

Higher Education Abroad:

Current Scenario and Future Trends

Abstract

This paper has been written as a part of a summer internship under the supervision of Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Professor G.G. Dwivedi. This study aims to review the current scenario of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad and determine how the choices of students who want to study overseas may get influenced by the National Education Policy 2020, and the global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. As per UNESCO Institute of Statistics, more than 3, 00,000 Indian students are pursuing tertiary education overseas as of 2017, which has made an average annual growth rate of 22% from 2000 to 2016. Indian students choose to study abroad due to specific pull factors such as greater exposure, better quality and standard of higher educational institutions and enhanced research opportunities, funds and employment opportunities. The United States of America, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and Germany remains to be the most preferred countries as of 2017 and STEM as the most chosen area of study followed by engineering, business administration and management, and life, medical and social sciences. The National Education Policy, 2020, seeks to transform the higher educational institutions in India and make them globally competitive through the implementation of plans like an increased investment of overall public expenditure on the education sector six per cent of the GDP, branch campuses of foreign universities, joint and dual degree programmes, open and distance learning, liberal education programmes, National Research Foundation with separate funding in research, Institutes of Eminence and greater use of technology. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has destructed the economies of the world, and it has also led to a significant loss for the students planning to pursue higher education abroad. Visa expiry, massive education loans, economic recession, a lower return of investment, withdrawn job offers, travel restrictions are some of such problems. It has intensified the role of technology and consequentially, online education which has, in turn, made the teaching-learning process more manageable. From online lectures, discussions to interactive academic sessions through platforms like Zoom, Google meet, Skype, Google classroom, websites like Coursera, edX, Swayam, and other MOOC (Massive open online courses) platforms have allowed students to gain knowledge, even

amidst the period of lockdown. With dual-degree and joint degree programmes, branch campuses of foreign universities in the special education zones, enhanced research funding along with upcoming challenges of travel restrictions and economic recession due to the pandemic, decisions of students planning to pursue higher education abroad may get affected. Primary data was collected through the method of an online survey based on snowball sampling of over thirty students to fulfil the objective of the research. Based on the findings, it is visualised that the future trend of higher education in India as an effect of COVID-19 and NEP, 2020 will be based on the three pillars of Online Education, established Branch Campuses of foreign universities and Open and distance learning. The major driving factors in establishing such a trend include the role of technology, the growing travel restrictions, economic recession, return of investment, emphasis on 'local' and family influence.

Keywords: Higher Education, National Education Policy 2020, Pandemic, Online education

Introduction

India, the seventh-largest, second-most populous, is one of the world's youngest countries with 365 million young people forming more than thirty per cent of the population. ¹ Youth are the most valuable resource for a nation on whose shoulders lies the expectation of the country's progress and building. Such youth, when guided to the right path with good quality education, knowledge and opportunities become the potential for development. Skilled youth form positive force and contribute to a productive economy. However, no one is born with such skills and knowledge. Building human capitals is the sole responsibility of the country by providing the young with proper education, plenty of opportunities and helps develop the skills.

It was in the year of 1990s with the privatisation of higher education in India that the mobility of students to pursue higher education in foreign universities intensified. Students from developing countries were welcomed as there was also a demand of the younger workforce at a lower cost.

¹ 'Young People,' United Nations Population Fund, Accessed July 28th, 2020
<https://india.unfpa.org/en/topics/young-people-12>

As per UNESCO Institute of Statistics, more than 3, 00,000 Indian students are pursuing tertiary education overseas as of 2017, which has made an average annual growth rate of 22% from 2000 to 2016.² India comes second after China, with the largest source of student emigration.³ Such emigrations of students happen due to specific push and pull factors which include issues like unemployment, low ranked universities, low research funding and highly ranked universities, more significant employment opportunities, higher exposure respectively.

The top five countries in terms of preference of Indian students to pursue higher education include United States of America, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom and Germany as of 2017 as per UNESCO Institute of statistics. Underlying reasons for choosing these include world-class tertiary educational institutions, better employment and standard of living.

The most chosen area of study is Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths(STEM) with approximately 77% of Indian students enrolled in STEM as per Open Door Statistics as of 2018-2019 in particular to the United States of America.⁴ Business Management and Administration ranks second in the list with 10% of Indian students pursuing the degrees abroad.⁵ Life and Physical Sciences, Medical, Law, Social Sciences, Creative Art and Design are now becoming popular options to pursue.

David Hart uses the term ‘High Skill Migration’ for Brain Drain and states that high Skill migration is the type of migration of persons with skills and education who, if stayed could have contributed well for the development of the country.⁶ Brain drain as an issue only exists when skilled youth, do not return to the home country and provide their intellectualism overseas. Many times, students move abroad to get better exposure, explore opportunities in terms of academics and bring knowledge back to the country. Thus, helping nation-building and development.

² “Global Flow of Tertiary level students,” UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Accessed April 30, 2020 <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>

³ ibid

⁴ “International Students by field of study,” Institute of International Education, Accessed May 27, 2020 <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Fields-of-Study>

⁵ ibid

⁶ David Hart, “From brain drain to mutual gain: Sharing the benefits of high-skill migration,” Issues in Science and Technology 23, no.1 (2006), Accessed May 27, 2020, https://issues.org/d_hart/

Placing India at the international level, only three Indian universities were able to secure a place in the Q.S. World University Rankings 2020.⁷ India's union budget allocation for the education sector from the financial year 2015 to the financial year 2020 has dropped from 4.14% to 3.4%, thus ranking third amongst the BRICS nation in education spending. India comes nowhere near the average education spending of 4.5% (as on 2018) of OECD nations.⁸

What is exciting and relevant to note, however, is the new policy of the Indian government to make shifts in the education sector with the motive of making India a global hub of education through the National Education Policy 2020. It aims at transforming the country and establishing a vibrant knowledge society.

The motive is to create world-class higher education institutions across the nation. It is to make education more responsive and innovative and at the same time, allow open and distance learning. Through the use of Information communication and computation technology like online classes, e-learning modules, virtual labs, and online examinations, efforts are made for realisation of the objective. Internationalisation of Higher Education and the competitive system is built through a collaboration between foreign and Indian Institutions (MoUs), facilitating the entry of International students and researchers and faculty exchange.

Globalisation as a process has led to greater interconnectedness around the world. Enhanced connectivity has played a pivotal role allowing all, to get the best around the globe. The future trend of higher education in India, in the coming ten years, seems to be a vibrant society built on the pillars of Information communication and computation technology, with branch campuses of foreign universities in place, and enormous popularity of virtual certificate courses and online education. The possibility of such a trend is based on the recent global spread of COVID 19, the economic recession that follows and the stricter immigration policies being imposed by many countries.

This research paper aims to undertake a review of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad and visualise the future trends.

⁷ "QS world rankings 2020," QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, Accessed May 10, 2020
<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2020>

⁸ Atul Thakkar & Shahan Sud, "Budget 2020: How India can fix its education system and save its Democratic Dividend," Economic Times, , Jan30,2020
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/education/budget-2020-how-india-can-fix-its-education-system-and-save-its-demographic-dividend/articleshow/73760310.cms>

The research paper has been divided into sections.

- The *first* section reviews the current scenario of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad and presents specific statistical information based on both primary and secondary data about Indian students.
- The *second* section analyses the effects of National Education Policy, 2020 on students pursuing higher education abroad.
- The *third* section establishes how COVID 19 and the growing role of technology will have an impact on Indian students planning to study abroad.
- The *fourth* section visualises the emerging future trends concerning Indian Students pursuing or planning to pursue higher education abroad in the coming ten years.

The Current Scenario

As per UNESCO Institute of Statistics, three lakh Indian students are pursuing higher education abroad. Such emigrations of students happen due to specific reasons which include push and pull factors. Push factors are the conditions which make the Indian students leave the country and include issues like unemployment, low ranked universities and low research funding and opportunities. While, the pull factors consist of conditions which attract students to another country for higher education and include circumstances like a better quality of education with highly ranked universities, more significant employment opportunities, higher exposure and favourable migration policies.

Primary data was collected through the method of an online survey based on snowball sampling of over thirty students to fulfil the objective of the research. The study area consisted of the countries where Indian students prefer to move to pursue higher education including countries of North America like United states of America, Canada, European countries like United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway; Asian countries like South Korea, China. (**Refer to Appendix A**)

Figure 1 and **Figure 2** shows seventy-seven per cent of the students went abroad to pursue higher education based on the fundamental pull factors which include better quality and standard of education, research opportunities and exposure. On the other hand, fifty per cent of students considered low ranked universities, low-quality education and low research opportunities and funding as the push factors.

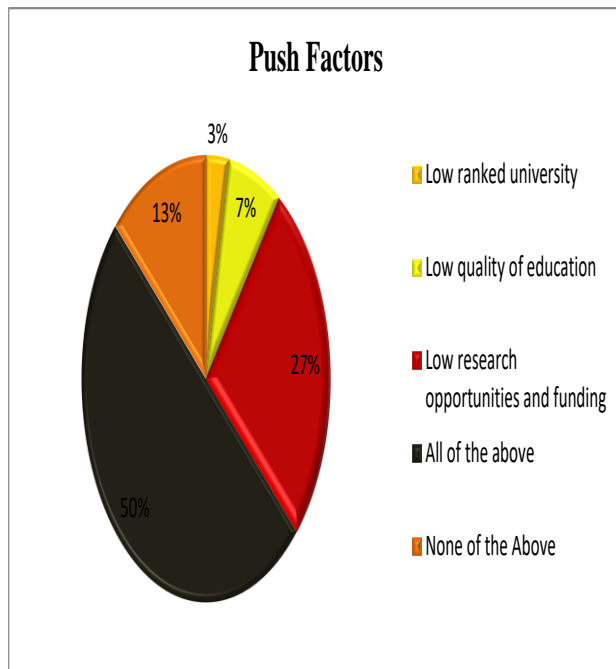


Fig. 1. Pull factors

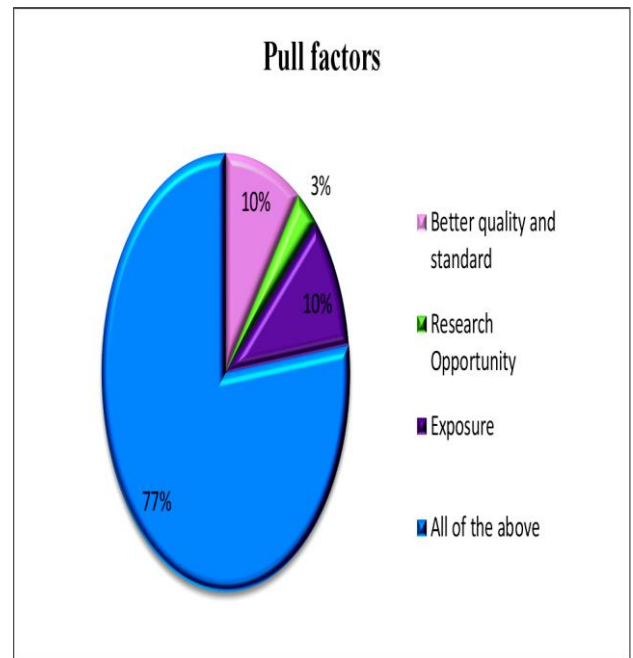


Fig. 2. Push Factors

Hercog and Laar⁹ in their paper, “Motivations and Constraints of moving abroad for Indian students” state that the significant gain of Indian students moving abroad is a better quality of education and a greater variety of field specialisation options. Other reasons to pursue education overseas include a family-friendly environment, political stability and public safety. Their research data also suggests that a student from research-oriented university is more likely to pursue tertiary education overseas than a practical university since employment opportunities for such students in India have improved over the years. However, research funding and enhanced infrastructure are yet to improve in India, thus remains a significant pull factor for education overseas.

Another study conducted Dr C Anbalagan propounds that the primary push factor for Indian students to choose to study abroad include competitive entry requirements and paucity of space at the local universities.¹⁰ Some of the brightest of students work hard to study in world-class universities while others get their desired specialisations abroad rather than in the

⁹ Metka Hercog and Mindel Van de Laar, “Motivations and Constraints of moving abroad for Indian Students,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 2016 Accessed June 3rd 2020 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12134-016-0499-4>

¹⁰ Dr C Anbalagan, “Challenges and Prospects of Indian Higher Educational Services,” *International Journal of Research in Management and Technology*, 2011, 1(2)

home country. Frequent social and political disturbances like strikes, calling off of classes, irregular schedules, lack of sincerity demotivates students and becomes a push factor.

Russell King and Gunjan Sondhi conducted research drawing a comparative analysis between the U.K, and Indian students pull factors to study abroad.¹¹ As per the study, while some students contended that they wanted a global perspective by studying in a world-class university, the others believed that having a degree from a prestigious university will allow them to stand better in the highly competitive labour market. Some students also considered the internationally recognised degree as an ‘investment’ made by the family, which could bring enhanced benefits in future.

Figure 3 portrays the top five countries in terms of preference of Indian students to pursue higher education which includes the USA, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany as of 2017.

The USA ranks first in terms of preference of Indian students with more than one lakh Indian students pursuing tertiary education there. Major pull factors for the United States of America are the presence of prestigious universities recognised all over the world. Students’ dream of pursuing degrees from the Ivy League in which getting shortlisted is itself a challenge. The country is known to have the best universities in the whole world. Other reasons include enhanced employment opportunities, quality of life, exposure, greater emphasis on practical learning. Not only this but, the world’s top multinational companies are headquartered in the United States, which is again a pull factor for business students

It is followed by Australia, with over fifty thousand Indian students. Affordable education, good scholarship programs, highly ranked universities, diverse courses along with enhanced quality of life and favourable immigration policy form pull factor.

Canada ranks third with over thirty thousand students. It is another country with highly ranked universities, affordable tertiary education, higher quality of life and standard of living and favourable visa and immigration policies. With a large population of Indians, the country provides a homely environment.

¹¹ Russell King and Gunjan Sodhi, “Internation student migration: a comparison of UK and Indian students motivations for studying abroad,”*Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 2017

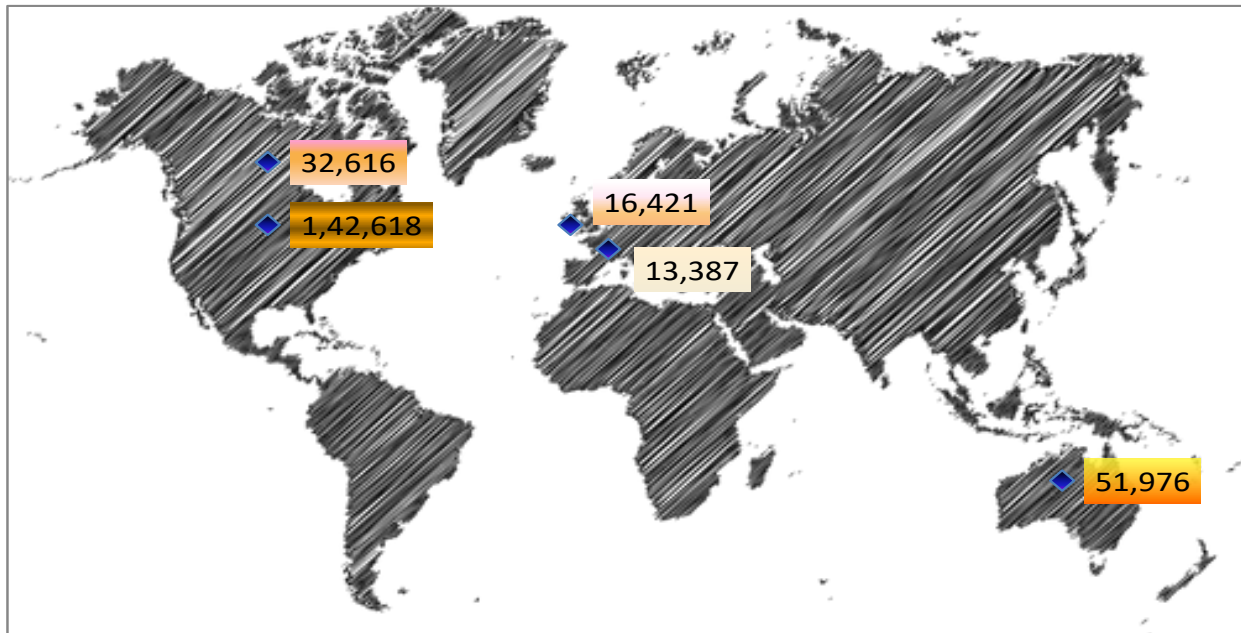


Fig. 3. Top five countries preferred by Indian Students

Source: UNESCO, 2017, Global Flow of Tertiary level students

The United Kingdom, with over sixteen thousand students, has been affected as a student destination due to its visa rules and Brexit. Nevertheless, the country remains as one of the preferred leading destinations for tertiary education for Indian students due to the highly ranked universities, exposure, and affordability.

Germany, with more than thirteen thousand students, is an attractive tertiary education destination mainly due to its higher education with no tuition fees policy. Many of the universities offer courses in both English and German languages which is another pull factor. Highly ranked universities, student-friendly environment, greater exposure are other reasons.

Furthermore, what is interesting to note is that in the sixteen years the percentage of students moving abroad to pursue higher education has made an average annual growth rate of twenty-two per cent from 2000 to 2016 as per UNESCO Institute of statistics.

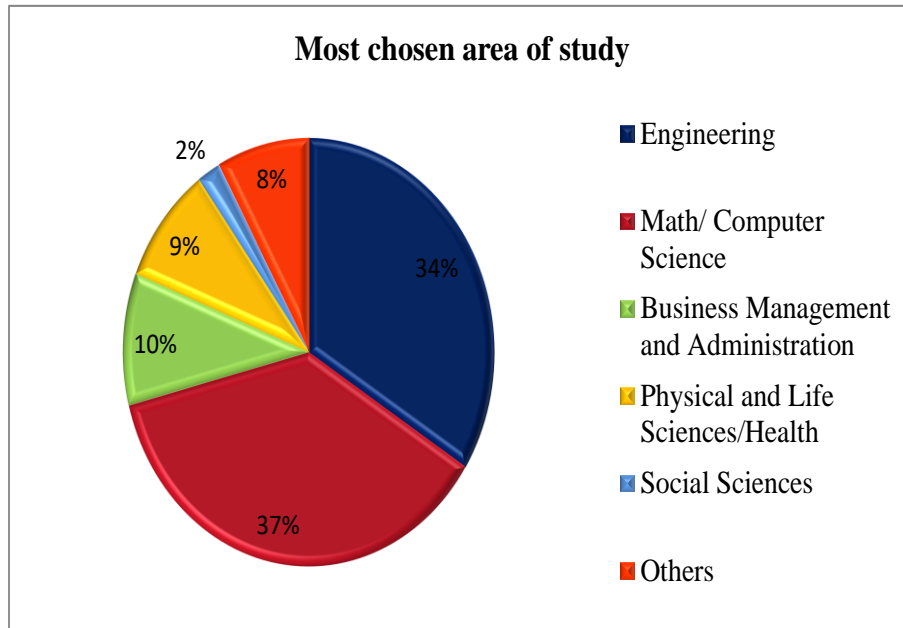


Fig. 4. The most chosen area of study by Indian students

Source: Open Door Statistics, 2018-2019

Figure 4 portrays the most chosen areas of study by Indian students. Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) is the most chosen area of study by Indian students. Advanced technology, highly qualified faculty, sophisticated labs, practical approach to learning and optional practical training are some of the reasons for the Indian students to pursue tertiary education in STEM subjects abroad. Approximately 37 per cent of Indian students prefer to study maths and computer science courses as per Open Door Statistics as of 2018-2019.¹²

Engineering courses rank second as the most chosen area of study. A practical approach to learning, highly ranked universities, opportunities to work and intern with popular organisations, greater research fundings and opportunities attract the students to this course. It is followed by business management and administration with ten per cent of Indian students pursuing degrees abroad. The growing significance of entrepreneurial aspirations with global education has now become widespread. Extensive internship opportunities in Multinational

¹² “International Students by field of study,” Institute of International Education, Accessed May 27, 2020 <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Fields-of-Study>

corporations, a vast network of international peers, broad curriculum and face to face interactions with experts are some pull factors.

Physical, Life sciences and Social sciences attract approximately nine and two per cent of students respectively. They are now becoming popular options to pursue. Highly recognised courses, research opportunities, a newer approach to learning and more exceptional practical applications to the courses attract students to this course.

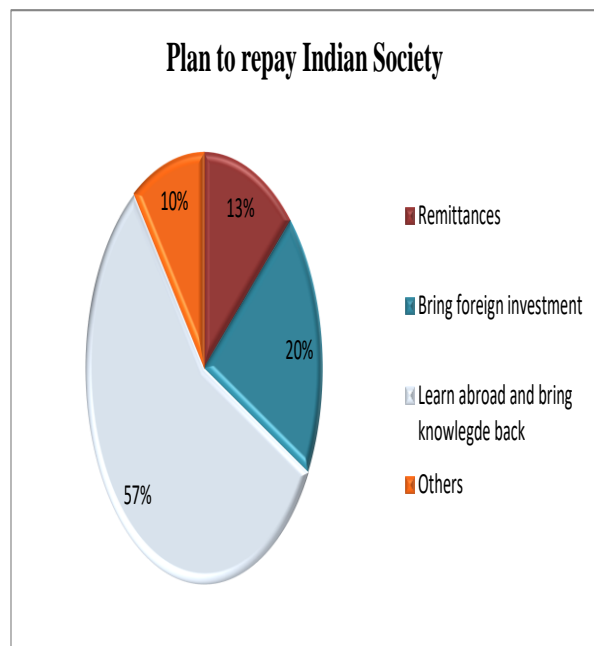
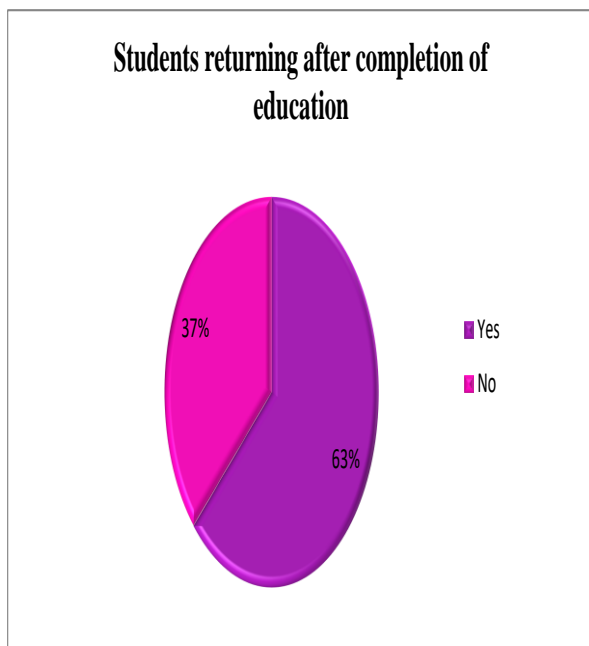


Fig. 5. Students planning to return after completion of education **Fig. 6.** Plan to repay Indian society

Based on the primary data collected, **Figure 5** and **Figure 6** shows the students (in percentage) who are planning to return after completion of their education abroad and their plan to repay the Indian society.

Sixty-three per cent of Indian students are planning to return to India after pursuing their degrees abroad.

Entrepreneurial aspirations, attractive opportunities, dynamic job market, homely environment, are some pull factors back to the homeland. Not only this, but Indian corporations also grant higher value and benefits to foreign education as it is more research-

based and involves meticulous training. Specific issues like unfavourable immigration policies and visa problems form the push factors.

Fifty-seven per cent of students have a plan of learning abroad and bringing knowledge back to the country. While twenty per cent and ten per cent plan of bringing foreign investments and remittances, respectively.

Overall, the motive of all the students is to become a potential for development. It is to become a positive force and contribute to a productive economy. They plan to explore opportunities abroad, gain enhanced exposure and return to the homeland to help in nation-building and development.

Effects of National Education Policy, 2020 on Higher education abroad and its implication

The National Education Policy, 2020 was made public on July 29, 2020. The revolutionary changes visualised to be made by the policy is best portrayed in the section of the transformation of higher educational institutions. Efforts have been made to make Indian higher educational institutions globally competitive. The most challenging part of the whole process is implementation. A well-implemented policy is a well worked out policy.

To paraphrase the National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020), the objective of higher education must be to allow the building of an intellectual, socially aware, informed and skilled nation that can inspire the people and become self-reliant.

Based on the primary data, the fundamental reasons why Indian students choose to study abroad in foreign universities is due to the better standard and quality of educational institutions, research opportunities and greater exposure.

The NEP, 2020 seeks to re-energise the higher education system and overcome challenges like lack of research in universities and colleges, fragmented system and paucity of world-class educational institutions. To attain the goal, policy validates an increased investment of public expenditure by both state and central governments to reach six per cent of the GDP at the earliest.¹³ It also sets to establish Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities,

¹³ “National Education Policy, 2020,” Ministry of Education, New Delhi
https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/Draft_NEP_2019_EN_Revised.pdf

which will be of the global status like that of the Ivy League Institutions, to set high standards of multidisciplinary education across India.

Specific segments of the policy will influence the decisions of students who choose to study abroad to include the establishment of Branch Campuses of foreign universities in the special education zones, provision of the dual degree, joint degree programmes and National Research Foundation with increased funding in research.

The policy envisions inviting foreign universities to operate within India. Select universities (the top 100 universities of the world) will be allowed to operate within India and establish branch campuses as per the policy, in exclusive education zones and have to follow the suggested legislative framework. It also stimulates twinning programmes, i.e. joint degree programmes wherein a part of the degree is completed in the Indian university and the rest in a Foreign University.

While the National Education Policy, 2020 seeks to re-energise the higher educational institutions, there exist certain shortcomings which need redressal. Higher educational institutions in India have always had had democratic mechanisms to discuss, and implement policies. However, the decision of discarding their structures and norms to establish top-down mechanism may affect the democracy within these institutions negatively.

With the National Research Foundation being the apex body for the allocation of funds for research, concerns have been led that it would lead to a reduction of autonomy for higher educational institutions to decide on their research priorities.

Apprehensions have also been raised on the proposed policy's greater emphasis on privatisation of educational institutions which in turn reduces the role of India as the welfare state and violates Article 41 of the constitution which states, "State shall within the limits of economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing a right to work, to education..."

Philip Altbach, in criticism of branch campuses, contends how the complex bureaucracy of foreign universities will deviate the government from achieving the goal of providing quality higher education.¹⁴ Not only this, but the primary aim of such universities is also to make

¹⁴ Philip.G Altbach, "Open door in Higher education: Unsustainable and probably ill- advised," Economic and Political weekly, 45 (13), Accessed May 20, 2020

money. Thus, they tend to establish programmes which are inexpensive and easy to set-up. Due to the restrictions and legislations posed by the Indian government, India may seem like an unattractive option for foreign universities; thus, the investments made be limited as well. While this may create opportunities for the faculty of these universities, the Indian students may not benefit from it at all.

To stop the brain drain, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has also planned to increase seat capacity in premier institutions by forty per cent and the Institutes of Eminence be increased to fifty. Such a proposal has come amid the pandemic, as concerns have led upon how students prefer to pursue higher education abroad than in India.

National Research Foundation (NRF) is suggested to be established to regulate, monitor and fund quality peer-reviewed research in India to permeate a culture of research in higher educational institutions.¹⁵ **Figure 7** portrays investment in education by various countries of the world. The draft highlighted how investment in research has declined from 0.84 per cent of GDP in 2008 to 0.69 per cent in 2014.

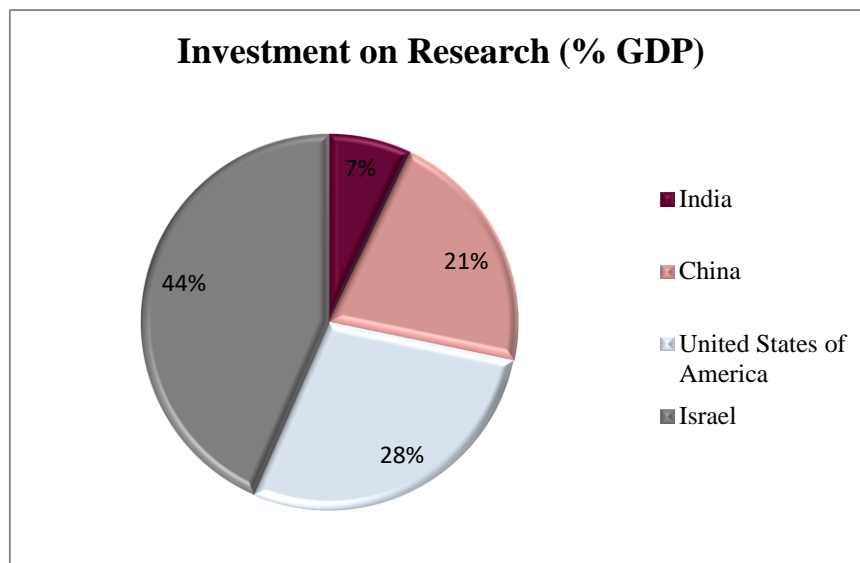


Fig. 7. Investment on research by various countries

Source: Economic Survey of India 2017-2018; PRS

<https://www.epw.in/journal/2010/13/commentary/open-door-higher-education-unsustainable-and-probably-ill-advised.html>

¹⁵ Sreeramana Aithal, Shubrajyotsna Aithal, "Analysis of Higher Education in Indian National Education Policy Proposal 2019 and its implementation challenges," *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*, No. 95157 (2019)

Thus, with the establishment of NRF, a boost will be provided to research in India. It will allocate funds for research projects with equal consideration to both public and private institutions. Researchers will be expected to connect their research as per the societal needs, government and industrial expectations. The major aim of the Institution is to fund peer-reviewed grant proposals, facilitate research at academic institutions, a collaboration between researchers and government to focus on relevant, demanding issues, and regular seminars and acknowledgement of good researches done.

Thus, if the proposals are adopted by the government, the Higher education sector in India will be revolutionised. With a greater emphasis on research and enhanced fundings, students will get plenty of research opportunities with good fundings within India itself. Consequentially, there may be a reduction in those moving abroad seeking similar opportunities. Not only this, with the establishment of branch campuses of foreign universities and dual and joint degree programmes, there is a chance of a reversal of students moving abroad to pursue higher education.

As per the report of AISHE, 2019, the total number of international students in India is 47,427¹⁶, and they come from 164 countries across the globe, mostly neighbouring countries. As per the report, the maximum number of students are enrolled in the Undergraduate courses (73.4%) followed by Post- Graduate (16.15%).

The objective the NEP, 2020, is to build India as the hub of higher education. India had had universities like the Nalanda, Vallabhi, Vikramshila and Takshashila University in the past, which was an epitome of learning. Following our set paths and tradition, the idea is to revolutionise the education sector in India through the launching of courses in subjects like Indology, Yoga, History, and Culture.

What tends to attract international students to India to enrol in degrees of higher education is due to our good quality infrastructure, low cost of education as compared to other countries and English as a course language. Students of neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sudan, Nigeria, Sri Lanka get pulled to Indian universities. They mostly prefer courses like bachelors of technology, followed by bachelors of business administration and bachelors of science.¹⁷ Such internationalisation boosts the economy and education is seen as

¹⁶ Ministry of Human Resource Development, "All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-2019," (New Delhi, 2019), page 24-25

¹⁷ *ibid*

a big business opportunity. The idea is to achieve ‘internationalisation at home’. Not only this, but high-performing Indian universities will also be encouraged to set up branches in other countries.

However, the country’s education system is needed to be improved to reach the goal which it has set for itself. Dr C Anbalagan in his paper, “Challenges and Prospects of Indian Higher Education Services: A Global View,”¹⁸ cites specific areas which are needed to be improved in the country to attract more international students. Poor infrastructure, lack of financial support in terms of scholarships, low international commercialisation, poor placements, inability to improve the international recognition of universities are some of them.

The National Education Policy, 2020, focuses on such crucial areas which if improved, will set India to its path of achieving the aim of establishing world-class education.

Following plans of the policy if, well implemented, will attract higher international students:

- Enhanced infrastructure due to increased funding and budget.
- Branch Campuses of foreign universities in India.
- Establishment fo National Research Foundation, thus more excellent research funding and opportunities.
- Liberal education programme which will offer better specialisation courses in specific subjects, internships, collaboration with industry and more considerable research opportunities.
- Greater emphasis on Open and distance learning through online classes, webinars, online discussions and application of SWAYAM and Free and Open-source Software for Educational Experience may increase international enrolment.
- The establishment of Institutes of eminence for higher international recognition and improving the ranking of universities.
- More efficient use of technology with the establishment of the Centre of Excellence which will allow translation of content to various languages, help differently-abled students and thus help revolutionise education.
- Introduction courses in Indology, Yoga, Music, Arts which will attract international students with interest in pursuing courses in Indian languages, culture and tradition.

¹⁸ Anbalagan C., “Challenges and Prospects of Indian Higher Educational Services,” International Journal of Research in Management and Technology, 2011, 1(2)

Not only this, but it will also increase the chances of India, creating a more considerable influence on such students through soft power.

Impact of COVID-19

The entire world has come into a halt due to the global pandemic of COVID-19. All the countries are grappling with the issue as their economies are getting destructed. The students planning to pursue higher education abroad are at a significant loss. Consequentially, academics are getting affected to a great extent as governments globally are pushed to a lockdown of cities. As a result, all educational institutions are closed.

While the Indian government is planning to bring back students stranded abroad in the wake of the pandemic, some students plan to stay put rather than returning. Nevertheless, visa expiry, massive education loans, economic recession, a lower return of investment, withdrawn job offers, travel restrictions, and other logistic issues continue to tense students.

Students pursuing higher education abroad are supposed to continue their degrees through online learning mechanisms as physical classes become impossible to be conducted. However, accesses to workshop facilities, laboratory and robotics have come to a stoppage which is affecting students to a great extent. The end semester examinations and the beginning of fall semesters are postponed. Individual universities like Boston University has announced that it is preparing for the possibility of not being able to take live classes up until January 2021 if the situation persists.¹⁹

For the students planning to go abroad for higher education this year, digital applications continue to be accepted. In March 2020, Leverage Edu surveyed Indian students who are planning education abroad in September 2020- January 2021 in a study named “*How is COVID-19 affecting Higher Education?*”²⁰ The study showed that 76% of the students are going to stand on the plan of education abroad, 16% stated they would decide by summer while 8% are going to adjourn the plan due to COVID-19.²¹ Nevertheless, ninety-one per cent of students are going to stick to their original plans. Of the total number of students, seventy-

¹⁹ Jahnke Art, “University Outlines COVID-19 Recovery Plan,” *University News*, April 10, 2020
<http://www.bu.edu/articles/2020/covid-19-recovery-plan/>

²⁰ “How is COVID-19 affecting higher education?” Leverageedu.com, accessed May 12, 2020
<https://leverageedu.com/blog/higher-education/>

²¹ “Despite coronavirus pandemic 91% Indian students still want to go ahead with their overseas education plans: Survey,” *educationtimes.indiatimes.com*, accessed May 17, 2020
<https://www.educationtimes.com/article/editors-pick/74789043/despite-coronavirus-pandemic-91-indian-students-still-want-to-go-ahead-with-their-overseas-education-plans-survey.html>

six per cent are headed for postgraduate studies while the rest twenty-four per cent are planning to pursue undergrad programmes.²²

Another study titled, “*Indian Student Mobility report 2020: Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education Choices*” was conducted by QS IGAUGE.²³ As per the report, COVID-19 has impacted the decisions of 48.46 per cent students who planned to study abroad recently. The decision of the students is now prioritised based on safety, employability, reputation, university life, infrastructure, good weather, social life, public transport and nightlife with the highest significance given to safety.

While the pandemic has engulfed the whole world, there are certain countries which are least affected by the coronavirus. With least number of cases, world-class educational institutions, low population, favourable immigration policies, good quality healthcare system, and future employment opportunities these countries are expected to attract large numbers of students in the coming years. Based on a study by Leverage Edu, New Zealand, Poland, the United Arab Emirates, Denmark, and Canada are to become the most preferred countries.

Ranked two in most peaceful countries, established world-class universities, commendable education system and affordable cost of living New Zealand ranks first in the most preferred country as per the study. Poland ranks second with good quality educational institutions, renowned universities, diverse degrees, and low cost of living. The United Arab Emirates ranks third with widespread exposure, industrial hub and a plethora of cultures. It is followed by one of the happiest country in the world, Denmark, with a modern education system recognised globally, a great significance given to practical and industrial exposure along with academics. Lastly comes Canada, which has always been a preferred student destination given the favourable immigration policies, high-quality educational institutions and a homelike culture.

What is very important to keep in mind is that the pandemic of COVID-19 is unpredictable. It is only the future that holds whether how long will the world take to return to normalcy and moving abroad to pursue higher education like before will be a possibility or not. With millions of people affected, the world is kept at its toes. The challenges are only to rise with

²² ibid

²³ “Indian Student’s Mobility report 2020: Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education Choices,” QS IGAUGE, Accessed May 14, 2020 <https://www.igauge.in/news/2020/5/mobility-report-2020>

an upcoming economic recession, the herculean task to plan to move out of lockdowns and stricter immigration policies.

Role of technology: In the post-COVID-19 world, what is to be noted as its impact is the intensified role of technology and consequentially, online education. A report published by KPMG and Google named 'Online Education in India: 2021' revealed that online education in India is expected to grow from USD 0.25 billion in 2016 to USD 1.96 billion in 2021 as a result of increased consumer adoptions and changes of business models.²⁴ It also stated that the open and distance learning India is to grow to ten million in 2021 at a CAGR of around ten per cent. With the current outbreak of COVID-19, the situation is only to get augmented.

Technology has made it easier to allow the teaching-learning process to continue despite the pandemic, making the world a smaller place. From online lectures, classroom discussions to interactive academic sessions, the learning process remains alive. Zoom, Google meet, Skype, Google classroom are some applications acting as facilitators.

Websites like Coursera, edX, Swayam, and other MOOC (Massive open online courses) platforms have allowed students to gain knowledge, even amidst the period of lockdown. Many digital platforms like J Store have open access to many articles, thus helping students having higher access to study materials. National Digital Library and other platforms like platforms have allowed free access to thousands of digital books online, thus helping students to continue learning in these toughest of the times. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) have also put in efforts for the provision of online books.

The most exceptional example of the intensification of the role of technology is the approval of the proposal by University Grants Commission of India allowing students to pursue dual degree programmes wherein students can along with their regular degree pursue another course simultaneously through open and distance learning. It allows students to pursue online courses offered by foreign universities through open and distance learning.

The Future Trends

With the spread of the pandemic, the world is expected to make a paradigm shift. The transition is going to take place economically, socially and politically. There will be a start of

²⁴ KPMG and Google, "Online Education in India: 2021," kpmg.com/in Accessed on 21st May 2020.
<https://home.kpmg/in/en/home/insights/2017/05/internet-online-education-india.html>

a newer kind of life which will have more of a virtual base. Technology will form a pillar where will stand a newer kind of lifestyle.

The dynamics of the education sector with the current challenges will undergo a drastic change. To tackle the current situation, what would be required is an efficient and effective makeover. The Indian government's aim of making India self-reliant will play a massive role soon. The National Education Policy 2020, with an emphasis on higher usage of Information Communication and Computation technology, will have a paramount roleplay in the coming years.

Above all, there are certain factors which are going to drive the future trend of higher education in India. These factors include:

- 1) **Role of Technology:** With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, technology will form the basis of the new normal. It is the only technology which can help solve the problem at hand and allow the teaching-learning process to go uninterrupted. It is thus inevitable, and therefore the future trend of higher education will be driven by technology-based education based on more significant usage of information communication and computational technology allowing the possibility of open and distance learning, online classes, e-libraries, greater emphasis on virtual courses.
- 2) **Travel restrictions:** The first preferred countries by Indian students include the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia. Due to the steep growth and spread of the virus, many countries have closed their borders while others have made stricter rules in the grant of the visas, immigration allowance and post-study leave extension. Such restrictions are going to affect the number of students who choose to pursue higher education overseas.
- 3) **Economic Recession:** With almost all the countries of the world entering an economic recession, there may be a decrease in the enrolment of Indian students in the foreign higher educational institution. A significant amount of students study abroad based on bank loans. With India hitting recession, the chances of approved loans may decrease.
- 4) **Return of Investment:** With the growing travel restrictions and the world facing an economic recession, the unemployment rate is on the increase. Since one of the pull factors for Indian students to study abroad was employment opportunities and a good

return of investment; the reduction in placement offers can lead to a chance of reduction of Indian students going abroad.

- 5) **Emphasis on local education:** The Indian government in the wake of the pandemic emphasised on the policy of “Atmanirbhar Bharat” that is, self-reliant India. The National Education Policy, 2020 is based on the idea of making India self-reliant and ‘Vishwa-guru’ through the launch of courses like Indology, Indian Languages, Yoga, Arts, Music. It sets to revive the learnings of ancient universities like Takshshila, Vallabhi, and Nalanda. With more considerable efforts being put on the improvement of the higher education sector by releasing more funds, more excellent funding to research, the establishment of Institute of eminence and select branch campuses of top 100 foreign universities, many students may choose the Indian educational institutions than moving abroad.

Based on the above driving factors, the future trend of higher education in the coming ten years is visualised to be based on three crucial pillars. *First*, the growing significance of Online Education, *second*, Open and distance learning through online classes with the help of webinars, e-labs and virtual modules and *third*, Branch campuses of foreign universities in India. **Figure 8** depicts the visualised future trend of higher education in India in the coming ten years.

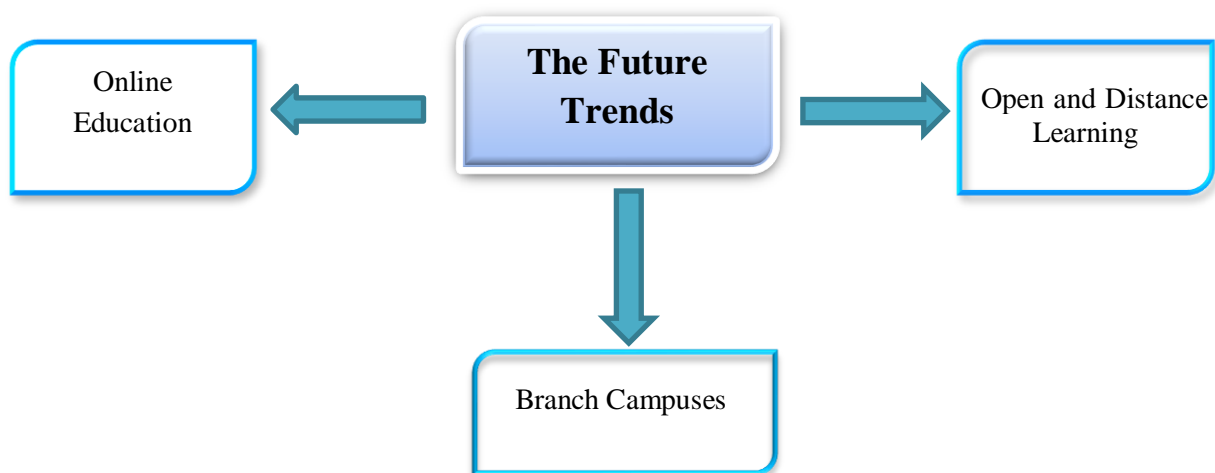


Fig. 8. The Future Trend of Higher Education Abroad

Online Education will now form a new trend in education. This will be as an effect of the ongoing pandemic and the National Education Policy, 2020. As per the NEP, 2020 higher educational institutions are encouraged to make available quality online content and courses. Not only this, but online education will also be preferred over live lectures in the coming times. It will be supplemented by the online courses provided by popular online platforms like edX and Coursera help develop specialised skills with immediate effects. With abundant universities from all over the world including Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Amsterdam, Harvard university providing popular focused courses, getting a course specialisation within a month in an economical fee is a just click away.

These courses help access fantastic content from the world's best foreign universities and help develop skills like critical thinking, analysis, languages and communication. What is significant to note is the movement of the online certificate courses from "specialisations" to "micro master" programmes which gives credits when one pursue new degrees in future. From a Mini MBA to digital project management, artificial intelligence, design thinking, sustainable energy and data science, there are hundreds of programmes available to be taken online.

Open and distance learning (ODL) through online classes first came into an exercise in the mid-19th century with the development of U.S. postal services.²⁵ It led to the development of 'correspondence colleges' where the instructions between students and professors were exchanged through postal services. With the transformation of society through the development of the Internet, the whole notion today has become cosmopolitan and attainable. The first university to teach entirely through distance learning was the University of Cape of Good Hope later known as the University of South Africa.

Often regarded as a reasonable and cost-effective method of education, open and distance education through online classes is seen as a method of expanding the reach of education for the masses and increase the demand for the sector.

A study conducted by technavio²⁶ analysed the reasons for the increase in distance learning in India, which include convenient and quality education, especially for students who are

²⁵ "The History of Online Schooling", OnlineSchools.org, Accessed 17th May, 2020.

<https://www.onlineschools.org/visual-academy/the-history-of-online-schooling/>

²⁶ "Three reasons why distance education is taking off in India," blog.technavio.com, Accessed on 21st May, 2020

<https://blog.technavio.com/blog/three-reasons-why-distance-learning-is-taking-off-in-india>

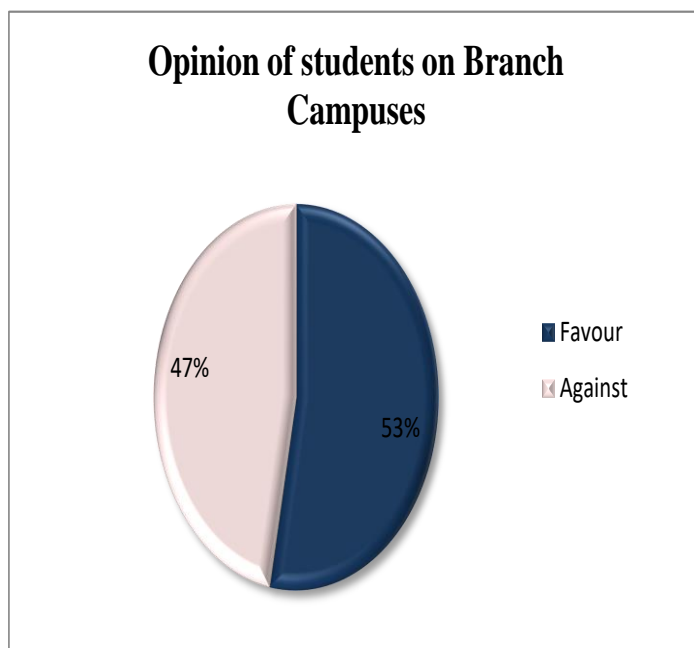
seeking to intensify professional skills; vigilant governmental initiatives like the launching of MOOC platform called SWAYAM, which provides courses from universities like that of UC Berkeley.

As per the NEP,2020 all the higher educational institutions have been given an option to run ODL. Not only this, but it has also been made clear that a course completed under ODL will be equivalent in quality and standards to highest quality programmes.²⁷

The global edtech investment was already in a rise in 2019 with US\$ 18.66 billion. This investment is said to reach \$350 billion by 2025 as an effect of COVID-19.²⁸ With the spread of COVID-19 and more extensive restrictions on the movement between countries globally, open and distance education is visualised to become a future trend.

The select **branch campuses** of foreign universities (top 100) in India are to be established as per the Higher Education Commission of India, National Education Policy 2020.

A Branch Campus defined by Altbach refers to an offshore establishment operated by the



institution or through collaboration in the name of the foreign university.²⁹The degree provided is in the name of the foreign university.

The NEP, 2020 allows the arrival and functioning of such universities with discrete standards for joint and dual degrees and mutually beneficial MoUs. Such universities are said to function in the Special Education Zones as suggested by Niti Aayog

Figure. 9. Opinion on Branch Campuses

²⁷ "National Education Policy 2020," Ministry of Education, New Delhi, Accessed July 30th 2020

²⁸ "The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. This is how," World Economic Forum Accessed May 17, 2020 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/>

²⁹ Philip G Altbach, "Why Branch Campuses may be unsustainable," *International Higher Education Institution Newsletter*(58), 2015, Accessed May 27, 2020 <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ihe/article/view/8467>

and the Commerce and Industry Ministry. Research/Teaching collaborations and student exchanges with high-quality foreign universities are encouraged. **Figure 9** portrays the opinion of students on the establishment of Branch Campuses based on primary data.

The establishment of such branch campuses of famous universities like Harvard University, Stanford University, Wharton business school may lead to a reversal of Indian students going abroad for higher education, and the students may choose to study in the branches functioning here itself. Not only this, but it may also increase the enrolment of international students in higher educational institutions in our country. It also stimulates twinning programmes, i.e. joint degree programmes wherein a part of the degree is completed in the Indian university and the rest in a Foreign University.

Conclusion

It was in the year of 1990s with the privatisation of higher education in India that the mobility of students to pursue higher education in foreign universities intensified. Youth from developing countries were welcomed as the demand for the educated younger workforce at cheaper rates surged. This outward mobility of students for better opportunities has shown an upward graph since then making India the second-largest source of student emigration as per UNESCO Institute of Statistics, with more than 3, 00,000 Indian students pursuing tertiary education overseas as of 2017. Indian students prefer to pursue higher education abroad due to specific push factors like low ranks of Indian universities, low quality of education, low research opportunities and funding and pull factors like highly ranked, enhanced quality higher educational institutions, better research funding and employment opportunities, and excellent exposure. The current scenario of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad portrays the United States of America, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany as the most preferred countries with STEM, engineering, business management and administration, and life, medical and social sciences as the most chosen area of study in the order of preference. Such a movement of the students will be affected in the future due to two significant factors; first, the National Educational Policy, 2020 and second, the pandemic of COVID-19.

India pledges to become a country based on the ideal of self-reliance (*Atmanirbhar*) and self-sufficiency. One of the policies drafted following the same quest has been the National Education Policy, 2020, which seeks to bring revolutionary changes in the higher educational

institutions in India and make the institutions globally competitive. Based on the primary data, the fundamental reasons Indian students choose to study abroad in foreign universities is due to the better standard and quality of educational institutions, research opportunities and greater exposure. The policy seeks to re-energise the higher education system and overcome challenges like lack of research in universities and colleges, fragmented system and paucity of world-class educational institutions. With increased funding in the education sector, the infrastructure of universities are likely to get enhanced, branch campuses of foreign universities will give a chance to Indian students to continue their education here, National Research Foundation with separate funding in research will provide better research opportunities in future. Open, and distance education, joint and dual degree programmes with an enhanced role of technology are other positives which are likely to have an impact on prospective students planning to pursue education abroad. Institutes of Eminence are likely to help universities enhance their rankings and be internationally recognised.

Another critical issue which is going to have a great deal of impact on the Indian students pursuing higher education abroad or the prospective students is the global pandemic of COVID-19. The pandemic has brought financial losses to foreign universities and has also led to a reduction in outward mobility of Indian students planning to pursue education abroad. This has mainly occurred due to the more cumbersome travel restrictions, the ongoing economic restriction and low employment opportunities, postponing of courses. As a result, countries like the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia are going to get severely affected. In contrast, countries least affected with COVID-19 and excellent educational institutions may become an attractive option like Denmark, New Zealand, Poland and the United Arab Emirates.

Based on such influences; technology, travel restrictions, economic recession, the return of investment, emphasis on 'local' education are going to be the driving force in the development of a new future trend in higher education. The new trend in the coming ten years will thus be based on the three pillars of Online Education, Open and Distance learning and branch campuses of foreign universities.

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Appendix A

The primary research study based on snowball sampling

Primary data was collected through the method of an online survey based on snowball sampling of over thirty students. The objective of the study was to ascertain the current scenario of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad, explore the possibilities of how National Education Policy, 2020, the on-going pandemic of COVID 19, and an economic recession that follows will affect foreign education, and determine the future trends in higher education in the coming ten years.

Study Area

The study area consisted of all the countries where Indian students prefer to move to pursue higher education including countries of North America like United states of America, Canada, European countries like United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway; Asian countries like South Korea, China.

Methodology

An online survey was conducted to collect quantitative data to fulfil the objective of the research. Since the student population is spread all across the world, survey research was considered as the appropriate method to allow the data to be collected remotely.

Sampling

Due to the lack of a specific location of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad, a snowball sampling technique was adopted. Initial contacts were made to known students who had moved abroad in the last five to ten years. From each of the respondents, names were obtained from other known Indian students who had travelled to the same country. The respondent, thus identified, was asked to answer the online survey and identify other researchers. This process continued until the number of respondents reached 30. Efforts were made to make the sample as diverse as possible, with respondents belonging to the fields of STEM, social sciences, medical, commerce.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data thus obtained was studied carefully. Descriptive Statistics was used to portray the current scenario of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad. Inferential data was used to determine the future trends in higher education in the next ten to fifteen years, the role of Information communication and computational technology in higher education in India, the possibilities of how the ongoing pandemic of COVID 19 and an economic recession that follows would affect the foreign education. Based on this, it was analysed whether the hypothesis is negated or proven.

Questionnaire

- What is your present education qualification?
- Which course field are you pursuing abroad or want to pursue in future?
1) *Sciences* 2) *Social Sciences* 3) *Medical* 4) *Commerce* 5) *Others*
- What level of education are you pursuing or want to pursue abroad?
1) *Undergraduate* 2) *Postgraduate* 3) *PhD* 4) *Postdoctoral* 5) *Others*
- Which country/countries are you in or planning to go for higher education?
- What is your reason for opting for higher education abroad?
1) Better quality and Standard 2) Research Opportunity 3) Better Placements
4) Exposure 5) All of the above 6) None of the above
- Are you planning to return to India after the completion of your education?
1) *Yes* 2) *No*
- In your view, is Brain Drain a myth or reality?
1) *Myth* 2) *Reality*
- Do you think adequate employment opportunities are available in the country?
1) *Yes* 2) *No*
- Do you think your country provides you with jobs of your intellectual capability and deserving salaries?
1) *Yes* 2) *No*
- In your view, have the present higher educational institutions in India served you well? If no, why not?

- In your view, what does Indian Higher Educational Institutions lag in as compared to other countries?
1) Low ranked universities 2)Low quality of Education 3)Low research opportunities and Funding 4)All of the Above 5)None of the above
- Do you think the government's decision of privatisation of Higher Education and opening of Branch Campuses of foreign universities solves the problem?
1) Yes 2) No
- Do you think the adoption of separate Employment Policy help tackling unemployment?
1) Yes 2) No
- In your view, will increase in Education Budget help in the enhancement of Higher Educational Institutions?
1) Yes 2) No
- In your view, are research grants and funds in India adequate to carry out extensive studies and researches?
1) Sufficient 2) Insufficient(Must be increased)
- If the Indian government takes adequate measures for enhancement of educational institutions, research opportunities and funds, would you have stayed back in India?
1) Yes 2) No
- Can the increase in the number of branches of premium institutions like Indian Institute of Technology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Management help reduce the loss of Intellectual capitals?
1) Yes 2)No
- How do you think you can contribute or repay Indian society?
1) Remittances 2) Bring Foreign Investment 3) Learn abroad and bring knowledge back 4) Others
- Can Brain Drain be reversed? If yes, how?
1) Yes 2) No