



PUSHKAR

India Takes New Initiatives for Internationalisation of Higher Education

India has belatedly recognised the importance of internationalisation of its higher education sector. In recent years, the Indian government has taken steps to promote greater collaboration between Indian and foreign academics and launched new initiatives to attract larger numbers of foreign students and faculty to its universities. The recently-released draft National Education Policy 2019 which will be finalised in the coming months has also recognised the importance of internationalisation in higher education. At this stage, however, it is too early to know whether ongoing efforts in internationalisation will succeed and to what extent.

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1. Introduction¹

India is becoming interested in internationalisation of higher education

In recent years, India's policymakers have become attentive to the benefits of internationalisation in higher education. The government of India, as well as some Indian universities, have announced a number of initiatives to boost internationalisation, by way of promoting collaborative research and increasing the numbers of international students and international faculty. Whether or not these initiatives are succeeding is, of course, another matter. Prakash Javadekar, India's former minister for Human Resource Development (which includes the education sector) expressed the hope that the country could "become a hub of affordable education for foreign students" (cited in Nanda, 2018). However, for that to happen, there needs to be a substantial improvement in the quality of education at India's universities. Also, India needs to adopt smarter strategies to attract international students as well as researchers.

New initiatives for internationalisation

This article begins with a brief definition of internationalisation and how the term is understood and broadly defined in the draft *National Education Policy (NEP) 2019* (MHRD, 2019). This is followed by a short explanation of why India is seeking greater internationalisation. The article goes on to discuss the potential of some of the new initiatives the government and some universities have taken to promote internationalisation in terms of international students and researchers. For example, to increase the number of international students, the Indian government launched the *Study in India* website (MHRD, 2018) in mid-2018 to make it easier for potential students to access information about Indian universities. As part of this initiative, the government has also introduced additional scholarships and fee waivers for a select number of foreign students (ibid.). To facilitate the hiring of international faculty by Indian universities, the government also simplified the bureaucratic processes for foreigners to be able to work there (Vishnoi, 2019).

Challenges for internationalisation

It is evident, however, that there are several challenges for India's recent internationalisation initiatives to succeed. For example, despite the good reputation and prestige that some universities—such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, and some of the various branches of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)—enjoy internationally, India is not known for the quality of its higher education. No Indian university ranks among the top 50 or 100 in the world. This makes Indian universities potentially less attractive for foreign students. NEP 2019 recognises this by saying:

"international students are attracted [to a country] due to the reputation of an institution, and thereby the first step must be towards creating such institutions" (MHRD, 2019, p. 249)

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Indian Institutes of Technology

The IITs are technology- and science-focussed institutions that were created by the Indian government in the early decades after India's independence in 1947. For a long time, there were only five IITs: in Madras (now Chennai), Kanpur, Kharagpur, Bombay (now Mumbai), and New Delhi. However, due to India's growing population and increasing popularity of and demand for technological education, their numbers have gone up to 23, with one IIT in nearly every Indian state. For the list of 23 IITs, see India's Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) at mhrd.gov.in/iits.



2. Meaning of Internationalisation

Before discussing India's growing interest and initiatives to promote internationalisation, it would be useful to quickly define what it means. As de Wit (2014) has noted, the term 'internationalisation' is relatively new, dating only to the 1990s, when it replaced other ways of describing similar activities, such as 'international education' for example. Also, the precise meaning and scope of the term have evolved over time.

Meaning of internationalisation

One of the more succinct, inclusive and popular definitions of internationalisation comes from Jane Knight (2015) for whom the term refers to the process of integrating an "international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (p. 2). Therefore, a fairly wide range of issues and activities carried out by universities and other kinds of academic institutions—not just attracting international students and faculty or collaborative research across national borders—are included in the definition and form part of the way the process is understood.

India's recently released draft NEP 2019 does not specifically define internationalisation but contains a fairly detailed statement on what it entails. It explicitly calls for promoting internationalisation of higher education by "facilitating student and faculty mobility, establishing international partnerships for research and cross-border delivery of higher education programmes, easing the processes through which institutions can enrol students from around the world, as well as the feasibility of carrying credits across institutions in multiple countries, and other such measures" (MHRD, 2019, p. 250). While NEP 2019 also discusses other aspects of internationalisation, such as setting up offshore

campuses by Indian universities and inviting foreign universities to set up branch campuses in India, it is clear that its priority areas for internationalisation are international research collaborations, international students and faculty. It is perhaps not a coincidence that these three aspects matter most in world university rankings.

3. Why Internationalisation?

Poor performance in world university rankings

As mentioned earlier, India's policy makers realise that the success of internationalisation depends on the quality of education at its colleges and universities (MHRD, 2019). At the same time, internationalisation plays a role in boosting the quality of education at higher education institutions, and impacts on the performance of universities in world rankings.

India's new-found interest in internationalisation has arguably been spurred by the growing spread and influence of world university rankings by various organisations in which Indian universities routinely perform quite poorly. NEP 2019 recognises the many other benefits of internationalisation for India's colleges and universities, students and faculty. However, fact is that the government did literally nothing to promote internationalisation until world university rankings became popular and showed India's universities to be lagging behind globally. Only a few Indian institutions count among the world's top 500 universities and even fewer, no more than one or two, have occasionally figured among the top 200. For a country that aspires to be counted as a great power due to the size of its economy and its growing economic and military strength, the absence of its universities from among the list of the top 50 or 100 in the world is a reminder of its shortcomings. Other great powers, including China, count several universities among the ranks of the top 100 or 200 worldwide.

Research performance

There are several reasons for the poor performance of Indian universities in world university rankings but among the main ones is research, both in terms of quantity and quality. India's universities have traditionally been teaching-focussed institutions, whereas research is a major component in world university rankings. Therefore, to some extent, the poor performance of Indian universities is to be expected. However, over the past decade, Indian universities have gradually improved their research performance, arguably in part due to the government's insistence on research publications from faculty members by linking research to promotions and other benefits (cf. Pushkar, 2018). Unfortunately, some of the increased research output has found its way to fake journals to the extent that India has become the world centre for predatory journals (Yadav, 2018). Plagiarism is widespread as well. The government

has finally realised the harm that unchecked publishing in fake journals and plagiarism do to higher education and specifically to research in the country. It has now taken steps to curb both practices although much remains to be done in order to further deter and minimise research fraud (Pushkar, 2018a & 2019a). Still, despite many shortcomings, there is no doubt that Indian universities produce more research than they did before and the numbers continue to improve.

While India has clearly improved in terms of the quantity of research, research does not make much of a global impact (World Bank & Elsevier, 2019). This is due to the fact that researchers based at Indian universities published nearly 600,000 papers between 2012 and 2016 but their research was not widely cited and citations count and matter greatly for research impact. There is some evidence that research produced via international collaborations has a much higher research impact than research without such collaborations (Guan, Yan & Zhang, 2017). Adams (2013) has in fact argued that we are witnessing the emergence of a 'fourth age' of research enterprise after individual, institutional, and national stages of organisation, one "driven by international collaborations between elite research groups" (p. 257). Indian researchers do relatively fewer collaborative research projects and this leads to lower levels of research impact measured in terms of citations. There is also a deeper problem that international collaborations do not resolve. Several studies show that high-income countries, especially Anglo-Saxon and European countries, have disproportionately dominated first and co-authorship in global collaborative research so that the benefits of collaboration remain less than expected for low- and lower-middle income countries (see for example, Gibson, Rojas-Gualdrón, Pericás, & Benach, 2019).

The relatively low levels of research impact by Indian researchers suggests that there is plenty of scope for improving academic linkages between Indian universities and those in other parts of the world—whether in North America, Europe, Asia or elsewhere—in order to develop and improve international research collaborations. The Indian government's Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) (www.gian.iitkgp.ac.in) which was launched in 2015 has among its objectives attracting larger numbers of foreign faculty to Indian universities for short- to middle-term periods to help faculty and students learn from them and also build academic networks. Over time, GIAN will certainly help in enabling larger numbers of international research collaborations but there seems to be no research on its impact over the past three to four years. In addition to GIAN, there are of course other programmes and similar new initiatives to promote international collaborations (cf. for example, Press Information Bureau, 2018).

One of the three shortcomings in India's higher education concerning internationalisation that damage the country's standing in world rankings is the limited collaborative dimension of research. India arguably does even worse with regard to the second and third dimensions of internationalisation: international students and international faculty. As highlighted in the discussion that follows, there are far too few international students and international faculty at Indian universities. Most Indian institutions—including the IITs—are unable to attract sufficiently large numbers of either international students or faculty. India's universities

Research impact

More international collaborations are needed

Attracting international students and faculty are big challenges

but especially public institutions are not bothered about attracting international students perhaps because university officials are well aware of the poor quality of teaching and research at their institutions and do not expect foreigners, even from neighbouring countries, to register as students at their institutions. Recent initiatives to promote internationalisation in India's higher education sector, specifically to increase the number of international students and attract larger numbers of faculty from abroad, need better strategies and greater clarity about their scope and objectives in order to succeed.

4. Seeking International Students

International students in India in numbers

India has 903 universities and nearly 50,000 colleges and other kinds of degree-awarding institutions. More than 36 million students are enrolled at these institutions. However, international students make up for only a small number of the total (see Table 1 below).

Year	Total students	International students	International students as % of total
2010-11	27,500,000	27,531	0.10
2011-12	29,200,000	33,151	0.11
2012-13	30,200,000	34,774	0.12
2013-14	32,300,000	39,517	0.12
2014-15	34,200,000	42,293	0.12
2015-16	34,600,000	45,424	0.13
2016-17	35,700,000	47,575	0.13
2017-18	36,600,000	46,144	0.13

Table 1 *International Students in India, 2010–11 to 2017–18 (Government of India, All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) reports, various years, aishe.nic.in/aishe/reports, last accessed on 20 August 2019).*

Indians studying abroad in numbers

As the table shows, in 2010–11, there were 27,531 international students in India. The numbers increased to 46,144 in 2017–18, registering an increase of 67%. While this increase may appear to be significant, it is not. There are many more Indian students—approximately 200,000—in the US alone (Umarji, 2019). 172,000 Indian students are reported to be at Canadian universities and their numbers are growing rapidly (Vanderklippe, 2019). Tens of thousands of Indian students are in other Western countries, including non-English speaking ones. Non-Western countries have become popular destinations as well. More than 18,000 Indians

study in China, already more than that in the UK (Chhopia, 2018). The numbers of Indian students headed to the United Arab Emirates saw a sharp increase from 500 in December 2017 to 50,000 in July 2018. According to India's Ministry of External Affairs (foreign affairs), the number of Indian students abroad stands at 752,725, which is nearly 15 times more than the number of foreign students in India (cf. Deepalakshmi, 2018). As India becomes more prosperous, these numbers are expected to increase further (Choudaha, 2019). The bottom line is that while the number of international students in India has increased over time, these students still make up for less than 0.2% of the total student population.

It is well known that, in addition to helping host universities score better on the international dimension, there are several other benefits—both quantifiable and non-quantifiable—that international students bring to the host nation. Western countries such as the US, Canada and Australia, the three top destinations for Indian students, earn fantastic amounts from international students. Australia earned AUS \$34 billion from education over a 12-month period in 2017–18, making it its top-earning service export (Ross, 2018). In Canada, total spending by international students and their visitors has reached nearly CAD \$30 billion in 2015 and 2016 (Vanderklippe, 2019). According to an economic analysis by NAFSA, the more than one million international students in the US contributed US \$39 billion and supported more than 455,000 jobs in 2017–18 (Marklein, 2018).

Economic benefits of foreign students

Countries like India and certainly China, a nation that is often on the mind of India's policymakers, are not seeking immediate or expecting substantial economic benefits from foreign students. Instead, as one headline aptly put it: "China is lavishing money on foreign students", especially from Belt and Road countries (*The Economist*, 2019). China has recognised that as it further advances its status of a great power, it stands to generate enormous goodwill by extending the benefits of its higher education institutions to countries in its neighbourhood and beyond. China now hosts nearly 500,000 international students from far and near and provides generous financial support to many of them (Crace, 2018). And for this, in addition to generating tremendous goodwill, China benefits in world university rankings in terms of internationalisation.

China's success story

China has actively sought international students because it takes the concept of soft power very seriously. According to Yang (2015, p. 24), "the realm of higher education has been the focus of China's most systematically planned soft power policy." For Joseph Nye (2005), who coined the term, the sources of soft power lie in "the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies" (p. x)—whether democracy, human rights and individual opportunities—so that peoples and nations around the world aspire to emulate that country. A country's higher education institutions also count as an important source of soft power when young people around the world admire and seek to attend those institutions. According to Nye, "much of American soft power has been produced by Hollywood, Harvard, Microsoft and Michael Jordan" (ibid., p. 17). On the one hand, while international students are attracted by a country's soft power, at the same time, their presence further augments

China and soft power

the host country's soft power since students often keep good memories and a favourable image of the institution and the country.

China's goal of becoming a global hub for international students has been successful because, like other success stories among Western nations, the country has invested massively in the growth of several world-class universities, provides generous scholarships, and its universities offer increasing numbers of programmes in English (Crace, 2018). These are approximately the same ingredients that can work for India.

Study in India

India appears to be interested in following a similar path as China as evident from its Study in India initiative. The plan was first considered in 2015 (Pathak, 2015). However, it took another three years before it finally emerged as a joint initiative of four ministries—the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), which looks after education, external affairs, home (internal affairs) and commerce—with the goal of increasing the number of foreign students in India to 200,000 over the next five years. The specific objectives of the Study in India are as follows (Press Information Bureau, 2018):

- Improve the soft power of India with focus on the neighbouring countries and use it as a tool in diplomacy;
- boost the number of inbound international students in India;
- double India's market share of global education exports from less than one percent to two percent;
- increase the contribution of international students in the form of direct spends, indirect spends, spillover effects, etc.;
- improve the overall quality of higher education;
- increase global ranking of India [by improving its desirability] as an educational destination;
- reduce the imbalance in the number of international students and Indians studying abroad; and
- grow India's global market share of international students.

Making study in India attractive

The Study in India website, which is one aspect of the Study in India initiative, will enable international students to readily obtain information about 160 colleges and universities currently listed on the portal and apply for admission. More institutions are to be added to the list. Students from 30-odd countries in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe are the target group. The scheme also carries benefits, such as easing the visa process and fee waivers to foreign students from Asia and Africa. Full or partial fee waivers will be offered to more than 50% of international students. The government approved 150 crore rupees (approximately, USD 210 million, perhaps too little) for Study in India for 2018 and 2019, mainly for brand promotion activities. Needless to say, such an initiative has been long overdue for an aspiring great power (Pushkar, 2016).

5. India Needs World-Ranked Universities to Attract Larger Numbers of International Students

What India arguably lacks most in its quest to attract larger numbers of international students is world-ranked universities. The overall quality of education on offer at most colleges and universities is also average to mediocre. This situation does not help to attract foreign students (MHRD, 2019). While it is true that there are several factors—such as scholarships and the language of instruction—which also attract foreign students seeking to study abroad in a given country, the reputation and ranking of institutions and the overall status of the higher education sector matter substantially. India's advantages, e.g. the use of English as the medium of instruction at many universities, remain limited because the overall quality of education at its colleges and universities is mediocre and none of its universities figure among the world's top 100 institutions. Of course, difficult living conditions for foreigners—on college and university campuses and outside—and complex bureaucratic procedures for foreign students also deter prospective international students. But there is no doubt that the absence of top-ranked institutions is an important factor that prevents India from becoming a more popular destination for international students. This is evident from the fact that students in low- and middle-income countries, who constitute the bulk of regionally and globally mobile students, are increasingly choosing universities in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea in preference to those in the West. The question India's policymakers have to ask is: Why not India when it is a growing economy and an aspiring great power? The answer may simply be that the Asian countries mentioned above are home to several universities that count among the top 100 or 200 in the world while India does not have such institutions.

In order to address the deficit of highly-ranked universities, the Indian government launched the so-called Institutions of Eminence (IoE) initiative in mid-2017 (www.ugc.ac.in/ioe). The plan calls for selecting 20 eminent institutions—ten public and ten private universities—that would be granted unprecedented autonomy from the government. The ten public institutions would get additional funding of 1,000 crore rupees each. The selected institutions are expected to break into the world's top 100 to 200 institutions within ten to 15 years, or at least into the list of the top 500 if they are not already there. It took another year before the government announced the names of the first three public and private universities: the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Bombay and Delhi among public institutions; and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani, Manipal Academy of Higher Education and Jio Institute among private institutions. Nearly another year has passed since then but the list of eminent institutions remains frozen at six. It is quite remarkable that the government has not provided a timeframe for the selection of eminent institutions. Overall, the entire process of selecting eminent institutions has been marred by a lack of clarity about its objectives (Pushkar, 2018b & 2019). Still, one can be hopeful that the eminent institutions will prove helpful in attracting larger numbers of foreign students to India.

What India lacks is world-ranked universities

The Institutions of Eminence initiative

Eminent institutions can lead the way

This programme may be helpful for a number of reasons. Firstly, the 20 eminent institutions can be projected as the best institutions in the country in the South Asian region and beyond. Students from abroad, especially from India's immediate neighbourhood, may want to study at these institutions because they offer high-quality education and financial support.

Secondly, the government's guidelines for the eminent institutions calls for "a reasonably good mix of domestic and foreign students" and up to 30% of the total student body can be foreign students (UGC Guidelines, 2017). Since these universities are free to fix and charge fees from foreign students "without restrictions," they will be encouraged to maximise their quota of 30%. In other cases, some universities may prefer to keep the fees for foreign students reasonable in order to attract more of them to study there. IIT-Delhi has done just that by taking the decision to substantially lower the fees for foreign students (Nanda, 2018a).

Thirdly, eminent institutions are advised to hire "a good proportion of foreign or foreign qualified faculty" and "would have the freedom to recruit faculty from outside India subject to the limit of twenty-five percent of its faculty strength" (*ibid.*). Foreign students are more likely to be attracted to institutions where larger numbers of faculty are international—with PhDs from some of the best institutions in the world.

Smart strategies can help

It is not inevitable that the eminent institutions will help increase the number of international students in India substantially. However, they can certainly play an important role in raising the international profile of India's eminent universities which, over the long term, will make them more attractive for foreign students. Still, India could do better in attracting more foreign students—even with the kind of universities it currently has—with a set of smart strategies. For example, the government and universities could focus more on suitable short-term courses for foreign students from high-income countries, especially in humanities and social sciences. Many internationally mobile students wish to spend a semester or even less to study abroad rather than spending two to four years for an undergraduate or master's degree.

Open Doors data on US student mobility

The numbers from the 2018 Open Doors data provide some interesting insights about US students studying abroad and may serve as a useful guide for Indian universities seeking to attract larger numbers of foreign students. While these insights may be less relevant with respect to students from low- and middle-income countries, they may be useful to understand study abroad choices made by students in high-income countries and perhaps by high-income students from other countries.

Firstly, 64.6% of the 332,000 US American students who studied abroad in 2016–17 opted for summer programmes or those that were eight weeks or less in duration. The growth trajectory of short duration programmes is seen as fuelling the overall growth in study abroad among American students (Redden, 2018). Secondly, women made up 67% of students studying abroad and their numbers continue to rise.

Short duration programmes are needed

This means that India could do better in attracting foreign students from high-income countries if its universities designed specific short-term programmes that would appeal to female students. The Open

Doors data also reveals that approximately 26% of students were studying STEM fields, with the rest choosing business (20.7%), social sciences (17.2%), languages (7.3%) and fine and applied arts (6.3%). It would be safe to assume that destination countries for STEM fields will likely remain European universities rather than Indian universities. The suggestion is for Indian universities to focus on short-term programmes in other fields of study—particularly social sciences and business—that may be of greater interest to foreign students, particularly women, from high-income countries. At the same time, the focus could remain on long-term programmes in STEM fields for foreign students from low- and middle-income countries.

There is a desperate need for India to adopt smart strategies to attract larger numbers of foreign students until or even after its eminent institutions rise up in world rankings. Some Indian universities like IIT-Delhi are already being wise about internationalisation by slashing tuition fee. They have also correctly recognised that they should focus on attracting students from the South Asian region and just beyond, primarily from low-income countries. For its part, the government has given Educational Consultants India Limited (EDCIL), an agency that falls under MHRD, the responsibility of attracting more foreign students to India (Mishra, 2019). It is widely acknowledged that India's universities also need to create better physical infrastructure such as campus- or university-managed accommodation which provide greater safety and have better support systems for foreign students.

India has potential

6. Seeking International Faculty

The third aspect of an/the international outlook or internationalisation is foreign faculty. India fares very poorly with respect to the numbers of foreign faculty. For example, only 40 foreign nationals teach across the 23 IITs, India's most respected institutions, which is less than 1% of all faculty members (Sharma, 2018). While the numbers of international faculty are quite high at some private universities (Dutttagupta, 2018), the total number of foreigners teaching across Indian universities is very low.

Very few foreigners teach in India

In late 2018, the government waived all prior security clearance requirements to hire foreign faculty members across all higher education institutions in India (Vishnoi, 2018). In procedural terms, this represents a big step forward. Universities can now directly hire foreigners without clearance from the Ministries of Home Affairs (MHA) and External Affairs (MEA). Knowing the ways of Indian bureaucracy, it is not hard to imagine why both institutions and interested faculty would lose interest if the clearance process took months. Mandatory clearance is now limited to

India eases bureaucratic procedures

foreigners from Prior Reference Category countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and foreigners of Pakistani origin, stateless persons and those who wish to visit restricted areas.

Acquiring employment visas easier

Long-term employment visas for foreigners usually are issued for five years, with a provision to extend for another five, political clearance for such appointments still remains mandatory. However, the process is expected to be reduced to three or four days. In addition, the government determined that Overseas Citizens of India (OCI), those who otherwise hold foreign passports, can be appointed as tenured faculty members without institutions having to seek MHA or MEA clearance.

The IITs have taken other measures

Other than these initiatives, the IITs have also been taking steps to improve their internationalisation. In August 2017, the IIT Council, the highest decision-making body for all IITs, took the decision that it would seek relaxation to the Citizenship Act so that the IITs could hire foreigners as tenured faculty members (Mohanty, 2018). The Citizenship Act 1955 denies permanent jobs to foreigners at public institutions.

IITs join hands to look for foreign faculty

A month later, a leading Indian newspaper reported that the IITs would form a united front to tackle the challenge of hiring foreigners (Verma, 2018). Each well-established IIT was allocated one or more geographical areas from which it would try to recruit foreigners, for itself and for other IITs. The US market, considered the main 'hunting ground' for foreigners, was divided into three regions and allocated to IIT-Bombay (West Coast), IIT-Delhi (southern US) and IIT-Madras (East Coast). IIT-Hyderabad was made responsible for recruiting faculty members from Japan; IIT-Mandi from Scandinavia; and IIT-Ropar from Canada. While the merits of this strategy have been questioned (Bothwell, 2018), it does seem that the IITs are treating this matter seriously.

Many difficulties in attracting foreign faculty

Among the many difficulties India's best universities, especially public ones, will continue to face the ability to offer competitive salaries to international faculty, more so since the Indian rupee has been losing ground to the US dollar. Eminent universities and private institutions are in a better position to hire foreign faculty in this respect since they are free to charge higher tuition fees. Also, many IITs in particular, are located in far-flung places that do not offer the comforts of larger cities and are thus not particularly attractive to foreigners. But even large cosmopolitan cities have their fair share of problems. For example, New Delhi, which is home to several good universities, is plagued by severely poor quality of air for most of the year. Finally, the nature of India's current politics which is dominated by a Hindu nationalist party may also persuade potential international students (and perhaps researchers) who are Muslim to stay away from India since many of the party's leaders routinely employ anti-Muslim discourse.

Lack of clarity about the meaning of foreign faculty

There are other problems with the task of hiring foreign faculty. While the guidelines for eminent institutions permit these universities to hire up to 25% of its faculty from outside India, the meaning of 'foreign faculty' is far too broad and includes Indians with PhDs from abroad and even those who have spent "considerable time in academics in a foreign country" (UGC, 2017). It is not clear why there is any merit in hiring larger numbers of Indians who may have spent 'considerable time in academics in a foreign country' unless that considerable time was spent in

obtaining a PhD or at least to gain international experience in the form of post-doctoral research. What will help Indian institutions improve in world rankings is not the considerable time that its faculty may have spent abroad, but whether more of its faculty earned PhDs from the best universities abroad, and whether good numbers of its faculty—up to 25%—are foreign passport holders (Pushkar, 2018c).

As noted earlier, most Indian institutions are teaching-focussed and have no need for foreign faculty. However, the eminent institutions, as well as those aspiring to compete on the world stage, will benefit from hiring larger numbers of foreign-trained and foreign faculty. Doing so will help them improve their research output as well as reward them on the internationalisation component in world university rankings. Foreign-trained faculty, whether foreigners or Indians, bring several advantages. It is usually, though not always, the case that those who earn their degrees from the best institutions in the world are better trained at post-graduate level and, more importantly, tend to be more research-oriented. They typically publish more and in well-regarded journals and with reputed publishers (Sahoo, Singh, Mishra, & Sankaran, 2017) even if not everything they publish may be of high merit. They are also more likely to publish with international collaborations. Overall, universities with larger numbers of faculty members trained at the best institutions may be expected to perform better than those with fewer such faculty members. The advantage of foreign researchers is that institutions benefit both in terms of research performance as well as from the extra points they score on the internationalisation dimension.

Benefits of foreign faculty

7. Concluding Remarks

Indian universities need to improve on the internationalisation dimension—in terms of international research collaborations and larger numbers of foreign students and faculty staff—if they want to compete more effectively in world university rankings and benefit in other ways. At the same time, in order to be able to become a hub of affordable education for foreign students, at least a few Indian universities must break into the ranks of the world's top 100 or 200 institutions so that foreign students and faculty take notice of them and consider studying there. This is a dilemma that government and university officials have to resolve. However, in addition, to succeed at internationalisation, India also needs good strategies to attract foreign students. So far, the verdict on some of the initiatives for internationalisation is mixed and it remains to be seen how successful or not India will be.

Internationalisation necessary for India

Author remarks

This article draws from several short and long essays on the subject of internationalisation in India's higher education published primarily in *The Wire* (<https://thewire.in/author/pushkar>) since 2016, most of which are listed in the references.

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Author

Pushkar is director and chief executive at The International Centre Goa (Goa), India. As a PhD in political science (McGill University), he wrote his dissertation on Chilean Christian Democracy and health sector reforms. Pushkar has taught at universities in India and Canada, including BITS Pilani-Goa (2013–16), McGill University (2006–11), Concordia University (2003–06) and Goa University (1992–96). He has published journal articles and book chapters on Chilean politics and health sector reforms and democracy, public goods provision and health in India. Pushkar is the co-author (with Madhvi Gupta) of *Democracy, Civil Society, and Health in India* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Since 2012, he has written more than 200 op-eds and essays on India's higher education for leading Indian and international newspapers and magazines such *Hindustan Times*, *Indian Express*, *Rajasthan Patrika* (Hindi), *Times Higher Education* (THE) and *The Wire*. He is often cited in newspapers, magazines and journals, including *Science*, *Nature Index* and *THE*. In January 2015, an article in *Forbes India* listed him as one of India's 24 thinkers "who best explain a rapidly-changing India to the world (and the world to India)" for his writings on higher education.