

India higher education internationalization: problems and possibilities

The Guest Editorial by Lavakare¹ concerning international students makes some important points that I would like to emphasize. India without any question needs clear guidelines and policies – and action – concerning international education, the role of international students in the country, and more broadly, its role in the increasing important and competitive global world of higher education. Indeed, India's role as an 'intellectual power' and its future success in science and technology depends in significant part on the excellence and international connectedness of its higher education sector, and as Lavakare has pointed out, India lags far behind its direct competitors, such as China, as well as the top academic systems in the world.

India has the potential to be an important 'destination' country for international students, but only if expectations are realistic and infrastructure are in place. The country's rapidly growing economy and increasingly important place in world affairs have increased global interest. India has the second largest higher education enrolments in the world. As Lavakare points out, large numbers of Indians go abroad to study (and many do not return), but only a trickle of foreign students choose to come to India. The country has not traditionally been on the world stage in higher education. No Indian universities are in the upper reaches of the global rankings. Most international students coming to India are exclusively from the developing countries. Only the Indian Institutes of Technology and to some extent the Indian Institutes of Management are well-known abroad.

India has not as yet figured out how to constructively interact with the world's

universities. The failure, over a number of years, to enact policies and regulations relating to foreign branch campuses, and relations with foreign institutions generally has meant that the country has relatively few overseas partners. The proposed legislation, had it been passed, imposed unrealistic expectations of foreign partners in any case.

It is quite unlikely that India will attract many students from Europe, North America, or Australasia for full degree study. Despite China's more advanced higher education system, relatively few students from these regions are degree students in Chinese universities. Degree students are likely to continue to be from the developing countries of Africa and South and perhaps Southeast Asia. This reality is not necessarily a negative. Thus, India has good potential for attracting students from the developing world for degree study – and thus building relationships with future leaders of those countries and contributing to its 'soft power'. However, it is the case that the top students from the developing countries will probably choose to study in the West – thus if India wants to attract the 'best and brightest', Indian universities will have to actively compete and offer attractive terms and conditions for study.

India does have considerable potential for attracting students from Europe and North America for 'semester abroad' or other short-term programmes, and for postgraduate research. However, this potential can only be achieved if Indian institutions forge effective partnerships with counterparts abroad – at the governmental level, but especially with universities. Indian universities must also have the relevant infrastructure to host inter-

national students and provide them with appropriate assistance and academic guidance. With a few notable exceptions, these facilities do not exist at present.

Few Indian universities have professional staff with the knowledge and expertise to deal with international students. Indeed, India lacks a cadre of professionals in international education, and has no place to provide training in this rapidly expanding field. Most Indian universities lack hostels and other facilities to host international students – and particularly short-term students who cannot be expected to find such facilities on their own. At the heart of any exchange are the academics. It is fair to say that most Indian academics have little experience with international exchanges, although many senior professors have their doctorates from Western universities. Without a significant commitment from the Indian academic profession, exchange programmes will not succeed.

Successful internationalization presents a significant challenge for India. Progress must occur on a number of fronts simultaneously if India is to achieve success. Any effort to bring Indian universities up to world-class status will require internationalization.

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1. Lavakare, P. J., *Curr. Sci.*, 2017, **113**(11), 2225–2226.
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Need to explore camel milk as probiotics

Consumption of probiotics is evidently on the rise globally because of their various health benefits on human beings. The search for novel probiotics with diverse properties is the necessity of time. Properties of camel milk were first mentioned

in the 'Words of The Prophet Mohamed' in the Surah, a section of the Koran (volume 7, book 71, number 5909)¹. Camels (genus *Camelus*) are the fingerprint of the desert and were first domesticated by humans in southern Arabia

and Somalia between 2500 and 3000 BC (ref. 1). Since then, they have been benefiting humans through many ways by providing milk, meat, hair, as working animals for transporting goods and in the military during 19th–20th century. The