

Editorial

Internationalisation of Higher Education

Internationalisation has moved from a marginal concern in higher education policy to a central organising idea. Universities across the world stand in the cross-currents of geopolitical tension, rapid technological change, uneven economic growth and profound questions about cultural identity. The aftermath of the pandemic continues to reshape mobility patterns and the very meaning of presence, while the Sustainable Development Goals urge systems of knowledge to speak to shared human challenges rather than narrow national advantage. In India, and within Telangana in particular, these pressures intersect with an ambitious reform moment symbolised by the National Education Policy 2020. Institutions are asked to widen access, improve quality and project a global presence, all at once. In such a context, the phrase “Internationalisation of Higher Education” demands patient unpacking. It names not a single project but a set of tensions between market and public good, mobility and rootedness, global communication and local voice. This issue extends the discussion in new directions, with contributions that examine higher education as an expression of moral influence and legislative transformation, among other themes.

This issue of the *Telangana Journal of Higher Education* responds to that need for patient thought. The articles gathered here speak to regulatory regimes, cross-border partnerships, talent migration, linguistic power, digital technologies and questions of equity that cut across them all. They also open up deeper reflections on the ethical stature and diplomatic weight of knowledge in national life—a theme taken forward later in this issue through the exploration of higher education as a form of persuasion and the mapping of national legislation that redefines its reach. Read together, they portray internationalisation as an uneven and sometimes fragile process—shaped by trade rules and global indices, yet sustained in the end by classrooms, communities and human relationships. The articles reach beyond metropolitan institutions to tribal welfare colleges, beyond formal agreements to alumni networks, and beyond physical travel to digital interactions and artificial intelligence. What emerges is a conversation that is at once empirical and normative, rooted in national policy debates yet attentive to worldwide patterns. The issue invites readers to think not only about how India and Telangana can engage with the world, but also about what kind of world higher education ought to bring into being. In this sense, the introduction and the closing essays of the issue form a bridge between practice and principle—between the mechanics of international engagement and the ideals that have guided Indian learning from Taxila and Nalanda to the present.

The opening contribution sets the stage by situating Indian higher education within global regulatory systems. In “Internationalising and Transnationalising Higher Education: UNESCO, GATS, OECD and India’s Regulated Openness,” V. Balakista Reddy contrasts two powerful logics. UNESCO treats education as a public good and attaches priority to academic rights, fairness and quality without demanding uniform content across nations. The World Trade Organization’s General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), by contrast, treats education as a tradable service yet leaves room for states to preserve domestic control. Reddy traces how India has approached this intersection with unusual caution. The country has refused binding concessions under GATS while gradually experimenting with cross-border collaboration under the policy umbrella of NEP 2020. Transnational education—branch campuses, franchised programmes and online degrees—appears in this article as both promise and threat. By bringing OECD and UNESCO quality guidelines into the discussion, the article proposes “managed openness” as a path that widens mobility yet protects equity and public funding. It reminds readers that internationalisation is not only about institutional ambition or student desire. It is also about regulatory craft that keeps higher education open to the world while accountable to its citizens. Later reflections within this

issue—especially those dealing with higher education as a subtle form of national influence and with legislation linking autonomy to global outreach—build on the foundations articulated here.

From this policy-centred beginning, the focus shifts to the lived texture of collaboration. “Cross-Cultural Challenges in International Academic Partnerships” by Aasheesh Kumar, Sangeeta and Sarita turns attention to the interpersonal and organisational conditions on which global ties rest. The authors show how language barriers, contrasting leadership styles, work habits and institutional traditions can unsettle even well-financed collaborations. Their discussion draws on theories of intercultural communication and organisational culture, yet it gains particular force from the contrast between a successful University of Melbourne–National University of Singapore partnership and a troubled European consortium. Respect, clarity and a balanced distribution of power emerge as central to durable cooperation. Cultural competence training, transparency, shared decision-making and continual feedback appear not as add-ons but as the very conditions of meaningful partnership. In placing human understanding at the heart of academic globalisation, this article complements Reddy’s emphasis on rules and guidelines. Internationalisation demands both—sound policy design and day-to-day practices that honour diversity, fairness and dialogue. The final two essays extend this duality from the institutional to the national scale—where persuasion, reputation and law become instruments for dialogue among civilisations.

If these early articles bring legal regimes and intercultural dynamics into view, “Riding the Global Tide: An Empirical Review of Globalisation in Higher Education” by Gautam Makwana and H. Elizabeth pulls the camera further back. Their review surveys empirical work from 2000 to 2023 on three major forces—changes in curriculum and pedagogy, the movement of students and academics, and the rise of market-driven institutional hierarchies. The picture that emerges is double-edged. On the one hand, globalisation has expanded international connections, multilingual instruction and cross-border partnerships. On the other, it has encouraged widespread adoption of Western academic models, growing dependence on foreign students for revenue and widening inequality between universities in the global North and South. Makwana and Elizabeth characterise globalisation as both integrating and fragmenting. Opportunity widens, yet stratification deepens. Their call for a shift from market competition towards ethical reciprocity, cultural balance and commitment to the public good resonates with the argument for regulated openness in Reddy’s article and with the ethical cornerstones of partnership described by Kumar, Sangeeta and Sarita. Together, these early essays sketch a field in which internationalisation cannot be reduced to numerical targets for mobility or rankings. It must be judged by its capacity to protect the diversity of knowledge and fairness in access. Such ethical grounding later connects directly with the reflection on higher education as soft power, where persuasion operates through fairness and respect rather than control.

The penultimate article brings a reflective and historically rooted dimension to this issue. In “Internationalisation of Higher Education as a Soft Power: Implications and Challenges,” Radhakrishnan interprets internationalisation as a form of influence built through trust, conversation and knowledge rather than through might. The discussion moves from ancient Indian universities such as Nalanda and Taxila to current digital and policy settings, drawing links with the National Education Policy 2020 and the NITI Aayog strategy. The article portrays universities as envoys of thought, carrying values across borders and creating understanding that exceeds trade or strategy. Comparisons with the United States, China and Canada reveal how moral responsibility and fairness shape national reputation and sustain goodwill. Radhakrishnan’s study deepens the issue’s main argument that higher education can embody cultural grace and ethical strength when it opens its doors to cooperation instead of control. It joins earlier essays on policy and partnership by showing that persuasion grounded in justice is itself a mode of power.

The closing contribution, Aditi Nidhi's "Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: From UGC to the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill," transitions the discussion from moral influence to legislative design. It traces India's journey from colonial educational legacies to present reforms that seek active engagement with the global academic world. The article follows the development of governance and law from the Radhakrishnan Commission through interventions of the Supreme Court to contemporary policy under the NEP 2020. By examining the emergence of the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, Nidhi shows how global dialogue is finding a place within domestic legislation for the first time. The analysis reveals how India's higher education is shifting from guarded regulation toward reciprocal exchange within a shared world of learning. What stands out is the sense that internationalisation, though often presented as policy reform, marks a deeper transformation of institutional and intellectual life. Together, the studies by Radhakrishnan and Nidhi act as a coda for this issue—they link philosophical heritage and legislative foresight, drawing the arc of internationalisation from early ideals of knowledge as service to its present form as global cooperation.

Taken together, the contributions to this issue of *TJHE* portray internationalisation as a many-layered process. Regulatory choices about UNESCO conventions, GATS flexibilities, and OECD–UNESCO quality guidelines interact with institutional partnerships that depend on cultural sensitivity and mutual respect. Globalisation changes curricula, pedagogy and institutional hierarchies, yet its meaning in India is shaped by engagements with the Indian Knowledge System and by efforts to tie ancient traditions to contemporary research. Student and talent mobility illustrates both opportunity and vulnerability—paths to global competence and development on the one hand, patterns of inequality, gendered risk and brain waste on the other. Initiatives in tribal welfare colleges in Telangana show that internationalisation can deepen inclusion rather than reproduce privilege when pursued with attention to local context. Academic freedom indices remind readers that the capacity to think and speak openly is integral to any shared scholarly project. Alumni networks, language policies and emerging technologies, finally, show how everyday practices—from mentoring to classroom discourse and digital use—carry global ambitions into lived experience. To these themes, the reflections on soft power and the study of legislative reform add two sustaining threads. One reminds readers that influence through knowledge and moral balance builds a nation's voice in the world. The other places internationalisation within the letter of the law, giving it a durable structure that can protect openness while maintaining trust. Together, they lift the entire conversation from immediate practice to enduring purpose.

What, then, does this collection suggest about the future of internationalisation in higher education in India and in Telangana in particular? One insight concerns the broadening of the term itself. Internationalisation cannot be confined to the movement of students and faculty or the signing of memoranda of understanding. It touches on who is allowed into global conversations, which languages count as vehicles of knowledge, how local intellectual traditions are valued, and whether scholars retain the freedom to pursue inquiry wherever it leads. Another insight concerns tension between aspiration and responsibility. Systems and institutions seek global visibility and rankings. Yet as these articles repeatedly indicate, genuine strength lies in regulated openness, ethical reciprocity, inclusion of marginalised communities, gender justice and protection of academic freedom. The studies by Radhakrishnan and Nidhi extend these concerns. The first turns the gaze towards diplomacy as an intellectual art that conveys goodwill through fairness. The second turns towards law that seeks to preserve sovereignty while welcoming exchange. Each transforms the idea of internationalisation into a vision of cooperation guided by conscience. A third insight points towards practice. Policies matter. So do human relationships—in partnerships, in classrooms, in alumni engagement and in guidance for students navigating unfamiliar cultures or

technologies. If influence and law act as outer frames, daily connection remains the living centre of any academic community.

For readers in Telangana and beyond, this issue offers not quick formulas but a set of invitations. Policymakers may find in Reddy's discussion of regulated openness, in the analyses of globalisation by Makwana, Elizabeth, Vijaya Lakshmi, Renuka and Ugandhar, and in the studies of migration by Curie and Bhaskar, material for rethinking strategies that balance national interest with international cooperation. Practitioners and institutional leaders can learn from the partnership experiences discussed by Kumar, Sangeeta and Sarita, from the inclusive model proposed by Lakshmi and Sinha, and from the attention to gendered risk articulated by Aruna Priya. Teachers and language specialists may draw on the insights of Madupu, Chary, Raju, Namratha and Sirisha Rani as they face classrooms transformed by English dominance and AI-based tools. Scholars concerned with the deeper conditions of academic life will find in Adama Srinivas Reddy's focus on academic freedom and in Weerakoon's account of alumni cultural mediation a reminder that internationalisation is, at heart, about the quality of human exchange. They will also recognise in Radhakrishnan's meditation on higher education as soft power and in Aditi Nidhi's tracing of its legislative course the conviction that influence and structure must work together if learning is to travel with integrity.

This editorial hopes that readers will move from these pages to the articles themselves with curiosity and critical interest. Each contribution offers one piece of a complex puzzle. No single article settles the questions raised by internationalisation—indeed, the value of this collection lies in its refusal to flatten nuance. Taken together, the essays show that engaging the world is not an optional extra for higher education in Telangana or in India more broadly. It is an inescapable condition. The challenge is not whether to internationalise but how to do so in ways that deepen knowledge, protect equity and sustain cultures while opening them to dialogue. If the reflections on persuasion through knowledge and on the new legislative foundations encourage further thought and experiment, they will have done what scholarship must always attempt—to turn understanding into action that carries learning towards fairness and shared human growth. If this issue prompts renewed debate, thoughtful policy, more inclusive institutional practice and more searching scholarship, it will have served its purpose.

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