

## Internationalization of Higher Education and Adult and Lifelong Learning: A Case Study of the University of Delhi's Academic Mobility with the Adult Education Academy, Germany (2015–2026)

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### Abstract

*International academic collaboration can strengthen higher education, promote intercultural learning and enhance mobility. This research focuses on academic mobility trends generating from the collaboration between the University of Delhi, India, and Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg, Germany, with the participation in the Adult Education Academy. The Academy, initiated in 2014 by Professor Dr. Regina Egetenmeyer at the University of Würzburg, provides an international platform for comparative learning in Adult and Lifelong Learning. The initiative brings together master's students, doctoral scholars, practitioners, and faculty members from different countries, thereby contributing to international networking, professional development, and capacity building. The research work utilizes year-wise mobility data from 2015 to 2026, and analyses patterns of participation, funding phases, and participant composition. The findings corroborates that mobility is highest during the early DAAD-funded phase, with participation peaking in 2016 and 2017. A gradual decline is observed after 2018, followed by decline during the COVID-19 period and a partial revival under Erasmus KA171 funding from 2023 onwards. The analysis further reflects that master's students formed the largest participant group during the initial phase, while the later years reflected a growing involvement of doctoral scholars and faculty members. Funding support is one of the key factors influencing the scale and continuity of mobility. The study highlights that sustained international funding, institutional commitment, and structured academic programmes are essential for strengthening long-term internationalization in higher education, academic mobility, professional competencies, intercultural understanding, and global engagement in the field of adult and lifelong learning.*

**Keywords:** - Academic Mobility, Adult Education, Lifelong learning, Internationalization.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 International & Comparative Perspectives in Adult Education & Lifelong Learning

The University Grants Commission introduced Lifelong Learning and Extension during 2007–2011 as a professional and applied field, drawing upon the Kothari Commission's emphasis on the trinity of higher education: teaching, research, and extension. The UGC policy of Extension also recognized extension as the third dimension of higher education.

In this context, the University of Delhi introduced the Master's programme in Lifelong Learning and Extension in 2014. The Academy was started in 2014 in

Germany, and the University of Delhi in India developed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2015 with the objective of professionalization and internationalization in the field of Adult & Lifelong Learning. The opportunity is extended to students, scholars, and faculty already working in the field of Adult and Continuing Education (page 2 of 10 Years of Adult Education Academy).

With reference to University Grants Commission's policy framework on Lifelong Learning and Extension under the XI Five-Year Plan, the University of Delhi introduced a Master's programme in Lifelong Learning along with a fourth-semester multidisciplinary course aimed at promoting professional and

interdisciplinary learning through internationalization and credit transfer. Within this academic framework, initiatives are taken to strengthen international collaboration in the field of adult and lifelong learning.

Academic interactions with Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg, Germany, emerged as an important step towards exploring possibilities for institutional partnership and international academic exchange. During this process, Professor S. Y. Shah, President of the International Institute of Adult and Lifelong Learning, and Professor Dr. Regina Egetenmeyer, Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Würzburg, engaged with the University of Delhi academic community through discussions, lectures, and deliberations. These academic exchanges helped create a shared understanding of the scope and relevance of international collaboration in Adult and Lifelong Learning [1-4]. This institutional collaboration subsequently laid the foundation for structured academic mobility and participation in the Adult Education Academy in Germany [3,4]. In this context, the collaboration represents an important example of how policy support, institutional initiative, and international partnership can contribute to the internationalization of Adult and Lifelong Learning in Indian higher education.

## 1.2 Indian Perspective of Internationalization of Adult & Lifelong Learning and Institutional context.

The Adult Education Academy has a two-week intensive program and incorporates an online preparatory phase, making the academy a blended mode program. The two-week course and the preparatory phase cover adult education doctoral and master's students, including faculty in the field of study. The syllabus of the intensive course covers policy analysis, international perspectives and analysis, and comparative group work in the field of Adult & Lifelong Education.

The two-week intensive course and the preparatory phase focus on major themes in adult education, including policy analysis, international perspectives, comparative group work, and methodological approaches in Adult and Lifelong Learning. During the preparatory phase, participants engage with transnational essays, educational policies, comparative education systems, and models of adult education. The first week of the academy emphasizes comparative perspectives, policy frameworks, and international approaches to adult education. The second week focuses on adult education methodology, professionalization in adult education, policy paradigms, and the concept of Adult Learning and Education for All. Through this blended structure, the academy provides a meaningful platform for academic mobility, intercultural exchange, capacity building, and the internationalization of higher education. Table 1 represents the phases of adult education programme.

**Table 1: Phases of the Adult Education Academy Programme**

|                       |                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phase 1 <sup>st</sup> | Preparatory phase                          | Participants are engaged in online preparatory activities, including the development and analysis of transnational essays, study of adult education policies, comparative systems, and adult education models. |
| Phase 2 <sup>nd</sup> | Intensive two-weeks program and Fellowship | Participants attend the intensive two-week programme, which includes international perspectives, comparative group work, policy analysis, methodology, professionalization in adult                            |

|  |  |                                                                            |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | education, and practical learning components contributed by practitioners. |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical case study design to examine the internationalization of higher education through adult and lifelong learning at the University of Delhi. The study is based on secondary data collected from institutional and departmental records related to the academic collaboration between the University of Delhi and Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg, Germany, particularly through participation in the Adult Education Academy. The period of analysis extends from 2015 to 2026, enabling an assessment of mobility trends across different phases, including pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic periods. The longitudinal evaluation from 2015–2026 (12 years) is designed to understand internationalization, development trajectories, and sustainability. It has also considered the scope of employability, capacity building, group learning, and international exposure under the National Education Policy 2020 and Sustainable Development Goal 4, from quality education to lifelong learning. The study covered actual data of the visits from 2015–2026 as per the institutional records available and purposive random unstructured in-depth interviews of the beneficiaries, especially students and scholars.

The aim of the evaluative research from the year 2016–2026 is to generate information and knowledge about motivation, interest, the scope of internationalization, professionalization, competencies developed, the scope of employability, and the scope of learning to live together in the paradigm of local to global. The tools used for collecting data includes interviews. The sampling of students is illustrated below:

Case First:

The empirical review of the paper considered unstructured interviews of selected cases of students and doctoral scholars with the purpose of exploring their learning, theoretical models, internationalization policies, and international opportunities for employability covering vocational skills and critical life skills through international mobility.

Case 1 concerns a doctoral scholar who received a two-month opportunity for short-term mobility and a long-term mobility of six months at J. M. University Würzburg, Germany under Erasmus AK 171. This case was selected and an in-depth interview was conducted online twice from Germany. The criteria selected were internationalization, professionalization, critical life skills, and employability. It was observed that the participant developed confidence and analysed comparative professional skills in Adult and Lifelong Learning.

It helped in working individually and in a team and provided a new dimension and opportunity for employability due to international exposure and cultural exchange in the field. He cited an example of a 62-year-old scholar from Texas University, USA, working with him, which helped in intergenerational learning.

His learning exposure and skills developed many times due to the opportunities provided for short-term and long-term mobility. In his case, the funding university extended his scholarship for one more semester due to his performance and consistency while working with international scholars in the field.

Case Second:

The selection of 10 participants was on the basis of purposive random sampling, covering both genders and representation from various socio-economic backgrounds. Case 2 is from the north-eastern part of the country and represents the Scheduled Tribe community with a very poor background. In spite of getting the DAAD fellowship (scholarship), he was provided additional support by the International

Institute of Adult and Lifelong Learning, the second collaborative partner of the Adult Education Academy, Germany. His input and feedback also covered all four areas as in the case of Case 1.

He learned analytical and comparative study during the two-week intensive international program with a focus on policy, pedagogy, group skills, and practical skills from German adult education practitioners. The scholar benefited by improving analytical and critical thinking. It also helped in learning professional and employable skills in the field of Adult and Lifelong Learning. It helped in developing competencies by interacting with various participants from multiple cultural backgrounds.

In both cases, the beneficiaries had not had any earlier international study. Out of a total of 63 beneficiaries, only two had an earlier background of international study mobility. It developed cross-cultural exposure and global networking in terms of employability. The two-week intensive program improved teaching ability, teamwork, leadership ability, and other critical life skills. The learning is quantified as follows.

#### International

- Cross-cultural exposure
- Global networking
- Intercultural communication
- Global perspectives in education
- Cultural awareness

#### Employability

- Skills enhancement
- Career development
- International experience
- Adaptability
- Professional networking and confidence building

#### Professionalisation

- Teaching methodology learning
- Andragogical and pedagogical learning
- Professional ethics
- Teamwork and time management

#### 2.2 Data Source and Period of Study

The major variables considered in the study include year-wise participation, participant category (students/scholars and faculty), mobility duration, funding source, mode of participation, and social category representation. The data is organized and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools like frequencies, percentages, averages, and comparative tables. Trend analysis is also employed to identify patterns of growth, decline, and recovery in academic mobility over time.

A simple exploratory linear regression model is used to estimate the long-term mobility trend. Case study method is adopted as the University of Delhi provides an important institutional example of how international collaboration in adult and lifelong learning contributes to academic mobility, professional development, and the broader internationalization of higher education in India.

The main outcome variable is total annual mobility participation. Supporting secondary variables include funding source, participant composition by role, mobility duration, and social category distribution. The year 2021 is treated as a outlier due to pandemic rather than a normal mobility count. Funding schemes are categorized into DAAD, Indo-German, Online/No funding, and Erasmus KA171 phases. Duration is reduced into short-term and limited longer-duration mobility categories for interpretation.

The table 2 presents the sample characteristics of DCEE data from 2015-2026.

**Table 2:** Sample characteristics DCEE data 2015-2026 (Based on Funding and Duration Context)

| Year      | Fellowship          | Duration          | Beneficiaries                                      |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 2015–2018 | DAAD Germany        | Two-week duration | Student scholars and the faculty of the department |
| 2018–2022 | Indo-German Project | Two weeks         | Student scholars and the faculty of the department |

|               |               |                           |                                           |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 2022–<br>2027 | Erasmus KA171 | Two weeks / Six<br>months | Six months only for students and scholars |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------|

The fellowship framework indicates that the mobility programme evolved through three major phases of funding and collaboration. The DAAD Germany and Indo-German Project phases are primarily based on short-term two-week mobility for both student scholars and faculty, emphasizing on academic exposure and international networking. In contrast, the Erasmus KA171 phase introduced a more advanced structure by adding six-month mobility opportunities for students and scholars, reflecting a shift toward deeper academic engagement, credit transfer, and sustained international learning. Thus, the framework highlights both the continuity of the

collaboration and the gradual expansion in the scope of academic mobility over time.

### 2.3 Rationale of International Mobility:

International mobility in the field of Adult & Lifelong Learning aims at achieving professionalization, promoting critical life skills, and expanding the scope of employability through international mobility. The University of Delhi, India, promotes this through international mobility programs.

Students and scholars are selected on the basis of an English language proficiency test conducted by experts in the field. The gender and social diversity of the beneficiaries are as follows in the Table 3:-

**Table 3:**

| Gender diversity among students and scholars | Caste Diversity of the beneficiaries |      |       |       |       |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
|                                              | SC                                   | ST   | OBC   | UR    | TOTAL |
| Male-38                                      | 6                                    | 3    | 24    | 40    | 63    |
| Female-25                                    | 9.52%                                | 4.76 | 38.09 | 63.49 |       |

**Table 4 :** Category-wise participation as recorded in the supplied table.

| Year | OBC | SC | ST | UR |
|------|-----|----|----|----|
| 2015 | 1   | 1  | 1  | 4  |
| 2016 | 0   | 5  | 0  | 7  |
| 2017 | 2   | 0  | 1  | 7  |
| 2018 | 2   | 1  | 0  | 2  |
| 2019 | 1   | 2  | 0  | 3  |

Female representation out of 63 was 39.68; female students and scholars represented 63 students and scholars. Out of these, 42 represented postgraduate students, which means the representation of postgraduate students from 2015 to 2026 remained 66.66 percent. This indicates that when DAAD and Indo-Germany funding were available, maximum representation of postgraduate students was observed. The Adult Education Academy offered at J.M. University Würzburg is aimed at international master's students, doctoral students, and also practitioners in adult education (see evaluation report page 1). The

analysis indicated that the Adult Education Academy helped in strengthening career prospects in the field of Adult & Lifelong Learning (refer page 1 evaluation report).

Out of the total scholarships, 90 students and faculty received fellowships. Thirty participants received the India-German fellowship through the University Grants Commission, and 20 received Erasmus KA171 scholarships. In all three types of funding, the expenditure of the entire visit to the Adult Education Academy was covered.

The present evaluative research covering the Indian perspective of the Adult Education

Academy (2015–2026) has positively contributed to internationalization, professionalization, and global skills enhancement, including communication, negotiation, and interpersonal skills (critical life skills under NEP 2020) in Adult and Continuing Education).

### 3. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion section starts with the summarization of funding sources as discussed in the Table 5.

Table 5 Summarization of funding sources

| Year | Total | Funding Source      | Master Student | Scholar | Faculty |
|------|-------|---------------------|----------------|---------|---------|
| 2015 | 7     | DAAD                | 6              | 0       | 1       |
| 2016 | 12    | DAAD                | 11             | 0       | 1       |
| 2017 | 11    | Indo-German         | 10             | 0       | 1       |
| 2018 | 7     | Indo-German         | 5              | 0       | 2       |
| 2019 | 7     | Indo-German         | 4              | 1       | 2       |
| 2020 | 6     | Indo-German         | 6              | 0       | 0       |
| 2022 | 5     | Online / No funding | 0              | 4       | 1       |
| 2023 | 4     | Erasmus KA171       | 2              | 2       | 0       |
| 2024 | 6     | Erasmus KA171       | 2              | 2       | 1       |
| 2025 | 6     | Erasmus KA171       | 2              | 2       | 2       |
| 2026 | 4     | Erasmus KA171       | 0              | 3       | 1       |

#### 3.2 Overall mobility trend

The year-wise mobility pattern displays a clear expansion in the initial phase. Total participants increased from 7 in 2015 to 12 in 2016 and remained high at 11 in 2017. After 2017, there is a decline in total number of participants, with

7 in 2018 and 2019, 6 in 2020, 5 in 2022, and 4 in 2023.

#### Analysis of the beneficiaries

The study is covered from 2015-2026 based on the mobility of J.M. university, Germany for two weeks to one semester mobility.

Table 6: Mobility Record DCEE 2015-2026

| Sr. No. | Year of the Mobility | Duration of the Mobility | Student/Scholar | Faculty | Scholarship Received |
|---------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------|----------------------|
| 1       | 2015                 | Two weeks                | 6               | 1       | DAAD Germany         |
| 2       | 2016                 | Two weeks                | 11              | 1       | DAAD Germany         |
| 3       | 2017                 | Two weeks                | 10              | 1       | Indo-Germany (India) |
| 4       | 2018                 | —                        | 5               | 1       | Indo-Germany (India) |
| 5       | 2019                 | Two weeks                | 5               | 2       | Indo-Germany         |
| 6       | 2020                 | —                        | 6               | —       | Indo-Germany         |

|    |      |                                        |                                            |               |                  |
|----|------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 7  | 2022 | Two weeks                              | 4 (Online)                                 | 1<br>(Online) | Indo-Germany     |
| 8  | 2023 | Two weeks                              | 4                                          | —             | Erasmus<br>KA171 |
| 9  | 2024 | 3 for two weeks, 2<br>for one semester | 5 (3 for two weeks, 2 for<br>one semester) | 1             | Erasmus<br>KA171 |
| 10 | 2025 | —                                      | 4                                          | 2             | —                |
| 11 | 2026 | 2 for one semester,<br>two weeks       | 3                                          | 1             | Erasmus<br>KA171 |

(Based on the actual mobility as per DCEE Record 2015-2026)

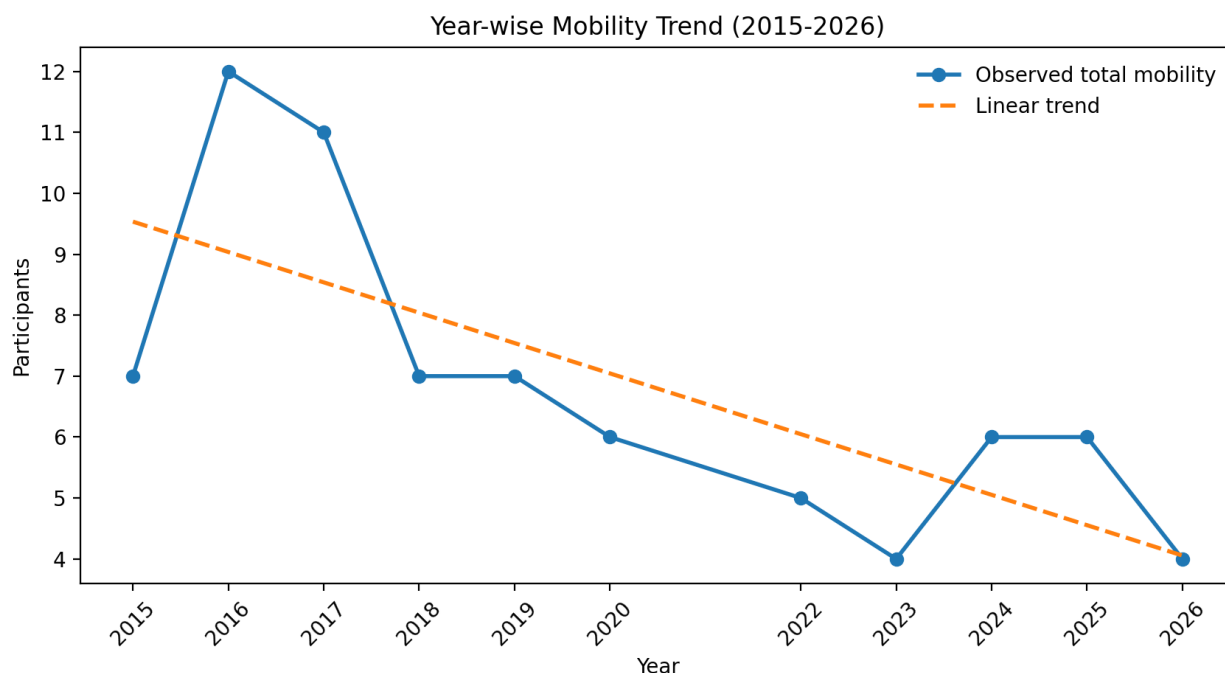
The analysis indicates that the total number of student and scholar mobility from 2015 to 2026 was 63, along with 8 teachers during the 11-year period. Out of 63, four scholars received mobility opportunities for one semester at the Adult Education Academy, Germany. Table 7 presents the mobility record of students and scholars.

**Table 7: Mobility of Students and Scholars**

|                    |         |                   |          |
|--------------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| M.A<br>mobility 59 | Student | PhD<br>Mobility 4 | Scholars |
|--------------------|---------|-------------------|----------|

(Based on DCEE visit 2015-2026)

The fellowships awarded to them were German DAAD and Erasmus KA 171. Out of 63 total, 34 students and the faculty received Indian fellowships and University of Delhi, and the Department facilitated academic exchange program for internationalization and professionalization in the field of adult education & lifelong learning. Figure 1 presents year-wise mobility trend.



*Figure 1. Annual mobility totals with fitted linear trend line.*

The fitted linear trend indicates an average decline of about 0.50 participants per year across the observed period, excluding the pandemic year 2021.

Based on the observed pattern, the years can be interpreted as three broad phases: an expansion

phase from 2015 to 2017, a transition and decline phase from 2018 to 2020, and a disruption-recovery phase from 2021 onward. An exploratory linear regression model is used to estimate the long-term trend in mobility participation from 2015 to 2026. The regression

trend indicates a gradual decline in the total number of participants over time. Although certain years, particularly 2024 and 2025, show modest recovery, the fitted line suggests that the overall trajectory remains downward. Due to the limited size of the dataset and the external influence such as funding transitions and COVID-19, this model is interpreted as indicative rather than predictive.

A simple linear regression is fitted to the annual totals and yielded a negative slope, confirming the overall downward trajectory visible in the charts.

From an exploratory machine-learning perspective, the data can also be grouped into

three clusters of programme behavior: high-mobility years (2015-2017), transition years (2018-2020), and disruption or recovery years (2021-2026). This kind of conceptual clustering helps convert the raw numerical series into meaningful institutional phases.

### 3.3 Funding phase analysis

The funding pattern indicates that why mobility remained strong in some years and weakened in others. The DAAD-supported phase had the highest average mobility, followed by the Indo-German phase. The later Erasmus KA171 phase helped maintain continuity, but not at the same average scale as the earlier peak years.

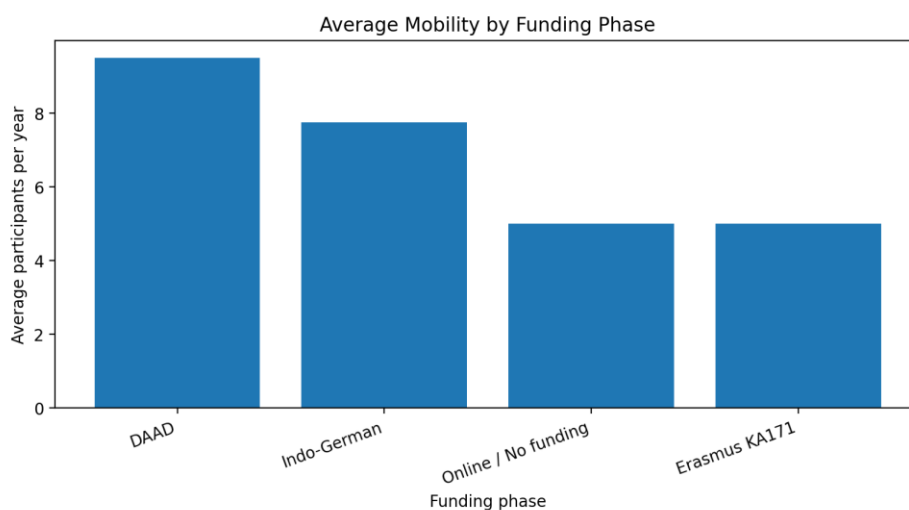


Figure 2. Average annual mobility under each funding phase.

A phase-wise comparison indicates that the DAAD years averaged 9.5 participants per year, whereas the Indo-German phase averaged 7.75. The Erasmus KA171 phase averaged 5 participants per year in the available records. The results indicate that the mobility trends is dependent on financial continuity and academic interest.

### 3.4 Profile of Mobility Participants

The participant composition reveals that the mobility programme is primarily student-centered. Master students are prominent in the earlier years, while scholar participation became more visible in the later years, especially where Erasmus KA171 is involved. Faculty participation is less as compared to students.

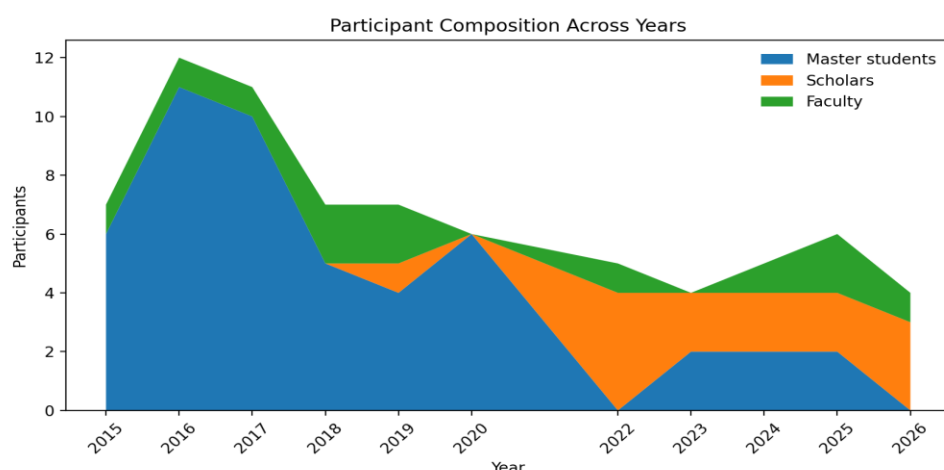


Figure 3. Participant composition across years.

This pattern indicates that the student and scholar mobility is more prominent than faculty mobility which mainly acts as a academic exchange support. This framework is consistent with mobility programmes that promote training, exposure, skill-building, and collaborative learning.

Although, faculty involvement is essential as even small numbers can contribute to curriculum development, international networking, and pedagogical exchange. The participation was mainly measured by short mobility counts rather than longer mobility counts.

Table 8: Sample from 2015–2026. Source: DCEE, University of Delhi.

| Sr. No. | Year of the Mobility | Duration of the Mobility            | Student/Scholar                         | Faculty    | Scholarship Received |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| 1       | 2015                 | Two weeks                           | 6                                       | 1          | DAAD Germany         |
| 2       | 2016                 | Two weeks                           | 11                                      | 1          | DAAD Germany         |
| 3       | 2017                 | Two weeks                           | 10                                      | 1          | Indo-Germany (India) |
| 4       | 2018                 | —                                   | 5                                       | 1          | Indo-Germany (India) |
| 5       | 2019                 | Two weeks                           | 5                                       | 2          | Indo-Germany         |
| 6       | 2020                 | —                                   | 6                                       | —          | Indo-Germany         |
| 7       | 2022                 | Two weeks                           | 4 (Online)                              | 1 (Online) | Indo-Germany         |
| 8       | 2023                 | Two weeks                           | 4                                       | —          | Erasmus KA171        |
| 9       | 2024                 | 3 for two weeks, 2 for one semester | 5 (3 for two weeks, 2 for one semester) | 1          | Erasmus KA171        |
| 10      | 2025                 | —                                   | 4                                       | 2          | —                    |
| 11      | 2026                 | 2 for one semester, two weeks       | 3                                       | 1          | Erasmus KA171        |

The analysis indicates that the maximum number of postgraduate students visited in 2016, with a total of 12 participants, including 1 faculty member under the DAAD

scholarship, followed by 11 participants including 1 faculty member under the Indo-German project in 2021. No winter school was held in Germany in 2021, and in 2022 an online

program was held without funding for Indian students and faculty.

In 2022, one-semester mobility was introduced. So far, four PhD scholars received one-semester mobility, out of which two received an extension of the scholarship and other opportunities in Germany due to the one-semester mobility.

### 3.5 Mobility Opportunities in Adult and Lifelong Learning

The analysis of 12 years and the selected in-depth interviews indicated that almost all (100%) used international scholarships for the first time, except some faculty members who had earlier used university scholarships for international workshops in Scotland and Ireland.

The University of Delhi in India was the only university that developed opportunities for international mobility in the field of Adult and Lifelong Learning. The analysis also indicated that four doctoral scholars who got opportunities for one-semester mobility had additional opportunities to participate in language learning, other international programs, conferences, and scope for overall personality building, learning in international teams, and exploring skills for further scope of employability. The case studies undertaken also indicated further scope among those who availed short- and long-term mobility.

### 3.6 Social category representation

The category-wise table shows participation from OBC, SC, ST, and UR groups across the study period.

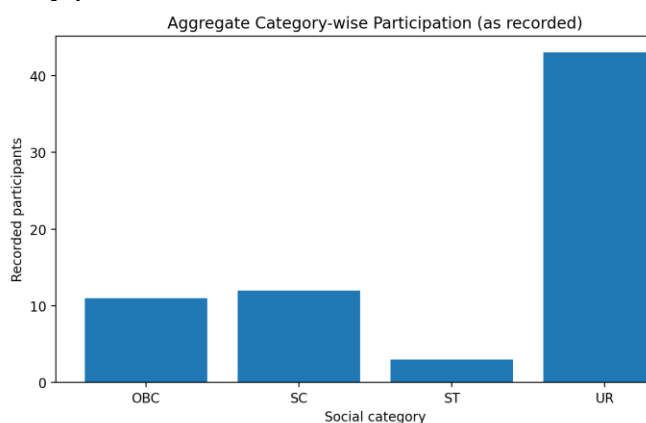


Figure 4. Aggregate category-wise participation from the available category table.

Across the available category records, UR counts are the largest, while OBC and SC participation is visible but lower, and ST participation is the smallest.

### 3.8 Exploratory trend analysis and interpretation

The results indicate that academic mobility at the University of Delhi is strongest when financial support is stable, when short-term exchanges is institutionally feasible, and when pandemic-related restrictions are absent. The programme clearly contributed to internationalization and academic exposure, but the evidence also points to three strategic needs: stable funding, greater inclusiveness, and stronger support for longer-duration mobility.

The data therefore supports a balanced conclusion. The programme is effective and meaningful, especially in its peak years, yet its later pattern reveals vulnerability to external funding changes and disruptions. Sustained institutional backing will be necessary if future mobility is expected to move beyond episodic recovery and return to a stronger developmental trajectory.

### 4. Conclusion

The academic mobility programme at the University of Delhi made an important contribution to professional development, international exposure, and the strengthening of teaching-learning processes. The records show that the programme was especially successful during the early funding-supported years, when participation was highest and mobility opportunities were more consistent.

At the same time, the longer time series shows that the programme became less stable after 2017, was disrupted sharply during the COVID period, and only partially recovered in the subsequent years. The overall trend remains downward, even though recent years show modest improvement. This means that the programme has preserved continuity, but not yet its earlier scale.

Further evidence suggests that the programme was dominated by short-term mobility, was primarily student-centered, and showed uneven but visible social inclusion. These patterns

indicate real institutional value, but also point toward future priorities: broader representation, stronger faculty engagement, and more opportunities for sustained semester-level exchange.

In conclusion, the mobility programme can be regarded as an effective platform for academic exchange and capacity building, but its long-term impact will depend on stable funding support, inclusive participation mechanisms, and a gradual shift from predominantly short-term exposure to deeper and more sustained international engagement.

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