### Special Essay

# Regulatory Framework for Internationalization of Higher Education in India

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Received: 29 November 2024 / Accepted: 27 December 2024

#### <Abstract>-

Higher education in India is one of the largest in terms of number of institutions and enrolments. This makes India a potentially huge market for the internationalization of higher education globally. The purpose of this article is to explore various national and international regulatory frameworks governing the internationalization of higher education in India. The National scenario will dramatically be influenced by the National Education Policy 2020, UGC Regulations, 2022, UGC Regulations, 2023, and the 'One Nation One Subscription' scheme, among others. Internationally, GATS commitments are binding upon India, being a founder signatory member. Methodologically this exploratory research interprets the implications of the four modes of GATS on internationalization of higher education in India. Within the four modes of GATS, the analysis of the national regulatory frameworks of India, affecting each mode is undertaken. Thus, India's response to the international regulatory framework, considering the national regulatory framework associated with various aspects of the internationalization of higher education in India, has been discussed. Since it is an introductory stage of some of these newly introduced policy implementation, some apprehensions, critiques, precautions, and recommendations as highlighted by some researchers have been presented.

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#### 1. Introduction

Citizens are provided rights and they fulfill their duties towards their country, as defined in the constitution of that country. Regulations provide guidelines and facilitate various aspects related to the conduct of a citizen, an institution, or any legal entity in a country. Law-abiding legal entities ensure development in civilized societies. Likewise, higher education systems are bound by the regulatory framework defined for them in the Constitution. The higher education system comprises various stakeholders like institutions, providers, beneficiaries, associate service providers, etc. (Syed et al. 2024, Burrows 1999, Omer et al. 2015) All these stakeholders must follow a set of regulations and are provided certain rights, Internationalization simultaneously. of higher education involves complexities associated with different regulations of different countries involved. Often these regulations can be overlapping and at times conflicting. Contradictions in social, economic, political, and academic scenarios in different countries pose contemporary challenges for those involved in the internationalization of higher education (Marginson 2022, Tight 2022, Hsieh 2020, Marginson 2023). Yet, those associated with higher education and desirous of indulging in the internationalization of higher education are bound to follow the associated regulatory framework of the countries involved.

The objective of this paper is to assemble and analyze the regulatory framework associated with various aspects of the internationalization of higher education in India. The scope for the term 'internationalization' in this research deals with online cross-border education, inbound students, outbound students, foreign higher education institutes willing to operate in India, Indian institutes operating abroad, movement of experts, and publication houses. The paper begins with a discussion of those aspects of the regulatory framework for higher education in India that are associated with the internationalization of higher education. It is followed by a framework discussion of the regulatory associated with the internationalization of higher education in India in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The four modes under GATS are discussed

as the subtopics dealing with a discussion related to associated stakeholders, identified in the scope of the research. Policy recommendations for the Government of India, suggestions for various stakeholders and a conclusion follow.

### 2. Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in India: Associated discussions

An understanding of the internationalization of higher education in India necessitates familiarity with some aspects of the existing regulatory framework for higher education in India. Later discussions would assume a cursory understanding of the regulatory framework for higher education in India as discussed in this section. Accordingly, this section discusses those aspects associated with the regulatory framework for higher education in India that would supplement a better understanding of the nuances of the regulatory framework associated with the internationalization of higher education in India.

#### 2.1 The Constitution of India and Provisions for Education

After seeking independence from Britain, the Indian constitution was adopted on 26 January 1950. It is celebrated as 'The Republic Day' in India to celebrate the sovereignty of India as a 'union of states'. India constitutes 28 states (provinces) and 8 union territories (under the governance of Union or Central Government used synonymously). Accordingly, the division of power to regulate and govern is distributed between the Central Government and the State Government. Powers delegated to the Union Government are mentioned in the Union list containing 97 subjects of national interests like defense, income tax, and customs duties. The powers required for local governance that need to be regulated by the State Governments are mentioned in the State list consisting of 66 subjects like police, agriculture, and liquor consumption. An additional Concurrent list mentions 47 subjects of common interests between Central and State governments, including 'all levels of education'. Consequently, the legislative, administrative, and financial aspects associated with education

are governed by the Central and the State governments collectively. India is a parliamentarian democracy and so the Parliament and the State Legislatures constitute the representatives of the people elected in the elections held every five years. The seats in the Parliament are based on the share of the population in each state for exact representation of the people. Central Government regulations are billed and passed by the *Lok Sabha* (similar to the lower house) and *Rajya Sabha* (similar to the upper house) in the Parliament of India, in New Delhi. The bill approved by the majority in the Parliament becomes an Act or an Amendment to an existing Act with the approval of the President of India. State regulations are approved by the State Legislatures and the Governors of the state to establish the State Legislature Acts. Since all the levels of education are in the concurrent list, the Central Government and the State Government can frame the associated laws. But in case of any conflict the union law prevails over the state law (NIC 2024, NIOS (n.d.), Joshi and Ahir 2015).

#### 2.2 Regulatory Framework Related to Higher Education in India

Ministries of Education at the Central government and the State government levels govern education at all levels including higher education. Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) liaisons between the two governments (Carnoy and Dossani 2013). The University Grants Commission (UGC) is the top-most regulatory body for higher education in India. The UGC frames the minimum standards of regulation for various aspects of higher education in India. Besides UGC, the All India Council for Technical Education governs higher education institutes imparting technical and professional education. In addition, there are several specific councils for law, architecture, agriculture, pharmacy, etc. that govern respective higher education disciplines. Often the regulatory framework overlaps with dual regulatory bodies for some higher education institutes (Agarwal 2006, Varghese 2015, Ahir 2007: Annexure 3, Joshi and Ahir 2015).

The data and glossaries in higher education in India use nomenclature like 'Central Universities' and 'Central Open Universities', to denote the institutions established by Union / Federal / Central Government. Institutions like 'State Public Universities', 'State Private Universities', and

'Institutes under the State Legislature Act' are established by the respective State Act. Additionally, certain institutions are established by an Act of Parliament, called the 'Institutions of National Importance' like the several Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Management (IIMs), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), National Institute of Design (NIDs), Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), among others. The Central Government has also declared some institutions as 'Deemed-to-be-University' under the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 (UGC 1956) (AISHE 2021-22 (n.d.): A-4). 'Private Universities' can be established by a sponsoring body like a Society, a Public Trust, or a Company with a legal entity through a State or Central Act. Gandhi and Ahir (2022) observed from the trend of proportionate share of various types of universities during 2010-11 to 2021-22, that the share of state public universities has been reducing (36 percent in 2021-22) and that for state private universities had been rising (33 percent in 2021-22) in the overall number of university/university level institutions.

Besides universities, affiliating colleges are affiliated to the universities, since they cannot award degrees on their own. Colleges in India can be of three types: Government colleges, private aided colleges, and private unaided colleges. Government colleges are fully funded, and managed by the government, mostly state governments. In private aided colleges, the initial funding for raising the infrastructure is provided by a private trust/entity/individual, and maintenance grants are provided by the government. The management of such colleges largely lies with the parent private entity. Private unaided colleges hardly receive any financial support from the government. They are largely funded by user charges or philanthropic or corporate donations, and so they are also referred to as 'self-finance' (financed by students themselves) colleges. They are largely managed by the parent private entity. Private unaided colleges fiercely compete for students and mostly offer courses with greater demand and/or lesser supply by the government. Irrespective of funding and management, all three types of colleges have to be affiliated with a university. The affiliating university governs all aspects of the colleges including academic, regulatory, and finance. Colleges follow the syllabus framed by the

university. The university conducts the influential proportion of the overall assessment, and the university grants the degree of higher education at all levels like diploma, bachelor's, master's, Ph.D., and post-doctoral degrees. Thus, the affiliating university ensures the implementation of the regulations framed by the University Grants Commission, as well as State government regulations if it is a state university (AISHE 2021-22 (n.d.): A-6, Joshi and Ahir 2015, Varghese 2015, Agarwal 2006, Tilak 2012). Different rules exist for the operation of 'autonomous colleges' and 'stand-alone institutions' (AISHE 2021-22 (n.d.): A-6, Joshi and Ahir 2015).

Higher education in government universities and government grant-inaid institutions is highly subsidized and in private universities is largely based on 'user charges' (Tilak 2012, Agarwal 2006). Tadaki and Tremewan (2013) highlight that shrinking public funding and expanding private provisions of higher education explain the changes toward decentralized and market-oriented organizations. In India, public financing for higher education is less than one percent of the GDP, which is grossly insufficient considering the growing demand for higher education (MoE 2024a). Literature suggests that at least 6 percent of the GDP of any economy should be devoted to education and 2 percent of that should be devoted to higher education (Tilak 2006). Hence, private universities and colleges are filling the demand-supply gap in access to higher education (Tilak 2018, Varghese 2015, Agarwal 2007). Tilak (2012) describes the transition in the policy of higher education in India from 'welfare statism' to 'quasi-market principles' to 'neo-liberal market philosophy'. Researchers like Puri (2015) express concerns related to equity with growing privatization and expected hikes in fees paid by students.

Additionally, there are several Central Government Acts associated with the maintenance of standards, accreditation and quality, equity, admissions and degrees, qualification of faculties, etc. (Ahir 2007: Annexure 3). There are several State Legislature Acts and Private University Acts governing higher education in India (Joshi and Ahir 2015). Over and above, the number of court rulings in different cases associated with higher education in India is overwhelming. These rulings facilitate the case-specific interpretation of certain Acts. Such court rulings can have a great impact on how higher

education in India is conducted and its impact on stakeholders like institutions, higher education providers, teachers, and students (as illustrated in Ahir 2007: Annexure 3).

#### 2.3 The National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 (MHRD (n.d.)), has been introduced after the last revision in 1986, a gap of 34 years. Over this period a lot has changed in the perspectives regarding socioeconomic, demographic, and political scenarios, and India's position in international diplomacy. There was a dire need for a change in the education policy of India that could help higher education face the challenges and gain from the opportunities of the 21st century. The entire policy document focuses on introducing a lot of reforms based on five guiding principles of equity, quality, access, affordability, and accountability. Particularly, transformations introduced in higher education sector intend to make it more holistic. multidisciplinary, focused on research, teaching quality with better technology, pedagogy, and evaluation methods, but rooted in ethos, value systems, and character building. NEP 2020 is expected to contribute to the pool of skilled value-oriented manpower who would help achieve the dream of a 'Developed India' by 2047 when India celebrates a century of gaining Independence (MHRD (n.d.)).

Despite the lack of comparisons across countries and considering the existence of different types of higher education institutes, it is safe to assume that India has one of the highest numbers of higher education institutes in the world compared to the US and China (NCES-US 2024, MoE-PRC 2024). From the regulatory perspective phenomenal changes have been envisaged in NEP 2020 with the introduction of an important umbrella organization called the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). HECI would encompass four verticals, each designated with a specific function. 1. The National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) would replace the existing multiple regulatory agencies to serve as a single regulator to overcome the duplications in the functions of the regulatory bodies. 2. The National Accreditation Council (NAC) would facilitate quality enhancement of higher education institutes based on the principles of self-governance,

autonomy, and benchmarking. It will be a 'meta-accrediting body' considering the large number of Indian higher education. Accreditation in such a large system needs a magnanimous accreditation system. 3. The Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) would undertake financing of higher education based on transparency and accountability. 4. The General Education Council (GEC) would be assigned the function of framing 'graduate attributes' in coordination with 'National Higher Education Qualification Framework' (NHEQF) and the 'National Skills Qualifications Framework' (NSQF). NHEQF will decide the qualifications for the award for various degrees in higher education. NSQF will be tasked with the responsibility of coordinating with NHEQF to ensure a smooth transition for the students willing to pursue higher education after vocational studies. The National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE) will be constituted to choose focus areas of vocational education based on local needs but as per the standards set by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The concept of Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) is based on the idea of 'one-student-one-id' for students studying in India. It is a digital repository or a storehouse, showing the credits earned by a student, pursued anywhere in India. This credit can be used by the student while further pursuing the education and can avail the exemption or continuance of a programme based on credits earned previously. It is largely to facilitate student mobility across regions and programs. As of December 2024, more than 130 million students have created their ABC ID (ABC 2024).

National Research Foundation (NRF) will be tasked with identifying and funding promising research in relatively deprived State Universities besides other public higher education institutes and in areas of national importance. The objective would be to ensure that the outcome of the research contributes to policy-making, helping industries and other entities/stakeholders (MHRD (n.d.)).

Devoted sections in NEP 2020, elaborate explanations regarding the vision for the use of technological tools in higher education, and developing online education opportunities highlight the importance assigned to these aspects in the development of higher education. The promotion of the use

of native and national Indian languages in higher education has been given a lot of emphasis. Accordingly, the efforts to create content and mode of delivery have been envisioned. Policies related to professional education (Legal, agricultural, healthcare, technical education), and adult education for life-long learners have been envisaged in NEP 2020 (MHRD (n.d.)).

A cursory understanding of the regulatory framework for higher education in India as was provided in this section, forms a foundation to understand better the regulatory framework for internationalization for higher education in India. Accordingly, the next section focuses on a discussion related to various regulations that are associated with various processes and involving various stakeholders associated with the internationalization of higher education in India.

### 3. Regulatory Framework for Internationalization of Higher Education in India

Within India, NEP 2020, and outside India, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) encompasses the regulatory framework affecting the internationalization of higher education in India. While NEP 2020 is a pivotal policy document influencing the regulatory framework in India, the sections associated with internationalization in NEP have been discussed. Subsequently, the entire regulatory framework for the internationalization of higher education in India is discussed using the theoretical framework of GATS. While most of the aspects are enumerated within the discussions of provisions for GATS, the latest announcement by the Government of India, 'one-nation-one-subscription – ONOS' has profound consequences on access to international research publications in India and has been discussed.

#### 3.1 Provisions for Higher Education Internationalization in NEP 2020

NEP 2020 particularly focuses on two aspects of the internationalization of higher education in India, inbound and outbound mobility of students for higher education and movement of higher education institutes (attracting foreign higher education institutes and permitting Indian institutes to set

campuses abroad). Considering that 1.33 million Indian outbound students are already the second highest in the world after China (MEA, 2024), NEP 2020 further wants to facilitate outbound students by providing greater mobility. However, how will it be done is not specified (MHRD (n.d.)).

NEP 2020 suggests making the Indian higher education system, a 'global study destination', providing premium quality education at an affordable cost to restore its role as 'Vishwa (global) Guru'. Internationalization of higher education at home is recommended to make it less elitist and more accessible for the masses (Tight 2022). This is in association with the fact that the Chinese scholars I-Qing and Xuan Zang who visited Nalanda University in ancient India in the 7th century CE held very high regard for Indian higher education. In their opinion, hundreds of lectures were delivered daily on varied topics including mathematics, astronomy, warfare, etc. without any fees (egyankosh (n.d.)). Along similar lines, various courses based on traditional Indian knowledge systems like yoga, medicine, language, art, music, and culture are promoted and incentivized for inbound foreign students in NEP 2020. Efforts to ensure a comfortable, culturally and mutually engaging stay for foreign students are directed towards establishing foreign students' offices in higher education institutes in India. Special care for their specific requirements for lodging and boarding is assured (MHRD (n.d.)).

NEP defines the policy directives for foreign institutions willing to provide higher education in India. Within two years of NEP 2020 assurance, UGC Regulations, 2022, and then UGC Regulations, 2023, have come into effect. These regulations facilitate various collaborations between Indian and foreign higher education institutes and the establishment of campuses of foreign higher education institutes in India, respectively.

'High-performing Indian higher education institutes' were permitted to establish campuses abroad in NEP 2020 (MHRD (n.d.)). As per the NEP mandate, two IITs have already established their campuses in Tanzania and Abu Dhabi, while five others are under consideration for Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia (PW Gulf 2024). Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has regional study centers in 22

countries (IGNOU 2024a). 1 state government and 9 deemed, and private universities have also established campuses abroad (Sharma 2024).

Thus, whatever was promised in NEP 2020 is being implemented within less than 5 years of the policy announcement. Foreign institutions are being allowed to open campuses in India and Indian institutions are opening This campuses abroad. is unlike any event related internationalization of higher education in India, historically since gaining independence. At the national level, NEP 2020 has given momentum to the internationalization of higher education. This is complemented by India's willingness to consider opening higher education for GATS at the international level. Most of the aspects associated with the regulations of internationalization of higher education in India are associated with some form of GATS provisions as discussed further.

#### 3.2 GATS and Internationalization of Higher Education in India

The deliberations on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are inclusive of higher education services. While India has been restrictive regarding the opening of other levels of education, adherence to GATS provisions for higher education is largely accomplished. GATS is implemented through 4 modes of international movements. The implication of the implementation of four modes of GATS concerning higher education in India is discussed further. Discussion includes both imports and exports of the higher education services. Various regulations associated with each of these modes of GATS have also been discussed within the discussion of the respective modes.

#### 3.2.1 Mode 1: Cross Border Supply in Context of Indian Higher Education

Cross-border supply in higher education is associated with providing higher education without requiring the physical movement of the consumers or providers. Provision for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is the most suited illustration. Providing online Indian higher education abroad and availing foreign online education in India is prevalent. UGC Guidelines (2021) and NEP (2020) elaborate on the benefits of using technology and upgraded AI tools to ensure access to higher education with flexibility and easy access. Virtual exposure to foreign higher education resources can be easily availed and leveraged for learning by the students. The scale of operations for both imports and exports of cross-border supply of higher education is massive in India.

Exports through cross-border supply of higher education. IGNOU, one of the largest open and distance learning higher education centers, has 22 study centers and exam centers in foreign countries (IGNOU 2024). Additionally, IGNOU offers online education to international students through the Center for Online Education (IGNOU 2024b). Fees charged for these courses range from INR 2,000 to INR 13,000 for SAARC nation students and for non-SAARC nation students range from USD 200 to USD 500. Programs include post-graduate programs, graduate programs, and certificate programs (IGNOU 2024b).

A plethora of free study material is available as open source and econtent on the portals of India like the National Programme on Technology of Learning (NPTEL) inclusive SWAYAM Enhanced and SWAYAMPRABHA, in addition to egyankosh. Some of this content is also available in the form of video lectures, and podcasts. SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) is the world's largest online free e-learning portal. The entire course can be accessed free of cost. However, if the candidate requires a certificate, they should register, pay a nominal fee, and appear for the exam. International students are still required to inquire from the national coordinator if they can appear for exams for the courses in SWAYAM from abroad. SWAYAM courses are recognized by the Government of India. The courses are mostly selfpaced, except for the scheduled courses. A candidate can also register for simultaneously (SWAYAM multiple online courses 2024). SWAYAMPRABHA is a YouTube channel with some videos accessible from the websites and some telecasted at stipulated time. Some of the content has English subtitles and some are also available in regional Indian languages to make it more accessible for greater knowledge sharing. This is in accordance with the motivation for regional languages in NEP 2020. There is no clarity if SWAYAMPRABHA is accessible to foreign students. Although it is freely accessible from YouTube in India and on television broadcasts at the time scheduled on the website for each lecture. It broadcasts 40 learning channels through GSAT 15 satellites and has a monthly viewership of 300,000 viewers (SWAYAMPRABHA 2024). egyankosh is an online digital repository of the reading material (egyankosh 2024). Sharma and Sharmiladevi (2022) have also found extensive use of IITBombayX, mooKIT of IIT Kanpur, and NPTEL among Indian users. The variety of courses offered includes knowledge, skills, life skills, and technology enhancement courses. It has provided more opportunities for non-conventional or deprived but willing learners (like homemakers, working professionals, and learners in remote and unapproachable geographical areas) to fill the gap of access to quality education and develop latent skills. It has also contributed phenomenally to enhancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education). The flexibility also nudges multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge enhancement as most of these courses do not have binding background eligibility criteria (Sahni and Kale 2004, Sharma and Sharmiladevi 2022).

Several concerns have been raised about the availability of supportive infrastructure for increased, equitable, and affordable access to digital education (Sahni & Kale, 2004; Sharma & Sharmiladevi, 2022). In particular, the famous argument 'cMOOC v/s. xMOOC' by Stephen Downes is widely debated. He suggests improving MOOC for a better suitability of 'connectivist pedagogy' (cMOOC) which is more learner-centric as compared to the traditional teacher-centric approach that he calls xMOOC (Downes 2013, Sharma and Sharmiladevi 2022).

Imports through cross-border supply of higher education. The online education market in India is assessed at USD 6.7 billion in 2024. With a CAGR of 23 percent, the market is expected to grow thrice at about USD 19 billion by 2029. About 309 million users are expected to avail of online education. The US is expected to be the biggest supplier in 2024 (Statista 2024). Certain driving forces behind the surge of online education include increasing demand for flexible and easily accessible education, improving technological infrastructure to support it, growing Indian digital literacy and the resulting upsurge in access, the need for continuous upgradation of the skill enhancement during the working life, among others. It is inclusive of online learning platforms (like Coursera, Udemy, EdX, and Babble), online university education (like Harvard Business Online), and professional certificates (like those offered by PMI and Kaplan) (Statista 2024). Due policy support is suggested in UGC Guidelines, 2021, where ICTbased internationalization strategies are discussed for teaching-learning, pedagogy, use in administration, and virtual international communication (UGC Guidelines 2021). With the provisions for ABC, it may be expected in the future that a student can credit such digitally available or online courses in ABC and avail the benefits of completing these courses subsequently (ABC 2024).

#### 3.2.2 Mode 2: Higher Education Consumption Abroad

The consumption of higher education services abroad is associated with learners who access higher education and providers of higher education in a foreign country. NEP 2020 emphasizes policy initiatives for increasing inbound students and facilitating outbound students. India has a long history of attracting foreigners and sending students to study abroad (egyankosh (n.d.)). The introduction of GATS and the resulting standardization of the global policy framework may benefit international mobile students.

<u>Exports through higher education consumption abroad</u>. India attracted 46,878 students from 170 countries during 2021-22. It is an infinitesimally small proportion of 43.3 million students studying in higher education in

India. Most of these inbound students enroll in Indian higher education from neighboring countries like Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. UAE is the fifth largest importer of higher education from India. African countries like Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Sudan are also top suppliers of higher education inbound students in India. The US ranks third in terms of sending inbound students to India. Most of the students prefer to go to economically wealthy provinces like Karnataka, Punjab, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. The majority of them pursue undergraduate courses (AISHE 2012-22 (n.d.)).

After seeking provisional admission, a foreign student is required to take a 'No objection certificate' from the Ministry of Health and has to produce evidence of adequate funds to sustain for four months. Country-specific visa norms are different. Dependents are granted conditional visas along with the student. Institutes and the government are to be informed every time the student leaves the country. Prior approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs is to be sought for movement in sensitive/restricted areas and sensitive subjects defined in visa norms (MHA 2024). Currently, international students pursuing higher education in India are not allowed to take paid work. They can undertake internships related to their course, but that cannot be paid (Ahmad 2022). This is considered to be one of the disincentives for international students, especially considering generous norms in other countries.

The 'Study in India' is a centralized portal to simplify the process of application for foreign students through a single point of communication to seek admissions in India. It has an online provision for undertaking the entire process to apply for any higher education institute in India. It assures a transparent process, access to only accredited and ranked institutions to pursue higher education offers diverse courses at diverse locations in India, financial assistance related process, visa and immigration process facilitation, and connecting the student with prospective higher education institutes. Education fairs in several countries are also organized (MoE 2024b).

Indian government provides several fellowships to foreign students primarily through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations – ICCR. Several

country-specific scholarships are also available for students willing to pursue higher education in India (ICCR 2024). Besides, discipline-specific scholarships are available to promote Indian traditional knowledge, like AYUSH scholarship to do under-graduation, post-graduation, and Ph.D. in Homeopathy, Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani medicines, and yoga. Lata Mangeshkar Dance & Music Scholarship Scheme (formerly ICCR Scholarship Scheme for Training in Indian Music and Dance) for performing arts courses is available to learn Indian music and dance. Atal Bihari Vajpayee General Scholarship Scheme is offered for several subjects.

A nationalist policy characteristic can be traced in NEP 2020 in the importance given to the adaptation of regional languages in higher education, pride in the traditional knowledge system and its promotion, reintroducing the age-old multidisciplinary idea of teaching several subjects simultaneously, and making higher education accessible as was the case in ancient Indian university like the Nalanda and Takshashila during 500-600 BC and 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. This is quite similar to the findings of Hsieh (2020). NEP 2020 attempts to facilitate foreign students' stay in India. The establishment of foreign students' offices in universities is suggested to facilitate the special regulatory, social, economic, psychological, and physiological requirements of foreign students. UGC Guidelines, 2021, to make India attractive for foreign students has an objective of internationalization at home. Various actions have been suggested like integrating foreign students culturally and by language, residential facilities accommodating their specific needs like food and other infrastructure, designing curriculum and pedagogy to accommodate foreign students, and medium of instruction as English (MHRD (n.d.), UGC Guidelines 2021).

Imports through higher education consumption abroad: India's outbound students accounted for 1.33 million in 2024, making India the second-ranking country in the world in terms of outbound students after China. Canada (427,000), the US (337,630), the UK (185,000), Australia (122,202) and Germany (42,997) were the top 5 destination countries for Indian outbound students (MEA 2024). UAE slipped from the third position to the sixth position from 2022 to 2024.

While leaving the country, the norms from India just require a student visa and an offer letter/admission letter from a foreign higher education institute. Indian policy and Indian fellowships have remained liberal for the outbound students. The scholarships to motivate Indian students to go abroad are not binding upon the student to return to India and serve the country for any stipulated time. Any student willing to study abroad is free to do so. Several scholarships are available for students to access higher education abroad (IDP 2024). None of these were found to have binding conditions or strings attached. UGC Regulations, 2018, allows a Ph.D. from the top 500 institutes ranked in THE WUR, QS WUR, or ARWU global ranking as a candidate eligible to apply for the post of Assistant Professor in higher education institutes in India (UGC Regulations 2018). In the case of medical graduates, Indians who study abroad are required to comply with the guidelines prescribed by the National Medical Commission, dated 18 November 2021. They are required to pass the 'Foreign Medical Graduate Exam (FMGE)' to be able to practice in India. The test which is organized twice a year, is to be cleared in a maximum of three attempts. The passing percentage has been very low at less than 30 percent of the overall number of students who appear for these exams (Chauhan 2024, NMC 2024, NBE (n.d.)).

Also, several international regulatory frameworks of foreign countries act as a deterrence to pursuing higher education abroad. Barriers like visas not allowed for dependents like spouse or children, high international student fees, living expenses and transportation costs, recognition of prior educational qualification, work while study restrictions, limited education loans due to collaterals, competitive fellowships, competitive seats for international students, and language restrictions (Sahni and Kale 2004, Joshi and Ahir 2022).

### 3.2.3 Mode 3: Commercial Presence of Higher Education Providers in a Foreign Country

Commercial presence in higher education means providing services in a foreign country by establishing a campus abroad. Opening a satellite campus in a foreign country is also associated with this mode. Offering twinning programs, dual degrees, joint degrees, and franchising agreements with local institutions are also treated as services offered in mode 3 of GATS. All the types of organizational setup discussed in this section export and import higher education services simultaneously, by serving both Indian students abroad and foreign students in India. Hence, it would be misleading to categorize them as exports or imports.

Indian institutions abroad: As mentioned in section 3.1, two IITs have already established their campuses in Tanzania (IITM) and Abu Dhabi (IITD) each, five others are under consideration (PW Gulf 2024), IGNOU has regional study centers in 22 countries (IGNOU 2024a), 1 state government and 9 deemed and private universities have also established campuses abroad (Sharma 2024). These institutes cater to foreign students as well as Indian students. Their eligibility is open for Indian students and foreign students. Certainly, they are exporters of higher education services by serving foreign students abroad. However, they may not be treated as imports for higher education services. It would be treated as Indians receiving education from an Indian institute itself, although abroad. These institutes are of high repute and have opened campuses abroad on merit.

Private universities are required to take permission from the Government of India and the host country government, before opening a campus abroad. UGC approvals are required before starting the campus, and the university will have to adhere to the norms of UGC. UGC can also inspect the university or its off-shore campus at any time (UGC Regulations 2003).

<u>Guidelines for internationalization of higher education in India, 2016.</u> Since UGC Guidelines 2016 preceded NEP 2020, and UGC Regulations 2022, a lot of sections from these guidelines can be seen *verbatim*, in these

subsequent policy documents. Now looking at hindsight, one may be able to see the UGC Guidelines 2016 as a collection of some ideas, that subsequently took a concrete shape in the form of NEP 2020 and UGC Regulations, 2022. The discussions regarding NEP 2020 have been previously dealt with, leaving barely anything new. Subsequent UGC Regulations, 2022 have given a far more concrete shape to the ideas related to twinning degree, joint degree, or dual degree programs. Accordingly, they have been dealt with elaborately in the next section.

The University Grants Commission (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Educational Institutions to offer Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes) Regulations, 2022: UGC Regulations, 2022, provide for different provisions related to the collaboration between Indian and foreign higher education institutes to award degrees collectively like the Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programs. To partner in any of these types of collaborative arrangements the eligibility criteria for Indian higher education institutes are that they should be either NAAC accredited with a score of more than 3.01 out of 4, or ranked in the top 100 of the domestic Indian university rankings by National Institutional Ranking Framework or in top 1000 ranks of Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR) or QS World University Rankings (QSWUR). Similarly, the collaborating foreign higher education institute should be ranked in the top 1000 THE WUR or QS WUR (UGC Regulations 2022).

The Regulations differentiate between the three types of degrees and the associated mandates. The degree of internationalization increases as we move from twinning programs to joint degree to dual degree programs. In a twinning program, a maximum of 30 credits can be pursued on the foreign campus. In a joint degree program, at least 30 percent of the credits are to be earned from each partnering Indian and foreign institute. In a dual degree program, the mandate is to earn at least 30 percent of the credits from the Indian partnering institute (UGC Regulations 2022).

Consequently, for twinning programs degree is awarded only by the Indian higher education institute, in joint degree programs both Indian and foreign partnering institutes award a degree through a single certificate. In a dual degree program, a candidate seeks separate admission in both institutes and is thus awarded a degree, separately and simultaneously once the student completes the requirements of both institutes. However, it is not interpreted as two separate degrees in separate disciplines/levels/subject areas. Degrees awarded are to be treated at par with the equivalent degree provided by the Indian higher education for further education of job qualifications (UGC Regulations 2022).

Some common aspects can be found across all the three types. The partnering higher education institutes sign an MoU elaborating the modalities of the degree. The access to higher education in the partner institute must be in conventional mode and not in online mode. Both partner institutes could induct students from any country including partner countries. Transcripts for the courses completed in respective institutes are prepared with a remark that some part of the course is undertaken in the partner institute. The course content and curriculum taught by partner institutes should not overlap. Compliance with UGC regulations is mandatory. Clear exit pathways for the students unable to complete the course should be defined with specifications of the credits earned for future use. Legal matters will be handled by the collaborating Indian higher education institute (UGC Regulations 2022).

The University Grants Commission (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023. Any higher education institute cannot open a campus in India legally unless approved as per the norms of UGC Regulations, 2023. UGC Regulations 2023 is by far one of the most revolutionary policy initiatives in terms of opening the doors of higher education for foreign entities since gaining independence in 1947. India had been traditionally conservative towards allowing foreign institutes in higher education in India. UGC Regulations, 2023, provides the regulations for a foreign institute desirous to open a campus, with an option of opening a campus without any partnering Indian higher education and all by itself, in India. One or more foreign higher education institutions willing to open a campus in India

should have been ranked in the top 500 institutes of global rankings or subject rankings or should have 'outstanding expertise in a particular area' to be eligible to open a campus in India while applying. Separate applications are required to open each separate campus.

The entire procedure for the approval will be handled by a standing committee. Application for opening the campus would be presented to the standing committee, which would then give their opinion within 60 days of the receipt of the application. The standing committee would then present their report to the UGC which will provide a 'Letter of Intent' within 60 days to establish the campus within two years of the receipt of the letter of intent. The foreign institute will express its readiness to the standing committee. The standing committee will give its recommendations based on the readiness of the foreign higher education institute to the UGC which will then approve to begin operations. Various general and specific conditions related to fees, staff, and pedagogy are decided by the foreign higher education institute. Strict norms related to the safety, integrity, and sovereignty of the country should be adhered to by the foreign higher education institute. All financial dealings of the foreign higher education institute will be subject to the two relevant acts - Foreign Exchange Management Act – FEMA (42 of 1999) and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (42 of 2010) that govern contributions made in foreign currency to an entity. Qualifications of the faculty should be at least at par with the norms in higher education in India. Quality of education delivered, infrastructure, and faculty qualifications should be at par with the parent campus. Other norms deal with safeguarding students' interests, maintenance of accounts, and annual records by the foreign institute (UGC Regulations 2023).

Such degree awarded shall be recognized in the host country and as equivalent to a similar degree awarded in the host country as well. Accordingly, the quality of higher education delivered in India is mandated to be at par with that of the host country institute. Faculty qualifications should be similar to those in the host country. The program is to be offered in person and not as an online or distance education program. Such a degree will be treated as equivalent to a similar degree from India to further

higher education or seek a job in India. They can enroll domestic and international students (UGC Regulations 2023).

The University of Southampton from the UK is the first foreign university to receive a letter of intent to establish a campus in Gurugram. They would begin the operations in July 2025 (The Economic Times 2024). A similar claim could be traced to Australia's Deakin University which inaugurated a campus in Gujarat's GIFT city (Gujarat International Finance Tec-city) (Australian High Commission 2024). A unique opportunity for higher education institutes was offered in the Union Budget 2023, whereby universities opening campuses in the GIFT city would be 'free from domestic regulations' except regulations abiding by the International Financial Service Centre (IFSC). Additional facilities provided to foreign universities at GIFT City include ease of doing business, 100 percent income tax exemption, and no Goods and Services Tax (GST – India's indirect tax) on the use of services in the GIFT City. Thus, GIFT City is a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) with facilities extended to foreign universities establishing campuses in GIFT City (GIFT (n.d.)).

# 3.2.4 Mode 4: Presence of Natural Persons (Teachers and Researchers of Higher Education) in a Foreign Country Temporarily

The presence of natural persons in higher education is manifested in the form of temporary movement of teachers and researchers working abroad. Educators, professors, and researchers travel for temporary engagements with their foreign counterparts or to avail certain technological or scientific facilities or resources abroad. They can even collaborate on a combined research project of common interests. With growing internationalization across all spheres of life, international collaboration for teaching and research can be mutually rewarding.

There are no specific norms for allowing inbound or outbound movement of teachers or researchers, except visa formalities and normal code of conduct for behavior. Neither are consolidated data available for knowing the inbound and outbound movement of teachers and researchers. However, some regulations related to how many times or how long a full-time employee can engage in foreign assignments can be stipulated in respective university statutes or ordinances. There can be restrictions for the frequency and duration of foreign visit in a year, as per those norms.

#### 4. 'One-Nation-One-Subscription' Scheme

Recently the Government of India announced an ambitious plan named 'One Nation One Subscription' (ONOS). With the announcement of The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) 2023 Act, attempts to develop a scientific research culture aligned with NEP 2020, have gained great momentum. Extending further the attempts to accomplish the research ambitions, the Union Cabinet approved the ONOS scheme. ONOS scheme has sanctioned Rs. 6,000 crores to access 13,000 ejournals from the top 30 publishers including Springer, Nature, and Wiley. The access would be granted to about 18 million students, teachers, and researchers in central and state government universities and research institutes in 6,300 institutes. Initially, it is approved for three years 2025, 2026, and 2027. Eventually, not only access but funding for Academic Processing Charges (APC) for higher quality publications is also under consideration (MoE 2024c).

According to Scimago Journal and country Ranking (SJR 2023) India ranked third in the world in terms of the total documents published, after China and the US in 2023. The total number of documents published in 2023 is 306,647. This can be largely attributed to the fact that promotions or career advancements for teachers in higher education in India have eligibility criteria of a certain minimum peer-reviewed published research papers for different levels in the hierarchy (UGC Regulations 2018). However, the citations per document and H index for India were found to be very low, suggesting high quantity but comparatively lower quality of publications. Two primary reasons are, firstly, limited or no access to expensive, paid, high-impact journals and publications and secondly, unaffordable non-funded high Academic Processing Charges (APCs) charged by the journals. Both of these factors make it very difficult to read good-quality research and write in high-rated peer-reviewed journals. ONOS promises to address these issues (MoE 2024c). It would be exciting to see the implications of this scheme after three years. Some experts have

also highlighted that this endeavor of the government is counter-intuitive considering that the world is growingly moving towards open-access journals (Mehra 2024, Koley 2024). The ONOS scheme is only for a limited period, as is specified, till a larger solution for rewarding impactful research with tangible benefits is not further concretized (MoE 2024c).

# 5. Critiques of Internationalization of Higher Education Policy from the Lens of Political Economy

Manivannan (2013) believes that foreign higher education institutes will not find it very easy to enter Indian higher education due to high demands for efficiency at lower costs by the Indian student beneficiaries. Thampy and Devaprasad (2023) assessed whether the establishment of foreign campuses in India will reduce foreign outbound students from India. They concluded based on the survey that the reasons for the choice to study abroad included greater exposure and employment opportunities there. This is not likely to be provided by the foreign branch campuses in India. Hence, they conclude that the receptivity towards foreign campuses in India will be lesser in India.

Participation in GATS for higher education services has been criticized on various grounds. Experts call it equal competition among unequal partners (especially in the context of developing countries as against developed countries) based on infrastructural development, investment capabilities, and income levels (Sahni and Kale 2004). Some fear that the sole purpose of higher education learning, to seek truth will be overshadowed by the commercial interests of profit-seeking providers from the massive Indian market. WTO can also dictate the governance of higher education. Concerns related to equitable access to higher education may further increase due to a rise in fees (Jayaram 2016, Puri 2015). Concerns related to retaining the socio-cultural fabric of the country, and greater emphasis on the privatization of higher education are emancipated (egyankosh (n.d.), Tight 2022). The dissimilar quality of higher education imparted in the higher education sector in India can also amplify the inequality between institutions with the introduction of GATS. Certainly,

the global brands of India like the IITs and IIMs, will have greater prospects of seeking advantages with opening up of the higher education sector with GATS. Puri (2015) fears that the patenting of knowledge, which is likely to happen with the GATS provision to a greater extent, will result in exclusion. English as a language of instruction in the process of internationalization raises concerns regarding equal opportunity for all countries to be able to benefit from exports in four modes of GATS (Tight 2022). Puri (2015) expresses concern for the treatment of education as a commodity to be bought and sold. He is apprehensive regarding the adoption of corrupt practices for profit-seeking and the authenticity of degrees awarded with profit-seeking objectives in mind. Concentrated movements of students from specific countries to specific countries as a long-term pattern have implications on a citizen-non-citizen mix of courses pursued, in a way also resulting in recolonization or neo-colonization (Tight 2022).

Student vouchers have been suggested as one of the solutions to overcome the challenges that may emerge from the opening of the higher education sector (Jayaram 2016). The opening of the sector can also untangle the overlapping regulatory framework while making it more effective and easier to comprehend and implement. Higher education providers can seek such eased-out regulations as an opportunity to prove the relevance of the higher education they offer in the job market. This is also in tandem with previously suggested regulatory reforms of establishing a unified regulatory body as also echoed in National Education Policy 2020 of India – the Higher Education Council of India (HECI) (MHRD (n.d.)). Tight suggests laying emphasis on 'internationalization at home' by inviting foreign students and institutions in the country to increase its access for the masses. This can counter elitist access to internationalization abroad by few students and institutions. It is further suggested to have a clear strategy and policy in place for the internationalization of higher education in every nation involved (Tight 2022). Although India declared UGC Regulations 2022 and UGC Regulations 2023 after the publication of Tight's research paper the paper does not include India in the list of countries with an internationalization policy.

#### 6. Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

India has experienced about 25 years of liberalization, privatization, and globalization policies since 1991 economic reforms. Various sectors are successfully operating with the dual presence of both the private and public sectors. In many cases, economic reforms improved the expectations and performance of the public sector due to the competition from the private sector, like banking, aviation, transportation, post, etc.

Even with higher education India now has a long history of parallel operations of both private and public sectors. The outcome is a mixed bag of performances. India is one of the largest higher education systems by institutional count and the second largest in terms of enrolment following China. This makes India a huge market for exports of higher education to students and establishing foreign campuses in India. India has a long history of importing higher education through outbound students on a mass scale. However, for India, permitting foreign campuses are untested waters yet. As India has committed to permit foreign campuses in various proportions through UGC Regulations, 2022, and UGC Regulations, 2023, prospective strengths and challenges are formidable.

India has chosen to take the path less traveled by her thus far. The time may be right to ask some questions. Can healthy competition between Indian and foreign higher education institutes result in access to better quality higher education for the students? With the entry of foreign higher education providers, can there be a replication effect on the research output by Indian higher education institutes? Can observation of the internal regulation and administration of foreign higher education institutions provide an opportunity for the administrators of Indian higher education institutes to more closely observe the prospects of learning from the external providers? Will the presence of foreign higher education institutes provide a model for enhancing academic and other infrastructural facilities for the Indian higher education providers too?

It cannot be denied that some of the finest higher education providers from India are making a global mark. We may need to further research the impact of increased competition from private higher education institutes on the performance of the public sector, maybe through a 'before and after study'. Maintenance of quality and protection of the beneficiary rights (in this case students and staff of higher education institutes) is a regulator's prime responsibility. Globally several countries have a long history of a large proportion of private higher education, including developed countries like Japan. India has been cautious in not allowing any institute without a proven track record in global rankings to enter. Provision for several other precautions for the students and staff are also mentioned in the UGC regulations. While it is too early to be able to holistically assess the impact of the regulatory framework for the internationalization of higher education in India, with proper cautions in place and identified national priorities, India may be able to leverage this historical opportunity of opening the doors to foreign providers.

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#### Acknowledgement

The research in this paper was undertaken by Prof. Kinjal Ahir, during her stay at the CSHE, Nagoya University, Japan as an invited visiting foreign professor during 13 May 2024 to 12 July 2024. The author remains obliged to the staff of CSHE, Nagoya University Japan, for their kind cooperation and academic discussions.

### インドにおける 高等教育の国際化に向けた規程の枠組み

キンジャール・アヒール

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インドの高等教育は、教育機関数、入学者数ともに世界最大規模を誇る。このため、国際化が進む高等教育にとって、インドは巨大な市場となる可能性を秘めている。本稿の目的は、インドにおける高等教育の国際化を左右する国内外の様々な規程の枠組みを探ることである。インド国内を概観すると、2020年国家教育政策(National Education Policy)、2022年および2023年のUGC(University Grants Commission)規程、そして「一国一購読契約(One Nation One Subscription)」計画が大きな影響を与えていることがわかる。一方、国際的には、インドは創設署名国としてGATS(サービスの貿易に関する一般協定)の義務を負っている。本稿は、探索的研究として、GATSがもつ4つの側面を取り上げ、それらがインドの高等教育の国際化に与える影響と、それらをもとに国内規程の枠組みの分析を行う。インドの高等教育の国際化に関連する様々な国内規程の枠組みに焦点をあて、国際規程にインドがどのように対応してきたかを議論する。政策実施の導入段階のため、研究者らによって指摘された懸念、批判、注意点、および提言も紹介する。

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