International Educational Tourism of India: Recent state and policy

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the existing situation of international educational tourism in India, mechanisms of policies that are associated with it, obstacles, and opportunities and make recommendations regarding the policies which are necessary to reinforce its role in sustainable tourism and education. This paper exploits descriptive and analytical research design using primary and secondary data. The use of structured questionnaire was carried out as a primary method to collect 100 respondents. Our findings reflect that the education tourism has a broad policy mechanism that favours it but financial bottlenecks, policy barriers to visa and standardization challenges kill the potential of educational tourism. The paper finds that policy applicability, money reward, homogenization and streamlined procedures would help in establishing educational tourism in India, hence promoting cross cultural exchange, education sector and tourism development.

Keywords: Educational Tourism, Policy Mechanisms, Barriers, Sustainable Tourism, International Students, etc.

1.1 Introduction

International educational tourism International educational tourism is the tourist activity of educive and cultural enrichment in the area of foreign travel, it is a part of tourism and educational exchange. It is an emerging market, with an estimated value of USD 416.8 billion in 2024 and a potential of reaching more than USD 1.3 trillion by 2033 that both the education industry and tourism industry can take massive advantage of (Cavicchi et al., 2020). India because of its long history of learning and increasing institutions of higher learning and also through the policy efforts is set to be a leading destination in terms of international educational tourism (TOI Adi Bytes, 2024). At present, the arrival of international students in India is about 50,000 annually, which contributes more than INR

5,000 crore to the revenue (TOI Adi Bytes, 2024). The government-sponsored program, Study in India, strives to welcome 200,000 foreign students by the year 2025, showing a high policy ambition of transforming education into a leading demand-driven sector in the spheres of tourism, working, and associated activities (Choudhary et al., 2022).

This paper is devoted to the analysis of the contemporary situation in the sphere of international educational tourism in India, the current policy framework and hindrances as well as facilitators, as well as to the policy implications that should be considered in order to promote its sustainable development. It evaluates the contribution of policy mechanisms, educational institutions, tourism stakeholders and businesses associated with forming the industry which grows year by year.

2.1 Literature Review

Educational tourism is an emergent concept that combines education, tourism and culture exchange (Dighliya & Dahiya, 2024). According to Choudhary, Srivastava, and Panwar (2024), it can be used to enhance sustainable tourism by completing its visitor experiences with an educational aspect. Moreover, according to Khatri and Sharma (2024), the educational tourism efforts can serve the purpose of diversification of tourism portfolio in Rajasthan to make it more profound along with value addition to tourists and the third local community. Such perception is relevant to Dighliya and Dahiya (2024) who notice innovations as a result of industry-academia partnerships, training opportunities, and curriculum by destination.

Although the policy model in the National education policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to have more collaborations with other countries and internationalization of education, its integration with other projects such as RUSA (Rashtriya Uccchar Shiksha Abhiyan) serves to raise the stature of education in tourism (Cavicchi et al., 2020; TOI Adi Bytes, 2024). This policy context is further enhanced by the Swadesh Darshan Scheme that is designed to develop tourism circuits and advance associated structures that enrich the educational tourism experience (Shekhar et al., 2023).

Case study evidence points out bottlenecks and prospects. Rajasthan as an example, Khatri and Sharma (2024) mention the prospects of educational tourism as contributing to the sustainable development of the region and point at such barriers as funding, training, and standardization of policies. Concurrently, Raj and Sharma (2023) demonstrate that tourism

education curriculum in government schools has a capacity to promote readiness of career and facilitate policy-making implementation in Himachal Pradesh; however, the policy areas of concern are standardization and implementation. Moreover, privately owned educational organizations and facilities are essential to the success of educational tourism according to Shekhar, Singh and Shekhar (2023).

The international educational tourism is altogether a strong prospect to education and tourism industry in India. Overall, the policy framework is accommodative, but the bottlenecks exist when it comes to standardization, policy coordination and implementation (Cavicchi et al., 2020; Choudhary et al., 2022). Moreover, some gaps exist in the area of infrastructure, financing, and training, which should be closed to make this sector grow. Good industry-academia partnerships and well-designed and efficient policy can ensure making educational tourism an essential part of sustainable educational tourism and sustainable tourism industry in India.

3.1 Objectives of the study:

This study aims at studying the status quo of international education tourism in India, singling out policy mechanisms, limitations, and prospects, and offering policy proposals to enhance its role to the realms of sustainable tourism, education, and economic growth, and cross-cultural learning and collaboration, respectively.

3.2 Methodology:

In the study, the researcher uses descriptive and analytical research designs to thoroughly investigate the scenario of international educational tourism in India. Structured questionnaire will be used to collect primary data among the tourism stakeholders, policy makers, learning institutions and international students. The sample will consist of 100 respondents chosen through a purposive sampling process that will allow gaining insight on policy mechanisms, barriers, and possibilities. Both quantitative and qualitative ways of data analysis will be used in finding realistic and policy-conclusive conclusions.

4.1 Data Analysis:

To have an in-depth analysis of the exiting scenario of international educational tourism in India, they have done a survey on 100 respondents who included stakeholders of tourism, policy makers, the administrators of educational institutions and so on and the overseas students. Data was obtained with the help of a structured questionnaire. The responses to major questions concerning policy mechanisms, barriers and opportunities of developing educational tourism in India have been summarized by means of the following table.
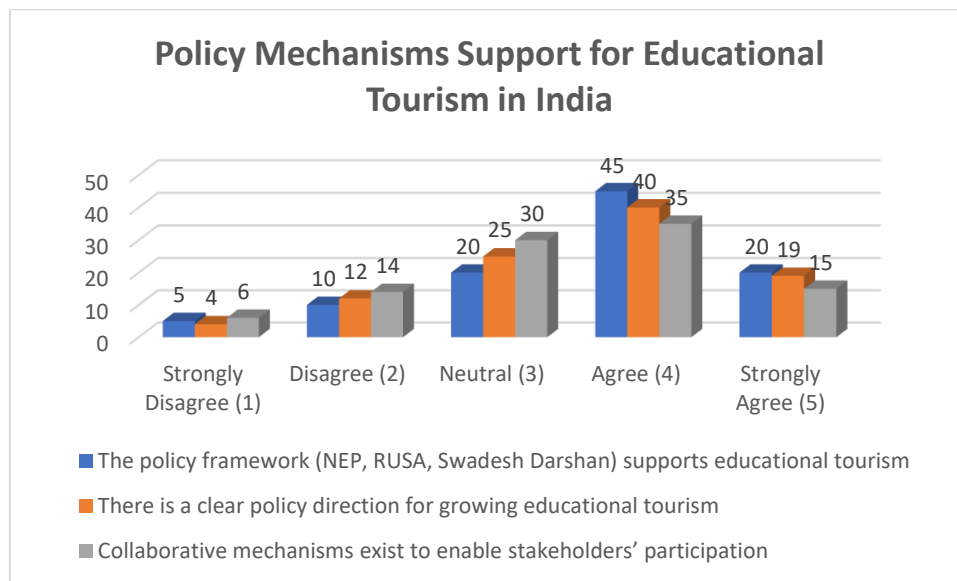
Fig. 1 Policy Mechanism support

The figure 1 reveals that policy mechanisms in India are widely deemed to be favourable in the development of educational tourism. Most of the respondents were in agreement or strongly agreeing that the policy framework assist in fostering educational tourism and that most of it is regarded to be positive. The situation is somewhat weaker yet positive but to the topic of clarity of the policy direction as well as collaborative mechanisms which allow the participation of the various stakeholders. In general, these answers show that the policy measures are viewed as being helpful and constructive, but at the same time there is a necessity to further strengthen them and coordinate their application more.
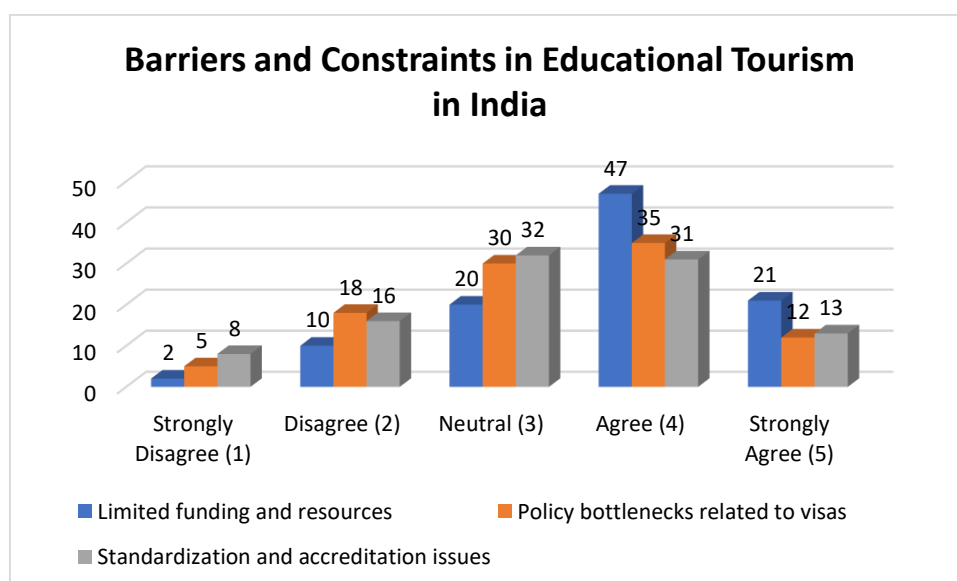

Fig. 2 Barriers and Constraints

As shown in fig. 2, there are various important obstacles and limitations which are perceived by the respondents of influencing educational tourism development in India. Most of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that one of the biggest challenges is the scarce funds and resources, which indicate the occurrence of financial bottlenecks, which should be eliminated. Policy bottlenecks in terms of visas were also seen as another obstacle to international students, problems concerning standardization and accreditation also help to perpetuate policy weakness. On the whole, these answers prove that the policy makers should relieve monetary burdens, simplify the process of the visa, and harmonize the laws in order to help educational tourism reach its potential in the country.

4.2 One Sample t-test:

Further to confirm the accuracy of the assumption that policy mechanisms are rated to be very supportive, it conducted one sample t- test against a test of 3 (neutral).

Table 1: One-Sample T-test

Statement	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value	95% CI
Policy framework supports educational tourism	3.65	1.04	6.27	99	< 0.001	(3.47 , 3.83)
Clear policy direction for growing educational tourism	3.54	1.06	5.04	99	< 0.001	(3.35 , 3.74)
Collaborative mechanisms enable stakeholders' participation	3.39	1.04	3.79	99	< 0.001	(3.20 , 3.57)

The statistics reveal a positive attitude towards policy mechanism to build an educational tourism in India (mean scores above 3), and the results of t-test are also significant (p < 0.001), meaning that the policy framework is much more than neutral. However, a number of bottlenecks are observed in terms of funding, standardization and policy implementation which is the indication of a need to revise the policy and enhance coordination. Funding and resources (mean = 3.74) is the greatest served as an indicator of a policy gap that needs financial incentives and extra resources to empower the participation of the stakeholders. In addition, there exist policy bottlenecks associated with visas (mean = 3.31) and standardization (mean = 3.26) which means that there is a weakness in the policies that should be solved. All in all, the statistics emphasize the fact that although policy mechanisms

comprise a robust basis of developing educational tourism in India, the problem of policy implementation and operational bottlenecks are still critical issues.

4.3 International Education Tourism in India:

Table 2: Number of International Students in India (2018–2023)

Year	International Students in India
2018	47,000
2019	49,500
2020	42,000
2021	38,000
2022	52,000
2023	54,000

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), Ministry of Education, Government of India (https://aishe.gov.in)

Table 2 indicates how the number of international students opting to study in India has grown in the past 6 years. According to the data, the deterioration of international enrollment in 2020 and 2021 was moderate and could not be ignored due to traveling restrictions and COVID-19 pandemic-related health issues. Nevertheless, rising confidence and interest in educational institutions of India led to the recovery to the number in 2022 and 2023, after the borders were reopened and some policy-making initiatives such as the creation of the "Study in India" were rolled out. The increasing trend is an indicator that there is a great prospect to further promote the aspect of educational tourism through enhancing the mechanism of policies, provision of better infrastructures and elimination of the bottlenecks in terms of visa support and financial provision visibility to policy makers and education providers.

5.1 Conclusion

The research has shown that educational tourist business in India has a huge potential of boosting the education and tourism business in the country. Such policy instruments, as National Education Policy, the so-called "Study in India" program and the system of collaboration policy elements create together a kind of ecosystem to attract international

students. Nevertheless, a number of bottlenecks hamper full achievement of this potential i.e. low funding, policy-related blocks to visa issues and standardization concerns. The statistics indicate that there is a favorable policy structure and increasing international student population, but the policy gaps and operational flaws are still considerable and should be bridged. In general, India can turn into the center of international educational tourism in case the implementation of policies is enhanced, the number of bottlenecks is decreased, and financial incentives and standardization, along with simplified operations, are prioritized.

5.2 Recommendations

In order to optimize the outcome of international educational tourism, policy makers ought to take into consideration the possibility of simplifying and streamlining the student visa process with the aim of easing the entry of international students. Granting financial support and scholarships will help eliminate financial obstacles and streamline education in India. Moreover, a commonality in curricula, a better level of control, and a greater development of partnerships between schools, tourism organisations and groups will further serve to prolong an ecosystem that will be stronger and more stable. Any additional marketing campaigns to facilitate tourism marketing of India as a study destination, coupled with better support systems to international students, will facilitate the process of consolidating India as a viable destination for education, tourism as well as cross-cultural communication.

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