



## Globalization and its impact on Indian Higher Education: Promises and Perils

**Dr. Shazli Hasan Khan**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education & Training, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, (MANUU), Gachibowli, Hyderabad-500032-(A.P.)

### ABSTRACT

*Globalization is the internationalization, liberalization and integration of world economies with the avowed objective of maximising benefits for every member country coming under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Higher education is one of the services where GATS has operational authority. Globalization is a process of integrating economy, education, culture, technology and even governance. India being a signatory to GATS, is obliged to open its higher education sector to foreign education providers. India, on its part, is authority to export its higher education. India's student population is huge and growing steadily. Many of our students go abroad for higher education and spend lots of money to acquire foreign digress. With globalization, India will attempt to bring the best foreign universities here and due to competition with these foreign education providers our own institutions will strive to raise their quality and standard of education. This will on one hand, reduce the charm of going abroad, and may attract foreign students to our shores, on the other. But all this would require reforms in our education system, increased use of information technology, and more emphasis on research and developmental activities.*

**KEYWORDS:** FDI, Foreign Education, GATS, Globalization, Foreign Providers of Education

### Introduction

World War II had devastated economies of many countries. In 1948, 23 countries, with a view to revive their shagging economies, founded General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In 1995, GATT was replaced by World Trade Organization (WTO), and GATT was replaced by GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services). It was signed initially by 118 countries which later swelled to 144. GATS covered 116 services including higher education.

The GATS requires its members to reduce public expenditure on education as it amounts to unfair subsidy. For a service to be exempted from GATS, it has to be entirely free—that is, entirely provided by the government. In most of the countries of the world, including India, total public control of education is not found. Both public and private organizations coexist. Hence all education falls under GATS purview. The governments are obliged to remove all obstacles to trade like tariffs, visa restrictions etc.

India, being a signatory to WTO and GATS, is bound to open its educational market to international trade, as higher education is not free in India. Students pay fees to obtain education.

WTO and GATS have truly globalized world economies. Globalization has ushered free flow of trade, technology, knowledge etc. across countries. The basic purpose of GATS is to create an open, global market, where services like education can be traded like any other commodity.

### Objectives of the Study

The following are the main objectives of the present study:

- 1) To explain the term 'globalization' and its implications for higher education.
- 2) To take note of how other developing countries are coping with GATS.
- 3) To identify the likely benefits as well as risks for our educational system.
- 4) To highlight the need for a strong regulatory and monitoring mechanism for foreign providers of education.
- 5) To make a few suggestions for the development of our higher education system.

### Methodology of the Study

Keeping in view of the availability of the resources and feasibility of the present research paper, the author conducted his research studies on the basis of secondary sources of data. Secondary data has been collected from various books, Journals, research articles etc. The methodology of the study also includes the thoughts and writings of various authors in the stream of academic, research & corporate industry. Thus, the author utilised all resources available and carried out exhaustive studies for the present research paper.

### GATS' Requirements and Modes of Trade

GATS require its members to submit their schedule under five sub-sectors of education and four modes of supply of education. The five sub-sectors of education are; Primary education, Secondary education, adult education, and other education. The four modes of trade in higher education are as follows:

**1) Consumption Abroad:** Establishing education centres abroad to lure students from there to their own universities. United States Information Agency (USIA) is doing just that. UK, Canada and Australia have also been advertising and appointing local "education agents" on handsome commission for recruiting students for their countries' universities. In India also, these foreign countries are actively engaged in luring our students.

**2) Commercial presence:** This refers to establishing an institute or centre in a foreign country, either by granting franchise or by entering collaborative arrangement, also called "twinning" arrangement, with some local institute. Students are enrolled on behalf of the initiating university which also decides about courses, faculty members and evaluation procedures etc. In some universities, arrangements are made for the students to visit the initiating university to cover a part of their coursework.

USA has established many campuses in Middle East and East European countries, as higher education is not sufficiently developed there. Some Indian universities have also opened their campuses in these countries.

**3) Cross-border Supply:** This mode refers to the operations of virtual campuses by using satellite and information highways. These universities enrol students from all corners of the world and provide them course material through their web sites, or through e-mail. The students can interact with faculty members through e-mail.

Virtual universities are becoming very popular and giving tough competition to real universities. Students can access education from their homes and anytime according to their convenience. Dhanarajan had already foreseen in 1988 that the "twenty first century will witness a pan-global open learning system" (Dhanarajan, G, 1988)<sup>1</sup>.

Electronic technology has revolutionised the global delivery of educational services. However, effective ways will have to be developed for learning assessment.

**4) Movement of Natural Persons:** Many teachers, research scholars, and other experts go abroad on assignment. Mobility of educational personnel should be facilitated by concerned governments.

### Globalization of Education: Operations in some Developed Countries

The developed countries have been earning huge profits in the trade

of higher education, with USA topping the list. The developing—and under-developed countries are making every effort to improve their higher education system as well as earn some profit.

China has been most actively pursuing globalization to exploit GATS provisions. China has made it compulsory for foreign universities to collaborate with local Chinese universities. Nottingham and Liverpool universities of UK have entered China under twinning arrangement. Peking University itself is developing as a world class university. China also provides attractive facilities to renowned foreign scholars so that the Chinese research programme also flourishes. All in all, China has framed strict rules for supervising and monitoring the role of foreign education providers.

### Globalization and Indian Higher Education

Our educational system is inadequate to provide quality education to all the aspiring millions. The National Knowledge Commission (2009) estimates that our country needs to build 1500 universities in the next 10 years to cope with the demand of higher education and to sustain growth. Our government is unable to invest the huge amount of money required by our education. A UNESCO<sup>12</sup> report says that public spending on higher education (per student) in India is one of the lowest in the world.

The following table-1 shows a comparative per student public expenditure by some advanced and some not-so-advanced countries (Expenditure per student in US dollar):

Table-1 shows a comparative per student public expenditure by countries (in dollars)

USA	UK	Brazil	China	Malaysian	Indonesia	India
9629	8502	3986	2728	11790	666	406

Globalization will provide India, hopefully, the necessary foreign investment in higher education. It will not only solve the problem of enrolment to some extent but also encourage many students to seek higher education in India itself and thus save precious foreign exchange. Some foreign universities are already operating in India and more are expected in coming days. India should also invite top class foreign institutions to open their campuses here. With competition looming large, Indian universities will also strive to improve education quality, infra-structure and technology.

The problem of ever-expanding demand for higher education in India can be solved to some extent by our open universities. India has one of the largest networks of open universities in the world, second only to China. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is India's largest distance education provider. In 2009-10, more than sixteen lakh students were enrolled in open universities in India, with IGNOU topping the list with six lakh. The National Knowledge Commission expects 400 million students in the next 10 years. Open Universities are the fastest growing system in our country and promises to meet the growing demand for higher education.

### Conclusion

Globalization promises to bring significant gains for India. However, the current educational scene is not quite encouraging in terms of infra-structure, faculty qualification, flexibility in curriculum. Globalization of higher education is in full bloom all over the world. India cannot remain aloof and should exploit the opportunities. India should encourage reputed foreign universities to open their campuses in India. It will improve our educational standards as well as solve the burgeoning problem of enrolment. With comparatively low cost of living, India may become a preferred destination for students in many developing countries.

To achieve our ambitious goals, India needs a strong regulatory mechanism which hopefully would be in place very soon. As the trade in higher education becomes more expensive, the government's role becomes crucial. We cannot neglect the role of social and human sciences in this consumerist society. Education in moral science and ethics must find its due place.

The educational administrators must expedite the process of reforms and encourage innovation in all aspects of education including curricular, teaching, learning and research. The regulatory framework must be strong enough to identify and debar sub-standard foreign institutions. Of course the top institutions of the west and USA should be allowed to collaborate in teaching and research, with Indian institutions.

Foreign providers can create additional scope and expansion of higher education. It can also encourage reform and improvement through example and competition. In sum, we can conclude by saying that opening Indian higher education to foreign competition will benefit us and boost our growth.

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