

Characteristics and Implications of British Educational Tourism

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Abstract—Educational tourism is a combination of research-based learning and traveling which is beneficial for educational tourists to broaden their horizon. But due to the lack of understanding about the concept of educational tourism and its associated impacts, educational tourism sector is one of the unnoted sub-sectors of Chinese tourism market. Britain has classical and perfect education system and offers versified educational tourism products. This paper analyzes the development and characteristics of British educational tourism. After analyzing the successful experience of British educational tourism, it also puts forward strategies for accelerating educational tourism in China from the perspective of government regulation, balancing “traveling” and “learning”, diversifying educational tourism products, promoting internationalization and establishing security system.

Keywords—educational tourism, Britain, learning through traveling, implications.

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational tourism is any type of program in which participants travel to a location either individually or in a group with the primary motive engaging in or having a learning experience [1]. Educational tourism is highly related with students and the purpose of learning. It can be undertaken in a variety of natural or human-made settings. Educational tourism requires active participation of the educational tourists, which can be regarded as a cooperative form of tourism, whereby the educational tourists and the tour providers “co-create the desired experiences” [2].

The experimental nature of educational tourism has made it an important means to conduct explorative learning, but it was not until 2013 did the concept of “educational tourism” firstly appear in government policy in China. In July 2014, the Ministry of Education began a pilot scheme of educational tourism project by announcing the first batch of “Chinese Educational Tourism Demonstration Bases and Destinations”, which set up a good example for developing educational tourism in primary and secondary schools. At the end of 2016, 11 departments including the Ministry of Education jointly issued the “Opinions on Promoting Educational Tourism in

Primary and Secondary School Students”. For the first time, educational tourism was included in national education policy, which directly promotes the active development of educational tourism in China.

However, despite the popular development of educational tourism, many schools even authorities do not fully understand its value and purpose. It is still in the early stage of exploration. The educational travel is still equivalent to the past spring tour, autumn tour, summer camp and other activities, completely neglecting the balance of “traveling” and “learning”, so there has been such phenomenon as “only traveling without learning” or “traveling overweighting learning”. There are also some expensive overseas travels that often stay on the surface activities such as going travel abroad, taking photos and do not really reflect the significance of educational tourism.

Due to the lack of understanding about the concept of educational tourism and its associated impacts, educational tourism sector is one of the unnoted sub-sectors of Chinese tourism market. Therefore, there is urgent need for research about how to develop educational tourism in China. Britain has classical and perfect education system and offers versified educational tourism products. By analyzing the development and characteristics of British educational tourism, this paper aims to put forward strategies for accelerating educational tourism in China.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN BRITAIN

As early as in Roman times, a large number of British people went to study in ancient Rome. During Middle Ages when education was under the control of the church in England, people went on educational tour mainly to explore religious theology and philosophy. In addition, people also traveled to the European continent as knights, scholars and students to learn more about exotic customs and improve their personal cognition[3].

With the rise of the Renaissance and the spread of humanism, aristocracy went to Italy and France in search of new knowledge. Scholars traveling to Italy not only enjoyed the natural scenery, but also learned about the history and cultural heritages of the city. As the center of the European Age of Enlightenment, France attracted plenty of noble elites to study the works of Voltaire, Montesquieu and other

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outstanding thinkers at that time. In the 16th century, due to the need of government official selection, the educational tourism in this period became a new channel for the aristocracy to broaden their horizon, cultivate gentleman's character and improve their abilities [4]. Through educational trips, the aristocracy were able to learn the local languages, enrich their knowledge, improve their diplomatic skills and finally obtain the qualification to become a qualified government official. From the 17th to the 18th century, educational tourism development entered the "golden period" due to the rise of the bourgeoisie and the progress of science and technology. During this period, educational tourism was no longer limited within the European Continent. Some scholars began to travel to Egypt, Turkey and other regions to learn exotic culture. With the first industrial revolution and the improvement of various infrastructures, the middle class and the general public also participated in educational tourism, which has become an important means of education in Britain[5].

Nowadays, educational tourism in Britain is becoming more and more popular. In November 2006, the Department for Education issued the "Learning outside the Classroom Manifesto", aiming to help schools provide every child with qualified and safe educational tourism activities. In 2010, the congress increased the policy support for educational tourism by recommending that outdoor education should be formally incorporated into the national education curriculum.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN BRITAIN

British educational tourism aims to create various learning opportunity for the young people and to help them gain confidence and broaden horizons. With the evolution of British educational policy, educational tourism has become an important part of British education system, with its characteristics as follows.

A. Educational

Britain has classical and perfect education system and was named the best country for education in 2018. British educational travel is based on museum education, celebrity culture and famous school visits which fully displays the educational significance of educational tourism products. Nowadays, in Britain, museums often present scientific knowledge from a three-dimensional perspective and have become the second social education providers after schools. The design of educational tourism products may make fully use of the large number of domestic celebrities who have great influence on modern society. Therefore, such the activities as visiting the birthplace and former residence of literary giants and famous scholars, visiting of the world's top universities are included in the key projects of educational tourism. Through the integration of travelling and learning, British educational tourism enables students to receive cultural edification imperceptibly.

B. Commercial

British educational tourism market is mature, with obvious commerciality accelerating the development of the industry. Currently, educational tourism products are mainly provided

by tourism agencies. Relevant suppliers design educational tourism products according to the school's curriculum and students' needs, scientifically evaluate economic benefits, and make reasonable quotations. With the increasing demand for educational tourism, the market competition is becoming increasingly fierce. There emerges more and more specialized and standardized suppliers who have developed various educational products with core competitiveness. According to the School Travel Forum, about 1,000 suppliers have received Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge which is to help schools identify good quality and safe provision, and to reduce red tape when planning educational visits[6].

C. Outdoor

One of the main purposes of British educational tourism is to improve students hands-on, practical ability and to master the living skills by engaging students in outdoor social activities and using students' eyes, ears, nose, hands, feet and brain. Several measures are taken to make sure outdoor activities are carried out. Firstly, British educational travel agencies offer a wide range of outdoor courses. For example, adventure courses may include rock climbing, hiking, water sports, cave exploration and other various outdoor courses. Secondly, Field Studies Council (FSC) is responsible for selecting field studies centers which aim to give visitors, teachers and students an enjoyable outdoor experience. Many FSC Centers offer residential accommodation and all residential centers offer day courses. All FSC Centers (residential and day) provide a full range of equipment and field sites not often available in schools, such as well-equipped laboratories and workrooms[7]. Finally, in order to encourage students to contact with nature, respect nature, and learn in nature, the concept of "forest research" is becoming more and more popular. Under the promotion of official and non-official organizations, forest schools are favored.

D. Comprehensive

Since the 1960s, the reform of "Non-formal education" has been initiated in Britain, and the idea of "Progressive educational philosophy" has been adopted. The goals and contents of educational tourism have become open-oriented by implementing the cross-disciplinary, multi-theme, cross-curriculum integrated curriculum model. For instance, courses such as citizenship, art design, science, geography, and sports are offered to help students to explore the unknown world at close range, and at the same time to enhance their concern for human beings and the surrounding environment. Being engaged in multi-field extended practical learning, students can accomplish rich and colorful learning experience. Through the comprehensive development of educational travel, students are stimulated to acquire comprehensive experience and comprehensive skills.

E. Student-centered

British educational tourism is student-oriented which focuses on students' participation and involvement. When designing the educational tourism courses, the schools pay more attention to the diversity and flexibility of the courses in order to help students acquire knowledge and experience in practice. When choosing educational travel destination, the schools respect the wills and the needs of the students, and

tend to choose destinations appealing to the students. When making traveling arrangements, besides taking into account the time schedule, the activities, the distance and route planning, the schools usually make plans based on the interests of the students and their physical and mental characteristics.

F. International

Cultivating students' international perspective is one of the basic principles of British's sustainable development of education. British educational tourism is international which is mainly manifested in two aspects. On one hand, the destinations of educational tourism are all over the world so that students can experience different languages, cultures and values of different countries by visiting local historical sites, natural landscape, sports events, arts and literature etc. On the other hand, educational tourism provides students with foreign exchange opportunities. Foreign exchange program has been considered to be one of the best ways to provide education[8]. In Britain, by participating in foreign exchange programs or summer camps, students can communicate, interact and cooperate with local schools or society thoroughly so that they could enjoy cross-cultural research learning.

G. Safe

Britain has superb experience in safety management. First, develop strict safety quality standards. The quality badge award by the Council of Learning Outside the Classroom is the only nationally recognized indicator of quality educational experience and the only indicator of effective safety risk management. Only those suppliers who have received quality badges after a rigorous evaluation and review can be trusted by the school and supported by the committee's staff in developing and improving products. Second, school is the main organization unit who is responsible for improving the safety and pertinence of the activities, and providing guarantees for the health and safety of the students. Third, make clear definition of the safety responsibility. The responsibilities of schools, educational tourism learning centers (suppliers), local authorities and regulatory bodies are explicitly defined in accordance with relevant laws.

IV. IMPLICATIONS ON CHINESE EDUCATIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Despite the great development of educational tourism in China, it still faces many problems, such as, lack of development standards, the imbalance between "traveling" and "learning", the homogenization of educational tourism products, the security concerns, the internationalization of educational tourism, etc. After analyzing the successful experience British educational tourism development, here are some implications on how to develop educational tourism in China.

A. Strengthen the government's regulatory role and promote the standardization of educational tourism market

A good market comes from good supervision. The government plays an indispensable role in standardizing the development of educational tourism. It can be seen from the current development of Chinese educational tourism that the

supervision of the government and school only stays on the surface and many educational tourism products can't match the standards. In order to enable students to truly experience the fun of "learning through traveling", the government's standardized management should be emphasized.

First, the government should make relevant policies to formulate industry development standards, identify the qualifications of relevant institutions, and regulate the entrance requirement including food, housing, transportation, traveling, shopping and learning. Second, a special educational tourism supervision department can be set up to perform the vertical supervision mode, which is, central government supervising the local government while local government supervising schools. Third, the supervision department should regularly check educational tourism activities provided by the schools, unannounced visit the relevant educational tourism activities practice bases and regularly review the educational tourism products provided by relevant institutions. At the same time, on-the-spot inspection and supervision of the school's educational trips should also be carried out to make sure that all educational tourism products meet the requirements and standards.

B. Balance between "traveling" and "learning" and promote the integration of educational tourism elements

"Traveling" and "learning" are the two basic elements of educational tourism, which are intermingled in the course activities. In the preparatory stage of an educational tour, the educational administrative and schools should emphasize the integration of "traveling" and "learning", rather than focus on the time allocation of the two. As for the course arrangement and traveling route, students can not only visit local tourist attractions, including natural landscapes and man-made spots, but also take part in outdoor activities, theme dinners, group competitions and other forms of activities. When leading the students in educational tours, the instructor can adopt "problem-oriented" strategies, helping students to get deep experience in the integration of external appreciation and internal learning.

C. Enrich the theme of the tourism practice base and promote the diversity of educational tourism products

To meet the travel needs of different age groups, homogenization of educational tourism products should be changed and diversification about educational tourism practice base and themes should be improved. On one hand, we should optimize and integrate educational tourism resources by combining Chinese culture with local features. The educational tourism practice base can make allies with regional scenic spots and establish partnerships so as to expand the radius and popularity of educational tourism products. High-tech means can be used to create intelligent bases and camps to increase the attractiveness and promote the healthy development of educational tourism. On the other hand, multi-level and multi-theme educational tourism products should be designed for the needs of primary and secondary school students of different ages and families. Like the classification of outdoor education learning centers in Britain, China's educational tourism base can be categorized as historical humanities, natural ecology, science and

creativity, red tourism, and cultural studies. The educational tourism products can be divided into red tours, ecological tours, cultural tours and rural tours. Diverse tourism products can be designed for travelers to choose. By immersing education in multi-theme products, educational tourists can achieve the goal of acquiring skills and improving willpower.

D. Cultivate students' international vision and promote the diversity of educational tourism experience

At present, China's educational tourism is devoted to the establishment of an activity curriculum system in which the primary school focus on local and rural customs, the junior high school focus on county and municipal scenic spots, and the high school stage focus on provincial and national conditions. However, with the deepening of the globalization, it is especially important to cultivate high-quality innovative international talents. It is the best way to understand different cultures by immersing students in an international multicultural atmosphere [9]. To promote the internationalization of educational tourism in China, on the one hand, we can adopt the method of piloting and promoting. Encourage qualified schools to make full use of the platform of international friendship cities to strengthen communication with local schools. Organize primary and middle school students to go abroad for cultural inspections by attending school courses, visiting famous historical sites, and experiencing local customs. Through these measures, students will absorb the essence of other countries' culture, make progress in the process of dialogue, and share the achievements of global multicultural civilization. After gaining experience and reaching consensus in terms of security guarantees and funding guarantees, the pilot experience will be fully promoted. On the other hand, it is advisable to set up a cross-border educational tourism working group to open up a green channel for the development of international educational tourism by coordinating with local embassies, education departments, transportation departments, security departments and research-related travel agencies.

E. Establish a sound safety guarantee system and ensure the security of education tourism

Safety is the top concern and basic principle for the educational tourism development. Measures should be taken to ensure the security and safeness of education tourism. First, the government should speed up the establishment of a sound security guarantee system by strengthening the construction of security facilities and improving the organization and management level of the educational tourism base. For example, there should be a medical-care office in each

educational tourism base and safety warning signs should be provided in hazardous areas. There should also be full-time medical staff with medicines and first aid kits who may perform timely rescue when emergencies appear. Second, the educational tourism base should establish regular communication and feedback mechanisms with education administration, public security, finance, transportation, tourism, insurance supervision and other related departments, to ensure the transportation, food and accommodation security of all students during the trips.

V. CONCLUSION

Educational tourism is a combination of research-based learning and travelling which makes students engaged with both nature and society. By applying theory into practice, it is beneficial for students to enhance self-confidence, acquire knowledge, cultivate innovation ability, promote interpersonal communication and cultural exchange. Through detailed studying of the characteristics of British educational tourism development, this paper puts forward measures on dealing with the existing problems of China's educational tourism development from the perspective of government regulation, balancing "traveling" and "learning", diversifying educational tourism products and promoting internationalization. As a compulsory course for quality education, the healthy and sustainable development of educational tourism relies on the joint cooperation of the government, schools and families.

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