

## **Analytical Inquest on Educational Tourism in North East India**

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### **Abstract:**

Educational tourism refers to program in which participants travel to a location as a group with the primary purpose of engaging in a learning experience directly related to the location (Rodger, 1998). According to Hayes and McCann (2008), educational tourism is defined as containing a diversity of activities including foreign exchange-student programs, leave and staff exchanges, training and educational tours, school workshops and trips, study and work tours, short courses, method and language courses, conferences and seminars, academic meetings, continuing adult education programs, winter and summer schools, advance practice training, internship periods, sports and coaching seminars, cultural and historical tours. The sub-types of educational tourism may be categorized as: a) cultural / historical, b) eco-tourism / nature based tourism/ rural tourism, and c) study abroad programs (Ankomah and Larson, 2004). Educational tourism also includes heritage tourism and student exchanges between universities and educational institutions. It is a part of lifelong learning which includes all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

The role of universities in education tourism takes into account the following areas. These are, delivery of instructions to the participants and the basic knowledge of the tourism, pay personal attention to the participants, devoting time, money and efforts to meet the challenges, usage of technology, communication of advantages and limitations, cultural traits, language and communication problems, environmental factors, commitment and exploration. In India, there have been improvements taking place in the system of education. Though there have been formulation of measures to make improvements in education tourism. These are, taking into consideration the needs of the students, building of tourism educational inventory, financial assistance, conducive environmental conditions, training of individuals in educational tourism, organization of educational fairs and sessions, counselling and guidance, employment-oriented programs, pursuance of short-term courses and availability of accommodation.

***Key words: Educational tourism, Higher Education and North East India***

### **Introduction**

Tourism in North East India is an opportunity for people to experience other environments, to spend their vacation and to meet other regions in a different environment. WTO (1999) defines tourism as a combination of various activities done by people visiting other environments for a period of time shorter than a year for different purposes. Human relationships become highly

dependent on economic gains. Economically, tourism is known as one of the leading industries during recent decades in North East India. Developing tourism is a significant proportion of nations all over the world. Tourism paves the way for socio-economic development in North East India through making benefits from exports, creating jobs and businesses, developing infrastructures within regions and getting exposed to different cultures (Ajake and Amulu, 2012). This commercialization of relationships is one of the most common impacts of tourism on host communities. The more the tourism industry grows, the more the employment rate increases in this sector. Therefore, there has been a growing ratio of people getting involved in this industry globally.

However, if tourism is well planned and organized in North East India, it will give rise to positive environmental impacts. It can provide the funds to conserve and protect historical places and heritages. It has the potential to change and renovate many redundant places to new attraction, shops, hotels or touristic facilities in the favor of the tourists. Tourism development can lead to renovation of transport system and infrastructures, which is interesting for both tourists and residents (Arva, et al, 2009; Busby, 2001; Bodger, 1998). Firstly, direct effect of tourism is expenditure by tourists. As tourists spend, it leads to an immediate revenue generation. Then, other direct effects are transportation, accommodation, eating industries etc. Secondly, indirect effects of tourism are known as the activities resulting from an initial income by a local, which is re-invested in sources to supply the demand of tourists for goods and services (Ashley, 2003; Gibson, 1998; Gunn, 1998; Bodewer, 1981).

### **Educational tourism**

The term 'educational tourism' refers to program in which participants travel to a location as a group with the primary purpose of engaging in a learning experience directly related to the location. According to Sharma(2015), educational tourism is defined as containing a diversity of activities including training and educational tours, school workshops and trips, study and work tours, short courses, method and language courses, conferences and seminars, academic meetings, continuing adult education programs, winter and summer schools, advance practice training, internship periods, sports and coaching seminars, cultural and historical tours.

The sub-types of educational tourism may be categorized as: a) cultural / historical, b) eco-tourism / nature based tourism / rural tourism, and c) study abroad programs. Educational tourism also includes heritage tourism and student exchanges between universities and educational institutions. It is a part of lifelong learning which includes all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. Nowadays educational travelers or educational tourists expect that a large number of programs will offer quality education, with reliable educational travel arrangements (Goyal, 2014). Therefore, educational tourism also

covers educational organizations, hosting and the accommodation sector, the conveyance and transportation sectors, the food and beverage industries and the restaurants' sector, entertaining facilities, opera, museums, arts and inheritance attractions, relaxation and fun facilities, and the other services (Ashley, 2000).

**Educational tourism for Cross-Cultural Exchange:** Nowadays people, countries, communities and regions are becoming interdependent and intertwined more than ever. Universities are the places where students from different regions meet each other. We can see students from North East India are studying in Central Universities of Southern and Northern regions of India. Subsequently, students from Southern and Northern regions are studying in Central Universities of North East India. Cross cultural communication or cultural exchange is a concept that enables individuals and communities to meet and communicate with other people from different regions of India. Understanding other cultures has a great advantage. It has the potential to prevent prejudice and hate. It can help to know and understand each other. It can also improve our lives by bringing new forms of artistic appearance and providing upgraded insights. Cultural exchange activities and movement may have a more powerful influence and effect than any other types of political delegations.

**Role of Higher Education Institutions in North East India:** The role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in North East India for strengthening the educational tourism is very essential. The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have to provide complete awareness on educational tourism with regard to archaeological tourism, agri-tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, film tourism, historical tourism, heritage tourism, pilgrimage tourism, rural tourism, sports tourism, wild life tourism (Sharma, 2015). The educational tourism should be precise. For acquiring basic knowledge, the participants need to be acquainted with tutorial learning. The instructors of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), should be able to make provision of basic knowledge to the participants regarding educational tourism. Hence, delivery of instructions about educational tourism, paying attention on participants, and using technology for knowing various cultural traits are essential elements for instructors.

### **Insightful Measures for Educational tourism in North East India**

*Need analysis:* The most significant step is to conduct an analysis of the needs and requirements of the students (Goyal, 2014). The students belonging to different castes, creeds, religions, nationality, ethnicities, gender and socio-economic backgrounds have different needs and interests. Their goals and aspirations are depended on their need and interest. The educational tourism is primarily based upon the interests and needs of the students in terms of field selection and achievement goals. The main goal of educational tourism should be focused upon the target of the students, regarding what they would like to accomplish. When students plan educational tourism, they have certain needs and desires to fulfill, which they predominantly focus upon.

*Setting up new measures in educational tourism:* It is essential to formulate attractive measures with a view to encourage students of various regions to participate in educational tourism of North East India. Subsequently, it is needed to reinforce students of North East India for visiting southern and northern regions of India. It is indispensable to bring desired changes in teacher education, higher education, teaching-learning technology, instructional strategies, enriched faculty, well equipped infrastructural facilities and advanced assessment techniques. At the same time, it is needed to formulate policies and rules that light up equal opportunities for all individuals irrespective of caste, creed, race, gender, religious background, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

*Finance* – Most of the students are unable to connect with educational tourism and fulfill their dreams of studying in the domain of Engineering, Medicine, Management, Computer Science, Technology etc. due to deficit in finance. The students belonging to economically weaker sections of the societies in North East India have more financial problems which will demotivate them for achieving their goals and targets. The government of India and concerned state government should provide necessary provisions, incentives and scholarships for gifted students and students from weaker sections to attain their higher education in the light of educational tourism.

*Creating Environment for safety and security* – It is very important to take safety and security measures in positive manner when students plan educational tourism and migrate from one region to another. The students should feel safe in new environment. It is significant to ensure that the socio-emotional climate is desirable for the students. It is also to ensure that their places of accommodation are safe and secure. It is imperative for educational institutions to formulate rules and regulations with a view to accommodate the students in positive learning environment.

*Well-trained individuals for educational tourism:* The individuals who want to work in the field of educational tourism need to be well trained with regard to knowledge, competencies, skills, and attitudes (Goyal, 2014). They should be adequately aware of all the areas, so that they should be able to provide all the needed information to the students. It is vital for the students to obtain adequate knowledge in terms of the performance of assignments in the system of education of India. These individuals possess certain educational qualifications and need to undergo proper training programs in terms of their job duties. The training for these individuals need to be organized in such a manner that students of different regions should feel satisfied.

*Organization of Educational Fairs and Sessions* – The organization of educational fairs and sessions are regarded important in making provision of the required knowledge and information to the individuals in terms of selecting universities, educational programs, short-term courses, financial assistance, and so forth. When individuals are unaware and do not possess the required knowledge in terms of the universities, programs of study, and financial assistance, scholarships and grants, then the educational fairs and sessions prove to be beneficial to them. In these educational fairs and sessions, the students meet with the University representatives and are able

to obtain answers to all their questions. Hence, after obtaining adequate answers, they are able to make better decisions.

*Counselling and Guidance* – Counselling and guidance facilities in educational institutions make provision of assistance to the students to provide answers to various questions and solutions to their problems. There are numerous problems that students experience, especially when they have migrated to other regions. The problems which they experience are with regard to understanding of academic concepts, teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies, and other tasks and activities. When students are unable to understand the concepts and score low grades, then it is disappointing to them and they need assistance regarding what types of study methods to put into practice to improve their learning. In educational institutions, there are professional counsellors and guides, who make provision of knowledge to the students regarding how to put into practice the teaching-learning methods and improve their academic performance.

*Employment-oriented Programs* – It is vital for the higher educational institutions to introduce employment-oriented programs. In these programs, the individuals, who are proficient, well-qualified and possess adequate communication skills are able to obtain employment opportunities upon the completion of their programs. These prove to be beneficial to the individuals, as when they are assisted by their universities in obtaining employment opportunities and do not have to be concerned regarding obtaining employment on their own. In some programs, there is an opportunity of internship, which provides students with the practical experience regarding how to perform their tasks and functions within the working environment.

*Short-term Courses* – In some cases, students do not feel pleasurable and contented, when they migrate to other cities for the pursuance of education. The reason being, they live at a distance from their families, are not able to familiarize themselves with the concepts, find teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies complicated and feel that it is costly, especially when they do not have financial assistance available. When the individuals possess these kinds of beliefs and viewpoints, then they are usually engaged in the pursuance of short-term courses. Hence, it is vital on the part of the educational institutions to promote learning, environmental conditions and other activities in such a manner that they should persuade the students to extend their stay and pursue long-term courses.

*Availability of Accommodation* – Accommodation facilities should be easily available to the students (Goyal, 2014). The availability of safe and affordable accommodation with all the necessary facilities and civic amenities would enable the individuals to perform their tasks and functions adequately as well as extend their stay. When a person is able to find an accommodation that is safe, it has all the facilities and one is able to adequately concentrate on his/her work, then one feels contented to a major extent. In the present existence, all the information regarding the availability of accommodation and the costs involved are presented on the website.

## Conclusion

Educational tourism is regarded as one of the forms of tourism in North East India that is focused upon in making provision of best education to the individuals from different regions. The increasing popularity of acquisition of knowledge and technical competencies from different regions of India has resulted for increase in educational tourism. On the other hand, educational tourism is constructive and beneficial to the universities, when they receive students from different regions of India to plan for educational tourism.

The role of universities in educational tourism takes into account of delivery of instructions to the participants, providing basic knowledge of the educational tourism, personal attention on the participants, devoting time, money and efforts to meet the challenges, technology applicability, communication of advantages and limitations, language and communication problems, cultural traits, environmental factors, commitment and exploration. Certain important measures like need analysis, setting up new measures in educational tourism, finance assistance, creating environment for safety and security, well-trained individuals for educational tourism, organization of educational fairs and sessions, counselling and guidance, employment-oriented programs, pursuance of short-term courses and availability of accommodation are to be taken in Universities in North East India while considering educational tourism.

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