

COLLEGES

# When internationalisation rules

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**Networks between universities must be built in a manner that facilitated maximum utilisation of joint research and collaborative programmes, says Jane Knight, eminent educationist.**



Universities in India will be able to reap the benefits of internationalisation of higher education by developing closer networks among themselves and with foreign universities, Jane Knight, eminent educationist and Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in

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Professor Knight, who has focused her research on the international dimension of higher education at various levels, is currently the Erudite Scholar-in-Residence at Mahatma Gandhi University.



In an interview with *The Hindu-EducationPlus*, she said the networks between universities must be built in a manner that facilitated maximum utilisation of joint research and collaborative programmes.

“Such networking will definitely be a step forward as they will effectively build on existing bilateral relationships and expand them into a network that is either single-purpose – for research – or multi-purpose – for research, student and faculty exchange, joint programme design, or benchmarking,” she said.

As the need to internationalise had become essential in the current global scene, the role played by the faculty was immense. “Teachers and researchers are the true engines of internationalisation. There needs to be support programmes for the benefit of the faculty so as to provide them the opportunity to engage in international collaborations, undergo capacity development training, and implement a system through which they are recognised and rewarded for their efforts,” she said.

Professor Knight said that for change to be brought about at the institutional level, the importance of a top-down and a bottom-up approach in action that involved faculty, librarians, lab technicians, and students must be realised. She said it would prove beneficial if institutions developed their annual or five-year strategic plans in a manner that provided due importance to an approach that was international as well as intercultural in



“Institutions will have to move from an ad hoc, fragmented approach to internationalisation, to one that is more coordinated, integrated and strategic, and is in line with their mission and vision as a college or university,” she said.

Professor Knight said globalisation and internationalisation were different, but linked to each other. Globalisation focussed on the worldwide flow of ideas, resources, people, economy, values, culture, knowledge, goods, services, and technology, whereas internationalisation emphasised the interactions and relationships between and among nations, people, cultures, institutions, and systems.

Contrary to widespread perception, internationalisation of higher education did not, in its actuality, require a standardisation or homogenisation of curriculum and the dilution of indigenous knowledge. Instead, the system involved incorporating the unique strengths of various institutions for holistic development. The collaboration among universities was required for scientific growth, for developing social responsibility, and for producing students who were well prepared to live in a more interconnected world.

## **Commercialisation**

Despite the many advantages of internationalisation of higher education, a major risk involved was the attempts to commercialise the system. “It must be understood that a great deal of investment is required by a university to establish a branch campus. An enormous amount of investment is required for ensuring the availability of proficient foreign and local teachers to deliver the programme, and to ensure that there are support systems, libraries, labs, and an administration system in place. Often, many tend to ignore the efforts and funds that are required and tend to believe that there is a larger profit margin than there actually is,” she said.

“There are institutions in very few countries that have marketed the system and have used it for revenue generation. While internationalisation requires huge investment, it does not serve as a field for generating profits. This perspective is being followed in most countries as it focusses on enhancing the brain gain. These countries aim to incorporate those efficient to their labour force in a very strategic manner.”

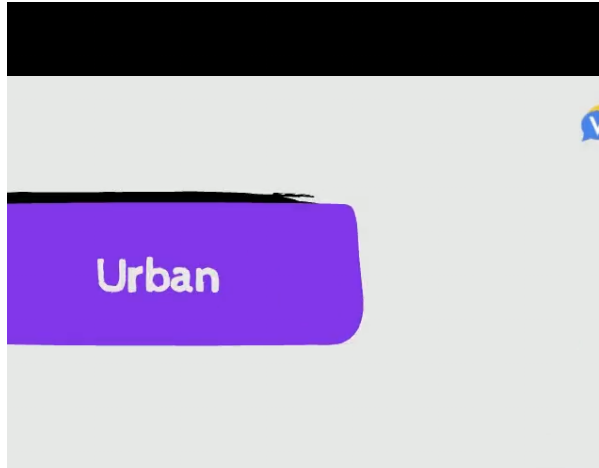
She said yet another offshoot of the drawbacks was the increasing requirement of credentials, especially foreign degrees, among people. This demand had given way to the rise of ‘degree mills’ that provides ‘degrees’ to students without making them performing sufficient academic activities.

The hunger for credentials had also given way to the establishment of several institutions run by private organisations. While many of those run by social organisations and companies were good, there are many other ‘rogue universities.’ There was a high risk of fear that the ‘degree’ or credentials that are issued by such institutions may not be

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