International Journal on Economics, Finance and Sustainable Development (IJEFSD)

e-ISSN: 2620 – 6269
p-ISSN: 2615 - 4021

Volume: 8 Issue: 4 | December 2026

https://journals.researchparks.org/index.php/IJEFSD

Article

Developing A Methodology for Assessing The Education Tourism Potential of A Region

Muxammadsoliyev Mirodiljon Mirzoxid o'g'li

1. Master's student in Economics, Asian University of Technology, Uzbekistan

* Correspondence: -

Abstract: Education tourism is routinely assessed by counting international students; however, this practice measures a population that international statistical standards exclude from tourism altogether. Under the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (IRTS 2008), a person enrolled in a course lasting one year or more is classified not as a visitor, but as a resident of the place of study. Consequently, degree-seeking students fall outside tourism by definition, whereas short-course participants fall within it. Education statistics, conversely, record enrolment but omit length of stay and expenditure, leaving the phenomenon between two statistical systems without full capture by either. Published Uzbek figures illustrate this ambiguity: a statistical series reporting 33,287 foreign citizens arriving for educational purposes in the first ten months of 2025—a 51.4% increase—does not specify which population is counted. To address this methodological gap, this paper proposes a three-component assessment framework separating attraction capacity, absorption capacity, and realized conversion, assigning each indicator to its corresponding statistical system, and evaluating short-term visitors and degree-seeking students independently rather than aggregating them.

Keywords: assessment methodology, education export, education tourism, international students, IRTS 2008, regional potential, tourism statistics, Uzbekistan, visitor definition

1. Introduction

Regions that host higher education institutions increasingly regard incoming international students as a distinct branch of the tourism economy, and the term education tourism has become widespread in both policy documents and academic literature. Standard regional assessments typically follow a uniform procedure: the number of foreign students is counted, an annual growth rate is calculated, an average expenditure figure is assumed, and the resulting product is presented as the region's education tourism potential or direct economic contribution [1].

Although this procedure appears straightforward, it contains a foundational flaw in its initial step that subsequent calculations cannot correct. Specifically, the population counted in standard assessments does not align with the population that international tourism statistics are designed to measure. This limitation stems not from poor data quality or imprecise estimation techniques, but from conceptual misclassification of the target population; thus, refining expenditure assumptions alone cannot resolve the distortion [2].

The objective of this study is to identify the statistical discrepancy between tourism and education accounting systems, demonstrate how this ambiguity manifests in national statistical releases, and formulate a disaggregated methodological framework for assessing regional education tourism potential. While the framework is contextualized using recent empirical data from Uzbekistan—where rapid growth in inbound educational mobility makes accurate measurement urgent—the underlying methodology is structural and applicable across diverse regional contexts [3].

Citation: Mirzoxid o'g'li, M. M. Developing A Methodology for Assessing The Education Tourism Potential of A Region. International Journal on Economics, Finance and Sustainable Development (IJEFSD) 2026, 8(4), 113-117

Received: 11th Aug 2026
Revised: 28th Sep 2026
Accepted: 12th Oct 2026
Published: 26th Nov 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

2. Materials and Methods

To construct a statistically coherent assessment framework, this study employs a comparative conceptual and methodological analysis of international statistical standards alongside national administrative data. First, the definitional boundaries of educational travel were examined using the United Nations International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008) and the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (TSA 2008) contrasting them against standard higher education enrolment accounting.

Second, empirical data published by the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan covering inbound educational arrivals for January–October and January–November 2025 were analyzed to diagnose aggregation biases and denominator ambiguities.

Third, based on the identified statistical gaps, a structured three-component regional assessment model was formulated. The methodology follows three core operational rules:

1) **Population Separation:** Short-term educational visitors (< 1 year) and long-term degree students (≥ 1 year) are strictly separated prior to measurement.

2) **System Attribution:** Every indicator is explicitly tagged to the statistical system capable of supplying it (tourism/border statistics vs. institutional education records).

3) **Non-Aggregation:** Components are evaluated independently rather than collapsed into a composite index or premature monetary estimate, preventing the masking of structural bottlenecks between institutional supply and regional infrastructure.

3. Result

A. Structural Divergence Between Statistical Systems

Analysis of international statistical standards reveals a clear boundary governed by duration of stay rather than nationality. Under IRTS 2008, a visitor is defined as a traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside their usual environment for less than one year for any main purpose other than employment by a resident entity [4]. While education and training are recognized as personal tourism purposes, IRTS 2008 explicitly stipulates that students enrolled in courses lasting one year or more are considered within their usual environment at their place of study. Therefore, bachelor's and master's degree students are residents rather than visitors, and their spending falls outside tourism expenditure [5].

Conversely, education statistics capture institutional metrics—such as headcount enrolment, academic level, and field of study—but do not record length of stay, accommodation type, local expenditure, or cross-border trip frequency. Furthermore, IRTS 2008 notes that immigration and visa records often fail to reflect actual stay duration, particularly when one-year visas are renewed annually, meaning border declarations alone are insufficient for visitor classification [6].

B. Empirical Ambiguity in Published National Data

Examination of official Uzbek statistical releases demonstrates the practical consequences of this institutional gap. According to the National Statistics Committee, 33,287 foreign citizens arrived in Uzbekistan for educational purposes between January and October 2025, compared to 21,980 in the corresponding period of 2024—an increase of 51.4%. For the January–November 2025 period, arrivals reached 37.2 thousand, representing a 54.3% year-on-year increase. In media and policy commentary, these border arrival figures are routinely cited interchangeably with international student headcounts [7].

However, a border arrival is a crossing event, whereas a student is an enrolled individual. A single degree student crossing the border multiple times within a calendar year generates multiple arrival records, while a continuing student who remains in the host country generates none. Moreover, the geographic concentration of the January–October 2025 inflow underscores the risk of aggregate expenditure modeling: arrivals

from India (14,322) and Turkmenistan (8,348) accounted for 68.1% of the total flow, followed by Tajikistan (2,323), Pakistan (1,620), and China (1,254). These cohorts differ substantially in course duration, housing arrangements, and return-travel frequency, rendering a single average expenditure multiplier invalid [8].

C. Proposed Three-Component Regional Assessment Framework

To eliminate population conflation, the proposed framework assigns long-term students (≥ 1 year) to education export accounts and restricts education tourism strictly to short-term learners (< 1 year). Within the tourism population, regional potential is evaluated across three distinct components (Table I) [9], [10]:

a. **Attraction Capacity:** Measures the academic pull factors of the region, including the number of short-term courses, summer schools, and exchange modules; languages of instruction; presence of international branch campuses; and seasonal distribution of offerings [11].
b. **Absorption Capacity:** Measures the logistical and infrastructural readiness to receive short-term visitors, encompassing short-stay visa and registration regimes, specialized student accommodation stock, direct transport connectivity to origin markets, and multilingual local support services.
c. **Realized Conversion:** Defined as the ratio of actual short-stay educational arrivals to available short-course capacity, diagnosing the gap between latent institutional potential and realized visitor inflows.

Table I. Disaggregated Regional Education Tourism Assessment Framework

Framework Component	Key Indicators	Primary Data Source	Target Population
Attraction Capacity	Number of short courses (< 1 yr), instruction languages, branch campuses, seasonal course distribution	Higher Education & Institutional Records	Short-term educational programs
Absorption Capacity	Short-term visa rules, student housing capacity, transport links, multilingual infrastructure	Tourism, Border & Municipal Systems	Short-stay visitors (< 1 yr)
Realized Conversion	Ratio of actual short-stay educational arrivals to total short-course seat capacity	Cross-linked Border & Institutional Data	Short-stay visitors (< 1 yr)
Education Export (Separate Account)	Degree headcount (≥ 1 yr), tuition revenue, long-term living expenditure	University Enrolment & Balance of Payments	Degree-seeking students (Residents)

4. Discussion

The proposed framework demonstrates that the core challenge in measuring education tourism is not a conflict between statistical agencies, but a coverage gap between two systems designed for different purposes. When researchers or policymakers multiply total international student enrolments by an assumed tourist expenditure coefficient, they apply a tourism metric to a resident population excluded by international standards [12].

Separating attraction capacity from absorption capacity provides actionable diagnostic value for regional planners. A region may possess high attraction capacity—

such as internationally accredited universities and diverse short-term courses—yet fail to realize its tourism potential if absorption capacity is constrained by restrictive short-term visa procedures, insufficient short-stay housing, or weak air connectivity. Combining these dimensions into a single composite index would obscure such structural bottlenecks [13].

Operationalizing this framework in Uzbekistan requires three targeted adjustments to current statistical reporting:

1) **Duration Breakdown at Border Control:** National arrival releases for educational purposes must explicitly define their unit of count (individuals vs. crossings) and disaggregate arrivals by intended length of stay (< 1 year vs. ≥ 1 year) using existing visa and immigration data.

2) **Institutional Course Disaggregation:** Higher education institutions should report short-course, exchange, and summer-school enrolments separately from multi-year degree enrolments.

3) **Regional Disaggregation:** Both border arrival series and institutional short-course records should be published at the regional (viloyat) level, as national aggregates cannot inform localized infrastructure planning [14].

Until border statistics distinguish intended duration of stay, monetary estimates of education tourism will remain methodologically unsupported. Future research should focus on empirical testing of this three-component framework across specific regions of Uzbekistan once duration-disaggregated arrival data become available [15].

5. Conclusion

Education tourism lies at the intersection of two statistical domains, neither of which captures the phenomenon completely on its own: tourism statistics exclude degree-seeking students by classifying their place of study as their usual environment, whereas education statistics omit stay duration and expenditure. Published Uzbek figures for 2025 illustrate how unsegmented border arrival counts create ambiguity when interpreted as student headcounts or multiplied by uniform spending assumptions. By strictly separating short-term educational visitors from long-term degree students and evaluating regional potential through attraction capacity, absorption capacity, and realized conversion, the proposed framework establishes a rigorous empirical foundation for regional tourism policy.

References

[1] X. A. Rodríguez, F. Martínez-Roget, and E. Pawlowska, "Academic Tourism Demand in Galicia, Spain," *Tour. Manag.*, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 1583–1590, Dec. 2012.

[2] J. P. Cerdeira Bento, F. Martínez-Roget, E. Pereira, and X. A. Rodríguez, Eds., *Academic Tourism: Perspectives on International Mobility in Europe*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020.

[3] T. Pitman, S. Broomhall, J. McEwan, and E. Majocha, "Adult Learning in Educational Tourism," *Aust. J. Adult Learn.*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 219–238, Jul. 2010.

[4] J. P. Cerdeira, E. T. Pereira, and M. C. Rego, "Educational Tourism and Local Development: The Role of Universities," *Sustainability*, vol. 12, no. 17, p. 6766, Aug. 2020.

[5] M. Iglesias, L. Huesca, and K. Lozada, "Focusing on Academic Tourism: Demographics, Behaviours and Impacts," *Forum Geogr.*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 117–131, Jun. 2024.

[6] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), "International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008," United Nations, New York, NY, USA, Series M 83/Rev.1, 2010. [Online]. Available: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_83rev1e.pdf

[7] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 Compilation Guide*. New York, NY, USA: United Nations, 2016. [Online]. Available: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/tourism/E-IRTS-Comp-Guide%202008%20For%20Web.pdf

[8] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), "International Standard Classification of Education: ISCED 2011," UNESCO-UIS, Montreal, QC, Canada, 2012.
[9] B. W. Ritchie, N. Carr, and C. Cooper, *Managing Educational Tourism*. Clevedon, U.K.: Channel View Publications, 2003.
[10] National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Over 37.2 Thousand Foreign Citizens Visited Uzbekistan for Educational Purposes in January–November 2025." Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2025. [Online]. Available: https://stat.uz
[11] F. Martínez-Roget, E. Pawlowska, and X. A. Rodríguez, "The Economic Impact of Academic Tourism in Galicia, Spain," *Tour. Econ.*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 1139–1153, Oct. 2013.
[12] United Nations, Eurostat, OECD, and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), "Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008," United Nations, New York, NY, USA, Series F 80/Rev.1, 2010.
[13] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *UNWTO Tourism Definitions*. Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2019.
[14] M. A. M. Mir, B. Shelley, and C.-S. Ooi, "Uses of Tourism Resources for Educational and Community Development: A Systematic Literature Review and Lessons," *Tour. Manag. Perspect.*, vol. 53, no. 101278, Sep. 2024.
[15] National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Uzbekistan Sees 51.4 per cent Rise in Foreign Citizens Arriving for Educational Purposes in January–October 2025." Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2025. [Online]. Available: https://stat.uz