

ADAPTING THE CURRICUM IN TOURISM AT THE LEVEL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION STATES

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Abstract

Tourism, one of the most remarkable areas of our time, a sphere of activity with a high dynamism and inexhaustible source of satisfaction for tourists, an area generating income and jobs.

The study of tourism will always entail a multitude of conceptual challenges, which can be addressed from perspectives such as mobility, experiential and economic. The knowledge of tourism presents a continuous change, especially when we talk about the efforts to define tourism not only as an interdisciplinary field of research, but also as a vocational discipline within high school education, an aspect that constantly presents the need for change, to adapt the curriculum to the new trends in the field of tourism. The interdisciplinarity of tourism, as a field of study, may represent a weakness in the construction of theory. The topics published in tourism studies show that they predominate through applied and business-oriented research, through marketing and economic topics. From a geographical perspective, major areas of research include sustainability and environmental issues, first and foremost, but also studies about destination, community and place.

What we propose in this study is an analysis of the education system in the field of tourism at the level of the European Union states, a deepening of the content of the curricula in this field. This study aims to analyze the needs of updating the curriculum to the current needs in the field of tourism.

Keywords: curriculum, education, tourism, European Union

JAL Classification: A20, I21, Z30, Z31

Introduction

This paper analyzes the perspectives of curriculum modernization in tourism education. The aim is to explore how European tourism education and the vocational curriculum can be modernised to better prepare students for the future of travel and tourism.

Both globally and internally, the hotel and tourism industry is expanding rapidly. There is greater acceptance of technology in different elements of this industry's processes as it continues to grow in multiple directions. In fact, the growth rate occurs faster than educators can understand it, or they can implement the necessary changes in their curriculum. The curriculum related to the hospitality and tourism sector is rapidly creating new study programs in response to the strategic and transactional requirements of the sector.

One of the most important experiences that a person can have is to receive an education. It is the idea of the whole exercise that by obtaining education, whether it is at any level (skills, concepts, competences) or of any kind (formal, informal, throughout life, coaching), the individual who participates should by definition change (in a positive direction). Several factors determine whether a change is truly transformative, some of which are internal to the person receiving the education and others around them (including here the educators themselves). Other variables are external and/or contextual. [Edelheim, J. \(2020\). *How should tourism education values be transformed after 2020? Tourism Geographies, 1–8.* doi:10.1080/14616688.2020.1760927](#)

European education systems are traditionally rooted and are characterised by national specificities. Social, cultural and economic changes attest to the concern of decision-makers, researchers and business managers to discover more about the peculiarities of national education systems.

Vocational education in tourism and travel forecasting is unpredictable. However, an impetus is maintained in the search for standardization and retraining in the tourism industry. There is also a prevailing concern about the quality of the workforce in particular, given the large number of people who are employed in this area. Thus, we can ask ourselves: What does the future hold for us in terms of tourism education?

In most European countries there is a great interest in the establishment of educational policies at European level, there are a number of reasons: the development of the European Union, the increasingly important significance of the international school and the studies of measurement and appreciation of students, but also the increasing internationalization of education and educational studies within the general framework of the globalization process. Hörner, W., Döbert, H., Kopp, B. V., Mitter, W. (Eds.). (2007). *The Education Systems of Europe*. Springer, doi:10.1007/1-4020-4874-2.

In directing the progress of European Union (EU) integration, education can play a fundamental role. According to Grek (2008, 208), education has turned into a key policy-making mechanism in the EU. According to Kushnir (2016) The Bologna Process, initially an EU initiative transposed into a larger European project, eventually crossed the BORDERS of the EU and then encompassed geographical Europe but also some countries beyond it, thus becoming the most important higher education initiative in the world.

The view that education is at the heart of the political decision-making process is supported by the examination of the materials of the European Education Area (EEA): "Debate has placed education and culture at the forefront of politics." The assumption that education in the EEA is viewed by the EC (European Commission) and the Council of the EU as an instrument for EU integration is also much more clearly supported by this analysis. A telling illustration is the title of the 2018 EC Communication: The importance of the Youth, Education and Culture (EC) programmes in strengthening Europe. Thus, the EC (2018b, 1) speaks clearly about the notion of 'unlocking the potential of education and training to serve the European project', just as the EC (2018a, 2) noted that: 'More attention needs to be paid to education, training and culture that will enable them to unlock their full potential to support the European project'. In addition, this is in line with the EC's 2017 press release, which mentions the use of 'culture and introspection as an impetus for unity'. Kushnir, I., *The Role of the European Education Area in European Union Integration in Times of Crises*, *European Review*, 2021 *Academia Europaea*

Tourism education is one of the most important areas of study in modern tourism, and it is also one of the most challenging. The question of how to approach tourism education has been a topic of discussion in the tourism industry for years, and although there are many schools of thought on how to approach this issue, there is no consensus on what is best.

One of the most important sub-sectors of complex tourism phenomena, tourism education has the potential to directly or indirectly affect the entire tourism industry. Where specific education and training is provided, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has identified (higher) tourism education as having the potential to increase customer satisfaction and the competitiveness of tourism enterprises and regions (Fayos Sola, 1997; Maureen et al., 2008, p. 191). In a number of nations, higher education in tourism has received official recognition. So, it's the education that occurs through knowledge. Kunwar, R. R. (2018). *Tourism Education, Curriculum Spaces, Knowledge Production, and Disciplinary Pluralism. The Gaze: Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 9, 83. doi:10.3126/gaze.v9i0.19724

One interest that has gained momentum in recent years is that of modernising the curriculum. Supporters of this approach consider that traditional teaching methods are outdated and ineffective and must be replaced with new means and methods that will arouse the interest of students but also help in the period after graduation, when they enter the labor market.

The beginnings of curriculum development had a shy start. Starting from the needs of the representatives of the tourism industry who considered the educational experience, a technical experience rather than one related to the field of management, a practice with a strong orientation towards the food and beverage field and reaching the recommendation of the educable to improve the curriculum from the perspective of the hotel component. Thus, it was requested by the beneficiaries of education to review the various curricular components

and to address numerous topics of content, as well as the development of skills such as the need to know a foreign language, cultural diversity, communication, human relations, practice in management, leadership, time management, planning strategies, team building, all for a technologically updated component. [Milman, A. \(2001\). Hospitality and Tourism Curriculum Development. Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 1\(4\), 65–76. doi:10.1300/j172v01n04_05](#)

"The curriculum represents the totality of educational, integrative, innovative and evaluative materials offered to students consciously or unconsciously by the school in order to achieve results that will be used for life in an ever-changing society" (Mulenga 2018)

The curriculum is composed of a complete program of educational materials recommended for the educable. In the case of tourism, both theoretical and practical components are essential to provide quality and effective education. Therefore, the tourist curriculum is especially necessary for the development of their skills. Due to the heterogeneous and complex nature of tourism, knowledge could not represent a complete perspective on the entire sector. Thus, there are many limitations such as time constraints (the study program spans two, three or four years). Therefore, according to the studies carried out, it is obvious that education can bring major changes in tourism practices. The tools used and the method of teaching are very important in terms of providing an effective and quality education in tourism by creating a pleasant environment for teaching and learning.

As mentioned by Liburd et al. (2018), the tourist curriculum is necessary to have in its composition both theory and practical components, the practical components thus playing an essential role in deepening the information learned. Exposing the student to real-life situations helps to gain deeper knowledge about practices in the industry and also prepares him to cope with real-world tourism.

The practical components help learners to acquire problem-solving, critical thinking and motivation skills, and the use of appropriate methods of education can stimulate the student's motivation to learn.

On the other hand, the intervention of technology in tourism education has made the curriculum more interactive and student-focused. At the same time, she brought real-world experiences, easy access to the resources necessary for study, active participation of students in activities, individualized feedback. This stimulated students' motivation to learn in a positive way while reducing its problem. [Yedla, V. R., Ajoon, E. J. \(2022\). "Re-Orienting Curriculum Of Tourism Education In The Context Of Covid-19: An Empirical Study", HABITUS Journal of Sociology, \(3\), 251-273](#)

Tourism activity is subject to constant changes and professionals in this sphere must adapt to the changes that have occurred, requiring to be prepared to act in case of possible impacts.

More and more changes are caused by crises, of natural or human origin, which require research and a response from education. Tourism training must include different pedagogical approaches to help develop competences, skills and values. Only in this way will the educable become future professionals able to adapt to this dynamic and fragile sector, which has been highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis. [Yedla, V. R., Ajoon, E. J. \(2022\). "Re-Orienting Curriculum Of Tourism Education In The Context Of Covid-19: An Empirical Study", HABITUS Journal of Sociology, \(3\), 251-273](#)

As instability has taken place internationally and major markets have gone into decline, the tourism industry is increasingly noticing that it is necessary to rely on knowledge, skills, qualifications and managerial expertise. In the case of large companies where training is carried out through development programs, managerial skills will ensure a satisfactory response to market changes. But in small companies, where education and training are non-existent or limited, the philosophy of amateur management may have left many persistent lacunae operations. The "crisis management" methods prevalent in tourism are likely to guide

towards instant decisions, towards outmoded management manners. [Cooper, C., Shepherd R., \(2014\) The Relationship Between Tourism Education and The Tourism Industry: Implications for Tourism Education, Tourism Recreation Research](#). Thus, it follows from this, that it is indispensable to form and standardize the education system at European level, favorable both to companies in the tourism field and to people willing to experience other labour markets.

The process that complements a person with a set of concepts and all the essential skills to interpret, evaluate and analyze is the main objective of tourism education. In addition, it encourages conceptual understanding and increased critical thinking skills of educable people in order to advance their intellectual and professional development (Cooper & Shepherd, 1997). The global tourism sector is one that is constantly growing and is becoming increasingly diverse. Therefore, the main objectives of tourism education are to equip graduates with the management skills they need to continuously grow and meet the needs of tourism, as well as the information they need to look for new approaches to do so (Barkathunnisa et al., 2017; Dale & Robinson, 2001; Kim & Jeong, 2018). According to Tribe (2005), there are two areas in the tourism curriculum: The first is the idea that tourism is a business phenomenon that can be used to build educational programs for professional purposes using business knowledge, and the second is an unlimited phenomenon that can be used to build educational programs for liberal purposes using a variety of knowledge. [Kırlar-Can, B., Ertaş, M., & Kozak, M. \(2021\). *Understanding the philosophy of tourism education: A perspective study in Turkey. International Journal of Tourism Research*. doi:10.1002/jtr.2472](#)

Tourism education is a particularly important field of study, as it can have a significant impact on the future of the tourism industry. The travel curriculum is also very similar to other professional school programs in many respects, which means that it has many similar challenges and opportunities for the modernization of the curriculum.

Tourism educational curriculum reform

Tourism education reform has been ongoing for decades but is still not fully implemented in many schools. There are four main perspectives on how to approach this reform:

1. Modernization of the curriculum by creating new courses, changing existing courses or adding electives
2. Create a unified European tourism education curriculum with national variations
3. Re-imagining the reconstruction of tourism education programs as part of a review of vocational education programmes
4. Reinventing education in tourism as part of a comprehensive education reform agenda.

Tourism education can be a powerful tool for the growth of the tourism industry. The relationship between tourism education and the tourism industry is strong, but it needs to be modernized to adapt to new perspectives in tourism education.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and has become an important part of our lives. This has created a growing need for staff with specialized skills in this field. Tourism education is a way to prepare students for a career in the tourism industry.

There is a broad consensus that a country's ability to compete internationally for tourists is directly influenced by the educational level of its tourism industry (Blanke & Chiesa, 2011). Due to this, education has a significant share in strategies for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Fayos Sola '97, pp. 59-72; Renfors et al., 2020). This situation is really noteworthy in terms of a well-documented feature of human capital in the tourism industry: its low levels of formative experience compared to other economic activities (Lillo & Casado, 2011; Mariscal, 2003). As a result, the academic understanding of tourism that much of the workers in the industry may possess is limited to short concepts that they learn throughout the secondary education stage. [Coll Ramis, M. A. \(2020\). *Tourism education in Spain's*](#)

secondary schools: The curriculums' perspectives. Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 100292. doi:10.1016/j.jhlste.2020.100292

The curriculum modernization movement aims to provide students with an education that will prepare them for a career in a changing global economy. The curriculum must be flexible enough so that it can adapt to technological, cultural and social changes. It should also focus on preparing students to solve problems creatively and analytically. A good example is the use of technology as a learning tool through virtual reality simulations or 3D models that simulate real-life experiences such as travel destinations or historical events (Zachariassen & Matthiessen, 2010). Tourism education gives students the opportunity to learn about different cultures around the world, which helps to improve their understanding of different customs in different countries, including the culture of their own country. This causes them to have more positive attitudes towards people in general.

Tourism education is an area that has been in the pipeline for decades. The nature of tourism has changed as we have become more globalised, and tourism education must adapt to these changes.

The education of the young generation is crucial, according to Buffa (2015), not only because they will be the future leaders, but also because they will be the market of the future. She points out that people between the ages of 15 and 30 are eager to explore and learn about new cultures, that they are more aware of sustainability issues than previous generations and more open to adopting new behaviors, and that they frequently hold environmentally responsible attitudes and beliefs. Essentially, according to Buffa (2015), they are frequently cited as paving the way for responsible tourism. According to her, two categories can be distinguished between travelers today and those who will dominate the industry in the future:

1) Hard Path group: The members of this group are proactive in gathering information. In addition, people who belong to this group tend to be bolder and more open to trying new things.

2) "Soft Path" group : The members of this group frequently rely on external sources to provide them with the information they need. They lack interest in novelty. Seraphin, H., Yallop, A. C., Smith, S. M., & Modica, G. (2021), *The implementation of the Principles for Responsible Management Education within tourism higher education institutions: A comparative analysis of European Union countries, The International Journal of Management Education.*

The European Union (EU) has begun work on the modernisation of its professional programmes, including tourism. This means that curriculum developers will have to rethink how they approach tourism education.

The EU is not the only region where curriculum development is taking place at the moment. In Australia, for example, tourism educators are looking for ways to integrate their courses with other disciplines so that they can better serve the needs of students.

In response to the development needs of the staff in an increasingly competitive environment, the educational programs appeared:

1. Keeping the industry up to date with new technologies and trends.
2. Freedom to replace qualified personnel at any time.
3. Presentation of a favorable image of the career in tourism.
4. Determination of potential employees to prefer to integrate into activities in the dynamic sphere of tourism.
5. Establishing the legal norms regarding the work carried out in the field.
6. Limiting the external workforce.
7. Response to communications and services that present increasingly high consumer demands.

Amoah, V. A., & Baum, T. (1997). *Tourism education: policy versus practical. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,*

5–12. doi:10.1108/09596119710157531

To provide students with real experiences, sustainable tourism pedagogy (STP), a practical approach, can be incorporated into conventional educational programs (in the classroom). According to Jamal et al (2011), this is considered an action- and change-oriented pedagogy that should address environmental and social issues, the well-being of tourists and tourism-related businesses, as well as promoting a lasting attitude in the minds of aspiring leaders. Innovative pedagogical approaches are crucial and have the potential to metamorphose people into sustainability transformers – people who want to unlock changes in the environment, as well as sustainability actions, through people trying to bring about change in other people or in the community (Kemper et al., 2019). A society needs sustainability regenerators because transformative leaders with high ethical standards are necessary to achieve sustainability (Visser, 2015; Srour). New technologies and the approach to social media have proven to be useful outside the classroom as well, allowing students from different schools around the world to cooperate on various projects (Camargo & Gretzel, 2017).

Principles of responsible management in education (PRME) adapted after Seraphin H. et al.

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| <p>P1. Goal: We will increase students' skills to create sustainable value for the future of business and society as a whole and to contribute to a just and sustainable global economy.</p> |
| <p>p2. Values: The principles of global social responsibility, as defined in international programs such as the United Nations Global Compact, will be included in our academic efforts, the curriculum and organizational procedures.</p> |
| <p>P3. Method: We will develop educational frameworks, materials, procedures, environments and resources that promote productive learning for responsible leadership.</p> |
| <p>P4. Principle: Understanding the function, dynamics, and effects of corporations in generating a sustainable social, ecological and economic value will be advanced through conceptual and empirical research.</p> |
| <p>P5. Partnership: We will connect with corporate business managers to learn more about their difficulties in fulfilling their social and environmental obligations and to investigate practical, universal solutions to these problems.</p> |
| <p>P6. Dialogue: On important topics related to global social responsibility and sustainability, we will enable and support dialogue and debate between educators, students, business people, government, consumers, educational institutions, the media, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.</p> |

Seraphin, H., Yallop, A. C., Smith, S. M., & Modica, G. (2021), *The implementation of the Principles for Responsible Management Education within tourism higher education institutions: A comparative analysis of European Union countries*, *The International Journal of Management Education*.

Conclusions

The next generation of managers and leaders in this vast field can only be prepared through a high-performance, sustainable and quality education. Tourism programs having a relatively recent history, adding to them a lack of obvious financial advantages within educational institutions, but also the lack of correlations with the implementation of some principles of education, the lack of permanent updating of the curriculum, lead to a brake on the system, otherwise dynamic from other perspectives.

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