

Akhmedova O.O.
PhD in Public Administration,
Associate Professor
Ukraine, KhNUE

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM: DEFINING THE CONCEPT

Educational tourism or edu-tourism is the sector of the economy that is developing fast and is acquiring more and more popularity nowadays. Some scientists refer this direction to the most perspective types of tourism as it was a prerogative of wealthy people just a few years ago and now is in a great and sustainable demand among people of the middle class. According to academics, the concept of educational tourism is broad in scope and it has been constantly changing as the concept of tourism itself.

There is a substantial number of scientists dealing with the issues of international, inbound and outbound, children, youth and students' educational tourism and educational tours. The tendencies of its development are considered by World Tourism Organisation (WTO), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Educational Company Eurostudent, Statistical Service of EU, such authors as R. Brent, N. Carr, Ch. Cooper etc. The contemporary state of educational tourism in Ukraine is examined by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, G. Drozdova, I. Zorin, O. Lubitseva, T. Kaverina, V. Kifiak, L. Tkachuk. Yet the perceived nature and organisation of learning and teaching that occur within educational tourism remain relatively under-researched, by both the tourism and education sectors alike, although further knowledge could assist in the development of tourism products that better fulfil the learners' needs.

In the law of Ukraine "On tourism", which defines tourism as the "temporary departure of the person from the place of residence in recreational, learning, professional, business or other purposes without performing the paid activity in the place where the person departs to" [1], such kind of tourism as "educational" is not even mentioned among other types of tourism specified in the law. This law, dated 1995, needs revising and updating, as there are not only new types of tourism have appeared since then but the economy, world and service sector as such have changed considerably.

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism more generally, in terms which go beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only and it goes as follows: "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes"[5], and visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) as people "travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" [5].

There is not any unified approach to the definition of the educational tourism. Some authors do not consider a travel abroad for the purpose of getting

higher education (which usually lasts for 4-5 years) as a type of educational tourism unlike many overseas researchers where such programs play a major role in this area (although, as it was stated above, the person may be called a tourist only if he/she stays outside permanent residence not more than a year). In addition, some authors argue that any kind of tourism can be considered educational since one of the main motives for tourist trips is the desire to gain new knowledge about the world. Some others refer educational tourism to the scientific, research-oriented, intellectual, ecological or cultural ones, in this way differentiating further (T. Kazakova, M.Kliap, C. Klein, S. Slocum). The term needs thorough and comprehensive elaboration as there is no legal and normative framework for this type of tourism as well as a legally defined notion.

Brent W. Ritchie considers educational tourism as a product, process and function. As a product, the emphasis is on the outcome of the learning experience (such as a university degree for international university students). While viewing it as a process or a function, the focus is on the means to an end. For instance, if learning in itself is defined as an end, then the experience may be focused on mastering or improving knowledge of what is already known about something (such as a trip to a marine biology station to learn about marine biology). Furthermore, if learning is derived as a means to an end, then, the focus is to extend or apply the previous study; for example, travelling to an ancient monument after studying the monument. [3; p. 24].

Pitman T. links the term “educational tourism” to niche tourism, debating the extent and spectrum of travel experiences that fall into this category. He states that most niche tourism markets are populated by clients motivated by a desire or need to learn, concentrating mainly on the adult-learners. He refers specifically to “organised recreational tours (usually commercial), aimed at the general public (as distinct from, for example, for-credit study tours for students) which promote an intentional and structured learning experience as a key component. This learning component is explicit, and core, to the delivery of the product” [4; p. 220].

From our point of view, the most accurate definition, given by the domestic academics, is the one proposed by L. Tkachuk: “Educational tourism is a travel, during which tourists combine leisure and learning: attend classes, guided tours to expand horizons, satisfy curiosity and achieve other learning goals” [2].

Thus from these definitions it can be seen that travel for educational purposes can be a diverse and complicated area of study, the specific nature of which is manifested through the peculiarities of demand (sharp seasonal fluctuations), diversification of the tourism product and hospitality services, relatively low susceptibility to crises and socio-political upheavals (the people’s needs for knowledge expansion even grows sometimes during the crisis periods), dynamically and continuously evolving customer needs.

Educational tourism may become a major educational paradigm in near future, creating added value in the society both in a form of increasing education level and creating new economic opportunities as a result of gained knowledge due to travelling. Moreover, education tourism will provide a platform for life

learning education for all people without age difference that gives additional opportunities in the ageing society. The content of educational trips and tours, thus, needs to be result oriented, giving people full knowledge-package, which they can use later and achieve certain results. The concept of education will gradually change with alternative education methods offered in form of educational tourism.

At the same time, the practice shows that the application of educational tourism in Ukraine is severely restricted due to a number of objective and subjective factors:

- educational tourism demands special organization;
- there is no developed infrastructure for educational tourism;
- lack of the specially trained staff;
- educational tourism is not included in the programs of social tourism, accordingly, educational institutions are limited in funding educational trips.

References:

1. Про туризм: Закон України від 15.09.1995 № 325/95 // Відомості Верховної Ради України. – Офіц. видання. – 1995. – № 31. – 241 с.
2. Ткачук Л. М. Освітній туризм у світі й в Україні / Л. М. Ткачук // Науковий вісник Інституту міжнародних відносин НАУ. Серія «економіка, право, політологія, туризм». – 2010. – Т. 2, № 2. – С. 147–153.
3. Brent W. Ritchie Managing educational tourism / Brent W. Ritchie, Neil Carr, Christopher P. Cooper. – London: Cromwell Rpress, 2003. – 260 p.
4. Pitman T., Broomhall. S, Mcewan. J. Adult learning in educational tourism. – Australian Journal of Adult Learning, vol. 50, no. 2, 2010. – pp. 219-238. – Available at: www.academia.edu.
5. The World Tourism Organisation. – Available at: <http://www.unwto.org>