

GOAL 4: QUALITY EDUCATION



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ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

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ABSTRACT: *The potential for tourism to be a primary vehicle for job creation, economic regeneration and sustainable development is a well-traversed argument. However, tourism's potential to advance education and to enhance human capital amongst local populations remains largely underestimated by governments, politicians, policymakers and international development agencies. Its development is often left to the initiative of the private sector resulting in a naïve race towards building accommodation establishments. Tourism development master plans usually focus on property development rather than enhancement of human capital that is required to make the sector sustainable.*

INTRODUCTION

Goal 4 aims to ensure that all people have access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. This Goal focuses on the acquisition of foundational and higher-order skills at all stages of education and development; greater and more equitable access to quality education at all levels, as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET); and the knowledge, skills and values needed to function well and contribute to society." (UN, 2016)

The potential for tourism to be a primary vehicle for job creation, economic regeneration and sustainable development is a well-traversed argument (e.g. De Kadt, 1979; Christie et al, 2013; Worldbank, 2011). However, despite claims about its size – “one of the world’s largest industries, supporting 284 million jobs and generating 9.8 percent of global GDP” (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2016), and its socio-economic value, tourism’s potential, with a few exceptions, remains underestimated by governments, politicians, policymakers (OECD, 2016) and international development agencies. Its development is often left to the initiative of the private sector. Unfortunately, the response to the promising potential of tourism consists, in many instances, of a naïve race towards building accommodation establishments. In anticipation of the favourable business environment

that the implementation of tourism development master plans would bring there is a focus on property development rather than enhancement of human capital that is required to make the sector sustainable.

Tourism offers significant opportunities for several destinations around the world to move up the value chain. Sustainable development can be achieved through fostering growth and development based upon many advantages including price competitiveness, and strong and rich natural and cultural resources. However, evidence shows that a number of obstacles remain to improving their competitiveness, notably improving safety and security, upgrading health and hygiene levels, developing various forms of infrastructure, and importantly fostering the human capital (Novelli, 2016).

Human capital can be defined as the set of competences, knowledge and personality attributes gained through education and experiences, that enable an individual to develop the values needed to function well and positively contribute to society. Workforce development is considered as one of the most important government tourism policy interventions, as ultimately, the sector rests on the capacity and capability of its people to support it through knowledge and skills. As a holistic concept, workforce development includes: coordination of public and private sector policies, plans and programmes; human resources management; capacity building to align current and future needs with demands; organisational performance and accountability (Hawkins et al, 2010).

Addressing knowledge gaps and training needs through adequate primary, secondary and tertiary education, knowledge exchange, capacity building and workforce development actions are therefore key. The aim is to increase core technical and vocational education and training, and lifelong learning and development of skills which will help to achieve the full social, economic and cultural potential of the tourism sector. In addition, this will set tourism on the right path to ensure its maximum contribution through more equitable access to natural resources, economic growth, national progress and a destinations' global competitiveness all under the umbrella of sustainable development.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

The complex and multi-disciplinary nature of tourism, as well as the multi-dimensional barriers that prevent its sustainable growth remain strongly linked to inconsistent levels of knowledge, skills and capacity of those that are directly or indirectly involved in the sector.

Tourism training has for years been characterised by the oversupply of uncoordinated and inadequate provision across both the public and private sectors. Although on the way to improvement, evidence from well-established destinations, such as The Gambia and Kenya has identified a number of deficiencies. This is all compounded by the fact that the curricula were not standardised, therefore affecting the quality of tourism vocational education at national level (Mayaka and Akama, 2007).

Regarded as a seasonal and low paid sector made up of many small providers with limited resources, identifying and providing the right level of training remains a challenging task. Furthermore, roles within tourism and hospitality are generally regarded as inferior. They are not viewed as an opportunity with a career path, but rather a short-term job prospect and used as a stepping stone into other better paid service sectors' organisations such as banking or retailing.

TANGIBLE WAYS FORWARD

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), “a well-trained and skilful workforce is crucial for tourism to prosper. The sector can provide incentives to invest in education and vocational training and assist labour mobility through cross-border agreements on qualifications, standards and certifications. In particular youth, women, senior citizens, indigenous peoples and those with special needs should benefit through educational means, where tourism has the potential to promote inclusiveness, the values of a culture of tolerance, peace and non-violence, and all aspects of global exchange and citizenship” (UNWTO, 2015).

Quality primary, secondary and tertiary education should include a set of multifaceted programmes and initiatives, which creatively span across all the SDGs. In addition, the academic curricula should foster awareness and engagement with the pillars of sustainable development – people, places and progress. Workforce development systems can be conceived at national, regional or sector specific level (Hawkins et al, 2010) and can be embedded within each stage of the educational system – from primary, to secondary and tertiary level.

Primary and secondary education

Educating children and young learners about tourism is increasingly important for numerous reasons. It provides the opportunity to expose them to both positive (i.e. income generated through tourism enables their parents to pay their school fees, feed them adequately, buy them toys or nice clothes) and negative effects (i.e. cultural commodification, loss of traditions, child/youth sex exploitation) of tourism. This is important to not only enable them to distinguish bad from good at an early stage of their education, but also to recognise the direct impact tourism has on their lives.

Tourism can also be a vehicle to enhance children and youth awareness about the natural environment within which they live. Appreciating indigenous wildlife, children and youth may become better equipped to grasp the importance of conserving certain species. Initiatives aimed at preserving the environment could become a vector and a catalyst to engage children in issues such as climate change and practicing sustainable living. In a similar vein education on heritage and understanding the cultural components of tourism can be used as a stimulus for their appreciation and engagement of their heritage and culture and provide opportunities for its celebration and preservation.

Tertiary education and vocational training

This should ideally adopt a partnership approach in creating competitive clusters to ensure that the necessary skills are developed to meet current job requirements and respond to possible future changes in the tourism market place. Importantly, they ‘should be considered as an investment, not simply as a cost’. Recently, the importance of training at every level of the tourism value chain, from community-based projects to large chain-operated enterprises (Dosswell, 2000; Christie et al, 2013) has been linked to the ‘concept of community capacity building [which] is regarded as the ability of people and communities to do works associated with the determinant factors and indicators of the circumstances of socio-economic and environmental contexts’ (Aref and Redzuan, 2009). Building the capacity of communities to effectively address problematic issues and planning for tourism development is a necessary ingredient for success. Capacity building programmes help to improve local ability to participate in the tourism decision-making processes and deliver better and locally grounded results.

A successful workforce development strategy should target the entire system of stakeholders and holistically address human resource issues, which go beyond technical and vocational education and training. To achieve the aspiration of an economically productive, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible tourism sector it should span across both the public and private sectors. While entrepreneurial skills and capacity building in tourism are crucial aspects of the sector's functionality and traction, effective governance and leadership are also fundamental to inspire the leaders of tomorrow, inform the thinking of political and business players and ensure sound policy and strategy-making in the future.

Creating new cohorts of experts, teachers and trainers able to transfer their knowledge to future generations of sector specialists on issues such as business management, entrepreneurship, conservation, energy and environment would ensure that tourism works in beneficial partnership with nature, local stakeholders and contributes to a more sustainable future. Quality education and training will shape and enable a better business environment grounded in local business, management and finance skills whereby public and private sectors' employees will become capable of learning from the past, reflecting on the present, building resilience and managing change for the future, without the need of constant external technical assistance and/or funding (Novelli, 2016).

It is not just those involved in the legislation, supply and management of tourism at destination level who have a part to play in education and SDGs. Tourists themselves benefit from being aware of their responsibilities and the opportunities of being change agents whilst they are on holiday. Tour operators, airlines and others involved in the supply chain have an opportunity, and many do, to informally educate tourists and community members through information in their brochures and web sites, videos on the flight, training camps, interaction with their employees and younger generations in the communities affected by tourism, before during and after the visit. Such programmes, often part of a Corporate Social Responsibility agenda, may also be initiated to have a positive impact on the brand image of the organisation, play a role in alerting tourists and host communities to the issues of SDGs, the part they can play and the benefits to be gained.

Sustainable Conservation and Children Leadership Development

Children in the Wilderness is a non-profit organisation supported by ecotourism company Wilderness Safaris to facilitate sustainable conservation through leadership development and education of rural children in Africa. The environmental and life skills educational programme is focusing on the next generation of decision-makers; inspiring them to care for their natural heritage. This is achieved in a variety of ways, from three- to five-day camps, to Eco-Clubs and Follow-up Programmes at schools, within the rural communities that live on the edges of the wild areas of Africa.

<http://www.childreninthewilderness.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nlQKur9Hyo>

Leadership Training for Women in Rwanda

The Akilah Institute opened in Kigali (Rwanda) in January 2010. It offers a unique model of market-relevant education that enables young women to achieve economic independence and obtain leadership roles in both the workplace and society. Many of the students are from rural homes and secondary schools with very basic resources and facilities. Aside from the technical abilities in business, technology and hospitality, leadership development, public speaking, and communication are among the skills that the young women are imparted with. The institute started with only 50 students, one programme and seven staff, but it has since grown to 355 students on campus, 145 graduates in 2015, 88 percent of which launched their careers within six months of graduation, earning nearly twelve times the national median income.

Akilah is poised to create a sustainable and scalable education-to-workforce model for young women across East Africa. It is moving to a competency-based education model, delivered in both online and offline formats. The new model will allow it to reduce the cost to serve and scale the number of women in the programme. Akilah is currently in its 7th year of operations. By 2024, Akilah's ambition is to operate as a profitable social enterprise funded by student tuitions and reach one million African female students and professionals through online course modules and enrol at least 40,000 women across a network of eight campuses in East Africa by 2030.

<http://www.akilahinstitute.org/>

Peer2Peer International

P2P International, also known as Peer2Peer Capacity Building through Niche Tourism Initiative, is an educational initiative offered at the University of Brighton (UoB). As a result of UoB staff's commitment to activist scholarship, it provides an innovative context-based learning environment to our undergraduate and postgraduate students studying Tourism, Hospitality, Events or Sport in collaboration with sponsored Gambian participants.

P2P International was born out of the collaboration between the UoB, private sectors' operators, such as Sandele Eco-retreat and Learning Centre, with support from organisations such as the Gambia Tourism Board, the Gambia Hotel Association and the Association of Small-scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET). The co-creation of knowledge between 'visitor' and 'host' learners enables the development of transformative travel and tourism that impacts positively not only the 'visitors' and their immediate 'hosts', but also the wider destination, by providing additional ways that benefit local businesses and communities at large.

Since 2007, P2P International has been committed to enhance students' learning and knowledge about sustainable and responsible tourism, hospitality, events and sport for development and related business and management practices.

Innovative fieldwork activities have been facilitated, leading to a unique lifelong learning experience for all parties involved. In 2015 P2P International won the Association of Tourism in Higher Education's (ATHE) Making the Case Award for a Teaching Project for Building Leadership and Management Capacity in the Visitor Economy, sponsored by the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA).

P2P International P2P initiative - links:

<http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/p2pinternationalgambia/welcome/>

Video: <https://youtu.be/qrGs-e4v56c>

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