

Tourismology, Tourism Education and Educational Community: NOTE and RETNL

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Abstract

The current scientific and academic perspectives of tourism studies are interpreted to understand the viability of Tourismology as a suitable approach to define this area of studies, similarly in Portuguese academy. The paper also aims to study the actual tourism education organization and the institutional background in a national network level. The academic attitudes should be considered and discussed in seminar debates helping to consolidate this scientific study area and facilitate the development of innovative and efficient educational approaches in their academic community. The empirical research is based on secondary data analysis from the higher education institutions (HEI's), mainly to understand their relative importance in this teaching level and the main approaches that correspond to a certain diversity of types of HEI's, which have invested significantly in this field since the last thirty years. The methodology is based in a case study from Portugal tourism education. The premise is that Tourism Studies recognition needs a continuous and rigorous diagnostic at a national level, and a consequent formative policy and strategy, to respond effectively to the internationalization challenges. So, we consider the opportunity to develop two important projects: the National Observatory for Tourism Education (NOTE), as a mean to support the management and competitiveness of the tourism education network in the academic community in Portugal; the Research and Education Tourism Network for Lusophony (RETNL), essential to promote a bridge between Tourism academic communities and cooperation for the adequate recognition of the Tourism Studies core and their importance. The study results indicates that Tourismology is increasingly used in the educational community to define tourism as an autonomous field of studies and the Projects named NOTE and RETNL could be important to reinforce this development in Portugal and in the Lusophony.

Keywords: Tourismology, Tourism Studies, Tourism Education, Educational Community.

Introduction

The understanding of Tourism Studies in terms of their scientific and academic background is important for the academic community in Portugal, mainly because of the various stakeholders need to ensure the consolidation of the education system. We recognize that the model to organize the interpretation and the viability of Tourismology should be in accordance to the complexity of the tourism system and also respond, adequately, to their multidisciplinary study and teaching, which are intrinsic characteristics of this educational area.

The paper aims to interpret and understand the viability of Tourismology as a suitable approach to define the area of Tourism Studies, to study the actual Tourism education organization and the institutional background in a national network level in Portuguese

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academy and help to facilitate the development of innovative and efficient educational approaches in their academic community.

The main operational objectives of the paper are to discuss about the scientific maturity achieved by Tourism Studies and the development of tools (NOTE and RETNL) that could be useful for the promotion of their recognition by the educational community. So we consider necessary to make the study case of Portugal tourism education and the formalization of their educational and scientific community. We consider that the organization of the tourism academic community is essential to the development of a new paradigm to tourism education in Portugal to help the consolidation of this strategic sector of Portuguese society and economy. This consolidation phase is also linked to the emergence of the paradigm of Tourismology as the aggregator common denominator of the diversity of courses and approaches, namely in higher education.

Some difficulties in their academic status are related to the fact that it was studied, in the past, from the point of interest of several traditional disciplines that allows, otherwise, the enrichment of their specific body of knowledge, progressively. The proclaimed obstacles that some members of the academy reiterate to the recognition of Tourismology as an autonomous science are, in our premise, weaker today.

The analysis of Tourism Studies research seems to demonstrate a progressive emancipation of Tourismology. The growth of their body of knowledge and their consolidation as an independent research area, mainly in university sphere, as well as quantitative analysis of this area of study in Portuguese higher education system, would support our thesis. The analysis of the Portuguese teaching institutions, in all levels of training and research in this area of knowledge, should be a basis to the evolution interpretation, especially in HEI's.

The theoretical framework (section 1) discusses the current scientific and academic perspectives of Tourism Studies. The methodology (section 2) used for the collection of data about the topic of research and education in Tourism is presented and discussed in evolutionary terms, with empirical application to Portugal. So, the situation of this object of study is applied in Portugal reality (section 3), to analyse the general situation of the Tourism Studies till the academic year 2015/16, allowing to conclude about a certain consolidation in the HEI's.

The proposition assumed is that Tourism Studies recognition needs a continuous and rigorous diagnostic and a consequent formative policy and strategy, to respond effectively to the increasing challenges that Tourismology faces. This paper is also an opportunity to refer the development process of two interesting projects: the National Observatory for Tourism Education (NOTE), as a mean to support the management and competitiveness of the tourism education network in the academic community in Portugal; the Research and Education Tourism Network for Lusophony (RETNL), as a network to promote better linkages between members in Tourism academic communities and stimulate their cooperation, that will help to discuss more openly the Tourism Studies nature and core of knowledge, and their scientific and academic approaches.

Scientific and academic perspectives of tourism studies

The title of the article represents an attempt of the authors to familiarize with the building of knowledge in Tourismology, as well its positive contributions to the future of education in Tourism Studies. This "new" term Tourismology is yet in discussion in our academic community since some time ago and we think that is the right time to justify their value to help the improvement and consolidation of the education system of Tourism Studies, as it is reflected by Cardia (2014: 2) that "seeks appropriate to coin a new term as

“knowledge education” as a starting point to follow the integration way”. She supports a proposal for “the education on tourism based on transdisciplinarity, integration and complexity, which could represent one way to go beyond the current knowledge based platform”.

Leiper’s (1981) interest to lift tourism to the status of a discipline could be seen as an attempt to overcome the defects stemming from a fundamentally fragmented curriculum, for which, he argued that a new discipline needs to be created to form the core strand in comprehensive programmes, especially at the professional level. He advanced a general tourism theory which embraced a system overview of tourism, in which the system constituted tourists, generating regions, transit routes, destination regions, and the industry.

Goeldner (1988), nearly three decades ago, described: ‘tourism as a discipline in its formative stages on a parallel with business administration as it was developing in the United States. Jansen-Verbeke (cited by Taillon, 2014) refers to tourism in the 1980s as being an academic community and explains that there was a growing awareness of the economic potential of tourism, its positive and negative impact on different types of location and the need for local and national authorities to manage and monitor it. Despite this development, tourism was not yet regarded as a scientific field of research in its own right, or as a stakeholder in policymaking.’ The academic community of tourism necessitates a level of social awareness but little acceptance in academia judging by this constitution of academic community.

It is recognized that, nowadays, Tourism is an important scientific and educational area in academia and its evolution permit us to defend this “new” science (Salgado & Costa, 2011), including the: maturity of Tourism Studies and their core knowledge; inter and multidisciplinary approaches to their system knowledge; complexity of the tourism phenomenon; variety and richness of sectors industry; growing importance in social and economic contexts and so on. These are characteristics that need to be combined in the holistic perception of the construction model supports the structure and discussion for Tourismology.

The importance of a model of integration between science and culture (Caria, 2014: 3), as a “basis of a new vision of the world which is not reductionist or holistic but holographic, in which whole is no longer important to the parties neither vice-versa. This complex vision could be applied to enhance knowledge and education of tourism which continues to be an object of debate about its scientific identity”.

The two main approaches to Tourism seem continue to divide the academic community in accordance to the opinion of its advocates. Tourism Studies have been studied and discussed exhaustively on their characteristics about their nature and own body of knowledge and, consequently, there are several terms to decipher tourism’s place in academia. Jovicic’s “Tourismology” or Leiper’s “Tourology” could be founded if theories and a discipline are built, as stated by Taillon (2014:4). In reality, Tourism literature has shown there is a disagreement amongst academics conducting tourism research as to whether tourism is an academic community, academic study, and/or academic discipline.

According to Darbellay and Stock (2012), if tourism is considered as an autonomous and organized system, than it can also be a discipline. Tourism was then started to be recognized as a science or discipline and its researchers as scientists.

In Portugal, for example, the term ‘tourismology’ attracted the interest of Cunha (2013: 14), which justifies the development of education and science in the field of Tourism with a view to his best knowledge, that is necessary for several reasons: “(i) lack of systemic

study of tourism concerns, in particular to study its global and not just limited to economic aspects, (ii) lack of study of tourism also binds to the lack of formulation of a specific theory, (iii) the absence of this formulation cause serious imbalances in education at all levels, especially at senior level, (iv) the theory and training must be closely linked to applied scientific research base, (v) origin of these shortcomings are adopting policies inappropriate, wrong and, sometimes negative for the development of tourism".

In this context, also Dias (2011) recognizes that an independent science is not born by self-proclamation, it is necessary to build consensus in the scientific community (eg. RETNL) with regard to epistemological criteria, against which a science must be imposed. Thus, his choice for Tourism Sciences description seems more realistic but also more conservative, less ambitious and more adverse to innovation. Thus, the ambiguity (science versus sciences) merely reflects the inevitable rifts between desire and reality, past and future, innovation and *status quo* ... that still exist to the dignity of Tourism Studies.

Cunha and Abrantes (2013: 111) also discusses critically this view and indicates that Leiper (2008) have no doubt that Tourism Studies is a discipline, and other authors like Gunn and Hoerner (2000) consider them as science too. So Leiper suggests the use of the term Turology to designate the scientific studies of tourism. In turn, Sessa (1984, cited by Cunha and Abrantes) uses the term Tourismology as the field of application of science to the tourism system; Jovicic (1988) also argues that the study of tourism as a complex phenomenon cannot be adequately performed by any existing discipline and therefore proposes the adoption of Tourismology, as Hoerner refer *tourismologie (Traité de tourismologie. Pour une nouvelle science touristique; La Science du Tourisme. Précis franco-anglais de Tourismologie)*, to whom science would study tourism that is linked to the journey. Currently, it can be assumed that this terminology is now reportedly being taken over by a growing number of scientific researchers of the area of Tourism. Leiper (cited by Cunha, 2013:15) refer that the multidisciplinary approach involves the study of a topic with the inclusion of information from other disciplines and operating inside the frontiers of the discipline (ex. economic multiplier). But Tribe maintains that this is only one field of multidisciplinary knowledge.

Esteban *et al.* (2015: 3) mention Gilbert (1990) to justify the need of the “conjugation of other disciplines such as sociology, economics, anthropology, psychology, business administration and geography among others, in order to establish a holistic epistemological background of tourism as a discipline”. The study of tourism phenomenon requires a multidisciplinary approach and this nature overshadows unilateral analysis of one social science and even researcher.

Belhasen and Caton (2009) also argue that analyzing the epistemological evolution of tourism would result in better comprehension and understanding of knowledge production process. It seems essential to understand the epistemological bases for the study of tourism (Esteban *et al.*, 2015). Tribe (1997:639) argues that epistemology applied to tourism is important for two basic reasons:(1) allows legitimizing and provides scientific quality to the relatively immature studies; (2) permits delimiting tourism as a subject of study.

Other researchers considers also that tourism is not yet a field like other sciences (Netto, 2005), but Netto don't accept the radicalism of statements mentioned by Tribe, that tourism will not be a scientific discipline. In fact, when someone says that in the epistemological field seems an audacious statement. In Netto (2005) reflection about the epistemological bases of tourism are identified three groups of authors who are trying to explain tourism in theoretical way, by taking into account a theory of Kuhn (1971)

scientific paradigms: Pre-Paradigm Phase, Tourism System Paradigm Phase, New Approaches Phase.

In the first place Panosso (2005) categorizes Pre-Paradigm phase which consists of researchers who published the first scientific papers on tourism without being considered as the followers of General Systems Theory. The second phase was supported in the General Systems Theory in tourism studies, and according namely N.Leiper, M. C. Beni, A. Sessa and R. Boullón it established the paradigm of Tourism System Paradigm. The systematic approach can be considered as a paradigm in tourism studies because it allows analyzing complex interacting elements as a set of units between which there is an established relationships. Thus, from the interpretative simplification, the knowledge of tourism can be focused from a more comprehensive perspective considering the tourism as an open system. According to Panosso, the third phase is categorized as New Approaches Phase, which offers different and innovative analysis of tourism. Some authors of this phase are proposing schemas and interpretations that seek to overcome the Tourism System Paradigm through reformulation of General Systems Theory applied to tourism, by attempting to relocate the human in the center of discussion on tourism, by either using the Levy-Strauss structural method on tourism, or by the semiotic analysis of tourism and the application of symbolic interactionism or ethnomethodology to the tourism phenomenon. This group consists of authors like J. Jafari and J. Tribe.

Panosso (2005) says that although tourism is considered as a distinct discipline by some authors such as Jovicic (1988) (tourismology) and Leiper (1981) (tourology), he thinks that unfortunately tourism could not yet reach the status of discipline in academia with its own method and object of investigation.

In fact, Jovicic (1988) defends Tourismology and argues that a complex phenomenon cannot be adequately covered by just a single discipline. It also suggests that the disciplines fail when trying to circumscribe the notion of the whole in an attempt to explain its nature only through particular areas. The observation of elements, regardless of the whole, results in errors of definition of tourism as a phenomenon only economic, geographical or sociological. The emergence of an autonomous subject allows the development of an integrated theory of Tourism, which would facilitate the integration of specialized studies to take place in several disciplines.

Jafari (2002) presents a model of the foundations of multidisciplinary tourism that demonstrate their scientific essence. According to this model, it is a developing science with the contributions from many social sciences. That is, the knowledge of tourism is a phenomenon with multiple influences, which implies the contribution of various branches of knowledge, as it continues to increase the complexity and diversity of phenomena that lead to travel. According to Xiao (2013: 288), Jafar has elaborated “his holistic view on the evolution of tourism through sequential and at times concurrent positions of what he termed advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy, knowledge-based, and public platforms”. Informed by his long experience and perspective after serving as editor-in-chief (1973-2007) of *Annals of Tourism Research*, and by the insights derived from his lifetime commitment to tourism, Jafar has developed a classic evolutionary account, which is as much a synthesis of the history of tourism in its development practice as it is a summation of its social science research.

The retrospect analysis (cf. Leiper, Goeldner and Jansen-Verbeke), on the existing tourism knowledge, permits to understand two different positions on the issue of tourism disciplinarity. The question could be: a discipline remains distinctive and insulated from the advance in knowledge taking place around the tourism system or in a unique traditional

discipline? Epistemological and phenomenological traditions of inquiries suggest that 'frameworking' knowledge within the so-called identifiable boundaries is not suggestive because it would hamper the prospect of new knowledge creation. Frequently the boundaries could change, usually through the establishment of a new discipline – Tourismology - that would occupy an enclave within the pre-existing division of academic space. The boundaries of Tourism are porous and the different disciplines could interact constantly with their core knowledge.

This proposition intends to recognize Tourism as a science, which has been exhaustively discussed and today deserves the adoption of Tourismology, as the main stream by the educational community. Cooper *et al.* (1996) consider that the beginning of tourism education can be attributed to the opening of the Lausanne Hotel School in 1893. Indeed, it can be assumed that at the end of the XIX century began the training for Hospitality. In fact, the hotel management is a more mature area but Tourism is today presented a stage of considerable maturity, concisely stating its purpose and methods. In this sense, Jafari (1997) refers to the hotel management as an important organ in tourism which needs the knowledge of the tourism system and also the way it connects with the other "organs" of the system. This analogy serves to illustrate that the human body is a system composed of several vital organs that, individually and collectively, ensure the survival of the body system, thus justifying also the integration of a coherent framework for Tourism. Cooper *et al.* (1996, 51) describe that "the problems associated with education in Tourism are typical of the midlife crisis because is not too inexperienced to be an area and not reached the necessary maturity". In this context, education and research in tourism assume a key role to ensure their proper development, orderly and structured as a scientific area.

According to Tribe (2005), it is necessary to consider the relationship between the three components in the body of knowledge and he considers that the tourism curriculum is smaller than the area of tourism knowledge. In turn, the knowledge of tourism represents only a portion of the tourism phenomenon. Additionally, since the curriculum is not only built from the knowledge of tourism, this circle includes other elements from the outside of the world of tourism. Note the flow of the phenomenon of tourism, through the knowledge of tourism education and tourism curriculum, which illustrates the refinement of the process under consideration. Highlights the important fact that the knowledge of tourism and tourism education has the opportunity to influence and change the curriculum. Consequently, Tribe (2006) examines the level of congruence between the theoretical world of tourism (the knowledge model) and the world of phenomena, adopting a constructivist approach to conceptualizing and analyzing its field of expertise, which falls between the two. The five factors operating in their field of expertise are the people, the rules, the position, the purposes and ideology. The literature review allows exposing how these forces contribute to the dual selectivity in knowledge creation. Tribe believes that the full truth about tourism is still not revealed, resulting in gaps, silences and lapses.

The research and management of knowledge in Tourism have grown rapidly since the nineties, determined by social, economic and technological tendencies (Cooper, 2006). However, this area has been slow in adopting this constructivist approach, not only by the lack of a mechanism for linking researchers around Tourism, but also a "hostile" environment to adopt knowledge. Its construction could help fill gaps in knowledge and provide lessons for their potential uses in tourism. Noting these facts, Cooper proposes an interesting model to generate greater efficiency in the generation of knowledge in tourism and helps to support the evolution and openness in Tourism.

The use of the term tourism should be accurate, particularly when it comes the subject of studies because there are two main divergent approaches in the epistemological field, as set out below. In fact, Leiper (2000: 805-809) and Tribe (2000: 809-813) personalize the debate and exchange arguments in an attempt to support its perspective on the scientific status and disciplinary nature of Tourism. Leiper acknowledges that disciplines manifest different attributes in each of its phases until it is definite statement. Against this maturation process that considers a discipline is "a body of knowledge that is organized to some extent in a systematic way, ideally to help in teaching, learning and research" (2000: 807). Leiper points out that this debate on Tourism Studies is similar to the tourism industry itself.

Opposing this view, Tribe writes two provocative articles: the indiscipline of Tourism (1997) and indisciplined and unsubstantiated (2000). The latter is in response to the article presented by Leiper - An Emerging Discipline (2000). According to Tribe, epistemologically, Tourism is not a discipline but a field of knowledge which makes use of a number of disciplines to investigate and explain their areas of interest. Tourism involves many aspects of human and society, then your knowledge is a multidisciplinary nature. The multi-disciplinary field of Tourism has gained momentum in the field of academic research. Tourism is a composite academic community consisting of scholars from multiple disciplines.

Esteban *et al.* (2015: 2) analyses the theory of knowledge of tourism to understand this emergent discipline and they made it with a sociological and epistemological reflection. The relative youth of tourism, as the academic debate about its unequivocal definition, make this a complex task because of its multifaceted character within a vague semantic universe (ANECA, 2004: 25). Indeed, different approaches to tourism created to satisfy various operational needs could only satisfy a part of the matter.

Esteban *et al.* (2015) refer the creation of researchers' groups that adopted positivist perspectives, searching for an effective knowledge and organizing knowledge on tourism through the facts that are proven by independent observation. In consequence, they highlight the contribution of Jafar Jafari, who has contributed

tourism as a science and its definitions, and lead tourism to a certain epistemological evolution. He generates a change in the criteria of tourism science and makes a synthesis on understanding different groups of thinkers and the different views of the problems, which have been created various analytical platforms. In this sense, Jafari distinguishes five diverse platforms that stand out different historical periods, and these platforms are generated over the each other without disappearing of previous ones (Jafari, 1994 and 1995): Advocacy Platform (1950's- 1960's); Cautionary Platform (decade of the 1970's); Adaptancy Platform (decade of the 1980's); Knowledge-based Platform (decade of the 1990's up to the late 20th century); and Public Interest Platform (since the early 21st century to the present).

We consider that the literature contributions permits to understand that in the last eighties begin the development of a platform based in knowledge, as Jafari mentions as the fourth platform (advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy and knowledge based), which actually permits to recognizes tourism as a total system with the objective to understand their structure, organization and functions. Jafari states that platform is the starting point of projecting tourism from a modern perspective, with more holistic, global, multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary vision. Its authors come from different platforms and, in addition to appearance of new

researchers; they focus their studies on tourism phenomenon in a wider perspective than before. Jafari introduces the fifth stream, as the Public Interest Platform that is still emerging. It is based on some comparatively recent incidents such as “9/11” or “bird flu” that have pushed governments, NGOs and citizens of various tourist destinations to claim attention to tourism. Therefore, it is important to make these changes so that industry takes its own new roots and provides new “formal” spokespeople (Jafari, 2005: 45). Knowledge platform can be seen as a holistic and integrative approach to tourism and considered as important for tourism to be recognized as a distinct discipline (Echtner and Jamal, 1997).

This is a holistic focus for the study and analysis of tourism that has the principal objective to generate a body of scientific knowledge about this object (Bonilla and Bonilla, 2004). The transformation of Tourism involves the extension of sharing knowledge with other fields, to recognize their true nature as a science, as the result of an independent and porous body of knowledge of Tourismology. For a complete understanding, tourism needs a horizontal approach as stated and defended by Cunha and Abrantes (2013: 95-114), including the systemic concept, to understand their truly multidisciplinary character.

In this context (Esteban et al., 2015), the rapid development of tourism in the last five decades, which leads to very dynamic and creative environment, in fact, shows us that the existing differences between various authors and Jafari are relative, because all these researchers and Jafari agree: that the periods are short and the new ideas are very dynamic; that the tendency is evolving from one disciplinary perspective to a multidisciplinary perspective, and with a holistic approach of the tourism phenomenon. Thus tourism researchers should not only understand the perspectives agreed upon in their own disciplines, they should also be able to understand approaches of other disciplines to be able to address related issues.

Methodology

The diversity of disciplines contributing to the study of tourism could reflect the range of academic qualifications and work experiences of educators. As a result, many times, tourism programs assume the character of a specialist area that is in accordance with an academic background in a college or school that have another vocational area, normally in traditional disciplines. In higher education, many courses have the vocation of tourism business or a basis in the social sciences. It is also noted the diversity in types of schools and faculties where these courses are taught, particularly in Portugal. The philosophy adopted by these institutions is based on the trend to include the study of Tourism in business schools or faculties of social sciences. The educational reality shows the courses in analysis are under the Ministry of Education and Science and dispersed by 4 areas in the National Classification of Education and Training Areas. The majority are included in a general area called Services, subarea Personal Services, including the areas of Hotel and Restaurant Management and Tourism and Leisure. There are also courses in areas with the designation of Management and Administration and Marketing and Publicity.

The Higher Education in Portugal integrates grade levels from VI to VIII at university and polytechnic systems. At level VI, the 1st cycle degree supposes a thorough understanding of a field of study or work that requires a critical understanding of theories and principles is intended. This level is based on advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of study or work, aiming to provide the following qualities: manage businesses or complex technical or professional projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable contexts of work or study; to assume responsibility for managing professional development of individual and collective. The courses can be applied to the holistic study of tourism due

to the interest and the need to investigate the evolution and current knowledge of this phenomenon. The master and Ph.D. levels, respectively VII and VIII, assume a more specialized knowledge and a focus in tourism research. In this context, and after the theoretical background of the Tourismology conceptualization, we interpret the perspectives of educators and researchers on their institutional situation in Portuguese HEI's, in order to support the thesis of a gradual recognition of Tourism Studies recognition.

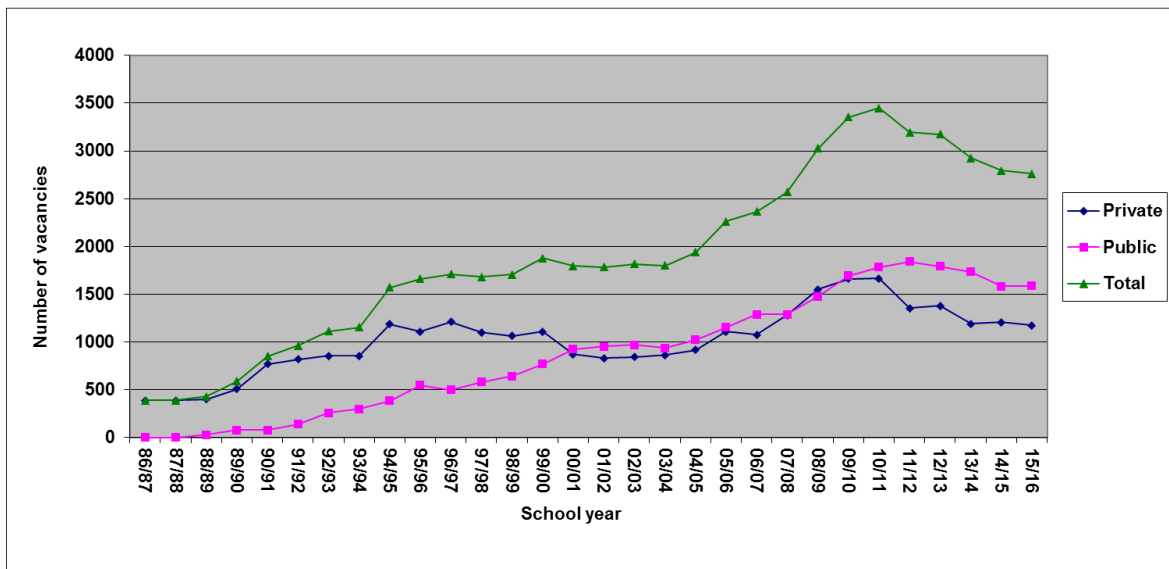
The methodology is also supported in empirical analysis that is based on secondary data about the situation till the scholar year of 2015-16, to characterize the relative importance of this area of studies, and understand their secure evolution in 30 years, centered on quantitative analysis of data from HEI's and their degrees.

This paper includes a case study with the analysis of the situation in Portugal because is the geographic context of implementation of the NOTE project and is also the country were the RETNL was created, in accordance to the necessity to promote the internationalization of their tourism education HE system.

Tourism Education in Portugal

The first three bachelors courses begin in 1986-87 in polytechnic subsystem (2 in Lisbon and Oporto) and the Aveiro University was the first public HEI's to create a 5 years degree in Tourism Management and Planning in 1988-89. The next two decades assist to an exponential growth in graduate courses (1st cycle) in Tourism Studies implemented in universities and polytechnics (figure 1).

Figure 1 – Number of vacancies in Tourism degrees in Portugal



(Source: Own elaboration based in Ministry of Science and Education - DGEEC)

The importance of Tourism is represented by the actual 1st cycle degrees (68) with approximately 3.8% of total vacancies (2763) offered at national level in 2015/16. The actual degree offer in the area of Tourism is represented by 25 in the private and 43 in the public sector. This offer represents a slightly higher in the public sector with 1588 vacancies. It is also important to note that this offer is predominantly in a polytechnic

subsystem (50 courses) compared to university (18 courses). There are 2 HEI's only specialized in Tourism and Hospitality (Estoril and Seia), 4 schools that includes Tourism explicitly in the name of the Institution (Peniche, Mirandela, Oporto and Faro), in the universe of 41 HEI's, that permits to understand that many degrees are offered by several and diverse types of HEI's.

In the academic year 2015/16, on the first stage of applications to public higher education, there were 1411 candidates placed on courses (89%). Thus, it can be stated that Tourism continues to present a significant demand on the part of candidates. The public sector demonstrates a considerable increase in enrolment in the 1st year compared to the private sector, since 1997/98.

Today, it is concluded that this area is fully integrated in the higher education, also important is the developments within the 2nd and 3rd cycles. In fact, the analysis of some variables on the quantitative reality of Tourism degree courses within the public and private subsystems, it is essential in order to understand its behavior in Portugal.

Development of NOTE and RETNL projects

The analysis of an existing association as a case study could give a perspective of how to gain credibility in an academic community to create a network between their members. For example, the European Commission has encouraged the development of European Thematic Networks, to group scholars in discussing issues of common interest within their discipline (Richards, 1998). The European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) is an important network that supports the importance of curriculum and education in Tourism and Leisure. Richards (1998) believes that ATLAS contributes to the development of curriculum in Tourism and Leisure, at the European level, because it recognizes these academic areas, rather than considering them merely as applications of other disciplines. In the context of ATLAS is important to articulate the Tourism Studies with Leisure. Harris (2005) believes that Leisure Studies are also a discipline but with porous borders, like Tourismology. So, the NOTE project will help to create communication between members of the Tourism academic community in Portugal, mainly to promote an efficient network and strong relationships in order to develop a coordinated strategy for this community, also articulating other national associations in the tourism area (example: APTP - Association of Tourism Professionals of Portugal). Complementary, the RETNL will create mechanisms for better communication between schools and research centers in Tourism with the sector companies, tourism organizations and civil society, contributing to a better use of knowledge and research produced in Tourism, extended to the Lusophony dimension, for example relating with ANPTUR (National Association for Research and Post-graduation in Tourism - Brazil); and other international bodies like ATHE (Association for Tourism in Higher Education - United Kingdom) or AECIT (Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism - Spain).

The scientific and technical events in the area of Tourism are regularly implemented in Portugal and abroad, so we consider the necessity to create a dynamic database to manage and communicate them in Portuguese language to the Lusophone community. This NOTE database includes the name (acronym), the date (first day and last one), link to the calendar of events in the NOTE home page, the site (including the link to the home page of the event), object (national or international); institutional image (with logo). Some national events include International Tourism Congress (Peniche or Guimarães); the international congress in Portugal (Annual EATSA Conference - Euro-Asia Tourism Studies Association) and the international conferences in other countries (Annual ATHE Conference; Annual ANPTUR Seminar).

In this context, in 2008, it was presented the draft of the National Observatory for Tourism Education (NOTE) in IASK International Conference in Tourism Research (Salgado et al, 2008). The NOTE is intended as a tool for collecting, organizing and disseminating relevant knowledge in the tourism sector so as to contribute to the targeted links between education and training systems and the corresponding national employment market.

The establishment of an integrated training system in the scientific area of Tourism could be an important strategy to ensure sustained development of the sector (Salgado, 2007). This idea recognizes the indispensability of training and educational processes in a more efficient way, allowing Tourismology to reach its own scientific status. The strong interactions in the academic community are one path required to achieve the objectives of collaborative networks, both at national and international levels, which should be interlinked with the main meetings of their members.

Conclusions

The interpretation of the current prevailing paradigm of Tourism Studies, as we confirm from the literature review based in the point of view of several important authors, helps to support the confirmation of Tourismology as an autonomous scientific subject that requires constantly study and progress in their body of knowledge and, in parallel, the development of tourism education and the organization of the educational and scientific community, in national and international networks, to articulate the discussion about the Tourism Studies development. This process of evolution allows the progressive mature and the necessary social, scientific and educational justification for the recognition of Tourismology as the science and discipline to consolidate this middle age area of studies. An important contribution to this discussion was the creation of the Journal of Tourismology, an international and peer reviewed journal, which seeks to advance theory in tourism and its recognition as a scientific discipline. According to this recent publication, Tourismology targets tourism and travel related papers however inter and multi-disciplinary manuscripts are also welcome, that seems the correct approach to include the core knowledge of tourism and also de multidisciplinary contributions to the fully understand of tourism. A “Theory of knowledge of tourism” that reflects a sociological and epistemological reflection, which helps to understand that tourism is epistemological in its roots (Gilbert, 1990), rather than simply economic or geographic. Thus, the main aim of this article was to take out diapers tourism as a social science that could be understood as the sum of an object of epistemological study and scientific method, by allowing current and future tourism and leisure researchers combine theoretical tendencies, which could serve as a base for its practical implementations. However, the multidisciplinary nature of tourism entails that there are new and profound transformations that affect the construction of its knowledge as a discipline. Particularly, postmodern theories that are mentioned at the end of the article “Theory of knowledge of tourism” seem appropriate. Hence, its opportunism defends hybridization, pastiche, decentralization of intellectual authority and multidisciplinary nature. Pearce (1993) argues that tourism should tolerate eclectic perspectives. In fact, in social sciences and in tourism it seems inappropriate to hold exclusive idea regarding epistemological knowledge generation, as the borders almost always tend to be challenged. The challenge, which nowadays scholars should consider in new sociological research, is focusing on the object of study that is recognized as tourism and utilization of inter-disciplinary and / or hybrid view (e.g. tourism economics) which gives a sense of what is intended to deal with.

The importance of Tourism Studies in Portugal is based in a consolidated offer of 68 degrees that represents approximately 3.8% of actual total vacancies. These degrees are

distributed by the private and public sectors, and also in the polytechnic and university systems, representing a very big diversity of educational approaches and types of HEI's, as showed before. We state therefore that Tourism continues to have a significant demand on the part of candidates and a correspondent offer by HEI's, where we observe that the public sector demonstrates a considerable increase in their offer of degrees. We also conclude that this area is fully integrated in the higher education with an offer of 2nd and 3rd studies cycles.

Therefore, this paper provides some evidence about the importance of two projects that could be useful to help the Tourism community in their development and to gain the necessary credibility in academic sphere with ambitious goals. We support the interaction model of Tourism HEI's at a national level to stimulate the projection in a Lusophone and a global level. A model to support the strategies leading to a networking organization in Portugal should include all the HEI's.

The increasing international focus in education, particularly in higher education, would require appropriate actions by the Portuguese HEI's at a European level and also a Portuguese language countries sub-group. Tourism HEI's importance and trends should be identified clearly in the national network structure and organization, particularly with the NOTE contribution, articulating the common efforts to promote the Portuguese education system to their global positioning. The promotion of cooperation and communication between all HEI's could be supported by the RETNL, integrating the networks of public and private systems, for a better management of resources in order to dignify the emergence and affirmation of the community of Tourismology.

According to the aim formulated there is evidence in the literature and from the discussion of this case study from Portugal that there is a strong argumentation that validates Tourismology as one good way to develop this emergent science and academic discipline. This development will help to create better conditions to promote strong linkages between members of the academic community and therefore improve communication and articulation in tourism education, despite the diversity of HEI's and approaches that makes tourism a rich field of study. The analysis of the Portuguese academia reality was our case study to understand the actual situation of tourism education and we can now say that NOTE and RETNL are fundamental projects to consolidate this area and to give the notoriety that tourism nowadays have in Portuguese academia, helping to project to the Lusophony level.

In a second phase, we will collect primary data with a questionnaire from course directors, with the objectives of inquire about the state level of autonomy of Tourismology and its core body of knowledge and, secondly, to interpret the consolidation of this academic subject area in HEI's, trying to reflect the situation in Portugal to promote the epistemological and educative discussion in the Tourism academic community.

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