

**HARJIV SINGH**, founder of BrainGainMag, a site that offers advice on studying abroad

# 'Beware of bogus education agents' advice'

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In December last year, Air India offloaded more than 15 US-bound students at Hyderabad, saying the universities in which they were admitted were under scrutiny. In other instances, students reach a foreign country to study in their dream college but are

deported even before they enter the institute. The reasons might vary from visa fraud, documentation errors and bogus education agents. HT spoke to Harjiv Singh, founder of BrainGainMag.com that provides free information on foreign admission, on the issue.

**On an average, how many students go abroad for studies and how many of them are deported?**

India sends the highest number of students [in the world] abroad for studies, after China. A total of 1,82,000 students went abroad in 2014, according to UNESCO. Around 500 students are deported every year, but the cost to both the students and the Indian government is high in terms of the time spent to bring these students home.

**Which countries deport the most number of Indian students?**

In the past five years, we have seen deportations from countries such as the US, UK, New

Zealand and Australia.

**What would cause Indians student to be deported from a foreign country?**

There are two key reasons. First, is the role played by unscrupulous agents who are paid commissions by universities and colleges abroad for admitting Indian students. These agents sometimes misrepresent facts about visas and work permits. Most cases of deportations happen when students violate terms of their visas by working without proper authorisation. The second reason is that students and their parents do not do enough research and depend on agents who only want to earn their commission and are not bothered about providing good career advice to the students.

**What are the problems associated with deportation? Does it involve legal and financial troubles? Are there future implications?**

Deportations can be devastating for families, both financially and legally. Families often borrow heavily to send their children abroad and deportation can be financially tough. Also, dealing with law enforcement and immi-

gration officials can be legally stressful, since there is no forum for redressal. Once these students come back, there is also the stigma of having been deported and possibly a huge setback in pursuing their career goals.

**What mistakes do students make while choosing a university abroad?**

The first one is that students do not research issues related to admission, visa, universities and career choices. The second is that they rely only on unscrupulous agents for advice. The third mistake is that students apply for courses on the basis of cost, opting for the cheaper ones. And finally, students often do not research enough to reduce their own financial burden. There are a lot of ways to bring down costs.

**What initiatives has BrainGain taken to help students?**

We recently launched a public service campaign through a six-episode web series called 'Lucky Lakanpal'. It is a humorous take on an agent Lucky and his antics for misguiding students who want to study abroad. The initiative got tremendous response online.

