India Opens Its

To help meet an exploding demand for higher education, India is beginning to engage in a myriad of collaborations with foreign universities.

Doors [CAUTIOUSLY]

BY MARIAN KISCH

INDIA'S POPULATION IS BOOMING— it's expanding to such a degree that it is expected to surpass China by 2025. With more than 30 percent of its 1.1 billion people being less than 14 years old, India has a severe shortage of higher education institutions to meet the needs of its growing college-age population. During a speech to the Central Advisory Board of Education in June 2010, India's Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal stated a goal of increasing India's college enrollment rate, among eligible students, from 12 percent to 30 percent by 2020 and increasing the number of students attending higher education from 14 million to 40 million. But that will require building 800 to 1,000 universities and 35,000 colleges. And it would still leave 150 million students out in the cold.[1]

Increasing access to higher education for Indian students is of vital importance in the coming years, especially given the ambitious government goal to triple the number of Indian students pursuing higher education by 2020. But it's not just about access to higher education—providing quality counts just as much. In India, "the main problems are capacity—a domestic, political issue—and the fact that few Indian universities are considered world class," according to William Lawton, director of The Observatory on Borderless Education, a think tank based in England.

India has a burgeoning economy, both national and international, and is in need of qualified professionals. Qualified is the operative word. "We have to make sure the quality of the education is good," Rahul Choudaha, director of development and innovation at World Education Services says. "Otherwise students will be unemployed or underemployed after graduation because they won't have the right competencies."

According to Anand Sudarshan, managing director and CEO of Manipal Education, "The regulatory infrastructure is old and creaking and the youngsters' demand for higher education is forcing change."

Role of Foreign Universities

Fortunately, various forms of internationalization are seen as a means to increase access and quality, with foreign universities eager to help India fill in the void—through research collaborations, twinning programs, joint degrees, and, possibly, branch campuses.

These institutions can increase access, add new programs, provide needed faculty, add a global perspective, and fill in the gaps in areas such as vocational education and community colleges.

In 2008 the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIER) identified 161 international universities involved in delivering 641 collaborative programs in India, mostly U.S. and UK twinning and joint programs.

But why do foreign universities want to come to India? Some want to recruit Indian students to their own campuses or reel in the money. Others have different motives.

"We are trying to position ourselves as a global university with a global reach," Shaun Curtis, director of International Exeter in the UK, says. "Research collaboration with Indian scientists will pay long-term dividends for both countries."

"It's in our interest to have India be a thriving democracy," Eduardo Ochoa, U.S. assistant secretary for postsecondary education, says. "Exchanges and exposure to India are important for our faculty and students in order to build global literacy, become aware of other cultures, and become more effective in a global society."

Obstacles to Working in India

Working in India's higher education institutions can be cumbersome. There is no centralized policy, nor any regulatory regime for foreign educational institutions (FEIs). As of September 2011, Sibal's recommended creation of an umbrella National Commission for Higher Education and Research to subsume the dozen councils, which he proposed in 2010, hasn't passed through the political structure.

The Foreign Educational Institutions bill was introduced in the Indian Parliament in 2010 but is stalled there. This would facilitate entry and regulation of FEIs while preventing entry of those of dubious quality. It would allow for branch campuses, with the ability to issue their own degrees or in consort with an Indian university. To become a "foreign education provider," the university would need to have a history of offering degrees in their own country for 20 years and maintain a fund in India of $11 million. Those currently offering programs would have to apply within six months.

Other nonpolitical challenges exist, too. There are differences in school calendars, credit systems, and language instruction. Many Indian students do not have the finances to study abroad without a scholarship, particularly with the differences in the cost of living.

INDIA'S COMPLICATED HIGHER EDUCATION STRUCTURE

INDIA HAS A COMPLICATED SYSTEM of public and private higher education institutions. Public universities, approved by the central or state government, oversee both "affiliated" public and private colleges. Private colleges are funded by corporations or philanthropic organizations. Public "institutions of national importance" include specialties in management, technology, and business; they award their own degrees. There are also stand-alone private universities approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC) that operate in a particular state. According to the UGC Report, there were 467 public and private universities and 26,000 colleges in 2010.

Getting into India's top universities has become so competitive that some require a 100 percent score on the national exam. This is complicated by the state's policy of reserving 50 percent of the seats in public institutions for those in the lower castes and tribes, similar to the United States' affirmative action plan. It has also resulted in some middle class students going to private colleges or overseas if they can't get into their top choice in India.

Despite these challenges, real change is happening in India through partnerships with foreign universities in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Germany, and beyond. They're working together in research and joint programs, both undergraduate and graduate, to offer the kinds of programs that India needs.

Researching Together

"It's arrogant to think any one university or country can find solutions to the world's problems by themselves," Curtis says. "We need joint authorship on research. India needs to link with the best researchers in the world, just as we do. Also, funders are looking for international collaborations."

Tom Tregenza, professor of evolutionary ecology at Exeter, agrees. "There is a vast untapped intellectual potential in India. Sometimes we in the UK get entrenched in our way of thinking. It cuts both ways; we learn from each other."

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Exeter has been working with the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore for five years, studying the origins of iron and steel production. Faculties from both institutes travel back and forth to carry on the research.

Because Exeter is working with two other institutes in Bangalore, Indian Institute of Management and India Institute of Science (IISc), it opened an office there in April 2011 to facilitate employability, partnerships, and alumni development. Exeter also partners with the India Institute of Technology in Delhi, in the field of physics.

"What's most important to us is to have several links with just a few universities rather than a few links with many universities," Curtis says. "This is a bottom-up approach, in which the faculty needs to buy in; otherwise nothing happens."

Rochishnu Dutta is participating in a split-site PhD this year, spending five months researching Mecapoda bush crickets at the Exeter Cornwall campus and the remainder of his time at the IISc. He is supervised by both an English and Indian professor and will receive his degree from Exeter.

"This is a great opportunity for me because I get to experience two different research styles in two premier institutes and get input into my project work from both my supervisors, substantially enriching my knowledge in evolutionary biology; research is fascinating when you have such dimensions," he says.

Expectations are high for research collaborations. "India will become a powerhouse for research in evolutionary biology because they have a strong secular tradition and have intellectual resources we can only dream about," Tregenza says.

Another budding research collaboration is between Rutgers University and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai. According to David Finegold, senior vice president for lifelong learning and strategic growth initiatives at Rutgers University, the two will work together on research projects with PhD students in the areas of India's workforce and economy, capacity building, and policy and governance for India's higher education system. They also hope to encourage student exchanges, short courses, and, eventually, develop a dual-degree program. "We want to build stronger

FACING INDIA'S CHALLENGES

THE CRITICAL NEED in India's higher education system today is for additional colleges and universities and for more teachers. But just building more and hiring more will not solve all problems. The quality of the schools, diversity issues, relevance of the offerings, and the political climate are all necessary ingredients to providing a topnotch higher education experience for all of India's students.

Many of India's higher education institutions are of good quality, especially the institutes of management and technology (IIMs and IITs). But there's a wide range of quality, with schools in the poorer regions suffering from lower quality and higher faculty-student ratios. Even in the prestigious schools, the quality is diminishing, according to Rahul Choudaha, director of development and innovation at World Education Services. He notes that critics say there is not enough faculty, which results in inferior schools and damages the brand equity of successful IIMs and IITs. This is particularly true in the private colleges, where, according to multinational corporations, 75 percent of these graduates are unemployable.[2]

India concentrates much of its efforts in higher education the areas of science, engineering, technology, business, and management. It is fairly well-known that diversification of higher education is needed in India, which is been noted in academic circles. For examples, the *Report of 'The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education*, written by Yash Pal, chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, emphasizes the need to offer and integrate all disciplines in all schools.[3]

Overregulation is another complication. The *Report* talks about the need for autonomous institutions, free from regimentation of ideas and pressures from politics. Right now, there are a dozen different accrediting bodies in India.

Vocational education is often undervalued, seen as a last resort and only for the poorer sections of Indian society, which is also noted in Pal's report. Undergraduate education needs to be improved. More attention must be paid to the state universities, which are the backbone of the system. Disparities in enrollment relate to rural-urban, gender (after secondary school, 49 percent of women pursue higher education versus 56 percent of men), and religion. Overall, there's a growing gap between educational haves and have-nots.[4]

India's middle class, which has now reached 300 million, values education. "If they don't see good education in India, they will look elsewhere," says David Finegold, senior vice president for lifelong learning and strategic growth initiatives at Rutgers University. "They want to make sure their kids succeed."

Rahul Choudaha agrees: "Schools with an international component are highly valued."

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partnerships with multiple dimensions and encourage a two-way flow of ideas."

In addition, Finegold is optimistic the two countries can build on the strong business ties between New Jersey and India in the technology and biotech fields. "We can work together in research and develop technologies to patent."

Joint Degree With Cornell

India has embarked on partnerships with foreign universities in which students receive two degrees, one each from a foreign and an Indian university. The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences program at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, has partnered with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) in Coimbatore to offer degrees in food science and plant breeding. Graduates receive an MPS (master of professional studies) degree from Cornell and an master's of technology degree from TNAU.

It all began 10 years ago when Cornell took students from its International Agriculture and Rural Development course to India during the winter break to see agricultural development there. TNAU paid a return visit to Cornell and subsequently the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust decided to sponsor the dual-degree program. Since 2009–2010, 25 students from India have enrolled.

Students spend one year at Cornell and one year at TNAU. Indian and Cornell students take courses together, adding value to the experience for both. Several faculty members from Cornell supervise the students' program and, when they are in India, the Indian faculty guides the students.

"This is a wonderful program," Syed Rizvi, professor of food process engineering at Cornell, says. "We need to make students more aware of what's happening globally and in developing countries. India's food processing sector is growing at over 10 percent a year and needs to quickly build its human resource capacity to meet its needs."

The program has worked so well that it will be expanded to two more universities: Punjab Agricultural University and the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad.

Suresh Damodaran, general manager of the Life Sciences Advisory Group, Sathguru Management Consultants in Hyderabad, praised the global experience for Indian students. "Private industry identified food science and plant breeding as a major area of need."

Visha Venugopal, a student in this joint-degree program, says, "I always dreamed of studying in an Ivy League school and it came true. It was easy to adapt; I loved the culture and the lifestyle." She says the program increased her self-confidence, improved her lab and language skills, exposed her to intercultural experiences, and improved her opportunities for a better career.

"Through this program I changed a lot; I see things in a broader perspective." Venugopal is now doing research, and project and strategic planning for national and international projects in India. Eventually, she plans to get a PhD in molecular biology.

Joint Program With Germany

Another example of a partnership program is Manipal University, a private university in western India, and Hochschule Bremen University of Applied Sciences (HB) in Germany. In 2009, with funding from the European Union, the Manipal Centre for European Studies, with Neeta Inamdar at its helm, was opened. Indian students study at Manipal for three semesters and one semester in Germany, where they take courses and do an internship.

This relationship has been going on for a decade, with a focus on student and faculty exchange programs. Four HB journalism students spend a semester at Manipal and four students and a faculty member do the same in Bremen each year. More collaborations are planned in the areas of ecology and sustainability research.

"Indian students gain considerably with the European exposure they get during their semester study and internship in Germany," Inamdar says. "It widens their horizons and offers a wider canvas for them to work on in the future."

Student Anvesh Lanka agrees. "A major part of the course involves European business practices. We require practical exposure to these aspects, in order to understand and apply them in an Indo-European setup."

Lanka expects to graduate next May, with a master's in European studies and management degree from Manipal. In the works is a master's in European studies from Bremen. "I would like to work for a European company with operations in India or an Indian company with operations in Europe. I have positive expectations, considering the sudden and massive increase of the European presence in the Indian market."

"It is time the knowledge systems of India integrate with that of the world," Inamdar says. "It is not a time to live in silos. Internationalization of higher education is a must in the real-time global village."

Additional collaborations may be in the works between the two countries in terms of a meta-university. Sibal and German Federal Minister of Education and Research Annette Schavan met in New Delhi in May to discuss partnerships of two to three universities from each country to offer degree-level courses. In May 2011 Sibal also suggested recognition of degrees and diplomas awarded by educational institutions in each country, increased avenues for vocational education, and setting up joint ventures under public-private partnerships for skill enhancement.

Twinning Programs

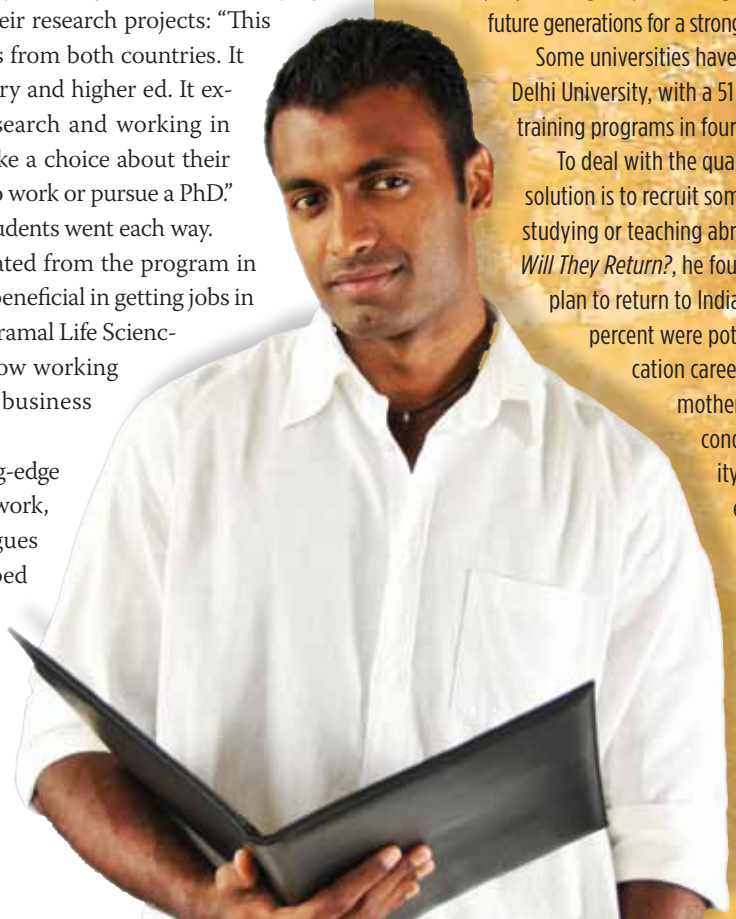
Especially popular, twinning programs enable Indian students to spend half their time in India's colleges and the other half in a foreign country. These are embraced because it's easy to transfer credits, there's little risk for the foreign university, it provides a predictable revenue stream for both institutions, and students like getting two degrees.

The University of Bath in the UK has such an arrangement with St. Xavier's College in Mumbai. Since 2009, Indian students have been enrolled in the master's of science (MSc) program, which includes 14 weeks in St. Xavier's, 14 weeks in Bath, and a 20-week internship in a biotech company in India. Graduates receive the MSc degree from Bath and a diploma from St. Xavier's.

In its first year, the program had four students, six the next, and this year, 11. "It fills the gap between biotechnology industry expectations and needed skills," says Momna Hejmadi, director of studies at the University of Bath. Graduates go into the biotech, pharmaceuticals, and health care fields. She says it also gives students applying for a PhD an edge because of their research projects: "This program brings in best practices from both countries. It bridges the gaps between industry and higher ed. It exposes students to academic research and working in industry. That way they can make a choice about their future, whether to go directly into work or pursue a PhD." From the first class, half of the students went each way.

Sneha Malhotra, who graduated from the program in 2010, concurs that the degree is beneficial in getting jobs in India. She did an internship at Piramal Life Sciences Limited in Mumbai and is now working there as a senior executive in business development.

"The research project in cutting-edge technology, the enriching coursework, and the interaction with colleagues from different backgrounds helped broaden my outlook and helped me gain a rich international understanding," Anna Abraham, another Bath graduate, says. Abraham also did her internship at Piramal. She's now



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One Million New Faculty

IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, but it's the reality in India over the next decade or so. But where will they come from and how will India increase the quality of its teachers?

The scope of the problem is huge. The top 22 universities have an average 34 percent faculty vacancy rate, with some as high as 84 percent. There's a 25 percent shortfall in the highly regarded technology and management institutes. There is currently shortage of 300,000 faculty members in India's higher education system as noted in a report by India's Ministry of Human Resource Development Task Force on Faculty Shortage and Design of Performance and Appraisal System submitted to Minister Kapil Sibal in September 2011. And it gets worse—the task force notes that over the next decade, the shortage will increase by 100,000 faculty members per year. All told, at least one million faculty will be needed to reach Sibal's goal of increasing India's college-age populations higher education enrollment to 30 percent by 2020.

India has reached out to other countries, including the United States, for help. The Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative will provide $10 million for higher education partnerships to strengthen teaching, research, and administration. Four to five grants of up to $250,000 will be awarded annually for three years, starting early next year.

According to Adam Grotsky, executive director of the United States-India Education Foundation, "This is a step towards broadening Indo-U.S. academic institutional ties. It will also encourage people-to-people linkages by enhancing mutual understanding and prepare future generations for a stronger bilateral relationship."

Some universities have already established partnerships. Delhi University, with a 51 percent faculty vacancy rate, runs training programs in four UK universities.

To deal with the quantity problem, one possible solution is to recruit some of the 100,000 Indians who are studying or teaching abroad. In David Finegold's study, *Will They Return?*, he found that all but eight percent either plan to return to India or are undecided.[7] Of those, 84 percent were potentially interested in higher education careers—family and giving back to the motherland the main reasons—if certain conditions were met, such as the ability to do research and a good work environment. Other important factors would include enhancing the quality and transparency of higher education governance, offering on-campus housing, raising the quality of state universities and private colleges, and offering better salaries.

There have been reports in the media that there have been plenty of partnership talks between India and other countries, including Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and the UK. And others are knocking on the door, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Spain.

researching PhD programs in molecular and cellular life sciences, and will probably attend a European university. "I eventually want to work in the area of cancer, but I want to get a good global experience first."

Numerous other twinning programs are already set up between India's schools and those in the UK, Singapore, Australia, and the United States.

Benefits to India

"Internationalization is seen as an opportunity to enhance prestige and revenue for Indian universities," Choudaha says.

Working with foreign universities can alleviate some of India's access problems by opening doors to more students, while offering more specialized and flexible course options and research facilities. It can reap economic benefits because some of the students who go abroad for their education will remain in India, although some dispute that notion. Indian students can save money on travel, accommodations, and living expenses. India may also become a destination for students from other countries. Ultimately, it can help India retain and develop its own talent with more options within the country.

India has a tradition of education abroad and student and faculty exchanges. Manipal University has 100 such relationships and the number is growing.

"This leads to better understanding, better flow of information, and a reminder that India is important," Sudarshan says. "The foreign university also gets a flavor of India." Overall, approximately 200,000 Indians go abroad for postsecondary study, mostly in Australia (121,000), the United Kingdom (39,000), and the United States (nearly 105,000).[5]

What's Happening Now?

India is a country with many assets. Finegold lists some: a commitment to meritocracy, equity, and democracy; an entrepreneurial culture; a huge reservoir of talent that has studied and/or worked abroad; and a willingness to invest in skill building. That makes it attractive to foreign corporations and universities.

Lots of memorandum of understandings (MOUs) have been signed with foreign universities; some come to fruition, others not. India is reaching out to new countries. In May an MOU was signed between Jamia Millia Islamia, an Indian central university, and two Saudi Arabia universities.

Several new proposals are on the table to improve India's higher education system. UGC has proposed federally funding 374 model colleges in underserved areas to fix regional imbalances and increase affordability. There's also a proposal to establish 14 innovation universities in partnership with leading Western institutions, which would be built around an academic theme or subject area and be open to students from around the world.

Some foreign universities have set up shop in India without waiting for government approvals. These include GD Goenka World Institute partnering with Lancaster Universityand Leeds Metropolitan University—both in the UK—which has established a campus in Bhopal. Graduates receive degrees from the UK institutions.

Financial help is increasing from foundations and trusts such as the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (Indian) and the Cornell-Sathguru Foundation.

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To help solve the faculty shortage, India is wooing Indian graduates of foreign universities to return to India to teach. Some are, but Indian corporations are luring more graduates because of higher salaries.

In October 2010, a Higher Education Summit was held in Washington, D.C., co-chaired by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and India's Sibal, to explore how government, universities, and business can collaborate to create innovative and sustained higher education partnerships between the two countries.

A new private sector-led initiative, Passport to India, will provide U.S. students with firsthand knowledge of India through three-week to six-month internships with companies and organizations in India.

Looking Into the Future

Where does India's higher education system go from here? How might partnerships with foreign universities develop and grow? Everyone agrees that patience and persistence are two requirements to working in India's higher education system. "Partnerships can bring quality education to India and improve access," Choudaha says. "We need an entrepreneurial will and prophetic patience to forge and sustain quality collaborations." Business and management programs will remain hot, but other academic subjects will become prominent as well.

India needs to attract more and better teachers for its higher education institutions. In a survey by Finegold and B. Venkatesh Kumar, professor at the School of Labour and Management Studies, Tata Institute of Social Science in Mumbai, they discovered that most Indian graduates in the United States were open to returning to their home country, under certain conditions.[6]

"Foreign universities have to take a nuanced approach to dealing with India," Sudarshan says. "Many times this may be complicated and necessitate taking a winding path. They need to come to the country with an open mind and invest for the long term." **IE**

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Endnotes

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