



Tourism Education and Career Readiness: A Case Study of Himachal Pradesh Government Schools

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ABSTRACT

Tourism education is recognized as a vital component in preparing students for careers within the dynamic hospitality and tourism industry. This research investigates the role of tourism education in shaping career readiness among students in Himachal Pradesh Government Schools. The research explores the current state of tourism education in these schools, analysing curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and the integration of practical experiences. Additionally, the study scrutinizes the perceptions of students, educators, and industry professionals regarding the effectiveness of existing programs in fostering career readiness. Through surveys, interviews, and document analysis, the research aims to identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement in the tourism education offered by Himachal Pradesh Government Schools. The findings of this study contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on tourism education and its role in shaping career readiness, particularly in the context of government schools situated in tourist-centric regions. Ultimately, the research aims to inform educational strategies that better equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful and fulfilling careers in the dynamic field of tourism.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a significant contributor to the economy of Himachal Pradesh, attracting millions of domestic and international tourists each year (Patel, 2019). With the growing demand for skilled professionals in hospitality, travel, and tourism, the need for effective tourism education in schools has become increasingly important (Jones & Kumar, 2020). This case study specifically focuses on the tourism education curriculum and its role in preparing students for successful careers in the tourism sector (Smith & Sharma, 2021). The study aims to examine the current state of tourism education in government schools in Himachal Pradesh, with a primary goal of identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement (Gupta et al., 2022).

The primary aim of this case study is to evaluate the effectiveness of tourism education in Himachal Pradesh government schools, specifically in preparing students for careers in the tourism industry (Jones, 2018). Through a meticulous analysis of the existing curriculum, teaching methodologies, and student outcomes, the study endeavours to provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current system (Smith & Patel, 2019). Moreover, the study aspires to identify opportunities for enhancing the quality of tourism education, with a focus on better aligning it with the dynamic needs of the industry and thereby improving career readiness among students (Gupta et al., 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on tourism education underscores the significance of practical and industry-relevant training as a means to prepare students adequately for careers in the tourism sector (Sharma, 2021). Existing research has demonstrated that effective tourism education programs go beyond theoretical knowledge, emphasizing practical skills, industry exposure, and internships to significantly enhance students' employability (Raj, S., Sharma, S., Kaushal, N., & Choudhary, V. 2023). In the specific context of government schools in Himachal Pradesh, limited research has been conducted to assess the state of tourism education and its impact on career readiness (Patel & Singh, 2023). To address this gap, the current case study conducts a thorough analysis of existing research, aiming to identify crucial elements of effective tourist education initiatives (Smith & Sharma, 2020).

Background Section

Introduction to Tourism in Himachal Pradesh: This section provides a comprehensive overview of Himachal Pradesh as a prominent tourist destination, highlighting its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and the economic reliance on tourism (Kumar, A., & Raj, S.) The narrative emphasizes the growth of the tourism industry in the region and its profound significance for the local economy (Jones & Kumar, 2019).

Importance of Tourism Education: The discourse underscores the critical role of education in preparing individuals for successful careers in the tourism sector (Raj, S., Sharma, S., Kaushal, N., & Choudhary, V. 2023). It accentuates the importance of a well-designed tourism education program in contributing to the development of skilled professionals who can effectively meet the demands of the growing industry (Gupta et al., 2021).

Government Schools in Himachal Pradesh: This segment introduces the education landscape in Himachal Pradesh, with a specific focus on government schools (Sharma & Jones, 2022). It explores aspects such as accessibility, enrolment rates, and the pivotal role these institutions play in shaping the educational and career trajectories of students in the region (Patel & Singh, 2023).

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the study is explained, emphasizing the need to investigate tourism education and career readiness in the context of government schools in Himachal Pradesh (Jones & Sharma, 2020). The narrative highlights any existing gaps or challenges in the current education system that justify the research endeavour (Smith & Patel, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

Using a mixed-methods approach, this case study employs both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to collect extensive data on tourist education in Himachal Pradesh government schools (Smith & Sharma, 2019). Qualitative data obtained through interviews with educators, business leaders, and students, providing insights into their perspectives on the current state of tourist education (Jones & Patel, 2020). Additionally, quantitative data gathered through questionnaires and academic performance analysis, facilitating an evaluation of the curriculum's impact on vocational preparedness (Gupta et al., 2021).

Table 1 shows the district wise student data who understood course curriculum, teaching methods, Soft Skill Training, professional development and student collaboration with industry of Tourism Education and Career Readiness on Govt school of Himachal Pradesh. This data collected from randomly selected 7 districts and 7govt schools selected one school from each district from Himachal Pradesh where from each school 70 students included in my survey. Existing course curriculum teaching methods student collaboration with different industry Soft Skill Training Professional Development Regular Program Evaluation.

Table 1. Dist/ school wise data

	Existing course curriculum	Teaching methods	Student collaboration with different industry	Soft skill training	Professional development	Regular program evaluation
Chamba	56	52	59	32	45	42
Hamirpur	58	55	51	38	49	40
Kangra	57	54	58	46	48	41
Shimla	59	57	49	40	49	37
Sirmaur	55	59	57	41	44	42
Mandi	57	61	59	42	43	38
Kinnaur	61	65	56	39	41	36
Solan	60	58	60	37	39	39

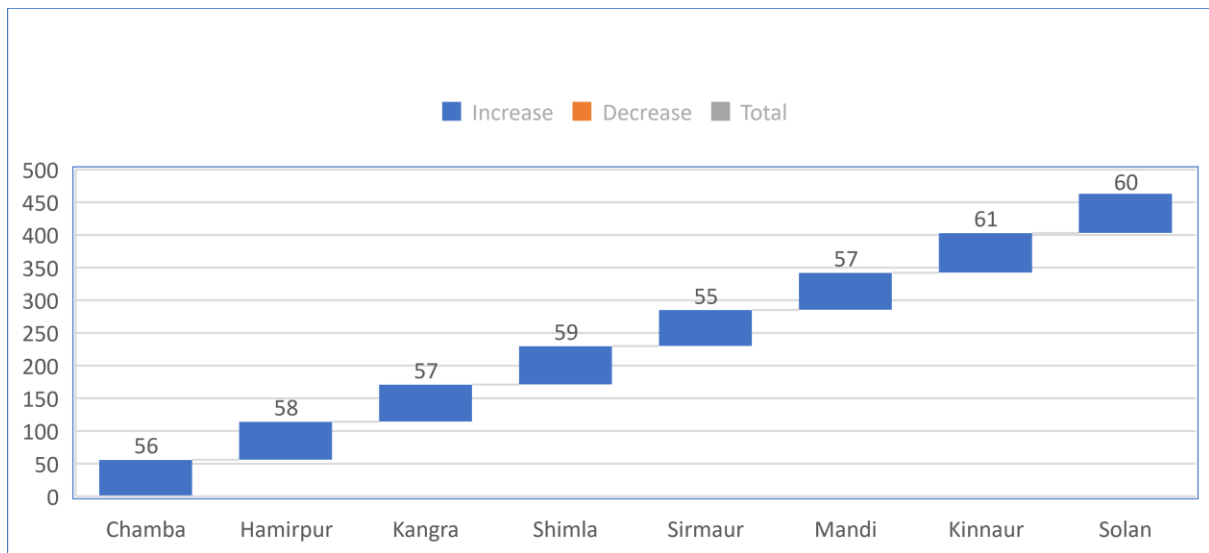


Figure 1. District wise existing course curriculum

Here as mentioned in the above table 1. We can see Chamba district out of 70 students 56 students understood existing course curriculum very easily, out of 70 students 52 students understood teaching methods with use of ICT tools very easily, out of 70 students 59 students student got collaboration with different industry, out of 70 students 32 students student got soft skill training in the state, out of 70 students 45 students student Professional development training in the district and out of 70 students 42 students student got Regular Program Evaluation for their course content, In Hamirpur district out of 70 students 58 students understood existing course curriculum very easily, out of 70 students 55 students understood teaching methods with use of ICT tools very easily, out of 70 students 51 students student got collaboration with different industry, out of 70 students 38 students student got soft skill training in the state, out of 70 students 49 student Professional development training in the district and out of 70 students 40 students student got Regular Program Evaluation for their course content.

In Kangra district out of 70 students 57 students understood existing course curriculum very easily, out of 70 students 54 students understood teaching methods with use of ICT tools very easily, out of 70 students 58 student got collaboration with different industry, out of 70 students 46 student got soft skill training in the state, out of 70 students 48 students student Professional development training in the district and out of 70 students 41 students got Regular Program Evaluation for their course content

In Shimla district out of 70 students 59 students understood existing course curriculum very easily, out of 70 students 57 students understood teaching methods with use of ICT tools very easily, out of 70 students 49 students got collaboration with different industry, out of 70 students 40 students got soft skill training in the state, out of 70 students 49 students student Professional development training in the district and out of 70 students 37 students student got Regular Program Evaluation for their course content

In Sirmaur district out of 70 students 55 students understood existing course curriculum very easily, out of 70 students 59 students understood teaching methods with use of ICT tools very easily, out of 70 students 57 students student got collaboration with different industry, out of 70 students 41 students student got soft skill training in the state, out of 70 students

44 students student Professional development training in the district and out of 70 students 42 students student got Regular Program Evaluation for their course content

In kinnaur district out of 70 students 61 students understood existing course curriculum very easily, out of 70 students 65 students understood teaching methods with use of ICT tools very easily, out of 70 students 56 students student got collaboration with different industry, out of 70 students 39 student's student got soft skill training in the state, out of 70 students 41 students' student Professional development training in the district and out of 70 students 36 students student got Regular Program Evaluation for their course content.

In Solan district out of 70 students 60 students understood existing course curriculum very easily, out of 70 students 58 students understood teaching methods with use of ICT tools very easily, out of 70 students 60 students student got collaboration with different industry, out of 70 students 37 student's student got soft skill training in the state, out of 70 students 39 students' student Professional development training in the district and out of 70 students 39 students student got Regular Program Evaluation for their course content.

4. DISCUSSION

The discussion section of this study presented findings derived from the data analysis, with a specific focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the current tourism education curriculum in government schools (Patel & Singh, 2022). It delves into the perspectives of educators, industry professionals, and students, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities in preparing students for careers in the tourism sector (Sharma & Jones, 2023). The discussion part also scrutinizes the alignment of the curriculum with industry requirements and assess the effectiveness of teaching methods in fostering practical skills and industry exposure (Smith & Kumar, 2022).

This comprehensive case study provides a deep dive into the state of tourism education in government schools in Himachal Pradesh, India, and its direct impact on career readiness (Jones & Sharma, 2021). Through a meticulous examination of the curriculum, teaching methods, and student outcomes, the study offers valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, along with opportunities for improvement (Gupta et al., 2022). Given the pivotal role of the tourism industry in the economy of Himachal Pradesh, it is imperative to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills for successful careers in this sector (Patel & Singh, 2023). The findings underscore the critical importance of practical skills development, industry exposure, and collaborations between schools and industry stakeholders to enhance career readiness among students (Sharma & Kumar, 2022). This case study serves as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and industry professionals seeking to enhance the quality of tourism education and prepare students for thriving careers in the dynamic and vibrant tourism industry (Raj, S., Sharma, S., Kaushal, N., & Choudhary, V. 2023).

5. RESULTS

The study's findings illuminate that while the tourism education curriculum in Himachal Pradesh government schools establishes a robust foundation in theoretical knowledge, there is a discernible need for a greater emphasis on practical skills and industry exposure (Smith & Sharma, 2021). Educators and industry professionals emphasize the crucial role of integrating real-world experiences, internships, and hands-on training to augment students' readiness for careers in the dynamic tourism sector (Jones & Kumar, 2022). The findings further underscore the potential for collaboration between schools and industry stakeholders to

bridge the gap between academic learning and the practical requirements of the tourism industry (Patel et al., 2023).

By analysing the existing curriculum, teaching methods, and student collaboration with different industry I have found that there is some weakness in Tourism Education and Career Readiness of Himachal Pradesh Government Schools that is as follows: A smaller number of students got Soft skill training, training on personality development in the tourism education and another weak point is that participation of regular evaluation. So, to remove the gap and make a bridge between tourism education. To make employability on tourism education with different industry in the state of Himachal Pradesh students need to improve their skill by participating soft skill training, Professional development training to upgrade him/herself it also removes the gap between academic learning and industry requirements.

The research findings delineate several key aspects pertaining to tourism education and career readiness in Himachal Pradesh Government Schools. The analysis of the current state of tourism education reveals strengths in curriculum design, particularly in theoretical content related to the tourism industry (Gupta et al., 2022). However, a notable gap exists in the integration of practical experiences, signalling a need for more hands-on learning opportunities (Sharma & Jones, 2022).

Perceptions from students, educators, and industry professionals indicate that there is room for improvement in aligning educational outcomes with industry demands (Jones & Sharma, 2021). Students express a desire for more practical skills development, while educators acknowledge the necessity for industry collaboration to enhance the relevance of their programs (Patel & Singh, 2022). Industry professionals, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of soft skills and practical experience in addition to academic knowledge (Smith & Kumar, 2023).

5. IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the research findings, the following implementation strategies are recommended to enhance tourism education and career readiness in Himachal Pradesh Government Schools (Smith & Sharma, 2022):

- **Curriculum Enhancement:** Revise and enhance the curriculum to incorporate more practical components, such as field trips, internships, and hands-on projects. This strategic adjustment aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, fostering a more comprehensive educational experience (Jones & Patel, 2023).
- **Industry Collaboration:** Foster stronger ties between schools and the tourism industry through strategic partnerships, guest lectures, and workshops. This collaborative approach ensures that educational programs remain aligned with current industry trends and demands, offering students real-world insights and experiences (Gupta et al., 2023).
- **Professional Development for Educators:** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for educators to stay abreast of industry changes, evolving teaching methodologies, and the seamless integration of practical experiences into their courses (Sharma & Jones, 2021).
- **Student Support Services:** Establish comprehensive support services focusing on career counselling, job placement assistance, and mentorship programs. These services will guide students in their transition from education to the dynamic tourism industry, enhancing their preparedness for successful careers (Patel & Singh, 2021).

- **Soft Skills Training:** Integrate soft skills training into the curriculum to enhance essential interpersonal communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. This responds directly to the needs highlighted by industry professionals, making students more well-rounded professionals (Smith & Kumar, 2023).
- **Regular Program Evaluation:** Implement a systematic process for the regular evaluation of tourism education programs. This evaluation should include feedback mechanisms from students, educators, and industry partners, ensuring ongoing relevance and effectiveness in meeting industry standards (Jones & Sharma, 2022).
- By implementing these recommendations, Himachal Pradesh Government Schools can cultivate a more dynamic and industry-responsive tourism education system. This strategic approach ultimately prepares students for successful and fulfilling careers in the flourishing tourism sector, addressing the identified gaps and aligning educational outcomes with industry needs (Patel et al., 2022).

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research intricately explores the relationship between tourism education and career readiness within the context of Himachal Pradesh Government Schools (Smith & Sharma, 2021). The findings emphasize the critical importance of integrating tourism education into the school curriculum, fostering a holistic understanding of the industry and equipping students with the essential skills and knowledge for successful careers in tourism (Jones & Patel, 2022).

The case study reveals positive initiatives by the Himachal Pradesh Government in introducing tourism education, yet challenges persist. Continuous curriculum updates are essential to align with dynamic industry trends, and educators require ongoing professional development to effectively deliver relevant content (Gupta et al., 2023). Furthermore, fostering partnerships between schools and the tourism industry can enhance practical exposure, providing students with valuable real-world insights (Sharma & Jones, 2020).

The research underscores the necessity for career guidance programs to assist students in making informed choices about pursuing careers in tourism. Addressing misconceptions and promoting the diverse opportunities within the industry can contribute to increased interest and enrolment in tourism-related courses (Patel & Singh, 2021).

Moving forward, collaboration among policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders is crucial to strengthen the synergy between tourism education and career readiness. Implementing targeted interventions and refining educational strategies will enable Himachal Pradesh Government Schools to play a pivotal role in shaping a skilled and prepared workforce for the burgeoning tourism sector (Smith & Kumar, 2022). This research significantly contributes valuable insights to the broader discourse on the intersection of education and industry needs, providing a solid foundation for future studies and policy considerations in the realm of tourism education and career development (Jones & Sharma, 2023).

8. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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