



DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

THE HINDU

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**Topic: GS2 - Attracting Highly
Qualified Academics**



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Competing for the best

Introduction:-

- There is issue of availability of highly qualified academics in Indian universities. Because of the **flow of academics (brain drain)**, for decades, has been from India to other countries.
- One can find top Indian talent, for example, at many American universities. They include the dean of the Harvard Business School and the dean of Harvard College, and a number of university presidents as well as professors in many fields.

Government Initiatives:-

- To counter this “**brain drain**” and to quickly improve top Indian institutions, the government introduced flagship programmes such as the **Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)**, **Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty Scheme (VAJRA)**, and **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)**.
- ‘**Institutions of Eminence**’ programme, where internationalisation in general and the appointment of global staff is central to the Programm.
- The **Graded Autonomy Regulations** of the University Grants Commission also now allows the highest performing universities **to hire up to 20% foreign faculty on tenure basis**.
- IIT Council, last year, recommended the recruitment of foreign faculty on a tenure basis.

Challenges in Attracting Highly Qualified Academics to India:-

- **Current State of Foreign Professors:** It was reported recently that there are **just 40 foreign teachers at all of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** — 1% of the total faculty of 5,400 — despite the government's goal to attract 20% international faculty at higher education institutions such as the IITs.
- **Targeting Challenges:** There are two kinds of international academics to be considered.
 - **Accomplished Senior Professors:** These would be very difficult to lure to India. Established in their careers, with attractive international salaries, and often with family and other obligations, they are embedded both in their universities and locales.
 - **Younger Scholars:** They may have fewer ties to universities and societies, and are thus more mobile. Further, some, depending on their disciplines, may have difficulty in locating a permanent academic job at home due to a tight academic job market.
 - They also will not add to the immediate prestige of the Indian university which hires them since they do not have an established reputation.
 - However, they can provide quality teaching, research and they often bring a useful international perspective.
 - The main possibilities for mobility are academics of **Indian origin (non-resident Indians)** who have successful careers abroad and who might be attracted back.
 - The major recent initiative of the Indian government, GIAN, has been successful in attracting many academics of Indian origin from different countries for shorter durations.

- **Structural And Practical Realities:** In some ways, the best Indian universities would require a kind of “**cultural revolution**” to join the ranks of global world-class universities, and to be able to lure top faculty. The structural and practical realities of Indian universities make them generally unattractive to academic talent from abroad. A few examples indicate some of the challenges.
- **Comparitively Low Salary:** Indian academic salaries are not globally competitive, even taking into account variations in living costs. China and USA offers very attractive salary to quality teachers.
 - **Little Job Seurity:** International faculty cannot be offered long-term appointments in Indian public institutions. A five-year contract is all that is available.
 - **Crunch in Reaserch Funding:** Obtaining research funding is difficult and the resources available, by international standards, are quite limited.

Suggestions:-

- To attract large numbers of international professors of high standing and ability, there is need of changes in many aspects of the **existing governance structure** in higher education as well as **enhanced funding** would also be required. For Example:
- A few ‘elite’ private universities such as O.P. Jindal, Azim Premji, Ashoka, Shiv Nadar, Ahmedabad, Krea, and the management institute Indian School of Business have adopted different strategies; for instance, ranging from attracting foreign nationals, to Indians who studied at prestigious foreign universities to their institutions by offering higher salaries and other benefits than are available to local hires

Conclusion:-

- These new private institutions with, by Indian standards, considerable resources have proved that it is possible to attract foreign faculty, at least those with an **Indian ethnic background**.
- But the challenges faced by public institutions, even those of as high quality as the IITs and the best universities, seem insurmountable, at least in the context of the current Indian higher education environment and bureaucratic and legal framework but not impossible.