

The Establishment of Transnational Networks by Indian Students in Germany

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India and Germany share a long-standing tradition of bilateral educational cooperation. Germany is an interesting destination for Indian students since the 1920s, when the first Indian Student Information Bureau set up in Berlin (Goel 2002). Until now several students participate in exchange programs as part of their scientific career every year (DAAD 2016). In 2013, Germany represents, with 3% of all Indian students studying abroad, the fifth most popular destination for Indian students after the USA, UK and other English speaking countries. Moreover, the number of Indian students in Germany has doubled in the last decade and is currently rising. In the academic year of 2008/2009, there were only about 3500 Indian students enrolled at German universities (Fig. 1). In less than ten years, the number rose up to 13,740 students from India who took admission to various courses at German universities in 2015/2016 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2016). This leads to the fact that currently students from India represent the second largest group of foreign students in Germany (DAAD 2016). Simultaneously, Indo-German exchange programs as well as research cooperations forced by both German and Indian educational institutions are growing in importance.

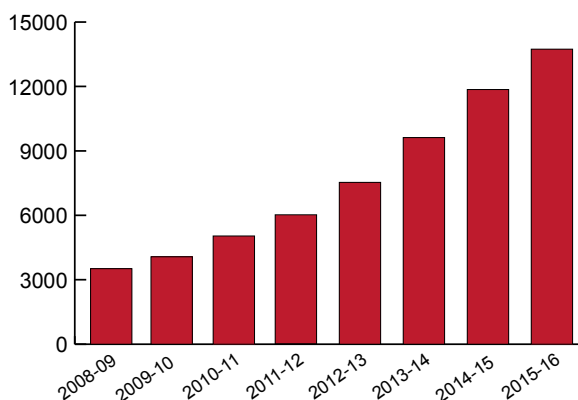


Fig. 1: Indian students in Germany per academic year (Own figure based on data by Statistisches Bundesamt 2016)

There are several reasons for this increase, which can be found in Germany as the country of destination as well as in India – the country of origin. One of these factors, which attract Indian students, is the excellence initiative, started in 2006/2007 by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the German Research Foundation (DFG). Hereby, two of the most important aspects are to enhance international research cooperation as well as to strengthen

the international appeal and visibility of excellent German universities (Kehm & Pasternack 2009).

Moreover, the German universities began to present themselves in India and promoted their appeal for foreign students such as the absence of tuition fees by a well-known education system. Information sessions at Indian universities and the inauguration of a German House of Research in New Delhi and their presence at universities and student fairs put the higher education landscape of Germany into the focus of Indian students (DWIH 2016).

International mobile students represent important agents in order to achieve an internationally networked and innovative cooperation, which is declared as the guiding principle of the internationalization strategy of education, science and research stated by the German Federal Government (BMBF 2016). Being part of the wide process of internationalization of higher education, student mobility influences both the personal as well as the institutional level. While the presence in a foreign country, the contact to a new society and the experiences gained at an international university shape the personal development (King & Raghuram 2013), international student mobility also impacts scientific cooperation, political agreements and the economy of the home as well as the host countries (OECD 2016). Therefore, this study aims to consider in how far Indian students develop transnational networks (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992), which connect both Germany and India.

Study on Indian students

The observed increase of Indian students in Germany indicates that the educational networks between India and Germany are currently densifying. By applying a qualitative approach this study intends to provide deeper insights on how networks of the young generation of academic graduates between India and Germany recently emerge. Semi-structured interviews with 16 Indian students were conducted in Delhi from a retrospective. Each of the students has studied for at least two months at a German university and has already returned back to India. The interviewed students came from eleven different scientific fields and the range included subjects such as European Studies, Computer and System Studies, German Studies and Neurobiology. Moreover, the students studied at different universities in Germany, which enabled to give a wide overview about experiences and network building in different destinations.

Besides the interviews with students, there were also semi-structured expert-interviews conducted. Those institutional representatives came from branch offices of German universities as well as from different exchange programs. The experts were asked about their institution's intention and policy in attracting Indian students and their expectations about the effect of Indian student mobility on transnational networks between India and Germany.

Phases of studying abroad

The process of studying abroad can be divided into three phases; pre-phase, while-phase and post-phase. Each of the phases mirrors a diverse stadium of contacts and networks. The pre-phase deals mainly with decision related questions about why the student decided to study in Germany in the first place and what kind of personal contacts to Germany did already exist at this time. Subsequently, the second phase is related to networks and experiences of the Indian student while living in Germany. How do Indian students build networks? Do networks between Indians dominate or are the Indian students rather seeking for German contacts? The post-phase inquires the impact of the process in focussing on the transnational networks, which are still maintained after the return back to India by asking with whom the students are currently in contact and how do they manage to keep their network. In particular, the reasons for maintaining the transnational networks are of major interest for this study.

Networks of Indian students

Preliminary findings reveal that all interviewed students have built networks in Germany while staying there for an educational purpose. First of all, the networks can be distinguished in personal and professional networks. Personal networks include all relations to peers, fellow students and friends with whom the Indian students shared their leisure time. Moreover, being a part of an educational exchange program the Indian students developed professional contacts to their supervisors, lecturers and university staff, which supported them during their stay in Germany.

Types of students

Besides the differences regarding the networks themselves, the students varied in terms of their purpose of building transnational networks, their actual building of networks and their maintaining of transnational networks in Germany. Applying a scientific typology, three student types can be determined (Fig.2), which fulfil the requirement of inner homogeneity within one type and an external heterogeneity between the three types (Kelle & Kluge 1999). The first type is defined as the reserved type, who falls back on already existing networks, which consists of Indian people who the student knew before coming to Germany and Indians he or she met in Germany. With an apprehensive and cautious attitude, the reserved type relies on the com-

panion of other Indians with whom he or she can enjoy the familiar lifestyle including Indian food, traditions and language even though being in a foreign country. After coming back to India, the reserved type is somehow relieved to return to a habitual life and does not maintain networks to Germany.

The second type is called the open type, because it emphasizes both interest for new international contacts and openness for the new culture as purposes for applying for an educational program in Germany. While being in Germany, the open type reveals an extrovert attitude and builds a great network of mainly personal German contacts. The communication is close and he or she is attracted by the company of peers with different cultural background. One of the students mentioned: "I mean if I am going to another country, I definitely want to see how that country functions and how the society especially functions, definitely. So, I was always more keen on meeting new people and new kind of people and not just sticking to Indians. So, I hardly made any new Indian friend there" (Source: Own interview). Being back in India, the open type maintains the transnational network to persons in Germany and is regularly in contact with them. Moreover, some of the interviewees from this group plan to return to Germany and invite Germans to visit them in India.

The third type is called the purposeful type due to a strong motivation to push the own scientific career by building a transnational network to Germany. He or she might already have an established professional network in Germany before going there by searching for highly qualified supervisors and teachers in advance. The main purpose for exchange is to increase career opportunities rather than finding new friends.

In Germany, this type uses the stay to build professional networks with German scientists, but also with other internationals. Since being back in India the purposeful type plans to return to Germany for higher education or to apply for occupations. He or she is dedicated in extending transnational networks by attending international conferences and following publications of German scientists. One student of this type said: "The professor I worked under, who was the head of the department over there, she is one of my supervisors on my PhD now, like I brought her here on board as well. So, I already have two supervisors in JNU [Jawaharlal-Nehru-University, Delhi], but I really wanted her to be a part of it." This student made use of her transnational network in Germany to engage a German professor in her PhD process.

The typology is based on the outcome of the interviews with the Indian students and the items of each type were identified by coding the interviews. By dividing the students into three types, it is notable that some of the students show a development from one type to another type during the process of studying in Germany. For instance, one student described his purposeful motivation in the pre-phase and his intentions

in extending his professional network in Germany. While staying in Germany he got more and more attracted to broaden his network to personal contacts and therefore became rather an open type but without leaving his purposeful motivation behind completely. On the other hand, some students who started as a reserved type discovered while being in Germany that they want to extend their professional network and to

increase their scientific career and future in Germany. Therefore, they developed from the reserved type to the purposeful type and are now actively maintaining networks to scientists in Germany. This shows that the intention of Indian students who study in Germany is shaped by the experiences they gain and therefore influences their building of transnational networks.

			Types		
Phase		Aspect	'Reserved'	'Open'	'Purposeful'
Pre	Purpose of Network	Existing Networks	Fall back on network	Open for new people	Extending professional network
		Expectations	Apprehensive, Cautious	Broaden one's mind	Increase of career
		Culture & Lifestyle	Rely back on traditions	Open for new culture	Analyzing new culture
While	Building of Network	Type of Network	Personal, Professional	Personal	Professional
		Group Identity	Indians, (Internationals)	Germans, partly Indians	Germans, partly Indians
		Communication	Close, distanced, anonymous	Close	Professional
		Experiences	To be processed	To be processed	To be processed
Post	Maintaining of Network	Future Plans	Staying in India	Visiting/Inviting Friends	Returning for scientific career
		Lifestyle	Continuing lifestyle	Changes of lifestyle	Rethinking lifestyle
		Frequency	Rarely, rather back in the Indian network	Regularly e.g. birthday, holidays	Regularly e.g. conferences, publications, holidays

Fig. 2: Typology of Indian students in Germany and their purpose, building and maintaining of networks (Own draft)

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Comparing the results of the typology with the expectations mentioned by the experts, it can be said that the representatives of the institutional level aim to enable students of all three types to study in Germany. However, their interest is rather to support those students who maintain their networks to Germany and who use their transnationality to continue their scientific career in Germany. They want to strengthen especially professional linkages between India and Germany to enable benefit on both sides, for the individual

student and the universities. Even though the university representatives focus on professional networks, they are aware of the fact that the Indian students also depend on personal contacts which might help them to explore the German university landscape as well as the language and culture of the country.

Conclusion

This study shows that three types of Indian students in Germany can be determined regarding their establishment of transnational networks. Every type represents distinctive ways, reasons and decisions in regard of establishing and preserving their networks. Even though all of the interviewed students build networks, some of them do not achieve the goal of permanent and transnational stable networks which is one of the major aims mentioned by German university representatives and educational exchange programs in India. Nevertheless, while the quantity of Indian students in Germany is rising, this increase goes along with a growing number of transnational networks build by those who fulfill the characteristics of the open and the purposeful type. This development, which influences the bilateral relation between India and Germany, provides chances to appreciate these transnational networks in order to achieve an internationally networked and innovative cooperation.

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