Tourism education

Filling the void - education or training

In the tourism field educational and training programmes are proliferating. Professor Gunn of Tourism Planning and Development at Texas A and M University, argues that instead of standardizing these courses educators should encourage the development of more to fill the gaps left by the rapid growth in this complex area. Education and training should be emphasized not as separate issues but as interlinked and integral components in college programmes.

As scholarly interest in tourism increases, the question arises whether there are programmes on the subject. Increasingly in the USA, and throughout the world, new programmes are appearing on topics such as hospitality, hotel, restaurant, travel agency and transportation management as well as commercial recreation, resort recreation, and tourism. As a consequence, many dissimilar as well as similar curricula have developed. While some critics may view this with alarm and seek standardization, the opposite is of greater concern - the need for much greater, more diverse, and higher quality education and training in tourism.

Today’s needs

Because the tourism field in the past has been preoccupied with hotels and marketing, these topics have dominated university and college curricula in tourism. But, as the true breadth of tourism is becoming better known, encompassing a much more complicated array of establishments, activities, policies and development, there does not seem to be an equal response in tourism educational programmes. One could question how well training and education are being offered in the following six categories.

Policy and development

As travel and tourism continue to develop in response to increased social and economic reasons, is the training and education for policy and development adequate? Probably not. Most individuals now engaged in governmental and private agency policymaking that affects tourism probably have had little, if any, formal education in the field. Directors and staffs of physical and economic planning agencies who have great impact on what, where, and how tourism development takes place, are generally deficient in tourism education. Certainly, coursework that provides insight into the many facets of tourism will be increasingly needed for the entire body politic in the future.

Recreation services

Because recreation in its broadest definition is an integral part of most travel and tourism, educational curricula directed toward recreation and leisure services are needed. While recreation programmes have been traditional in many universities, there remain many opportunities for expansion into the resort and travel applications. Indicative has been a number of recent seminars sponsored by the newly formed Resort and Commercial Recreation Association in the eastern USA. The recreational aspect of tourism needs specialized programmes directed toward establishment and operation of group camps, night clubs, casinos, golf courses, game arcades, vacation homes, museums, race tracks, and other services providing recreation, sports and games.

Educational services

In the past, hotel schools depended greatly upon part-time lecturers from industry. This has proven to be less than satisfactory on several counts. Business people are not trained or experienced in the many matters essential to pedagogy, such as teaching units, schedules, and testing. The ability to manage is not necessarily a qualification to teach. Needed today are educational programmes directed toward future educators of tourism. Special training for the many levels of teachers and researchers predictably will be in much greater demand as travel continues to expand. Extension and adult education will be as critical as formal college and university programmes.

Travel organizations

Throughout tourism, many more organizations have been formed in recent years. In the USA, virtually hundreds of business, travel and recreation organizations are now providing special services to members. They are increasingly effective in nationwide development and governmental policy. But, how well are the mana-
gers and staffs of these organizations educated in the field of tourism? As these organizations increase further in numbers and offer increasingly complex programmes, there is great need for education and training in tourism management.

Manufacturers
If ever there was a field demanding product innovation and creativity, it is the field of tourism. Every year it is the new designs and new marketing approaches that add diversity and new horizons for travel and tourism. Thus far, the manufacturers and marketers have been able to draw talent from other fields. Hasn’t the time arrived for special educational curricula for the manufacturers of tourism-related products? Courses in tourist and recreational behaviour and psychographics as well as specialized courses in product development for tourism are needed.

Service businesses
Even though hotel and restaurant schools have been in place for many years, these represent but one small facet of tourism service education and training. Equally important are courses in management and retailing of travel equipment, camping equipment, sports goods, and other travel products. Seldom special attention is given to curricula that include health, safety and law as related to travel and tourism businesses.

Education and training
The brief review of needs listed above begs the issue of whether curricula should be directed toward education or training in tourism. This division is not an academic splitting of hairs; education is not the same as training. While most educators might favour both, universities in recent years have favoured training at a great sacrifice to overall education, as expressed recently in a popular magazine. Today, everyone wants to attend college not necessarily to get an education but often to get a job. In response, colleges have become more career-oriented and have surrendered their academic policies to professional accrediting organizations and the business community.

By bending to the demands of vocationalism and giving students what they want, educators in colleges and universities may be providing training but not an education. This concern was expressed recently by former University of Illinois chancellor Jack Peltason.

We’ve confused the fact that students’ views are of primary importance. They’re not necessarily the best judges of what they need. I think the relationship between students and teachers is that of a professional to client. But we keep talking about students as consumers. Zais, a specialist in curriculum and instruction, makes a clear distinction between education and training. Training is a technical model directed toward specific behavioural changes. In tourism today, many training pro-

rammes directed toward improved skills are available, such as for food production, hotel housekeeping, ticketing airlines, and tour guiding. Education, on the other hand, is not highly structured and is directed toward expanding one’s awareness of human environment and how to cope with this environment rather than the acquisition of skills shown in Figure 1. Not many tourism programmes today, even in universities, have held to this classical view of education.

Without doubt, both training and education in tourism, on an equal level of priority and prestige, are in need today. Leaders in tourism repeatedly declare inadequate personnel to be their paramount problem. Perhaps it is time for administrators at all levels, from grade school through university, to alert themselves to the separate but complementary needs of education and training in the field of tourism and get on with the task.

Objectives
Perhaps educators would view curricula more constructively if programme objectives were clearly stated. There is danger in attempting standardization or adopting ‘model’ curricula without first stating the objectives of a specific school. When the field of tourism is viewed from standpoints of its true breadth and complication, there is need for great diversity of programme objectives from school to school and university to university. Between and within the six categories of need (and many others) – policy and development, recreation services, educational services, travel organizations, manufacturers, and service businesses – it becomes clear that many different curricular objectives can be equally correct and valuable.

But, the process of setting objectives is not easy. Each programme must work within its organizational constraints and the faculty’s image of what is important. As tourism programmes grow world-wide, now may be the time to review objectives and reassess programmes accordingly. Zais identifies three principal domains as important in the setting of curricular objectives.

• The cognitive domain concerns how well a curriculum provides knowledge and comprehension. Without synthesis,rote memory of facts does not provide knowledge.

• The affective domain – attitudes, feelings, and values – generally give educators the most trouble. Usually trained in the philosophy of science and its objectivity, educators often hesitate to work the affective domain into curricula and courses. Yet, if we are honest about it, we must admit that many students’ learning experiences are either assisted or blocked by their attitudes toward environmentalism, equality, race, or wholesome-ness of leisure pursuit.

• Many curricula in recreation utilize well the psychomotor domain – the development of physical skills
Conclusions

This brief examination of tourism curricular issues suggests that too little, rather than too much, is being done. Instead of moves toward standardization, curricular efforts should be directed toward greater response to filling the many voids in this complicated and growing field.

Both training (specific skill development) and education (life understandings) are in need in the tourism field. All levels, from grade schools through technical schools, colleges and universities, need to consider new curricula for enhancement of tourism.

Perhaps most will be accomplished by taking a hard look at objectives. Too often, curricula are borrowed from others or are the result of much patching over many years. If precise objectives for each curriculum for each school are more clearly stated there is little doubt that training and education in this vital field will be improved greatly.

Clare A. Gunn
Professor of Tourism Planning and Development
Recreation and Parks Department
Texas A and M University
College Station, Texas 77843, USA

Notes
1 Portions of this article are taken from "Why curricula in tourism and commercial recreation", to be published in the Hospitality Education and Research Journal.
5 p. 309.

Figure 1. Zais model of the curriculum

Source: Robert Zais, op cit, Ref 4, p. 97.