distance education encompassing overseas organisations is becoming more admired in several countries. Under twinning arrangements, scholars typically study in their motherlands, but move out of the country to complete the course and be awarded degrees from the foreign university. In India, for example, the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun has condition of sending students overseas for further training. The full-grown development like twinning agreement is increasingly developing in India. Education hubs to draw international learners are a further arrangement some countries have implemented. Neighbouring countries like Singapore and Saudi Arabia are favourite locations of well-known foreign universities to offer degree programmes. The increasing population in India, the upwardly mobile middle income-group and comparatively average education service in India has produced the supply-demand hiatus in higher education. It clarifies a huge number of student mobility to foreign universities every year. Distance learning has assumed growing significance in recent years due to unprecedented development of proficiency in information technology in last few decades. Virtual education is thus another case of internationalisation, notwithstanding some of its confines. The “open courseware consortium”, for no less than 10 free courses provided by the American institutions has made possible cross-border higher education in diverse geographies (Agarwal, 2006). It is implicit that the institutions in India will experience comparable reforms in the impending decades as a direct upshot of globalisation.

OECD nations form the major pull factor of migration for the Indian students. The highly skilled migration having moved within this region comprises 30.2 percent of the total (Dunnewijk, 2008). The Indian students’ mobility pattern is not unidirectional. In reality the preference for courses of the students enrolling in the universities of the U.S., U.K., Australia or Canada is undergoing change due to the impact of changing job market in a globalised world. Of late a significant share of the Indian students in Australia opts for cookery, hospitality, sports management like off-beat courses, which can easily open up employment opportunity for the Indian students in Australia. The ‘curry bashing’ like attacks on Indian students has cast a negative impact on student mobility from India to Australia. The Indian government decision to prohibit student mobility to the Australian campuses is a potential enthusing factor for other countries like the US, UK etc. vying to get Indian students. The traditional preferences for PhD degrees or post doctorate is gradually yielding place to career oriented courses ranging from low-skilled courses to high-end technology disciplines like missile technology, nano technology etc. It is noticeable that even the great economic recession has failed to subdue the increasing number of migrants to the foreign universities, probably because India is relatively less affected by recession like other countries. Thus India has become an important education service exporter to the campuses of the developed countries. Even China receive a significant share of Indian students in medical science due to comparatively cheaper service vis-à-vis India. However, recent studies (Germain, 2009) establish the fact that the United States has really experienced recession regarding funding of its educational institutions. From the Ivy League universities to obscure colleges, thinning profits and the weakening value of contributions have resulted in job loss, cancellation of fresh building works and even cut in enrolment figures. The United States

was the epicenter of economic disaster in 2008 and 2009 with consequences like lay-off of employees in the US, cutting of salaries, and insolvency of major MNCs. Recent policy adjustments similar to curbing off shoring, controlled H1B visa guidelines and also expensive higher education are great discouraging aspects for the Indian students for studying in the United States. Choudaha's (2012) estimates suggest overall global enrolment growth in 2012 in the American institutions. Though, the road ahead for the majority U.S. institutions of higher learning will hardly be unproblematic as many institutions make great effort with the test of meeting recruitment goals with too little time and fixed resources. In the U.S. alone, India and China added to 84% of all enhancement in worldwide student enrolment from 2000-01 to 2010-11. The most commonly cited reasons for increased mobility among Chinese students are the growing supply of high school graduates whose families can afford a U.S. education and the unmet demand for high-quality education at home. By contrast, enrolment growth among Indian students has slowed considerably, possibly due to the residual effects of the U.S. economic recession - given that nearly 60% of Indian students enrolment in Master's programs of Engineering and Computer Science, they are highly sensitive to the financial returns of their investment in education. However, there are signs that the slowing trend is set to reverse. The number of student visas issued to Indians in 2011 increased by 18% (from 39,958 in 2010 to 46,982 in 2011),¹ suggesting renewed interest in U.S. educational opportunities (Choudaha, 2012). Even as the number of Chinese students has swelled at an astonishing rate, the growth of students from India has been exhibiting a reverse-trend during the last couple of years. Recent statistics released by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USICE) demonstrate that the quantity of active Chinese students on F-1 or M-1 visas at the Student and Exchange Visitor Approved Schools at the last part of 2011 augmented by about 28% to almost 200,000 against the previous year, while Indian student numbers declined by almost 4% (IIE Open Doors 2011). The following Table 1 demonstrates the subject preferences of Indian students studying in the United States. The majority of the students from India have shown a strong preference for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Whereas, the following Table 2 shows the difference of Indian and Chinese students' enrolment in the United States.

¹ See (2011, October 29). The Times of India. Retrieved from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-10-29/chennai/30336414_1_indian-studentsnumber-of-student-visas-overseas-education on 22.7.2012.

TABLE NO. 1: FIELDS OF STUDY FOR THE TOP FIVE PLACES OF ORIGIN, 2010/11

Rank	Place of Origin	Business/ Management	Engineering	Fine/ Applied Arts	Health Professions	Humanities	Math/ Computer Science	Physical/ Life Sciences	Social Sciences	Other
1	China	27.5	19.2	3.4	2	1.2	10.6	11.5	7	8.9
2	India	15.2	36.9	1.3	4.9	0.6	19.8	11.4	3	4.7
3	South Korea	17	10.8	12.2	5.4	4.6	5	8	10.1	14.7
4	Canada	15.3	7.7	7.8	16.1	4.8	2.4	8	12	14.1
5	Taiwan	23.4	14.7	11.5	3.7	2.1	6	10	7	10.3

Source: Institute of International Education. (2011). "Fields of Study for the Top 25 Places of Origin, 2010/11." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors> on 13.8.2012. The data is about students studying at all levels.

TABLE NO. 2: INDIAN AND CHINESE STUDENTS IN UNITED STATES

Rank	Place of Origin	2009/10	2010/11	2010/11 % of Total	% Change
	WORLD TOTAL	6,90,923	7,23,277	100	4.7
1	China	1,27,822	1,57,558	21.8	23.3
2	India	1,04,897	1,03,895	14.4	-1

Source: Institute of International Education. (2011). "Top 25 Places of Origin of International Students, 2009/10-2010/11." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors> on 13.8.2012. The data is about students studying at all levels.

BRAIN DRAIN DEBATE

Student mobility is the most conspicuous form of internationalisation. It needs discussion considering the varying policy machinations as student mobility can be a vital variation of brain drain; though the term "brain drain" has become old-fashioned in our era with the spanking new ideas like brain circulation, brain chain, brain movement or brain bank and so forth. (Chaudhuri, 2010).

The traditional view is that the mobility of Indian students means a loss of potential income of few billion dollars for the institutions of higher learning in India and also hemorrhaging of talent as out migration of skilled manpower. The proponents of brain drain have assumed it as loss, although it is difficult to establish at least in some of the sectors. The term gained popularity in the late 1960s as industrialised nations were attracting skilled personnel. According to Beine et al (2001) the brain drain is a stumbling block on fiscal growth through the reduction of a source country's human resource. Also, low investments in education are an enormous loss for developing countries. The brain drain is caused by a demand-pull from the receiving countries, where domestic labour-market shortages necessitate import of foreign labour. However, the modern day literatures have emphasised more on global circular migration of skilled employees or termed as brain circulation. Internet has revolutionised the modern communication, and tertiary education as well as the industry who have gained much from such technological innovations. As a result, student mobility has been modified to some extent due to distance education, virtual universities, franchise courses, twinning programmes etc. Jane Knight (2009) finds that that international students and researchers are progressively more fascinated by a degree in country A, followed by a subsequent degree or possibly internship in country B, leading to service in country C and probably D, lastly migrating to their home lands after 8 to 12 years of intercontinental learning as well as work experience. Consequently, the materialisation of the term "brain train" represents a trend that contains benefits and perils for both sending and receiving states. The convergence of an ageing humanity, decreasing birth rates, the knowledge economy, in addition to expert labour mobility is presenting novel issues for tertiary education and thus producing global academic mobility and employment. According to the studies of the Parliamentary Office of UK (2008), in India, in IT and pharmaceuticals the brain gain of technical experts is not uncommon. This is mostly motivated by the expansion of prospects in the private sector. Some companies aggressively employ NRIs (Non Resident Indians), as the NRIs seem to be possessing wider knowledge compared to local counterparts. On the flipside at International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology located in New Delhi, about 90 percent of postgraduates migrate to the USA on graduation, resulting in scarcity of junior employees. It is generally known, that countries growth depends on knowledge, research, innovation on top of partnership with other countries. In this connection DEMOS (2007) views that NRIs provide the leadership and management expertise, monetary as well as risk capital that are giving impetus to Indian science and innovation.

The Indian families spend over \$ 2 billion per annum for educating their wards in foreign campuses. With the passing years, as the globalised financial system has established its roots in developed as well as the developing nations, the dependence on technologies like internet has increased leading to speedy network of data and information. Hence, knowledge globalisation process has caused an awe-inspiring increase of cutting-edge skill. However, a fresh trend of reverse-migration; often termed as "reverse brain drain" by many experts is now observed from countries like the U.S. to China and India due to healthy economic growth revolving around free market economy in China and India. However, the real brain drain is felt in medicine, where during last couple of years about 3000 doctors from AIIMS only, left for the U.S. for higher studies and never returned. From April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 - 1,157 doctors had moved out of India in search of better prospects and from 2009 to 2010 in the same period, 1,458 doctors went out of the country (Times of India, 14th April, 2012). The Indian government decision to introduce bond for medicine students migrating to the U.S. for mandatory service in India is

probably fuelled by the fact that the rural areas of India in particular, are severely deficient of basic health care services and also the country spends not less than 1 million rupees for producing one doctor. Even if a handful of such Indian doctors ultimately engage in research in developed countries like USA, their inventions are sold at a premium in countries like India by the MNCs in medicine business. The global ranking of institutions suggest that the Indian institutions still lag far behind other countries in this regard, which propels the students from India to migrate to the U.S., U.K. or the Australian institutions for globally approved degrees.

The present policy debate is no longer limited to whether migration is to be sanctioned or not, but the debate is gradually shifting to the issue of how to handle migration efficiently in order to improve its positive outcomes on development process while removing any miserable effect (MOIA, Annual Report, 2007-08). Several researchers have established the validity of brain drain and loss of valuable human resources in the less developed countries. Agrawal, et al (2011) has found it *unlikely* that a developing country with a working financial system and striving hard to exploit the enormous stock of obtainable technology is essentially wealthier if a great portion of its meagre talent resides overseas. The empirical results imply that, regarding access to knowledge, the localization effect outweighs the Diaspora effect: Poor countries are better off if their highly skilled workers stay home. The stay rate of Diasporas is considered as a strong indicator of brain gain in favour of a host country. Altbach (2012) has expressed his opinions as below:

“If stay rates are a sign of continuing inequalities in the global knowledge system and in higher education, it will demand achieving a better balance and will require time, resources, and in some cases, changing in academic structures and practices. While there is much rhetoric about globalization creating a “level playing field,” the realities show something quite different.”

The question of institutional mobility benefitting India is haunting many academicians as well as policy makers. The best case circumstances are international best institutions entering India and accelerating competition in Indian higher education sector. The nastiest probability is run of the mill institutes coming in and investing in quarters with excellent returns prospective, purging some competent teachers from foremost national institutions but in the long run having modest impact on value or quantity. Some of the leading institutions are in now reluctant to have their own campuses in India in a post recessionary set up. However, optimists argue that this is just the commencement of an extended course and the charisma of India as a market for tertiary education plus catchment area for bright students will only mature eventually. Government figures estimate that \$2.2 billion worth of foreign exchange moved out of India as remittance towards tuition cost and other expenditures by Indian students in 2008-09. Some small opportunities that could open up opportunities in the continuing ‘life-long’ education space, and also many varieties of courses that could be on offer. International branch campuses expand the reach of institutions in such a manner as to improve their global profile as well as status. They provide better access to an already swelling student market, particularly in Asia where demand for tertiary education is likely to continue to outshine supply for another 20 years. Lawton et al (2012) think that building branch campuses will never replace broader intercontinental education activities as a means of locating universities with global ambitions. Altbach (2011) views that India has an enormous unmet demand for first-rate higher education and also the number of places existing in India’s very petite top sector like the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Management, and similar institutions — is minuscule in relation to the very

high demand. Consequently, foreign institutions see a brilliant occasion for rewarding growth in the Indian education bazaar.

On the flip side, pessimism prevails over this issue also. Altbach (2010a) thinks that best ranked foreign universities may prefer to set up academic centres offering inadequate teaching in India but providing as focal points for research and sophisticated postgraduate work. Again Altbach (2010b) finds that with a few exceptions, many branch campuses are not in actuality campuses, rather those campuses may be termed as small, narrowly focused, and academic programs with limited worldview offered offshore to exploit money-spinning markets of the developing world. The trendiest programs offered are business management and information technology characterised by low establishment costs and considerable wide-reaching demand. Except the Arabian Gulf, Singapore, and few other countries these branch campuses are undistinguished, resembling office complexes rather than educational institutions. But factors that weigh against the full-fledged entry are the ability of foreign institutions to attract the best students in their home campuses; and also the potentially huge investments because of the sky-high price of land for the campus and expenses on infrastructure. Since profits cannot be repatriated it acts as a disincentive for sustaining top-notch standards and faculty which should be paid at par with faculty in the parent universities in terms of remunerations and perks. To meet expenses, fees would have to be raised than those of Indian institutions. Since pension benefits are absent in foreign universities, many academics in centrally and State-funded institutions would likely to prefer to stay back for post-retirement benefits (Dutt, 2010). Criticisms like elitism in higher education after the entry of foreign varsities sounds unsubstantiated as the system of higher education is already elitist and foreign degrees are preferred by only those families who can afford. There is apprehension in some circles that ordinary universities will proliferate in India due to its money-spinning market adding woe to worries for the country. Rather than profit motive of the foreign universities, the Indian policy perspectives ought to focus on quality of those institutions about to enter India, rather than quantity of foreign universities.

The mobility of students to overseas institutions of higher learning of international repute is a necessary condition for students from India, in view of the global recognition of those degrees in job market. It is an uphill task for the Indian institutions to develop into institutions of high quality like those of Stanford or Cambridge Universities in a short term. Of course, those foreign universities, including Ivy League schools, want to expand their global footprint; and India's rise and its growing middle class investing in higher education offer a compelling narrative. Many Ivy League administrators have even made exploratory trips to India in recent times. Yet, the dilemmas that these institutions face whenever they have contemplated establishing 'branch campuses' overseas, with institutional and programme mobility, is of quality assurance on academic standards — and the financial sustainability of providing an education equivalent to what they offer back home.

While the higher education sector is comparatively small with regard to future requirements, its record regarding quality plus standard of performance is nothing but ordinary. In global rankings of universities, no Indian institutions finds a place among top 200 in the world in 2012 as revealed in The Times ranking of world universities. In terms of published papers – an indicator of research output, India surely cuts a sorry figure. The mushrooming of self-financing private

colleges has aggravated this crisis of mediocrity of the system. This, in turn, has pessimistic outcome for the recognition of our degrees and also of the graduates of India's system in other countries and markets. Regulation of higher education is a serious issue. The crisis is associated to a great degree to the failing regulatory structure of higher education. This applies particularly to the issue of quality as well as standards. The burden on the regulatory establishment, enforcement malfunction, overlaps and disagreement between agencies, and complicity because of political or other pressure lobbies have all played a function in this situation. There is much uncertainty also concerning the function of these agencies in the regulation of private and foreign service providers. To sum up, India's higher education sector is at present facing severe challenges regarding the need to augment student intake (access), attaining excellence, mobilising the requisite resources, and strengthening the regulatory function. Lack of resources is another distressing attribute of India's higher education structure. So far as the entry of foreign universities is concerned, this mode as per Paul (2009) can, somewhat, lessen the problem of access. Yet, it can still be high-priced for students as overseas service providers should possibly charge comparatively high fees. As only a small number of universities are expected to take this route, student enrolments will be restricted. It is viable to control and supervise this mode. For instance, only accredited institutions may be given approval. They can be asked to conform to national guidelines and principles of transparency and disclosure regarding admission, fees, and so on. Judged by the measure of access as well as equity, this mode is likely to remain elitist, although it could set novel paradigm of quality. The demand and supply side mismatch can only be solved partly by inviting foreign institutions in the country or by restricting student mobility by invoking regulations. The privatisation of higher education is an inevitable corollary of globalisation and internationalisation of education. Ruch (2001) and Varghese (2009) argue that India's public sector is unable to deliver the massive social demand for higher education, besides the lack of capability of public institutions of higher learning to offer job-oriented courses. The families are also eager to spend on education for their wards are some of the contributing factors behind the rise of private sector in delivering higher education services in India. As a consequence, unbridled growth of private sector in higher education neglecting the aspects of quality has posed serious challenge to the system.

(The revised content of this paper draws from minor project titled 'Globalisation, Higher Education and Student Mobility: A Case Study of Selected Institutions of West Bengal' wholly funded by the University Grants Commission)

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