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An Analytical Framework of Tourism Education in an Era of Complexity and Sustainability: Evidence from Sweden

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Title: An Analytical Framework of Tourism Education in an Era of Complexity and Sustainability: Evidence from Sweden

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Abstract:

There is growing awareness among tourism scholars about the responsibility of tourism education to address the complexity of the modern world and the challenges that arise from it. This is a sign of maturity for tourism education and a trespassing from purely vocational to liberal education which aims to contribute to more reflective practitioners who strive to improve not business alone but the world and the community they are living in (e.g., Dredge et al., 2012; Inui, 2006; Jamal et al., 2011; Tribe, 2002).

Jamal, Taillon, and Dredge (2011) based their *sustainability practitioner* on the *philosophic practitioner* discussed by Tribe (2002) and argued for a Sustainable Tourism Pedagogy (STP). STP needs to be practical and action-oriented in addressing real world environmental and social issues, rather than only theoretical. At the same time, STP needs to integrate practical wisdom through the Aristotelean perspective of the *good life*. Nevertheless, very little change can be noticed in tourism education curricula. Research, together with education, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, has developed around business schools addressing the challenges of hospitality and tourism as an industry. In spite of a number of programmes related to sustainable tourism and scholarly works which seek to analyse and provide a theoretical contribution and a framework for analysis for relevant curricula, a gap may be noticed between theory and practice in the development of sustainable tourism pedagogy (Jamal et al., 2011), wherein very little is known about tourism education outside the Anglo-Saxon world.

In parallel to the developments in tourism education, debates in pedagogy have discussed the role of education for citizenship. In this discourse, education must prepare “citizens of a complex and interlocking world” (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 292), and universities should thus integrate into their curricula a segment of education for citizenship. It is argued here that these two frameworks (i.e. Sustainable Tourism Pedagogy and Education for Citizenship) could inform each other to provide an operational analytical framework for tourism education in the era of complexity and sustainability. Indeed, tourism education could benefit from this discourse to define and position itself in the pedagogy discourse to address future challenges. Connection with the industry is as important as the ability of the graduates to extend reflection and action beyond the tourism industry. Education for sustainable tourism thus should be seen as a liberal education for sustainable development rather than a merely sectoral one. Examining sustainable tourism in a holistic, complex, adaptive approach allows tourism to be examined in its wider context and could facilitate the evolution of tourism education as education for citizenship. The aim of this research is to reconcile the two frameworks into an operational one for guidance in the development and in the evaluation of programmes and courses. An analytical framework for tourism curricula is developed here, and empirical data are collected from Master of Tourism programmes in Sweden and content analysed to examine their progress, in terms of a Pedagogy for Sustainable Tourism. This is a work in progress, and results are expected to contribute to the evolution and operationalisation and of tourism education for sustainability.

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