

# Chapter 42

## Tourism Education During the Pandemic: Is Distance Education a Solution?

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The worldwide pandemic situation created by the COVID-19 disease confronted the education systems of all countries with the most unpredictable challenge ever, a pedagogical revolution that required the transition from traditional and conservative education of auditors to distance education formats. The new front was clear, in a few days the entire education community had to adapt to the new environment, developing and creating new plans to provide teaching through different electronic platforms and software. As the tourism sector is one of the main sources of sustainable development, the role of higher education systems in this sector is to prepare human resources able to proactively respond to all the challenges created during the pandemic circumstances and post-pandemic circumstances. This chapter based on semi-systematic literature review discusses distance education in tourism as an inevitable alternative to education due to the pandemic conditions in terms of providing an appropriate preparation of human resources in tourism to properly face the new reality.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the authors will discuss the impact of distance education and its challenges during the pandemic in fulfilling tourism education goals. The concept of distance education will be elaborated under the frame of literature review aiming to confront its particulars during the COVID-19 pandemic, also describing if there is any classification between e-learning forms. The role of higher education in providing the proper tourism education through the different forms of virtual learning will be analyzed.

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The crucial function of digital skills will be evaluated as a key set of tools and knowledge that serve as enablers of online learning and as determinants of academic staff capacity and student's capacity to realize the virtual learning. Distance education is also argued in terms of updated curricula to face the new challenges during and post COVID-19, the model of triple helix in tourism education, proposed by scholars helps understanding the process of updating tourism education in the new frame.

The new ecosystem created requires higher education institutions to correctly offer a new and re-structured curricula updated to the new requirements that means ensuring that they are preparing a workforce that can respond proactively to this new crisis, and help the tourism sector to go ahead after the new crises. The ease and difficulties of adapting and creating the new curricula will be discussed in terms of mitigating and impending factors. The key claiming is not related only with the process of revising the curricula, but also new pedagogies and forms of employing the soft skills combined with electronic platforms to address and transfer properly the knowledge and lectures as if they were in the traditional classes. The chapter explains also why a holistic approach is necessary to describe the key frontline player's role (tourism sector professional's role) in managing the crisis. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and conclusion.

## **BACKGROUND**

The outbreak created after the COVID-19 was defined as pandemic by the World Health Organization at the beginning of March 2020 led the entire world to a huge crisis. It began as a health crisis, but caused a domino effect in the economy, society, and global relations including this way the tourism sector. Tourism education role in preparing the key frontline players capable to cope with the recovery period in the tourism sector is exceptionally essential due to the fact that the tourism sector is one of the most probable sectors to be exposed to disaster and crises according researches (Pforr & Hosie, 2008). Tourism education is part of the large tourism ecosystem, this way all the changes affecting the businesses and activities of tourism sector will impact tourism education. By the other side also tourism education impacts the other actors of the co-system to cope with the new changes (Séraphin & Yallop, 2020) as cited by (Tiwari, Séraphin, & Chowdhary, 2020). Two obstacles and simultaneously two objections were presented to the tourism education: (1) to transmit and share the contemporary knowledge required by the new industrial requirements and (2) to ensure that the link between students and lecturers was the appropriate one through the distance learning connection to enable the knowledge sharing process occur accordingly.

Most of the scholars (Chigeza & Halbert, 2014) (Adams, Randall, & Traustadóttir, 2015) have classified face to face learning as a traditional format of learning based on the fact that has the longest history as a learning format compared with the other modern formats (online learning and blended learning); it's characterized by a physical classroom where are present all the participants and interact under the learning frame. Also other authors (Robert, Borokhovski, Schmid, & Tamim, 2014) argue that face to face learning is different from blended learning even when computers and educational technologies are used in class.

Online learning began as a trend of using and implementing technology in higher education, as higher education institutions began to offer online courses (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). As core advantages of online learning can be considered the flexibility of learning process, promoted innovation and an approach more student-centered. Before the pandemic, HE institutions have implemented the online learning

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