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Education, Employability and Youth Employment

Aims of the chapter

This chapter explores in more detail the nature of the relationship between education and youth employment in tourism. It reviews the development of tourism and hospitality higher education with a particular focus on perceptions of the purpose of education from policy makers' standpoint. It extends the discussion around skills begun in the previous chapter within the context of employability, reviewing the role employers, universities and policy makers play in the provision of a skilled tourism workforce. The chapter concludes by outlining the potential advantages of hiring a young workforce.

Nature and expansion of tourism and hospitality education

Data demonstrate that an increasing proportion of young people worldwide are in formal education. Data from UNESCO indicate that in 2010 there were approximately five and a half times more people enrolled in tertiary education than in 1970 (the global population increased by a factor of 1.8 between 1970 and 2010).

Table 5.1: Global enrolment in tertiary education (millions)

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	1970-2010 Compound annual growth rate
Arab States	..	1.58	2.39	5.04	8.66	--
Central and Eastern Europe	8.76	10.04	9.84	14.02	21.54	1.0227
Central Asia	..	1.48	1.54	1.48	2.07	--
East Asia and the Pacific	3.58	7.04	13.77	24.97	54.8	1.07
Latin America and the Caribbean	1.58	4.67	7.02	11.2	21.5	1.067
North America and Western Europe	14.06	20.15	25.03	27.77	37.72	1.025
South and West Asia	2.68	4.0	6.34	12.16	28.47	1.061
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.21	0.57	1.3	2.55	5.78	1.086
World	32.69	49.73	67.54	99.53	181.05	1.04

Source: UNESCO

Wolf (2011) draws on three UK studies that focus on cohorts born in 1958, 1970 and 1991. When aged 18, the proportion of young people from these cohorts in full time education or training was 17%, 25% and 45% respectively. Changes in tertiary education go beyond a simple expansion. They have also been far-reaching in relation to its purpose, with a vocational orientation ever more present. Subjects such as tourism and hospitality are indicative of this reorientation, which is also reflected in the preferences of students, who view higher education today more in vocational terms than as a source of liberal education (Tarrant, 2006, in Baron and Corbin, 2012).

Table 5.2 presents data that relate to the percentage of graduates graduating from social sciences, business and law (SSBL) in a select number of advanced economies. Business and Law may be seen as a proxy for vocational orientation. As these data show, there was almost a uniform increase in the proportion of graduates in SSBL graduations between 2000 and 2006, but since then the development has been mixed. Although largely speculative, given the focus only on the UK, data from ATHE point to a plateauing of the popularity of tourism courses in higher education (Walmsley, 2012), which would mirror the current trends in SSBL more generally.

Table 5.2: Percentage of graduates from tertiary education graduating from social sciences, business and law

	2000 (%)	2006 (%)	2012 (%)
Denmark	24.9	31.9	35.7
Finland	22.8	23.4	25.3
France	37.4	40.9	41.5
Germany	20.6	24.2 ¹	23.4
Japan	25.1	27	27
United Kingdom	27.5	30.5	31.6 ²
USA	40.8	38.1	36.4 ²

1 2005 data

2 2011 data

Source: UNESCO

The history of tourism and hospitality higher education is relatively recent. While earliest aspects of tourism and hospitality education pre-date the Second World War, it was not until the rapid growth of tourism subsequently and the concomitant growth of professionalism in the sector that led to its expansion and increased vocationalism (Fidgeon, 2010). While it is true that tourism education and training varies in the extent of its vocational orientation (Hudson, 2005), most would agree it is primarily a vocational subject. One imagines therefore that prior to any formal tourism education, individuals learnt about tourism on the job, or were specialists in other areas albeit with knowledge that could then be applied to the sector (e.g. accounting, general management, psychology etc.).

Global expansion of tertiary level tourism and hospitality higher education: Examples from seven key countries

UK

According to Busby and Fiedel (2001), the first undergraduate degrees in tourism in the UK were offered in 1986. Cooper *et al.* (1994) then note that the number of degrees increased ten-fold between 1986 and 1991. The number of HE institutions offering undergraduate tourism education stood at around 114 in 2012 (Walmsley, 2012). Hospitality education at HEIs has a longer pedigree with the 1960s seeing the delivery of the first hospitality programmes (Knowles *et al.*, 2003).