

# THE CAREER DISPATCH

INSIGHTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

**2023: Visa issues, student recruitment, and more on the outbound students from South Asia**

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## Introduction

Given the region's vast population and the developing nature of its economies, South Asia presents an immense opportunity for higher education institutions. It is the second largest in terms of student enrolments and according to recent World Bank data accounts for 18% of all tertiary education students globally. While the governments of these nations are involved in the development of primary education, the private sector dominates higher education. In India and Nepal, private education institutions, including universities, colleges, and stand-alone institutions, account for over 65% of higher education enrolment; in Bangladesh and Afghanistan, the share is over 40%; and in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, private HEIs cover 20% of all enrolment. The top seven destination countries chosen by South Asian students are the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, and China, but new markets, such as Turkey and Ireland, are emerging as alternative choices by students. The region has many opportunities, but it requires a dependable and knowledgeable local presence to manage agent, school, and university relationships in order to continually succeed in an increasingly competitive and ever-changing environment. I hope you will enjoy this edition of *The Career Dispatch*.

**Tarun Gupta**  
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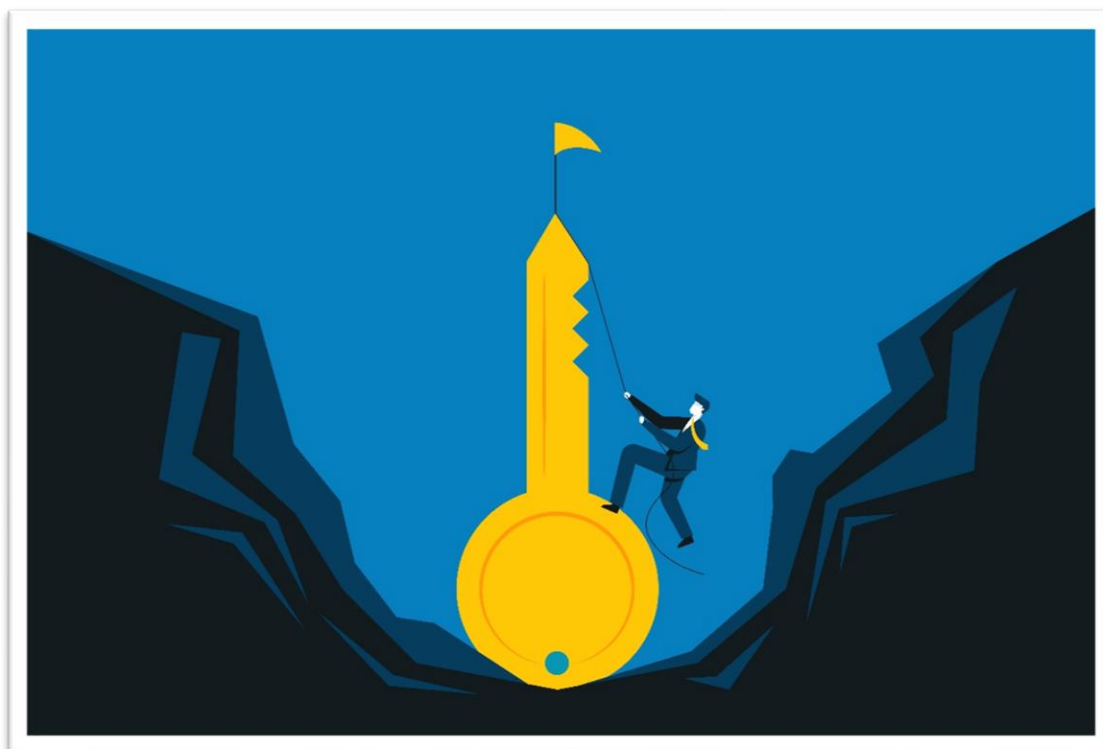


## APRIL 2023 ISSUE

**2023 started with a bang for the international higher education industry, with students applying in droves at foreign universities, and recruitment levels surpassing pre-pandemic levels for many HEIs. But challenges also abound in the form of employment shortages, housing crises, and visa frauds. This issue commences a special series for HEIs looking to enter the South Asian market: South Asia Unlocked. As always, there's news related to the South Asian higher education industry to keep you abreast with the latest developments. Happy reading!**

# **SOUTH ASIA UNLOCKED**

## **A primer for HEIs looking to enter the market**



T&A Consulting is pleased to announce the beginning of **South Asia Unlocked**, a series for new market entrants as well as existing Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) looking to leverage opportunities in the vast South Asian market. In this series, we will discuss issues that are relevant to entry into the South Asian market—one of the most lucrative sources for international student recruitment that is undergoing massive changes in the sphere of higher education. The themes will be largely based on, but not restricted to, topics covering student recruitment, issues that affect students abroad, brand building and market entry strategies mainly in the view of new policies, like India's new National Education Policy that aims to boost academic collaborations between Indian and foreign institutes and makes way for foreign HEIs to set up base in India.

While the series is aimed at the international higher education industry, it caters specially to institutes that are interested in student recruitment as well as are looking to take a more long-term strategic approach to build value, quality, and consistency in the market.

For the first part of the series, we discuss one of the biggest challenges the industry faces today even as recruitment numbers rise: visa frauds.

# Student Visa Frauds: A thorn in the side for international education



## 🚩 What is the backdrop to the increasing visa fraud instances?

Scams related to student visas are not unprecedented in the sphere of international education, and students from South Asia have often fallen victim to them. But as the trend for studying abroad gains unprecedented momentum in this region, so have the opportunities for fraud.

Taking the example of India, a total of 750,365 students went overseas for higher education in 2022, as per the data from the Ministry of Education. This is an increase of 68% in comparison to 444,553 students who went abroad in 2021. The same is the case with Bangladesh, with numbers quadrupling between 2015 and 2020, and 70,000-90,000 students going overseas every year according to UNESCO data. In Nepal, the Ministry of Education approved 82,000 No Objection Certificates for Nepali students going abroad between January and June 2022, a figure that was more than double the figure for 2021.

But numbers in themselves do not tell the full story. The reasons behind rising visa scams relate to more than just students' desire to earn degrees from foreign universities. Let us take a look:



## News in Context

The recent decision by the Canadian Border Security Agency (CBSA) to deport more than 150 Indian students after their visa documents were found to be fake has kicked up a storm. As per CBSA, these students, mostly from the Indian state of Punjab, arrived in the country on forged college admission letters.

The students, however, claim they have been duped by the visa agent. The incident has also raised questions about the efficacy of the immigration ecosystem in Canada.

## The lure of jobs at the expense of ignoring degree and institute

Better job prospects abroad have attracted youth from South Asian countries for a while now. And since getting work permits is not an easy option, getting entry through study visas has been a preferred route. But with a rising number of youths choosing employment at the expense of ignoring what course and institute to choose, it is becoming easier for scamsters to dupe them.

## Lack of awareness leading to over-reliance on agents

The middle class South Asian countries has risen steadily over the past few decades, and so have their spending capacities. As aspirations of studying abroad gain a foothold in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, counselling has become a lucrative business. But given the lack of awareness about admissions processes and visa formalities, agents take advantage of unsuspecting families that are willing to pay hefty amounts to send their wards abroad, at times trusting the agents blindly with even the choice of course and college.



## Fake off-campus job offers for students

Visa frauds are more prevalent in countries that allow off-campus work opportunities. Many students go abroad on study visa and prefer to work part time to sustain themselves. However, for many, the off-campus job opportunities are the primary goal. It is easier for agents to dupe this group by giving out wrong information about the number of classes that need to be attended or off-campus work hours allowed. Interestingly, according to ImmiLaw Global, an international immigration law firm, 99% of Canadian job offers are fake/scams.

## Nexus between private and public institutes

Public institutes sometimes have unofficial agreements with private institutes and offer more offer letters than there are seats available. After reaching the country, many students find seats filled up at the college they got offer letters from, and end up at these private colleges, which often lack accreditation. This creates a vicious cycle of lack of work permits and more visa frauds.



## Country In Focus CANADA

Canada is one of the leading destinations for outbound students from South Asia, particularly India. The North American country welcomed a record 226,000 Indian students in 2022 according to data released by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. It holds a charm for students from the Indian subcontinent, given the quality of education, lower costs, post-study work, and immigration opportunities.

But the country is also susceptible to different forms of visa fraud. As per Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, a global strategic information service tracking trends and developments in borderless higher education, one of the biggest reasons for this is the fact that universities in Canada are overseen provincially. This makes it difficult to track students throughout the nation after they arrive.

The responsibility for education is assigned to the provinces in the Canadian constitution. It is the provinces that have the power to approve degree-awarding institutions. As a result, the higher education system is diversified across states with different quality assurance methods. Consequentially, there is scope for irregularities in institutional accreditation.



# News and Updates

## Australia's Deakin University to be the first foreign university to set up a campus in GIFT City



Australia's Deakin University is set to become the first foreign university to set up a base in India via an independent campus in Gujarat's GIFT City, announced Australian PM Anthony Albanese in Ahmedabad in March.

According to India's International Financial Services Centres Authority, the campus would offer courses in financial management, fintech, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Deakin will roll out academic programmes in July 2024 with the option to migrate to campuses in its home country.



## UGC to adopt guidelines for foreign unis in May

The draft University Grants Commission (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations will be adopted in the first week of May, as stated by UGC Chairman M. Jagdish Kumar. He added that the draft received responses from several foreign universities and embassies, mostly from Europe and North America.



## 44 Indian programs in QS rankings 2023

As many as 44 programs by Indian higher education institutions have made it to the top 100 of the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2023. This number stood at 35 in 2022. Five broad categories were used to rank universities—Engineering & Technology, Arts & Humanities, Life Sciences & Medicine, Natural Science & Social Sciences and Management.



## NSU, University of Kolkata sign MOU

North South University (NSU), Bangladesh, and the University of Kolkata, India, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for research and academic collaboration. Signed on 13 January by NSU's VC Atiqul Islam, and CU's VC Asis Kumar Chattopadhyay, the agreement seeks to establish joint research projects and other academic collaborations between the two universities.



### Sri Lanka introduces STEAM model in its education system

Sri Lanka has introduced the STEAM education system (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) in schools across the country. Introduced under the theme 'Let's see - let's work - step into the future,' the program will be implemented in coordination with Education Ministry, National Science Foundation, Science and Technology Centres, University System and Training Institutes.



### Charles Darwin University signs MoU with NSU

Charles Darwin University (CDU), Australia, and North South University (NSU), Bangladesh, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in March 2023 to strengthen collaboration on academic and research activities between Northern Australia and Bangladesh. The MoU seeks to put in place a framework for cooperation between the two institutions to promote educational opportunities, research outcomes, and exchange programs.



### Education in Ireland holds a 5-city education roadshow in India

Education in Ireland (the Irish Government's national education brand overseas) successfully conducted its flagship education roadshow across five cities in India in February 2023. The fairs were conducted in Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Pune, and saw the participation of 15 top Irish higher education institutes. The roadshow saw the footfall of many aspirants who engaged with faculties to clear their admission doubts.

### Study in Nepal fair conducted by European Union

Over 500 students from Nepal attended the third Study in Europe fair conducted by the European Union in Kathmandu, Nepal. Jointly organized by the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal and its EU Member States, the event saw the participation of 10 EU Member States: Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Romania. The representatives presented the education programs on offer, along with funding opportunities.





# T&A at work: **Events & initiatives**

## Leadership for Change workshop by **Queen's University Belfast**

On the 20th, 21st and of 23rd February, Queen's University Belfast (QUB) South Asia conducted the Leadership for Change, an academic-led workshop designed by Dr. Gavin Duffy who is a lecturer at QUB, in the Indian cities of Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru respectively.

The event saw the participation of principals, vice principals, and career guidance counsellors who actively participated in this one-of-its-kind workshop and gave excellent feedback during and after the workshop.

The workshop, designed and led by Dr Duffy, aimed at enhancing leadership skills in educational environments. It offered the participants:

- Professional development by enhancement of leadership skills
- Theoretical and practical knowledge of how to lead change in educational environments

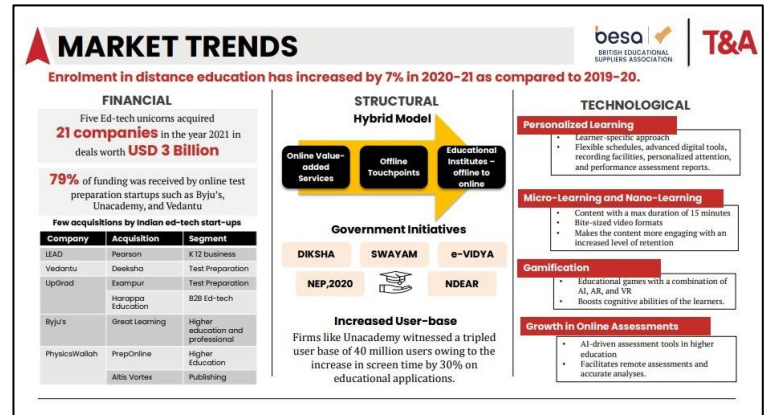


# India Market Access for education supplies and technology

T&A Consulting partnered with the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) to help their members understand the market entry pathways and the extent of business opportunities in the Indian market.

BESA, the British Educational Suppliers Association, is the trade association covering the entirety of the UK educational suppliers sector. It represents over 400 educational suppliers in the UK, including manufacturers and distributors of equipment, materials, books, furniture, ICT hardware and EdTech. Working with the Department for International Trade (DIT), BESA helps take over a hundred companies overseas every year to a wide range of important export markets, from the US to Malaysia and China, providing intelligence briefings, logistical support and often substantial bursaries.

Exploring the opportunities arising from India's New Education Policy, the webinar offered insights into a variety of sectors, ranging from digital learning, use of technology, vocational education and educational equipment and supplies.



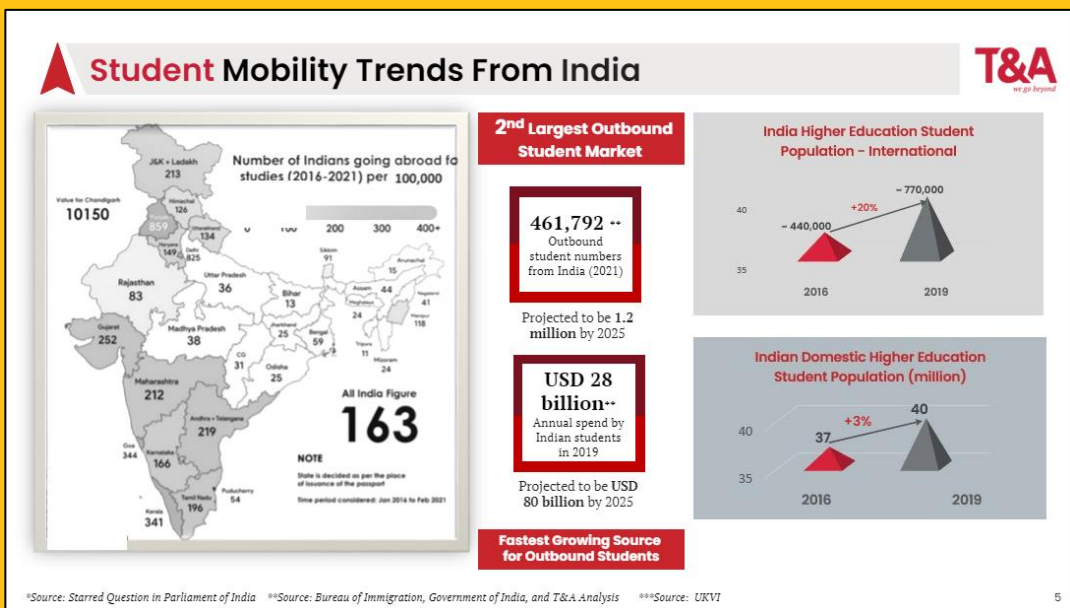
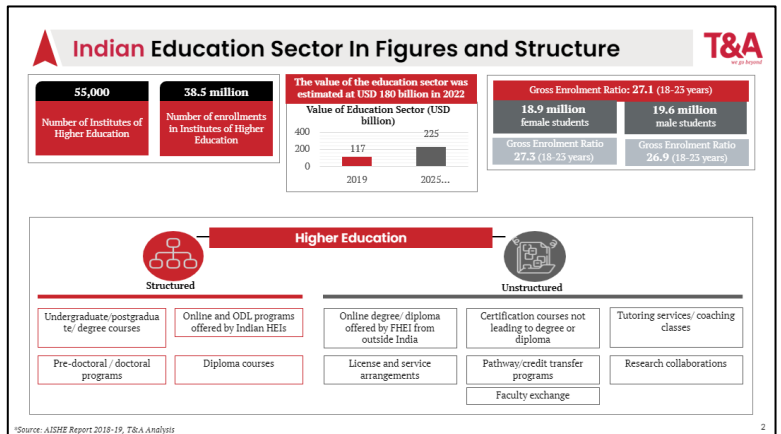
## UK-India Education Connect: Unlocking Opportunities for UK Education Stakeho...



# Webinar for **FICORE** members

T&A participated in the Info Series webinar held on 20th January' 2023 and organized by FICORE (Finnish Indian Consortia for Research and Education). The aim of the webinar was to present an overview to the Finnish academia about the collaboration initiatives undertaken through the Talent Boost Program by Business Finland India, regarding academic and industry collaboration with India and for talent attraction, alumni and start-up relevant activities done so far.

Mr. Tarun Gupta, Co-Founder and CEO, T&A, presented on the topic of “Current Regulatory Landscape in Indian Higher Education” during the webinar. He presented the current regulatory changes that have taken place in the Indian higher education landscape and the impact these changes will have on foreign HEI’s looking for collaboration projects.



# ABOUT T&A CONSULTING

## INDIA & SOUTH ASIA EDUCATION REPRESENTATION SERVICES

T&A Consulting is an international consulting practice to government economic development organisations, higher education institutions (HEIs), and private businesses.

We specialise in developing and successfully executing market entry and growth strategies across the many markets in which we operate. As a global practice, we have a subsidiary in Canada and representative offices in Europe and the UK.

With a strong belief in the age-old adage “quality is the best business plan”, and going against the more traditional approach of representing multiple HEIs, we understand that HEIs want more than just a marketing function in-market. HEIs want to build sustainable brand recognition in the South Asia region, which is the fastest growing geography for international student mobility in the world.

Therefore, we made a deliberate choice to introduce a unique reward-based partner approach to a limited number of HEIs, ensuring each one of them has dedicated resources and the full support of our experienced marketing, representation, and admissions capabilities.



## T&A CONSULTING | SERVICES

### In Market and Operational Support

- Assistance in developing strategies and implementation of plans to recruit students in line with entry requirements.
- Management and reassessment of existing agents' network.
- Appointment of new agents in previously unexplored South Asian markets including Tier 2,3 and 4 cities in India.
- Maintenance of data on market specific changes, admission requirements and course information.
- Market Intelligence towards new interventions including new programmes, agent engagements and rewards and scholarships.



Get in touch with our University Engagement Manager



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## Event Management & Logistics

- Design, schedule and implement physical and virtual events
- On-site logistics, AV equipment, catering, venue set-up
- Co-ordinate inter and intra city travel and transport



## Industry Integration /Employability

- Development of industry linkages to boost student work placements
- Partnerships with private companies with research and innovation centres to provide hands-on research experience to students



## Marketing & PR Services

- Brand positioning and strategy development
- Social media strategy creation and implementation
- Managing social media platforms
- Designing advertising campaigns
- Strategic planning and execution of public relations initiatives



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