

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

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Abstract:

The research explores the internationalization of higher education policies across different nations, focusing on a comparative analysis of strategies and best practices. Special attention is given to India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and its global positioning. The paper integrates policy frameworks, case studies, and statistical trends with graphical visualizations to present a holistic view of global higher education internationalization.

Key words: *Internationalization, Higher Education, Education Policy, Comparative Analysis, NEP 2020, Global Positioning, Policy Frameworks, Global Education, International Education Strategies.*

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Introduction:

The internationalization of higher education refers to the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of universities (Knight, 2004). It encompasses various initiatives, including student and faculty mobility, transnational education, academic collaborations, joint research projects, and international branch campuses. The concept is dynamic and continuously evolving to address the global academic and economic landscape.

Internationalization is a key driver of quality and excellence in higher education. By exposing students and faculty to diverse perspectives and methodologies, it enhances the academic environment and fosters cross-cultural competencies. Internationalization also facilitates collaborative research, enabling universities to work on global challenges such as climate change, public health, and artificial intelligence. Additionally, it contributes to economic development, as international students and faculty bring financial and intellectual resources to host countries. The growing competition in global university rankings has further incentivized nations and institutions to develop strategic policies aimed at increasing their international engagement (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

For emerging economies like India, internationalization is particularly significant as it helps align domestic educational systems with global standards, attract foreign students, and create a skilled workforce equipped for global challenges. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a shift in India's approach, prioritizing internationalization by allowing foreign universities to establish campuses in India and encouraging Indian institutions to expand internationally (Government of India, 2020).

Research Questions:

This study aims to explore the internationalization of higher education with a special focus on India's **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and how it compares with global policies

1. What are the major trends in higher education internationalization?
2. What are the key motivations for governments and universities to pursue internationalization (e.g., economic, academic, and diplomatic reasons)?
3. How do the internationalization policies of major global education systems (USA, UK, Germany and China) compare with those of India?
4. What best practices from leading global education systems can India adopt to enhance higher education internationalization?

Research Objectives:

1. To conduct a comparative analysis of internationalization policies in major countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, and India to identify similarities and differences.
2. To critically analyse India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in the context of higher education internationalization, focusing on its reforms
3. To evaluate best practices from leading global education systems can India adopt to enhance higher education internationalization

Research Methodology:

The research adopts a qualitative and quantitative approach, combining comparative policy analysis, statistical data interpretation, and case study evaluation. The methodology consists of the following key components:

1. Research Design

- **Comparative Analysis:** Evaluating policies of the USA, UK, Germany, China, and India.
- **Trend Analysis:** Examining global student mobility, international collaborations, and faculty exchange programs.
- **Policy Evaluation:** Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of NEP 2020.

2. Data Collection Methods

a) Secondary Data Sources

- **Policy Documents & Government Reports:** Official documents from the Ministry of Education, Government of India (NEP 2020), OECD reports, UNESCO statistics, and World Bank data.
- **Global University Rankings & Reports:** Data from QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education, and British Council reports.

b) Quantitative Data Analysis

- **Statistical Data Interpretation:** Analysing trends in student mobility, foreign faculty engagement, and transnational partnerships using UNESCO and OECD databases.

c) Case Study Approach

- Examining case studies of successful higher education internationalization models

3. Data Analysis Techniques

- **Comparative Matrix Analysis:** Identifying similarities and differences in internationalization strategies.
- **Policy Impact Assessment:** Examining the potential long-term effects of NEP 2020 on global rankings and institutional performance.

Analysis:

1. Global Trends in Higher Education Internationalization:

| Sr. No. | Trend | Description | Leading Regions/Countries | Strategic Implications |
|---------|--|---|--|--|
| 1 | Student Mobility | Movement of students across borders for full or partial degree programs | USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany | Increases diversity, institutional income, and global reputation |
| 2 | Transnational Education (TNE) | Delivering education overseas via branch campuses, online programs, joint degrees | UK, Australia, China, UAE, Malaysia | Expands institutional footprint, reduces brain drain, localizes global education |
| 3 | International Research Collaboration | Cross-border joint research, publications, and innovation partnerships | EU (Horizon Europe), USA, China, India, Japan | Enhances research visibility, funding access, and global problem-solving |
| 4 | Global Faculty Mobility | Academic staff taking positions, sabbaticals, or joint appointments abroad | USA, UK, Germany, Singapore, South Korea | Facilitates intellectual exchange, diaspora engagement, and global faculty recruitment |
| 5 | Virtual Mobility & Online Internationalization | Use of technology for virtual exchanges, COIL, MOOCs, and joint digital classes | Global (led by edX, Future Learn, Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange) | Increases access, reduces cost, promotes inclusive internationalization |
| 6 | Strategic National Policies | Embedding internationalization in national education policy frameworks | India (NEP 2020), EU (EHEA), China, Japan, South Africa | Promotes system-wide global competitiveness, inbound mobility, academic diplomacy |
| 7 | Regionalization of Higher Education | Regional academic cooperation through networks, mobility, and recognition of qualifications | EU, ASEAN, Africa, Latin America | Fosters intra-regional ties, reduces dependency on traditional Western destinations |
| 8 | Global Rankings and Branding | Universities pursuing better rankings through internationalization efforts | USA, UK, Australia, Singapore | Drives strategic partnerships, student recruitment, and brand positioning |

| | | | | |
|----|--|---|---------------------------------|---|
| 9 | Quality Assurance in Internationalization | Development of standards, audits, and frameworks for cross-border quality control | UNESCO, ENQA, AQAN, CHEA, QAHE | Ensures credibility of global programs, harmonizes standards |
| 10 | Language and Curriculum Internationalization | Multilingual programs, English-medium instruction, globally relevant curricula | Netherlands, Sweden, China, UAE | Enhances employability, global readiness, and access for international students |

2. Motivations behind Internationalization Policies:

1. Growth of International Student Mobility

International student mobility has witnessed exponential growth in recent decades. According to UNESCO (2022), the number of internationally mobile students increased from 2.1 million in 2000 to over 6 million in 2022, with major destination countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and China. Countries actively invest in policies to attract international students, as they contribute to economic growth and enhance research ecosystems (OECD, 2021).

2. Expansion of Transnational Education and Offshore Campuses

Many universities now operate branch campuses in foreign countries to increase their global presence. Institutions such as New York University (NYU) in Abu Dhabi, the University of Nottingham in Malaysia, and the University of Sydney in China are examples of successful transnational education initiatives (Huang, 2021). This trend enables students to receive international education without leaving their home countries while promoting global knowledge exchange.

3. Government-Led Internationalization Policies

Governments worldwide recognize internationalization as a strategic tool to boost higher education. Countries like Germany and China have launched initiatives such as Germany's Excellence Strategy and China's Double First-Class Initiative, aiming to make their universities globally competitive (Marginson, 2019). Similarly, the Erasmus+ program in Europe has facilitated student and faculty exchanges across member states (European Commission, 2020).

4. Influence of Global Rankings and Competitiveness

Higher education institutions strive for global recognition in QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education Rankings, as these influence student enrolments, research funding, and academic partnerships (QS World University Rankings, 2023). Universities with strong international collaborations often rank higher, pushing institutions to invest in international partnerships and faculty exchanges.

5. Digital and Online Learning in Internationalization

The rise of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and digital education platforms has revolutionized higher education internationalization. Platforms such as edX, Coursera, and Future Learn have enabled students worldwide to access courses from top universities. This trend allows institutions to expand their global outreach beyond physical student mobility (OECD, 2021).

6. Economic and Cultural Diplomacy

Many governments use higher education as a soft power tool to strengthen diplomatic ties. The British Council (2018) highlights how countries like the UK, Australia, and Canada leverage their education systems to attract international students and establish long-term diplomatic and economic relationships.

3. Comparative Analysis of Higher Education Internationalization Policies:

| Sr. No. | Country | Policy Framework | Key Objectives | Student Mobility Focus | Research Collaboration |
|---------|----------------|--|---|---|---|
| 01 | United States | No unified national policy; guided by institutions; Fulbright, Education USA | Recruit global talent, academic diplomacy, economic growth | Inbound focus: Over 1 million international students | Major global partnerships (NSF, NIH); top global co-authorship |
| 02 | United Kingdom | UK Education International (2021), TNE Strategy, British Council | Expand TNE, protect global leadership in student numbers | Balanced inbound + robust TNE + outbound through Erasmus & partnerships | Strong EU, Commonwealth, and US research collaboration |
| 03 | Germany | Federal Strategy for Internationalization (2017), DAAD, Erasmus+ | Promote mobility, enhance global research profile, capacity-building | Balance of inbound (tuition-free) and outbound | Extensive collaboration under Horizon Europe and DAAD bilateral programs |
| 04 | China | Double First-Class Initiative (2015), Belt and Road Education Plan | Become global education hub, boost university rankings | Controlled inbound + growing outbound (esp. Belt and Road partners) | Huge state investment; growing collaborations with Europe, US, Africa |
| 05 | India | NEP 2020, Study in India, GIAN, SPARC | Improve global image, enable world-class institutions, encourage foreign universities | Focus on increasing both inbound and outbound mobility | Promoting collaboration through IIT/IIM reforms; global MoUs and SPARC programs |

4. India vs. Global Benchmarks (2025)

| Sr. No. | Metric | India | USA | UK | China | Germany |
|---------|------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 01 | Inbound Students (in thousands) | ~47 | ~950 | ~600 | ~500 | ~350 |
| 02 | QS Top 200 Universities | 3 | 45 | 17 | 6 | 8 |
| 03 | Foreign University Campuses Hosted | 0 (in progress) | ~30 (abroad) | ~25 (abroad) | ~10 (active) | ~15 (collab) |
| 04 | % International Faculty | <3% | 25–35% | 30–40% | 10–15% | 15–20% |
| 05 | Institutional Autonomy Index (0–5) | 2.5 | 4.5 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 4.5 |

5. Critical Analysis of NEP 2020 and Internationalization of Higher Education

| Reform/Initiative | Reform/Initiative | Reform/Initiative |
|--|---|---|
| Entry of Foreign Universities | Top 100 QS-ranked foreign institutions can set up campuses in India | Lacks clarity on regulatory framework, faculty hiring, IPR protection |
| Academic Credit Bank (ABC) | Enables credit transfer between domestic and foreign institutions | Needs better global interoperability standards |
| Study in India Program | Attract international students through scholarships and branding | Limited visibility internationally; logistical and visa issues persist |
| Twinning, Joint, and Dual Degree Programs | UGC allows collaboration with top 1000 ranked foreign institutions | Ranking limit restricts partnerships; bureaucratic delays common |
| Internationalization at Home | Emphasis on cross-cultural learning, foreign language courses, online exchanges (COIL) | Lacks deep integration into curriculum; depends heavily on faculty training |
| Language and Medium of Instruction Flexibility | Promotes regional languages but allows flexibility for EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) | Tension between local inclusivity and global competitiveness |
| Research Collaboration – SPARC, GIAN | Funds joint research and visiting scholars from top global universities | Impact is moderate; bureaucratic red tape and lack of scalability |

6. Best Practices in Higher Education Internationalization and Their Relevance to India

| Country | Best Practice | Key Features | India's Potential Adoption Strategy |
|----------------|--|---|---|
| United States | University Autonomy & Strategic Global Branding | Autonomous governance; universities develop independent international strategies and branding (e.g., Harvard Global Strategy) | Grant full academic & administrative autonomy to selected Indian HEIs; empower them to form MoUs, hire globally, and co-brand |
| United Kingdom | Global Mobility via Structured Visa Policies & Transnational Education (TNE) | Tier-4 visa scheme for students and faculty; UK HEIs operate campuses globally (e.g., University of Nottingham in Malaysia) | Streamline Indian visa/immigration for students/faculty; incentivize Indian HEIs to build offshore campuses and joint programs |
| Germany | Publicly Funded Globalization (DAAD) | Centralized scholarships, research fellowships, and institutional collaboration programs; Germany attracts 350k+ foreign students | Scale up India's "Study in India" & "SPARC" with larger budgets and dedicated global branding units, especially in Global South |
| China | Co-hosted Foreign University Campuses | NYU Shanghai, Duke Kunshan University, UCL-BNU collaboration; government facilitates land, funding, regulatory support | Implement UGC's foreign university campus policy; partner with top-200 global HEIs with incentives and fast-track approvals |
| Australia | Centralized Quality Assurance and Student Services | TEQSA ensures quality across institutions; strong student services attract 600k+ students/year | Create a national-level quality and student support framework under NAAC + UGC to provide academic, legal, and emotional support for foreign students |

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