

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM AS THE MOST PROFITABLE TYPE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the impact of educational tourism on the global and national economy. Developed countries of the world achieve economic and scientific development by attracting foreign students. Foreign students make a significant contribution to the national economy through tuition fees, living expenses, the service sector and the labor market. They also contribute to increasing the international competitiveness of educational institutions and innovative development. The current state of Uzbekistan in educational tourism is analyzed and ways to increase economic benefits by increasing the flow of foreign students are proposed. The article highlights the international experience of educational tourism and strategic recommendations for Uzbekistan. The opportunities for additional income to the country's economy, improving infrastructure and becoming an international education center are discussed through the development of educational tourism.

Keywords: Educational tourism, international students, economic impact, educational investments, tuition fees, labor market, services sector, international cooperation.

Introduction

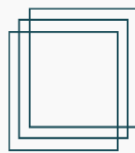
Educational tourism is one of the most profitable and rapidly developing types of the global tourism industry today. Globalization processes, the growing importance of the knowledge economy, and the growing demand for international education are making educational tourism an important sector that not only brings economic benefits, but also strengthens cultural exchange and international cooperation.

The relevance of educational tourism is explained by several factors. First, the number of students wishing to study abroad is increasing year by year. For example, in 2022, more than 6 million students studied outside their home country. This indicator indicates a high demand for international educational services.

Secondly, educational tourism brings significant income to the economies of countries. For example, Turkey received \$ 23.7 billion in tourism revenue in the first half of 2024, and by the end of the year this figure reached \$ 60 billion. Although accurate statistics on educational tourism in Uzbekistan are limited, our country pays special attention to the development of this area. The important role of educational tourism in the

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development of the country was emphasized at the forum "Global Education Forum as a Basis for Tourism Development", organized within the framework of the 25th General Assembly of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Samarkand in October 2023.

The higher education system in Uzbekistan has also seen significant growth in recent years. For example, from 2017 to 2021, the number of higher education institutions increased from 70 to 154, the number of students studying on the state budget increased from 110.9 thousand to 119.6 thousand, and the number of students studying on a fee-paying basis increased from 186.8 thousand to 688.4 thousand.

These figures reflect the ongoing reforms and expansion of opportunities in the education sector. By developing educational tourism, Uzbekistan aims to train internationally competitive personnel and contribute to economic growth.

The importance of educational tourism is not limited to economic benefits. It enhances international cultural exchange, improves the skills of students and professionals, and also develops scientific and technological cooperation between countries. Therefore, the development of educational tourism is considered one of the urgent and necessary issues today.

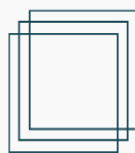
In recent years, a number of foreign scholars have conducted significant research in the field of educational tourism.

For example, Jane Knight, in her study "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Concepts, Frameworks and Interpretive Frameworks," analyzed the key concepts, factors and new developments in the process of internationalization of higher education. She examined the content, key actors, changing motivations and strategies of international education, showing that this process is complex and multifaceted.

Hans de Wit's research, "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Theoretical and Practical Evolution," analyzed the theoretical and practical aspects of the concept of internationalization of higher education. He examined the stages of development, key factors, and future directions of international education, and highlighted the place of this process in the global education system.

Another scholar, S. Marginson, has studied the various motivations for the internationalization of higher education and their practical consequences. He has studied international education policies, student movements, and trends in the global education market, demonstrating the complexity of this process and the role of various stakeholders.

Local scholars O.Umarov and M.Tokhtanazarova studied the links between cultural tourism and cultural heritage, emphasizing the economic and cultural significance of cultural tourism. They also analyzed the experiences of countries such as Greece, Egypt, and Japan in developing cultural tourism.



D. Yuldasheva conducted an econometric analysis of the factors affecting the development of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan and constructed regression equations based on statistical data from recent years. The results of the study showed the importance of training personnel, improving infrastructure, and improving the quality of services in the development of tourism.

These studies shed light on the development of educational tourism, its economic and cultural significance, and its place in global educational processes.

Educational tourism, i.e. travel to other countries for the purpose of education, plays an important role in the global economy. Overall, the tourism sector accounts for approximately 10% of global gross domestic product (GDP).

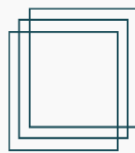
Afsuski, ta'lim turizmining jahon miqyosidagi YaIMdagi aniq ulushi haqida to'liq statistik ma'lumotlar mavjud emas. Shunga qaramay, ta'minlash, ko'plab mamlakatlar uchun daromad olish imkonini beradi.

Educational tourism is a part of general tourism, and its share may be relatively small. It is worth noting that educational tourism is not only of economic benefit to countries, but also of great importance in the development of cultural exchange and international cooperation.

Educational tourism, travel by foreign students to other countries for the purpose of education, plays an important role in the economies of many countries. Below is a comparative table showing the importance of educational tourism in the economies of Russia, the USA, Spain, France, Kazakhstan, Turkey, the UK and Uzbekistan.

The share of educational tourism in the economy and state support policies in different countries

Country	Number of foreign students	Share of educational tourism in GDP (%)	State support policy
Russia	300,000+	Around 1%	Scholarships for foreign students, inter-university cooperation programs, simplification of study visas
USA	1,000,000+	0.3%	Scholarships, inter-university exchange programs, and support for educational visas through programs such as Fulbright
Spain	125,000+	Around 0.2%	Attracting EU students through the Erasmus+ program, offering Spanish language courses
France	350,000+	0.4%	Attracting foreign students through the "Campus France" agency, opportunities to learn French, scholarships
Kazakhstan	20,000+	Less than 0.1%	Support for foreign education through the "Bolashak" program, cooperation with international universities
Turkey	200,000+	Around 0.5%	Scholarship programs such as "Turkey Scholarships", English language programs for international students, study visas soddalashtirish.
Great Britain	500,000+	0.5%	Scholarship programs such as "Chevening", inter-university cooperation, support for study visas
Uzbekistan	5,000+	Less than 0.05%	Opening branches of international universities, expanding study opportunities for foreign students, simplifying study visas.



Source: Developed by the author based on data from international educational organizations (UNESCO, OECD, Campus France, DAAD), official government statistics, and open sources.

Educational tourism plays an important role in the economies of many countries around the world today. The flow of international students not only brings financial income to the national economy, but also serves to develop scientific innovations, enhance cultural exchange, and strengthen global cooperation. Countries such as the USA, Great Britain, France, and Russia are among the world leaders in educational tourism. These countries host hundreds of thousands of international students every year and provide them with a wide range of opportunities. The share of educational tourism in gross domestic product (GDP) is relatively high in these countries, accounting for 0.3–0.5% in Great Britain and the USA. In France, this figure is around 0.4%.

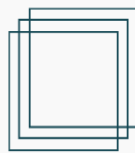
Compared to Uzbekistan, these countries have established extensive support programs at the state level to attract foreign students. For example, the Fulbright program in the USA, the Chevening scholarships in the UK, and the Campus France program in France provide grants and financial assistance for foreign students. Turkey is also developing the "Türkiye Burslari" scholarship program to attract international students and is seeing economic benefits from educational tourism.

Russia and Kazakhstan are also paying special attention to educational tourism. Russia has more than 300,000 foreign students, and the country's education system is being developed through international cooperation. Kazakhstan, on the other hand, is trying to attract international students by increasing integration with foreign education systems through programs such as "Bolashak".

In Uzbekistan, the share of educational tourism in GDP is very low - less than 0.05%. This indicator indicates that many reforms are still needed to increase the economic impact of educational tourism. In recent years, significant progress has been made in Uzbekistan in opening international university branches. Branches of foreign universities such as Webster University, MGIMO, and Turin Polytechnic University have been opened. This is an important step in attracting foreign students.

In our opinion, it is advisable to more intensively implement the following opportunities and proposals in order to further develop educational tourism in Uzbekistan and establish it as a profitable direction:

1. Strengthen international cooperation. Uzbekistan should develop joint programs and exchange projects with foreign universities. Integration into international programs such as Erasmus+, DAAD, Bolashak will help increase the flow of international students.
2. Introduce scholarship programs. It is necessary to create special grant and scholarship programs for foreign students, and develop a system of financial support from the state.



3. Improve the quality of education and expand courses in English. To be competitive in the global market, it is necessary to increase the number of courses taught in English and develop programs with international accreditations.

4. Simplify the educational visa process. Simplifying the visa process for foreign students and developing an online application system will help turn Uzbekistan into a center for educational tourism.

5. Strengthen marketing and promotion. Uzbekistan's rich cultural and historical heritage can be attractive to foreign students. Participation in international education fairs and strengthening digital marketing campaigns are necessary.

By developing in these areas, Uzbekistan can turn educational tourism into a sector that brings significant benefits to the economy. At the same time, foreign students will strengthen the country's international image, develop scientific research, and increase cultural exchanges.

If Uzbekistan implements the above reforms, it will have the opportunity to increase the share of educational tourism in GDP to 0.5% in the near future and attract more than 50,000 foreign students annually. This means that it can bring billions of additional soums to the country's economy.

What results can Uzbekistan achieve by developing educational tourism?

By developing educational tourism, Uzbekistan can achieve a number of important results in the short and long term.

First, economic outcomes will improve. As a result of the increase in the number of foreign students and the increase in economic income:

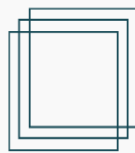
- Currently, the number of foreign students in Uzbekistan is around 5,000, but with targeted policies, this figure can be increased to 50,000+.
- If each international student spends an average of \$5,000–\$10,000 (tuition, accommodation, food, transportation, and other expenses), this could bring an additional \$250 million–\$500 million per year to the country's economy
- The share of educational tourism in gross domestic product (GDP) could increase from 0.05% to 0.5% or higher.

It will also reduce the unemployment rate:

- As a result of the expansion of universities and colleges through educational tourism, jobs will be created for new teachers, researchers, and representatives of the infrastructure serving students.
- Thousands of new jobs could be created in the hospitality, transportation, restaurant, technology, and other service sectors.

Second, scientific results will improve. By improving the position of universities in world rankings:

- Currently, universities in Uzbekistan rank low in international rankings. The quality of education can be improved by attracting foreign students.
- The increase in international students is pushing universities to move up in international accreditations and world rankings.



• Leading universities in the UK and the US have achieved global recognition by attracting international students. Uzbekistan can also implement a similar model.

Also, as a result of scientific research and innovative development:

• International students can contribute to the development of research and innovation at universities in Uzbekistan by joining scientific activities.

• The arrival of foreign professors and students helps to form new international scientific collaborations and grant projects.

Third, against the backdrop of cultural and social improvements, the development of cultural tourism and international cultural exchanges can be achieved, and as a result:

• Uzbekistan's cultural wealth and historical heritage can be attractive to foreign students.

• Educational tourism enhances cultural exchange, fostering the exchange of ideas between local and international students.

• This process also contributes to the further popularization of foreign languages, especially English, in the country.

Through the development of the tourism sector:

• Foreign students, in addition to studying in the country, also contribute to the development of domestic tourism.

• The tourism sector could develop significantly as they invite their family members and friends to Uzbekistan.

Fourth, international cooperation and geopolitical benefits. International cooperation is strengthened through education, and as a result:

• Educational tourism can be an effective tool for strengthening international cooperation.

• Foreign students can contribute to the development of many future scientific and economic cooperation projects.

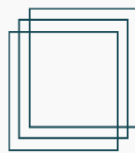
At the same time, Uzbekistan's international image and competitiveness will increase, and as a result:

• International students studying in Uzbekistan helps improve the country's image.

• Countries such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Russia have strengthened their international position through educational tourism in recent years. Uzbekistan can also achieve similar results.

Foreign students are one of the most important factors that significantly affect the national economy. Developed countries of the world are developing educational tourism as a strategic direction, earning billions of dollars. International students contribute to various aspects of the country's economy along with their education. Tuition fees, living expenses, the labor market, service provision, and infrastructure sectors are all affected by foreign students. If Uzbekistan develops this sector, it will bring significant benefits to the economy and will have the opportunity to turn the country into an international education center.

Foreign students bring a steady income to the country's higher education institutions.



In countries such as the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia, international students study on a higher contract basis than local students. For example, in the USA, foreign students bring more than \$39 billion in income to higher education institutions annually, while in the UK this figure is about 35%. The number of foreign students in Uzbekistan is still very small, so the higher education system does not have enough income.

If Uzbekistan increases the number of foreign students, universities will have the opportunity to increase their funding, obtain international accreditations, finance research, and improve the quality of education.

Foreign students spend a lot of money on accommodation, food, transportation, school supplies, and other necessities while studying in a country. For example, in Germany, an average foreign student spends 12,000–15,000 euros per year. Foreign students studying in such countries make a significant contribution to the development of trade and services. This figure is currently low in Uzbekistan due to the small number of international students, but with the increase in the flow of foreign students, the domestic consumer market will also expand.

At the same time, it also contributes to the development of the housing market for foreign students. The development of the market for special dormitories and apartments for students can lead to an increase in property values. Therefore, Uzbek universities should develop housing infrastructure for foreign students that meets international standards.

Many countries offer work opportunities for international students. For example, in Canada and Australia, international students are allowed to work up to 20 hours per week, which not only provides them with financial stability, but also benefits the country's economy.

Uzbekistan currently has limited formal employment opportunities for international students, but if the system were simplified, they could benefit the local economy while also supporting themselves. For example, international students could gain experience by working in the service sector and increase economic activity within the country. This could be particularly beneficial for startups, the IT sector, and research centers.

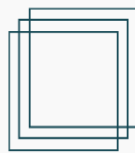
International students have a significant impact on the development of the country's service sector. Transportation, housing, food, healthcare, and other services are developed based on the needs of international students.

Countries like Malaysia have been able to develop their services sector by increasing the number of foreign students. Uzbekistan also has the opportunity to increase economic activity in this area by developing educational tourism.

Foreign students have a positive impact on the country's economy in various ways. Their tuition fees ensure the financial stability of universities, while the cost of living develops the domestic consumer market. The impact on the labor market leads to the creation of new jobs and the expansion of the service sector. By focusing on increasing the number of foreign students, Uzbekistan is implementing a number of reforms to

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accelerate economic growth, bring universities to an international level, and develop the national education system. If an active policy is pursued in this direction, Uzbekistan will become one of the most attractive educational centers in Central Asia in the near future.

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