

Tourism Education Futures - 2010-2030
Building the Capacity to Lead

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an initiative to examine the future of tourism education into the years 2010 – 2030. A group of forty-five senior tourism educators and industry experts came together for a Summit at Modul University, Vienna, Austria to discuss how tourism education needs to adapt to significant societal and industry changes. The theme of the Summit was how to build the capacity for tourism students to lead the industry into the future as it faces increasing pressures for responsibility and stewardship. This paper discusses the pre-summit and summit processes and their outcomes, and explains future plans for this Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI). Among other outcomes was a listing of values that could create the foundation for future tourism education programs, and also five categories of skills that participants felt would be important for students of the future to master. These are: destination stewardship skills, political and ethical skills, enhanced human resource skills and dynamic business skills.

Keywords: futures, education, tourism, skills, stewardship, leadership, TEFI, BEST Education Network

'... for business leaders to succeed in the global economy will require new kinds of management processes and analytical frameworks. Their decision rules will need to be more rigorous and open to a wider set of measures and realities than in the past. The old decision rules and assumptions won't do. In fact a new definition of rigor is needed'. Samuelson 2006

'Logical and precise, left-brain thinking gave us the Information-Age. Now comes the Conceptual-Age - ruled by artistry, empathy, and emotion.' Pink 2005

Introduction

The world is experiencing seismic changes. We know what they are, and we know they are happening with increasing frequency. Society and tourism are being shaken by these external shocks and need to adjust to the impacts and prepare to act, think, and plan differently. Students who enter this uncertain world and in particular, the fragile and vulnerable tourism sector, need different skills, aptitudes and knowledge, implying that educational systems need to change radically to meet this need (Wallis and Steptoe, 2006). Tourism educational programs need to fundamentally re-tool and re-design – not incrementally by adding new courses – or simply by putting courses on-line - but by changing the nature of what is taught and how it is taught. Skills and knowledge sets must be redefined, structures and assumptions need to be questioned, and old ways of doing things must be transcended. Tourism employment in the coming decades will have a very different profile than it does today. For example, the key jobs in 2015 may not even exist today and much of what we teach our students is obsolete by the time they graduate. These pressures and the increasing need for responsible stewardship of tourism call out for a new paradigm for values-based tourism education.

Tourism Education Futures Summit

In an attempt to address these issues, five sponsoring universities (Temple University and University of Hawaii, USA, The University of Queensland, Australia,

Bocconi University, Italy, and Modul University, Austria) invited experienced educators and industry to meet to discuss recommendations for a framework for a new tourism curriculum 2010-2030. Specifically they came together with the following intention:

To understand the changing environment that future students of tourism and hospitality will enter upon graduation. To identify the values, knowledge, and capabilities that graduates will need to lead positively, responsibly and effectively. Time frame for discussions: 2010 – 2030.

This initiative began with a Summit in April 2007 at Modul University in Vienna, Austria which was attended by 48 academics and industry members from 13 countries. Many of those in attendance were at the top of their careers and brought a wealth of experience and forethought to the discussions. Prior to the meeting, participants were sent readings to inform and focus their thinking process. These readings (Coles et al 2006, Pink 2005, Samuelson 2006, and Wallis and Steptoe 2006 listed in the references) were mostly chosen in the general field of education rather than in tourism. About two months prior to the Summit, the participants were also surveyed regarding their perceptions of skills and knowledge sets that graduates of the future would need. The questions posed to them were:

1. Please identify and explain the **four key issues** that you feel will most dramatically change the world of tourism in the period 2010 – 2030.
2. Please identify and explain the **four key capabilities and knowledge areas** that graduates (undergraduate and master's students) entering the world of the future will need to acquire in their education.
3. Please identify and explain the **four key capabilities and knowledge areas** that graduates entering the world of the future will need but do not currently acquire in their education.

The Summit meeting began with a presentation by a futurist (Jim Dator) who laid the foundation for futures studies; he stressed the importance of considering different futures and creating the most preferable one. He identified the main threats or tsunamis

that we need to be aware of as we project ourselves into 2030. They are demographic, environmental, technological, economic, cultural and governmental in nature. His detailed talk on each of these megatrends can be played on www.tourismeducationsummit.com. This was followed by a tourism-specific presentation on “Implications of Global Megatrends for Tourism” by the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (ST CRC) in Australia (presented by Chris Cooper) (Dwyer, L. et al, 2007). Many of the identified trends reflected those addressed by Dator. The main ones were social (e.g. age complexity, urbanization, feminization of workforce), political (e.g. safety and security, immigration issues), environmental and resources (e.g. climate change, land use changes) and technical (e.g. increasing importance of knowledge, continued fast pace of technological development).

The next presentation by Gerry Fernandez highlighted the expected increases in social diversity in the future. The demographic shifts occurring in ethnicity, age, family status, religion, gender, sexual orientation etc. will change the nature of the work force and the traveler by 2030. He explained how knowledge on diversity will become a competitive advantage and how leadership in the future will need to be more culturally competent.

Scott Meis developed the work force trends further and gave a human resource view of tourism considering education, labor and jobs in tourism. He shared many results of statistical analysis and forecasting of the tourism labor market in Canada. The slide presentations of all the presenters are available on www.tourismeducationsummit.com.

To start the hard work of the Summit and to break the participants' comfort zones, Jim Dator presented five different geo-political, social and environmental scenarios for the delegates' consideration as they envisioned tourism in 2030. Part of the first day was spent in small groups working with these five possible futures and their impact on tourism.

The second day began by focusing on creating a set of values upon which future tourism education systems should be based. The values that emerged from participants' discussions are as follows:

- *Managing/celebrating cultural diversity*
- *Pluralism*
- *Ethics*
- *Experiential learning*
- *Valuing people*
- *People's multi-faceted capabilities*
- *Creativity, innovation and ideas*
- *Emotional intelligence*
- *Self-actualization*
- *Inclusion*
- *Respect for education*
- *Value critical thinking*
- *Value knowledge and complexity*
- *Value of arts, sciences and fundamental disciplines*
- *Openness*
- *Optimism*
- *Gender equity*
- *Educational diversity*
- *Instrumental education*
- *Good citizenship*

The final step of the Summit considered how program structures, curriculum design, interactions between faculty, students and industry should shift based on the previous sessions which had envisioned the future. This last step did not progress as far or as smoothly as the organizers had hoped. It was clear that more time was needed and more work needed to put in.

Despite this sense of incompleteness, the Summit ended with a sense that progress had been made and the futures thinking had begun. Many participants stated that they

would take the findings of the Summit home to their institutions and implement futures studies in their tourism programs (see the website for these comments). The intended – and rather optimistic goal of drafting a White Paper to provide a framework for the future of tourism education was not achieved. The Summit therefore, rather than being a stand-alone event with an outcome, became an initial step in what is now realized needs to be a necessarily longer process taking two to three years to complete.

Survey Results

One of the richest outcomes of the Summit was the participants' responses to the pre-Summit survey. The full responses are on the website, however a consolidation of the comments is worth reporting here to guide future activities. It is hoped that it will be useful to tourism educators in general as they think through their own curricula. The responses of sixteen participants were summarized and the following four categories emerged:

Destination Stewardship Skills

- Management of real and virtual networks
- Knowledge sharing skills
- Ability to respect and work with all stakeholders
- Managing complex adaptive systems
- Environmental management skills

Political and Ethical Skills

- Ethical behavior: demonstration and motivation
- Integration of basic human values into the workplace
- Lobbying and the ability to influence the political process

Enhanced Human Resource Skills

- Team building
- Effective listening and negotiation
- Motivation and leadership
- Working with distributed, virtual project teams
- Emotional intelligence

Dynamic Business Skills

- Flexibility
- Multi-tasking
- Critical thinking
- Optimal use of common sense
- Innovation/entrepreneurship
- Communication skills using new multi-media technologies
- Cross-cultural competencies
- Risk identification, estimation and control
- Avoiding problems rather than solving them

Summary and Next Steps

All the activities of the Summit (including keynote speeches, scenarios, pre-summit survey responses, readings etc.) can be found on the website

www.tourismeducationsummit.com. The sponsoring universities of the Summit consider it vitally important to continue this initiative and the work that began in Vienna. To do this, it was felt that the initiative needed both a **name** and an **organizational home**. The initiative will now be called Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI) and is now incorporated into the BEST Education Network whose mission fits with the intent of the initiative:

The BEST Education Network (BEST EN) is an international consortium of educators committed to furthering the development and dissemination of knowledge in the field of sustainable tourism (www.besteducationnetwork.org).

The goal of TEFI remains to create a framework for a values-based tourism curriculum that will be relevant and effective in creating responsible leaders for tourism in the coming decades. At the BESTEN Think Tank in Flagstaff, Arizona June 2007, various members of the Summit met to determine future steps in the initiative. Others who could not be present were also asked for their opinions on next steps. The next steps are well under way and are as follows:

1. A small task force consisting of Dan Fesenmaier, Pauline Sheldon, Chris Cooper, Leo Jago, Sue Beeton, Janne Liburd and John Tribe has been formed to guide the progress of the initiative.
2. This report summarizing the progress to date will be circulated to all Summit participants to inform them of the next steps.
3. Two team members will research in depth the latest thinking, concepts, ideas from the field of education regarding futures.
4. One team member will research in depth the futures literature to ensure that all possible future trends and impacts are included in the initiative.
5. The core task force met in October 2007 to discuss the findings and the next steps.
6. One university has offered to be a pilot for the recommendations that emerge.
7. BEST EN will give an award for Innovative Tourism Education Programs.
8. Input from an Austrian graduate student's thesis will inform the process.
9. A second Summit is planned at the University of Hawaii, School of Travel Industry Management April 11-14th., 2008 with the participants of the first

Summit. This summit will be titled: “Towards a Values-Based Tourism Education Program.

10. A final Summit in 2009 will complete the work and the White Paper on a Future Curriculum for Tourism Education will be released by the end of 2009. The location of this summit is not yet determined.

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