

# Exploring the Global Frontier: Unveiling the Opportunities, Impacts, and SWOT Analysis of Internationalization in Educational Institutions

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**Abstract—** In recent times, the word "internationalization" has become a pinnacle focus for all Indian higher education institutions, driven by the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and subsequent regulations set forth by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India. In fact, internationalization is of utmost significance in our rapidly evolving world. While internationalization has been extensively discussed worldwide for many decades, it has reached its zenith in India over the past two years. Numerous articles and reports have been published on internationalization at home, but there remains a dearth of information regarding the international opportunities available to Indian institutions, students, and faculty members. While Tier 1 institutions, especially the esteemed IITs, NITs, universities, and deemed universities, have made remarkable strides in this area, colleges are also awakening to the importance of internationalization. However, they often face resource constraints that hinder their progress. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the various international opportunities and activities that institutions can focus on. The impacts of these opportunities are also demonstrated with case studies and statistical data. Additionally, a SWOT analysis of internationalization is also presented along with a few recommendations to support and enhance this crucial endeavor.

**Keywords—**Internationalization, Collaboration, Partnership, Student Mobility, International Opportunities.

**JEET Category—** Practice

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE landscape of higher education in our country and also across the Globe has witnessed a significant transformation in recent times, marked by a notable change in the discourse surrounding internationalization. What was once perceived as a mere privilege, where only rich people can afford, the internationalization of higher education is now regarded as a paramount endeavour and has access to everyone. After the release of The National Education Policy 2020, which aimed at fostering progress within Indian educational institutions, places great emphasis on aligning and competing with global standards.

In the realm of internationalization, a vast ocean of opportunities awaits students, regardless of the institution from

which they are pursuing or have completed their studies. However, the primary hurdle lies in the lack of awareness surrounding these diverse opportunities. In response to the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020, the University Grants Commission (UGC) introduced new regulations in 2022 aimed at overseeing international opportunities through "Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Educational Institutions to offer Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes" Regulations. The aforementioned regulation meticulously defines the procedural framework and requisite conditions to be adhered to by institutions embarking on twinning, joint degree, and dual degree programmes. Factors such as the duration of study and the credibility of the collaborating institution are carefully delineated. Remarkably, only a minority, comprising less than 2% of the total institutions, which primarily consist of universities and institutes of national importance (INIs), have taken steps towards internationalization out of the vast pool of more than 53,000 institutions in India. Unfortunately, the remaining 98% of institutions are not acquainted with these opportunities and lack the necessary resources to make them accessible to their students. The scarcity of trained manpower capable of effectively managing internationalization initiatives poses a significant challenge.

Despite the extensive studies conducted on internationalization over the past few decades and the availability of various articles and reports, the focus has predominantly been on internationalization at home, specifically on activities such as international student recruitment, the establishment of foreign university campuses in India, and student mobility. However, there is a notable dearth of reports regarding internationalization strategies outside of the home country. This article aims to address this gap by providing a comprehensive overview of various international opportunities and activities suitable for all types of educational institutions. It is worth debunking the myth that all international opportunities are inherently costly, as affordability plays a crucial role in decision-making. In fact, some of these opportunities are fully funded, and students can even earn money through certain programs.

The Office of International Affairs (OIA), mandated by the UGC Regulation on International Collaboration, represents a significant milestone in the establishment and continuity of diverse international opportunities and activities, aimed at

providing students with equitable access.

## II. VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In this part of the article, an overview of diverse international opportunities is presented, with the aim of benefiting students, faculty members, and the institution as a whole. It is important to note that not all the opportunities discussed in this work may be suitable for every institution. Some opportunities may prove highly successful for certain institutions, while not yielding the same results for others.

Various internationalization opportunities are Short Term Mobility – Outgoing / Incoming, Research Internships, Semester Exchange / Semester Abroad – Outgoing / Incoming, Full Time Student Admissions, International Visiting Faculty – Incoming / Outgoing, Research Collaboration and Bilateral / Multilateral Grants, Higher Studies Abroad and Foreign Language Courses.

### A. Short Term Mobility – Outgoing / Incoming

Short term mobility programs offered by numerous institutions abroad provide an exceptional opportunity for students to participate in summer and winter programs ranging from one week to eight weeks during their semester break. These programs offer a unique blend of technical subjects and cultural experiences, enabling students to gain valuable exposure. Typically, participants from diverse countries contribute to the program, creating a truly international environment and fostering a wide range of perspectives.

These programs are often available at a nominal cost, covering accommodation and food expenses. They offer students an excellent chance to explore the educational system and culture of the host country, while also gaining access to highly reputable and top-ranked institutions.

Conversely, institutions in India can also embrace the concept of short-term mobility programs, attracting students from around the world. As per the guidelines outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, institutions can focus on niche areas of Indian culture, such as Indology, Indian languages, AYUSH systems of medicine, yoga, arts, music, history, culture, and modern India. Furthermore, it is crucial to provide meaningful opportunities for social engagement, ensure quality residential facilities, and offer on-campus support to enhance the overall experience for international students.

### B. Research Internships

Research Internships present an exceptional avenue for students to engage in research projects, supported by financial assistance. These opportunities are highly competitive, and selection is based on the candidates' academic credentials and previous project work. They serve as one of the most promising pathways for students to gain admission to prestigious Master's and Ph.D. programs, offering substantial funding support. A multitude of over 80 fully funded research internships are available globally, provided by renowned organizations such as NASA, CERN, NTU Singapore, Max-Planck Institutes,

MITACS, and various ministries and agencies.

One key characteristic of these opportunities is the early release of project lists and problem statements, allowing ample preparation time for prospective applicants. Students are required to submit essential documents like Statement of Purpose and Motivation Letters, accompanied by Letters of Recommendation. It is worth noting that these opportunities are open to students from any institution, providing a fair chance of learning, regardless of the ultimate outcome of the application process.

### C. Semester Abroad / Exchange – Outgoing / Incoming

Within the realm of internationalization, student exchange programs present an excellent opportunity for full-time degree-seeking students to undertake a portion of their studies abroad, typically lasting one or two semesters. This opportunity operates through Student Exchange Agreements established with institutions overseas. To initiate a formal partnership, the institution, preferably through its Office of International Affairs (OIA), must establish contact with universities abroad.

A key feature of this opportunity is that there are no additional tuition fees imposed by the partner institution abroad. However, students are responsible for their own living expenses and travel arrangements. Under the purview of the UGC Regulations, this opportunity falls within the scope of "Twinning Programmes," where curriculum mapping ensures seamless credit transfer for courses taken during the designated semester.

These student exchange opportunities are particularly well-suited for collaborations with institutions in Europe and Asia. Through formal partnerships established by the institution, every student can partake in this enriching experience.

Alternatively, students can also gain invaluable exposure through Study/Semester Abroad Programmes. Such programmes allow students to enroll in courses offered by renowned institutions abroad, with the option of paying tuition fees. Institutions from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, among others, commonly offer these opportunities. Although a formal agreement is not usually required, the home institution must carefully map the courses to ensure appropriate selections.

Furthermore, institutions have the opportunity to host students from partner institutions abroad through exchange agreements. These incoming students engage in regular courses offered at the hosting institution. For example, many institutions in India receive students from France, as part of the mandatory semester abroad for Master's students (Level M1) in France. Accommodation and other support services play a pivotal role in successfully hosting international students under these exchange programs, ensuring their comfort and integration.

Lastly, a fully flexible curriculum is essential to facilitate both outgoing and incoming exchange programs. This flexibility allows for seamless integration of courses and enhances the overall effectiveness of the internationalization

efforts.

#### *D. Full Time Student Admissions*

Within the realm of internationalization efforts, one significant opportunity that deserves detailed discussion is the admission of full-time international students. The Government of India has diligently endeavored to attract students from various countries, exemplifying its commitment to this pursuit. Currently, India predominantly receives students from select Asian and African nations. However, India's rich history and educational traditions warrant the attraction of students from developed countries as well. In recent years, perceptions about India have undergone a remarkable transformation.

To enhance its appeal to international students, India has implemented various measures. These include the provision of scholarships, global promotion of Indian higher education institutions, and simplification of visa procedures. Consequently, the number of international students enrolling in Indian universities has witnessed significant growth.

According to the AISHE Report 2020-21, there are a total of 48,035 foreign students from 163 different countries studying in Indian higher education institutions. The highest number of foreign students originates from Nepal (28.26%), followed by Afghanistan (8.49%), Bangladesh (5.72%), Bhutan (3.8%), Sudan (3.33%), and the United States (5.12%). The top 10 countries account for 67.48% of the total foreign students. Notably, the number of foreign students enrolled in Indian universities has remained relatively stable over the past five years, with minor fluctuations. In the year 2000, there were 6,988 foreign students, which rose to 27,531 in 2011 and further to 33,156 in 2012.

The Government of India has introduced a flagship program called "Study in India," which offers scholarships to international students, particularly those from developing or underdeveloped countries. This initiative has significantly attracted more students to pursue their education in India. In order to ensure the successful hosting of international students and facilitate their integration, the provision of accommodation and other support services plays a pivotal role.

By exploring and optimizing the potential of full-time student admission, educational institutions in India can effectively contribute to the internationalization agenda and create a diverse and enriching learning environment.

#### *E. International Visiting Faculty – Incoming / Outgoing*

##### *1) Incoming*

One of the significant opportunities in the realm of internationalization is the engagement of international visiting faculty in India, specifically for teaching courses on the latest trending areas and emerging technologies. This opportunity holds immense potential for providing a larger number of students with international exposure. By welcoming international visiting faculty, educational institutions in India can enhance their academic programs by incorporating the expertise and knowledge of renowned scholars and

practitioners from around the globe. These visiting faculty members bring with them the latest advancements in their respective fields, exposing students to cutting-edge concepts and technologies.

This opportunity not only expands the horizons of students but also creates avenues for research engagement. Students can benefit from the mentorship and guidance of visiting faculty in pursuing research projects, which not only contributes to their academic growth but also nurtures a research-oriented mindset.

Furthermore, this opportunity presents a platform for faculty members to forge research collaborations with their international counterparts. Through fruitful discussions and idea exchanges, faculty members can explore possibilities for joint research initiatives. Such collaborations not only enrich the academic environment but also increase the prospects of obtaining bilateral or multilateral grants from various funding agencies.

Embracing this opportunity can significantly contribute to the internationalization efforts of educational institutions in India, creating a vibrant and globally connected academic community.

##### *2) Incoming*

Indian faculty members have a valuable opportunity to participate in visiting faculty programs abroad through various avenues, including formal cooperation between institutions. This opportunity offers Indian faculty members unequalled exposure to teaching diverse students at partner universities, as well as engaging in research activities. Such experiences can significantly enhance their teaching capabilities upon their return to their home institution.

To facilitate this exchange, several schemes and financial assistance options are available from prestigious agencies such as DAAD, USIEF, SERB International Research Experience, and the Embassy of France. These programs not only benefit faculty members but also attract students from partner universities through incoming exchange and full-time student programs.

#### *F. Research Collaboration and Bilateral / Multilateral Grants*

One of the significant outcomes of the various international opportunities presented here is the establishment of research collaborations between faculty members from different institutions. These collaborations play a pivotal role in fostering strong formal partnerships and further strengthening academic activities. Through joint research endeavors, faculty members can collectively contribute to advancing knowledge and addressing global challenges.

Research collaborations between institutions result in joint research publications and grants obtained through bilateral and multilateral calls for proposals from various esteemed agencies. Agencies such as GITA, JSPS, USIEF, DAAD, ERASMUS, CEFIPRA, BRICS, among others, provide avenues for financial support and recognition for collaborative research projects. These grants enable faculty members to pursue innovative

research ideas, access specialized resources, and collaborate with international counterparts.

The benefits of research collaborations are manifold. By pooling expertise and resources, faculty members can tackle complex research questions that require diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches. Collaborative research projects also promote knowledge exchange and foster a culture of intellectual collaboration. The resulting joint research publications contribute to the scholarly community by disseminating new findings and insights.

Moreover, securing grants through bilateral and multilateral calls for proposals from prestigious agencies provides the necessary financial support to carry out research activities. These grants cover research expenses, travel, equipment, and personnel, facilitating the smooth execution of collaborative projects. The recognition and funding obtained through these grants enhance the reputation of the institutions involved and attract further opportunities for collaboration and funding.

### *G. Higher Studies*

As per the Ministry of External Affairs, India, 13,24,954 gone abroad for their studies during the year 2022. The pursuit of higher studies abroad by Indian students presents a significant opportunity for internationalization in Indian higher education. With the increasing globalization and interconnectedness of educational systems, Indian students venturing overseas for higher education contribute to a diverse and globally competent talent pool. This opportunity not only benefits individual students but also fosters cross-cultural understanding, enriches academic environments, and strengthens the reputation of Indian higher education institutions.

The trend of Indian students pursuing higher studies abroad has been on the rise, driven by factors such as the quest for quality education, exposure to different academic and research methodologies, and enhanced career prospects. By experiencing different educational systems, cultures, and perspectives, Indian students gain valuable international exposure and develop a broader worldview. This exposure nurtures their critical thinking skills, adaptability, and intercultural competence, which are crucial attributes in today's globalized society.

Furthermore, the international experience gained by Indian students studying abroad contributes to enriching the academic environments of Indian higher education institutions. Upon their return, these students bring back new knowledge, perspectives, and global best practices, which they can share with their peers and faculty members. The insights gained from their international experiences enhance the academic discourse, promote innovation, and foster a global outlook within the Indian higher education landscape.

The impact of Indian students studying abroad extends beyond individual benefits and academic enrichment. It also serves as a testament to the quality of education provided by Indian higher education institutions. The achievements of Indian students abroad reflect positively on the reputation of Indian institutions, showcasing their ability to produce

graduates capable of thriving in global settings. This recognition not only attracts more students from around the world to Indian higher education institutions but also opens avenues for collaborative research, faculty exchanges, and institutional partnerships.

The opportunity for Indian students to pursue higher studies abroad is a valuable aspect of internationalization in Indian higher education. It empowers students with global competencies, enriches academic environments, and enhances the reputation of Indian institutions. By fostering the international mobility of Indian students, higher education institutions in India can contribute to the development of a globally connected academic community and cultivate graduates who are equipped to tackle global challenges.

### *H. Foreign Language Courses*

The inclusion of foreign language courses in the curriculum of Indian Institutions plays a crucial role in fostering internationalization efforts. These courses serve as a gateway to cultural understanding, effective communication, and global collaborations. By offering foreign language education, institutions equip students with valuable linguistic skills and intercultural competence, enabling them to engage with diverse communities and navigate international environments with ease. Moreover, foreign language proficiency enhances opportunities for academic exchanges, research collaborations, and employment prospects in multinational organizations. The integration of foreign language courses in Indian educational institutions strengthens the internationalization agenda, preparing students to be global citizens and contributing to the development of a globally connected academic community.

Embassies and missions in India such as Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre (TECC), French Institute in India etc., play a vital role in supporting educational institutions in their efforts to offer foreign language courses. These diplomatic entities provide valuable resources, faculty expertise, cultural exchange programs, and scholarships, fostering an environment conducive to language learning.

More importantly, this could provide wonderful employment opportunities for the students.

### *I. Other Opportunities*

Other opportunities in the realm of internationalization in Indian higher education include Dual Degree Programs and Joint Degree Programs, as outlined in the UGC Regulation on Academic Collaboration.

Dual Degree Programs offer students the chance to obtain two degrees simultaneously from partnering institutions in different countries. This arrangement allows students to gain a broader perspective, acquire specialized knowledge, and enhance their cross-cultural competencies. This also promotes the long-term institutional partnerships.

Joint Degree Programs involve the collaboration of two or more institutions, typically from different countries, in offering a single degree program. These programs provide students with an integrated curriculum, combining the strengths and expertise

of each participating institution.

The UGC Regulation on Academic Collaboration serves as a framework for the implementation of these programs, ensuring quality standards, academic rigor, and student welfare. It outlines guidelines for the establishment, administration, and evaluation of Dual Degree Programs and Joint Degree Programs, fostering transparency, accountability, and the maintenance of academic standards.

### III. IMPACTS OF INTERNATIONALISATIONS: A CASE STUDY

This section presents the impacts resulting from internationalization opportunities and activities based on a seven-year experience, including two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, heading the international office of two autonomous universities in India. This case study focuses on various internationalization opportunities, which were offered to Indian students studying at these institutions with more emphasis on two primary students' opportunities namely international research internships and students mobility.

Over the course of seven years, a total of 483 students availed themselves of these internationalization opportunities. Remarkably, more than 63% of these students, totalling 305 individuals, pursued higher studies abroad within two years of graduation. Out of this cohort, 242 students secured admission to Master's programs immediately after completing their undergraduate degrees. Additionally, an additional 278 students pursued Master's degrees abroad without participating in the aforementioned internationalization opportunities during their undergraduate studies. Notably, the number of students gaining Master's admission in the year following the implementation of these internationalization activities doubled compared to the previous year. These statistics provide compelling evidence that once students experience internationalization opportunities, they are more inclined to seek further international experiences.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the number of students participating in Research Internships and Semester Exchanges has exponentially increased each year at both institutions. This growth can be attributed to positive word-of-mouth referrals from senior students and students' awareness of the career advantages associated with these opportunities.

The impact of incoming exchange students and full-time international students is evident in the rich cultural diversity and vibrant student community on campus. These internationalization efforts also have the potential to attract more students seeking higher education opportunities. Over 530 Students were admitted to their full-time studies mostly from Asia and African Countries and over 160 incoming exchange students from France, Germany, Malaysia, Morocco, Taiwan and Lebanon over the same period.

Short-term mobility opportunities act as a gateway to enticing students to explore other internationalization opportunities. Faculty mobility yields numerous benefits for institutions, including strengthened research partnerships that can facilitate increased student mobility. A particularly significant impact of faculty mobility is the ability to secure bilateral and multilateral research grants through natural

research collaborations. During the study period, seven internationally collaborated grants were obtained, with a total project outlay exceeding 30 million INR. These collaborations included partnerships with countries such as Taiwan, France, Korea, Canada, and Germany. Additionally, more than 155 international visiting faculty courses were organized, providing international exposure to over 6,200 students. This opportunity allowed a greater number of students to access international experiences with reduced financial constraints. Moreover, the presence of international faculty members offering full courses in niche and emerging areas, as identified by the home departments, provided students with internship and master's opportunities.

Bilateral and multilateral research grants have played a crucial role in sustaining international collaborations and fostering mobility of researchers, as well as facilitating the development of technical infrastructure. As a result of these collaborations and mobility opportunities, internationally collaborated research publications have more than doubled compared to previous years. This increase has positively influenced various international rankings, including the introduction of the "International Research Network" as a new parameter by QS for their 2024 ranking, highlighting the importance of internationalization in research.

To further promote internationalization, foreign language courses such as German, French, and Mandarin Chinese were introduced, attracting more than 2,400 students who gained a fundamental understanding of these languages. Some students even pursued advanced proficiency levels. As a result, two significant impacts were observed: an increase in job opportunities within core international multinational corporations and higher education opportunities with generous scholarships due to language proficiency.

To summarize, the case study highlights the remarkable impacts of internationalization in higher education in India. The availability of internationalization opportunities has led to increased student mobility, enhanced research collaborations, improved international rankings, and expanded language proficiency. These outcomes contribute to the overall advancement and reputation of Indian institutions in the global academic landscape.

### IV. SWOT ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

An attempt is made to present a SWOT Analysis of various internationalization opportunities and activities discussed in this article. It should be noted that not every point presented in this analysis may be applicable to all institutions, and this analysis is not exhaustive.

**A. Strengths:** Enhanced Global Reputation & Rankings, Increased Cultural Diversity, Research Collaboration, Skill Development to meet the Global Job Market, Student

Mobility, unity and renewed multilateralism between countries, Improvement in Economical and Technical Ties.

B. *Weaknesses:* Financial Constraints, Language Barrier, Limited Accessibility, Shortage of Skilled Personal in Internationalisation.

C. *Opportunities:* Collaboration and Partnerships, Enhanced Research Output, Global Student Recruitment.

D. *Threats:* Political and Economic Instability, Changing Global Mobility Landscape (Immigration / Visa Procedures), Intense Competition, immigration talent personals.

Institutions can strategically plan and implement internationalization strategies to foster global engagement, enhance research collaborations, and provide students with transformative international experiences by leveraging strengths, addressing weaknesses, capitalizing on opportunities, and mitigating threats.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, internationalization has become a pivotal focus for Indian higher education institutions, driven by the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and regulations set forth by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The rapidly evolving world necessitates the adoption of internationalization strategies to align and compete with global standards. While Tier 1 institutions have made remarkable strides in this area, smaller institutions often face resource constraints that hinder their progress. This article has provided a comprehensive overview of various international opportunities and activities that institutions can focus on, along with case studies and statistical data showcasing their impacts.

To further support and enhance the internationalization endeavors of young and small institutions in India, specially the colleges located in Semi Urban and Rural, the following recommendations are provided:

- **Create Awareness:** Institutions should prioritize creating awareness about international opportunities among students, faculty, and staff through workshops, seminars, and information sessions to ensure everyone understands the benefits and options available. Many agencies and embassies such as DAAD, CampusFrance USIEF, Uni-Italia, TECC, British Council etc., offers various such a Session towards providing awareness to the students and faculty.
- **Establish Partnerships:** Institutions should actively seek partnerships with foreign universities and organizations to facilitate student exchanges, research collaborations, and visiting faculty programs.
- **Strengthen Support Services:** Institutions should focus on providing robust support services for international students, including accommodation, visa assistance, and cultural integration programs. By ensuring a welcoming and supportive environment, institutions can attract more international students and create a diverse learning community.

- **Encourage Research Collaboration:** Institutions should promote research collaboration among faculty members from different institutions, both within India and internationally.
- **Facilitate Higher Studies Abroad:** Institutions should support and guide students who wish to pursue higher studies abroad. This can include providing information about scholarships, admission processes, and academic requirements. By encouraging and facilitating higher studies abroad, institutions contribute to the internationalization agenda and develop globally competent graduates.
- **Enhance Institutional Capacity:** Institutions should invest in building the necessary infrastructure and expertise to effectively manage internationalization initiatives. This may involve hiring dedicated international affairs staff, establishing internationalization committees, and providing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

By implementing these recommendations, young and small institutions in India can successfully implement and execute internationalization opportunities and activities. This will not only benefit the institutions themselves but also contribute to the overall growth and development of Indian higher education on the global stage. Internationalization is a transformative journey that opens doors to new knowledge, perspectives, and opportunities, and it is essential for institutions to embrace this crucial endeavor in today's interconnected world.

## APPENDIX

Appendixes, if needed, appear before the acknowledgment.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Use the singular heading even if you have many acknowledgments. **Leave this section as is for the double-blind review process.**

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