

# Role Of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (Iccr) Educational Scheme in Promoting International Understanding: A Study Among International Students In India

Sayed Anwar Hussaini<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Joseph PD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Business Administration – TTM, Mangalore University

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration – TTM, Mangalore University

**Abstract—** The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) Educational Scheme plays a crucial role in promoting international understanding by offering academic opportunities that attract students from diverse cultural and national backgrounds to India. The initiative fosters genuine connections between international students and the host country by offering scholarships, facilitating academic involvement, and promoting cultural exchange. This study examines the role of the ICCR Educational Scheme in promoting cultural awareness, mutual respect, and global harmony among international students. The researcher employed a mixed-methods strategy in this study, utilizing a descriptive and explanatory research design to achieve the research objectives. This study adopted random sampling, comprising a sample size of 373 international students studying under ICCR scholarships in India. This study utilized a questionnaire as the data collection method to analyze the data and evaluate the hypothesis using SPSS version 25. The findings suggest that the ICCR educational program fosters international understanding by providing international students with a significant cultural experience, enhancing their intercultural communication skills, and enabling them to appreciate India's cultural diversity.

**Index Terms—** ICCR Educational Scheme, International Students, Cultural Diplomacy, International Understanding, Cultural Awareness, India

## I. INTRODUCTION:

International education has emerged as a highly effective approach for fostering global collaboration and intercultural understanding. As student's cross boundaries in their pursuit of knowledge, new insights,

and expanding opinions, academic exchange serves as an effective mechanism to cultivate mutual respect, cultural appreciation, and harmonious international relations. The ICCR, established in 1950, has acquired significant traction alongside India's increasing soft power, facilitating mutual understanding and promoting cultural exchanges globally (Bhattacharya, 2013). The ICCR, through its Educational Scholarship Scheme, facilitates the study of thousands of international students in India. Hence, fostering academic advancement as well as cross-cultural interaction and interpersonal relations (ICCR, 2025).

Despite the annual increase in international students under the ICCR, little research has been conducted on the specific impact of these educational programs on fostering international understanding. In the educational sector, particularly education, internationalization is a significant aspect (Altbach, 2002). While research on cultural exchange is available, there is a deficiency in understanding the reality of cultural exchanges and the perceptions of students who directly benefit from ICCR scholarships. Consequently, the genuine impact of such programs on promoting mutual respect, cross-cultural education, and global awareness remains unclear. O'Regan (1999) argues that cultural interchange is vital to a focus on cultural definition, loss, reconstruction, and renewal. It aligns with the fundamental objectives and aims of an international scholarship program, as well as the value it holds for the global education community (Barker, 2024).

Comprehending this link is crucial, as international scholarship programs are central to modern cultural

diplomacy. This initiative will leverage the experiences of international students in India to gain insights that can inform the development of more effective cultural and educational policies by lawmakers, universities, and international organizations in the future.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The phenomenon of international educational exchange is a recognized, however, very effective mechanism that fosters mutual understanding, respect, and participation with the global society. Intercultural learning is widely recognized as beginning when young individuals engage with international education at the higher education level, thereby fostering mutual understanding and communication skills across diverse cultures (Sobkowiak, 2019). Research indicates that many worldviews can be obtained when young individuals engage in study abroad programs, which may, conversely, have different impacts. Scholarship diplomacy, as an example of soft power, is also crucial to this discourse, utilizing government-sponsored educational programs as methods. Studies demonstrate that government-funded scholarship programs, especially in developing countries, play a crucial role in establishing lasting diplomatic relationships and improving cultural engagement (Nye, 2007). The scholarship structure in India, overseen by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, complies with these international standards. Established in 1950, ICCR offers various scholarship opportunities, encompassing undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, and cultural courses, thereby facilitating thousands of foreign students in achieving their academic aspirations at Indian institutions annually (Yathish, 2025). Scholarship diplomacy enables India to present itself as an interactive and culturally rich nation. Research suggests the experiences of international students in India substantially influence their global comprehension. Some students value India's diversity, educational settings, and growth chances; yet, others may encounter obstacles such as long administrative processes, cultural adaptation, and feelings of loneliness. These experiences indicate that it is insufficient for certain students to simply receive scholarship opportunities; rather, they require

experiences that facilitate the development of substantial intercultural awareness.

Reich Theories, as proposed by Allport (1954), asserts that significant encounters between foreign and local students are essential for dismantling preconceptions and promoting intercultural understanding. Furthermore, current research on internationalization and higher education in India suggests that the ICCR plays a crucial role in increasing foreign student enrolment, particularly from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The ICCR currently sponsors 24 scholarship programs for international students, which are crucial in helping the organization achieve its objectives (Mathews, 2022). Research on national demographics, such as Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and several African countries indicate that cultural adaptations among international university students varied according to their backgrounds and the requirements of distinct socio-political environments. International scholarships in higher education have long been a prominent form of assistance in the realm of international development. It is regarded as a significant assistant in the following ways: Initially, international scholarships possess a rich and comprehensive historical background (Perna et al., 2014). Boeren et al. (2018) assert that education is perhaps the most ancient type of development collaboration in higher education. The origins of foreign scholarships can be traced to the early 20th century, when colonial elites received education and training abroad (Perna et al., 2014). Secondly, in other countries, scholarships have emerged as a prevalent form of financial assistance, backed by many different kinds of benefactors, including governmental entities and private organizations, throughout the years.2 Established and emerging donor nations have been offering international scholarships to students from poor countries, primarily for the advancement of human capital (Perna et al., 2014).

A recent study highlights the need to use mixed research methodologies in evaluating scholarly outcomes. Although empirical data distinctly demonstrate advancements in global comprehension and international communication, narratives facilitate a review of students' individual thoughts, cultural adjustments, and identities. A combination of these methodologies fosters a more thorough comprehension of scholarship experiences, enhancing global awareness, which would be an exemplary

approach for evaluating the ICCR Educational Scheme. The literature demonstrates substantial evidence that ICCR scholarships significantly promote international understanding. However, it necessitates a comprehensive evaluation and focus on the degree and nature of cultural connections, as well as student characteristics.

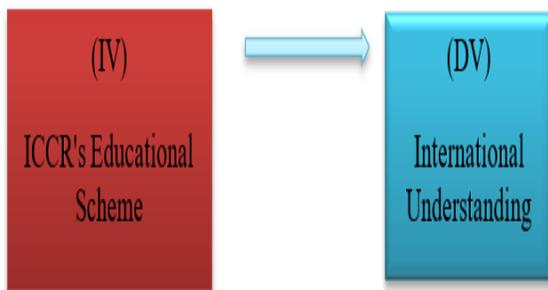
Nevertheless, it provides a significant foundation for ongoing research, facilitating an analysis of cultural learning experiences and perceptions among international students in India-supported institutions globally, as well as an understanding of India's role as a global entity.

### III. SCOPE

This study will focus only on the educational program of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and its contribution to fostering international understanding among ICCR-sponsored international students in India. This refers to international students who have been awarded ICCR scholarships and are enrolled in designated Indian colleges and higher educational institutes. The emphasis is on the essential elements of ICCR's educational program, which include academic assistance, access to higher education, cross-cultural learning opportunities, campus integration, and engagement with Indian students and staff. It examines how these educational possibilities fostered cultural understanding, mutual respect, and favorable impressions of India among overseas students. The research has been rigorously limited to the academic timeframe and geographical region within India.

The study excludes international students who do not receive ICCR scholarships and those involved in intercultural and educational programs conducted by organizations other than ICCR.

Theoretical framework:



This study's conceptual framework examines the function of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Educational Scheme in fostering international understanding among foreign students in India. The ICCR educational scheme is recognized as the primary independent variable because it serves as a crucial instrument for cultural diplomacy, fostering students' cross-cultural communication, appreciation of variety, and global viewpoint. International understanding serves as the dependent variable, representing the extent to which international students develop mutual respect, cultural awareness, and positive perceptions of India. The model developed for this study illustrates the relationship between ICCR's educational scheme and international understanding, guiding the development of hypotheses and empirical analysis.

Research Question:

How does the ICCR's Educational Scheme influence international understanding among international students in India?

Objective of the Study:

To assess the role of ICCR's Educational scheme on international understanding.

Hypothesis:

H1: The ICCR Educational Scheme plays a significant role in fostering international understanding.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative and quantitative research techniques. A descriptive and exploratory research design was selected to investigate the Role of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)'s Educational Scheme in promoting international understanding among International Students in India. The authors selected 373 International students studying under the ICCR scheme in various universities in different states of India. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was analyzed using SPSS version 25. Also, the study employed descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis to analyze the collected data.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Table 1. Demographic Analysis

Variables	N/ Valid Case	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender of Respondents	373	1.3700	.48345
Age of Respondents	373	2.0912	.97675
Country of Respondents	373	15.8740	15.43083
Education of Respondents	373	2.1394	.75625
Study Year of Respondents	373	2.2708	.95271
Duration of Study of Respondents	373	1.9598	.88049
State of Respondents	373	3.4638	2.30984

Source: Survey Data

The above table shows that out of the 35, 26 (74.3%) of them are male, 34.3% of the respondents are between the ages of 26 – 30 years, 2 (5.7%) of the respondents are from the country Iraq, and 8 (22.9%) respondents' programs of study in India are a Master's degree. 34.3% of the respondents are in the second year of their study, 15 (44.9%) of respondents' duration of study in India is 3 years, 3 (8.6%) of respondents are studying in Gujarat state, 24 (80%) of the respondents' monthly stipend is between 20,000 and 25,000.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Educational Scheme	373	4.2799	.56106
International Understanding	373	4.2059	.60523

Source: Survey Data

The table above shows the descriptive data for the Educational Scheme and International Understanding, derived from responses of 373 participants. The average score for the Educational Scheme is 4.2799, with a standard deviation of 0.56106, signifying a strong consensus among respondents about the efficacy and beneficial impact of educational schemes. The comparatively low standard deviation indicates uniformity in respondents' perceptions. International Understanding exhibits a mean score of 4.2059 and a standard deviation of 0.60523, indicating a robust, favourable perception among the participants. The modest and low variability of responses suggests that participants predominantly hold analogous perspectives on this domain.

The elevated mean values for both variables indicate that educational programs are regarded as crucial in fostering international understanding, and the uniformity in replies enhances the credibility of these results.

Pearson Correlation Test:

The research aimed to determine the correlation between the educational framework and international comprehension among foreign students in India. The Pearson correlation test quantified the link between variables through the correlation coefficient. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) assesses the relationship between variables and indicates their reciprocal influence. The table below displays the findings. Intercultural competency, mutual tolerance, and global awareness through academic opportunities and cultural interactions. The impact is based on factors such as student participation, institutional support, and prior exposure to India. Enhancing cultural orientation, mentorship, and community engagement may improve its efficacy. ICCR scholarships serve as both academic assistance and a strategic tool for promoting international understanding and fostering global citizenship among international students. Enhancing and broadening these initiatives can significantly foster multicultural harmony, international collaboration, and peaceful cohabitation in an increasingly interconnected global landscape.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Educational Scheme	373	4.2799	.56106
International Understanding	373	4.2059	.60523

Source: Survey Data

The table above shows the descriptive data for the Educational Scheme and International Understanding, derived from responses of 373 participants. The average score for the Educational Scheme is 4.2799, with a standard deviation of 0.56106, signifying a strong consensus among respondents about the efficacy and beneficial impact of educational schemes. The comparatively low standard deviation indicates uniformity in respondents' perceptions. International Understanding exhibits a mean score of 4.2059 and a standard deviation of 0.60523, indicating a robust, favourable perception among the participants. The modest and low variability of responses suggests that participants predominantly hold analogous perspectives on this domain.

The elevated mean values for both variables indicate that educational programs are regarded as crucial in fostering international understanding, and the uniformity in replies enhances the credibility of these results.

**Pearson Correlation Test:**

The research aimed to determine the correlation between the educational framework and international comprehension among foreign students in India. The Pearson correlation test quantified the link between variables through the correlation coefficient. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) assesses the relationship between variables and indicates their reciprocal influence. The table below displays the findings.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of the Variables

Items	Educational Scheme	International Understanding
Educational Scheme	1	.552**
International Understanding	.552**	1

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.552a	.305	.303

a. Predictors: (Constant), Educational Scheme

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data

The table above illustrates the association between the Educational Scheme and International Understanding. The correlation value (r = 0.552) signifies a moderate to high positive association between the two variables.

This indicates that as involvement in or efficacy of educational programs rises, the degree of international comprehension among participants also tends to rise. The link is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), indicating that the likelihood of this relationship arising by chance is below 1%. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which asserts no correlation between the educational plan and foreign comprehension, is rejected.

The data indicate that educational programs significantly enhance international understanding, supporting the notion that organized educational initiatives have a positive influence on cross-cultural awareness, mutual respect, and global harmony among participants

Source: Survey Data

The table above provides a summary of the regression analysis assessing the impact of the Educational Scheme on the dependent variable. The correlation coefficient (R = 0.552) signifies a moderate positive association between the educational program and the outcome variable. This suggests that enhancements or improvements in the educational program are correlated with favorable changes in the dependent variable.

The R-squared value (0.305) indicates that 30.5% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the educational scheme. This signifies the model's significant explanatory capability; however, additional factors beyond the educational framework also account for the residual variance. The Adjusted R-Square (0.303), which considers sample size and the quantity of predictors, closely approximates the R-Square value. This demonstrates the model's stability and reliability, affirming that the educational scheme is a substantial predictor without excessive inflating of the explained variance.

The model indicates that the educational system has a significant influence on the dependent variable, accounting for almost one-third of its variation, and suggests the potential for incorporating additional predictors to improve explanatory power.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1	Regression	41.587	1	41.587	162.959
	Residual	94.680	371	.255	
	Total	136.267	372		

- a. Dependent Variable: International Understanding
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Educational Scheme

Source: Survey Data

The table above displays the ANOVA findings for the regression model analyzing the impact of the Educational Scheme on International Understanding. The ANOVA test assesses the statistical significance of the overall regression model by contrasting the variation accounted for by the model (Regression) with the variation that remains unexplained (Residual). The regression component indicates that the Educational Scheme helps in explaining variations in International Understanding, while the residual component denotes the impact of other unaccounted factors. A statistically significant ANOVA result ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the regression model is an appropriate fit and that the Educational Scheme significantly influences International Understanding. The ANOVA table substantiates the model's adequacy in elucidating International Understanding and demonstrates that the Educational Scheme significantly influences the dependent variable.

Table 6. Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	B	Std. Error Beta
1	(Constant)	1.655	20.2	8.215	.000	
	Educational Scheme	.596	0.47	.552	12.766	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: International Understanding

Source: Survey Data

The table above presents the findings of a regression study examining the impact of the Educational Scheme on International Understanding. The constant value ( $B = 1.655$ ,  $p < .001$ ) signifies the baseline level of international comprehension when the educational system variable is controlled. The unstandardized coefficient for the Educational Scheme is 0.596, signifying that for each one-unit increase in participation or efficacy of the educational scheme, international comprehension rises by 0.596 units, assuming other variables remain constant. The standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.552$ ) indicates a robust positive correlation between the educational program and international comprehension.

The t-value of 12.766 with a significance level of  $p = .000$  demonstrates that the impact of the educational plan on international understanding is statistically extremely significant. The results unequivocally indicate that the educational plan has a significant impact on fostering international understanding among the respondents.

## VI. RESULT & DISCUSSION:

The study's findings are derived on data gathered from 373 participants and examined by descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression methods. The demographic profile of the respondents demonstrates sufficient representation across gender, age, nationality, educational attainment, year of study, duration of study, and state of residency. The descriptive statistics reveal heterogeneity among respondents, indicating a diverse foreign student population that enhances the generalizability of the findings.

The descriptive analysis of the primary study variables indicates elevated mean scores for both the Educational Scheme (Mean = 4.2799, SD = 0.56106) and International Understanding (Mean = 4.2059, SD = 0.60523). The elevated mean values suggest that respondents predominantly concur that educational programs are beneficial and that they possess a significant degree of foreign understanding. The comparatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in respondents' perceptions, hence affirming the dependability of the results.

Correlation analysis indicates a statistically significant positive association between the Educational Scheme and International Understanding ( $r = 0.552$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This moderate to strong correlation indicates that enhancements in educational programs are associated with increased levels of international comprehension among global pupils. The regression analysis further corroborates this association. The model summary reveals that the Educational Scheme accounts for 30.5% of the variance in International Understanding ( $R^2 = 0.305$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.303$ ), indicating significant explanatory strength of the model.

The ANOVA results validate that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 162.959$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating that the Educational Scheme is a robust predictor of International Understanding. The regression coefficients indicate that the Educational

Scheme exerts a considerable positive influence on International Understanding ( $B = 0.596$ ,  $\beta = 0.552$ ,  $t = 12.766$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that enhanced effectiveness or engagement in educational programs results in a substantial rise in international comprehension among participants.

This study's findings unequivocally indicate that educational programs are essential for fostering international understanding among international students in India. The elevated mean values for both the Educational Scheme and International Understanding indicate that students regard these initiatives as effective avenues for cultural interchange, academic collaboration, and mutual respect. This corresponds with the overarching goals of international education, which prioritize intercultural learning and the cultivation of global citizenship.

The robust and statistically significant association between the Educational Scheme and International Understanding substantiates the assertion that organized educational activities have a positive influence on cross-cultural understanding and global harmony. The regression results reinforce this conclusion by indicating that approximately one-third of the variation in international comprehension is attributable solely to educational programs. This is a significant contribution to social science research, as many societal, cultural, and individual aspects collectively influence outcomes.

The substantial ANOVA and coefficient findings confirm that the correlation is not coincidental and that educational programs are a dependable predictor of global comprehension. Nonetheless, given that roughly 69.5% of the variance remains unaccounted for, the results imply the potential impact of additional factors, including cultural engagement, social integration, linguistic competence, institutional assistance, and individual motivation, which warrant investigation in subsequent research.

The results confirm the efficacy of educational programs in promoting international understanding and underscore their significance as policy instruments for enhancing intercultural relations, global collaboration, and harmonious coexistence among students from varied national and cultural backgrounds.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The ICCR Educational Scholarship Scheme aims to promote international understanding among students in India. The program fosters intercultural competency, mutual tolerance, and global awareness through academic opportunities and cultural interactions. The impact is based on factors such as student participation, institutional support, and prior exposure to India. Enhancing cultural orientation, mentorship, and community engagement may improve its efficacy. ICCR scholarships serve as both academic assistance and a strategic tool for promoting international understanding and fostering global citizenship among international students. Enhancing and broadening these initiatives can significantly foster multicultural harmony, international collaboration, and peaceful cohabitation in an increasingly interconnected global landscape.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading/Addison-Wesley.
- [2] Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading/Addison-Wesley.
- [3] Altbach, P. (2002). Knowledge and education as international commodities. *International higher education*, (28).
- [4] Barker, J. (2024). *A trying Endeavour: a case study of value and evaluation in an international scholarship program* (Doctoral dissertation, RMIT University).
- [5] Bhattacharya, A. (2013). *India's Growing Soft Power in Southeast Asia: Will it Clash with China*. New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies.
- [6] Boeren, E., Cabus, S., & Mackie, A. (2023). Participation in adult learning: System characteristics and individuals' experiences. In *Lifelong learning, young adults and the challenges of disadvantage in Europe* (pp. 87-113). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- [7] <https://iccr.gov.in/iccr-scholarship/orientation-programmes> Mathews, E. (2022). *Changing Context, Changing Strategies: Opportunities and Challenges in Attracting International Students to India*. International student

- recruitment and mobility in non-anglophone countries, 182-196.
- [8] Nye, J. (2017). Soft power: the origins and political progress of a concept. *Palgrave communications*, 3(1), 1-3.
- [9] O'Regan, T. (1999). Cultural exchange. *A companion to film theory*, 262-294.
- [10] Perna, L. W., Ruby, A., Boruch, R. F., Wang, N., Scull, J., Ahmad, S., & Evans, C. (2014). Moving through MOOCs: Understanding the progression of users in massive open online courses. *Educational Researcher*, 43(9), 421-432.
- [11] Perna, L. W., Ruby, A., Boruch, R. F., Wang, N., Scull, J., Ahmad, S., & Evans, C. (2014). Moving through MOOCs: Understanding the progression of users in massive open online courses. *Educational Researcher*, 43(9), 421-432.
- [12] Sobkowiak, P. (2019). The impact of studying abroad on students' intercultural competence. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(4), 681-710.
- [13] Yathish, A. (2025). Cultural Diplomacy and the Dynamics of Cultural Institutes in India and Europe. In *Contours of India-EU Engagements* (pp. 252-276). Routledge.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.vidmar