

Innovation in Tourism Education: Building the Capacity to Lead

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This paper will present the findings of a recent Summit on the Future of Tourism Education held in April 2007 in Austria. The summit's goal is to identify future societal, economic, environmental, political and technological trends from 2010 to 2030 and project how tourism and tourism higher educational programs must change to address these trends. Fifty tourism education experts (40 from academia and 10 from industry) from all over the world gathered to share ideas about how to address these paradigm shifts. One objective is to suggest ways that tourism education programs much change to match these shifts.

Prior to the Summit, in February 2007, the author surveyed prospective participants regarding their opinions of the most significant trends affecting tourism education from 2010 to 2030. Other questions focused on the skill sets that our students will need after graduation that they currently do not have. Since the most popular jobs in 2015 do not even exist today, increasingly flexible education systems and skill sets are required. The initial analysis of the seventeen survey responses identifies six major trends affecting tourism education in the future. They are 1) changes in markets, 2) issues of sustainable tourism, 3) climate change, 4) training and workforce issues, 5) advancements in technology, and 6) demography. These will be discussed in some depth in the paper.

Respondents also identified skill sets that graduates need in the future. They include the need to multi-task, to understand psychology and cross-cultural differences, performance accountability, ethics, morality and honesty, innovative, risk-taking and creative skills, strategic communication skills, emotional intelligence, learning how to learn, knowledge management and others. An full description of these skills will be included in the paper.

The basis of the Summit's discussions are five different future scenarios of the world in 2030. Each scenario is a combination of various economic, political, environmental and social possibilities for the future. Participants are placed in these scenarios and asked to debate and analyze their impact on tourism education into those futures. From that discussion, specific implementation plans for program design, knowledge content and delivery and implementations for faculty, students and industry will be generated. This paper will describe the futures exercise in some detail, and will summarize the outcomes of the discussions at the Summit. It will also make

suggestions as to how the BEST Education Network could collaborate with and contribute to the Summit outcomes.

References

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