Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: From UGC to the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill

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Abstract: The internationalisation of Indian higher education has emerged as a strategic objective in recent decades, driven by policy shifts, global demand, and economic imperatives. Traditionally, the swings of Indian institutions between the colonial past and national interests are experienced as they struggle to relate to international norms and maintain their national heritage. Commissions and Committees, such as those led by Radhakrishnan, Mudaliar, and Kothari, laid some of the early groundwork for modernisation, as well as more recent policies (NEP 2020, UGC regulations) that have expressly encouraged foreign collaborations. It is a paradigmatic change on the part of the draft Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, which incorporates internationalisation into its very fabric (in the form of councils to manage foreign campuses and outbound growth). This not only explains how the internationalisation of higher education in India began with debates on English vs. vernacular education during the colonial era, but also covers current legal and policy restructuring, utilising government reports and committee findings. The author in this article endeavours to analyse the role of the UGC, the National Education Policy, and court interventions in enabling cross-border education. The author also outlines ongoing challenges and suggests how the new bill and systemic reforms aim to address them, positioning India as a "global study destination" for students and scholars.

Keywords: Academic Collaboration, Cross-border Education, Cross-Border Mobility, India as Global Study Destination, Internationalisation, Judicial Oversight, National Education Policy

Introduction

Internationalisation has become a cornerstone of India's higher education reforms. Over the past decade, the government has explicitly sought to attract global institutions and talent; for instance, the "Study in India" programme, launched in 2018, offers scholarships to foreign students, indicating a plan to host nearly half a million international students by 2024 (NITI Aayog, 2025).

Current statistics show India remains primarily a source of outbound students (only ~0.6% of its ≈50 million higher ed students are foreign, but policy rhetoric is changing this (Iftikhar, 2025). As one expert observes, "the NEP 2020 is the first national policy text that prioritises internationalisation," aiming to make India a "global study destination" by providing "premium education at affordable costs" (Mondal, 2025). The government has revised regulations to allow top-ranked foreign universities to establish branch campuses, and even encouraged leading Indian universities to open campuses abroad. This strategic pivot is part of a broader vision: India's leaders seek to double higher education enrolment (12% to 30% of 18–23-year-olds)

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and build world-class multi-disciplinary institutions that can compete internationally (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2025).

Globalisation pressures and demographic trends have made international engagement essential. Official agencies have, in turn, emphasised cooperation across the borders. As an illustration, the new Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025, specifically mandates its regulatory councils to ensure internationalisation of education in order to achieve world-class standards (The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025). There has also been judicial focus: the Supreme Court has recently commissioned a national audit of privately based universities, as well as demanded openness in the NAAC accreditation procedure, highlighting worries about the position of the institutions in the world. This article will analyse and explore the education policies followed in the colonial era, changes brought thereafter, the role of regulatory bodies and the review of the new bill that might have an impact on internationalisation.

Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: A Historical Perspective

The involvement of India in international learning dates back thousands of years. Universities such as Nalanda and Taxila, initiated by ancient Indian scholars and rulers, attracted students throughout Asia. But colonialism essentially redefined Indian education. The most prominent among the colonial savants was Lord Macaulay, who proclaimed in 1835 that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.' In other words, he blatantly claimed the privileged position of Western knowledge and the English language education (Stein, 2010). Later policies, such as the English system with Despatch 1854 by Wood, and the Hunter Commission 1882, introduced this system to form English-speaking schools and a few colleges, mostly to support the needs of colonial administration. But the overall intellectual growth and development were still in their nascent stage (Wood, 1854). This 'un-Indian' model was much criticised thereafter, and many writers, until today, have denounced it, objecting that the schooling in the 19th century did not consider the past of India and produced students who were not rooted in their own culture but were more sensitive to foreign knowledge than to their own.

Following Independence in 1947, the first education commission was established to reform this legacy. According to the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), universities should have national leadership on all matters and also address the growing concerns in all kinds of higher education, literary and scientific, technical and professional. It advocated a balanced curriculum, arguing that English should remain the medium of higher instruction to ensure access to global knowledge: "English … is the only means of preventing our isolation from the world." Yet the same commission warned against ignoring native culture; it urged inculcating Indian civilisation and values within higher education so as not to "cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever-growing knowledge." In effect, early post-Independence reformers tried to blend Western scientific education with a revived pride in India's heritage (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1950).

Subsequent commissions are built on this foundation. The Secondary Education (Mudaliar) Commission (1952–53) focused on school-to-college quality, and the Kothari Commission (1964–66) created a comprehensive blueprint for expansion (Patra, 1952). Kothari famously proposed a 10+2+3 structure and formation of "centres of excellence" to raise India's educational standards. Although access to this commission's full text is limited, summary accounts note its call for "strengthening centres of advanced study" and developing some major universities to "achieve the highest international standards" (It implicitly recognised that Indian universities needed to benchmark against global peers). Later, in the 1980s and

1990s, committees like those headed by Gnanam (1990) and Ramlal Parikh (1993) looked at governance and accreditation, and the Anandakrishnan Committee addressed curriculum reform (Varghese & Malik, 2015). While these bodies rarely focused explicitly on internationalisation, their recommendations (for quality assurance, academic collaboration, and research emphasis) laid the groundwork that would later facilitate global linkages (Mathew, 2016). Finally, the Punchhi Commission (2007–10) on Centre–State relations and the Kasturirangan group (2017–18) crafting the National Education Policy underlined the urgency of modernisation; they predicted NEP 2020's explicit goals of global engagement and Indianisation of education.

Committees and Commissions

India's higher education policy has been shaped by numerous high-level panels (Bharucha, 2024), of which several stand out as particularly influential.

Radhakrishnan Commission (1948–49): The first University Education Commission post-independence, chaired by philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. It envisioned universities as engines of nation-building, responsible for leadership in politics, administration, science and arts. It advocated the combination of liberal education and professional training and underlined that the English-mediated teaching ability was essential to reach the world of science, or stay in the dark veil of ignorance forever. At the same time, it encouraged colleges to inculcate national ideas and culture in the students, citing that a system of education, which failed to educate about Indian heritage, had done little in terms of spreading Indian culture.

A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar Commission (1952-53): It was the call sign of the Secondary Education Commission, which conducted the review of schooling in India. It aimed at intensifying the secondary curricula and establishing easier access to college. Although the issue of concern was mainly in lower-level education, it influenced tertiary education through better preparation of studies (Patra, 1952).

Kothari Commission (1964-66): The Education Commission, led by D.S. Kothari, prescribed a pattern of education at every level in the country. It promoted the increased access of universities, the enhancement of the science education and the development of research (Kothari Education Commission, 1964). It saw the creation of major universities that would strive to meet the world standards, a move that indicated that India was to at least formulate world-class institutions. Another recommendation that the Kothari Commission made was the strengthening of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), as well as systematic educational planning, with the help of a National Education Fund.

Gnanam Committee (1990): An educational management panel handpicked by UGC. It analysed the administrative models for both colleges and universities. Although its focus was governance, it indirectly impacted internationalisation by urging autonomy and professionalisation in university management, aligning with global best practices (University Grants Commission, 1990).

Ramlal Parikh Committee (1993) was tasked with the responsibility of making improvements to teacher education, curriculum, and revising distance and correspondence courses. The analysis of B.Ed. training assisted it in improving pedagogical standards in education (Anbalagan & Jeyalakshmi, 2022).

National Knowledge Commission (2005-09): A non-statutory commission, the NKC recommendations in 2007-09 were highly advocated for their excellence and innovation. NKC, led by Sam Pitroda, a technocrat, encouraged the opening of Indian universities by increasing autonomy, state funding, and international connections (National Knowledge Commission, 2009). The vision

of the NKC prefigured such NEP 2020 objectives as vocational integration and internationalisation of campuses.

M. Anandakrishnan Committee (2007): This committee, also known as the committee on Tamil Nadu education reforms, chaired by Dr M. Anandakrishnan, advocated the modernisation of curricula and IT use. It emphasised the importance of industry-academia partnership, which implicitly endorsed technical education worldwide connectivity (Sivanesan, 2017).

Punchhi Commission (2007-10) was a commission on Centre-States relations. In its interim report, it drew attention to the supremacy of education to federal policy but did not specifically dwell on the internationalisation of higher education. It did venture to underline that states required more independence in being innovative, which found its echo at last in NEP 2020 (Arya & Dadwal, 2022).

Kasturirangan Committee (2017-18): It was set up to help in the drafting of the new national education policy, chaired by Dr K. Kasturirangan (Committee Reports, 2019). It explicitly incorporated internationalisation, recommending that top foreign universities be allowed to open branch campuses, and that Indian universities be empowered to expand overseas. These proposals formed the backbone of NEP 2020 (Sections 12.7–12.8), which for the first time offered a coherent legal vision for global engagement in higher education.

Internationalisation of Higher Education: Role of the UGC

The University Grants Commission (UGC) came into being through an Act of Parliament in 1956 and has served as the chief agency guiding Indian universities ever since. For many years, it concentrated mainly on funding and maintaining academic standards, yet its role has widened to embrace the building of links with institutions across the world (Government of India, 1956). Acting under the direction of the National Education Policy of 2020, the UGC has set out several major guidelines and regulations, listed below.

NAAC and Quality Assurance (1994 onward): In 1994, the UGC set up the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) to rate institutions. While not explicitly about foreign linkages, NAAC's grading (recently under judicial scrutiny provides an interface with global quality metrics (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, 2004). A 'NAAC A-grade' can boost an institution's attractiveness to international students and collaborators.

Internationalisation Guidelines (2021): In 2021, the University Grants Commission issued the "Guidelines for Internationalisation of Higher Education" to bring Indian higher education institutions into contact with universities across the world as part of the wider NHRI mission (Kamalakar, 2024). The guidelines encouraged exchange programmes for students and teachers, the setting up of dual degree courses, and the sharing of Indian cultural knowledge in other countries.

Academic Collaboration Regulations (2022): In 2022, the UGC announced the "Regulations on Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Institutions" (UGC, 2022). These rules opened the way for twinning, dual, and joint degree programmes with universities abroad—making it easier for students to study across national borders.

Foreign Campuses Regulations (2023): The landmark step came in late 2023 when the UGC finally permitted foreign universities to open campuses in India. The "UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023" require approval only for FHEIs ranked in the top 500 globally. Such FHEIs may offer undergrad to PhD programmes on Indian campuses, with degrees legally equivalent to those at the home campus. The specific regulations include admissions, curriculum equality, and

budget conformity. This 'light-touch' regulatory framework has direct alignment with NEP 2020 and also with the government's globalisation vision (Kamalakar, 2024). As an example, an article published in 2024 offers the following information that the government of India has observed that top foreign universities will now be permitted to function in India, and the laws are being geared accordingly towards internationalisation of higher education in India.

Recognition of Foreign Degrees: The UGC has also clarified the equivalence of foreign qualifications (for instance, recognising popular master's or PhD programmes abroad as eligible for Indian faculty jobs), and extends competitive exam eligibility, like GATE, JAM, to graduates of listed overseas universities (The Hindu Bureau, 2025).

By means of these measures and initiatives, the UGC can actively influence the internationalisation of Indian higher education—by facilitating the integration of the world into the business field, by encouraging external collaborations and by guaranteeing that Indian organisations can meet the standards of global quality. Its diversifying regulatory nature is an indication of how it has transitioned from insularity to openness, making domestic education consistent with international standards (UGC, 2021).

Internationalisation of Higher Education: NEP Perspective

The National Education Policy of 2020 is a turning point in the planning of Indian education. It anticipates international interaction in the first place. SE 12.7-12.8 outright promote research partnerships and faculty exchange with foreign institutions and imagine India as a global place of study (Pol et al., 2024). Key NEP provisions include:

- Allowing and regulating branch campuses of foreign universities, subject to UGC approval. The NEP states that India will invite "the top 100 or top 500 universities of the world to operate" campuses in India, although this exact target may be refined in implementation (*The Hindu*, 2023).
- Permitting leading Indian institutions to establish branch campuses outside the country. This step encourages the growth of Indian campuses overseas.
- Incentivising the inclusion of Indian knowledge systems, such as yoga and Ayurveda, within curricula designed for foreign students (Das et al., 2025). The intention is a blend of Bharatiya content with global academic formats.
- Promoting credit transfer and joint degrees so students can split study between India and abroad.
- Strengthening programmes like GIAN (Global Initiative for Academic Networks), SPARC (Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration), and PRABHASS (Pravasi Bharatiya Academic and Scientific Sampark—integrating Indian diaspora with the motherland), all designed to increase mobility and partnerships (Das et al., 2025).

According to official accounts, NEP 2020 was fulfilling the obvious vision of the country to enable foreign university campuses in India (UGC, 2021). The policy has also been successful in connecting higher education with the wider Indian approach to diplomacy (often described as education diplomacy)—such as Scholarships under Study in India and Gyan Videsh, which aim at attracting students in South Asia and Africa, raising the level of Indian soft power. The vision of NEP 2020, according to the analysts, is the internationalisation at home—increasing the standards of Indian universities worldwide and attracting foreign students and professors. The NEP goals are now being operationalised by the Ministry of Education through new laws and agencies (e.g., HECI, ARIIA), although the internationalisation thrust is self-evident: India is to transform into a globally oriented knowledge hub, rather than being a highly inward system (UGC, 2021).

Internationalisation of Higher Education: Judicial Perspective

The judicial system in India has had an up-and-down effect on the internationalisation of higher education. The majority of interventions concern regulatory fairness or accreditation-relevant situations in the context of confidence of international students (Mok et al., 2008). As an example, in April 2025, the Supreme Court ordered the Centre, UGC and NAAC to provide some detailed replies to allegations that there was corruption in the accreditation of universities. The demand for transparency can be highlighted in the Court notice, which, in turn, was triggered by an investigation of NAAC assessors, as a requirement of fairness and transparency: fair and transparent grading of higher education institutions. The concern to subject Indian quality assurance to such scrutiny is that anything that causes failure in quality assurance could ruin the reputation of India on the international stage.

In late 2024, a year before, the Supreme Court directed a national audit of every single and considered university. Such an overarching question was provoked by scandals (financing of terror, drug abuse in college campuses and forged NAAC grades) and was designed not only to expose the seamy side of higher education but also to purge it (Rajnish, 2025). These are similar measures taken by the Court reflecting previous judicial activism: the Apex Court had earlier in 2009 instructed NAAC to review again deemed universities that it had previously ruled as substandard (the so-called Tandon panel institutions).

Further, Indian courts have never defined an independent doctrine of internationalisation of higher education. Rather, they give the constitution and laws the institutional character in which internationalisation functions. Judicial intervention has been mainly of a structural nature: it has enabled the demarcation of regulatory power, demystification of normative order in the dominance of norms that regulate the educational sector, as well as adjudicating disputes among organisations, regulators, and professional councils. This is the most crucial jurisprudence in internationalisation since cross-border academic activity inevitably brings to bear the issues of standards, recognition and institutional autonomy spheres that have been extensively tackled by the courts (Jain, 2018).

Higher education standards have always been under central coordination, as this is a national matter of concern that the Supreme Court has long pointed out. In *State of Tamil Nadu v. Adhiyaman Educational & Research Institute*, it was declared that where Parliament has made a law specifying standards, state-level or parallel regulatory measures could not weaken such standards. Whereas the case concerned foreign universities, its doctrinal implication on internationalisation is vast: It states that the cross-border cooperation and the foreign interactions should be aligned with the nationally delimited standards, as opposed to the latter localised discretion.

The statutory role of the UGC has been read into by judicial interpretation. At *Bharathidasan University v. AICTE*, the Supreme Court made it clear that universities come predominantly under the coordinating jurisdiction of UGC and cannot be subjected to the regulatory overlaps by the professional councils in the areas that are not in their statutory remit. This ruling strengthens the concept that global partnerships that are concluded by universities in terms of curriculum development, research or joint degrees have a legal foundation in standards incorporated in the UGC and are not overlappingly licensed.

Concurrently, the regulatory power and autonomy in institutions have been balanced in the courts. In *University of Delhi v. Raj Singh,* the Supreme Court quoted Raj Singh, whose authority was to formulate binding rules, to the extent that the rule maker is not allowed to engage in an arbitrary or *ultra vires* exercise of the power of rule-making. To promote internationalisation, this jurisprudence acknowledges that, as much as regulators can

provide requirements regarding foreign co-operation as well as conduct on campuses, it should not go beyond the limits of the statutory standards and should leave the domain of academic decision-making of the universities alone.

The judicial involvement in the recognition of foreign degrees has been typified by restraint (Apoorva, 2023). The courts have refused on a number of occasions to replace their judgment with that of expert agencies in matters of equivalence, accreditation and academic standards. In *Yashpal v. State of Chhattisgarh*, while addressing the proliferation of private universities, the Supreme Court underscored the importance of maintaining credibility and standards in degree-granting processes—principles that apply equally to foreign or collaborative degrees. High Courts have also respected regulatory choices on cases concerning recognition of foreign qualifications to be admitted or employed as a question of academic equivalence, which is a technical issue that will be better determined by a specialised agency (Teachers Institute, 2023). This tendency to court deference supports a model of regulation whereby internationalisation is administratively controlled so that courts are seen as a protectorate against arbitrariness and not so much the primary decision-makers of academic merit.

Although the structural wars of the tensions between UGC and professional councils remain unresolved by courts, their jurisprudence reveals them through the prism of regulatory fragmentation. Cases of professional eligibility of graduates, especially with foreign or collaborative qualifications, have shown how conflicting mandates may act to hinder mobility and recognition. It has been seen that the value of coherence and clarity in regulatory design has been emphasised by courts in the past, and this has, in turn, been implicitly endorsed by the move toward reform following the view to consolidation and coordination (Desjardins, 2015).

The role of the judiciary in internationalisation in this aspect is peripheral yet central. Through affirmation of national standards, restraint on regulatory aggressiveness, and the reference to expert decision-making on equivalence, the courts have created an environment in which the internationalisation process can be approached and take place in a standards-driven approach as opposed to an ad hoc judicial system. Hence, the judiciary is enforcing accountability, which indirectly strengthens institutions' global standing.

Moreover, while not a judicial ruling, a Supreme Court-linked outcome (through these actions) has clarified that universities must comply with UGC regulations without exception (Bakshi, 2025). Informal reports (later confirmed by published guidelines) indicate that once a university opts into a UGC regulatory regime (e.g. NAAC accreditation or joint degree rules), it cannot flout those rules (UGC, 2022). This means foreign universities in India—and their Indian collaborators—are legally bound by Indian oversight. In sum, India's courts have not directly mandated internationalisation policy, but their oversight ensures that as India opens up its campuses, it does so with integrity and accountability.

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill and Internationalisation: A Paradigm Shift

The proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025, represents a comprehensive reorganisation of Indian higher education governance (VBSA Bill, 2025). It would replace the UGC with a new Commission comprising three arms: a Regulatory Council, an Accreditation Council, and a Standards Council. The VBSA Bill, 2025, is an important event in the history of higher education governance in India. The Bill has been proposed in the backdrop of the long-term developmental vision, which India is projected to achieve by the centenary of Independence in 2047, which essentially aims at

radically reorganising the regulatory framework regarding universities and other higher education establishments. It is indicative of a wider policy change which reduces the vision of higher education as a sector of the social economy, but as a key national resource, focus of economic development, technology, human capital development and global competitiveness. Instead of aiding in making gradual changes, the Bill tries to reconfigure the regulation of higher education statutorily. It centralises divided oversight, divides selective regulatory roles, refocuses governance on results and openness, and promises varied institutional autonomy associated with accreditation. Simultaneously, it entrenches substantial authority over policy formation and intervention into the Central Government, posing serious concerns over the related aspects of autonomy, accountability, federal balance and constitutional design (Shrivastava, 2025). Most importantly, in terms of internationalisation, the Bill has a specific provision for engaging in global activities through these structures.

- The Standards Council is mandated to set out "frameworks for innovative development of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support, including the promotion of internationalisation of education to attain world-class standards… as well as the Indianisation of education" (VBSA Bill, 2025). This dual phrasing acknowledges that India seeks world-class benchmarks while simultaneously affirming the value of Bharat's knowledge systems. Practically, Standards Council will be specifying norms of credit transfer, degree equivalency and outcome accreditation that meet international norms.
- The accreditation of all institutions will be done by the Regulatory Council. Notably, it is empowered to "specify standards for select foreign universities to operate in India" and to "facilitate high performing Indian Universities to set up campuses in other countries" (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2023). This is unprecedented: for the first time, Indian law would explicitly license specific foreign campuses and encourage overseas branches of Indian universities. It also mandates preventing unchecked commercialisation, ensuring transparent disclosure of finances and outcomes by institutions.
- The overall Commission will come up with the national road map of higher education. Its missions are to provide high-level strategic direction of overall and holistic development of higher education in a competitive global environment and to market India as a destination of education (NITI Aayog, 2025). These stipulations institutionalise the aims of NEP: India is not just opening to the world, but it is also branding itself to entice talent around the world. The Bill goes further to mandate the new bodies to strategise integrated vocational-education pathways and coordinated work of the accrediting agencies.
- Foreign universities will still require government-approved status to operate in India, but the Standards Council will set "clear minimum standards" for such campuses.
- High-performing Indian institutions will be actively supported to internationalise (e.g., getting state permission, financial incentives, or simplified rules to establish overseas branches).
- The Bill proposes heavy penalties for non-compliant institutions, indicating a shift toward stricter enforcement of quality standards.

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, will be a turning point in the history of the governance of higher education in India. The Bill proposes an integrated but functionally differentiated regulatory framework, which is aimed at remedying unrelenting issues that have been raised vis-à-vis fragmentation, over-regulation and disproportionate quality outcomes. The focus on autonomy, accreditation, transparency, and outcome-based supervision is indicative of a move towards strategic stewardship and not a direct state control (VBSA Bill, 2025). At the same time, the Bill also concentrates significant interpretive and intervention capacity in the

Central Government through policy-direction and policy-finality provisions, and it empowers supersession of the new bodies, features that have triggered criticism that centralisation could expand even as the language of autonomy is strengthened. The long-run significance of the Bill, therefore, will likely turn on how its legal powers are operationalised through subordinate regulations, appointment practices, audit and accreditation design, and the evolving Centre–State relationship in higher education governance (VBSA Bill, 2025.

Seen in broader terms, the Vidyalaya Bharatiya Shiksha Adhiniyam makes internationalisation a legal aim. It does not rely on temporary UGC rules any longer. Instead, it puts global involvement at the very heart of how India governs its higher education (VBSA Bill, 2025). Analysts and commentators see the Bill as a fundamental change. It establishes an education commission focused on independence and with due regard for high quality. This certainly shows the desire of India to be a contender in the education sector across the world (Shrivastava, 2025).

Challenges and the Road Ahead

The policy may be bold, but real obstacles persist. Problems within the system itself have, for a long time, reduced India's attraction for the world (NITI Aayog, 2025). Visa procedures remain slow and difficult for foreign academics and students—this is a fact. Some changes, like e-visas and longer student visas, are making things somewhat easier. Another issue is reputation. Indian universities do not place well in international rankings. The reasons are not simple—research can be patchy, and facilities are often not up to the mark. There are only limited scholarships for international students outside South Asian (SAARC) and African partners. According to one of the reports by NITI Aayog in 2025, the lack of a global curriculum and promotion harms the Indian academic attractiveness in the world. According to the report, there are several critical challenges: Indian universities have to align with international academic and industry-related standards; the process of visas and admission should be streamlined; campuses should be improved in laboratories, libraries, and facilities; and more should be invested in research and development. On the student front, foreign students in India usually encounter cultural and language adaptation problems, poor career opportunities, and issues related to safety and support services offered on campus.

There are many obstacles at the institutional level. Although there are NEP and UGC programmes, real implementation is lagging (Kulal et al., 2024). As an illustration, despite the regulations permitting foreign campuses, some foreign campuses may not be approved within months, which puts some universities off. History faculties at Indian institutions have not been enthusiastic in sending out teaching staff to overseas institutions or accommodating large numbers of foreign scholars, due to the nature of domestic teaching work and budgetary limitations to some extent. It is also feared that the brain drain may occur: the talented Indian students will tend to leave the country to pursue education overseas and never come back, but this is something that the government is striving to address by strengthening institutions in India (International Development Research Centre, & NITI Aayog, 2023).

New frontiers in the future: This will take the form of multi-pronged efforts. The VBSA scheme aims to delegate several procedures: in case it is adopted successfully, it may establish a one-window system of approvals of foreign collaborations and campus approvals. New on-ground initiatives to host international institutions are seen in the introduction of NEP or state policies (such as Maharashtra state policy of an International Education City of Navi Mumbai that has licensed five foreign universities already) or in the introduction of on-ground international centres, including International Centres of Excellence. The accountability drive of the judiciary will enhance quality assurance, and hence,

the Indian degrees will be more credible. It will continue to expand scholarship programmes (e.g. Gyan Videsh scholarships of Southeast Asian students) to bring in a variety of talent (Kumar, 2025). Indian universities at the curricular level are progressively implementing sharing of elective courses in worldwide topics, credit exchange agreements and MOOCs (e.g. SWAYAM platform) so as to access overseas students (NITI Aayog, 2025).

Problems such as low internationalisation of the brand and disproportionate quality will not improve overnight. To be able to compete with established education hubs, India needs to spend more money on research and development as well as infrastructure, as China and Singapore have done (Choe & Roberts, 2011). It also has to respond to systemic problems such as language (strengthening the teaching of English and other foreign languages) and to improve student services (visas, residence halls, professional counselling) in order to improve the experience of foreign students. There certainly is political will. When continued, these endeavours might slowly make India have higher education that is accessible, diverse and affordable, as envisaged in the NEP internationalisation vision.

Conclusion

India's journey towards the internationalisation of higher education has been gradual but accelerating. From the early post-Independence period, India's approach has been changing towards the internationalisation of higher education. To ensure the delivery of a high-quality education, it is vital for universities to possess autonomy and address global education needs effectively. The University Grants Commission and other regulatory bodies are actively engaged in making consistent efforts to achieve these objectives. The University Grants Commission and the National Education Policy have been continuously laying down guidelines, and the interventions of the Supreme Court have also brought integrity into the system. This agenda may likely be institutionalised in the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, which will bring changes to the governance system. Provided that its enactment and practical adoption mark the end of decades of reforms, this would represent a shift from a comparatively closed higher education sector to one that is participating in the world of academic communities in its entirety. However, the journey will rely on the ability to overcome issues that have built up over time, including those related to quality and research output, regulatory ease, streamlining, and student welfare, so that India truly attracts and nurtures global talent. To that extent, internationalisation is not an ultimate goal but a pathway to a better education system. India's vision, as articulated in NEP 2020 and the VBSA Bill, is bold: to become both a destination for global learners and a producer of world-class knowledge. The coming years will test India's resolve, whether it can turn this vision into reality, creating a genuinely international ecosystem of higher education that benefits students, faculty, and society at large.

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