

PROBLEMS RELATED TO APPROACH TO TOURISM EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Countries attach importance to tourism education in order to promote tourism activities, thus, gaining power in tourism markets. The most crucial indicator of this is starting up new schools offering tourism education. Recently, there have been some arguments on the contents in institutions operating in the field of tourism education and tourism sector. Discussions framed within the context of vocational and technical education remain aloof from constructing a mutual ground in such developing countries as Turkey. In this study, problems related to tourism education and levels of education were taken into account with respect to contents and methodology. This study aims to contribute to those who are into tourism education and in particular to those involved in tourism education planning.

Keywords: tourism, tourism education, vocational tourism education, Turkey.

ÖZET

Turizm Eğitime Yaklaşım Sorunları

Ülkeler, turizm faaliyetlerine etkinlik kazandırabilmek, bölgesel ve ulusal düzeyde turistik rekabet güçlerini arttırabilmek için turizm eğitimine önem vermektedir. Bunun en önemli göstergeleri ise, ülkelerin turizm eğitimi veren kurumlar açmasıdır. Gerek turizm sektöründe ve gerekse turizm eğitimi veren kurumlarda özellikle içerik ve yöntem konusuna ilişkin çeşitli tartışmalar olduğu gözlenmektedir. Mesleki ve teknik eğitim kapsamında ele alınması gereken bu tartışmalar, özellikle Türkiye gibi gelişmekte olan ülkelerde ortak bir zemine oturtulamamıştır ve sık sık eleştirilmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye’de turizm eğitime ilişkin sorunlar; eğitim basamakları, eğitimin içeriği ve yöntemi açısından değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmada değerlendirilen konuların genelde turizm eğitimi ile ilgilenen kişilere, özelde ise turizm eğitimi planlayıcılarına katkı sağlaması hedeflenmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: turizm, turizm eğitimi, mesleki turizm eğitimi, Türkiye.

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have witnessed a surge of questions by both academic critique and educational institutions. The questions have come into the agenda of tourism education in the form of rather “contents” and focused on “what will we teach?” (Singh, 1997; Baum, 1998; Airey & Johnson, 1999; Chung, 2000; Leslie & Richardson, 2000; Eber, 2003; Leslie & Russel, 2006; Hind, 2006; Mayaka & Akama, 2007). Though different aspects of the problems have been put forward in these discussions and studies, compared to the question of “contents”, regarded as of high priority, these aspects do not account for the question comprehensively and they have become doomed to incomprehensible due to their non-educational nature. Questions other than “contents”, sometimes just couldn’t go beyond the explanation of the systems of tourism education (usually in a chronological manner) of the countries involved (Christou, 1999; Okumus & Yagci, 2005; Maclaurin, 2005; Zhang & Fan, 2005; Lo, 2005).

There has been a common belief that the foremost question in tourism education is “contents”. The question has been tried to sort out sometimes by the suggestion that state should not interfere with tourism sector and the sector should be free from state-intervention and sometimes by the tourism sectors should thoroughly be under the governance of Ministry of Tourism. At other times, on the other hand, due to the heterogenic nature of the field, a formation comprised of government officers, scholars, sector representatives, educators and other ad hoc members was thought to be a solution.

No doubt that “content” is of great importance in tourism education. But, the suggestion put forward in the manner of “we should teach this” limits the perception of the in-depth dimensions of the question of “content”. The fore reason for this is the fact that tourism education is a matter of discussion not for educational concerns but because of the developments occurring in the field. In other words, the discussions do not derive from the faults in tourism education and the need for revision because of these faults but developments and changes in the sector. Hence, the problems were perceived as the methodological rather than educational ones. Besides, the pedagogical aspects of the problem were not even taken into account. As a result, several problems stemming from the fact that teachers do not know what to do during the 40-50 minute-course and

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course books have been prepared in accordance with the curriculum framed within certain variables have been left unsolved.

It is interesting that, in the field of tourism education, Ministry of National Education and universities have not acted in the initiative of Ministry of Culture and Tourism; as for the academia, practitioners have not attached themselves to academicians in such fields as management and economics. One of the reasons why the discussions pertaining to tourism education is closely dependent on the question of “content” is the matter of “over-devotion”. The stringent keenness on the “content” has led to no suggestion in a fashion to satisfy some scholars in the field of tourism education and the only suggestion put forward was the integration of the curriculum of economics and management into the field. Tourism education has, so far, been dealt with in the context of sector-oriented framework both in terms of outcomes and in content. Unfortunately, this has not been performed, as mentioned before, within its own structure but rather in a prescribed manner imposed by the sector.

The above explanations generally give the impression that the on-going arguments in this field are not held within the framework of a particular “method”. Moreover, with respect to teaching, the field suffers from the lack of a method that would lead the way for concerns about why the given problems occur and what the basic framework for the hypotheses to be elaborated should be. However, especially in social sciences how a question is put forth, the quality of the question or a different suggestion for the classification of a question can also alter the quality of solutions. Thus, when an argument about tourism education is concerned, it is crucial that an argumentation method be defined first.

Another reason for the one dimensional arguments with respect to the instruction in this field is the partial methodological approach to how the structure of tourism education and concerns about it are put forth.

A HISTORY OF TOURISM EDUCATION IN TURKEY

In order to approach the tourism education with a certain sound method, one should first identify the historical process that the field has gone through and the situation today. The activities related to tourism education in Turkey was initiated as part of a “planned development period”, which mainly started in 1963 and which was first administered in 5-year terms and then was switched to 7-year terms as administered today. However, the first endeavors in the field date back to earlier periods. While no regulations concerning tourism education and instruction were available until 1890, the Ottoman State promulgated the “Regulation number 190 of the Personal Translators of Voyagers” in October 29, 1890. (Ünlüönen, 1993). Non-Moslems, who spoke some foreign language worked as private and freelance translators. In Republic period, “Decree, number 1730 of the Personal Tranlators of Voyagers” was put into effect in 1925 and implementing regulation was published accordingly. Owing to the fact that the municipalities in charge of this regulation did not maintain the law, the regulation did not work as intended. From this period on, The Touring and Automobile Association of Turkey has played an important role in the training of tourist guides and in the preparation and publication of literature related to tourism education and instruction.

Regular tourism education in Turkey continued with Ankara and İzmir Vocational High Schools for Trade offering vocational training courses for tourism and some tourism associations offering translator/ tourist guide training courses. Vocational courses for tourist guides were also opened in İstanbul in 1955 and in İzmir in 1960. In addition to these, the foundation of tourism departments as a specialization branch and the foundation of Ankara Tourism and Hotel Management School in the 1961-62 education year in accordance with the Law 7334 of Economic and Commercial Sciences Academies are improvements realized in the preparation stage of the planned period.

Again within “The Planned Development Period”, “hotel management” schools were founded in İstanbul in the 1967-68 education year and in Kuşadası in the 1975-76 education year and the name of these schools were changed as “Vocational High School for Tourism and Hotel Management” in 1975. The instruction in these schools broke down into branches as “reception”, “service” and “kitchen” in the 1975-76 education year; as “reception”, “service” “kitchen” and “housekeeping” in the 1987-88 education year and as “reception”, “service” “kitchen”, “housekeeping” and “travel agency” in the 1993-94 education year. From the 2005-2006 education year on, the general structure of these schools have been altered more and some basic fields have been defined (catering services, accommodation and travel services, entertainment services); then, these basic fields have been divided into various sub branches. As of 2006-2007 education year, a total of 23.376 students have been enrolled in 88 Anatolian Vocational High Shool for Tourism and Hotel Management. (MEB, 2007).

As for higher education, tourism education was initially offered in Ankara Higher Teacher Training School of Trade and Tourism, which was founded with the tourism branch being incorporated as a new de-

partment into Ankara Higher Teacher Training School as per the 1965-66 education year. From that time on, tourism education units as pre-bachelor's and bachelor's degrees were founded; within Ege University in 1969, within Hacettepe University in 1974, within Bursa Economic and Commercial Sciences Academy in 1975, within Adana Economic and Commercial Sciences Academy in 1980 and within Erciyes University in 1982.

The number these schools have increased in time; their names have changed and they have thousands of graduates.

According to higher education programs and quotas manual, within the various faculty and colleges of higher education institutions in Turkey there are 35 tourism programs offering a four-year degree under various titles such as "tourism and hotel administration", "tourism and tourism guidance", "catering management", "accommodation management", "travel agency management", "tourism management", "tourism and hotel management", "teacher training in accommodation management" and "teacher training in travel management and tourism guidance". When second education programs and the programs in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are considered, the number reaches to 51. According to the same manual, in Turkey, there are 135 programs offering a two-year degree in tourism within various units of higher education institutions under titles such as "tourism and hotel administration", "tourism and travel management" and when second education programs and the programs in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are considered, the number reaches to 164 (OSYM, 2007).

Recently, vocational tourism education in Turkey is administered in two ways at formal and non-formal levels. The formal tourism education is given in secondary schools and higher education institutions and the non-formal education is administered by different government institutions and by private or civil organizations as well as formal tourism education institutions (Table 1).

Table 1: The Panorama of Tourism Education in Turkey

TOURISM EDUCATION		
FORMAL TOURISM EDUCATION		NON-FORMAL EDUCATION in TOURISM
Affiliated with Ministry of National Education	Affiliated with the Council of Higher Education	Various Institutions
Anatolian Vocational High Schools for Trade	Associate Degree (MYO)	MEB (TUREM, ÇEM) Ministry of Culture and Tourism İŞKUR
Anatolian Vocational High Schools for Hotel Management and Tourism	Undergraduate	Professional Organisations (TOBB) OEF (Distance education)
Anatolian Vocational High Schools	Graduate	Civil Organisations (TUGEV) universities (Certificate Programs) Municipalities
Private Vocational Secondary Education Institutions		Unions (TOLEYİS) Private Education Institutions (Courses) Public Education Centers Business Enterprises (In-service Training) Other

WHO SHOULD DELIVER TOURISM EDUCATION?

It has been stated that the problems concerning the tourism education and instruction activities are also essentially related to the arguments about methodology in tourism education and instruction. Sectoral tourism, born out of a reasonably obvious breaking point in the world (Industrial Revolution), is an extension of numerous radical sociocultural, socioeconomic and political diversifications and in this respect; it constitutes grounds for many hot debates.

How should tourism be considered? As an application field, a ground for academic research or a function of economy? Without doubt, tourism is an integrated body covering all of these and even more. Neverthe-

less, when benefiting from the tourism arguments so as to teach tourism to people of different ages through a certain content and approach is at stake, it may not be that easy to draw conclusions through simple reasoning. So far as it is concerned, if considered based on academic research, most of the people who receive tourism education are desired to be, first of all, intellectual individuals and eventually to become intermediary manpower in the sector. Nevertheless, when administered for the sake of this desire, it is rather obscure “what for and how” tourism education functions, for all the three forms mentioned above possess their own content and methods. Moreover, not only does each form has supporters from various professional bodies and interest groups, but they have a great many of addressees of different views of the world and different expectations as well.

People from all sections of the society, from all social classes and status are somehow involved in tourism at every stage of their lives and their conception of the field varies according to the attribute of the function they cast upon tourism depending on their social, professional and ideological peculiarities and this also applies to people who receive tourism education (Woods, 1992). The attribute of the attitudes towards tourism affect students’ expectations in these courses. These effects prevent tourism education from being based on a common principle especially when higher education is concerned.

Notwithstanding the fact that tourism education and instruction activities pertain to a great many of disciplines in many aspects in terms of its technical features, professional supervisors should be involved, too. It is almost unlikely that academicians, politicians or professionals from different fields to be academically dealing with what kind of behaviour disorders people receiving tourism education may develop when the anticipated expectations are not lived up to. In this respect, it can be concluded that tourism education and instruction should be handled by tourism educators experienced in the sector owing to the fact that they are acquainted with both sectoral and pedagogical aspects of the field.

THE LEVELS OF TOURISM EDUCATION

On the whole, the problems in tourism education arise in similar ways to all other educational categories or it is believed so. The low rate of the fulfillment of the course objectives of vocational tourism courses is mostly treated under such titles as the course book, the content and the efficiency of the instructor. This applies to all phases of the education process. Seeing that tourism education in Turkey is offered at secondary school and higher education levels, it is rather remarkable to run up against the same type of problems at all stages. If similar even the same line of problems arises at different levels, then, there is a misleading notion in defining the problems or levels. However, when the fact that in higher education in Turkey, be it a two- year or a four- year degree, the same content is processed through the same method, technique and similar material is taken into consideration, the oddity that the same problems are experienced at different levels can be demystified.

What should be done in this case is to define the levels of tourism education, the attributes of these levels and the possible expectations in parallel with these attributes. Nevertheless, such an approach has not been adopted so far and to a great extent, the structure and problems of this field have persistently been discussed at higher education level. To discuss tourism education on higher education basis is preferable by university instructors since it also provides them with the opportunity to discuss about the system they are involved in. Quite evidently, owing to the fact that handling tourism education issues with their economic, soci-cultural and political aspects adds intellectual stimulation to discussions, the evaluations so far has been predominantly focused on tourism higher education.

When the fact that education, as a whole, is forming sustainable attitude and behavioural patterns in individuals and internationally these patterns are evaluated and applied in respect to social and natural sciences is taken into account, the second-rate place of tourism education in today’s education curricula at all stages of education process becomes apparent. The common belief about tourism education is that students “somehow” start secondary and higher education preoccupied with certain cliché judgements and that tourism courses do not function more than merely reinforcing what is already known (Avcı & Boylu, 2006). The fundamental reasons underlying these judgements could be the family and the close environment.

Tourism course books, prepared with commercial and career oriented considerations more than aiming at forming “attitude and values” (Kavanaugh & Ninemeier, 2001), the preliminary conditions of desired sustainable behavioral patterns, make the field profoundly appealing. However, it is not that easy to satisfy the expectations of the students who have not acquired the necessary attitude and behavioral patterns of tourism education and who have not formed behavioral changes accordingly.

Tourism education at primary schools should be well adapted for the purpose of developing positive behavioral patterns and attitude towards tourism in students. Nevertheless, at primary level, tourism issues have become an expansion of “social sciences” mosaic rather than fulfilling its actual function. Anyway, the

primary level students simply do not need “tourism” knowledge; besides, they are not of the physical and mental maturity required for the field, yet.

It would be appropriate if tourism issues, which should be considered as part of social sciences, were given in such a way so as to develop behavioral patterns related to students’ close environment and positive attitude and values in accordance with the objectives and structure of tourism courses. However, the present rationale for tourism subjects at different levels of primary education is not very much different from that of secondary and higher education. It seems that tourism education at primary education level is attributed only to providing knowledge, while tourism education should predominantly concentrate on “acquiring sustainable behaviours, attitude and values” at primary school level. Thus, determining positive or negative behaviors is passed into the hands of families and environment, which is unknown and uncontrollable.

After particularizing that tourism education at primary education level should be provided adopting an attitude, value and sustainable behavior acquisition oriented approach, a different approach can be sought for secondary education level. It is impossible that teaching of any field be administered in the same way at all stages of the education process. Owing to students’ age and development peculiarities, objectives and functions of education institutions and also dissimilar treatment of subject matters according to levels, it can be concluded that tourism education should be “fact and concept” oriented at different levels. The secondary education stage, when students are mature enough to acquire and process knowledge, is the stage at which information is merely perceived (Bacanli, 2001). Therefore, it is of great significance that tourism education at secondary education stage be adjusted in a way so as to develop supplementary analytical thinking skills in students who possess positive attitudes. As it is understood, the “knowledge” dimension of tourism education is tried to be accentuated.

After accentuating the knowledge dimension of tourism education at secondary education stage, we can talk of specialization - education at two-year degree level because it is after secondary education stage that a student can assert an opinion about “what, how, why” of his/her desires. It is a well known fact that in Turkey owing to the problems or distortion in education system and student incompetencies, students who cannot get a position in a four-year degree program take their chances on two-year degree programs or vocational courses. Although we do not have a sound opinion about the content, quality and sufficiency of the educational facilities in short-term vocational courses, there is little evidence from relevant authorities that they function properly.

In addition to the problems in primary and secondary education stages, in pre-bachelor’s degree tourism programs the content is similar to that of bachelor’s degree tourism programs to a great extent. This results in a very much different way than expected from a two-year degree program. They could be better off if students attending a two-year degree are given the chance to gain an intensive practical experience opportunity, considering their specialization factor in certain branches (service, housekeeping, front office, transfer agent etc.). If the process of such a training method do not last more than two years, including the language preparation program, a two-year degree tourism education can be more practicable and functional.

After stating the significance of “specialization” factor in tourism education at a two-year degree program level, we can discuss about whether or not a four-year tourism education is necessary. As mentioned before, it is well known that tourism, which is affected by many disciplines such as economics and administration in social sciences, is instructed at four-year degree level with considerations of these arguments. What is expected from a student attending a four-year degree program is that he or she can gain methodological thinking skills and that he or she can form and posit different opinions and proposals by identifying cause and effect relations between concepts. What is expected from a student attending a four-year degree tourism education program is to become a qualified manager in this field gaining a good command of almost all subfields of tourism. In this respect, it should be made crystal clear whether four-year degree tourism education institutions are necessary or not. It should be negotiated en bloc that tourism higher education programs are completely incorporated into the administration faculties.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

It should be discerned that problems in tourism education and instruction cannot be eliminated without concluding the arguments about “methodology, objectivity and scientific thinking” in tourism. Similarly, the border line for the principles of tourism education and the expectations from sectoral tourism and its role has not been determined, yet. However, questioning the present situation in this or some other ways can provide a common agreement and understanding basis for tourism education and instruction. Tourism education should be negotiated considering all the steps of the education process. Not designing the tourism courses in primary,

secondary and higher education in accordance with the peculiarities of each step means to violate the principle that “teaching should be learner centered”.

It is crucial that the teaching of such a discipline as tourism, related to a great many economic, sociocultural and political structures, should be analysed by adopting a viable method. As far as the present situation is concerned, the only alternative to this monotony of teaching with the same content, the same objectives and the same methods at all levels is that some teachers and instructors make a change by their individual and professional differences. This, too, stands as mere evidence for the unplanned education in this field and that these individual differences are put forth in negotiations about the problems of the discipline indicates that the negotiations also suffer from a lack of method.

In order to prevent current problems of tourism education, it should be paid special attention in providing the concepts with different figures and statements, in a manner suitable to students’ cognitive abilities, in offering secondary, pre-bachelor and undergraduate education and similar and different aspects of educational levels should be discerned. It is an undeniable fact that there are extreme similarities in the contents of secondary, pre-bachelor and undergraduate education. Furthermore, students should not be made to gain the same skills, for in the field, it is expected that employees with education of different levels should have distinguishing and characteristic skills. For instance, a secondary school graduate is expected to perform ability in technical aspects, whereas a university graduate is expected to perform conceptual skills (managerial skills). The strange thing is that the contents of secondary and university education hardly have any differences. In this context, it is of great importance that similar aspect among different levels of education should be found out. Common subjects matter to be taught at different levels should be offered at the level where the learners can grasp the subject matter more efficiently and comprehensively. Courses offered at non-formal education institutes are ongoing and the faults in formal education persist and different faults have emerged. To start with, those attending public education programs are made to take hold of the subject matter from various disciplines in relatively short time and subject matters involved in the curricula of formal education are repeated in a short period of time. However, non-formal education in the field should be structure in a way to train rather than educate. Non-formal education should aim to offer skills directed towards a profession in a relatively short time.

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