

Best practices in Internationalization of Higher Education Institutes in India and Nepal

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Abstract:

Propose: The purpose of the paper is to identify best practices for the Internationalization of higher education in India and Nepal to serve as a basis for the internationalization processes in Indian and Nepalese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The results were analyzed for best practices in the Internationalization of Indian and Nepalese HEIs to develop internationalization strategies further.

Design/methodology/approach: There is two approaches adopted in this study to understand the extent of Internationalization in Higher Education Institutions of India and Nepal. The first approach was based on secondary data such as the reports on the status of HEI's published by India and Nepal's respective governments to understand the present scenario. The second was a primary survey-based approach wherein a questionnaire was administered. 118 HEIs participated and provided information regarding their current status and future scope for Internationalization.

Results: Only around 40% of surveyed HEIs had initiated activities on the Internationalization of higher education. Further, HEIs which were involved in internationalization activities were mostly Self-financed and Private unaided. The study findings also revealed that though most HEIs considered Internationalization an essential strategy and implemented it for the last two to three years, however, many HEIs did not have a formal policy, and many of them did not incorporate Internationalization in their vision or mission statement. Many technical /structural impediments such as Credit Transfer problems, Lack of Support by University/ higher authority, and Inadequate Financial Resources need to be addressed. Apart from this, many HEIs were considering Brain Drain, Difficulty in assessing the organized quality of courses/program offered by foreign institutes and accessibility of International Opportunities as a critical potential risk of Internationalization which needs to be answered.

Conclusion: By exploring and describing the current practices, challenges and impediments of the Internationalization of higher education in Indian and Nepal, this study provides future direction and suggestive strategies of Internationalization opportunities in India and Nepal.

Keywords: Internationalization of Higher Education, Higher Education, Internationalization Practices, Challenges, Impediments, India, Nepal

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to the study Internationalization of Higher Education, "Internationalization is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society" (Thondhlana, Garwe, & De Wit, 2021). "It is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight j., 2008). The study identifies several benefits of Internationalization such improved quality of teaching and learning, increased international awareness and deeper engagement with global issues by students, students' preparation for a global world or enhanced international cooperation and capacity-building. The quality of the higher education system is a shared concern for India and Nepal. Internationalization is a way to enhance the quality of education and research for all the students and staff and make a meaningful contribution to society. However, it has not been integrated into the strategic planning of Indian and Nepalese higher education institutions.

The study's overall objective was to support the internationalization process of HEIs in India and Nepal to improve the quality of higher education (HE) via the design of internationalization strategies, capacity building of the staff, creation of international offices, and promoting regional and international cooperation.

This research was born as a result of previous cooperation between Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena (UPCT) Spain, Sarvajanic College of Engineering & Technology (SCET), India, Nalla Malla Reddy Engineering College (NMREC), India, Vivekanand Education Society's Institute of Management Studies and Research (VESIM), India and Nepal Engineering College, (*nec*), Nepal in the framework of Erasmus+ KA107. The KA107 is an Erasmus+ funded program. Erasmus+ funded this inter NepInd project (Erasmus+ KA2 – capacity building in higher education) which is directly managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission located in Brussels. The consortium has been completed with other partner HEIs from India and Nepal that share the same needs and problems. KA107 nobilities and other European projects have raised Indian and Nepalese partners' awareness about the potential and the interest of promoting and planning the Internationalization of their HEIs. Erasmus+ KA2 calls CBHE as the appropriate framework to support them with the identified difficulties and needs.

The objective of the study

The study's main objective was to collect best practices for the Internationalization of higher education in India and Nepal to serve as a basis for the internationalization processes in Indian and Nepalese HEIs. The main objective can be divided into three sub-objectives. 1) to gain knowledge about the degree of Internationalization of HEIs in India and Nepal. 2) To compile best practices in Internationalization in a representative sample of Indian and Nepalese Universities. 3) To analyze these practices as a basis for designing the internationalization strategies of the Indian and Nepalese HEIs. The survey results were analyzed for best practices in the Internationalization of Indian and Nepalese HEIs to gain knowledge that will be useful for further developing the internationalization strategies.

II. HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA AND NEPAL

Scenario in India

Higher Education is defined as the education obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing ten years of schooling and is of the duration of at least three years. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional or Technical education.

HEIs have been classified into three broad categories: University and University level institutions like Central, State, Open, Private University, Institutes of National Importance etc.

Colleges/Institutions like Affiliated College, autonomous college and stand-alone institutes and Faculty or Department or Programme. Undergraduate enrollment accounts for 80% of the total, while post-graduate programs account for 11% of total enrollment. The disparity is due to a lack of capacity in HEIs. Graduates from general courses have low employability and those from technical courses have 33% employment through placement. There is a lack of quality education and disconnect between industry and education.

Quality in HEIs was monitored by University Grants Commission (UGC). The AICTE, a national-level body set up in 1945, is the advisory body for all matters relating to technical education.

Now, there are two major accreditation bodies for HEIs in India. NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established in 1994 and NBA (National Board of Accreditation) NAAC assesses all colleges irrespective of their disciplines and NBA is limited to technical engineering and management programs. Both assessments have now been made compulsory by UGC. However, as of 2017, only 14% of all HEIs have NAAC accreditation. In addition to the UGC, 14 professional councils are responsible for recognizing courses, promoting professional services, and providing grants to HEIs in particular disciplines. The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is set to replace the existing National Policy on Education.

The total number of Indian students overseas increased from 66,713 in 2000 to 375055 in 2018, based on data analysis from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. It translates to a robust average annual growth rate of 22%. 36% of all Indian students overseas were enrolled in the USA universities, followed by 19% in Australia and Canada.

Scenario in Nepal

Eleven universities and six academies, as equivalent to deemed universities, currently operate in Nepal. All universities are technically public institutions, but their campuses (i.e., colleges) are often privately-owned. There are two types of campuses/colleges in Nepal: Constituent colleges and affiliated campuses/colleges.

University Grants Commission is the regulatory, autonomous statutory body formed to promote, facilitate, support, and enhance higher education quality. The Council for Technical Education and Vocational

Training (CTEVT) is a national autonomous apex body committed to producing technical and skillful human resources. Nepal Engineering Council sets norms and standards for engineering education in Nepal.

The rate of students choosing to go abroad for higher education has dramatically soared despite the increasing number of universities and public/private institutions. Prevailing national issues like poverty, unemployment, slow economic growth and political instability in Nepal have been acting as major causes for Nepalese to fly overseas for higher studies. The USA remains a preferred choice for international students around the world. It is estimated that the US is chosen as a destination by at least 70 percent of the students looking forward to studying abroad.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study applied the approach that relies on the primary data collected through a survey from Indian and Nepalese universities in a consistent, internationally comparable format. The individual institution's internationalization activities are the unit of analysis rather than the university-level activities.

Data Collection Method

In this study, there are two approaches to understand the extent of Internationalization in Higher Education Institutions of India and Nepal. One approach is external to the system and relies on such secondary data as, for example, the reports on the status of HEIs published by respective governments of India and Nepal, literature studies published by various independent researchers and institutions like ERASMUS. The first approach, which mainly relies on secondary data, is not of much use because of the discrepancy in data collection and analysis methodologies. The second is the primary survey-based approach which relies on academic behavioral and attitudinal data voluntarily provided by the academic institutions in a consistent, internationally comparable format. The former relies on the aggregate macro-level national data, the latter on the disaggregate micro-level data collected from higher education institutes.

Survey stages

A survey to study internationalization status in higher education institutes of India and Nepal was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the emphasis was given to understanding internationalization's status among Indian and Nepalese higher education institutions. It was then used in identifying institutions which are doing some of the best practices in Internationalization. The second stage analyzed and identified the status of best practices of Internationalization among selected Indian and Nepalese higher education institutions.

In the first stage, from various governing and statutory bodies of higher education institutions has obtain baseline information about the name, address, and contact details of various institutions across India & Nepal. These governing and statutory bodies include bodies such as the University Grant Commission (UGC), Association of Indian Universities (AIU), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), The Council of Architecture (COA), Ministry of Education- Government of Nepal etc. This information collected and categories state, types of institution and stream wise. Mainly 6 geographic zones were created and divided among the partner institutions to establish further communication. A detailed database of HEIs of India and Nepal was prepared by partner institutes involved in this project through referring to their websites. Telephonic contact was established with Public relations officers or representatives of International offices of respective institutions. They were briefed about the survey and a questionnaire with instructions was shared with them. Table 1 depicted the distribution of partner institutes' responsibilities to collect primary data from higher education institutes for India and Nepal.

Table 1: Distribution of the responsibilities among partner institutes

ZONE	STATES	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION
NORTHERN ZONE	Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, and Rajasthan	P-3 SCET, India
NORTH EASTERN ZONE	Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura; The State of Sikkim	P-8 NEC, Nepal
CENTRAL ZONE	Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhnad and Uttar Pradesh	P-6 IPSA, India
EASTERN ZONE	Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal	P-5 VESIM, India
WESTERN ZONE	Dadra and Nagar Havelli, Daman and Diu, Goa, Gujarat, and Maharashtra	P-7 SMAID, India
SOUTHERN ZONE	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana	P4- NMREC, India
NEPAL	All universities of Nepal	P9- SEC Nepal

Sampling techniques

The convenience sampling method was used to statistically measure a subset of individuals selected from a larger group or population to approximate a response from the entire group. Unlike other sampling techniques, the Convenience sampling method is a practical approach to garner responses from many groups. The main reason for selecting this method is to collect HEIs data from a conveniently available pool of HEI respondents from India and Nepal. It is the most commonly used sampling technique as it is incredibly prompt, uncomplicated and cost-effective. In many cases, members are readily approachable as a part of the sample. As the researcher's knowledge is instrumental in creating a sample in this sampling technique, there are chances that the results obtained will be highly accurate with a minimum margin of error. It creates, in most cases, a balanced subset that carries the most significant potential for representing the larger group as a whole.

Representative sample criteria

The following criteria were considered to make the sample of the study close representative of India and Nepal's higher education institutes.

- Large government-sponsored institutions like IITs, NITs, IIMs were intentionally kept out from the survey as these are Government-sponsored elite institutions. IITs, IIMs, NITs have just 3% of total students but get 50% of government funds. The remaining 97% of students attend more than 865 higher educational institutes and received negligible government funding. So the inclusion of such institutions in the survey list may skew the survey results and not represent the actual ground reality.
- In India and Nepal, the prospect of Internationalization in HEIs is governed by the single statutory body of the Ministry of Education. In both countries, there are no separate governing councils for various education streams of Internationalization. So in sample selection, all HEIs are considered equivalent.

Data collection instrument

A questionnaire was prepared by studying various literature resources to identify essential aspects of Internationalization in higher education institutions. Some past studies conducted by World Bank and European Union related to Internationalization in education were also referred to as case studies. A draft questionnaire was shared with all partner institutions for their feedback, and according to their suggestions and value addition final questionnaire was prepared. Questions in the questionnaire were related to institutions' necessary information, their Internationalization status, benefits of Internationalization, issues related to Internationalization, and Internationalization prospects. The questionnaire has divided into two sections. The first section was baseline about the status of Internationalization and individual opinions and issues of the Internationalization of higher education institutions. The second section is related to the documentation of best practices identified from the first section. An online web-based survey platform was used to conduct the survey. A special web base domain was prepared and shared with all partner institutions involved in the data collection process. All partner institutions were given access to their respective domain, so they could use its dashboard to monitor their activities' progress.

Data collection Duration

Partner institutions in India & Nepal were assigned a geographic zone to carry out surveys via online web domain. Total 245 institutions registered and out of them, 118 responded to the questionnaire sent by partner institutions. The survey was started on 5th January 2020 and most institutions submitted their data by mid of March 2020. Lockdown because of COVID 19 pandemic was imposed in India and Nepal from 24th March 2020, and till date, education institutions are not permitted to function in full capacity.

Data analysis

Data surveyed from selected HEIs through a web portal was collected. The collected data was then verified and necessary corrections were done with the consent of surveyed institutions. SPSS (Statistical Package for the social sciences) software was used to analyze collected data. Data analysis was performed in three categories.

Generating Profiles of Institutions: Existing situation of Internationalization was assessed. Here experience, type of activities, preferences, governance structure of Internationalization was analyzed.

Analysis of choices in weightage-based questions: Here, the main focus was to assess categorical data inclinations. Which trends were preferred across geographical location, institution type or institution category wise. This analysis aims to find out popular trends and their range in Internationalization in India and Nepal.

Analysis of trends in preference-based questions: For this segment, preferences-based questions, choices and priorities-wise each indicator were analyzed. Trends in first choices and last choices are discussed to indicate various preferences of choices and priorities about internationalization practices.

IV. RESULTS

Profile of the HEIs

Table 2 bifurcate the profile of the HEIs by institute types, institute description and their location based on whether they have a program for Internationalization. Overall results indicated that out of 118 higher education institutions surveyed, 70 HEIs do not have any program for student/faculty mobility/curriculum up-gradation; only 48 have some program. Later responses will indicate there is little formal institutional level program instead, it is on an ad hoc basis. There is much scope for capacity building in Internationalization in most HEIs.

Further, out of 48 HEIs who have an Internationalization program, 3 - Government administered, 3 - Government aided, 21 - Self-financed institutions, 14 private unaided and 7 - autonomous institutions. As per the Location wise distribution, 28 were urban HEIs and 20 rural HEIs. Finally, the institute description, 3 HEIs were research-focused, 16 HEIs teaching-focused and 29 HEIs were having a balance of both research and teaching focused.

Whereas out 70 HEIs who do not have any program, 7 were Government administered, 7- Government aided, 33- Self-financed institutions, 20 private unaided and 3- autonomous institutions. As per the Location wise distribution, 39 were urban HEIs and 31 rural HEIs. Finally, the institute description wise, 2 HEIs were research-focused, 24 HEIs teaching-focused and 44 HEIs were having balance of both research and teaching focused. The sample covered all types of HEI typologies existing in India and Nepal. As rural HEIs play a remarkable role in India and Nepal's education sectors, considerable samples from rural areas were included in the primary survey.

Table 2: HEI profile

Profile of the HEI		Have Internationalization Program	
		No	Yes
Institution Type	Government	7	3
	Government-aided	7	3
	Private unaided	20	14
	Autonomous	3	7
	Self-financed	33	21
Location	Urban	39	28
	Rural	31	20
Institution Describe	Research focused	2	3
	Teaching focused	24	16
	Balance of research and teaching	44	29
Total (118)		70	48

Status of Internationalization of Higher Education

This section analyzes the data collected from 48 HEIs who have a program for Internationalization. The section provides a detailed analysis of HEI's perspective and their existing initiatives towards the Internationalization of higher education. Table 3 indicates the status of Internationalization and steps taken by the HEI to Promote the Internationalization of higher education.

Table 3: Status of Internationalization

Status of Internationalization		Frequency
Internationalization as mission or vision statement	No	22
	Yes	26
Importance of Internationalization	1 star	3
	2 star	1
	3 star	9
	4 star	19
	5 star	16
Initiation of Internationalization	< 2 years	19

	< 3 years	5
	> 3 years	24
Formal policy for Internationalization	No	30
	Yes	18
Total		48

Table 3 shows that out of 48 HEIs, 26 HEIs had Internationalization as part of their guiding statements, while 22 had no explicit Internationalization element in their vision/mission statement. In the absence of any Internationalization element in the Vision, it follows that these institutions have not taken any steps towards Internationalization. However, most HEIs believe that Internationalization is an essential factor for the institution's management at the institution policy level. The results support that as 35 HEIs have given 4 point to the Internationalization on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 are most important.

Further, in institutions with Internationalization, 50% (24 out of 48) have been carrying out related activities for more than 3 years. 5 HEIs had fewer than 3 years and 19 HEIs had an experience of fewer than 2 years. So we can say that almost half of all respondents have less than 3 years' experience and are relatively new in Internationalization. Finally, it was found that 30 HEIs do not have any formal policy/strategy for Internationalization, whereas 18 HEIs have a formal policy.

Existing Practices of Internationalization of Higher Education

Surveyed HEIs were also analyzed from point of view of their existing internationalization initiative. Table 4 summarized the HEIs Internationalization in terms of most valued internationalization activities, fund sources, and internationalization benefits.

Table 4: HEI's Existing Practices of Internationalization-Most Valued Activity

Most valued Internationalization activities	Percent	Sources of fund	Percent	Benefits of Internationalization	Percent
Student Mobility	58.1%	Fund from student fees	29.1%	Students Employability	54.2%
Faculty Exchange	7.0%	External funds	19.8%	Networking	27.1%
Strategic Partnership	14.0%	Fund from student's activities/institute activities	12.8%	Public Image	10.4%
Joint / Dual Degree	2.3%	General institutional budget	23.3%	Generation of Funds	2.1%
Capacity building program	11.6%	Not funded	11.6%	Better Cultural	4.2%
Short-term exposure program	2.3%	Do not know	3.5%	Revenue Generation	2.1%
Full-term Credit transfer program	4.7%	-	-	-	-

Most of the HEIs have given Student mobility with 58.1% as most valued activity for Internationalization. Simultaneously, strategic partnerships (14.0%) and capacity-building programs (11.6%) were the second and third respective priorities of HEIs across India and Nepal. These three priorities help present new challenges and interpretations for students and academic staff of institutions, helping them become more rounded. International mobility is not only about academia and studies, the other experiences and skills that accompany outward mobility often have the most significant impact on student development.

Finding funds for international programs is always challenging for beginners. 29.1% of HEIs depend on students' fees fund for internationalization activities, 23.3% funded the program from the institutional budget and 19.8% received external funds. Table 4 also indicates that 54.2% HEIs indicate that Internationalization's main benefit is an improvement in student employability and Global exposure. It would also help HEIs in networking and collaboration possibilities (27.1 % HEIs), capacity building, resulting in improvement of the institution's image (10.4% HEIs).

Table 5: HEI’s Existing Practices of Internationalization-External Drivers

Drivers of Internationalization	Percent	Assessment of Internationalization Activities	Percent
Business and Industry Demand	42.40%	External review	8.3%
Demand for Higher Foreign Education	21.20%	Both internal and external review	47.4%
Government Policy	9.10%	Internationalization activities are not assessed	35.4%
National and International Rankings	18.20%	Other	8.3%
Societal Expectations	9.10%	-	-

Out of the total surveyed institution (table 5), 42.40% HEIs had Business and industry demand as main external drivers of Internationalization. The same finding also emerged from the previous analysis of the same survey as internationalization activities would increase the probability of better employment, thus improving the institutional image. Another two significant trends were Demand from foreign higher education institutions (21.20% HEIs) and National and international rankings (18.20% HEIs). It indicates that HEIs were concerned about their linkages with other institutions, image building, and quality improvement through various national and international bodies ranking activities.

Further, 47.4% HEIs have internal and external reviews of activities and point to checks and accountability. What type of reviews and which agencies are involved in these reviews need to be understood for better clarity. 35.4% HEIs were such where no assessment takes place. Reviewing activities is essential to keep any program on track and to prevent mismanagement of resources. It is also a pointer towards the sincerity of the institution towards the objective of Internationalization.

Table 6: HEI’s Existing Practices of Internationalization-Geographic Priority

Geographic priorities for Internationalization	Percent	Selection criteria for partner institute	Percent
No	77.1%	Ease of doing business	11.2%
Yes	22.9%	Visa availability	10.7%
Geographic priorities for Internationalization	Percent	Local language known	9.6%
		Partners are leaders in discipline.	14.7%
		Visitation & training offered by partners.	14.7%
Africa	9.1%	students demand	12.7%
Asia	9.1%	Better infrastructure for research	14.7%
Europe and North America	63.6%	To Increase attractiveness of employability	11.2%
Latin America	18.2%	Other	.5%

Table 6 depicted that 77.1% HEIs have specific geographic priority and 22.9% do not have any specific priority for the Internationalization of higher education. 63.60% HEIs have a strong preference for Europe and North America as a preferred region for Internationalization which was supported by previous literature that U.S.A., Canada, Germany, U.K. remain the most favored destinations for student and faculty mobility (Choudaha, 2017).

Partner selection is a crucial decision for Internationalization. HEIs give foremost priority to ‘partner institutes who are leaders in the discipline, where is better infrastructure for research, and partners offer visitation and training. (14.7% HEIs have responded positively as the most important criterion for selection in each factor). 12.7% HEIs have responded with the partner institute being in demand by students for selection. The least importance has been given to the language of a country (9.6%). It could be due to many universities offering courses with English as a medium of instruction. Other reasons were the partnering activity offers students better employability (11.2%), Visa availability (10.7%) and Ease of doing business with the partner (11.2%).

Challenges of Internationalization of Higher Education

Table 7: Issues in Internationalization of Higher Education

Impediments to Internationalization	Percent	Potential Risk of Internationalization	Percent	Challenges of Internationalization	Percent
Credit Transfer Problem	29.2%	Brain Drain	32.6%	Concerns with security	22.1%
Lack of Support University/ higher	22.9%	Difficult to assess organized quality of courses / program	18.6%	Difficulties related to recognition of prior	14.9%

authority		offered by foreign institutes		qualifications	
Financial Resources Inadequate	18.8%	Homogenization of curriculum	9.3%	Fear of xenophobia/racism	8.3%
Faculty Disinterested	2.1%	Increased xenophobia / racism on campus	2.3%	Increased competition among institutions	9.9%
Students Disinterested	2.1%	International Opportunities accessible only to student with financial resources	23.3%	Lack of financial support	2.2%
Local Language	4.2%	Overemphasis on Internationalization at the expense of other priorities of important for staff and students	7.0%	Language barrier	11.0%
Lack of knowledge of opportunities, programs	4.2%	Overuse of English as a medium of instruction	2.3%	Mistrust due to cases of corruption /fraud	7.2%
Lack of any International Strategy	4.2%	Pursuit of international partnership / policies for reasons of prestige	4.7%	Policy changes in source countries	12.2%
Inflexible curriculum unaccommodating of time spent outside	8.3%	-	-	Visa / immigration policies	12.2%
No incentive for Promotion	4.2%	-	-	-	-

Table 7 summarized the significant impediments, potential risks, and challenges faced by HEIs in India and Nepal in the Internationalization of the higher education journey.

HEIs were asked for major impediments they are facing. 29.20% HEIs indicated that credit transfer is a significant impediment as a choice-based credit transfer system provides a 'cafeteria' approach. Students can take courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, take additional credits and acquire more than the required credits. In the case of current Indian and Nepalese HEIs management, it seems difficult because they are following different credit systems. Other major impediments such as Lack of Support by University/ higher authority (22.9%) and Inadequate Financial Resources (18.8%) were the primary concern for HEIs.

Further, 32.60% HEIs considered 'Brain drain' as a prime risk because they believe that global exposure will create more brain drain possibilities. In this process, universities and countries may lose their most educated and talented human resources to other countries through migration. Adding to this, International Opportunities accessible only to a student with financial resources (23.3% HEIs) and Difficulty to assess the organized quality of courses/program offered by foreign institutes (18.6%) were the potential risks that HEIs were considering in Internationalization of higher education in India and Nepal.

Finally, table VII highlighted that the Security of students (22.1% HEIs) remains the foremost concern of International degree-seeking students. Further, challenges such as Difficulties related to recognition of prior qualifications (14.9%), Policy changes in source countries (12.2%), Visa/immigration policies (12.2%), and Language barrier (11.0%) and Increased competition among institutions (9.9%) were the major challenges HEIs foresee in future concerning the recruitment of international degree-seeking students.

Suggestions for future strategies for Internationalization of HEIs in India & Nepal

Based on the study findings and some observations made during the survey and based on the National Education Policy (NEP) 2019, the study proposed the following concerns may be addressed during the strategy and framework of Internationalization activities.

- Internationalization activities could be explicitly targeted at private, unaided, self-financed, autonomous, accredited HEIs and programs as they show scope for good potential. Accredited colleges or programs have been reviewed for quality of education and assessed by external agencies. Private/autonomous/self-financed HEIs enjoy greater freedom in decision-making so partner institutes can work out an agreement's modalities without too many bureaucratic tangles.
- In India, as per NEP 19, there are plans to develop all HEIs by 2030 into Type 1- Research Universities/ Type 2- Teaching Universities /Type 3 Autonomous colleges with degree-granting power. It is planned that colleges must develop into Autonomous degree-granting institutes or merge completely with Affiliating Universities. These colleges will have the potential for Internationalization as they will be degree-granting and will do away with one of the significant impediments (across all parameters) – Lack of support from affiliating universities.
- Credits for UG courses have more potential for Internationalization as student mobility is highest in UG courses/programs. Due to the limited availability of seats in courses of their interest and choice, many students are unable to fulfill their potential. The future need of the hour is 'multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary programs aimed at 17 Sustainable Goals (part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development adopted by General Assembly of United Nations in September 2015) subjects like Clean

water, energy, environment sustainability, gender equality will become important. The focus will shift from Uni-discipline to a strong 'liberal education approach' regardless of subject or duration. Even engineering institutes will move towards holistic education with more Arts and Humanities courses. Foreign language studies will also become important. India had a strong tradition of Humanities education, but it is the Foreign Universities that have an edge in Liberal Education. So this can be used as an advantage in Internationalization activities.

- In NEP 19 HEIs, including those offering professional education, will be empowered to widen the scope of course offerings, so each becomes a large multi-disciplinary institute offering a wide selection of courses. Time and age limits for entering and completing programs will be relaxed to allow learners to take breaks between studies and a system of transferring credits will be developed. It has much scope for various mobility.
- The Concept of Credit Bank: An academic credit bank can be currently envisaged and later the same maybe established digitally to store academic credits earned from various recognized HEIs. Credits earned from previous years, other institutes, work internships can be awarded once the student enters the formal program again. With this Academic Credit Bank, fear of wastage of years at International institutes is avoided. Through credit bank, it will become possible to undertake short duration courses abroad and accumulate credits for earning a Certificate/Diploma/Degree.
- Finance and Affordability: There is a strong relationship between outbound student flows and macroeconomic conditions. Post pandemic, there may be downward fluctuations, but they are unlikely to slow growth in the long run. India and Nepal's rising middle classes will have greater purchasing power in the years ahead. Many of the present generations have grown up in corporate upward classes and are financially well off. A degree from a foreign University is a valuable asset. Many companies prefer to hire graduates from foreign schools, especially in Europe and USA.
- In the immediate present, there is potential for setting up agreements for Dual Degree. Due to the economic downturn, many will aspire to study at European Universities but will find living abroad on campus expensive. With many courses offered online, this could become possible. The current situation needs the setting up of online, distance or e-learning programs where, at a later date, students may be invited on campus for internships or earning credits.
- The culture of empowering academic freedom for faculty, including the freedom to pursue research, write and adopt innovative pedagogical and curricular practices, is essential. The Faculty team should have a judicious mix of researchers, teachers and field practitioners. Institutes can quickly identify experts from partner institutions responsible for a set of specific deliverables and be offered an honorarium as a team member.
- The Indian and Nepalese institutes need to build performance-rewarding incentives for faculty in their promotion and career advancement schemes. In the absence of any special credits for faculty mobility, it will be challenging to get the faculty interested in any opportunity for stints in Europe.
- Since the emphasis is on making the education industry and job-oriented, semester placements/internships also attract students to professional courses. It will also enhance their cultural exposure and help them become global citizens.
- There is a huge demand for graduates in Agriculture and allied disciplines, HEIs, and partner institutes. They should plan to provide integrated UG education in related disciplines of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences. Integrated agriculture education of different Universities and focusing on agricultural research is essential for attracting public grants and, therefore, offers internationalization scope.
- At the institutional level, most HEIs with Internationalization does not have trained or qualified staff to run the International Office. The administrative staff and some teaching faculty take on the task ad hoc. Staff training and human resource capacity building will be crucial for Internationalization.

V. CONCLUSION

Internationalization is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and make a meaningful contribution to society. The study's overall objective was to understand the present scenario of the internationalization process of higher education institutions (HEIs) in India and Nepal to improve the quality of higher education (HE) and suggest the design of internationalization strategies, capacity building.

The profile analysis of the HEIs revealed that only around 40% of surveyed HEIs had initiated activities of the Internationalization of higher education. Further, HEIs which were involved in internationalization activities were mostly Self-financed and Private unaided. Government and Government added HEIs were playing a limited role in the Internationalization of higher education. HEIs involved in

internationalization activities were evenly dispersed in rural and urban areas and a majority of them belonged to the balance of research and teaching HEIs.

The study findings also revealed that a majority of HEIs considered Internationalization as an essential strategy. They had implemented this strategy for the last two to three years. Still, many HEIs did not have a formal policy, and many of them did not incorporate Internationalization in their vision or mission statement. It may result in a lack of commitment by various HEI's stakeholders towards Internationalization. The analysis of existing internationalization practices shows that HEIs considered Student Mobility, Faculty Exchange, and Strategic Partnership as the most valued internationalization activities.

Further, HEIs were generally relying on internal sources to raise the fund to support internationalization activities. Student's Employability, Networking, Public Image were the significant benefits that HEIs see due to the Internationalization of higher education. Business and Industry Demand, Demand for Higher Foreign Education, National and International Rankings were the significant drives that have motivated HEIs to perform Internationalization activities. HEIs in India and Nepal were in the introductory stage of Internationalization; therefore, most of them do not have any specific geographic priority for internationalization opportunities in a foreign country. However, results show that they prefer Europe and North America more for such opportunities than other parts of the world.

The study also tried to figure out the major HEI's issues regarding impediments, challenges and risk associated with Internationalization. The current situation demands internationalization initiatives. However, many technical /structural impediments such as Credit Transfer problems, Lack of Support by University/ higher authority, and Financial Resources Inadequate need to be addressed. Apart from this, Many HEIs were considering Brain Drain, Difficulty in assessing organized quality of courses / program offered by foreign institutes and accessibility of International Opportunities as a critical potential risk of Internationalization which needs to be answered.

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