

## Educational tourism. A theoretical review of the phenomenon

### Turismo Educativo. Una revisión teórica del fenómeno

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#### Abstract:

Educational Tourism is a mode of travel to various destinations aimed at acquiring knowledge and experiences of an educational, professional or personal nature in areas such as history, culture, social or language learning. The concept of educational tourism involves all academic activities, training and vocational training, which are carried out through mobility or exchange of students, employees, teachers, researchers among others who are interested in acquiring knowledge in a different place of residence, with the aim of training to acquire experiences, knowledge of customs, traditions, cultural heritage involving different teaching methods.

The programs and examples in other countries were taken as a theoretical review to then identify the educational tourist potential of the state of Hidalgo. The methodology is based on a descriptive method, a qualitative approach and the current situational.

This first stage identifies conceptualization, background, programs and tourist importance in Mexico.

#### Keywords:

*Education tourism, training processes, sustainable development*

#### Resumen:

El turismo educativo es un modo de viaje a varios destinos destinados a adquirir conocimientos y experiencias de carácter educativo, profesional o personal en áreas como la historia, la cultura, el aprendizaje social o lingüístico. El concepto de turismo educativo incluye todas las actividades académicas, la formación y la formación profesional, que se realizan a través de la movilidad o el intercambio de estudiantes, empleados, profesores, investigadores, entre otros interesados en adquirir conocimientos en un lugar de residencia diferente, con el objetivo de capacitar para adquirir experiencias, conocimientos de costumbres, tradiciones, patrimonio cultural que implican diferentes métodos de enseñanza.

Los programas y ejemplos en otros países fueron tomados como una revisión teórica para identificar el potencial turístico educativo del estado de Hidalgo. La metodología se basa en un método descriptivo, un enfoque cualitativo y la situación actual.

#### Palabras Clave:

*Turismo educativo, procesos de formación, desarrollo sostenible*

#### Introduction

Academic mobility between and within countries has evolved significantly in recent years, foreign students in educational institutions are increasingly common in a globalized world. There are several reasons for traveling with learning reasons, however, the intention to experience diverse educational systems, witness different cultures, enrich professional knowledge or diverse models are just a few. A prominent goal is to learn a language, as well as to take advantage of the wide range of calls offered

by scholarships in the exchange programs of universities, which has made this kind of activity one of the most attractive to students in the world.

Although academic mobility could only be considered in the educational field, it has had an economic impact on university cities, increasing their number of visitors. So, it has become a typology of tourism that allows for measuring economic impact on destinations and supplying the sector market.

Education tourism meets the needs of increasing demand and is a tool for promoting and consolidating destinations

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in addition to contributing to social tourism because it is mainly youth. With the interaction of academic activities with recreational activities, visitors develop positive attitudes which make the activity a significant experience in diverse environments.

Given the increasing importance of this type of tourism, the main objective of this research is to study the characteristics of mobility at the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo and its impact on the tourism sector of the entity and its potential growth in order to identify the factors that condition this activity.

### **Conceptual approach to educational tourism**

Before the various concepts of educational tourism, it is relevant to mention the definition of tourism issued by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), refers to travel that is motivated by participation and experience in learning activities (2019) From this concept it is open to expanding the typology of this important activity, since the main elements focus on diverse activities that motivate displacement and generate economic spills at destinations.

Some authors consider educational tourism from a very broad perspective from formal education in various modes to those that generate knowledge through experience that generate learning in a casual and casual way. Within this conception, this type of tourism is a specialized segment aimed at academic activities and/or educational components (García et al., 2005).

University mobility is considered a typology of tourism, as activities undertaken are carried out outside their usual environment for a period of time in order to carry out studies, activities of fun and leisure in their free or leisure times. In this regard, the World Tourism Organization since 1994 considers tourists to be persons moving from their residence to another site for the purpose of studying or academic activities, specifying the category of tourists conditioning their stay for less than one year.

Other authors such as Genis (2007) describe educational tourism as combined with travel and education experience that includes young and adult tourists. Complementing Goeldner and Ritchie (2003), they mention that educational institutions provide a new dimension to tourism and education, as they offer curricula attractive to foreigners and people from other regions, making it a motivating way to travel.

However, some authors differ in the typology considering academic mobility within cultural tourism. Montaner (1991), refers to the package of activities that facilitate knowledge that enable the expansion of culture to include courses, cultural symposia and language courses. Latiesa (2000), considers educational tourism as a

tourism of training, study and instruction, including it as part of cultural tourism.

Also, Aranda and Molina (2007) consider language learning as cultural tourism caused by the internationalization of higher education institutions. The work of Montull I Aced (2007) also focuses on all stays of less than one year, carried out in higher education institutions outside the usual residence such as academic tourism.

However, all the above approaches relate mainly to international exchange, and it is relevant to clarify that there is a distinction between national or domestic education tourism, which includes university movements within a country and the international educational tourism that considers university movements between various countries.

From the above concepts it is concluded that educational tourism should include mobility as a conditioner for being considered within the typology of tourism and that it can consider language tourism, youth tourism and cultural tourism, since the objectives of academic mobility can be diversified by including broad experiences, however, with the intentionality of learning and study.

After 2019 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that modified the modalities of study, UNESCO classifies student mobility in two areas:

a) Physical Student Mobility (PSM): referring to being in another country with variable time for academic, professional or cultural purposes related to higher education.

b) Virtual Student Modality (VSM): considers this type of mobility as the one that uses information and communication through technology to facilitate virtual education from the academic, cultural and collaborative spheres of learning.

Moreover, García et al (2005) segment educational tourism in three categories:

- Scientific tourism: research-related travel, highlighting doctor's studies to prepare their theses.

- Student tourism: conducted by students and teachers to attend programs at various levels of education.

- Continuing education tourism: Programs designed for adults for specialization or training.

These same authors refer to educational tourism terminology such as study travel, study abroad vacations, learning vacations, educational travel, popularized mainly by American and Canadian citizens to refer to travel that combines tourism and learning.

This phenomenon has taken such importance in European and North American countries that authors such as Ganformina (2006) propose a new concept "Turislinguism" referring to languages and their potential to create tourism.

### Types of travel by educational tourism

Education tourism as mentioned above is intended to learn, train or experience, so that they can be given in various ways such as:

- School travel: These are short stays, programmed by teachers, with academic goals.
- University studies experience: enable students to continue a career while living abroad.
- Professional experience: targeted at professionals whose purpose is to train or participate in research projects.

Educational tourism has a variety of formats with common points, highlighting the approach to knowledge and the fun that complements it by applying to people not only of school age, among the most important are:

*School travel:* These are school stays or school visits with academic goals and use one or more tourist services, guided and group. They're usually short stays.

*Study experiences abroad:* This type of academic journey is promoted by educational institutions, its duration varies from weeks to months, its development is carried out in universities mainly, although they may be given for specialization in some discipline or enterprise.

*Holidays of seminars or educational trips for older adults:* This type of trips is attractive for people who are retired from work activity but who can learn about some areas of interest such as art or astronomy and are carried out in camps.

*Educational cruisers:* These combine the fun of traveling with readings or courses on specific topics, create social ties along with a new learning.

*Vacations for skill improvement:* These trips are characterized by learning or participating in mainly environmental conservation activities.

So, we can summarize that educational tourism can be very varied and flexible, which uses its facilities to be timeless and increases personal understanding through travel experiences.

### Characteristics of Educational Tourism

According to Kenkova (2017), educational tourism can be conducted on a variety of interests such as: learning a language, undertaking university studies, training or acquiring professional experience.

Education tourism is based on learning, understanding and respecting the value of cultural diversity, contributing to the social, economic and cultural development of sites. From a critical perspective this type of tourism and based on the SDG<sup>1</sup>, as it generates knowledge and at the same time fosters the development, social, economic and cultural of communities.

The characteristics of educational tourism can be listed in general:

- Its main objective is academic or learning
- Seek solidarity and maturation of the tourist
- Travel planning is in line with institutional requirements
- Students' stay allows for the use of tourist services such as hosting, food and leisure.

### Background to academic mobility

It appears that academic mobility was a trend of modern education, however its history dates from the eleventh century, where the first universities appeared and students' pilgrimage to study in the major urban areas, was called academic pilgrimage (Montiel et al., 2004). It should be noted that this denomination referred to the coexistence of students with pilgrims traveling to visit a sanctuary.

Academic trips continued in the 16th century, whose characteristics were that they had standardized itineraries and included visits to various universities until they had a doctor's degree. The emergence in the 17th century of the Grand Tour phenomenon changed academic travel to become a more accessible activity that allowed them to travel Europe by searching for cultural experiences that provided them with friendships, manners coupled with academic or professional preparation.

In the following centuries, educational travel is made in the face of the inability to study in the cities of origin, and scholarships and exchange programs are also created in the 20th century, and early in the courses. XXI is increasing the student movements mainly across the territory of the European Union, which establishes collaboration in education as one of the elements of integration (Villavicencio, 2009).

Also, a phenomenon that has enhanced academic mobility is globalization that demands people who know local and regional problems, but with global visions that allow creative and innovative solutions that foster the development of nations.

### Background in Mexico

Education tourism activities in Mexico in early times during the period of porfiriato (1830-1915), where school tours were intended to know customs and wealth of destinations.

It was in the period of Lázaro Cárdenas that scholarships are encouraged mainly to military forces, especially to Central American countries, in this same way persecutions of dictatorships also encouraged the arrival of students and teachers with opposition ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> sustainable development goals

In 1970 when CONACyT<sup>2</sup> was created the first convention that allows Japanese and Mexican professionals to deepen their knowledge through stays in both countries, in 1971 this organism grants scholarships to study abroad, and in 1973 the thousand scholarships were exceeded. Since 1989, the effect of the decision to strengthen post-graduate studies is remarkable.

Subsequently, in 1980, the destinations for North America for graduate studies diversified, and in the 1990s Mexico's universities became a center of attention for foreign students mainly to Guadalajara, Monterrey, Mexico City and Puebla. The internationalization of higher education is set out in the National Development Plan, which provides lines of action to promote postgraduate programs in international contexts, significantly increasing programs that facilitate educational tourism.

From 2019, 2020 and 2021, contrary to expected, mobility did not decrease, according to ANUIES statistics increased by 32% despite the closure of higher education institutions and borders, due to Covid-19 (Future Education, 2021).

### **The training potential through academic mobility**

The current commitment of educational institutions is to train students with cognitive, social, multicultural, linguistic and technological skills; to meet the needs of the labor market with a perspective of continuous improvement, collaborative work and solving problems in the productive sectors. These requirements are pouring towards educational quality, with adequate infrastructure, flexible curricula that allow mobility through academic stays and constant evaluations of curricula, pupils and academic performance.

Globalization in higher education has become one of the most important challenges of universities seeking comparative curricula among countries that facilitate international mobility of students and teachers, coupled with the ease of obtaining financing that enables them to develop.

#### **International mobility programs**

- **Europe**

##### Socrates/ Erasmus Program

It is certainly one of the best-known mobility programs in the European Union, and was created to facilitate and encourage university mobility among the countries of Europe. Its subprograms now cover countries such as Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland and Turkey, which offer mobility to students and teachers (European Commission).

##### Regional cooperation programs: Alban and ALFA

Its main objective is to promote cooperation in higher education between the European Union and Latin America mainly for postgraduate, technical and scientific training and development of cooperation between institutions.

##### EU-Canada program

It is a cooperation program between the EU and Canada to improve the quality of human resources of both nations, as well as funding university projects and mobility.

##### Leonardo da Vinci Program - professional practices

The aim of meeting the teaching and learning needs of the member countries of the European Union. It promotes collaboration and funding of vocational education projects related to mobility and multilateral projects.

##### COMMENIUS (European educational programs)

European programs, managed by the European Commission, offer opportunities for exchanges and educational experiences between institutions of the European Union with the aim of strengthening social cohesion, language learning and greater interrelationship.

- **America**

##### Fulbright program in Spain

Its main objective is to study, research, or teach in the United States and Spain. The program supports the collaboration of teachers or researchers, journalists and communication professionals, teachers and professionals, postgraduates, such as support teachers and postgraduate students.

##### ISEP

It is a non-profit institution that facilitates the exchange of students from the United States with countries in Europe, Canada, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

- **México**

##### PROCAI

Inter-institutional Academic Cooperation Program aiming at establishing collaborative and linking mechanisms that promote quality and educational excellence among IES<sup>3</sup> associated with ANUIES<sup>4</sup>.

##### International Santander Mobility

The aim is to facilitate and encourage higher education students, study for one semester in a university in another country.

##### MANEA

Mobility program at some universities in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific.

##### MACMEX (Programa de movilidad académica Colombia- México)

Program for Mexican students wishing to study at the main universities in Colombia.

##### International mobility grant

<sup>2</sup> National Council for Science and Technology

<sup>3</sup> Higher education institutions

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education.

It encourages the training of young Mexicans abroad for development of professionals in Europe, Australia, Asia, Canada and the United States.

### The importance of educational tourism

Educational tourism is developed and expanded globally through mobility and exchange programs involving educational institutions and governments of participating countries, so has been their importance that it has generated a business in areas such as insurance, flights, international credentials for students among many others. International agencies such as the United Nations (UN), have supported and endorsed services and products involving mobility and academic exchange, creating specialized agencies such as:

- International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC).

This body was created in 1949 by unions of university students to make travel accessible, and now around 70 specialized companies promote the goal of the body. Benefits involve services such as transport, processing, projects, hosting etc. (ISTC)

- Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations (FIYTO)

Created in 1951, it promotes educational, cultural and social travel among young people by ensuring mutual understanding among youth travel operators.

- International Bureau of Social Tourism (BITS)

Founded in 1963, it is an international organization that promotes access to social tourism, its functions are to disseminate information, conduct studies and research and cooperation projects (Téoros, 2003).

- World Youth Student and Educational (WYSE).

World Membership Organization that promotes the travel industry for young people, students and educators (WYSE).

- International Au Pair Association (IAPA)

It is a global organization that supports opportunities for cultural exchange for young people (IAPA).

- SETEJ Mexico

It is a civil association created in 1971 to provide cultural, social and tourist services to students, young people and teachers.

Educational tourism is a segment that generates thousands of jobs according to the European Tour Operators Association (2019), indicating that 207 million trips were generated by young people in that year, representing 20% of the world tourism of the year cited. 60 percent of these young travelers are considered to have been educational, 23 per cent for language learning, 14 per cent for study and 13 per cent for work experience. For educational travel agencies, commissions are very high, ranging from 3,000 to 20,000 dls, especially in

prestigious universities, but benefits are not only economic as agents are actually changing lives and orienting the future of young people or teachers. However, the knowledge requirements of these actors go not only in the orientation of the journey itself, but also encompasses migration procedures, educational systems, vocational guidance and cultural activities. Education is an area of business opportunity in the tourism sector, the key is adaptability to students' needs and a close relationship with educational institutions.

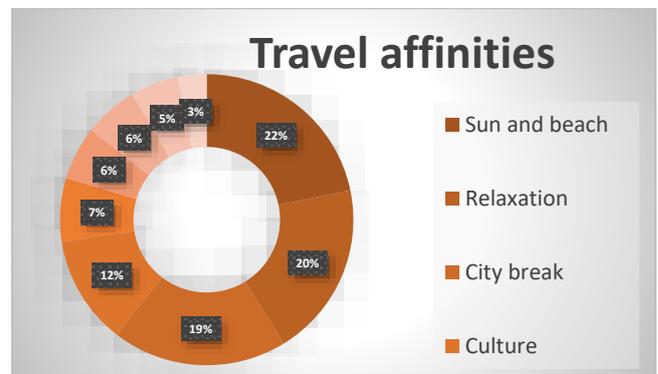
The benefits of this type of tourism are very varied, such as the transmission of culture, income generation, prestige to educational institutions, updating and enriching educational programs, among many others.

### Educational Tourist profile

According to data obtained in Datatur 2018 (before confinement), it was identified that the age range of Mexican tourists is 25 to 34 years old, base the selection of the destination on the recommendation of friends and family, however tourists considered in the age range prefer the searches over the Internet, the possibilities for reserving Mexicans are higher for sun and beach travel, relaxation and city break.

For travel affinities by product type are the following:

Figure 1. Travel affinities



In respect to the chances of traveling from 18 to 34 years of age, which corresponds to that considered by educational tourism, 94% are interested in traveling. For this reason, we can identify that Mexico is an important market for academic travel, since it is considered in the motivations of travel together because the range of the people who travel most are young people who are of school age or are in professional preparation. As for the profile of visitors arriving from abroad to Mexico, it can be noted that according to SECTUR data (2019), the main tourist broadcasting countries are the United States with 47.9%, Canada 21%, Colombia 2.9%, Argentina 2.8% and Brazil 2.3%. The main reasons for travel were holidays, business, and other. The main destinations for educational, business and cultural reasons are: Monterrey, Mexico City, Guadalajara and

Queretaro. The universities that highlight the interest they generate for academic or mobility travel are: Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara Querétaro stands out for its attraction as a student city.

Thus, education tourism can be considered one of the most growth trends in recent years, it brings together learning activities, attendance at congresses, educational events or living local experiences. Similarly, the goal of displacement is learning itself as it is in the case of studies, mobility, exchange or language learning.

When you are in contact with different societies and with different characteristics of the place of origin, recreation and space activities are carried out, using local tourist and complementary services.

### Conclusions

The benefits of this type of tourism are diverse, in addition to the transmission of local culture, the generation and distribution of wealth, diversification of the supply, attraction of visitors among others. In addition, this type of tourism is a high fidelity of the visitor, since they usually return on the same motivations or just visit the friendships that were generated in academic stays, one of the main features is that this tourist likes quality in services.

It should be noted that this type of tourism has evolved rapidly, the inclination to learn about destinations and its culture has attracted visitors from around the world. Intellectual and personal growth is the greatest motivation of the journey, learning or improving a language, the maturity that it generates in students by becoming independent, adapting to change, experiencing other forms of life and culture.

Educational tourism is a great opportunity to learn in other countries, regardless of age, there is a wide variety of programmes and facilities, combined with the type of education or training offered is a growing segment and enriching tourism activity.

### Clarifications

This research work aims to identify the benefits of this typology of tourism and the potential of the development of activity in the first stage, then will perform an analysis of the behavior of educational tourists inland the Autonomous University of Hidalgo, this article shows the first stage of the project that aims to make known the typology and its benefits.

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