

EVENT REPORT

PANEL DISCUSSION ON

DEMYSTIFYING HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALISATION IN INDIA

#EducationReforms

PANELLISTS



Prof (Dr) G Gopakumar
Former Vice-Chancellor of the
Central University of Kerala
and Advisor to CPPR



Dr Mousumi Mukherjee
Associate Professor & Deputy Director,
International Institute for Higher Education
Research & Capacity Building (IIHEd)



Ms Meeta Sengupta
FRSA, Fellow Salzburg Global Seminar & Educator

MODERATOR



Dr Shakila T Shamsu
Formerly OSD (New Education Policy),
in the Department of Higher Education,
Ministry of Education and Advisor (Special) to CPPR

THURSDAY, 20 APRIL 2023

5 PM to 6:30 PM IST

PLATFORM: ZOOM

About the Event: Centre for Public Policy Research, in partnership with the Association for Public Policy Education, organised a webinar to discuss and deliberate on the different views regarding the new draft regulations put forward by UGC on the internationalisation of the higher education system in India.

Panellists:

Professor (Dr) G Gopakumar is the former Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod. A leading political scientist and psephologist, he specialises in the areas of International Relations, Comparative Politics and Indian Politics. He has published 12 books and over 145 research articles. He held a number of positions as the Dean of Social Sciences, Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Kerala, UGC-Emeritus Fellow, ICSSR Senior Fellow, and has more than forty-one years of teaching experience in Political Science at the University level. He had also served as the Director General of the Institute of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Kerala, and as the Director, VK Krishna Menon Study Centre for International Relations. Dr GopaKumar has received numerous international and national awards as well as fellowships. He was also the Visiting Faculty at Claremont Graduate University, USA and University of Calgary, Canada. Dr GopaKumar is also a reputed political commentator on television news and a newspaper columnist where his objective and scientific political analysis is highly valued.

Dr Mousumi Mukherjee is the Founding Executive Director of the Centre for Comparative and Global Education at O.P. Jindal Global University. She is also an Honorary Senior Fellow of the University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Currently, she is the Vice-President of Research and Partnerships Development of the STAR Scholars Network, and a Research Standing Committee Member of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies. She has published over 30 international peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and co-edited books with reputed publishers, such as Routledge, Brill-Sense, Sage, Springer and Oxford University Press. She is a distinguished Fulbright alumna, who has also worked as an educational consultant with national and global organisations, such as NCERT, UNESCO-IIEP and the World Bank.

Meeta Sengupta, FRSA, is a writer, keynote speaker and advisor on building the future of education, leadership and systems. She is currently working on the pipelines for responsible leadership, and on applying the nine-factor framework of System Design for education and leadership. Meeta Sengupta has spoken at global conferences, written for a large number of books, and publications, has participated in radio and television discussions, and is on the board and advisory board of a number of organisations in the education and sustainability space.

The webinar was moderated by **Dr Shakila Shamsu**, Advisor (Special) to CPPR, Education Policies & formerly OSD (New Education Policy), in the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education (MoE).

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

1. The discussion sought to understand and analyse the concerns and possible impacts of UGC's draft regulations allowing foreign universities to set up branch campuses in India.
2. On the question of the pain points and concerns with regard to higher education internationalisation, Dr G Gopakumar welcomed the policy, provided it has regulations in place that ensure quality and equity of access. The success of this policy, according to Dr Gopakumar depends on collective leadership and involvement.
3. Dr G Gopakumar raised his concern that in the recent decade, only urban-centred universities have gained prominence unlike the local and ordinary universities. If the trend continues for foreign universities, it would create issues with access, equity, affordability and job opportunities.
4. Dr G Gopakumar argued that Internationalisation is a broad term that includes questions of credit transfer, exchange of teachers, nature of admission process and the programmes offered. While flexibility in regulations is required, too much of it will create problems.

Hence, he suggested that certain broad-based and structured parameters should be set while implementing the regulations. For instance, the NEP's suggestion of inviting the top 100 meritorious foreign universities will ensure the quality of education.

5. Dr Mousumi Mukherjee too welcomed the regulation, but shared her concern about the abrupt shutdown of foreign university campuses in countries like Singapore and Dubai. She suggests that students should be put in the forefront as stakeholders and a fleshed-out regulatory system should be built that ensures a smooth learning trajectory for students. She also raised certain uncertainties regarding the authoritative body for these regulations. Although NEP proposed a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as the authority for higher education in India, it was UGC that came up with the draft regulations.
6. Meeta Sengupta, expressed her view that internationalisation of higher education is an important tool of soft power, against the backdrop of India's position in the geopolitical space. She believes that internationalisation would mark the coming of age of our economy. Responding to Dr Gopakumar, she commented that academic rigour and flexibility can co-exist. She thinks the tendency to caution might be over placed, in this context.
7. On the lines of the impact of this regulation on student migrations, Dr Mousumi Mukherjee brought the attention of the panel to the observation that, what students look for in international education abroad is not merely the academic experience, but also the socio-cultural exposure one gets from being in a foreign country. Hence, she believes that the migration rate of students will be largely unaffected among students who are privileged to afford higher education abroad. They look forward to such physical mobility for a socio-cultural immersion experience.
8. Dr Mukherjee added that, although India has the second largest higher education system in the world, the gross enrolment ratio still stands at 27%. To increase gross enrolment we need more higher educational institutions, welcoming foreign universities. She also aligns herself with Dr Gopakumar's concern about equity and access.
9. On the lines of migration of students, Dr Gopakumar, cited the contemporary situation in Kerala, where migration for education, particularly among the middle class, is rampant. He shared that as long as the entry of foreign universities happens in a phased manner, there would not be much decline, at least initially.
10. According to Dr Gopakumar, students migrate to countries abroad to also secure a good future for themselves. Hence, it is imperative for us to improvise the industrialization in India, in a phenomenal manner, so that students can find jobs within the country, with the benefit of the value-added product of a foreign university degree. When the market situation evolves to such a state, which will take time, there will definitely be a slight fall in the mobility of students for education in foreign countries.
11. In terms of multidisciplinary education, Professor Gopakumar is positive that internationalisation will encourage liberal arts and multidisciplinary education. He gave the case of how the best technical institutes are creating room for liberal arts and humanities. Sengupta feels that there is an opportunity for the integration of rigorous stem methodology in the liberal arts space.
12. India should attract students from abroad by incentivising foreign universities to set their campuses here. Students also get attracted when they see that India provides courses that are not widely available abroad. When foreign universities set up their campuses here, it gives international students the opportunity to attain international education along with gaining a social and cultural exposure as well.
13. Sengupta is certain that the setting up of foreign university campuses in India will create a strong competition for domestic universities, both private and government. Young faculty who are working in lower positions in domestic universities will see an opportunity in these new international campuses.
14. According to Professor Gopakumar, this competition is good as it will boost government investment in higher education. Right now, only 3% of the GDP is used on education. This is not adequate to face the competition from abroad.
15. Once the floodgates of internationalisation open, to face the competition, states take up

the responsibility to ensure adequate funding, proper training and capacity building. This improves the quality and quantity of public education.

16. Dr Mukherjee supported this statement by stating that domestic institutions can compete with foreign universities provided the playing field is levelled. For this, significant investment from the government is necessary to empower domestic institutions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Equitable access and affordability of education should be ensured for students from all economic backgrounds.
2. More fleshed-out regulatory system should be in place to ensure the prevention of abrupt shutdown of foreign university campuses in India.
3. We should leverage the opportunity of internationalisation of education for building soft power, by also encouraging foreign students to pursue higher education in India.
4. The policy would not affect the migration rate immediately, owing to the fact that students do not merely seek academics, but also a socio-cultural immersion and a secure well-paying job.
5. Through industrialization, opportunities can be opened up in such a way that students get employed, leading to a fall in student migration.
6. More competition in the higher education sector pushes the state for more investment and development.
7. Investments should be made in such a way that quality teaching is made available which generates more employment opportunities.

*This report was prepared by **Rose George and Annabel Mariam Thomas**, Research Interns at CPPR.*