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# The Future of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Teaching and Training

## Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which teaching and training in tourism, hospitality and events have evolved and adapted to the contemporary demands of academia and industry. It explores the development of education in tourism, hospitality and events, the contemporary factors which influence teaching and learning, and discusses the rise of Massive Open Online Courses with a particular focus on their potential application within tourism, hospitality and events curriculum. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of Open Badges and their importance in education.

At the time of writing, the world has been confronted by the Covid-19 global pandemic which has caused great disruption at all levels. The impact of Covid-19 is briefly addressed in this chapter as the enforcement of social distancing measures has led to a significant increase globally in online education.

## Education in tourism, hospitality and events

Tourism, hospitality and events (THE) are service-oriented sectors with a particular set of characteristics that determine the skills and competences required for graduates (Whitelaw *et al.*, 2009). These characteristics include inseparable production and consumption, the nature of guest relationships, labour intensive work, the cultural diversity of both staff and guests, and low barriers of entry to the industry (Whitelaw *et al.*, 2009). As such, skills generally associated with the workforce of these sectors include verbal and written communication skills, ethics, problem solving ability, leadership, critical

thinking and strategic planning (Chapman and Lovell, 2006). At the educational level, curriculum design needs to be structured in a way that allows students to engage with multiple perspectives related to their subject matter, as well as gain the necessary graduate attributes to meet industry demands.

Initially, formal THE education focused on technical or vocational training (Inui *et al.*, 2006). Educational institutions provided training in relation to core competencies mainly related to hospitality and hotel management. Over time, the rapid growth in the demand for THE services generated the need for further diversification in levels of education. Institutions began to offer higher education degrees, including bachelor degrees with a management component and specialisations in particular areas such as Spa Management, Resort Management, and Sustainable Tourism. Higher education institutions have since moved from elite to mass providers of a diverse range of programmes in an attempt to align education with national policy relating to economic and social goals (Airey *et al.*, 2014). In many developed countries this has been achieved by providing accessible pathways for socio-economically disadvantaged groups or more economically viable education rates.

Tourism, hospitality and events undergraduate degrees often combine academic knowledge, vocational skills and competencies with some form of practical experience within the industry, usually through internships or Work Integrated Learning (WIL). However, studies have identified particular disparities between the objectives sought in academic curricula and those vocational skills required for work in the THE sector (Whitelaw *et al.*, 2009; Airey *et al.*, 2014; and Kim and Jeong, 2018). While similar issues exist for tourism, hospitality and events, these programmes have pursued different approaches (Airey *et al.*, 2014). Hospitality and event degrees have included vocational preparedness within the curriculum by providing training at restaurants or by coordinating events respectively. In the case of tourism, there is a greater focus on classroom activities with the inclusion of occasional field trips. The next section provides an analysis on the contemporary changes in THE higher education.

## **Contemporary teaching and learning in THE**

Education in tourism, hospitality and events is currently facing significant challenges due to pressure from the global environment related to the changing needs of the industry, the dynamic nature of student markets and pressures on the academic workforce (Airey *et al.*, 2014). The internationalisation of education has also contributed to increased competition in the recruitment of international students as well as efforts to introduce national and international standards of qualifications.

The increased number of international students is generally perceived as a challenge for higher education institutions because these students have special needs regarding provision of language and social support. However, it should be noted that international students carry a set of experiences that potentially serve to enrich classroom discussions and activities. Kim and Jeong (2018) argue that the internationalisation of education could serve to foster cultural competency, as our diverse global society requires individuals who can positively interact with people from a broad range of social and demographic contexts (Chun and Evans, 2016). This is particularly important considering the diverse workforce and customer base that make up the tourism, hospitality and event sectors.

International programs include those provided by the Tuning Project and the International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE). The Tuning Project has led to the creation of the European Qualifications Framework which connects the qualification structures of participating countries. One outcome includes the standardisation of Bachelor, Master's and Doctoral programs that require institutions to identify the skills and knowledge each degree should deliver in their particular field of study (Dredge *et al.*, 2013). THE-ICE, on the other hand, validates programme accreditations and global quality assurance among a network of 37 higher education institutions (THE-ICE, 2020). At a national level in Australia, the Setting the Standards project has produced a set of nationally agreed upon and clearly articulated threshold learning outcomes (TLOs). These TLOs have been contextualized for THE courses in higher education, setting the minimum standards for any graduate in these programs and providing flexibility for institutions to include additional standards for their cohorts (Whitelaw *et al.*, 2015).

Considering the social impacts related to tourism, hospitality and events, Inui *et al.*, (2006) recommend a more comprehensive curricula inclusive of sociological topics concerning human interaction, social trends, sustainability and changing structures. They conclude this would engender more reflective students capable of critically examining the social responsibilities of these sectors in a range of areas such as poverty alleviation. Similarly, the service encounter component of tourism, hospitality and events would require students to develop attitudinal skills relevant to the context of their work as well as the organisation's strategic objectives and culture (Chapman and Lovell, 2006).

Increasingly, higher education institutions have begun to include experiential learning designed to provide students with a greater level of real-life business contexts (Kim and Jeong, 2018). Delivered as capstone projects, these