



Advent of Foreign Universities in India

This editorial is based on [“An India chapter for foreign universities”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 24/01/2023. It talks about the concerns with the setting up of Foreign Universities in India.

For Prelims: University Grants Commission, Foreign Universities, National Education Policy.

For Mains: Challenges with the Advent of Foreign Universities in India, Government Policies & Interventions, Education.

Recently, the [University Grants Commission \(UGC\)](#) uploaded a draft regulation on the **‘Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs) in India’**. A legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India.

Initially, **permission would be granted for ten years**, with renewal being subject to the fulfilment of requisite conditions. The foreign universities would have the freedom to devise their own curricula and admission process.

The [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#) provided that **“selected universities e.g., those from among the top 100 universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India.**

What is the Significance of this Step?

▪ Benefits to India:

- **Cut-down Outflow of Indian Money and Brain Drain:**
 - There are a **number of Indian students who opt for foreign degrees**, which means an outflow of Indian money.
 - A recent report by a leading consulting firm estimated that **Indian students’ overseas spending is set to grow from the current annual USD28 billion to USD80 billion annually by 2024.**
 - The number of Indian students opting for higher education abroad rose from 4.4 lakh in 2016 to 7.7 lakh in 2019; it is set to grow further to roughly 18 lakh by 2024, resulting in higher overseas expenditure on higher education.
- **Address the issue of Gross Enrollment Ratio:**
 - The advent of foreign universities in India **may increase the enrollment ratio by providing more options for higher education and potentially attracting more students** to pursue degrees.
 - Despite having one of the largest higher education systems in the world, [India’s Gross Enrolment Ratio \(GER\)](#) in higher education is just 27.1%, among the world’s lowest.

- **Cultural Exchange:**
 - Having foreign universities in India can **foster cultural exchange and understanding between India and other countries.**
- **Increased Competitiveness:**
 - By having foreign universities in India, **the country can become more competitive globally in terms of education and research.**
- **Brand Building:**
 - It can also **increase the brand value of the country, providing an opportunity to showcase the country's potential** and strengths to the world.
- **Benefits to Foreign Universities:**
 - India has a **large and rapidly growing population of young people**, many of whom are eager to pursue higher education.
 - India has a **large pool of highly educated and skilled workers**, making it an attractive destination for foreign universities looking to establish research centers or other operations.
 - India's economy is **growing rapidly, and this presents an opportunity for foreign universities to establish a foothold in the country.**

What will be the Challenges with the Setting up of Foreign Universities in India?

- **Quality of Education:**
 - The **quality of education provided by FHEIs may not be up to the standards of Indian institutions**, which could negatively impact the employability and future prospects of Indian students.
- **Fees:**
 - The **fees charged by FHEIs are often much higher than those charged by Indian institutions**, which could make higher education less accessible to students from lower-income families.
- **Lack of Oversight:**
 - The **regulatory oversight of FHEIs in India may be inadequate**, which could lead to situations where students are taken advantage of or left without recourse in case of problems.
- **Cultural Impact:**
 - The **influx of foreign institutions and students could lead to a loss of Indian culture and values**, as well as a lack of integration between Indian and foreign students.
- **National Security Concerns:**
 - The **foreign institutions may be used for espionage and other illegal activities.**
- **Not Enough Resources:**
 - Truly reputed higher educational institutions operate on a **not-for-profit basis and have no materialistic motives to go offshore.**
 - A few countries that have **such offshore campuses had to hard-sell the institutions the idea by leasing land at almost no cost**, bearing the bulk of infrastructure cost and promising them the academic, administrative and financial autonomy that they enjoy in their home country.
 - **India could hardly afford any such incentives.**
- **Autonomy to Foreign Institutions:**
 - The draft notification promises **academic, administrative and financial autonomy to foreign institutions** but **takes that away by asserting that they abide by all the conditions** that the UGC and the Indian government prescribe from time to time.
 - The provision that the **foreign higher education institutions must not do anything “contrary to the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality”** might deter the best universities that most value their academic autonomy.

What should be the Way Forward?

- **Developing Clear and Transparent Regulations:**

- The government should establish clear guidelines and regulations for the establishment, operation, and accreditation of foreign universities in India. This can help ensure that these institutions operate in a way that is consistent with Indian laws and regulations.
- **Promoting Collaboration and Partnerships:**
 - Instead of allowing foreign universities to establish standalone campuses in India, the government could encourage them to collaborate and partner with existing Indian institutions. This could help to mitigate **competition and ensure that the benefits of foreign universities are shared with Indian institutions and students.**
- **Reforming Universities of India:**
 - Government need to **reform universities in India that would involve a number of different steps**, such as improving the quality of education, increasing funding for higher education, and promoting research and innovation.
- **Setting up EEZs:**
 - Another step can be Setting up **Education Excellence Zones (EEZs) and International Universities.**
 - As a result, **knowledge production would be clustered in India, and FHEIs could be invited into these EEZs for true inter-university excellence** and competition.

Drishti Mains Question

What are the issues with the advent of Foreign Universities in India?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. “Education is not an injunction, it is an effective and pervasive tool for all-round development of an individual and social transformation”. Examine the New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP, 2020) in light of the above statement. **(2020)**

Q. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 remains inadequate in promoting incentive-based system for children's education without generating awareness about the importance of schooling. Analyse. **(2022)**