

Transnational Education in India: Empirical Positions

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Abstract:

Globalisation has influenced every sector of services including higher education in developing economy. New forms of provider and delivery mechanism have been emerged that necessitates the evaluation of present policy backgrounds in case of India. Numbers of such case provisions are increasing in India in private sector of higher education however no clarity of approach is visible to harness the benefits from such provisions. Present paper analyses the current position of India with reference to number of provisions and policy stand in comparison to other developing nations.

Key words: Transnational education, Policy

India has second highest population in the world. The age group in 15-24 years constitutes 19.1 % of total population (Census 2011). Most of youth coming in this age group go or plan for higher education. It is possible because of increase in purchase power of Indian middle class which is secondary to rapid growth of Indian economy. These middle class families give high value to education and their number in India is increase to 267 million by 2015-16 (National Council of Applied Economic Research & Business Standard Limited, May 2004). The massification of Indian higher education that is availability of higher education to everyone at moderate cost is also a reason for their high aspiration. All of these led to intense competition among students where only few can pursue education in desired course at desired institution.

Due to linkage of different economies of world under influence of globalisation, corporate demands of students having professional education of international level. The labour market expects the presence global and multicultural skills in prospective employees. According to the OECD, "Skills have become the global currency of the 21st century" (OECD [n.d.]). It is exerting force on the Indian educational institutions to innovate for novelty and develop strategy to bring recent and advance curriculum, pedagogy and academic resources which is actually met by few Indian institutions only.

The high cost of education at top institution of foreign countries makes it inaccessible to most of Indian middle class families. The cross border education is a viable option for students looking for education of international standard at lower cost. It has been found in studies that the average fees for an Indian degree cost 1000 dollar in year and for transnational education it is 2000 dollar but in case of study at foreign institution it increases up to 20000 dollar. The transnational education is also a good option for students not willing to go outside India due to different reasons. It has been found in literature that only 2% of international students move outside their country for higher education (Vincent-Lancrin 2007, p.76). The cross border education is a good option for remaining 98% of international students looking for quality foreign education.

Cross border education is often used interchangeably with transnational, borderless and offshore education. Some scholars prefer transnational higher education as the overarching term (Naidoo, 2009), offshore higher education (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006), borderless higher education

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(Middlehurst, 2002), some use the term interchangeably (Knight, 2005; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2011; Stella, 2006). UNESCO and the OECD, in their Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross Border Higher Education (UNESCO/OECD, 2006), describe CBHE as: ‘higher education that takes place when students follow a course or programme of study that has been produced, and is continuing to be maintained, in a country different from the one in which they are residing’. Different studies has supported that the disproportionate relation between GDP and GER, unmet domestic demand, enhanced socio-economic status of the middle class, aspirations for the quality and market driven qualification in the developing countries push graduates towards international education (Bashir, 2007).

The potential of transnational education to meet the demand and hope of prospective students of higher education can be beneficial only when it meet the claimed benefits of it. Few studies done outside India have shown questionable results. McNamara and Knight (2014) claimed that most of TNE programmes are occurring in due to student interest. They found that TNE graduates though highly skilled but they are not fully able to meet the skills gaps in the local labour market. Similarly Robertson et al (2011) found that in Singapore there was a negative perception associated with Australian TNE graduates in comparison with local graduates. The overseas qualification did not provide any positional advantage to Australian graduates in comparison to local.

The globalisation, liberalisation of Indian economy has also lead to privatisation of higher education which does not mean disinvestment but increasing number of private institution in education. It is actively encouraged by government because of increasing demand of educated and skilled manpower by economy which is getting knowledge based, it is also an after effect of globalisation and liberalisation and rapid advancement in technology. Every year government of India spend some money on higher education that led to rapid growth of education sector in India in last decade. According to IDFC-SSKI report (2009) the Indian Education space has become the largest capitalized space in India with Government spends of USD 30 billion and private spend of USD 50 billion. Presently there are 760 universities, 38498 colleges and 12276 standalone institutions are educating 34.2 million students in India. Out of which 34% of universities and 77% of colleges are privately managed. The number of private universities and colleges are growing continuously due to increase in demand of higher education (AISHE 2014-15). The two major reasons behind it are increasing population in 15-24 years of age group and second is the inability of government to take the responsibility of providing higher education to masses alone. The expected higher rate of return led to mushrooming of private institutions that outnumber the government institution in many areas causing intense competition. It raises the concern of dilution of quality of education by many private providers, few of which are running the institution in space which does not meet the criteria of regulatory authorities.

Presently only few Indian institutions can give education of international standard; it can easily be understood by looking at different international ranking where only few come under 500 (Times higher education ranking 2014). Resource scarcity was reiterated as the inhibitor for the technological advancements, latest curriculum, new technology for assisting pedagogy and resourceful faculties to bring in new approaches and dimensions. The scarcity of resources and intense competition force the institution to differentiate them from mass which is serious challenge for new higher education institutions (Huisman et al. 2002). The foreign collaboration can provide necessary resources by sharing that helps the institution to get differentiation in market. According to McNamara and Knight (2014) transnational education could potentially accelerate productivity growth and enhance quality in the domestic higher education through a variety of channels for example by expanding the pool of qualified and experienced faculty and administrators, transfer of education technology in the form of academic quality processes and regulations, strengthening the local higher education institutions that work with foreign universities and connecting the local higher education sector to the wider global higher education market. A report by UUKI on TNE engagement talked how it can provides an

opportunity for external expansion as well as internal review which can strengthen the core capacity and capability of an institution and support further growth in the areas of curriculum development, material delivery and partnership activity. It can also provide students global experience and exposure and increasing their employability (WECD 2016). The report suggested that considering the significant impact of TNE activity on resource management of the institutions, it has to be included in their sustainable planning.

All the benefits of transnational cooperation can be reaped only when foreign partner is highly experienced and reputed in his field. It also depends on purpose of collaboration, equality in partnership and existence of trust between them. The importance of right partnership was highlighted by Knight (2015) as well as McNamara and Knight (2014) for gaining much-needed competitive advantage by both. There are many stories where things did not go well as in a recent case of the University of Wales, which was effectively closed in October 2011 after it was revealed that poor quality assurance practices meant that its degrees were being offered by dubious foreign partners, provides an extreme example of the reputational risks of franchising. At its peak, the University of Wales had 20,000 students studying in 130 foreign partner colleges. It was brought down by a series of scandals, including the revelation that the director of one college in Malaysia had fake qualifications and that Accademia Italiana in Bangkok had been operating illegally. Similarly an institution named IIPM in India was ordered by court to shut down his MBA BBA management courses which they were not authorize to award according to Indian regulation. They were also slammed by court for publicising their link with International Management Institute, Belgium to attract students in the name of global education (Saurav Dutta 2014). Economic globalisation influenced the characteristics of universities as producing the outputs according to the market demand. Economic rationality and commercial interests act as major incentives to promote cross-border education in the context of globalisation (Varghese, 2013).

The globalisation, rapid development of information and communication technology and mode of transportation have made the economies of countries knowledge based. Highly skilled human capital is a key component of a knowledge economy that maximise production by furthering creation of knowledge and technologies. Thus every country requires high quality and expanded higher education system to produce skilled labour that can strengthen the economy of the nation. The rapidly increasing population and lower GER of many developing Asian countries in comparison to OCED countries is a major drawback for them to become a knowledge based economy. There financial constraint also inhibits their education sector to fulfil the gap. For example, In year 2013-14 3.84% of total Indian GDP was spent on education which is much less in comparison to OCED countries. Majority of money was spend on elementary and secondary education in comparison to higher education.

Globalisation also emphasized on increasing convergence and interdependence of economies and societies and raising the demand of global education. The liberalization of international trade and global markets are often viewed as the strongest move in this direction. The GATS passed in 1995 was a step that led a foundation stone of it. It was an agreement that gives access to foreign higher education providers among OECD countries and enabled the commercial presence of higher education institutions in other countries, which was previously precluded by legal regulations in many higher education systems. The capacity-building and improvement of education infrastructure, local and regional economic regeneration, revenue for the local and regional economies, retention of bright young people at home during study and reduction of 'brain drain' after graduation, national prestige: being a destination for 'world-class' institutions are the few claimed benefits of education offered by crossing borders for host countries like India (Lawton 2012). But actual impact of transnational education on any countries education system depends on the nature of the transnational education itself and the motivations of the host government (Healey 2017).

India has always given importance to education since our independence. It is guided by the thought of our father of nation Mahatma Ghandi who said education not only molds the new generation, but

reflects a society's fundamental assumption about itself and the individuals which compose it. Traditionally higher education in India is regarded as public good for the benefits of individual and society. But with introduction of neoliberal policies in early 1990s the public good character is being forgotten and profit seeking private sector is gaining strength (Tilak 2008). The commercialisation of higher education at global level after GATS makes it unavoidable for any country to ignore the rapid development of cross border education irrespective of their approach between promoters to those who prohibits. Martin (2004) in studies on seven countries found that different countries have different approaches for framing regulation for cross border programs some promoting, some prohibiting and rest has laissez faire approach. India come under last category which means country do not have any clear regulatory framework so its possible benefits cannot be reap by domestic education institutions in a legitimate way. It may create opportunities for several low quality foreign education providers to emerge in the market for selling education. These providers often disguise with the status of accreditation and sometimes seen tagged by accreditation agencies whose status in itself remain dubious. In contrast to it countries encouraging entry of foreign providers have framed their regulations for allowing collaboration with private education institutions to expand their education system. According to Healey (2017) cross border collaboration in education occurring to absorb the demand of any country can have a positive impact on its domestic sector. However to gain benefits country needs a strong quality assurance framework in place as in Malaysia. Its purpose is to avoid the risk of profit-seeking private entrepreneurs with short time horizons dominate the market as it happened in Singapore before 2009. But Singapore learned lesson from it and put a strong regulatory framework in that led to closer of nearly 2000 venture running for profit making. Hong Kong government also aimed to provide an opportunity of acquiring degree to students of lower socio-economic status through TNE (Waters et al 2014). A British council (2013) report discussed that both benefits and potential risks associated with TNE are individualised for each country. They also highlighted that many countries do not have a national TNE policies with well defined rationale and goals. Above cited literature suggest that the benefits of TNE can be taken by any country including India with clear policy and strong regulatory framework for supervision.

Presently there are estimated to be over 600 foreign education providers in India (AIU 2011), spanning everything from twinning to faculty exchange and distance learning. The quality of some of them were problematic. Nearly one third of the institutions were not recognized or accredited in their country of origin, and an equal proportion of their Indian collaborators are also not part of the formal higher education system either. Even when the foreign providers are universities, most are not in the premier league and have mediocre reputations in their own countries. Neither branch campuses nor franchise agreements have had much success, with the exceptions of 61 twinning and articulation arrangements that allow students to go to the source country in the final year and stay on for employment purposes (John Daniel et al 2008).

In such a scenario we need a presence of strong quality assurance framework as in Malaysia to stop the profit seeking entrepreneurs from gaining any benefits as happened in Singapore before 2009. In absence of clear regulatory framework the low quality foreign education institutions collaborate with private education institutions that are sometimes "self-appointed" Accreditors that sell "bogus" accreditation status (Knight 2011). Their marketing strategy focuses on many accreditation stars that allure students, increase competitiveness and perceived international legitimacy. A Hindu editorial by M. Anandkishnan (2010) criticised the ignorance of ground reality that more than 200 foreign programmes are offered in India in various modes. Many of them were of substandard quality and value, which is a matter of great concern. Regrettably, no agency in India has an account of the number of foreign programmes, their mode of operation, nature of partnership, quality of instruction, fee structure and the protection of students' interest. Many of them put out glossy and misleading advertisements, enticing gullible students with false promise. So presently it is taken care by two regulatory bodies AICTE and UGC. The AICTE mainly look engineering and management education in India. It is also responsible for issuing regulations to control the entry and operations of foreign universities/ institutions for imparting technical education.

The regulation led by both UGC and AICTE currently only allows twinning as a mode of collaboration. The foreign education provider bill for regulating the entry of foreign institution was not able to pass from parliament of India and lapsed. It was not the first time it's happen with draft for regulating their entry, it happened in 2010 also. According to Middlehurst and Woodfield (2008) many US and Australia-based overseas providers interested in opening branch campuses in India are waiting for changes in rules by introduction of legislation allowing their entry in India (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2008). Presently India is a difficult market for them which can be understood by case of a US for-profit network of universities known as Laureate Education Inc. (earlier known as Sylvan International Universities), opened a campus in Hyderabad in 2003 which was closed the next year due to difficulties obtaining accreditation and 'deemed universities' status from the University Grants Commission. It is not a single isolated case happened in India there are so many examples of it that frequently come in news from time to time.

According to British council(2016) report approximately 12000 students were studying in different transnational program of UK one of the leading provider of TNE in world. These program have a large potential of meeting the demands of Indian students but their real contribution In comparision to India's potential student numbers is still negligible. Daniel et al (2008) found that if India increased the age participation rate from 7% to 10% in higher education it would creates an additional market of 5 million students which could be a very tempting situation for major foreign providers. He claimed it is probable reason for India's cautious approach in developing policy for CBHE and did not allowing the for-profit providers to operate on its territory (John Daniel et al 2008).

Conclusion

Now in era of globalization and interconnected economies which has become knowledge based every country requires world class universities for economic growth and development. In case of India the additional condition which raise demand of world class universities is high population of youth looking for it. We already have few world class institution like IIT and IIM and have the potential to become world class in other field also. The Transnational education helped China and Malaysia to develop elite global institution, it can be very helpful in case of India also. But India's asymmetry in flows and unclear policies are major hindrance in it. What we need now is clear transparent policies encouraging partnership with world class elite institutions for curriculum development, partnership in research and establishments of collaborative learning programs. The focus of these policies should be on governance than merely regulating it (Rajkhowa 2017).

Regarding the excessive cautious approach of India for cross border collaboration, time has come when we should not ignore the possible benefit of allowing it simply because of possiblity of profit making by foreign providers as the fees charged under it are still higher than domestic education. There is a need of changing the approach from considering it a threat to national sovereignty and culture to a tool for capacity development in higher education. India should learn from experience of other Asian countries where the Transnational education has become a part of domestic higher education sector, meeting their educational demand and contributing in their growth without affecting their culture .

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