

CURRENT TRENDS AND PROSPECTS OF TOURISM EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN GREECE

by Polyxeni Moira, Dimitrios Mylonopoulos, Stavroula Kefala

Abstract

Education and training have always been considered factors of utmost importance in economic development. To this aim, governments constantly strive to develop effective education systems, creating education and training structures at different levels which reflect the socio-economic conditions of each state. Since tourism as a social activity is internationally recognized as contributing significantly to economic and cultural development, the organization of the tourism education and training system is a research area of particular academic interest. More specifically, the structure of tourism education can be often confusing for both trainees and employers. This confusion is accentuated by factors such as the diversity of tourism as an interdisciplinary field and its inherent feature of employment seasonality, features directly linked to tourism enterprises, SME structure, function and employability opportunities. This article delves into the multidimensional system of tourism education and training in Greece, a country that is economically reliant on tourism. In particular, the education system is being analysed during the period of the country's economic crisis. Findings point out long-standing weaknesses of the education system intensified by uncoordinated political action under the pressure of the economic crisis. Analysis of tourism educational policy can possibly account for the ways knowledge is translated into practice, particularly in the area of small firms. This paper aspires to point out the relationship between government policy in Higher Education and small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) by highlighting the importance of tourism education on local economy. It turns out that in Greece, tourism education and training suffers from inherent weaknesses that are not necessarily due to the economic crisis but are potentially exacerbated by it.

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1. Introduction

It is an undisputable fact that there is a direct relationship between an educational system, a country's economy and its productive capacity. (Becker, 1974: 15-16; Mincer, 1975: 72-73; OECD, 2004: 6). The interdependence of education and the economy is essentially determined by social reality, since potential employees are expected to demonstrate skills and qualifications acquired through a high level of education or training. "Vocational education and training of human resources in tourism play an important role in the development of the tourism industry and hence in the national, regional and global economy" (Deaconu et al. 2018). According to this reasoning, the more qualified the employee, the greater his/her potential professional power. Tourism as an economic activity affects many sectors of a country's economy, namely transportation, accommodation, food & beverage, recreation and entertainment. As a complex "industry" covering a wide range of economic activities, tourism requires substantial investment in human capital.

The tourist industry in Greece is experiencing significant growth. According to the Greek Tourism Business Association (SETE in Greek), tourism in 2014 contributed directly to the creation of at least 9% of the country's GDP, while its direct and indirect contribution was estimated at 20% to 25%. According to available data, tourism is the driving engine of the Greek economy, with an estimated growth of 11.3% or € 1.8 billion in 2014 (from € 15.2 billion of direct contribution to the GDP in 2013 to € 17 billion in 2014 (Ikkos/SETE, 2015: 13). Concerning employment in tourism, it amounted to 9.3% of the total number of employees in the country since 2014, compared to 3.9% in 1983 and 7.0% in 2008. In 2016, the total number of employees in tourism according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority amounted to 341.2 thousand (Ikkos/SETE, 2015: 12-13). The SETE stresses that in terms of competitiveness, Greece cannot differentiate itself from competing countries at a cost level but at the level of product diversification and the offer of rich tourist experiences, provided there are well-trained human resources available (SETE 2005: 56).

The European Commission, in its Communication on "Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness" (SWD (2016) 195 final), considers it important to improve the skills shortages in various economic operators and launches a strategy plan for cross-sectoral cooperation in this field. The strategy plan was initially implemented based on a demand driven process in six sectors, including tourism. In many host countries it is deemed necessary to create modern educational programs that will facilitate the education and training of staff and executives in tourism companies whose specialized knowledge and skills will contribute to the qualitative upgrading of the tourist offer. Tourism educa-

tion is therefore increasingly linked to sustainability (Moscardo, Benckendorff, 2015). In many host countries it is deemed necessary to create modern educational programs that will facilitate the education and training of staff and executives in tourism companies whose specialized knowledge and skills will contribute to the qualitative upgrading of the tourist offer.

It is widely accepted that the upgrading of the provided tourist services is achieved only through the education and training of human capital employed by major tourist enterprises and by increasing the student' engagement and skills. (Moscardo, Benckendorff, 2015, Farber Canziani et al. 2012). In particular, employers consider trained staff as a means to increase productivity and improve the quality of services that will consequently increase their company's profits. States are seeking to accelerate tourism development and boost competitiveness. Employees embrace training because their increase in performance, thanks to their tourist education, tends to increase their earnings (Dessler, 2013, Wilkinson et al. 2017). However, the appropriate training of human capital, necessary in a developed or growing tourism industry, presupposes the existence of a well-organized system of tourism education and vocational training. Training and training systems play an important role in the upgrading of skills. New forms of work organization and a more and more complex business environment require new approaches to training (Friis, 2001: 1). Acquisition and development of skills are vital to the performance and modernization of labor markets to provide new forms of flexibility and security for jobseekers, workers and employers (SWD (2016) 195 final).

2. The study

The survey was conducted from January to September 2018 due to the fact that major changes were taking place at the time, and are still underway, concerning the upgrading of tourism education and especially the merging of academic institutions which also affected tourism and hospitality paths of study.

The paper argues that tertiary tourism education in Greece is gradually being adapted to fit new emerging needs as a result of the economic crisis. This process of transformation has been carried out largely through mergers of University departments or the closing down of others. This could be considered as an effort to eliminate previous dead-end paths of study and limit the offer of available programmes. These moves are seen as providing the ground for efficient management of study options available at different levels and leading to different degrees, simultaneously steering future professionals towards more specific careers according to market needs. Another point of this paper is that in times of economic crisis, market needs

should be reflected in the education and training of future professionals in two opposing directions. On the one hand by developing higher level tertiary academic curricula and providing students with a solid academic knowledge and background, and on the other hand by developing vocational programmes aiming at attracting professionals willing to fill the increasing needs for professional practitioners with practical skills. One of the proposed solutions carried out in Greece reflecting this model include the elimination of the Higher (in between) level of former 3-year 'TEI' studies (turned into 4-year ATEI).

2.1 Methodology

In order to track changes and assess this educational reform taking place in tourism education in Greece the authors attempted to record and map available programs of study as well as eliminated paths of study in an effort to collect and present data in a more consolidated and comprehensive way. The fact that programs at different levels (tertiary education, vocational training or professional schools) are offered by different institutions monitored by different state organizations or Ministries presents an extra difficulty. This research project makes use of secondary data collected by government departments and institutions' organizational records. Primary research was also carried out due to the writers' capacity of teaching staff in one of the major tertiary tourism education programmes examined in the project. An attempt is made to collect and present in inclusive tables the multitude tourism path programmes of study and to clarify any grey areas concerning which programs are still running and which are no longer available. Decline or increase in student numbers presented in the tables is believed to account for decisions made as to the longevity of a department or not.

2.2 The system of tourism education and training in Greece

In Greece, tourism education and training is provided by a number of public and private sector stakeholders (Moira et al. 2004: 59). But the main institutions in the field of education and training are state-owned as is also the case in other European countries. The system is centralized and focused on the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion, providing little room for flexibility to supervised education and training providers. Thus, the Ministry of Education, Research and Religions and the Ministry of Tourism (Law 3270/2004) operate predominantly in the public sector for issues of tourism education, training and education. The Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food and the Ministry of Administrative Reform are also active mainly in the field of secondary education and training, with a possible future

involvement of other ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Health in the field of medical and thermal tourism, the Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy in marine tourism, diving tourism and others. It could be argued that, within the public sector, each ministry with its supervised legal entities seems to constitute a separate micro-system of education and training.

In the following section the available tourism study programs are presented analytically per organizing institution. The Ministry of Education is considered to be the major stakeholder followed by the Ministry of Tourism and other minor organizations. Programs are catalogued per level (undergraduate/postgraduate) or tertiary/vocational and provide information on areas of study, location and admissions.

Ministry of Education, Research and Religion. The dominant system of tourism education and training in tourism is the one formulated by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion. This system includes two different levels of education, the secondary level which comprises of the Professional High-schools (EPAL in Greek) which operate either during mornings or evenings and the tertiary level schools where Higher Education Institutions belong, i.e. Universities and Technological Educational Institutions. At the same time, formal training is provided by Vocational Training Institutes (IEK¹ in Greek), which belong to the post-secondary education category. There is also a subsystem of continuing vocational training in the tourism sector which is quite loosely structured. Continuing education and life-long learning, since the completion of the Certification of Vocational Training Centers (KEK in Greek) by the National Certification Center (E.KE.[J].I.Σ. in Greek), is carried out systematically by either public or private centres (KEK), and is subsidized by the European Operational Program run by the Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity. However, these programs are largely meant for the unemployed and not so much for workers who would like to improve their knowledge and skills.

All in all, the Ministry of Tourism offers programs at the following levels: Secondary, Post secondary vocational (IEK), Tertiary (Universities), Continuing and life-long education.

More analytically:

At the secondary level of education, tourism education is technologically oriented and is provided by EPAL (professional high-schools). The specializations were originally limited to "Hotel Management" (Moira et al.

¹ The IEK operate either as public or private institutions. The public are operated by the Ministry of Education, the Labor Force Employment Organization / OAED which to the Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Tourism. Their curricula and the awarded certifications are controlled and approved by the Ministry of Education.

2008) but recently changed to a more inclusive “Tourism Business Management”, apparently to cover all types of tourism businesses and not exclusively hotels. However, due to the multidimensional nature of the tourist activity, there are also specializations involved in tourism but belonging to other fields and disciplines such as Food and Beverage Specialist which usually belongs to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

The Ministry of Education also comprises the National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP² in Greek) which supervises the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK³) which all kinds of training (initial or complementary). The vocational institutes (IEK) operate different specializations that are constantly changing to meet the needs of the labor market⁴.

At tertiary level, tourism education is technologically oriented and is provided by Technological Educational Institutes (TEI in Greek). The length of studies at the TEI is of 4 academic years, while during the last semester of study students prepare a dissertation and carry out a practicum in a tourist business.

From 2001 until 2013 there were autonomous departments of “Tourism Management” in seven Technological Educational Institutes / TEI⁵ (Athens, Thessaloniki, Piraeus, Patras, Larissa, Crete and Epirus). Most of the changes made in tourism education are reported in this level. A brief relation of events is considered appropriate at this point in order for the reader to better understand the reform. More specifically, in 2013-2014, due to the financial crisis and the pressure from the European Union institutions to reduce public spending, a large scale reform of the education system (Athena project) took place, leading to mergers, cancellations and renaming of departments with parallel changes in curricula. This reform led to the merger

² EOPPEP develops and implements a comprehensive national certification system for non-formal education (initial and continuing vocational training and general adult education) and provides scientific support to vocational guidance and counseling services.

³ The IEK were established by Law No. 2009/92 (Government Gazette 18/A). They are not formally classified at an educational level (although they are considered as level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework) as they can be attended by graduates of Junior-high schools, Professional high-schools, OAED apprenticeship schools and any type of High school, depending on the individual specialties they offer (Article 4, Law 2009/92).

⁴ In 2016-2017, specialties such as Tourism and Hospitality Specialist, Management and Economy Executive in the field of Tourism, Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Tours specialist, Air Transport Service Staff, and Culinary specialist/Chef were operating. <http://www.foititikanea.gr/images/PDF/eidikothtes-diek-2016-2017.pdf>

⁵ Higher Technological Institutes (TEI) resembles the UK Universities of Technology. They emphasize the training of high-quality applications' executives, who through their theoretical and applied scientific training constitute a link between knowledge and application, developing the applied dimension of sciences and the arts in the respective professional fields and thus transferring, via modern technology, practices and techniques in the field of applications.

of the Department of Tourism Management with other departments of the School of Business and Economics e.g. Business Management, Marketing, etc. under the “umbrella” of a single “Business Management” Department under which optional study paths are either introduced from the first semester of study or later on. Thus, the Department of Tourism Management was incorporated as a “Tourism and Hospitality Management” study path in the Business Management Department. In this context, the reduction in government spending on education and despite the initial intention to reduce the University departments and thus the costs, the changes in the Athena project have resulted in an increase in the number of departments offering Tourism studies at a TEI level, from seven to ten, as a new department was founded in Grevena and two new departments were created within the TEI of Western Greece and Sterea Hellas respectively, with a specialty in “Financial and Communication Management of Cultural and Tourist Units”. The Department of Tourism Management of TEI Patras, based in Patras, ceased to accept new students and was scheduled to continue operating until 2017-2018 at which time existing students were expected to complete their studies. But suddenly, in 2017-2018 it was decided that the department would re-operate as an autonomous department and it received 120 students. Finally and most importantly, in 2018, in an attempt to further reduce public spending⁶, a merger of two higher education institutions of the Technological Sector (Piraeus University of Applied Sciences and TEI of Athens) was carried out which resulted in the creation of the third largest university of the country under the name University of Western Attica. Starting from the academic year 2018-2019 a Department of Tourism Management started operating within this new University, which resulted from the merger of the two previous TEI’s departments of Tourism Management. This practised would prove to be an ongoing trend resulting in mergers of various other local TEI departments into larger University departments. At the same time, these changes have been the starting point for the gradual increase in the number of total admissions in Tourism departments from 385 in 2012-2013 to 1800 in 2017-2018. These changes are shown in Table 1.

⁶ For example, the departments of the new institution have decreased from 42 to 26, following the shutting down of departments and specialisations which no longer fit the country’s academic and scientific needs (Explanatory Report to the Law on the Establishment of the University of Western Attica). The merger will, according to estimates, lead to significant economies of scale at an academic, administrative and logistical level, with significant savings and efficient resource management.

Tab. 1: Changes in Higher and Tertiary Education in Greece 2012-2018

HIGHER TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION								
2012-2013 Department of Tourism Management	Admissions 2012-2013	2013-2014 Business Management Departments / Direction Tourism Management & Hospitality Management	Admissions 2013-2014	Admissions 2014-2015	Admissions 2015-2016	Admissions 2016-2017	Admissions 2017-2018	Admissions 2018-2019
Athens	85	Athens	85	85	90	120	110	***
Piraeus	50	Piraeus **	100	100	110	140	140	***
Thessaloniki	120	Thessaloniki	100	100	110	130	130	146
Patras *	70	Western Greece (former Patras*)	0	0	0	0	120	135
Larissa	0	Thessaly (former Larissa)	100	125	140	150	150	169
Crete (Heraklion)	60	Crete (Heraklion)	85	100	100	140	140	158
Epirus (Igoumenitsa)	0	Epirus (Igoumenitsa)	100	125	100	80	80	90
		Western Macedonia (Grevena)	100	150	170	170	170	191
		Ionian Islands (Lefkada)	130	175	190	230	240	270
Total	385	Total	800	960	1010	1160	1280	1.159
		2013-2014 Dept of Financial and Communication Management of Cultural and Tourism Units						
		Western Greece (Pyrgos)	150	200	170	210	210	236
		Central Greece (Amfissa)	130	125	150	170	170	191
		Total	280	325	320	380	380	427
Universities supervised by the Ministry of Education 2017-2019								
		Piraeus	0	0	0	0	70	79
		Aegean (Chios)	0	0	0	0	70	79
		West Attica (Athens)	0	0	0	0	0	288
		Hellenic Open University (Patra)	0	0	0	0	0	300
		Total	0	0	0	0	140	746
OVERALL TOTAL	385	OVERALL TOTAL	1080	1285	1330	1540	1800	2332

Source: Table developed by the authors

*The T.E.I. of Patras used to admit new students until 2012-13 when it ceased operating due to the "Athena" project. It would continue its operation until 2017-18 without any new students until when the latter would graduate. In 2017-2018 the department started operating again as an autonomous "Dept of Tourism Management".

** The TEI of Piraeus as of 2014 was renamed as Piraeus University of Applied Sciences (Government Gazette B'3681 /2014)

*** The TEI of Athens and the Piraeus University of Applied Sciences were merged under the title of University of Western Attica

These changes have caused several problems in the operation of the Departments providing tourist education. As there is no longer an autonomous Department of Tourism Management, but an introductory study path to the wider discipline of Business Management and the professors come from different subject areas that are often unrelated to tourism, the new programs were expected to bring together different subjects, different disciplines, but also different expectations from both teachers and students. A typical example is the reduction of the offered tourism courses at the TEI of Piraeus from 24 to 19 and the TEI of Larissa/Thessaly from 26 to 18.

Indeed, Stergiou and Airey (2017:7) have stated that the changes were treated with skepticism and hostility by professors and students who felt that the level of tourist education was downgraded. The most withstanding argument was that this downgrading makes it impossible to respond to the needs for an ever-growing tourist industry.

In addition, the degrading of the educational process is also apparent in Table 1 where it appears that the changes led to an increase in the number of admitted students from 385 to 2.332 without there being a corresponding increase in the number of teaching staff, which decreased due to retirement and limitations in new recruitments following the 1:5 EU obligation (Law 3899/2010 and INE GSEE-ADEDY, 2012).

Another argument against changes states that regarding the existing study programs of the Business Management Departments in the path of "Tourism Management and Hospitality Management" of the TEI, research has shown that there is a common core of courses offered, for example, Tourism Principles, Tourism Sociology, Tourism Law, Tourism Marketing, etc. and there is a slight variation in selection courses depending on the differentiation of each department. For example, the TEI Piraeus in the "Hospitality Management" option, there is an emphasis on marine tourism and shipping, because Piraeus is an important tourist port. The TEI of Thessaly emphasizes the hotel management section, etc. Through the knowledge of how tourist businesses operate, students are informed and acquainted with issues such as the implementation of a management system with specific organizational structure, management, monitoring and reporting, environmental issues management - energy, water, waste, pollution, resources, human resource management and equal labor relations, building relationships with local society and markets, social pressures, certification and promotion issues, local characteristics and local cultural value.

As for the tertiary level, there were no undergraduate sections dedicated exclusively to tourism, but there were individual taught courses in some departments, mainly Business Management (Moira, 2004) either as compulsory or as elective courses, as was the case at the University of the Aegean. But from 2017-2018 there are two undergraduate departments of tourism studies representing the tourism sector. In particular, Piraeus

University operates a Department of Tourism Studies and the University of the Aegean (Chios) operates a Department of Economics and Tourism Management. The Ministerial Order (number F.253.1/50607/A5/2017) for the academic year 2017-2018 provided for a number of 79 admissions for each department. From the academic year 2018-2019 onwards, the newly founded University of Western Attica (see above) also became part of the Tourism Education available options at a tertiary level.

At a postgraduate level, until 2010, the TEI in accordance to the law could not organize postgraduate study programs independently. Thus, five universities (Piraeus, Aegean, Hellenic Open University, Macedonia and Athens University of Economic and Business) operated those tourism programs at a postgraduate level, instead. However, changes in the tertiary education system led to a rapid proliferation of the offered postgraduate study programs in the field of tourism, amounting to thirteen and provided by both universities and TEIs, autonomously, inter-departmentally or in cooperation between Universities and TEI (Table 2). Tuition fees for postgraduate programmes are to be decided by each institution.

Tab. 2: Offered graduate courses from Universities and T.E.I.

ORGANISATION	OPERATION	GRADUATE PROGRAMME	AREAS OF EXPERTISE	SEMESTERS	LOCATION	FEES in €
1. University of Piraeus	autonomous	(MBA-Tourism Management		3	Piraeus	7.500
2. University of the Aegean	Interdepartmental	"Tourism Design, Management and Policy"	a) Option «Tourism Development Strategy" and b) Option "Hospitality Management".	3	Chios	3.500
3. Athens University of Economics and Business	Autonomous Dept. of Business Management	«Service Management»	Option «Development and Management of Alternative Tourism Services".	3 part time 4 full time	Athens	6.500

*Current trends and prospects of tourism education and training in Greece.
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4. Hellenic Open University		MA "Tourism Management"		Min 3 years, Max 5 years	Patras Athens Piraeus Thessaloniki Crete Ioannina Rhodes	3.250
5. University of Macedonia	Autonomous Department of Business Management	a)MA in Tourism Business Management for young graduates, and b)Master in Tourism Management-MTM for business executives		3	Thessaloniki	a) 4.800 and b)5.400.
6. International Hellenic University/ School of Economics, Business Management and Legal studies	autonomous	MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management		1 year full time and 2 years part time	Thessaloniki	5.000
7. University of Thessaly	(interdepartmental) Department of Planning and Regional Development and Department of Economics	Tourism and Culture Design and Development		2 full time and 4 part time	Volos	2.900 full time and 3.200 part time
8. Harokopio University	The Departments of "Home Economics and Ecology", "Geography" and "Informatics and Telematics" of Harokopio University, the "Department of Business Management" of the University of the Aegean and the "Institute de Reserche et d' Études Supérieures du Tourisme" of Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne (IREST)	International Master in Sustainable Tourism Development: Cultural Heritage, Environment, Society		2	Athens	5.500

9. T.E.I. of Thessaloniki	Autonomous Dept. Business Management/ Tourism Enterprises management path	MA in Tourism Business Management	1) Hotel and Hospitality Management 2) Air Transport and Travel Operations Management, 3) Management of Nautical Tourism, Cruise and Ferry Operations, 4) Tourism Destination Marketing and Management 5) Cultural Tourism & Management and 6) Tourism Management	3	Thessaloniki	3.800
10. T.E.I. of Central Macedonia		MBA in Hospitality and Tourism (in English)		3	Serres	4.000
11. University of West Attica	Department of Tourism Management with the Department of Business Management of the University of the Aegean	Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Tourism	three options a) Hospitality Management, b) Management of Health and Wellness Tourism.	3	Athens	3.000
12. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Interdepartmental (Depts Economic, Forestry and Natural environment, Agriculture, Spatial Planning and development, Theology and Law)	Tourism and Local Development	Three options: <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism and regional development <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and Sustainable Tourism c) Religious-cultural tourism	3	Thessaloniki	2.900
13. Democritus University of Thrace	Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences	Sports Tourism, Organization of Events, Dance	a) Sport Tourism and Recreation b) Organisation of Sport Events c) Studies in Dance	3	Komotini	2.400

Source: Table developed by the authors

It can be argued that, within the field of tourism studies, there seems to be an excessive offer of post-graduate programs by higher education institutions, without any previous market research and graduate employment opportunities research. Also, these programs are aimed at graduates of different specialties, e.g. management of tourism businesses, economic departments, international studies, engineers, lawyers, environmentalists, etc. which at first sight could be considered a fruitful approach as tourism is not a one-dimensional scientific discipline but requires a multidisciplinary viewing. The problem, however, is that the admission to these programs is usually based on the first degree's total mark and /or after an interview rather than a written exam. The result is that students have no common background and they face difficulties attending specialized courses. For this reason, most MSc programs offer basic introductory courses to tourism which are usually taught at an undergraduate level. For example, the MSc. of the University of Western Attica offers Business Management and Organization, Tourist Policy, Hotel Operations Management, and Tourist Economics, the MSc. at the University of the Aegean offers Tourism Economics, Tourism Management, Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality, Tourism Sociology and Geography of Tourism. At the same time, limitations imposed by the economic crisis concerning the recruitment of specialized and experienced teaching staff leads to the recycling of professors and tutors in almost all the postgraduate tourism programs. On the other hand, market requirements may and should influence the nature of curricula, course specializations and the SMEs' engagement with education. Links may be established with universities and other higher-education institutions offering work placements and actively involving students in specific schemes and projects which would lead to a wide range of benefits for employers such as engaging with education and enhancing the students' skills and long-term recruitment policies thus contributing to professional development of future staff. Simultaneously, alumni could be provided with professional options while the SME sector would capitalise on young people's skills and productivity, important factors enhancing what companies call "Corporate Social Responsibility".

Ministry of Tourism. Within the Greek Ministry of Tourism⁷ there is the Directorate of Tourism Education and Training, where all the responsibilities of the former Organisation of Tourism Education and Training⁸ (OTEK in Greek) were transferred in 2013. It consists of the departments of Higher

⁷ There have been many changes to the competent Ministry which has been renamed, abolished or merged several times (Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Tourism) (Mylonopoulos, 2016: 37-41).

⁸ The Organisation of Tourism Education and Training (OTEK) was established by Law

Schools of Tourism Education (ASTE) and Tourist Guide Schools⁹, the Vocational Training¹⁰ Department and the Department of Life-long learning and Connection with the Labour Market¹¹.

At a post-secondary level the eight IEK of the Ministry of Tourism operate with programs approved by the Ministry of Education and with various specializations that are continuously adapted to meet the needs of the labour market. The IEK curriculum includes courses that promote knowledge about business practices and sustainability, which may allow graduates to contribute to healthy business models and SME proliferation, in a country where small scale businesses are the norm. Indicatively, the following are courses offered within the IEK curriculum: Principles of Food Industry Practice, Quality Management Systems (HACCP), Principles of Economic, Technical Facilities, Equipment, Goods Control, Catering, Restaurant Organization, Production Costs, Oenology, Hygiene and Safety.

Besides, the operation of the Schools in various parts of the territory (Attica, Thessaloniki, Crete, Rhodes, Corfu, Argos, Galaxidi, Alexandroupolis, Crete) is another way of bringing students in contact with local communities, businesses and local development, local cultures, as well as cultural and culinary traditions.

At a tertiary level there there are also two Higher Schools of Tourism Education operating in Rhodes (ASTER) and Crete (ASTEK). Their special feature is that their level is located between secondary education and higher education, called “superior”, they are placed at level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework and entry is only possible through the national examination system for entry in tertiary education of the Ministry of Edu-

3105/2003 (Government Gazette 29/A) and was under the supervision of the Ministry responsible for tourism. The Organization, in accordance with the law, was the specialized state provider for tourism education and training in Greece. In 2014 (by Presidential Decree 112/2014 “Tourism Ministry Organization”), OTEK was abolished and its responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of Tourism.

⁹ Guide Schools belong to post-secondary vocational education. Prior to the crisis and the changes that followed, two Schools were operating in Athens and Thessaloniki and occasionally (depending on the needs of the local tourist market) in Heraklion, Mytilene, Corfu and Rhodes. The Guide Schools had been inactive for a few years and recently (September 2017) there has been a call for applications for the school of Athens.

¹⁰ The current specialties are the same as those of EOPEP, the organisation which approves the relevant programs, without excluding the founding of new specialties in order to meet local needs. (Moira, 2007).

¹¹ OTEK used to organise life-long learning programmes (training) in various cities across the country, for those already employed in tourism or seasonal workers, who had only empirical knowledge of their subject-matter. The trainees were able to systematize and complement their technical skills with the necessary theoretical knowledge to improve their performance in service such as Reception, Restaurant, Catering, Cooking and Confectionery. In recent years, however, these programs have not been organized. The last programme was run on EU funds through the NSRF, from 2013 to 2015.

cation. The duration of study is 7 semesters and the subjects taught are similar to those taught at TEI. (Introduction to Tourism, Principles of Business Management, Tourism Economy, Sociology of Tourism, etc.). Graduation does not lead to postgraduate studies unless the graduate enrolls in a Department of Tourism Management of a TEI. (and is placed in the 6th semester) in order to obtain the corresponding qualification/ degree.

Tab. 3: Admissions at the Higher Schools of Tourism Education

HIGHER SCHOOLS OF TOURISM EDUCATION							
SCHOOLS	Admissions 2012-2013	Admissions 2013-2014	Admissions 2014-2015	Admissions 2015-2016	Admissions 2016-2017	Admissions 2017-2018	Admissions 2017-2018
ASTE Rhodes (ASTER)	60	60	75	75	90	90	101
ASTE Aghios Nikolaos (Crete) (ASTEAN)*	50	50	75				
ASTE Crete (ASTEK)*				75	90	90	101
	Total	110	150	150	180	180	202

Source: Table developed by the authors

* The Higher School of Tourism Education operating in Aghios Nikolaos (Crete) was renamed in 2014 into ASTE Crete (ASTEK).

Through course choices such as: Architecture, Tourism Sociology and Tourist Psychology, Tourism Geography of Greece, Working Relationships, Foreign Languages, Tourism Marketing, Intercultural education and communication in tourism, Tourism Market Research and Tourism Behaviour, the cultivation of tourist awareness and awareness on issues of sustainable development and protection of the social and cultural environment is ensured. In addition, contact with large and small business through (payed) traineeships allows students to get acquainted with concepts such as the use of mild energies for heating, reuse and recycling, composting, the use of biodegradable detergents, the consumption of food products from small-scale local bio-cultivations, etc. Students acquaint themselves with tourism businesses operation, they are informed and acquainted with issues such as the implementation of a management system with specific organizational structure, management, monitoring and reporting, environmental issues management, waste management, pollution, human resource management and equal labour relations, building relationships with local society and markets, social pressures, certification and promotion issues, local characteristics and local cultural values.

Concerning continuing education, within the Ministry of Tourism, the Tourist Education and Training Directorate also supervises the function of the Tourist Guides School, which is a post-secondary two-year voca-

tional school. Graduates who successfully pass the final examinations are awarded the official tourist guides' license. Lately, the schools had been inactive since 2010 (Mylonopoulos, et al., 2012). Instead, Universities (such as the University of Macedonia, the University of the Aegean and the Ionian University) have been given the task of running fast-track tourist guide programs. Also, the new legal framework mentioned that the only professionals able to practice the profession of tourist guide are the graduates of University Departments of Archaeology, History, History of art, Ethnology and Social Anthropology. According to these arrangements, it was possible to become a tourist guide in just two months, compared to two years with the previous regime, provided that the student was a graduate of specific University department as mentioned above and spoke at least one foreign language, in most cases English, fluently. This was believed to have led to deficiencies in tourist guides fluent in lesser known languages that respond to new tourist trends, such as the Russian and the Asian tourist flows. This change has been severely criticized, and the Federation of Guides has appealed to the Council of State, considering that the new legislation "... grossly violates the Constitution, the European law, but also the national legislation while progressively attempting to abolish its excellent professional training for Tourist Guides provided by the Ministry of Tourism, which have been implicitly put to disuse by the same Ministry" (Kalogiros, 2013). As a result of the protests and the overall negative situation caused by this system, in 2017 it was announced that the Tourist Guide School of Athens would reopen and operate a two-year training programme (Ministerial decision 13239/2017). The Athens School Tours reopened for the academic year 2018-2019 with the admission of 30 students.

Other Ministries. The Labour Force Employment Organization (OAED¹²), which operates as a legal entity under public law is supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance & Social Solidarity. OAED provides vocational education and training and implements Continuing Vocational Training programs for workers and self-employed. Also, OAED operates vocational schools (IEK) with the same tourism specialties as those of OEEK.

Until the onset of the economic crisis, specialized training was provided by the Schools of Training and professional Highschools (EPAL) of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food, with specialties such as "Environment and Agrotourism¹³". Currently no programs are running. Also until 2011 there was a "Tourism Economy and Development" specialization path in the National School of Public Administration¹⁴

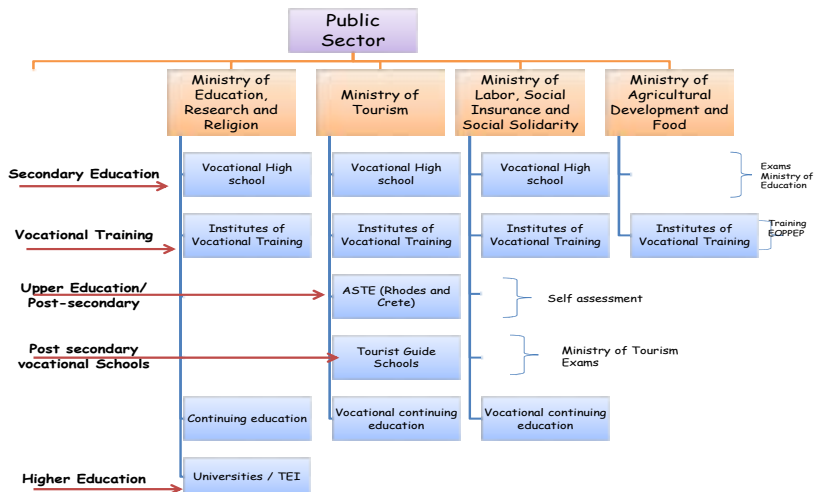
¹² The Agency was established by Law 2961/1954 "Establishing an Employment and Insurance Organization for Unemployment" (Government Gazette A197), which was renamed to Labour Force Employment Organization. 212/1969 (Government Gazette A11) and was restructured by Law 2956/2001 (Government Gazette A25).

of the then Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization¹⁵.

The department started operating in 2006 with the purpose of creating competent high-ranked civil service staff specializing in tourism policy. Graduates of the Department have been extremely successful in serving the Ministry of Tourism, the Hellenic Tourism Organization (EOT) and the former Organization for Tourism Education and Training (OTEK).

The importance and necessity of the Specialisation's creation was mainly based on the fact that the bodies that define and implement the country's tourism policy need specialized personnel capable of responding to new requirements of the international tourist environment. The beginning of the economic crisis and the signing of the memoranda led to the abolition of this specialisation path, which created a significant gap in the staffing of public tourism bodies.

Fig. 1: Studies in tourism in Greece, 2017



Source: figure developed by the authors

¹³ The organization "DIMITRA" was established by Law 2520/97 (Government Gazette A173). It also includes the provision of agricultural vocational education and training, which until the beginning of the economic crisis also involved tourism. So, under the supervision of the organization, Professional schools (TEE) operated offering the speciality of "Environment and Agrotourism" (Moira, 2007).

¹⁴ The National Center of Public Administration was established by Law 1388/1983 (Government Gazette A113), aiming at the training of public administration officers for central and decentralized state organisations and legal entities through highly specialized professional training and a new approach to problem-solving, in order for them to effectively contribute to the democratization and modernization of public administration. The National Centre of Public Administration consists of the National School of Public Administration (ΕΣΔΔΑ) and the Institute for Continuing Education (ΙΝΕΠ).

¹⁵ The National Center for Public Administration and Local Government (ΕΚΔΔΑ) is

3. Discussion

It has been shown through the data that the merging of University departments although carried out under strict financial conditions, actually led to a gradual increase in admissions and positions offered. It is believed that this could be due to the fact that local TEI/ ATEI departments couldn't accommodate large numbers of students or didn't have similar financial support as larger established Universities. Merging facilitated former smaller and independent departments to evolve and develop under the umbrella of larger institutions boasting stronger research opportunities, financial aid and high-end technological facilities. Consequently these newly emerged departments were able to accept larger numbers of students. Arguments against the multitude of tourism studies offered state that there seems to be a pattern of tourism path studies eliminated and reduced to a mere optional choice of few courses within a larger specialization of e.g. Business Administration. This could be seen as a downgrade of the tourism specialization. Simultaneously however, the emergence of larger and stronger departments specifically dedicated to Tourism, on a higher level than before (ATEI departments merging into a new University) may prove to be beneficial for this specific academic area.

Similarly, within the Ministry of Tourism's offered programs, there has been also an increase in admissions, which could reflect the ongoing demand of students for these schools which are directly connected to the market through placements in hotels and more practical training.

4. Conclusions

Graduate employment for tourism education and tourism training programs in Greece has not been systematically investigated. A study carried out among TEI graduates (Moira et al. 2004) and a survey conducted among tourism managers (Christou, 2002) point out the problematic relation between the knowledge and skills acquired through study and those required by the tourism industry.

Although 17 years have elapsed since the TEI were awarded higher education status [Law number 2916/2001] and since the restructuring of

the national strategic body for human resources development in public administration and local government. It was founded in 1983 as a legal entity of public law. Today it operates under the authority of the Ministry of Administrative Reform. Its mission is to create competent high-ranked public administration staff, and to upgrade existing employees through continuing education and certified training (see <http://www.ekdd.gr/ekdda/index.php/gr/>).

their curricula, and despite the constant changes in the offer of curricula both in the field of tourism education as well as that of tourism training, changes do not seem to be done in a systematic manner or following a thorough study of the market's real needs. Scarce studies are fragmented, "photographing" certain time periods (Moira et al. 2004) and do not seem to depict and reflect reality. At the same time, there seems to be no systematic communication or exchange of information between the academic community and the tourism industry, especially small and medium enterprises, which are the backbone of Greek tourism (Stergiou, 2017: 611).

The existing system of tourism education and training in Greece is complex, multi-leveled and often involves overlapping areas. Tourist education is offered at various levels (secondary, tertiary, graduate, etc.) and by different public bodies. This complexity causes confusion which is accentuated by the lack of formal professional recognition or legal vesting at various levels in the exercise of professional rights or the recognition of the same professional rights at different levels of study. Also, despite the existence of so many levels, the distinction between education and training is often unclear. As a result in some cases professional bodies provide theoretical education programs and educational bodies provide technical training in tourism professions. This finding was highlighted 10 years ago during the forum for tourism education and training of the Ministry of Tourism (Moira, et al. 2008; Moira, 2008a; Moira, 2008b; Moira and Mylonopoulos, 2008a; Moira and Mylonopoulos, 2008b). In addition, there are often important changes, such as a change in the curricula of tour guides which converted the educational programme into vocational training, the abolishment or revival of academic departments, the establishment of university departments without the provision of teaching staff, etc. which are being made without a previous investigation on the necessity of such new arrangements. This confusion is transferred to the tourism industry and causes problems in the staffing of tourist businesses, resulting in a negative impact on the quality of provided services. This paper attempted to catalogue all tourism education programs offered in Greece on a secondary, post-secondary, tertiary and continuing education level. Through analytical presentation of data including admissions, undergraduate and post-graduate programs and peripheral as opposed to centralized institutions this paper offered a map of current tourism education in Greece. It is believed that this study will help clarify the reasons that major reforms have been carried out in view of economic crisis restrictions and how these decisions influence student outcomes. It has been found that on the one hand changes mean practical difficulties for students concerning student/tutor ratio for example, it seems that more established institutions research-wise are more likely to thrive and offer solid academic knowledge as well as professional future to graduates. Reforms also seem to follow the trend

and market need for practical skills and vocational training. Tourism is an interdisciplinary field of knowledge that implements in a holistic way the tools of various sciences, mainly of social sciences but not only. In this context, it is necessary to combine knowledge from different disciplines with as a common denominator the achievement of human communication, which characterizes all forms of tourism activity. In particular, the basis of tourism entrepreneurship in Greece consists of small and medium-sized business and even family businesses, which are characterized by a strong element of ancient Greek hospitality. Another feature of small and medium-sized family businesses, which is positive but at the same time becomes an obstacle to further training in tourism, is the fact that these businesses were created by self-employed locals with no specific knowledge and skills. It is therefore often difficult, even impossible, to persuade both them and the younger generations of the need for vocational training and continuous training. The existing tourism education system, with its inherent weaknesses, has not managed to attract neither entrepreneurs who have not perceived the importance of tourism education nor young people who, affected by social stereotypes (probably influenced by the seasonality of mass tourism), believe that employment in tourism is short-lived and unattractive for a stable career which should provide opportunities for growth and higher salaries. It is noted that the timeless weaknesses of the education system are exacerbated by political actions implemented under the pressure of the economic crisis. It turns out that in Greece, tourism education and training suffers from inherent weaknesses that are not due to the economic crisis but are potentially exacerbated by it. Through direct involvement of SMEs, which constitute the bulk of tourism businesses in a small country like Greece, and the encouragement of direct recruitment of graduates leading to personal professional satisfaction, enjoyment and staff motivation. The solution to the problem of tourism education and training in Greece possibly does not only involve a differentiation between levels of upper and higher education, but also the cultivation of a national tourist consciousness (Kikilia, 2013: 48), which is acquired from early years' education and is shaped throughout life.

*Polyxeni Moira,
University of West Attica / Greece
polmoira@uniwa.gr*

*Dimitrios Mylonopoulos
University of West Attica / Greece
dimilon@uniwa.gr*

*Stavroula Kefala
Greek Ministry of Tourism, Dept. of Tourism Education and Training / Greece
kefala_s@mintour.gr*

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