

- SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL AND NATURE-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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- **SUBTHEMES:**
 - **Curriculum and Teaching**
 - **Research and Development**
 - **Community Development**

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Summary

The South African government has earmarked tourism to become one of our leading industries. Tourism development, however, is confronted with several problems that need to be addressed by tertiary institutions in collaboration with national and international collaborators to share experiences in developing innovative approaches to tourism by including subject fields regarding HIV and AIDS and sex tourism: Although Valli Moosa, The former Minister of Tourism, stated as early as 2002, on the 28 of September, that participants in the tourism industry in South Africa are “too white”, little has changed. At the moment, in 2007, the implementation of knowledge regarding tourism and tourism development still do not succeed because of a lack of: innovative research; environmental and sustainable development in global education regarding tourism; and linkage projects between national and international academic institutions, industries, NGO’s, government and the community itself.

Exchange programmes between universities, the use of the internet and Community Service Learning should form part in developing innovative approaches to global education. The need exists for a multi-disciplinary tourism programme to be implemented that involves the development of approaches (including international partnerships, global training, quality enhancement, marketing and management) that are pro-poor and transferable to other communities and countries in addressing above-mentioned challenges/problems. Such a tourism programme should be committed to maximizing the contribution universities can make towards poverty reduction goals through encouraging responsible tourism development in the fields of Cultural and Nature-based Tourism. By linking Universities, research centers, international collaborators, the private sector, NGO’s, governments as well as communities itself, experiences will be shared in exchange programmes between universities that will lead to the internationalization of learning, discovery and engagement in Higher Education resulting in creating jobs in the field of sustainable tourism in South Africa and elsewhere.

International and national partnerships are of the utmost importance in order to ensure quality assurance, the raising of funds and to deliver learners that will meet the demands of the tourism industry. The media should at all times be informed of partnerships, tourism research and successes regarding tourism development.

A number of new qualifications in tourism have been developed by several South African institutions to cover areas such as management, marketing, sport and adventure, hospitality and administration. After in depth research, it is apparent that there is an urgent need for a tourism programme that will educate entrepreneurs who have specialized skills at University level, focusing on the areas of Service Learning and innovative research leading to the sharing of experiences and innovative approaches to tourism and global education with an emphasis on human empowerment and concentrating on previously ignored

communities and indigenous knowledge systems. Such a programme has been developed by University of the Free State and is awaiting to be implemented.

Research problem

Organisations such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa are well aware of the importance of sustainable tourism for economic development in South Africa and stress the importance of partnerships between legislator, government, the private industry and the community in statements regarding tourism development. Although these statements prove relevant holistic attitudes towards tourism development, it unfortunately still neglects to show an understanding of the role tertiary institutions have to play in tourism and community development.

A number of new qualifications in tourism have been developed by several South African institutions to cover areas such as management, marketing, sport and adventure, hospitality and administration. After in-depth research, it has become apparent that there is an urgent need for a sustainable tourism programme that will educate entrepreneurs who have specialized skills at university level, focusing on the areas of Service Learning and innovative research leading to the sharing of experiences and innovative approaches to tourism and global education with an emphasis on human empowerment, the enhancement of indigenous knowledge systems and the development of previously ignored communities. Such a programme has been developed by University of the Free State and is awaiting implementation.

By including service learning in the programme, learners will be part of projects which will benefit both themselves and the relevant communities which is in line with the sentiments as stated in The White Paper on the Development & Promotion of Tourism in South Africa, regarding Community Based Tourism (CBT). On successful completion of the programme, learners will be able to enter the broad field of tourism and to add to the economic growth of the country whilst proving responsible behaviour towards the South African environment, communities in need and the enhancement of lifelong learning in these communities. Tourist attractions will be identified and developed in previously ignored communities, and schools will be included in awareness programmes whereby the importance of sustainable tourism and an awareness of our environment will be highlighted according to the needs of the Free State region and according to Regional Tourism Strategies.

Transformation in Higher Education in South Africa

The transformation process of South African higher education establishments was initiated shortly after the ANC came into office in 1994. Since 1994, tertiary institutions in South Africa have been part of a paradigm shift to integrate knowledge, service and research for the benefit of the broader South African community. Discussions about transformation in the higher education sector were

shaped during March 2001 when the former Minister of Education, Prof. Kader Asmal, submitted a non-negotiable plan for higher education that changed the tertiary education system quite drastically. The fine-tuning of the education plan has led to present legislation in relation to South African education that champions outcomes-based education (OBE) to serve a wider diversity of interest groups, to address a wider variety of societal problems, and to form partnerships with the broader society, with quality assurance being an integral part thereof. This shift emphasises socio-economic responsibility and is a reaction to a variety of challenges currently facing the South African community. In the new education dispensation, learners are co-opted in activities that address these societal needs, while conducting scientific practice in an authentic environment (De Beer and Bezuidenhout 2008). These contexts can be described as different interlinking systems which reflect the thought system and guidelines of the white Paper of the Department of Education (RSA) during 1997.

Transformation in Higher Education was preceded by documents about Curriculum 2005 that had already been written down in 1997. This proposal implies a paradigm shift in instruction, encouraging establishments to involve the South African societal sphere in the academic paradigm so as to allow learners to learn and deliver service in an authentic environment. Community Service-learning has been implemented since 2001 at several South African universities, thanks to the Joint Education Trust (JET)-Ford Foundation Planning Grant that the CHESP-initiative (Community Higher Education Service Partnership Programme) has made possible. Although the American model of Community Service is utilised, a unique approach of Community Service-learning is followed in the context of South Africa as a developing country with a history of university instruction, traditionally rooted in Europe (De Beer and Bezuidenhout 2008).

The insistence upon outcomes-based instruction at tertiary establishments in South Africa implies that work orientation, authentic African contexts, relevant instruction, and research will be part of curricula. The aim of this type of instruction is to bring about an equilibrium of knowledge, attitudes, and values to address wider societal needs (Wessels & Van den Berg, 1998: 2–12). Several requirements were put forward by the Department of Education, one of which was that the generic outcomes had to be fulfilled in the curricula, and that outcomes were stated clearly as a paradigm for specific outcomes of modules within the curricula (National Commission for Higher Education, 1996).

Community Service-learning (CSL)

Higher Education Institutions of South Africa are required to involve students in Community Service-learning (CSL) regarding all curricula, adding to the development of life skills of its learners. Service-learning can be used in any field at Higher Education Institutions and lends itself naturally to tourism development, teaching and learning. This teaching methodology provides socially responsible graduates who are competent in critical, analytical and communication skills to

deal with change, diversity and tolerance to opposing views (De Beer & Bezuidenhout, 2008).

The basis of the BA Tourism degree which emerged from the partnership between the Universities (Vista University/University of the Free State and Southern University in the USA) and institutions in the public sphere as well as local government is in line with the goals of transformation of Higher Education and lends itself to CSL. The partnership recognized the need to address historical inequalities. Such education will go beyond the mere technical training of tourism operators to emphasize an understanding of the conceptual challenges of transformation and a relevant tailor made tourism programme.

Transforming tourism education in Higher Education

Tourism agencies will tell one that tourists to South Africa are not only interested in seeing the big five and in relaxing on our beaches, but also in going into townships, visiting traditional villages, eating traditional African foods and learning about cultural practices and neglected histories.

Local villages and remote areas should not be excluded from tourism prospects and CSL. The benefits for rural and indigenous communities include preservation of cultural traditions, conservation of the natural environment and maintenance of social, cultural and religious values.

History and culture systems are assets of communities and can be marketed in order to create jobs and attract investments. It is generally the most economically marginalised communities that were previously excluded from mainstream economic activity. Community- and nature-based tourism is a key tool we can use for turning underdeveloped areas into bases for globally competitive industries, and universities can be partners in this process regarding not only teaching and learning, but also development.

The multidisciplinary BA Tourism programme was designed in order to address community needs of central South Africa as well as needs from the tourism industry. During the first year all students have to follow the same modules, giving them the necessary exposure to the fields of Cultural Tourism and Nature-based Tourism in order to make an informed decision on which subjects suit their second and third year students best.

Rationale for the qualification

The programme B. A. in Tourism was developed in collaboration with USAID and is committed to maximising the contribution Universities can make towards poverty reduction goals through encouraging responsible tourism development in the fields of Cultural and Nature-based Tourism. This multidisciplinary programmes' aim is the development of human and socio-economic capacity in

under-served communities. By linking Universities, research centres, international collaborators, the private sector, NGO's, as well as the government, under-served communities will be empowered to create jobs in the field of sustainable tourism in South Africa.

This qualification is in line with the vision and mission statement of SA Tourism as well as the Motheo District Municipality, in that it supports and enhances effective and efficient service to the community. The programme will address the urgent need to enable learners from the under-served communities (which the University of the Free State serves) to enter the very challenging and growing industry of tourism. 28% of the budget of the Motheo District was set aside for job creation in the area of tourism. According to the Motheo Reviewed Integrated Development Plan document, Tourism growth is a top priority of the Free State (Development Plan of the Free State region for 2002-2005, IDP Review, 2003).

By including service learning in the programme, learners will be part of projects that will benefit both themselves and the relevant communities, which is in line with the sentiments as stated in The White Paper on the Development & Promotion of Tourism in South Africa, regarding Community Based Tourism (CBT). On successful completion of the programme, learners will be able to enter the broad field of tourism and to add to the economic growth of the country whilst proving responsible behaviour towards the South African environment, communities in need and the enhancement of lifelong learning in these communities.

BA Tourism curriculum

The Faculties involved in the BA Tourism degree are Law, Humanities, Science, Social Sciences and Business Management. Lecturers from disciplines involved in this curriculum are from the departments of: Anthropology, Art History and Visual Culture Studies, African languages, Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French, Business Management, Communication, Computer Science, English, History, Geography, Philosophy, Psychology, Political Science, Sociology, Statistics, Sesotho and Sign Language.

The compilation of the subjects boils down to first year students being exposed to tourism fundamentals which will include aspects such as healthcare and ethics in tourism. The foundations of nature-based and cultural tourism will be established. Students will be educated regarding business management and computer skills with reference to the tourism industry. Communication and various indigenous as well as international languages are important facets of the programme. After a choice was made between the two fields in tourism, third year students will carry on in their decided directions and will have to engage in CSL, tourism safety and ethic procedures which will include tourism policies and commercial law. An advanced course in data management will empower the tourism student to enter the field of tourism development and tourism research.

The three year BA Tourism degree will offer the following courses:

FIRST YEAR YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD
<i>Major subject *</i> *	<i>Major subject *</i>	<i>Major subject</i>
<i>Tourism fundamentals</i> <i>Cultural Tourism I</i> <i>Nature-based Tourism I</i> <i>Tourism III</i> <i>Language I **</i> <i>Business Management/</i> <i>Communication</i> <i>Policy</i> <i>General Reasoning Skills</i>	<i>Cultural Tourism II</i> <i>OR</i> <i>Nature-based Tourism II</i> <i>Language II***</i> <i>Culture course****</i> <i>Sex Tourism</i>	<i>Cultural Tourism III</i> <i>OR</i> <i>Nature-based</i> <i>Tourism Safety</i> <i>Community Service</i> <i>Tourism and</i> <i>Commercial law</i> <i>Data Management</i>
<i>Computer Literacy</i> <i>for Tourism</i> <i>Information Skills</i>		

One of the following subjects: Anthropology, Art History and Visual Culture Studies, Business Management, Communication, Geography, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology.

** A combination of two language courses from the following list: Afrikaans, English, German, Sesotho.

*** One language from the following list: Afrikaans, English, French, German, Sesotho, Sign Language

**** Two basic culture subjects: Anthropology, Art History and Visual Culture Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science.

****Learners will be able to select two of the following languages during their first year:**

Afrikaans, English, French, German, Sesotho, Sign Language.

*****Learners majoring in Business Management will register for the indicated Communication modules and learners majoring in Communication will register for the indicated Business Management modules.**

****** Learners majoring in Business Management will not be allowed to register for this module.**

******* For non-mother-tongue speakers of English only.**

Concept history

The concept paper on Sustainable Tourism, which underlies this programme, was developed by Southern University (Louisiana, USA). The mentioned document envisaged that this Tourism Qualification should empower learners to become meaningful role players in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry and the community. The programme aims at producing professional entrepreneurs that include those areas that are associated with South African heritage. Two years before the merger with the UFS, Southern University supplied Vista University with templates on the writing of modules, including Community Service Learning.

Outcomes of the B A Tourism qualification

The purpose of this three year qualification is to provide learners with a theoretical background and practical skills to equip them for a career in the field of community based and cultural and/or nature-based tourism as officers in Public Support Services, and Community Tourism Organisations (TO's) as project leaders/participants, liaison and education officers, as well as tourism, community and policy developers.

This multidisciplinary Outcomes-based Education qualification, that combines 17 disciplines, will assist the learner in developing a high level of competence in a range of managerial, marketing, research, business, communication, leadership and social skills as required by the tourism industry of South Africa.

Learners will be assessed by means of various assessment methods within the areas of ethics, research, entrepreneurship, tourism development, CSL. At completion of the BA Tourism degree, students will be able to:

Analyze and implement knowledge in the South African context regarding issues of socio-economic development and tourism.

Apply techniques to discover the natural, historical and cultural characteristics of unique environments.

- Communicate effectively in the tourism industry.
- Manage interpersonal relations in the tourism industry and display an understanding of customer behaviour.
- Develop a multi-disciplinary approach, integrating knowledge, community service and research, in order to unlock potential in communities to enter the world of sustainable tourism and enterprise.
- Display factual knowledge of the surrounding environment and appreciate the cultural diversity in South Africa.
- Demonstrate familiarity with and have an informed outline knowledge and understanding of the content, theories and scholarly positions of Cultural and Nature-based Tourism, as well as all the other core modules.
- Demonstrate a systematic and integrated knowledge, and the ability to critically question the basic assumptions of the most important theories, scholarly positions and basic methodologies of Cultural or Nature-based Tourism, and one the

following subjects: Anthropology, Art History and Visual Culture Studies, History, Geography, Communication, Psychology, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Business Management (level 6).

- Show competence with modes of conducting basic research aimed at engaging well-defined issues in core disciplines of the Tourism degree.
- Interpret topical issues related to sex tourism by using different perspectives in the disciplines included at third year level.
- Interpret, explain and develop an argument around and an understanding of newly encountered material and demonstrate an ability to marshal an approach used in one or more disciplines of the Tourism Degree.

Within the field of **tourism and ethics**, students will be able to:

- Act ethically and adhere to the guidelines in the tourism industry.
- Show an awareness of the consequences of sex tourism.
- Identify the values contained in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights and Legislation with regard to tourism.
- Be sensitive to issues of environmental conservation.
- Operate within the boundaries of tourism legislation.
- Linking tourism policies, safety and security management and communication with tourism practices.
- Understand and apply the ecological and conservation principles and to function within the requirements of the relevant guidelines and principles of the industry.
- Contribute towards the understanding and appreciation of the relationships between the natural and cultural environment, conservation and tourism within South African communities.
- Run awareness campaigns to develop pride in the South African heritage.

Regarding the **development of tourism**, students will be able to:

- Discover the natural and cultural characteristics of unique environments and assist in developing and preserving tourist sites.
- Use modern technology for tourism development.
- In their aims in becoming **entrepreneurs**, students will be able to:
 - Apply techniques to discover the natural, historical and cultural characteristics of unique environments.
 - Compile brochures for tourism purposes.
 - Enter into self-employment.
 - Use the relevant technology, instruments and techniques in the field of cultural and nature-based tourism.

- Indigenous knowledge systems will be explored and integrated in tourism activities in order to reaffirm an African identity. The programme will focus on South Africa as part of a broader African context.

Regarding activities on **community development**, students will be able to:

- Use human and socio-economic capacity in the area of sustainable tourism by empowering previously ignored communities to enter business.
- Stimulate the economic development of local communities.
- Plan and implement community projects.
- Link with community agencies and the private sector in order to build partnerships for the purpose of community development and the promotion of the socio-economic development of communities.
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Students will become involved in **research** regarding sustainable tourism and indigenous knowledge systems and be able to:

- Collect oral data during research in order to record previously ignored histories and to develop tourism attractions accordingly.
- Acquire the necessary skills and attitudes in developing competence in conducting research.
- Identify and train community leaders (run mentorship programmes) in the field of sustainable tourism businesses in order to empower community members to become meaningful participants in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry and community.
- Liaise with the private sector and community agents, resulting in linked research with partners in the tourism industry regarding sex tourism.
- The research plan for sustainable tourism development at University level, should involve several phases:
 - The training of teachers to teach tourism at school level.
 - A tracking system to establish where students are employed.
 - The development of postgraduate studies in enhancing tourism research.
 - A summer institute in Tourism for High School learners.

The learner's personal growth and his/her service to the community will at all times be a core activity in linking theory to practice. Structured learning will go beyond the classroom by engaging communities through service activities that benefit learners as well as communities, promoting lifelong learning.

Ultimately, a programme leading to the award of a Tourism Degree aims to develop a learner who, on successful completion of the qualification, will be able

to be a meaningful role-player/participant/entrepreneur in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry and the community.

Conclusion

International and national partnerships are of the utmost importance in ensuring quality assurance, the raising of funds and to deliver learners that will meet the demands of the tourism industry. The media should at all times be informed of partnerships, tourism research and successes regarding tourism development.

International and national partnerships will at all times be of the utmost importance in order to ensure quality assurance and to deliver learners that will meet the demands of the tourism industry. Learners will have the opportunity to implement their specialized competencies (comprising of knowledge, skills and values) of the South African heritage domain by having an opportunity to select between Cultural and Nature-based Tourism.

Visitors from the industry will be involved in the training of learners in providing talks and introducing liaison work. The industrial relevance of subjects must be understood and quality assurance must prevail at all times. The involvement of tutors or mentors from the industry will be encouraged.

This qualification will address the urgent need to enable learners to enter the growing and very challenging industry of tourism. Tourist attractions will be identified and developed in previously ignored communities. Schools be included in awareness programmes whereby the importance of tourism will be highlighted. Teachers will be trained by means of short courses to teach Tourism in schools. Therefore, a broad spectrum of learners in South Africa will hereby be empowered to become meaningful participants in the community and tourism and to feel and create pride in their South African heritage.

Learning will go beyond the classroom where learners will engage in innovative research encompassing qualitative research techniques (including intensive personal contact with community members to tap into the vast indigenous knowledge in the community), collecting data in order to record history, and to develop tourism attractions to stimulate the economy of the local South African context. This will also be in synchronization with international requirements and demands since the international client will form a significant portion of the clientele.

It is my opinion that it is crucial that tertiary institutions should be included in tourism plans in developing and implementing learning programmes, which will not only address the needs of the tourism industry, but will also cater for the needs of previously disadvantaged communities in order to increase development in the area of sustainable tourism. This will not only mean more revenue for the country, but will also expand the market for more trained personnel in tourism.

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