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Internationalisation of India's Higher Education

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The article is based on **Education and international relations** that was published on ORF (Observer Research Foundation) on 3rd September. It talks about the prospects and initiatives regarding internationalisation of India's higher education.

Context

- India has an inspirational history of Nalanda, Takshashila and Vikramashila that served as the melting pot of scholars from across the world.
- Unfortunately, no Indian University is ranked in the top 150 universities globally. Only three Indian institutions – IIT Bombay, IISc Bangalore and IIT Delhi- find a place in the top-200 of the [QS World University Ranking for 2020](#).
- Indian education system is on its way to reconstruct itself. Several initiatives have been taken by the government to attract a large number of foreign scholars to study in Indian universities and enriching our system through ideas and diversity.
- To achieve this objective, India's Higher Education needs to be reformed to first provide wholesome education for Indian students, before we cater to foreign students in large numbers.
- Without urgent systemic reforms, internationalisation of India's higher education will remain a distant dream.

Favourable Factors attracting foreign students to India

- The Indian economy is doing well and has progressed to become the world's seventh-largest economy by nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power parity (PPP). The image of the third-world poor country is being shed slowly.
- India has developed the image of being **home to successful tech companies**. Bengaluru has become synonymous with startups. It is stirring quite a lot interest among the globally mobile youngsters.

- Our top institutions, especially the IITs, are world class and feature in the top-200 of world rankings.
- **Indian origin CEOs** such as Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella, have bolstered the image of Indian scholars.
- Top-200 of the Fortune 500 companies recruit from Indian universities in large numbers.
- Experiences in emerging markets are placed at a premium in developed countries that want to establish a business presence here.
- India offers a rich milieu of culture and arts for the students to engage with.
- **Popularity of English as a spoken language** places India at an advantage vis-a-vis China.
- The **cost of higher education is relatively cheap in India**, offering an interesting place in the cost-value matrix.

Efforts to attract foreign students and faculties

- **Study in India Programme:**
 - Primary objective is to target foreign students by branding India as an attractive education destination.
 - India is home to around 70,000 foreign students. The 'Study in India' programme has an ambition of increasing it to two lakh by 2022.
- **Fee Waivers and scholarship:** Indian higher educational institutions are waking up to the opportunities of having an internationally diverse student body. Many universities are offering fee waivers and scholarships to attract foreign students to boost their image and rankings.
- **GIAN (Global Initiative for Academic Networks) programme** was initiated in 2015 to invite distinguished academicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, and experts from premier institutions from across the world, to teach in the higher educational institutions in India.
- The **SPARC (Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration)** programme was initiated in to facilitate research and academic collaboration with top academic institutions in the world.
 - The Government plans to fund collaboration of top Indian institutions with foreign institutions figuring in the top-500 of the QS world ranking.
- The '**Institutes of Eminence**' was conceptualised with a goal of making a few prestigious Indian Higher Education Institutions rank within the top 100 in globally-renowned rankings.

Education as Soft Power

- Hamid Karzai, Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders who have studied in India speak endearingly about their experiences as students in India.

- Indian students studying abroad in the US or the UK feel attached to their alma mater and develop a bond with the host countries.
- The American education system is among its biggest sources of soft power. The home to some of the best universities in the world, it attracts the brightest minds from across the world.

Issues and Challenges before Higher Education in India

- **Shortage of resources:** State universities and their affiliated colleges that handle bulk of enrollment in higher education receive a very small amount of grants and thus lacks basic infrastructure.
- **Teacher vacancies:** According to UGC, Out of the total sanctioned teaching posts, 35% professor posts, 46% associate professor posts and 26% assistant professor posts are vacant.
- **Accountability and performance of teachers:** At present, there is no mechanism for ensuring the accountability and performance of professors in universities and colleges. This is unlike foreign universities where the performance of college faculty is evaluated by their peers and students.
- **Lack of employable skills:** A recent employability report has found that over 80 percent of engineers in India are unemployable as they lack the technological skills required by employers now.
- **Outdated Curriculum:** Eminent scientist and Bharat Ratna awardee CNR Rao once said, 90 per cent of the universities and higher educational institutions in the country have outdated curriculum.

Way Forward

- Allowing India's online **MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)** such as those on **SWAYAM** (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) Platform to be used in neighbouring countries will **strengthen our soft power**.
- Enhancing investment in higher education, especially in research and development, is urgently required to raise the standard of higher education in India.
 - **HEFA (Higher Education Finance Agency)** is a welcome step in providing finance to premier educational institutions for creation of high quality infrastructure and innovation ecosystem.
- Taking measures to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India to increase inflow of foreign funding in India's Higher Education system and to reduce "Brain Drain" from India.

- Activities mandated under the 'Study in India' programme should be executed.
 - The process of making visa procedures simpler
 - Sprucing up facilities in host institutions
 - Marketing Indian universities in target countries
 - Target-marketing student groups through social media
 - Signing international agreements with institutions and universities abroad
- Education can be an important source of soft power if it is pursued in the right direction. Lessons can be learnt from our Yoga culture which has gained tremendous recognition worldwide.

Drishti Input:

“Education can be an important source of soft power. Elaborate. Discuss the initiatives taken by the government to attract foreign students in Indian universities and to stop Brain Drain from India.”