

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY IN TOURISM EDUCATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

The new global challenges linked to climate emergency and ecological transition (CEandET) require professionals able to apply complex thinking to manage them and seek alternatives and/or strategies for adaptation at various scales.

Taking into account the current climate emergency situation and the complex challenges we face, it has become necessary to train citizens and professionals to overcome uni-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary focuses and acquire the capacity for inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary work. Study plans leading to acquisition of a diploma should therefore centre their aims on obtaining skills in this regard, to acquire knowledge about and for action and resolution of complex problems.

It is hence vital to ascertain whether this transition is occurring, if such knowledge is being conveyed or if the necessary skills are being trained in the university degree programmes responsible for educating a large proportion of those professionals or citizens. The inter-disciplinary nature of the tourism degrees, in line with the sector, and the existing relationship between tourism and climate change, makes conveying these skills seem simple, in principle, compared to other degrees.

This paper evaluates the presence of content associated to ecological transition (ET) and climate emergency (CE) in the eight tourism degrees offered in Andalusia. For that purpose, study plans, teaching projects and programmes for all respective subjects were compiled and analysed. They were subsequently examined in detail to identify the presence of terms linked to skill acquisition and content relating to sustainability, climate emergency and ecological transition. These were grouped according to rationale (theore-

tical, practical or ethical) and the goal pursued: understanding and ethics of the current reality (climate change, environmental, social and economic impacts, touristification, mass tourism or sustainability); offering alternatives or possible solutions geared toward ecological transition (smart tourism destinations, tourismdegrowth, de-touristification, slow tourism, holiday homes and collaborative tourism, among others) and acquiring of the practical capacity to resolve (managing, applying, enabling, etc).

2. RESULTS

2.1. Regarding the overall structure of Andalusian tourism degrees

In line with the inter-disciplinary nature of the tourism sector and its diplomas, the first results confirm the existence of notable diversity in the departments involved in Andalusian tourism degrees. A total of 103 different departments accordingly teach the 384 course units offered in these degrees (excluding internships and final degree work). This number varies from 18 at the universities of Seville and Granada to 8 in Huelva and Almería.

Regarding the overall structure of these diplomas, 22.4% of the subjects correspond to languages, while subjects linked to economics and business, including accounting, finance and marketing, account for 37.1%. The areas of geography and heritage together group 16.5%, while the technical units associated to statistics and informatics account for 5.4%, and 8.1% are linked to law units; 10.4% are connected to a broad range of subjects deriving from the large number of optional units in some degree programmes, among them communication, sociology and psychology.

Regardless of the type of courseunit offered (required, basic or elective), specific analysis of each degree shows that languages, followed by business and economics, are more present in all the degrees and account for more than half the units offered in the study plans of the universities of Huelva (58.2%), Almería (55.1%) and Jaén (53.5%).

After the aforementioned, geography accounts for a higher number of units in all the degrees; its presence is especially significant in Seville (11.8%), Granada (10.9%) and Málaga (10.6%). After geography come law and heritage, noteworthy in the degrees from Granada, Seville, Córdoba and Cádiz.

2.2. Regarding the subjects that impart related content and skills in Andalusian tourism degrees

Generally, 97 of the 384 subjects (25% of the total) include skills, thematic content or objectives associated to ecological transition and/or climate emergency in their programmes or in some of their teaching projects. Most of them are basic or compulsory subjects. Standing out over all others in the analysis by degrees is the tourism degree from the University of Granada, where 50% of the subjects taught include related content, followed by the degrees from Cádiz and Córdoba (with 37%). For their part, the degrees from Huelva, Málaga and Almería are those with a lower percentage of subjects that include content of this type, with 16% at the universities of Huelva and Málaga and 11% at that of Almería.

Of the 97 subjects that have related content, 42 merely mention it in the skills, while 32, besides citing it under that heading, include it in the syllabus. Other mention it in other parts of the programme, without citing it in the skills: 18 do so in the syllabus and 5 in the objectives or results expected; 6 of the 8 degrees present to a greater or lesser extent subjects in which the related content only appears in the skills, while the tourism degree from Córdoba records a higher number of subjects of this type – 12 out of 19 present the content in the skills, without developing it in the syllabus. This situation is similar in the tourism degree from Granada (9 of 22). Conversely and proportionately, it is in Málaga where there is more concern for including it in the syllabus, sometimes directly, without addressing it in the skills, while the cases of Jaén, Huelva, Seville and Cádiz present intermediate situations. Finally, 3 of the 8 degrees present subjects in which most of the content is found neither in the skills nor in the syllabus but rather in other points of the programme (introduction, objectives and expected results, etc). In this regard, the case of the University of Almería stands out.

A priori, centralising content in areas such as geography, history, anthropology, sociology and humanities could be considered. These departments are the ones responsible for teaching 47 of the 97 subjects with ET and CE content. Next are the economics departments, imparting 20 subjects of this type. Although the position of these departments does stand out, there is still substantial diversity.

2.3. Regarding the content and skills associated to Andalusian tourism degrees

Considering the content taught in these course units, the analysis of word clouds shows how besides the word tourism and its derivatives (touristic, tourist, etc), the concept of *sustainability* is repeated the most among the teaching projects and programmes. Also appearing consistently in them are terms linked to each of the pillars of sustainability (*environmental*, *social* and *economic*), which could be interpreted as the acquisition of inter-disciplinary skills needed for action. But the term *environmental* is the one most repeated, which might be interpreted as a partial understanding of sustainability, identifying it with the part concerning the environment. Likewise interesting is the high frequency of the term *territory* associated to activity of the geography departments.

Apart from this, a greater presence and repetition of concepts linked to cognizance of the current situation must be underlined, associated to ‘KNOWING’, while there is much less presence of terms associated to ‘KNOWING HOW’. Furthermore, words associated to ethical intent or ‘KNOWING HOW TO BE’ also appear and are repeated more than those linked to content for action or ‘KNOWING HOW’.

Notably, there is a total absence of emerging concepts associated to the new trends in development and understanding of global phenomena (ecological transition, climate change, climate emergency, down-growth, resilience, 2030 Goals, education for sustainable development, education for global citizenship, etc) and, more specifically, of parallel terms in the specialised literature (e.g. touristification, mass tourism, slow tourism and collaborative tourism, etc). Indeed, the presence of all these concepts is not small; it is nil.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The results show a very limited presence of CE and ET content: just 25% of the subjects include skills, thematic content or related objectives in their programmes or in any of their teaching projects. This statement is definitively verified when we analyse which sections such content appears in, as a large number of those units only mention it in the skills but do not reflect it in their syllabuses.

It is notable that most use the concept of sustainability as the backbone of the analysed content; encapsulation of content into ‘pills’ of theoretical (KNOWING) and ethical (KNOWING HOW TO BE AND TO VALUE) rationale is also seen, versus comprehensive ‘treatments’ that include skills for action (KNOWING HOW). Based on these results, there is a derived need to undertake a thorough revision of the approaches, skills and content from the study plans (downward) to the teaching projects and programmes (upward). Likewise, the absence of emerging concepts associated to the new trends in development and understanding of global phenomena, and the repetition of concepts linked to knowledge of the current situation, suggest the need to review the different degrees’ content, updating syllabuses and learning strategies in order to include the absent skills, content and approaches, and also to avoid unnecessary overlapping or repetitions.

Tourism is one of the world’s major industries with respect to the generation of capital, jobs and income, though also regarding territorial transformations and ecological footprint. The political (solid discourse, laws, plans) and economic (environmental standards, social responsibility, etc) incidence of a new culture of (tourism) development, as well as complex and globally-oriented thinking, requires more academic occurrence of the content-referred to, on the one hand, and stronger knowledge for action (KNOWING HOW) via meaningful new learning, on the other.

Introduction of the aforementioned theoretical approaches and the development of new learning methodologies may empower students (and future professionals) of tourism to ‘take control’ of their future and help them implement comprehensive visions leading to socially responsible, environmentally respectful and economically profitable enterprises and administrations.