

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59455

Title: LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: A MULTI-COHORT STUDY OF RURAL IMMERSION OUTCOMES, INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE, AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY IN INDIA.

Recommendation:

Accept as it is
Accept after minor revision.....
 Accept after major revision
 Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity	✓			
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Mithilesh kumar shukla

Reviewer's Comment for Publication:

This paper examines how structured rural immersion programs in India shape intercultural competence, career readiness, and perceptions of rural communities among domestic and international students. Using a multi-cohort mixed-methods design (2024–2026) with Australian New Colombo Plan students, Indian undergraduates, educators, and Indigenous fellowship participants, it finds significant improvements in cultural competency, safety perception, and career aspiration, plus a strong "perception-reality gap" where pre-arrival fears proved unjustified. The study derives three frameworks: the Rural Immersion Learning Cycle (RILC), the Perception-Reality Gap Index (PRGI), and the Community-Integrated Curriculum (CIC) Model. It argues rural communities should be co-educators, and social enterprises serve as essential educational infrastructure to fulfil NEP 2020's experiential learning mandate and boost India's international student mobility.

Recommendation: Accept after minor revision.

Detailed Reviewer's Report

STRENGTHS:

- 1- The paper Draws on four distinct cohorts (Australian NCP students, Totapara fellows, Indian undergraduates, and 136 educators), enabling cross-context comparison and triangulation of findings.
- 2- It is used Mixed-methods approach.
- 3- It Proposes three empirically derived models (RILC, PRGI, and CIC), offering practical tools for program design, policy, and future research rather than just describing findings.
- 4- The paper Addresses a genuine policy gap.
- 5- It Provides specific guidance for university international offices, policymakers, and practitioners, making the research directly usable.
- 6- Practical, actionable recommendations of the study.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1- Very small sample sizes, The NCP Cohort analysis rests on only 5 completed surveys (projected to 14), and the Totapara cohort on just 7 participants.
- 2- No pre-program measurement for key outcomes.
- 3- Self-selected participants and Weak data consistency.