

## BOOK REVIEW

### **An International Handbook of Tourism Education**

*David Airey and John Tribe, editors (2005). Elsevier Science, Oxford, England*

*An International Handbook of Tourism Education* (2005) edited by two protagonists in the cause of tourism education, David Airey and John Tribe, is an interesting exploration of the history of the various approaches establishing tourism as a discipline in higher education. Much of the debate may be viewed as a power struggle over who determines the curriculum, and the educational policy, goals and standards: government, industry employers or educational institutions. The book provides many interesting historical and international perspectives on how tourism, and to a lesser extent hotel and catering (hospitality), education has evolved through the 1960s to the present day. In providing a general text on tourism education the editors have gathered in one place much of the current work being done in tourism and in tourism educational research and that in itself is a good thing. So too is the comprehensiveness of the referencing and bibliography.

However, *An International Handbook of Tourism Education's* (2005) assertion that current tourism education is a success may be overly optimistic. Tourism educational research is neither sufficiently cumulative nor sufficiently practical for it to make the contribution required of it. There is no evidence for example, of the number of teachers, lecturers or educators engaged in tourism education that have a comprehensive training or education in the basic disciplines of the subject, nor have these basic disciplines been identified, rather they are described loosely as 'extra disciplinary'. Literature critical of tourism or tourism education is scarce. Although tourism educational researchers are often keen advocates of the notion of the 'philosophical' or 'reflective practitioner', critical self-analysis is not apparently among their own strong points.

Tourism educators interested in curriculum development have long faced a paradox. The curriculum is manifestly a social construction. Why does it seem then that this social construct is treated as a timeless given in so many studies of tourism education? Why have tourism educators most



of whom are well attuned to ideological and political struggles underpinning social and economic life largely accepted the ‘givennesses’ of the curriculum? Has there been undue influence by economic interests (the industry) in designing the content and process in tourism education?

The studies presented in this collection have a shared intention. They seek to understand the field of study through a process of evolutionary curriculum and research development. They offer a challenge to the notion that corporate speak sets the rules for tourism curriculum discourse. They examine how that which constitutes the contemporary reality we experience as tourism in higher education has been negotiated, constructed and reconstructed and to that extent, this is a very valuable contribution to the literature.

A fundamental issue weaving its way through the book is whether and to what extent vocationalism drives tourism education. The text raises the specter of the liberal/vocational debate without actually engaging with it. The terms “liberal” and “vocational” are often employed to denote two different paradigms comprising distinct educational philosophies. The former values knowledge for its own sake, while the latter puts a premium on application or on the way knowledge is used in practice. The vocational/liberal topic is not a new one in general education. Proponents of vocationalism/industry needs claim that competency standards empower individuals with the choice of what to learn and how to learn it. The counter argument is that, such knowledge is defined narrowly in terms of employer needs, and rather than being a framework for learning, competency standards are prescriptions to which educational funding is tied, by which lecturers are benchmarked and assessed, and through which graduates’ progression and pay are determined. The contributors seem to avoid engaging with the philosophical principles of this debate and while Tribe’s acknowledgement that tourism is in a pre-paradigmatic state allows the hope of a drilling-down into the intellectual implications of this statement. However, this was not accomplished.

Many chapters refer to the link between research, teaching and learning and afford the topic excellent treatment. This vital link offers a vehicle to move tourism education from its vocational orientation through professionalism to eventual scholarship.

The chapter on Work experience and Industry Links introduces the concept of supervised work experience (SWE) but this needs unpacking – supervision by whom of what? Greater critical reflection on the actual outputs of work-placement experienced by a majority of students would seem to be more beneficial than ‘verbatim’ commentary of an insignificant number of selected students. Clearly, an essential part of

tourism education is practical preparation internally in tourism departments and externally in tourism business outlets. A critical review on role of mentors in the students learning process is required for balance. The industry mentor has many functions: model instructor, source for tips and advice, observer of a student's practice, provider of feedback, co-enquirer who stimulates a student's reflections, an evaluator, challenger and coach. But among the many roles the mentor has, the specific task is the explication of practical 'knowledge' rather than demonstration of task performance. In this case, discussion on this element has been neglected.

The authors point to tourism's beginnings as an add-on to hotel and catering, justifying its existence on grounds of vocational/industry relevance, a position from which many of the contributors seem unable to remove themselves for fear of appearing too academic. At this stage of its development, the dominant criterion is relevance to the needs of industry and of learners seeking jobs. However, in the second stage, as tourism progresses as a discipline the role of the universities became more important as the locus (loci) of argument for the subject to be viewed as a discipline in higher education, claiming the necessary financial and physical resources, and career opportunities which accrue in such circumstances. The final stage in Airey and Tribe's history, comments upon the curriculum, the pedagogy and to a lesser extent the analysis and evaluation of the project. This latter claim needs to be revisited. There is little by way of critical reflection or analysis on tourism education or research.

Airey and Tribe (but mostly Tribe) seem to favour the alignment of research and curriculum subjects to national tourism policy rather than contributing to an argument in favour of informed, independent contestation of tourism policy by a research (philosophical practitioners) community, composed of teachers, practitioners and academics who together develop capacities that allow them to speak with authority against the many past and current misguided, mistaken and unjust global tourism policies.

The book's contents are organised under six broad headings, namely:

- Introduction, comprising three chapters Introduction, Growth and Development, Overview of Research;
- Curriculum comprising four chapters, Tourism, Knowledge and the Curriculum, Curriculum Theory and Practice: A Case in On-line Education; Curriculum Development and Conflict: A Case Study of Moldova, Work-experience and Industrial Links;

- International Tourism Education comprising twelve chapters on, Australasia, Brazil and Latin America, The Caribbean, China, East Africa, Germany, India, The Netherlands, North America, Slovenia, South Africa, United Kingdom; These chapters provide examples of tourism educational development from a variety of countries and perspectives;
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment comprises nine chapters, Teaching, The Student Experience, Issues in Teaching and Learning. This chapter deals with the plight of teachers, whether researchers or not, whose work is becoming more and more interfered with by education policy makers bent on accountability (conformity) and improving the quality of teaching and learning, but who are silent on issues such as - the purposes of education beyond the drive toward economic competitiveness resources; and the necessary resources to achieve the aims. Assessments, Undergraduate Dissertation, Cultural Issues in Learning, e-Learning and e-Assessment, Teaching and Research, Community Education;
- Resources, Progression and Quality comprises five chapters, Teachers – the author of this chapter has identified a tension at the heart of education and more particularly at the heart of tourism education which might be described as the tension between bureaucratic and instrumental policy and tourism education's role as a developer of capacity for a worthwhile life. Learning Resources, the inclusion of this chapter makes the purchase of this book essential. Careers and Employment, is an extensive exploration of the areas of careers and employment highlighting many of the difficulties of definition and accounting for the variety of career options. Quality Assurance, is an excellent exposition of the Quality Assurance system in the UK and required reading for those interested in developing the subject;
- Postgraduate and Ph.D Education. This chapter is a must read for all interested in or engaged with postgraduate and doctoral education. It is well presented, thoughtful and critical. It is a pity that so little attention was given to the potential for Prof.D (Tourism)., as well as that of the PhD;
- Postscript. comprising two chapters, Practical Issues for Design, Delivery, Evaluation and Resourcing of Courses, is the closest the text has come to actually being a handbook and Issues for the Future. In this latter chapter much too much attention is given to a review of the previous chapters already experienced by the reader. The issues raised are cursory and tend to avoid predicting future educational

research needs. New subject disciplines such as tourism are always threatened by sets of antagonisms consisting of competing interest groups and historical agents, the struggle for a tourism curriculum is never-ending. This struggle is a human struggle and the outcome is profoundly implicated in who we become through our choice of the alternatives available to us. Curricula are not simply discourses that produce subjectivities, they also serve as textual economies that reproduce not only our dreams and visions for a better world, but also, acknowledge our limitations in achieving these dreams.

Clearly, in this text there is something here for everyone with an interest in tourism higher education and it is both possible and desirable to dip in wherever suits. This text provides an opportunity for Airey and Tribe to gather up base-data on tourism education that every person purporting to call him/herself a teacher, lecturer, educator or researcher in tourism or hospitality should make their own and read regularly. But be warned, it is not the only text that should be read by those seeking to become tourism teachers, lecturers, researchers or educators.

Globally, tourism research, education and the societies of which it is part are confronting the most profound changes, the like of which have not been seen for more than a century. The forms of tourism education that were designed in the 1960s and 70s in an age of a dominant manufacturing industry are under challenge and fading as we move into a world of knowledge-based high technology, flexible, intelligent and culturally diverse workforces, downsized administrations and declining resources per student. What is to follow is both uncertain and unclear and the different directions of change in tourism education are likely to remain contested.

## **Joseph Hegarty**

**Joseph Hegarty** (joseph.hegarty@ireland.com) is International Consultant in Hospitality & Tourism Education, Daars, Sallins, Co Kildare, Ireland.