

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM AS A TOOL TO INCREASE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF EDUCATION IN EGYPT: A CRITICAL STUDY

Farouk Abdelnabi Hassanein Attaalla

Professor of Tourism Studies, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University, Egypt.

Email: Faroukfaa01@yahoo.com, faa01@fayoum.edu.eg

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Abstract

Purpose of study: Educational tourism is one of the best ways to help students and adults to gain a good perspective around the world. In Egypt, there are some challenges facing international students to study in Egypt as well as the absence of academic or formal studies to assess the role of educational tourism in Egypt so far. This research aims to evaluate educational tourism in Egypt.

Methodology: through a critical study of the researcher based on work experience and responsibility for international students, as well as in light of international experiences of educational tourism.

Main findings: Among the important results highlighted by the study are that the Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt has a new vision for educational tourism through which it seeks to attract more international students to study in Egypt and the medical sector has acquired a large proportion of international students.

Limitations: There is no current specific information gained by higher education experts or responsibility, so the researcher depends on his own review of available limited published information and his own work responsibility.

Originality of study and implications: The study provides some recommendations, including increasing the proportion of joint academic programs with international universities, and granting incentives and benefits to tourism companies that provide educational tourism services and facilities.

Keywords: *Educational Tourism, International Students, Egypt, Competitiveness.*

DEFINITION OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

Educational tourism is defined as a new tourism pattern, and is considered as an approach to continuing education, carrying out research activities, and acquiring knowledge. Educational tourism is called in other names, such as job development, career improvement, or experience of self-esteem and realization, and there is no specific age for the person who wants to gain knowledge through educational tourism.

Educational tourism is one of the best ways to help students and adults to gain a good perspective around the world, and helps in obtaining new cultures and experiences, as travelling to different countries develops individual information about the countries visited, by communicating with the indigenous population, or the visitor center and get to know their culture and visit their favorite areas. There are many types of educational tours, such as museum tours, art galleries, historical sites, and local parks. The educational tourism sector can also become a major educational model, adding value to society by increasing the level of education and creating new economic opportunities.

The concept of educational tourism has a large share in global tourism programs, whether American, European or Asian, etc., and the United States of America comes first among the countries that students come to in order to study, and obtain study in the best possible way, through educational facilities. In the second place, the United Kingdom comes, followed by Australia, then Germany, France and Japan. However, they face a big common problem, which is the language barrier. While developing countries have shown reasonable growth in this sector so that educational tourism represents 10% of the total tourist sector in a country like Jordan.

In Egypt, there are some challenges facing international students to study in Egypt as well as the absence of academic or formal studies to assess the role of educational tourism in Egypt so far.

Educational tourism is considered one of the modern directions of tourism that has higher growth in recent years, although the concept of travel for learning and education is a complex field of dimensions ([Martinez-Zarzuola et al., 2015](#)). New education styles, new information and research techniques and good exposure to science have enabled the growth of the educational scenario across the world. This is the main aspect that fuels the growth of the educational tourism sector ([Tiwari, 2020](#)).

The definition of educational travel varies between sector and country but generally includes trips with language components or development training ([Custer, 2013](#)).

Travel for education differs from travel for entertainment. Educational tourism trips require cooperation with the public and private sectors, as well as representatives of the education and travel sectors ([Lind and Salovaara, 2018](#)).

Educational tourism involves such tourism services and products as different educational programmes, student exchange programmes, tours, excursions, and various types of tours that have a purpose of the study, and new types of educational tourism-related activities e.g. ethnic workshops and field study trips ([Tashlai and Ivanov, 2014](#)). Another view says that

Educational cruises, school trips, seminar vacations, study abroad experiences and self-enhancement vacations are a few examples of educational tourism. Knowledge can be imparted in a much better manner apart from sitting in one corner and reading books. This sector is acquiring popularity these days and is a fast-growing sub-sector in the travel and tourism industry ([Tiwari, 2020](#)).

Although the main purpose of international students is to study, the quality of the study may vary too ([Singh, 2013](#)):

- Study at a college or university.
- Study in a school.
- Student and teacher exchange programs.
- Educational trips belonging to schools and colleges.

Providing overseas student teaching experience is the key ingredient for future teachers and students to be culturally and globally literate to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The graduates should be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of citizens in the twenty-first century, they have the required skills and sensitivity as well as the respect for human dignity that is likely to improve current and future conditions ([Kirkwood, 2001](#)).

This is supported by mention of the study's findings conducted by [Tashlai and Ivanov \(2014\)](#), participation in the educational tourism programmes have a great number of positive effects for the education tourists' personal qualities and skills as well as its benefits to the tourism industries of the countries hosting the inbound international students. The advantages of such involvement are expressed in the form of different personal improvements, for example, increased self-respect and confidence, patience, independence, problem-solving skills, responsibility for the actions and decisions, and tolerance. Beside the mentioned human qualities, the education tourists improve their increase their interest and enthusiasm concerning discovering new cultures and countries, new acquaintances, tourism, and further education. It is also necessary to note that students with the experience of studying abroad become more ambitious about their personal and professional plans and goals.

THE EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN WORLDWIDE

According to the report of the World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation, young travelers represent 20% of international tourism, thereby making the group an important economic force – for example, in 2012 \$217 billion of the \$1.088 trillion tourism spending worldwide came from young travelers ([Tashlai and Ivanov, 2014](#)).

It is estimated that spending foreign tourists looking for college education services contributed more than \$ 50 billion to the global economy in 2012 ([Bohm et al, 2012](#)).

Estimates say that the youth travel will be US\$ 320 billion by 2020. Education travel is thought to represent about 40% of all youth travel journeys ([Custer, 2013](#)).

The United States can be given the first rank with regards to education as it provides and strives to maintain the best educational facilities, encourages educational tours and spends on quality learning and research. The United Kingdom comes second followed by Australia. Germany, France and Japan are also excelling in the educational tourism sector, but they face a major common problem – the language barrier ([Tiwari, 2020](#)).

The Educational Tourism in the United States of America

In the United States, educational tourism expenditures supported 313,000 jobs and contributed \$ 24 billion to the US economy in 2013 ([NAFSA, 2013](#)). The US colleges are classified as the best in the world, and the country remains the largest destination for educational tourism. With regard to the economic impact of educational tourism, the 1.1 million foreign students from all over the world who enrol in US colleges contribute 42 billion USD a year to the country. Many of these foreign students pay their full tuition, which allows universities to use part of that money to support American students ([Eagan, 2018](#)). Some of the various types of student teaching program models in the United States of America are ([Mahon and Cushner, 2002](#); [Quezada, 2004](#)):

Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching (COST): COST is a consortium of 15 United States colleges and universities and 28 colleges and universities from other countries that have banded together to plan and create opportunities for prospective teacher candidates to complete their student teaching abroad. Over 600 college students have participated in student teaching in overseas schools. The consortium was established in 1973 and meets annually to update its bylaws, discuss new overseas placements and to assess itself as an organization. Placement is in national schools including countries such as Australia, the Bahamas, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, and South Africa. Student teachers may also select to be placed in the United States or international schools in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Greece, Japan, Mexico, and Switzerland. Each year 60 to 75 students participate and complete their student teaching outside the United States.

Foundation for International Education: The Cultural Immersion Project of the Overseas Student Teaching Project at Indiana University-Bloomington was created in the 1970s to prepare and place student teachers in national schools in

England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland, India, Taiwan, Kenya, and Costa Rica. Students complete 10 to 16 weeks of student teaching in Indiana and eight weeks in another country.

The literature review of research that has been conducted supports three general themes based on students' personal reflections, program evaluation, and perceptions from host educators. The three themes are instructional pedagogy, self-learning and genuine multiculturalism.

The Cornell University is one of the best hospitality programs in the United States. Its Hospitality programs are ([TBS, 2019](#)):

- Bachelor of Science Hotel Administration degree.
- Master of Management in Hospitality degree.
- Master of Science in Hotel Administration degree (research-focused degree).
- Ph.D. in Hotel Administration (research-focused degree).
- Hospitality students gain hands-on experience in hotel and restaurant management and operations at the Statler Hotel, a full-service luxury hotel.
- School of Hotel Administration students, through the Cornell Abroad program, study in over 40 countries and in over 150 programs and universities throughout the world.
- The Management Intern Program provides students opportunities to learn from real-world management situations in a variety of hospitality segments.
- The Culinary Institute of America Alliance provides students the opportunity to complete an associate degree at the Culinary Institute of America while completing their bachelor's degree at the School of Hotel Administration in four years.
- Students have access to mentorship opportunities via the Cornell Real Estate Club, Connect Entrepreneurial Hoteliers Network, and the Employer in Residence through the Career Management office.
- More than 200 companies and organizations are involved with the school.

The Educational Tourism in Finland

The Finnish educational system is internationally renowned for its great success in studies of the International Student Assessment Program (PESA) and excellent learning outcomes. This success results from highly trained teachers, high-quality teaching materials, and leadership in educational programs ([Lind and Saloyaaara, 2018](#)).

Below is more information on the main markets for international educational tourism trips to Finland, namely China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and the countries of the Gulf region, which have shown increasing interest in Finland as a travel destination, as follows ([Yuan et al., 2018](#)):

Interests of educational tourism trips from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong:

- Vocational education reform.
- Competitiveness of the educational system.
- Life skills work.
- Cooperating with the corresponding schools.
- Children's school camps.

Interests of educational tourism from South Korea:

- Digitization.
- Programming.
- Creativity.
- STEAM Schools (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Schools).
- Reform of primary schools.
- Reforming vocational schools.
- The school administration.
- Language learning trips for children.

Interests of educational tourism trips from Japan:

- School camps that have become the focus of Japanese interest.
- School trips.
- The high levels of safety in educational institutions, which are used as a major selling point for educational tourism trips.
- Current demand for higher education.
- Opportunities for children to gain international experiences.

Interests of educational tourism trips from India:

- An in-depth understanding of the educational system.
- Professional Learning.
- Skills development.
- Knowledge exchange.
- Education Technology.
- Educational games.

Interests of educational tourism trips from the Gulf region:

- Innovation platforms.
- Teaching skills.
- Learning environments.
- School camps.

The Educational Tourism in Japan

Japan is a popular destination for educational travel in Asia. In 2015, more than 65,000 people came to Japan for educational travel. More and more schools in Japan are taking part in educational travel and promoting international exchange in their schools. The figures no. 1 and 2 provide more illustrative details ([Japanese Ministry of Education, 2020](#)).

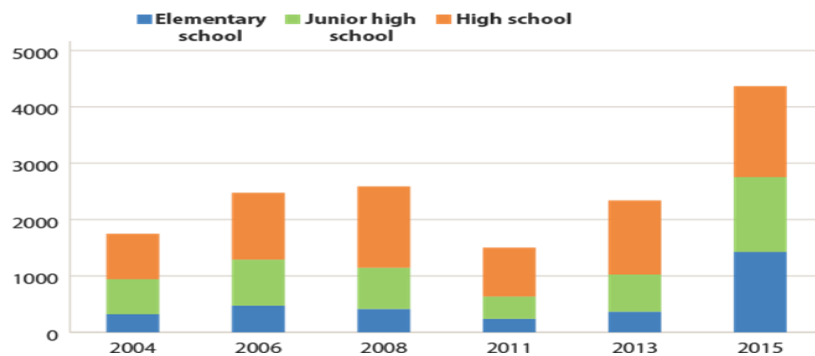


Figure 1: Changes in the number of host schools for school exchange

Source: ([Japanese Ministry of Education, 2020](#))

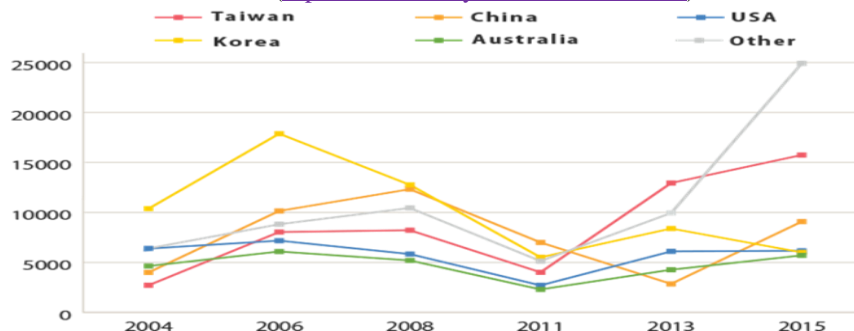


Figure 2: Changes in the number of visitors to Japan for educational travel by country/region

Source: ([Japanese Ministry of Education, 2020](#))

The Educational Tourism in Australia

Education is a major source of income in Australia, with half a million international students studying in Australia each year, contributing about \$ 17.2 billion in export revenue annually. More than one dollar out of every \$ 3 spent by an international visitor is made by international students. Students spend their money on education and fees (46.9%), food, drink and accommodation (31.8%), shopping (3.5%), cars (3%), international airline tickets (2.6%), as well as phone, entertainment, organized tours, gasoline, And domestic flights. Queensland is Australia's most popular educational tourism destination, where visiting students learn about marine life and the environment in a real semester, through people eager to share their knowledge with others. (VET Blog, 2015)

The Educational Tourism in Eastern Europe Mobile Student Study

This study was conducted on international students travelling for studying abroad from Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Poland. The findings of the study are summaries in table no.1 concerning elements that affect participation in education tourism programs. These could be valuable for the travel agents, tourism companies, and different educational institutions that are functioning on the international market of educational tourism. (Tashlai and Ivanov, 2014).

Table 1: Elements Affecting International Travel for Education

Financial Elements			
Limited funds	Limited capabilities	Price range	Tuition fee
Dependence	Unexpected expenses	High cost of living	Economic stability
Savings	Programme fees	Family support	Increased money value
Emotional Conditions			
Sharing problems	Remoteness of the family	Loneliness	Feelings of non-belonging
Mutual understanding	Missing friends	New friends	Emotionalism
Responsibility	Insecurity	Relationship	Uncertainty of the future
Lack of fun	Personal communication	Self-dependence	Home-sickness
Stress	Conflicts	Helplessness	Confusion
Pressure	Fears	Annoyance	Short apathy
Motives			
Quality of education	Future benefits	Interests	Change of life
Admiration of the country	Freehand	Independence	Thoughts about the future
Easy moving	Friends in the destination country	High living standards	Future opportunities
High goals	Scholarship	Practice availability	Social activity
Immigration	Hopes	Excitement	Ambitions
Benefits			
Deep knowledge	Tourism development	New hobbies	Life improvements
New experiences	New interests	Changed personality	Leaving of the comfort zone
Independence	Mutual understanding	Improved language knowledge	Self-improvement
Leisure Time			
Off-campus life	Tourism	Living on campus	New local friendships
Shared accommodation	Free time	Visiting sights	Interaction with other International students
Culture and Local Habits			
Different mentality	Local standards	Foreign languages	Conflicts
Mixed cultures	Eating and drinking habits	Lifestyle	Education systems

Source: (Tashlai and Ivanov, 2014)

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM COMPANIES

Global travel companies anticipate a lucrative growth in the educational tourism sector. Though nascent in certain areas of the world, many travel companies are conducting educational tours, thereby promoting the importance of education and contributing to the growth of the educational tourism sector. Companies such as Exodus Travels, Intrepid, Topdeck, Bright spark, Globus Student Discoveries, WorldStrides, American Council for International Studies (ACIS) and Lindblad Expeditions are emphasizing on student enhancement through educational tours by imparting technical as well as environmental knowledge (Tiwari, 2020).

European Study Tours Company, as an outstanding model of companies, organizes educational tours as follows (www.euro-study-tours.co.uk, 2020):

- Over 38 years' experience organizing educational travel experiences and tours.
- Bespoke itineraries tailored to your exact requirements
- Curriculum-linked visit programmes
- Inspiring live student conferences and events
- Free teacher inspection visits
- 24/7 helpline offering support whilst you are away
- On-the-ground reps in key destinations and on-site support at live events.
- Comprehensive group travel insurance

RESULTS OF FIELD STUDY: EGYPT

In the context of what was presented from previous studies on the concept of educational tourism and case studies of different countries in the world; the information published by the [Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education, \(2020\)](#); and the survey conducted by the author (January – April 2020); The current study provides a general framework that includes the current situation of educational tourism in Egypt, and general guidelines for the advancement of this new tourist pattern, as an approach to increase the competitiveness of higher education in Egypt.

Egypt's Vision of the 2030 Strategy for Sustainable Development in the education pillar aims to increase the percentage of international students by 10% annually.

Table 2: The Strategy of the Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt 2030

The strategy of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in light of the sustainable development plan and Egypt's 2030 vision
Availability: equal new higher education opportunities (public universities - private universities).
Quality: 2-1 establishing a technical accreditation organization for the technical education program in partnership with the Ministry of Education.
Quality: 2-2 new programs and sectors modernization (in light of local, regional and international studies)
Competitiveness: 3-1 establishing technological universities.
Competitiveness: 3-2 upgrading the position of Egyptian universities in the international classification of universities.
Globalism: 4-1 establishing branches of foreign universities.
Globalism: 4-2 International universities.
Globalism: 4-3 Joint educational and research programs with international universities.

Source: ([Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education, 2020](#); Author Own Elaboration)

Egypt has 75 nationalities and 87 thousand foreign students studying in Egypt in the current academic year 2019-2020 with various study groups, among them were 13 thousand students in public universities, and the remainder joined private universities and Al-Azhar University. Faculties of the medical sector get the largest share of international students by 60% of students.

The Ministry of Higher Education's main goal is to increase the number of new international students to 20,000 in 2020. In addition to that, it helps raise the international rankings of Egyptian universities, because some rankings depend on the percentage of international students for universities by 5% relative to the number of Egyptian students in Egyptian universities.

It is targeting launching the first marketing website under the title "*Study in Egypt*" in coordination with various ministries during 2020. The student can get to know everything in Egypt in terms of transportation and the use of transportation, medical hospitals and picnic areas within the various governorates according to the university to which the student is enrolled.

The top origin countries for expatriate students to Egypt in 2020 are Kuwait, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Sudan, in addition to the countries of Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Mauritania and Nigeria.

The factors that attract international students to study in Egypt include the stability experienced by the Egyptian state; the diversity of study programs in Egyptian universities, the trend towards developing study programs with an international partnership, meaning that the student can study in Egypt and obtain an accredited certificate from an Egyptian University and other international universities, and this is the most motivation for attracting international students to study in Egypt.

There are no statistics on the expenditures of expatriate students spending to study in Egypt. Unlike other countries such as the United States and Australia, where there are data and figures published for educational tourism.

By working as a director of the Office of International Student Affairs at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels - Fayoum University, as well as a survey of the opinions of international students, the current research summarizes outstanding elements that should be taken into consideration for international student presents it was found that the most important challenges that meet them while studying in Egypt are:

- The required papers and registration fees for postgraduate programs in tourism and hotels need to be suitable for expatriates.
- The equivalence of diplomas for expatriates from the Supreme Council of Universities and guidance provided for the appropriate specialization in colleges of tourism and hotels in Egypt should be easier than the present.
- The initial application for registering the data of foreign students on the website of the Supreme Council of Egyptian Universities needs to be easily done.
- The Expatriate and Graduate Studies Officers at a faculty should enhance their assistance in completing the academic, administrative, and financial procedures for the expatriate students.
- The universities and the faculties need to provide appropriate social services for expatriates (help to find suitable housing, and so on ...).
- The universities and the faculties need to provide health services appropriate for expatriates (health insurance and so on ...).
- The universities and the faculties should provide recreational services appropriate for expatriates (organizing tourist programs for expatriates, and so on ...).
- Requirements for discussing theses and dissertations and awarding scientific grades from procedures and papers should be appropriate for expatriates.
- It is important to communicate with international students after obtaining a degree and returning to their countries, to develop a spirit of loyalty and affiliation with the universities from which they graduated.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN EGYPT

- Through a review of the experiences of developed countries related to educational tourism mentioned in this current study, it is clear the importance of this type of tourism in terms of revenues received as well as raising the ranking of universities worldwide. Since Egypt is a developing country, it is important to work on developing this type of tourism that is beneficial on the economic and educational levels.
- Reducing tuition fees in Egypt for Arab and African students.
- Organizing workshops and seminars in Egyptian cultural bureaus abroad on the capabilities of Egyptian universities of various academic and training programs.
- Establishing and emphasis on the effectiveness of joint academic programs and partnerships with universities, especially in developed countries.
- Benefiting from information technology, websites and social media in marketing for educational tourism in Egypt.
- Giving concessions to tourism companies and travel agencies that provide services for international students, which include flight reservations, hotel accommodations, and organizing tourist and recreational programs.
- Taking into consideration the elements and motives affecting the students' decision to study abroad, which are mentioned in the results of the study that was done on students who travel from five countries in Eastern Europe to study in different countries of the world.

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