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Academic Exchange

Student Flows, Exchange and Capacity Building in India

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Introduction and background

Within the Commonwealth, India has a special place as a country with a large and complex system of higher education, which is both a major host to foreign students and a sender of its researchers abroad. For this reason, the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned both a report on general higher education and a specific case-study on technical education (see the Chapter in Part Five by Jayalakshmi Indiresan).

This report is based on the premise that academic linkages can be catalytic in the institution-building of higher education in developing countries, since these links are likely to add an international dimension to institutions in the forms of students, knowledge and resources. It addresses itself to issues associated with enhancing student mobility in institutions of higher education within the developing countries and from among the developed to the developing countries within the Commonwealth. Its more specific focus relates to academic exchange schemes, capacity and institution building in selected universities in India. The intention was to examine:

- the policy thrust
- exchange schemes in operation
- the role of the various agencies involved in exchange schemes
- the capacity of higher educational institutions to absorb more foreign students
- the need for institutional build-up and support structures

Much of the discussion relates to foreign students in *universities*, although universities are not necessarily synonymous with higher education overall. It focuses on *all* foreign students in India, unless specific references are made to Commonwealth countries. This was because key personnel interviewed at the national and institutional level did not differentiate between students from the Commonwealth and outside. A distinction was, however, made between developed and developing countries and between neighbouring and other foreign countries.

This qualitative study is based on secondary data and on extensive interviews held with key personnel involved in the admission of foreign students, both nationally and at institutional level. Our insights and observations have been illuminated by case-studies of two universities:

- 1 The University of Delhi, (DU), Delhi
- 2 Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) New Delhi

There are, however, certain gaps in the information at institutional level. For instance, JNU does not compile information on various schemes or on how many foreign students are self-financing; further, grades of foreign students in JNU are not compiled separately. These gaps could not be filled within the short time available.

Key issues and perspectives

A discussion of foreign student admission policy cannot be isolated from the discussion of policy making in higher education, ideological orientations of the state and the size of the higher education system. Earlier studies on foreign students in India do not evaluate and monitor student mobility with respect to institutions/courses of choice. The statistical data, even when collected, are not used to reflect trends and to project future demands. They do not focus on interests and capacities, nor on specific barriers to academic exchange or on the policy issues highlighted in this study.

Higher education in India faces several challenges. These challenges arise in part from the burgeoning demand from students, who finish school, to enter the universities and colleges. Since population has grown rapidly and the number of secondary school students has also multiplied, many more students are qualifying for entry to university and other higher education courses. Besides, higher education is viewed as an instrument of social and occupational mobility. Therefore,

there is intense competition for places in higher educational institutions. This has made admission standards unreasonably high in academically excellent/good institutions.

The universities are pulled in different directions due to pressures from within and outside the system. Political turbulence due to student unrest and demand for more places, facilities, etc through student unions is a crucial internal source of pressure. Democratic politics and the demands placed on universities by national policies governing student intake, reservation of places for specific groups of students on the basis of non-academic criteria, dependence for funds on state and central government and political accountability are important external factors. India's vice-chancellors face a crisis situation in which institutional autonomy remains a theoretical proposition – a crisis heightened by severe resource constraints.

The government's response to demographic pressures and social demand has been to off-load on to the universities the problem of managing the student intake. Thus, inordinate political commands influence or even dictate university intakes. Rational planning and management seem virtually impossible. Therefore, while the issues of entry standards, admission criteria and quotas are university problems, they are also influenced by macro-policy decisions.

With increasing student numbers, the challenges are to sustain and improve the quality of higher education provision. Quality is at risk where enrolments exceed capacity. This has happened in several universities which have succumbed to the pressure of numbers.

The historical autonomy of universities and its fierce defence by faculty, staff and students, provides them limited insulation and, therefore, the capacity to plan and manage their institutions in spite of political pressures. Central universities are in a somewhat better position than the state universities to resist these pressures. The existence of institutions of excellence is attributable, not only to the belief in autonomy, but also to the need to train personnel for the expanding professional and technical needs of the economy.

The expanding education system, the highly subsidised fees, the 'capitation fees', the burgeoning private colleges (referred to below), student unrest and trade unionism on campuses are all to be understood in this context.

Higher education in India

In 1988–89, there were 144 universities (five being exclusively for women), besides 25 autonomous institutions. Of the 144, ten are central universities while the rest are state universities. Central universities receive full grants from the central (federal) government through the University Grants Commission while the state universities receive partial grants from the central government. Both the institutions selected for this study are central universities.

The other important distinction is between affiliating and unitary universities. In an affiliating university, postgraduate teaching and research takes place in the university departments, while undergraduate teaching is done in colleges which are 'affiliated' to the universities. However, the syllabus for the colleges is laid down and the examinations are conducted by the university. Other academic matters such as who should be admitted, the range of their academic attainments, what subjects to introduce, etc, are also decided for all colleges at the university level. The majority of universities in India are of the affiliating type. A unitary university does not have any affiliated colleges. Teaching takes place at the university departments. In some unitary universities, undergraduate teaching is done, but by the university itself. DU is an affiliating university. JNU is a unitary university, where only postgraduate teaching and research is done (except in the School of Languages, where undergraduate courses are provided in some foreign languages).

The third type are the agricultural universities, the fourth technical universities, such as Roorkee University. In addition, certain institutions are regarded as institutes of national importance. These include the five Indian Institutes of Technology, All India Institutes of Medical Sciences at New Delhi and Chandigarh, Indian Statistical Institute, etc, while several research institutes have been set up outside the university orbit, such as the Indian Institute of Public Administration (New Delhi) and the National Institute of Design (New Delhi). Twenty-eight institutions, such as the Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) are given the status of 'deemed to be universities'. There are 40 laboratories under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. The significance of these developments is that substantial scholarly and scientific research is done outside the universities.

There are no private universities, though several colleges are set up through private funds. All these, however, have to be 'recognised' by affiliation to a university. There are 6,900 colleges all over India (of

which 825 are exclusively for women), which offer courses in arts, science, commerce, engineering and medicine. The majority of them are privately managed, though they get government grants. The fees in these colleges are unbelievably low (often only five hundred rupees a year), since higher education is subsidised by the government. Professional colleges, such as those of medicine and engineering, are more expensive and more than half of them are managed by the government. A few (about five per cent) of the professional colleges, notably in Karnataka and Maharashtra, charge what is known as 'capitation fees'; students may be required to pay a large sum of money to meet the capital costs of the college. Fees would then be ten to twelve times higher than in a government college.

The universities of India vary enormously in their size, capacities, academic standards, level of discipline and efficiency. In some universities, the quality of teaching is excellent and good research work is done, library and laboratory facilities are adequate, examinations are held and results declared on time. In some states, on the other hand, universities may be closed for months, classes are not held, teachers are not paid and examinations are held a year or two behind schedule. Thus, the quality of teaching and research varies from excellent to bad or indifferent across universities, colleges and departments within a university.

Nonetheless, what is noteworthy is the gigantic size of the higher education system and the presence of a fairly large number of universities, colleges, departments and institutes which provide high-calibre teaching facilities at a heavily subsidised rate. The total enrolment in higher education in 1988–89 was estimated to be 3,947,922 and the number of teachers in higher education was 54,973.

Student mobility: Analysis of recent trends

In 1989–90, the year for which information at national level is available, there were 12,606 overseas students in India, compared to 11,759 in the previous academic year. On an average, 90 per cent of the foreign students are undergraduates and 10 per cent postgraduates. Of these not more than five to seven per cent are sponsored candidates. The rest are self-financing.

The most notable sending countries in 1989–90 were:

Commonwealth students

Kenya	2,856
Malaysia	870

Sri Lanka	550
Bangladesh	362
Nigeria	241

Non-Commonwealth students

Sudan	1,633
Jordan	1,599
Nepal	807
Ethiopia	476
Iran	404
Palestine	231

There were 26 universities with an intake of over a hundred overseas students each, of which 15 had over two hundred (see Table 6.2). Pune University, Maharashtra, had the largest enrolment of foreign students (2,165), followed by Mangalore University in Karnataka (918) and Delhi University (797). Another 262 foreigners were studying in the five Institutes of Technology.

In terms of countries of origin, the largest number of students at Pune University came from Sudan (769), followed by Jordan (717) and Ethiopia (221), while in Mangalore, the largest enrolment is from Malaysia (639). At Delhi University, students from different countries are distributed among a total of 46 countries (see Table 6.4).

Most of the foreign students at Pune University are enrolled in general courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. On the other hand, a majority (1,021) of students in medicine and pharmacy (out of 1,064) are registered in universities located in Karnataka state. It may be noted that several private medical colleges affiliated to universities in Karnataka state charge 'capitation fees'; it is presumed (in the absence of more reliable information) that most of these are self-financing students. Of the 334 engineering students (barring those in the Indian Institute of Technology and Roorkee University), 121 are in universities in Karnataka state.

Foreign student admission policy in higher education

An objective of JNU as set out in the First Schedule of the JNU Act, 1966 spells out very clearly the role that the university can/should play in providing leadership in the training and higher education of students from developing countries. It reads as follows:

... provide facilities for students and teachers from other countries to participate in the academic programmes of the universities.

This reflects a widespread awareness of the role and responsibility of Indian universities. Despite this, however, and despite the known demand from abroad for Indian higher education, no coherent policy regarding the admission of the foreign students has evolved so far. Foreign students are being admitted all over the country without any clear cut guidelines. Discussions with key personnel at the national level did, however, indicate the presence of a perspective and of implicit guidelines. For instance, a distinction between developing and developed countries is made in the context of student inflows and preference is given to students from the former. Considerations of neighbourly co-operation and assistance, and foreign policy objectives, also tend to influence foreign student admissions. There is also a guideline that foreign students will be five per cent of the total student intake.

Not only are there no policy or clear cut guidelines, there is no streamlined procedure for the admission of foreign students, nor a co-ordinating organisation/agency for this purpose. The bewildering variety in the higher education system adds to the complexity of a situation where several agencies are involved in the process, as is demonstrated below.

Agencies involved in foreign student admission

Several agencies are involved in the admission of foreign students in the universities. Their roles are:

Indian Council For Cultural Relations (ICCR) This is the nodal agency for arranging the admission of most foreign students. Sending country allocations are made by the relevant ministries/departments. ICCR sends out admission forms to Indian missions abroad in December (a function previously undertaken by the MHRD). There is a difference in the approach to general education and to professional courses (especially engineering, medicine, pharmacy, etc). For professional courses, information about country, name of the technical institution and of student is generally provided beforehand. The ICCR only helps in the admission procedure and in disbursing the fellowship. For general education ICCR also allocates *scholarships* to selected students (the word scholarship is used inclusively to embrace fellowships as well). ICCR processes applications received through Indian missions abroad. Then, depending on institutional and course preferences

indicated, the application is sent to three institutions. After an institution accepts the application, the ICCR takes a decision regarding award of scholarship and informs the student through the Indian mission. The verification of eligibility requirement/equivalence is the responsibility of the receiving institution.

The ICCR also pays attention to the socio-cultural welfare of foreign students. It finances tours to places of interest in India and arranges cultural activities. It provides funds to universities for payment of token honoraria to the foreign students' advisors, for arranging cultural activities at the campus and outside and for hiring English language teachers, etc. Funds for all these activities are provided to universities for all foreign students, regardless of whether they are sponsored or self-financing. However, budgetary allocations for these activities are very limited.

Ministry of Human Resource Development Since the transfer of its scholarship division to the ICCR, this plays a limited role in the admission of students, although it continues to be in charge of the overall policy thrust. It is also involved in giving clearance to applications of research scholars/graduate students for fieldwork. It arranges their affiliation to placement in various universities. In this process, the UGC is also consulted and clearance is sought from it. MHRD, along with UGC, also takes care of memoranda of understanding signed by Indian universities with universities/institutions abroad.

University Grants Commission This organisation is involved, directly or indirectly, in most foreign student admissions in the universities. Apart from its role in giving clearance to applications received from MHRD and other agencies, it allocates a few doctoral fellowships and research associateships out of the quota for Indian students. It also administers, from time to time, any special (one time) schemes that the government may wish to execute between universities in India and abroad.

Ministry of External Affairs The Student Cell of this ministry arranges the admission of self-financing students in professional courses. It has a standardised procedure and a prescribed proforma. For more details, reference may be made to the companion study on technical education.

Educational Consultants India Limited (Ed-CIL) A comparatively recent public sector undertaking, this arranges, on commercial basis, the admission of self-financing students and of those sponsored by their own countries/employing organisations. Training of working or professional persons is also arranged. It is prepared to cater to the special training needs/academic requirements of sponsoring agencies

and of individuals. It has entered into Memoranda of Understanding with some Indian institutions which provide the academic and other support structures for specially designed courses. Most of the admissions handled by Ed-CIL are for professional courses or for short-term training courses of employed persons/professionals from developing countries. It looks after all aspects of a student's/trainee's stay in India: receiving at the airport, escorting to the institute, monitoring academic progress through periodic reports from the receiving institution, ensuring accommodation, etc.

Indian Missions Abroad It was observed that, although there was a heavy dependence on these by the agencies already listed, they do not have updated, complete information to assist foreign students in their quest for admission. Its lack of information is about educational systems and institutions as well as procedural matters. This is partly because of the bewildering variety of courses, programmes, and institutes, and partly because most receiving institutions do not supply any brochure or instruction manual providing details of their admission procedure. For instance, while DU has prepared a booklet which is mailed to Indian missions in December, JNU does not have such a brochure. Most Indian missions abroad seem, in any case, ill-equipped to handle information relating to the multiplicity of educational systems and variety of admission criteria and procedure.

Association of Indian Universities AIU plays a twofold role. First, it provides equivalence of the entry eligibility qualifications of students from different countries. Second, it compiles the national level data on all foreign students in Indian higher education. For this, it has to depend on the receiving institutions, which send uneven and delayed information.

As mentioned earlier, some universities have entered into Memoranda of Understanding with specific institutions or universities abroad for receiving groups of students or individual students. These MOUs need clearance from UGC and MHRD. They may also be signed directly by the MHRD and a foreign university/institution for bringing in students.

These are the main agencies involved in making arrangements for the admission of foreign students, and they are responsible for a multiplicity of schemes for the reception of these students.

Major academic exchange schemes

Sponsored students generally come for higher studies to India not as individuals, but as participants in some scheme or special arrangement. Information obtained from the ICCR, MHRD, UGC at the national level and supplemented from the two case studies showed that there were five types of arrangement:

- scholarships of the Government of India
- admission through Memoranda of Understanding
- sponsorship by the sending university/institution
- short-term or casual visiting
- self-financing

Scholarships/Fellowships of the Government of India are awarded under four types of scheme:

- 1 *Multilateral/bilateral schemes* such as the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan and the General Cultural Scholarship Scheme. There are 75 and 180 scholarships respectively under CSFP and GCSS (both of which are the responsibility of ICCR). While the former scheme is meant for students from the Commonwealth countries, the latter is available to students from all developing countries.
- 2 *Bilateral Cultural Exchange Programmes (CEPs)* The government of India has entered into such programmes with several countries. Scholarships are assigned to students under each of these; currently ICCR offers scholarships, ranging from two to ten, to students of 20 countries. In addition, there are also other reciprocal arrangements.
- 3 *Special agreements with specific countries* At present, ICCR has four, with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and Angola.
- 4 *Special one-time scheme* The government of India announced several scholarships for Sri Lankan students in 1990. UGC was entrusted with its implementation. So far, one third placements have been made.

At the national level, the important schemes are those that bring *researchers* to India, through the US Educational Foundation in India (USEFI), New Delhi; The American Institution of Indian Studies (AIIS) New Delhi; and the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI), New Delhi.

The first two are funded through the US India Rupee Fund, and the third by the MHRD. All these schemes work well and scholarships are fully utilised. There are two other important and successful schemes offering admission through Memoranda of Understanding. The Berkeley Professional Studies Programme brings 10–12 graduate students from all over the US for a year. These students are affiliated to universities and institutions all over India on the basis of research proposals approved by the receiving institutions. This programme is administered by a co-ordinating office at Berkeley and at New Delhi. The co-ordinating officers process the applications, obtain bureaucratic clearances, arrange for admission or affiliation, generally look after the needs/sensitivity to Indian climate, awareness of Indian culture, accommodation of students and arrange for orientation course at New Delhi. Faculty members from DU are involved in co-ordinating the orientation programme and a large number of students become 'casual students' at DU. The graduate students have to pay a small amount in USA, but after their arrival in India, they are fully funded through the US India Rupee Fund. The second, similar scheme brings every year 12–15 undergraduate students from the nine campuses of University of California to four colleges of general education of DU. This is the Education Abroad Programme (EAP) of the University of California. It has co-ordinating offices at Santa Barbara, California and New Delhi. The office that handles BPSP at New Delhi also looks after EAP. Selected undergraduate students have to earn 36 credits, which are added to their total credit requirements in the US. They either attend regular courses or specially designed courses, on such subjects as Indian society and culture. The co-ordinating office at New Delhi provides support and service similar to BPSP. This scheme is fully funded by the University of California, USA.

Mostly these students come from and are sponsored by the industrial and post-industrial countries of the West. More recently, students from Eastern countries have also been coming. One example was an Indonesian student coming for M.Phil/Ph.D. Programme in International Studies; he was a university teacher on academic leave and was being financed by his university. Most students come for short-time specific courses under these schemes.

Casual students come under different programmes/schemes, MOUs or may be sent by an employing agency or the university where they are enrolled. Casual students may also come in the self-financing category. Countries of origin have usually been North American or European, but students from Japan and newly industrialising countries,

such as Korea, have also started coming. Those from the Western countries come for specific courses related to Indian society, art, culture, religion, etc. Those from the East come for language training, for doctoral degrees, and for short-term specific courses. Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), a central university at New Delhi, attracts students from the Middle East and elsewhere for Islamic studies (a Japanese student, for example, is undertaking research on Sufism at JMI). Discussions with teachers, foreign student advisors and wardens revealed that the casual students, generally, are more motivated since they have very clear cut objectives. They come for shorter periods and so do not tax the existing facilities, such as accommodation. They also come well-equipped with required academic skills such as language ability. They adjust well with Indian students since they also tend to be more sensitive to Indian culture and society.

Self-financing students form a majority of foreign students in India. Barely five to ten per cent of the total student inflow would be of sponsored students. Even this estimate presumes that the utilisation rate of scholarships will be fairly high (it will be shown later that it is not). At JNU, self-financing students have come from Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Sudan, and Ethiopia. At DU, there are good numbers from the Middle-Eastern countries, especially from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan; there are also Palestinians, some of whom may be receiving financial support through the UN Office for Refugees. Several students from the Middle Eastern countries register at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), the third Central university at New Delhi which caters to the education of Muslim students. Currently, it has 200 foreign students, most of whom are self-financing undergraduates. Students from Indonesia and Thailand reported that their governments provide them with lists of approved universities. Students are given permission to seek admission only in those universities. They write directly to DU and JNU. Once the university informs them that they are eligible for admission, they have to seek the necessary clearance and complete the admission formalities.

Uptake and utilisation of awards

The most recently available data on CSFP is seriously disturbing. Under this scheme, 75 scholarship and fellowships are offered by India every year to students from Commonwealth countries – the largest number offered by a developing country within the scheme. Not all of these are taken up. In 1990–91, 47 nominations were received; 24 admissions were arranged and only 15 actually joined. All of them were women

who came for postgraduate work. In 1991–92, 62 nominations were received, 35 admissions were offered, but only 10 joined (three men and seven women). Similarly, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations scholarships scheme (which includes four Commonwealth countries: Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius and Sri Lanka) was not fully responded to.

The reasons for under-utilisation are also barriers to mobility. The main reasons are: lack of information, bureaucratic hurdles, lengthy procedures and time lag between granting of admission by the receiving institution and the information being received by the student.

The under-utilisation of CSFP was also discussed at the meeting of CSFP administrators in Barbados in October, 1990. They saw it as in part attributable to the scarcity of quality management and trained administrators, to poor organisation and planning and to lack of clear cut admission procedures and of infrastructure and personnel directly entrusted with foreign student admissions (as in EAP). Concerned officials also pointed out that students were not just interested in scholarships as such or in any institutions or courses. Unless they are placed in institutions and courses of their choice, they are unlikely to accept the award. For instance, there is preference for universities in the South of India, since the North is considered disturbed. Again, they prefer reputed and recognised institutions. The presence of other students from country of origin or of friends are also positive factors. Attention to these factors can increase the uptake of the scholarships. India is not alone in facing the paradox of demand alongside under-use of opportunities. For India, as for other Commonwealth countries, the question arises: since scholarships are available, why do they remain under-utilised? Do institutions lack the will to admit foreign students? Or do they lack the capacity to absorb them? The next two sections seek to answer these questions.

Interest/willingness to internationalise campuses

Our interviews with key personnel indicate that much co-operative activity is already taking place and there is scope to harness that significant potential in the area of co-operation for higher education development through enhanced student inflow.

At the institutional level, special provisions, such as foreign student quotas for admission to courses and hostels, waiving of entrance tests, direct admission from abroad, are indicators of willingness. Moreover, higher education is highly subsidised (and therefore inexpensive), yet India is one of the few countries which has not introduced a dual fee structure. (This policy is being changed, 1993, Ed.) Some universities,

such as Pune in Maharashtra have started charging a higher registration fee from self-financing students to create facilities for foreign students. Even this rise remains marginal. In other provisions too, no distinction is made and the benefits enjoyed by Indian students are extended to foreign students. For instance, university education is free for women students at Baroda University, Gujarat. Women students from abroad are also exempt from paying tuition fees. Similarly, at JMI, women students are exempt from attending classes and may register, then take the examinations 'privately' at the end of the academic year; this benefit is available to foreign women as well.

From the *national and institutional viewpoint*, there is consensus that if India helps in training experts for other developing countries, she is fulfilling international obligations. There are also political ramifications of establishing linkages with other developing countries and newly emerging nations through students, who may be future bureaucrats, diplomats, etc, and who are likely to become goodwill ambassadors for the country in which they trained.

On the part of the institutions too, the presence of foreign students has a desirable influence on Indian students, who are exposed to varied cultural influences without going abroad. On the other hand, foreign students who stay in India are instrumental in expanding the sphere of cultural influence. Internationalisation of campuses creates opportunities for academic exchange of experts. Indian academics and experts, who go to foreign universities, attract more foreign students to their own institution. For instance, some foreign students at JNU mentioned that they came either because they had come in contact with a JNU faculty member in their country of origin or because they were familiar with the published work of some faculty members. Besides, DU and JNU were on the approved list of their countries. Thus, academic exchange programmes may have several beneficial effects and implications.

Almost every one contacted was aware of these implications and expressed opinions in favour of student inflow. Heads of universities, however, were guarded about conditions for that inflow. This is due to the likely political issues raised by the presence of noticeable numbers of foreign students on the campuses in an atmosphere where the universities are already beset by the democratic pressure mentioned earlier in this chapter. Their interest is also qualified by certain conditions, namely, the preference for students of high academic calibre, and for dispersal instead of concentration of too many foreign students on one campus.

There is consensus on giving preference to students from neighbouring and developing countries. Our survey indicated that the children of Indian emigrants settled abroad (for example, in Surinam, Fiji, Mauritius) showed a preference to come to India. Cultural proximity and the desire to familiarise with one's cultural roots could be the reasons. Once on campus, they were rated higher on adjustment than the other students. Discussions with foreign students from neighbouring countries and those of Indian origin also reinforces the point that they were better adjusted.

Incoming foreign students are attracted by the relatively good academic facilities, and easy admissions, as well as by the low tuition fees in India. English as the medium of instruction is an added attraction. Indian higher education is able to meet the unsatisfied demand for advanced education and training which is either not available in the country of origin or is too expensive, too competitive or of too long a duration. Some cannot find admission in their own countries, as in Iran, or they come to avoid military service, as from Jordan and Palestine.

On the basis of readily available information and interviews with key personnel it is found that the demand for professional courses, such as medicine, MBA and engineering courses is high among students from developing countries or those who are new nations; for Islamic studies among those from the Middle East; for courses on Indian religion, art, music cultural and philosophy from Western countries. The students in the last category tend to be either short-term casual students or to come for fieldwork. The students coming from Far East and from South-East Asia tend to prefer language training, social sciences and work for research degrees. There may, however, be exceptions. Systematic information ought to be collected from the universities to make more reliable statements about current preferences.

Capacity building and institutional strength

In looking at the capacity to receive foreign students comfortably and without political or structural difficulties, it is necessary to take into account: student intake; staff and faculty; courses offered, including special courses for foreign students; accommodation; counselling and welfare provision; and library, laboratory and computer facilities. All these aspects were given point by our case-studies of JNU and DU.

With regard to *intake*, most universities can admit more students without overstressing their seating capacity, especially in general education. But since places are limited and there is strong competition

among Indian students, it is desirable that the number of sponsored places for non-Indians in any one institution should remain limited. As already noted, DU and JNU each make special provision for foreign students, of the order of a quota of five per cent of DU's total enrolment (or a maximum of 6,000 foreign students) and 10 per cent of JNU's post-graduate population (or 400 such students).

Many universities have adequate provision of *staff and faculty*, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The faculty members in DU and JNU can meet international standards. To maintain familiarity with other systems of education and to upgrade skills and knowledge, faculty exchange programmes need to continue evolving.

Immense variation and choice in *courses* are available in higher education in India. There may be a case, however, for more special courses, such as bridging courses, remedial, reduced and summer courses to be introduced in selected institutions, to meet their specific requirements of language, subject content and time at their disposal. Additionally, it is important that cultural and other orientation programmes are on offer. As mentioned earlier, cultural programmes are organised by the ICCR, orientation programmes by the ICCR and Vishwa Yuvak Kendra (run by international Youth Hostel Association) New Delhi. ICCR also arranges and provides support to universities for socio-cultural activities. Case studies indicate, however, that none of these activities are undertaken on a regular basis. Foreign students expressed a keen desire to become familiar with Indian culture and society and with campus culture as well. They would undoubtedly respond well to orientation programmes conducted annually on a regular basis, which would help their adjustment.

There is an acute shortage of *accommodation* on Indian campuses. At the same time, students prefer to live on the campus with Indian students, so long as catering facilities meet their expectations. (Otherwise, they would prefer to live in separate hostels with kitchen facilities; some are willing to pay more for these facilities.) This imposes a severe strain, even where the receiving institutions reserve places for foreign students. JNU is an example of a university which, in spite of very high per capita hostel places, is under constant pressure from the students' union to expand accommodation. The situation in other universities is worse. DU has plans to add to the existing International Students' Hostel, while JNU plans to build a new one, but neither projects can take off, due to lack of funds.

Counselling and welfare are also essential components in institutional reception of overseas students. Until the present, there has been no

provision for counselling for Indian or foreign students at either DU or JNU, although a counselling unit for women students has recently been set up at the former. There is a need for both academic and social counselling. For instance, foreign students from the Middle East generally enrolled in language (Persian) courses at JMI, but after informal counselling, they tended to shift to professional courses. The emotional and socio-cultural problems can also be handled through a counselling cell.

Such provision would be in addition to a Foreign Student Advisor (FSA), who should play a vital role in the orientation, adjustment and general welfare of foreign students, besides looking after their admission and other administrative requirements. FSAs are generally full time faculty members who take on this additional responsibility, so that they are unable to devote their full attention to this activity. Universities do not have earmarked funds for appointment of full-time advisors or of staff for an international student office. Some universities may appoint office staff depending on the foreign student intake. DU does have an office which looks after the admission of all foreign students. The FSA has streamlined the admission procedure and produced the printed brochure mentioned earlier. JNU has not assigned any clear cut role to the FSA, who looks after their cultural activities only. Consequently, although there are not many students in JNU, they seem bewildered and confused by the multiple authorities they have to approach for various problems. Streamlining of the FSA office and a full-time foreign students' advisor with well-defined functions is crucial to enhance student mobility.

Libraries, Laboratories and Computer Facilities There is a wide variation offered by the Indian universities. The two chosen here for in-depth analysis are central universities and thus have better resources than the state universities, yet there is tremendous strain on the existing facilities. While the resources are dwindling, the numbers are increasing. General education gets much less funding than technical education. Devaluation has compounded the problem since, in the coming years, fewer books and equipment will be bought and imported. In the contemporary situation, knowledge generation is increasingly dependent on modern information technology, so that universities will, certainly, need support to provide facilities at international standards for their own students, apart from attracting students from abroad to strengthen student mobility.

In answer, then, to the questions about will and capacity, the climate of opinion is largely favourable and the university system could support more student inflow, provided only that finance could be made

available for infrastructure and services. Where is the finance to come from? Altruism should not prevent another look at issues of generating more fee income.

Student finance and the case for a dual fee structure

India has a favourable fee regime, due to a highly subsidised fee structure. The question of a dual fee structure, therefore, becomes relevant. In the absence of a clear cut official policy on a differential fee structure, a consensus does not emerge about charging higher fees from foreign students. In the meantime, some universities, such as Pune in Maharashtra, have started charging higher fees from self financing students. We have mentioned earlier that Ed-CIL arranges admissions for sponsored (by non-Indian governmental sources) and self-financing students on full cost basis in government run and 'capitation fee' colleges. Still the demand for Indian higher education has not decreased.

It is also felt by national and institutional officials, that India has the skill, the knowledge and in market terms, a valued commodity to sell. Therefore, it should make it saleable and then charge more than full cost. The higher fees should be used for resource mobilisation and to meet the expenses of educating the foreign students and providing extra facilities. Some argue in favour of making a profit. However, while working out the cost, sponsored students should be left out, since the government of India pays for them. Investment in them may be seen in the context of inter-country programmes of co-operation and assistance. Students funded from elsewhere and those who are self-financing must, on the other hand, pay for their education. According to one view, a distinction should be made between self-financing students from the developed and those from the developing countries. The former should pay more than the latter who might be denied access to higher education if fees were increased.

Another, divergent, view is that dual fee structure should not be introduced, but that a fee rise in India is long overdue and this should be done speedily. Only after the Indian students are charged more, should the foreign students be asked to pay on full cost or differential basis.

The foreign students themselves made several points. First, if they are to be asked to pay more, they should be informed well in advance.

Some expressed reservations about their ability to pay. Second, they should be assured a good return for their money. Some mentioned better facilities and a better standard of accommodation and catering. Others stressed the need to improve the quality of staff in some colleges of DU. Many were willing to pay more if they were assured admissions in good departments and colleges, accommodation in hostels and food arrangements to their satisfaction. If these conditions were met, the students from developed countries would be willing to pay more than the actual cost.

For those who cannot afford higher fees, the sponsored schemes should help, but are still faced by under-utilisation. What are the barriers to student mobility?

Barriers to mobility

Barriers to mobility have been identified from the institutional perspective as well as from the students' viewpoint. They are *administrative*, *academic* and *socio-cultural*.

On the administrative side, lengthy admission procedures, indifference of Indian missions abroad, bureaucratic delays and hurdles, very short advance notice of admission and involvement of too many agencies and organisations are well-known hurdles. There is also a lack of co-ordination among different ministries, universities and other organisations. The ICCR is now the nodal agency for all students who receive government of India scholarships. But no information is available on self-financing students, who have no reference point. After a student has come to India, then the absence of a centralised agency at the national level and an office at the institutional level, lack of a streamlined procedure at the receiving country and institution, and indifference of most foreign missions in India, are some of the other administrative barriers. Discussions with students and officials contacted underscore the desirability of another nodal agency at the national level, which should have links with foreign missions in India and Indian missions abroad. The Indian missions in foreign countries should create a desk to encourage and monitor student inflow. Foreign students also stressed the role of foreign student advisors in institutions to help with orientation and the overcoming of academic and socio-cultural difficulties. Commonest socio-cultural barriers are different food habits, reluctance to adhere to hostel restrictions, culture shock on arrival in India, absence of any orientation course at this end and absence of residential accommodation in an alien land which increases

loneliness and emotional deprivation. While students from neighbouring countries or of Indian ancestry adjust better, those from African countries complain of colour prejudice. This, too, underscores the need for orientation courses for foreign students and involvement of Indian students and faculty in them. Orientation courses are essential to enhance student mobility. Discussions with Sri Lankan students revealed that such a course had been conducted in Sri Lanka in the past, but has now been discontinued. These may be arranged at the country of origin or at the receiving universities.

Among the academic barriers, three are prominent. These are: lack of information on eligibility requirements; language disability; and poor academic calibre of some foreign students. AIU provides information on equivalence if sought by institutions as well as by individuals. In fact, AIU would like governments and institutions to approach it for equivalence far in advance. It has a set procedure to provide the information.

Even though several students have proficiency in English language, it is inadequate for communication, verbal and written, in higher education courses. There is wide consensus that tests in English (like TOEFL) should be conducted at the entry point. The information is that some Indian missions conduct these tests for sponsored students, but it is not a uniform practice. As mentioned earlier, remedial courses and teaching of English as a foreign language are also proposed as measures to remove this handicap to foreign students and to ensure quality.

There is widespread recognition of the fact that the foreign students who come to India are not always the best. They may therefore be weak in their discipline or subject. This happens because there are no uniform criteria of admission. There is wide variation in the qualifications and skills of those who come. Added to that is the complexity of the Indian situation, where there is no accreditation system. The data from DU confirms the widely held impression about the low academic calibre of foreign students. JNU does not compile grades of foreign students separately nor did discussions give any such indication. It may also be because quite a number come for research degrees which do not require grades.

The issues of quality of students, the selection procedure, and the dual fee structure are more prominent in technical education in comparison to general education. This is for two reasons. First, the students in the IITs are of uniformly high quality and are admitted through a very demanding selection procedure, so that comparisons

between good and poor students are feasible. Contrastingly, in general education, there is wide variation in the quality of students, so that comparison is difficult and definitive statements about the quality of students are difficult to come across in the university setting. This is true even when entrance tests are conducted, as in JNU. The selection procedures are not very rigorous. A second reason is that technical education, especially at IITs and Roorkee University, is very expensive and the places are also very limited. The demand for these is far higher than for general education. Considering the demand and the cost involved, the question of dual fee structure assumes significance. In such a situation, what may be required are reduced courses, special courses during the summer and coaching by research students, as is done in the linguistics department of DU. This arrangement is informal and has worked well. There is need to institutionalise such arrangements in order to replicate them.

Another dimension to academic quality is the quality of the receiving institution and its staff. Students of DU complain of the poor quality of teaching in some of the colleges. They would like to be admitted to colleges where regular and good teaching takes place. There were students who complained that JNU was not what it used to be or was expected to be. They referred to the experiences of their teachers, at whose instance they had come. They noted that the preoccupation of Indian students with public examinations for the All India Administrative Services had diluted the teaching programme. They stated that they were willing to work but somehow neither the Indian students nor the teachers were interested. Faculty development programmes through exchange schemes may reduce teachers' dependence on the classroom situation and help them devise individual student oriented courses.

Comments and recommendations

This survey has pinpointed the strengths and weaknesses of India as a host country for a large number of foreign students. Its strengths include a large and developed higher education system with well-reputed institutions at its apex. There is a strong foreign demand and reasonable capacity to meet some of the demand, provided political pressures are recognised, and the essential support needs of the incoming students are taken into account. The problems are: the lack of explicit policy (although we have stressed *implicit* policy thrusts); and an absence of good data on foreign students in India (without such

data, it is probably not realistic to suggest major policy). At present, data are either not available or are compiled in such a manner that they are not easily susceptible to analysis.

Collection, compilation and analysis of secondary data to locate trends, choices, grades/performance of foreign students at home and abroad and their distribution by countries of origin, by receiving institutions and courses (general or professional) is imperative to identify strengths and weaknesses. Gaps in information ought to be filled through such a database which includes information on sponsored and self-financing students. It will provide answers to several pertinent questions. For example, students from which countries prefer which courses and which universities? Is there any difference between sponsored and self-financing students in terms of performance, motivation, choice of courses and institutions? Why are women not adequately represented (which is indicated by case study data)?

Apart from providing answers, a strong database will highlight areas that need strengthening and show the directions for action in the future.

From the secondary data, it becomes evident that the extent of under-utilisation of CSFP and other scholarships is high. On the other hand, exchange or bilateral schemes looked after by institutions, such as the USEFI, AIIS, and SICI, or those administered by offices set up for the express purpose of promoting student inflow on a limited scale (such as the India Study Centre at New Delhi for BPSF and EAP), seem to be feasible schemes. While they differ in character, what is common to these successful schemes is that institutional support structures have been set up in both countries to look after the overall problems relating to student mobility. In addition, the procedure is streamlined and multiple agencies are not involved. A student/research scholar is generally in contact with two offices, one in the country of origin and the other in India. The student needs for eligibility entry requirements, finalisation of admission, orientation, familiarisation with Indian climate and culture, provision of accommodation or help in renting residence are taken care of by the institutions. Discussions with students who come under EAP and BPSF reveal that they are generally satisfied with the arrangements.

The conclusion is that the success of a scheme does not seem to depend on the choice of courses, or because it involves a developed country, or brings only research scholars, or because it is fully funded by the country of origin, or on availability or non-availability of accommodation. It depends more on the presence of a nodal agency/office

with earmarked functions to look after all the aspects involved in the movement of students from one country to another. These offices/agencies take care, in an efficient and professional manner, of the administrative, socio-cultural, physical and emotional needs of foreign students.

On the broader plane, there is a need to extrapolate this experience and establish similar offices or to identify agencies which can treat the matter of student mobility holistically and humanely. At the least, functionaries should be appointed, within the large impersonal bureaucratic organisations, with the sole function of handling foreign students. We support and are strongly convinced of the potential of Commonwealth collaboration in higher education, and suggest that, rather than institute a new/special fund, student mobility could be substantially enhanced through existing bilateral/multilateral schemes. What is required is to increase their utilisation and realise their full potential.

There are several steps which need to be taken in order to tap, release and harness that potential. They are recommended, in the light of Indian experience, not only to India and her institutions, but also to fellow Commonwealth nations and agencies. The recommendations which emerge are the following:

- creation of the database
- streamlining current procedures, organisational set-up; removal of bureaucratic hurdles and provision of speedy and effective communication through MIS, and an office with designated functions along the lines of existing viable schemes
- selection of certain institutions and involving them directly in the admission processing
- concentration of academic and support structures in selected universities
- award of fellowships to self-financing students at the recommendation of the receiving institutions and on the basis of the academic performance in India

Support structures needed in any host country, in order of priority, are:

- 1 Accommodation, seen as the most urgent need at the national/institutional level and also by individual students. Commonwealth Students' Hostels along the lines of Commonwealth Hall in London are a feasible solution. Provision

of places for Indian students ought to be made so that foreign and Indian students get an opportunity to live together.

- 2 Library, laboratory and other modern facilities (such as word-processor and computer facility, etc).
- 3 Foreign student office with centralised information/function to handle all aspects of admission. (This may need extra funds for full/part time FSA, for supporting staff and for computer, etc, to provide readily available information about foreign students.)
- 4 A Management Information System (MIS) for bridging the communication gap, speeding up admission procedure, linking different agencies, and helping generate a database.
- 5 A centralised/nodal agency to collect/collate information at the national level. The existing procedure is very lengthy and uneven information is provided by the receiving institutions. (Availability of this information, on trends, choice/preferences/bottlenecks would enhance capacity utilisation of existing schemes.)
- 6 Mobilisation of the existing capacities of universities to contribute to the expansion of student mobility through training of staff at selected departments/centres to teach English as a foreign language. Uniform language tests may be introduced at entry points in countries which send large numbers of students to India. Language courses should be introduced at receiving institutions.

The Commonwealth Secretariat can also be a catalyst be setting up structures and institutions outwith but linked to the existing structures. It could establish a Commonwealth Institute of Higher Education or new organisational machinery at New Delhi with branch/zonal offices in different parts of India. These offices should be assigned the task to deal with all aspects of student admissions in an effective, professional and humane way. MIS should be an integral part of this networking of agencies/administrative structures. These may also provide support for institutional build-up to select institutions for enhancing student mobility.

Finally, the vice-chancellors have to meet the challenges posed by expanding enrolments, increasing political pressures. The issue of foreign student admission cannot thus be decided purely on academic and economic considerations. Political considerations cannot be wished away. Yet given the willingness, capacity, and an implicit policy thrust, it is possible to assert that student mobility can be enhanced. The Commonwealth Secretariat may devise a management programme which would respond to these challenges through provision of

resources for support structures and expertise to improve institutional and systems management with specific attention being paid to enhance student mobility.

The Secretariat has a two-fold role: to help in the existing institutional build-up; and to provide support structures to maximise the take-up of current scholarship and sponsored exchange schemes.

[This paper is based on consultations with eleven officials at national level, including officials of the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and Educational Consultants India Ltd (Ed-CIL). Eight senior academics and officials of the University of Delhi were interviewed, and thirteen from Jawaharlal Nehru University (including both Vice-Chancellors) – other discussions were held with selected teachers, Indian and foreign students. The original study included further information on DU and JNU, which as been omitted here for lack of space.]

TABLE 6.1 Foreign students enrolled at Indian universities, 1989-90, numbers and countries of origin

A. COMMONWEALTH

<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>
AUSTRALIA	8	MALTA	1
BANGLADESH	362	MAURITIUS	164
BARBADOS	1	NAMBIA	1
BOTSWANA	13	NEW ZEALAND	3
BRUNEI	3	NIGERIA	241
CANADA	23	PAKISTAN	7
CYPRUS	1	SEYCHELLES	8
DOMINICA	1	SINGAPORE	18
FIJI	24	SRI LANKA	551
GAMBIA	2	TANZANIA	95
GHANA	2	TRINIDAD and TOBAGO	88
GUYANA	11	UGANDA	48
HONG KONG	3	UNITED KINGDOM	70
KENYA	2,856	WEST INDIES	16
MALAWI	6	WESTERN SAMOA	2
MALAYSIA	870	ZAMBIA	14
MALDIVES	16	ZIMBABWE	5
		Total Commonwealth	5,534

B. NON-COMMONWEALTH

Country	No. of Students	Country	No. of Students	Country	No. of Students
AFGHANISTAN	140	IRELAND	4	RWANDA	3
AFRICA (unclassified)	97	ISRAEL	1	SAUDI ARABIA	29
ANGOLA	38	ITALY	3	SOMALIA	158
ARGENTINA	2	JAPAN	35	SOUTH KOREA	16
BAHRAIN	117	JORDAN	1,599	SPAIN	6
BELGIUM	2	KOREA	24	SUDAN	1,633
BHUTAN	128	KAMPUCHEA	5	SWEDEN	4
BRAZIL	1	KUWAIT	148	SWITZERLAND	6
BULGARIA	3	LAOS	6	SYRIA	27
BURMA/ MYANMAR	12	LEBANON	16	THAILAND	158
CAMEROON	2	LIBYA	4	TIBET	78
CHILE	1	LIBERIA	1	TURKEY	3
CHINA	3	MALI	1	UAE	97
COLOMBIA	1	MONGOLIA	3	USA	137
DJIBOUTI	1	MEXICO	2	USSR	21
EGYPT	47	NEPAL	807	VENEZUELA	1
ETHIOPIA	476	NETHERLANDS	3	VIETNAM	73
FRANCE	30	NORWAY	1	YEMEN	107
GERMANY	20	OMAN	6	YUGOSLAVIA	2
GREECE	1	PANAMA	2	Not Classified	75
HUNGARY	6	PALESTINE	232		
INDONESIA	81	PHILIPPINES	11		
IRAN	404	POLAND	6		
IRAQ	47	QATAR	5	Total Non-Commonwealth	7,079

Total all countries (Tables A & B) 12,613

TABLE 6.2 List of Indian universities with more than 100 foreign students, 1989-90

<i>University</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>No. of Foreign Students</i>
PUNE UNIVERSITY	Pune, Maharashtra	2,165
MANGALORE UNIVERSITY	Mangalore, Karnataka	918
DELHI UNIVERSITY	Delhi	797
MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY	Aurangabad, Maharashtra	701
PUNJAB UNIVERSITY	Chandigarh, Punjab	629
NAGPUR UNIVERSITY	Nagpur, Maharashtra	528
MADRAS UNIVERSITY	Madras, Tamil Nadu	435
M.S. UNIVERSITY OF BARODA	Baroda, Gujerat	397
RANI DUGAVATHI UNIVERSITY	Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh	340
BARKATULLAH UNIVERSITY	Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh	303
MYSORE UNIVERSITY	Mysore, Karnataka	256
BOMBAY UNIVERSITY	Bombay, Maharashtra	250
SUKHODIA UNIVERSITY	Udaipur, Rajasthan	214
SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY	Kolhapur, Maharashtra	213
ROORKEE UNIVERSITY	Roorkee, Uttar Pradesh	200
Dr M.G.R MEDICAL UNIVERSITY	Madras, Tamil Nadu	170
KARNATAKA UNIVERSITY	Dhorwad, Karnataka	168
AGRA UNIVERSITY	Agra, Uttar Pradesh	163
BANARAS UNIVERSITY	Vanarasi, Uttar Pradesh	163
JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMI	Delhi	157
BANGALORE UNIVERSITY	Bangalore, Karnataka	157
MADHURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY	Madhurai, Tamil Nadu	144
DEVI AHOLY UNIVERSITY	Indore, Madhya Pradesh	128
RAJASTHAN UNIVERSITY	Jaipur, Rajasthan	127
L.N. MITHILA UNIVERSITY	Darbhanga, Bihar	122
ALIGARH UNIVERSITY	Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh	102

Note: Indian Institutes of Technology foreign student intake was: Delhi 83, Bombay 62, Kharagpur 62, Kanpur 28, Madras 27, Total 262

TABLE 6.3 Annual enrolment of foreign students, Delhi University, 1961-62 to 1991-92

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>
1961-62	337	1977-78	1,279
1962-63	383	1978-79	1,503
1963-64	407	1979-80	1,371
1964-65	360	1980-81	1,088
1965-66	396	1981-82	807
1966-67	424	1982-83	793
1967-68	452	1983-84	836
1968-69	478	1984-85	804
1969-70	549	1985-86	793
1970-71	653	1986-87	812
1971-72	647	1987-88	628
1972-73	724	1988-89	684
1973-74	784	1989-90	797
1974-75	830	1990-91	Not available
1975-76	809	1991-92	900

TABLE 6.4 Countries of origin of foreign students enrolled at Delhi University 1991-92 (Commonwealth Countries listed first)

<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of students</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>
BANGLADESH	60	ETHIOPIA	58
CANADA	11	GERMANY	2
FIJI	2	INDONESIA	5
GHANA	1	IRAN	18
KENYA	57	IRAQ	4
MALAYSIA	3	ITALY	2
MAURITIUS	101	JAPAN	10
NIGERIA	13	KOREA	30
PAKISTAN	2	NEPAL	131
SEYCHELLES	2	QATAR	1
SRI LANKA	28	ROMANIA	1
TANZANIA	3	SOMALIA	20
TRINIDAD	2	SUDAN	46
UGANDA	24	SWEDEN	1
UNITED KINGDOM	10	TAIWAN	1
ZIMBABWE	2	THAILAND	40
Total Commonwealth	321	TIBET	85
AFGHANISTAN	20	TURKEY	1
BHUTAN	15	USA	9
BRAZIL	1	USSR	5
BULGARIA	3	VIETNAM	3
BURMA/MYANMAR	7	YEMEN	8
CHINA	4	YUGOSLAVIA	4
COLOMBIA	1	Total Non-Commonwealth	536

All foreign students classified 857

Others whose countries were not reported 43

Total foreign students at the University 900

Notes: Approximately 30 per cent of all foreign students are female
 Approximately 10 per cent of all foreign students are Government scholars