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The Dragon is Roaring... The Development of Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management Education in China

Gu Huimin, Perry Hobson, PhD

Abstract

This paper analyses the development of Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management (THE) Education in China. It particularly focuses on the changes in the past 25 years and how education in this field is evolving in terms of scale, expansion and quality improvement. Also discussed are government policies related to China's internationalization of THE education, characteristics, problems and strategies in terms of how higher education institutions can initiate international cooperation. The paper suggests there is an emerging voice from the Chinese tourism academy, but it is still comparatively weak and quality issues in education will become the main focus after the rapid expansion of the last 25 years. Currently paradoxes exist of generalization and specialization, internationalization and national agendas, and will continue to remain as challenges in the future.

Keywords: THE, Chinese education institution, international cooperation

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe the changes that have taken place in tourism and hospitality education in China's universities. Consequently the paper describes the growth in tourism, hospitality and event management education with reference to student numbers, numbers of courses and spatial distribution of participating universities. It continues with an analysis of some of the problems that have emerged during this process, and indicates a need for co-operation with universities outside of China. However, such cooperation has to exist within specified legal arrangements, and these are also briefly outlined. The paper concludes with a series of observations about the current and immediate future of tourism education in China.

The tourism and hospitality industry is the world's largest employer. In 2005, it is believed this industry employed in excess of 260 million people worldwide (CNTA=2006). This number is expected to grow to over 330 million people in just five years by 2011.

Tourism in China has experienced consistent and significant growth since the early 1980s due to the open-door economic

reform policy adopted in 1978. According to the statistics of China national Tourism Administration (CNTA), tourism growth in China from 1990 to 2004 saw international arrivals increase from 27.5 million to 120 million visitors. This represents a 19% annual growth rate from 1980 through 2005. At the same time, receipts from tourism grew from US \$2.2 billion in 1990 to US \$29 billion in 2005. Tourism growth has had an equivalent effect on job growth. As of 2005, there were more than 2.6 million people working in the tourism industry in China, with about 1.5 million people working in the lodging industry, 250,000 in travel agencies and 1.5 million in other sectors of the industry (CNTA2006).

As stated by Du (2003), Johns & Teare (1995), Lam & Xiao (2000), Wu & Li. (2006) and Zhou (1991), current demand and future growth place significant pressure on an education system to prepare a qualified workforce to handle the important responsibilities associated with providing quality products and services to the traveling public. Inherent in this demand for a well prepared workforce is the need for professional management and leadership. One important platform for preparing the industry's future leadership is higher education. The response to the demand for well educated tourism and hospitality managerial staff in China has been the growth in the number of total education institutions involved in tourism, hospitality and event management to 1336 in 2005, of which 693 are college-level and 643 are vocational schools, with over half a million students, divided nearly equally between institutions of higher education and secondary vocational schools (CNTA, 2006). Table 1 shows the increase of tourism education programs and students in the last 16 years. From these figures, we can see that there has been a significant increase in higher education programs with, however, a decreasing number of admissions to secondary vocational schools. This is also reflective of the main stream of China's education reform based on the rapid expansion of higher education since 1998.

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Table 1
Growth of THE Education Institutions & Students
in China 1990-2005

	Education Institutions		Students(hundred)	
	No.	%	No.	%
1990	215		490	
1991	266	23.7	581	18.6
1992	258	-3.0	614	5.7
1993	354	37.2	827	34.7
1994	399	12.7	1021	23.5
1995	622	55.9	1393	36.4
1996	845	35.9	2043	46.7
1997	936	10.8	2215	8.4
1998	909	-2.9	2338	5.6
1999	1187	30.6	2764	18.2
2000	1195	0.7	3279	18.6
2001	1152	-3.6	3428	4.5
2002	1113	-3.4	4170	21.6
2003	1207	8.4	4590	10.1
2004	1313	8.8	5786	26.1
2005	1336	1.8	5664	-2.1

Sources: China National Tourism Administraton. (1991-2006). *The Yearbook of China Tourism Statistics*. Beijing: China Tourism & Travel Press.

The Development of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management Education (THE) in China

The History of THE Education Development in China

China's tourism, hospitality & event management education (THE) has developed with the sustained growth of China's economy and associated social changes. Zhang & Fan (2005) and Tao (1997) divide the development into three phases, the first phase from 1949 to 1978, the second from 1978 to the mid- 1990s and the third phase from that time to the present, with each phase having its own focus due to different stages of tourism development. In order to more specifically outline the characteristics of this evolution, this paper adopts 4 phases, including a 'closing-door phase', 'introduction phase', 'growth phase' and 'mature phase'. The characteristics of each have been listed in Table 2.

Closing-door phase (1949-1977)

This phase was from the founding of the PRC (in 1949) to the reform period and opening-up of China to the outside world. Due to the 'Cold War' of the 1950s until the 1970s, China had almost no links with any foreign countries other than those of the

socialist block. Tourism was considered as an offshoot of political reciprocity, and the few organizations dealt with foreign travel like the Overseas Travel service (the predecessor of today's China Travel Services) and China International Travel Services dealt with 'political travel' and were among the first employers recruiting guides to speak foreign languages, especially Russian. The major providers of this talent were mainly from universities or vocational schools majoring in foreign languages, like Beijing Second Foreign Languages Institute (the predecessor of today's Beijing International Studies University). From the perspective of the domestic tourism industry, hospitality education focused primarily on Chinese food and the culinary arts with very little contribution derived from western ideology.

Introduction phase (1978-1985). This is the beginning of China's modern THE resulting from opening up to the outside world. In 1978, the first full time vocational secondary tourism school, Jiangsu Tourism Technical School (now Nanjing Tourism School), was founded, followed by China's first tourism institute of higher education, Shanghai Institute of Tourism (now merged into Shanghai Normal University) a year later. Since

then, tourism vocational schools have mushroomed throughout the county (Zhang & Fan, 2005), including the Sichuan Tourism Schools and Guilin Tourism Institute.

In 1980, the first university level education program offering a bachelor degree in Tourism Economics and Management was launched in Zhejiang University by CNTA and marked the start of higher education in THE in China. A year later, Beijing International Studies University, Nankai University, Northwest University had their first intake of students. THE education in this phase was following the rapid growth of inbound tourism development and CNTA's development strategy, with a major focus on tour guide and hospitality management training. The geographic location of these institutions was mainly in tourist cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xian and Guilin. Due to the shortage of education resources in tourism, traditional disciplines like history and geography in other universities were transferred to tourism education and provided a practical solution to rising demand, a process from which tourism studies also benefited.

Growth phase (1986-2004)

Table 2

Tourism Education Lifecycle in China

Phase	Tourism Development	Education Scale	Education Pattern	Education Focus	Education Level	Geographic Distribution
Pre-opening	No tourism in China, focus on retail and food service, political reception	Small, less than 10 universities	Retail studies, foreign language studies	Food service, culinary studies, tour guide	Vocational school, BA	Big commercial cities
Introduction Phase (1979-1985)	Rapid development of inbound tourism	Less than 10 universities offering programs in economic & management field	Tourism economics, foreign language studies (tour guide)	Hospitality management, tourism economics	Vocational, BA	Tourist cities such as Beijing, Hangzhou, Xian, Shanghai, Guilin, Tianjin
Growth Phase 1 (1986-1997)	Rapid development of inbound tourism, domestic tourism and outbound tourism	More than 1000 programs establishes	Economic, Management Geography, Art	Tourism planning, destination management, hospitality management, tour guide	Vocational, BA, Master, PhD	From coastal areas to China
Growth Phase 2 (1998-2004)	Rapid development of domestic tourism and outbound tourism, convention	Accelerate to reach biggest scale in terms of student enrolment in the world	Multi- discipline	Tourism Leisure & Recreation, Hospitality, Event management, Heritage	Vocational, BA, Master, PhD	From coastal areas to China
Mature Phase (2005- present)	Steady development		Multi- discipline		Vocational, BA, Master, PhD	Whole China

In 1986, the Chinese government deregulated the tourism industry and replaced a highly centralized system with a decentralized one. Other sectoral interests also established various interests in tourism and partly as a result, education institutions belonging to other disciplines almost literally swarmed into tourism education at an average increase rate of more than 20% in the number of tourism schools and students. The geographic distribution expanded swiftly from coastal areas to all over China. In order to meet the challenges of population growth and unemployment, in 1998, China adopted the policy of a massive expansion of university enrolments. From 1999 to 2005, tourism colleges of higher education increased in number from 209 to 574, and students increased from 50 to 275,000 (a 480% growth rate). While higher education programs were experiencing rapid growth, vocational school numbers were decreasing in number due to a lack of recognition and competition from higher education. The number of schools fell from 978 to 739, but the student numbers still increased from 220,000 to 300,000. The

pace of growth raised many questions for THE higher education in terms of the quality of programs, such as, the shortage of experienced faculty, shortage of education facilities, perceived reduction in student quality, competition in student employment et cetera. For example, in 1999, the average number of students in the education program was 233, but by the year 2004, it reached 440, and the ratio of faculty/students reached 1:27.5 (CNTA, 2000, 2005), far exceeding the required rate of 1:15 set by the Ministry of Education of China. According to one survey, teachers with doctoral degrees only accounted for 16.4% of staff and 48.7% had a master's degree as their highest qualification (Gu. et. al., 2006).

The multi-disciplinary nature of provision during this phase also generated by-products of non-uniformity in the education system. Tourism education expanded from being business oriented into planning, arts, sociology, anthropology et cetera. The positive side of this movement was in of the avoidance of a narrow focus to studies, while a negative side meant little com-

munication existed between scholars and university programs and a lack of a disciplinary focus emerged. Quality control became critical but was very difficult to monitor due to a lack of uniform standards. The other feature in this phase, an increase in graduate studies, will be discussed later.

Mature phase (2005~ present)

There are several aspects of changes in this stage. The first is from quantity to qualitative development. Circumstances began to change after the period of rapid expansion and a demand for a cooling down of an overheated college sector started. The over expansion of education forced China to change from quantity development into qualitative development. In 2004, the China Education Commission launched a system of higher education assessment, urging all universities and colleges to participate in a 5-year round of assessment. The Commission established comprehensive assessment criteria covering all aspects of higher education. Universities or colleges that could not match the standard were to be removed from the list of Chinese universities. This has the potential to increase quality but a "one system to fit all" may mislead education programs and remove the special features of individual institutions. A major-specific system is now in its testing phase and the outcomes still need time to unfold. No tourism education assessment has started at the time of writing in 2007.

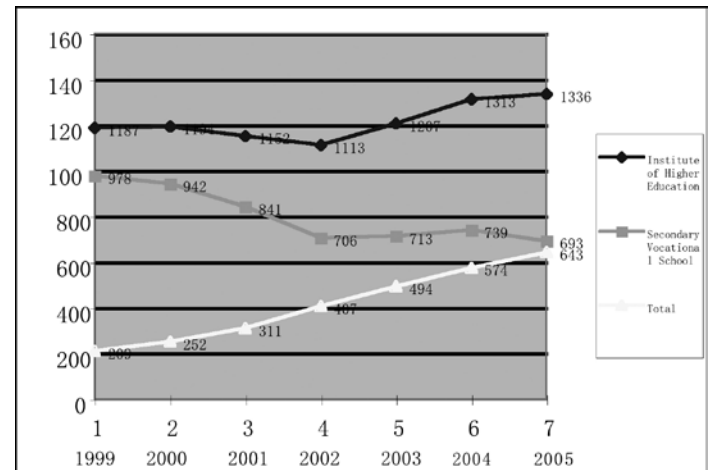
The mature phase indicates the second change from a government funded to an individual fee paid system, especially for graduate students. This has increased tension in and criticism of China's education by society generally. Consequently, education has become one of the top three critical issues (the other two are medical care and pensions) for a Chinese government trying to maintain a harmonious society. But the impacts of the self-

funded system on tourism education are still yet to be revealed.

Another change is the privatization of education. Currently, the majority of education programs are in the public sector and

Figure 1

1999-2005 Number of Tourism Schools and Colleges

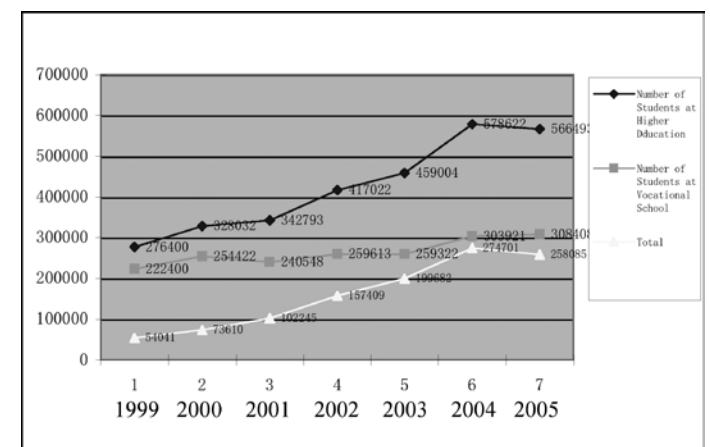


* Tourism Institutes: Tourism colleges and ordinary institutes of higher education with tourism departments.

** Secondary Vocational Schools: Secondary tourism professional schools, vocational tourism high schools, tourism classes at secondary professional schools, vocational high schools, and technical schools.

Figure 2

1999-2005 Number of Tourism Students in China

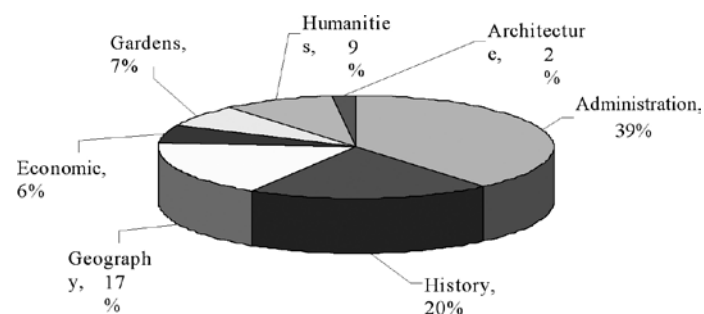


* Tourism Institutes: Tourism colleges and ordinary institutes of higher education with tourism departments.

** Secondary Vocational Schools: Secondary tourism professional schools, vocational tourism high schools, tourism classes at secondary professional schools, vocational high schools, and technical schools.

Figure 3

The School of Tourism Management Degree programs in China



Source: Wu, T. & Li, X. (2006). A Research on Higher Tourism Education in China. Tourism Tribune, Special Issue on Human Resources and Education and Teaching.

private schools lie lower in the education hierarchy. As a consequence of the reform policy, started on an economic premise of private enterprise, education is now encouraged to be owned and operated in a more diverse manner, although private schools still yield very low value for most Chinese people.

The fourth feature of tourism education in this phase is the movement from teaching to research. This is largely the result of a government policy to establish 'an innovative society' to increase the global competitiveness of China through research and development. The increase in research funding from government at different levels has led universities to be more research oriented than before. The establishing of research centers has become a trend in most universities and colleges.

Other features include internationalization and diversification of education that will be discussed later.

In general, China has experienced the development from a purely domestic oriented tourism education at a small scale into an internationally oriented, large scale and multi-disciplinary based THE education.

Geographic Distribution

In terms of geographic distribution, THE education programs in China are located in those regions of economic, population, educational structure and tourism development. Most of these programs are in the coastal areas and the large provinces of Hunan, Shandong and Beijing. In terms of tourism higher education programs, the top three (largest in number) are Jiangsu, Shandong and Chongqing. In terms of student numbers, the top ten is headed by Guangdong, Shandong and Sichuan. Beijing is ranked 11th and 22th in tourism education and student numbers. Shanghai ranks 19th. Guangdong, Sichuan and Chongqing have the highest student ratios while Jiangsu and Zhejiang have relatively low ratios as shown in Table 3 that shows the distribution of tourism programs in the different regions in China in 2004.

Education Level

Tourism education has indeed charted some significant success in establishing itself as an important element in the education repertoire at virtually all levels for students, from about the age of 16 years (Airey & Tribe, 2005). THE educational programs are very much practically oriented. Among all the education programs in China in 2004, 45% offered higher education degrees and 55% provided vocational education (see Figures 1 & 2). China also faces a problem of an overt vocational orientation, which has been good for attracting students, but poor for academic reputation (Airey & Tribe, 2005).

In the 1980s, universities seldom provided graduate education in tourism, but, as noted, significant changes occurred in the 1990s. Currently, more than 200 universities have graduate

programs and more than 10 universities provide a doctoral degree in tourism and/or hospitality management (CNTA, 2004). As in other countries, constraints imposed by the paucity of scholarship/research funding places strains on an institution's capacities to provide experienced supervision (Botterill & Gale, 2005). This leads to an increase of graduate students, especially PhD students, going abroad (Bao, 2002). In China, Beijing and Shanghai have the best education resources due to concentrated economies of scale found in large population centers, but the numbers of institutions that can offer PhD students are far behind that of Guangdong. The imbalance in education resources may diminish the attractiveness of the programs and hinder their healthy development.

Discipline Distribution

As discussed previously, THE education possesses a multi-disciplinary feature in China due to the comprehensive nature of the subject and the origins of its development. According to Wang Jie (2006), most tourism management courses in China are managed by non-tourism-related disciplines, such as foreign languages, landscaping/gardening, history and geography (See Figure 3). Approximately 39% of the tourism departments are found in Schools of Administration because tourism management courses are the sub-courses of Business Administration and the majority of tourism graduates receive a Bachelor degree in Administration. Another 20% of all students are from the Schools of Humanities because the demand for history graduates has declined in the society and the establishment of tourism management degree courses has become a 'self-rescue package' for these schools. Similarly, about 17% are Schools of Geography that developed tourism management courses as an expansion and application in urban planning and landscape architecture during this period. According to the Report on the Development of Tourism Degree Education in China, twenty-five of all the universities that have tourism management courses had established schools with names including the word 'Tourism' by 2005. Only seven are independent schools in tourism while eighteen are established joined with other specialties - including eight with History and Culture, five with Administration, and three with the specialty of Geography (Wu & Li, 2005).

The Event Management Education in China

Like tourism and hospitality education in China in the 1980's, Event Management education started late but with rapid development in recent years due to the expansion of the MICE industry. The 2008 Olympics and 2010 Shanghai Expo are among the triggers of this growth. The first program was launched in 2001 by the Shanghai Arts Specialty Institute with a major in Exhibition Design. By the year 2004, the institutions initiating programs increased to 66 with 3,500 students (Ding, 2005).

Table 3

Major Statistics of Tourism Schools and Colleges in China (2005)

Locality	Number of Tourism Schools and Colleges			Number of Students at Tourism Schools and Colleges		
	Total	Institutes of Higher Education	Secondary Vocational Schools	Total	Institutes of Higher Education	Secondary Vocational Schools
Total	1336	693	643	566493	308408	258085
Beijing	94	28	66	26854	5310	21544
Tianjin	15	5	10	3702	1924	1778
Hebei	56	36	20	15782	11998	3784
Shanxi	34	22	12	10236	5943	4293
Inner Mongolia	5	3	2	1801	1475	326
Liaoning	86	22	64	29293	10076	19217
Jilin	21	14	7	6897	5796	1101
Heilongjiang	59	38	21	14306	8660	5646
Shanghai	31	15	16	14286	6064	8222
Jiangsu	89	59	30	23301	16270	7031
Zhejiang	48	32	16	24356	11230	13126
Anhui	54	30	24	14234	6600	7634
Fujian	51	31	20	17948	13383	4565
Jiangxi	40	21	19	21477	15063	6414
Shandong	94	53	41	39362	27843	11519
Henan	54	37	17	18827	6669	12158
Hubei	54	38	16	22998	8721	14277
Hunan	104	36	68	31211	11623	19588
Guangdong	59	23	36	63866	34958	28908
Guangxi	40	21	19	20370	11048	9322
Hainan	18	9	9	25515	20452	5063
Sichuan	39	20	19	35957	23018	12939
Chongqing	91	41	50	50431	22722	27709
Guizhou	29	7	22	3954	2012	1942
Yunnan	11	9	2	11545	7906	3639
Tibet	1	1	0	586	586	0
Shaanxi	19	10	9	10767	6364	4403
Gansu	15	13	2	2596	1798	798
Qinghai	6	4	2	1232	757	475
Ningxia	3	2	1	929	629	300
Xinjiang	16	13	3	1874	1510	364

Sources: China National Tourism Administration (2006). The Yearbook of China Tourism Statistics
Beijing: China Tourism & Travel Press.

As a new subject, these institutions teaching event management reflected a multi-disciplinary origin. The main disciplines can be grouped into six categories: Tourism Management (Beijing International Studies University, Guangzhou University, Zhongshan University, Fudan University); Business Administration (Beijing Union University, Shanghai Communication University, Shenyang Vocational Institute), International trade (Xiamen International Exhibition Institute, Wanli Institute, Ningbo), Advertising (Zhejiang University, Shanghai University), Art Designing (Beijing Communication University, Jilin University, Shanghai Engineering & Technology Institute), Foreign Language (Shanghai Bangde Vocational Institute). The curriculum mainly covers event design, event management, display design, decoration and meeting services (Liu, 2006).

In terms of level of course provision, vocational schools account for most (80%) while higher education establishments account for the remainder. In 2005, 14 universities have the authority to offer a bachelor degree in event education. In general, China's event education is in a growth phase. The high demand for students has led to an overly 'hot expansion market', thus causing challenges in a shortage of qualified staff and other education resources. The threat of over-supply may soon exist if no regulation is introduced by the government.

International Cooperation

Globalization has resulted in an expansion of international cooperation in China's higher education. After China's accession to the WTO, international cooperation has been a main stream pattern in China's higher education. This trend has and will continue to greatly influence the pace and pattern of globalization of China's tourism, hospitality and event management education. As China is highly controlled by government in education, international cooperation with foreign partners also needs approval by the government. There are basically three types of cooperation at this moment: International Cooperative Organization, International Cooperative program and International exchange program. Table 4 lists the characteristics of the three types of cooperation and their advantages and disadvantages.

International Cooperative Organization

This is a form of educational organization officially authorized by the Chinese government. According to Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2003) and Announcement of Enhancing Administration of Degree Provision in Joint Education by China and Foreign Countries (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2004), Chinese-Foreign

Table 4

China & Foreign Education Cooperation

	International Cooperate Organization	International Cooperate program	International exchange program
Authority organization	municipal government, China Education Administration	municipal government, China Education Administration	university
Cooperation activities	international campus for international institutions, official recruitment of students in China, official recognition of degree, cooperate in all the education activities	official recruitment of students in China, official recognition of degree, cooperate in all the education activities	cooperate in all the education activities, like 2+2, 3+1, short term student exchange, short term non-degree programs, staff exchange, research cooperation etc.
Degree offer	Chinese, International	international	based on agreement
Advantages	tight cooperation, high involvement, flexible in establishing programs and curriculum design, recognition, long term authority, relatively low cost, low competition	tight cooperation, high involvement, flexible in establishing programs and curriculum design, recognition, big market, relatively low cost, low competition	easy to be approved, flexible in establishing programs and curriculum design, No barriers from government,
Challenges	difficult to get approval from government, restrict controlled	difficult to get approval from government, restrict control	loose cooperation, low involvement, low recognition, short term, difficult in getting authorized degree from both sides, high competition, high cost

Cooperation in Running Schools permits cooperative educational activities between foreign and Chinese educational institutions in establishing educational institutions within the territory of China to provide education primarily for Chinese citizens.

Based on the regulation, the State encourages Chinese-foreign cooperation in the field of higher education and vocational education, whereby Chinese institutions of higher learning cooperate with 'renowned' foreign institutions of higher learning. Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools can enjoy preferential policies decreed by the State and enjoy autonomy when conducting educational activities in accordance with the appropriate law. They should meet the needs of the development of China's educational system, ensure the quality of teaching and make efforts to train all kinds of skills and talents that are needed for China's socialist society. These programs are specifically encouraged in central and western China. Educational institutions of various types at various levels can be established except for those offering compulsory education or special education for the military, police and political services. Furthermore, no foreign religious organization, religious institution, religious college and university or religious worker may engage in cooperative activities of running schools within the territory of China. Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools shall not offer religious education, nor conduct religious activities. The other restriction is that foreign education institutions, other organizations or person are not allowed to solely establish schools or education organizations which mainly recruit Chinese students. Additionally the degrees provided by the authorized cooperative organizations should meet the standards regulated by the degree audit of the China State Department Degree Committee. The authorized organization is forbidden to run a profitable business other than education and should not recruit students during its preparatory stage. The education administrative department is responsible for overall planning, comprehensive coordination and control for all Chinese-foreign cooperative activities in running schools nationwide. The education administrative department, the labour administrative department and other relevant administrative departments are responsible for work in relation to Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools in accordance with their functions and duties.

International Cooperate program

The International cooperation program is an authorized program run by a Chinese organization with a foreign education organization. This program started in 1995, and 45 university programs have been approved in China. An example in tourism and hospitality is a "Master of Hospitality & Tourism Management" run by International Enterprises Training Center, Zhejiang University and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The students are mainly from the Chinese tourism and hospitality industry. This cooperation is a win-win strategy for both parties in

terms of faculty exchange, textbook development, educational innovation as well as education management and services.

International exchange program

This is the most commonly used method of cooperation. Activities range from 2+2 and 3+1 arrangements to short term student exchanges, short term non-degree programs, staff exchange, student internship and research cooperation. Since it is relatively easy to conduct such programs without a rigid application process to the China Education Ministry, a large number of universities and other institutions are using these programs with their international partners. The disadvantage of this way is that both cooperating partners may have difficulties in reaching more favorable conditions in terms of student recruitment and degree offer. Other risks include low commitment, lower recognition, and higher competition.

The Future Trends and Challenges

The emergence of Chinese voice in international THE education arena

Growth in THE education is a reaction to the importance of tourism as a global social and economic activity while the steady development of the tourism and event industry in China will continue to provide an impetus for THE education in the future. As Tribe (2001) noted, "tourism research leadership will pass from the UK to our international competitors" and China will be among these competitors. This will be supported by strong economic growth and tourism industry development. The other stimulation for China's changing position in the academic arena will be the initiatives for "building an innovative oriented society", with more emphasis on research and development. Funding from government and other bodies will help THE education programs in China to gain better resources domestically as well as internationally. Currently, the better educated and more internationally exposed young scholars have become basis for educational innovation. The wave of returning scholars and students will reinforce the Chinese voice in international education and research, especially when, during this initial period, linking with well established western researchers. Despite this bright future, the current reality is that only a small number of scholars and teachers can meet international standards, and the majority of staff fall behind their western counterparts in terms of knowledge and practical industry experience due primarily to the past impact of the traditional Chinese education model. The development of a theoretical contribution by Chinese scholars is still deficient and thus far the mainland Chinese voice has not reached the international tourism academy. Language proficiency is a major barrier to mutual communication between Chinese and international scholars. Consequently, as with all education, the human resource will always need to be the center of and for future development.

Paradox of generalization or specialization

The development of education in China is a political mission and thus the means of teaching of China's higher education is based on an approved "solid foundation and high adaptability". As a consequence, THE curriculum in China pays attention to a breadth of knowledge, such as foreign language learning, an introduction to visited destinations, tourism psychology, tourism etiquette, and public relations etc. In the comprehensive universities especially the "211"¹ universities, the curriculum tends to be general rather than specialized. This causes tourism programs to be less important compared to other disciplines, especially in a business school. Students have more variety in the selection of other subjects in a wide range of related academic areas. Yet the weakness of the tourism curriculum in China is its lack of specialization that results in a shortage of skilled students able to meet the current discipline based demands of the labor market in the tourism industry in China (Wang, 2006). The lack of specialisation also results in a lower recognition of students, especially when they have their internship period in industry, particularly in the hospitality area, where the work placements at the initial phase are very poorly paid and possess low social standing (Wang. et.al., 2006; Zou, 2004).

Specialized universities or colleges also face the challenge of lower standing in the competition for gaining educational resources from government and other channels. Due to their low ranking in the university list, they have to face a lower quality of students, unfavorable research funding opportunities, and less opportunity to gain high level education programs, especially PhD programs. This results in the leakage of quality staff and hinders the attraction of new talent. Specialized universities or colleges should be treated as the equals of comprehensive universities and this could happen if they follow a tighter disciplinary base.

Another feature specific to the Chinese education system is the mode of entry by competitive university entrance examinations where the student has not only to pass the examination to gain entry to a desired program of study, but has to achieve required grades for the given three tiers of universities. The most capable students seek entry to tier one universities, which tend to be research and theoretically oriented. Students entering hospitality, tourism and event management courses in these universities might receive less practical orientation. On the other hand, students entering a tier three university may be exposed to less experienced teaching staff. These considerations are conjectural in that no research on issues of tier of university, subsequent entry into the industry and industry's retention of staff gained from universities has been undertaken, but it is a factor that requires some attention, if only to ascertain whether any relationships between these

1 211 universities refer to the universities which have been approved by China Education Administration as the qualified programs of the "211 Project". The list of universities can be found in: [http:// www. eol.cn](http://www.eol.cn)

variables exist.

Internationalization or nationalization

While the "going abroad wave" and "program internationalization" still prevails in China, problems have also been raised. One is the degree of recognition by the Chinese government. For example, a many Chinese students have studied hospitality management in various Swiss hotel schools from the 1990's, but only the degree from Ecole Hoteliere De Lausanne is recognized as a university level qualification, and the remaining qualifications are ranked only as vocational awards. The other example is the one-year master program offered by some international universities. Despite its competitiveness in attracting students, these degrees face the challenge of less importance being placed on them by Chinese employers. The common phrasing of "Sea Turtle" (highly recognized returned student from abroad) to "Seaweed" (returned students from abroad waiting for jobs) reflects this problem. It should be noted that too easy an acquisition of a degree will eventually result in a general reluctance to have these degrees in the Chinese employment market. Consequently, it is estimated that universities with non-recognized degrees will eventually be withdraw from the Chinese education market by the Chinese government. It is obvious that students will be more interested in the better known universities, and branding of universities and programmes will be critical.

In terms of international cooperation, Chinese government education policy is still not clear. As discussed previously, the Chinese government has a policy to encourage international organizations to establish joint cooperative organizations and programs with Chinese partners, but so far only two cooperative education organizations and 45 cooperative programs have been approved officially in China. There are more than a hundred program applications that have not been approved. A large number of international cooperative programs are either illegal or cannot be implemented, with the former causing degree recognition problems. There is no sign that this policy will be loosened in the short-term. In response to rigid regulation, the easiest way will be to have cooperative exchanges of students.

Conclusion

The dragon is roaring. In the last 30 years, a favorable environment of enormous economic growth and massive social change have resulted in the origin of a modern Chinese THE education program and accelerated the resources available for further development. Parallel to the development of the tourism industry as an economic driver in the world economy, THE education in China should also have its voice in terms of academic innovation and practice. Many ingredients for the success for THE education are already in place, but they need further improvement.

First among these key successful factors will be the quality and

development of the academic staff as researchers as well as teachers (Airey & Tribe, 2005). In an uncertain and dynamic world, China should be cautious of its sustainable THE development in the long run. A rational rather than fickle development program might help in the future. China has already experienced quantity expansion to become one of the largest THE education bodies in the world, now it is time to focus on quality education. A better quality assessment system including more rigorous international and discipline based curriculum should be introduced and implemented.

Second, cultural reform should be launched as a turning point in China's education. The "Seeking children to be the dragon" attitude has been an obstacle for a well balanced human resource pool as few parents are willing to see their children work in what are perceived as "serving" sectors. The success of cultivating and retaining talent will largely depend on providing different levels of education, rather than purely at senior levels based on masters or PhD awards. Education should not only meet the needs of education providers, but more importantly benefit the economy by matching the demands of industry and society as a whole. Otherwise the system is at risk of generating large numbers of students who only know the theory of a wide range of subjects but never have and are not willing to gain experiences and skills based on more fundamental disciplines, thereby causing a huge loss to China.

Third, education institutions should be more market oriented, albeit within systems that monitor and reward quality. Although confusion will definitely occur when deregulating the system of education, the market signals will eventually become clear and should be followed subject to a more holistic view of educational need.

Last but not least, international cooperation will eventually be the way for Chinese THE education to be more competitive. An international campus of a foreign education institution might be a threat to Chinese education institutions in the short term, but will enhance China to gain more competitive advantages in the longer run. Experiences from economic and other reforms has already proved that "Dancing with wolf" is a win-win strategy for both the Chinese and international partners. The door has been opened, and should not and will not be closed again.

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