Higher Education Abroad Continues to Rank in India

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Higher education abroad continues to rank at the top of student aspirations. In the first of a series of articles on the subject, we address the academic, financial and cultural issues that foreign- bound students have to confront. Indiaâ€™s growing stature as an educational hub may provide fabulous opportunities for foreign universities, but for a significant number of students in the country the attraction of quality higher education overseas only getting stronger.

Figures available with educational consultants show that nearly two Lakh students apply for courses, including short- term and refresher programmes, around the world every year.

What accounts for this magnetic pull at a time when leading international universities are inking deals and eyeing closer collaboration with their counterparts in India? And are students getting the most out of their investment on overseas education?

Students benefit immensely in terms of their personality development, outlook and thinking from an exposure to an academic programme at a reputed foreign university. International education indeed is cutting edge because the curriculum is updated at regular intervals.

But what really drives students to look abroad for higher education opportunities is the serious shortage of quality education in the country. The demand for higher education in India is far greater than the number of institutions imparting it. This forces students to look for other avenues and studying abroad is one of the top choices.

Business Studies, IT, Biotechnology and Engineering continue to be the most sought after programmes, and the majority of Indian students who enroll for these programmes prefer to work abroad before returning home. How North Indian students gravitate more towards Business Studies and IT, but their compatriots from the south opt for science and engineering courses.

Only a small percentage of students return to India immediately after finishing their studies because they wish to gain international exposure and experience to enhance their employability. Only 10-15 per cent of the students return to India because of family obligations. The majority gets a job in Canada itself. But this story is without its warts and bumps. One of the major hurdles students face in their quest for an overseas education is demonstrating their financial resources.

India have a thriving parallel economy that hinges on undeclared money, so a large number of students find it difficult to furnish details of necessary financial support. This leads them to take to fraudulent means, which can close their doors to overseas education forever. Once finances are taken care of, students make a beeline for the five English speaking countries that top their list of higher education destinations â€” US, UK, New Zealand, Australia and Canada â€” though the number of them actually going to these countries varies from time to time because of changing visa rules and threat perceptions.

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