Chapter 9

DEVELOPING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHINA THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH

Michael O'Regan
Institute for Tourism Studies, China

Jaeyeon Choe
Institute for Tourism Studies, China

Abstract: As its market and society open up, China has transformed itself from a closed agrarian socialist economy to an urban state and an economic force. This has released accumulated tourism demand, led to the development of a diversified industry, and the spread of university and vocational courses in this field. However, the industry faces challenges to recruit and retain staff, with tourism education in higher education blamed for the shortfall in numbers and quality of candidates with suitable purpose, knowledge, and passion to serve. This chapter provides a background to the development of and problems facing tourism education in China, and suggests how to support student engagement and hence the future workforce.
Keywords: Student engagement; China; education; collaborative action research

1 INTRODUCTION

3 Since the opening up of China by Deng Xiaoping, reformist leader of the
People's Republic of China from 1978 to 1992, tourism has become a pillar
5 industry. Using a range of policy measures relating to conservation and
environmental protection, infrastructure and tourism facilities, manage-
7 ment, operation, entrepreneurship, marketing and promotion, policy, plan-
ning, administration, education, training, human resources (Xiao, 2000),
9 domestic tourism was worth US$426.4 billion in 2013, up 15.7% from
2012. The number of domestic tourists increased to 3.3 billion, a growth of
11 10.3% over the previous year. In addition, the United Nations World
Tourism Organization noted that China was the third most popular desti-
13 nation in the world in 2012, with a total of 58 million arrivals. By 2020,
according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, China will
15 become the largest tourist-receiving country in the world and among the
largest for overseas travel (UNWTO, 2013). As occurred in the United
17 Kingdom (Dale & Robinson, 2001), the growth in tourism demand has
been mirrored by a growth of education in this field, which was spurred by
19 a 1999 decision to accelerate the pace of expansion in the tertiary education
sector (Altbach, 2007; Bai, 2006; Gu, Kavanaugh, & Cong, 2007).   AU:2
21 The number of tourism higher education programs in China has
increased rapidly due to the fast growth and maturation of the industry
23 and facilitating policies, with tourism education, in theory, making a valu-
able contribution to the industry and the country's sustainable develop-
25 ment (Du, 2003). While the increase in higher education programs should
in theory meet the supply of job openings in areas such as research, con-
27 sulting, management, and frontline jobs (Jiang & Tribe, 2009), the emer-
gence of tourism education, training opportunities, and tourism jobs has
29 not been accompanied by tourism students seeking jobs in the industry
(Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Lam & Xiao, 2000; Zhang & Wu, 2004). While pre-
31 vious studies have focused on Chinese tourism higher education curricula,
comparisons of this and those of other countries, and on student attitudes
33 toward the industry (Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Wang, Huyton, Gao, & Ayres,
2010), this study evolved as the study explored the introduction of a new
35 English-language curriculum at a large university in North Eastern China
as perceived by instructors, staff, and students.
37 Two initial focus groups with tourism students and a focus group with
teaching staff revealed that there was widespread disinterest in tourism
39 both as a subject and career with a decline in students' engagement as they
progressed through school (Jacobs, 2002). As the authors resumed normal

1 teaching duties, these concerns became amplified, and low levels of engage-
ment were noted. This led to a broader faculty-led discussion after an
3 alumni office report indicated that despite an employment rate of 97%
among 2012 graduates, only 3% had jobs connected with the industry.
5 During the focus group with staff, they believed that complying with
international teaching and learning standards was more important than
7 complying with the needs of the industry. While the staff felt they had no
influence on student engagement, disengagement was not an issue as long
9 as it did not lead to behavioral problems, poor academic performance, or
dropping out. As lack of engagement is an important precursor to students
11 not seeking jobs in the industry, the authors felt the need to explore the
nature of the problem and improve the situation. While "reforming" teach-
13 ing and learning to engage students is difficult to define and quantify, the
institution provided them with the opportunity for a collaborative interac-
15 tive inquiry that also facilitated reflection and dialogue about the authors'
own practices.
17 The study engaged in data-driven collaborative action research to under-
stand the drop in engagement amongst students in years two, three, and
19 four and take action to improve behavioral and cognitive engagement.
While many studies have described the situational, political, cultural, and
21 social issues that have created concerns about tourism education in China,
this study is focused on action research engaged by colleagues who shared
23 an interest in a common problem and sought practical outcomes (Wallace,
1991). Using collaborative action research as a scheme of study to address
25 the major problems of student engagement with tourism as a subject, the
objective of this project is to study the effectiveness and advantage of lec-
27 turers introducing new teaching and learning tools at a higher education
level in China, and their impact upon student engagement.
29

31 TOURISM HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA

33 Travel and tourism in China generated 22,756,500 jobs directly (3% of
total employment) in 2012, with the total wider contribution to employ-
35 ment (including wider effects from investment, the supply chain, and
induced income impacts) worth 63,779,000 jobs in 2012 (8.3% of total
37 employment). By 2023, travel and tourism is forecast to support 89,550,000
jobs or 11.1% of total employment (World Travel and Tourism Council,
39 2013). Given the scale of these numbers and reported shortages of trained
tourism professionals, the industry has been confronting the problem of

1   attracting, training, and retaining skilled employees (Penfold, Liu, &
     Ladkin, 2012). This may seem paradoxical given the number of higher level
3   institutes that offer tourism programs in China. From well-established
     institutes such as the Tourism College of Zhejiang, Tourism Institute of
5   Beijing Union University, and Shanghai Institute of Tourism to new insti-
     tutes such as the Guilin Institute of Tourism, the growth of tourism has
7   been reflected in the growth of tourism schools and colleges.
         While there were only 27 universities and colleges offering hospitality
9   and tourism programs in 1986, the number had increased to 1,097 in 2012.
     In addition, the number of secondary vocational schools with tourism pro-
11   grams, which stood at 252 in 1993, increased to 1,139 by 2012. Taken
     together, the 2,236 universities, colleges, and vocational training institutes
13   have 107.34 million enrolled students, a considerable increase from 936
     institutions and 221,504 students in 1996 (China National Tourism
15   Administration, 2013).
         In theory, these numbers show that the development of tourism educa-
17   tion is keeping pace with industry growth (Lam & Xiao, 2000), with Du
     (2003, p. 105) noting that "higher tourism education has become one of the
19   fastest growing sectors in China's higher education, with every province,
     autonomous region, and municipality with its own tourism institutions."
21   However, volume is not the same as quality, with Du (2003, p. 106) arguing
     this expansion has often come from "poorly ordered, low-standard and
23   crude scale expansion, and is inefficient in terms of economy of scale."
     While the challenges facing China's government, tourism businesses, and
25   the education sector have been recognized, few steps have been taken to
     address them. If not addressed and overcome, consumers, students, and the
27   sustainable development of the industry will be impacted (Jiang & Tribe,
     2009; Min, 2004; Wu, 2013). The impact will fall heavily on the educational
29   system, with businesses blaming tourism education.
         Zhang and Wu (2004) argue that the current state of tourism education
31   is not meeting the industry's expectations, while Lam and Xiao (2000,
     p. 291) argue businesses believe "the poor quality of service providers in
33   China is due to lack of visionary education and training plans provided by
     the government." However, studies have shown the complexity of the issue,
35   with researchers noting poor service ethic and skills, substandard institutes
     and vocational training schools, poor teaching materials, lack of quality
37   teaching staff, the one-child policy, overemphasis on rote memorization, a
     top-down instructional style, over expansion, over reliance on exams to
39   evaluate progress, corruption, poor language skills, political indoctrination,
     a lack of entrepreneurial creativity, poor salaries, and resource limitations

1 (Cheuk, 2005; Du, 2003; Min, 1994, 1999, 2002, 2004; Zhang & Fan, 2006).
   While many of these issues are common in other disciplines, the most fre-
3 quently mentioned problems in tourism education mentioned by industry
   representatives and teachers are the outdated curricula, poor quality staff,
5 and students.

7

   Curriculum Issues, Staffing and Student Issues
9

   Poorly designed and outdated curricula that create a poor educational
11 experience for students is a recognized issue (Lam & Zhao, 2000; Penfold &   `AU:3`
   Ladkin, 2010; Zhang & Wu, 2004). Du (2003, p. 107) argues that poor pro-
13 gram setups have produced students with "a narrow scope of knowledge,
   irrational knowledge structure, incapability of comprehensive analysis and
15 coordination as well as poor adaptability to tourism-concerned occupa-
   tions." Institutions do not work closely with the industry, creating mis-
17 matches in the labor market as curricula have not adapted to market
   conditions. Zhang and Fan (2005) point out that the relationship between
19 universities and industry is still far from close, consistent, or regular, with
   Du noting that some of the programs and their educational objectives are
21 "established at random, and curricular designs are kept apart from practi-
   cal needs" (2003, p. 106).
23   Businesses also argue that there is a lack of quality staff, with the
   demand for tourism instructors in higher education outstripping the supply
25 of qualified professors and instructors (Gu et al., 2007). Lack of qualifica-
   tions (and no assistance to gain higher ones), subject specialism, training,
27 practical experience, and language development are also noted. Zhang and
   Fan (2005) note that professors of tourism programs are often poorly
29 informed about current issues and most of their research achievements
   remain only academic. Wang (2010, p. 429) notes that "the problems that
31 prevail in tourism education, such as out-of-date content and old-fashioned
   and didactic teaching methods, demonstrate that most tourism educators'
33 levels of expertise need to be raised." Given the emphasis on staff as an
   issue, businesses argue that it is crucial to establish a mechanism of teacher
35 cultivation and development that meets the demand for talent.
      Most criticism from industry and teachers is that students themselves
37 are not fulfilling industry expectations and needs (Gu et al., 2007; Penfold
   et al., 2012; Zhang & Wu, 2004). It is argued that they lack practical experi-
39 ence, suffer from lack of familiarity with service skills, have a negative atti-
   tude toward service roles, lack strategic direction, have low job loyalty, and

1 lack clear career goals. However, the main issue for businesses is that "university graduates were unwilling to enter the industry and that there was a
3 gap between what was taught and the realities of the industry itself" (Zhang & Wu, 2004, p. 424). The issues are complex, given Chinese culture,
5 values, and the educational system in China (Zhang, Lu, Hu, & Adler, 2010). Jiang and Tribe (2009) found barriers to entry such as personal rea-
7 sons, nature of tourism jobs, human factors, educational factors, and management factors. Wu (2013) found similar barriers, noting how personal
9 pursuits, family and social pressures, educational factors, the nature of tourism jobs, and the benefits of working in the government-created bar-
11 riers when students decided on a post-tourism degree career.

    It is within these contexts that the authors collaboratively sought to
13 understand student disengagement, and implement research-based instructional practices to improve student engagement with tourism as a subject
15 and career. Since research should not focus on controlled experiments removed from real conditions (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2013),
17 an empirical study using a form of action research was utilized, providing an empirical study of researcher-practitioner engagement that is still quite
19 novel in China. The action research process is dealt with in more detail in the following section.
21

23 *Study Methods*

25 While based at a large public university in North Eastern China with a significant tie-up to a university in the United Kingdom and with a favorable
27 environment for teacher autonomy (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeo, & Barch, 2004), the authors initiated an ethnographic study involving students and
29 lecturers to investigate the introduction of a new English-language curriculum. However, without the researchers' direction during focus group inter-
31 views with students, negative attitudes to tourism as a subject were repeatedly made.

33   The three focus group results evolved into a discussion at a faculty meeting about the barriers to student engagement (Christenson, Reschly, &
35 Wylie, 2012). Engagement is "the student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowl-
37 edge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (Newmann, 1992, p. 12). Engagement is linked to attendance, academic
39 performance, effort, persistence, self-regulation, and learning, and is associated positively with desired academic, social, and emotional learning

1   outcomes (Klem & Connell, 2004). While engagement can be narrowly
defined through its behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements, one uses
3   engagement more broadly to refer to energized, directed, and observable
actual interactions with tourism as a broad subject and career.

5   Collaborative action research was adopted as a methodology to examine
the educational practices and their accompanying effects (Calhoun, 1993).
7   Action research, aligned with the interpretive paradigm, is predicated on a
belief that there is not one reality "out there," but social worlds which
9   emerge as a social process, constructed by those who inhabit it, including
the researchers themselves, are potential variables in the enquiry. An
11 important area not only in education and educational research, Noffke
(1997, p. 306) likens action research to a "large family" in which "beliefs
13 and relationships vary greatly." It allows educators to collaboratively
examine a particular problem while learning about and improving their
15 own practices as well as disseminating that knowledge with other educators
(McNiff, 2003; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003; Noffke & Somekh,
17 2009). By studying a particular problem to learn about their own practices,
practitioners of action research can develop a deeper understanding about
19 what is needed in a school with the aim of improvement for both education
and industry (McNiff et al., 2003).

21

Action Research Steps

25 Practitioners use different steps or processes to conduct action research
(Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990; Sagor, 1992). Calhoun (1994) defined action
27 research as having five steps: selecting the area of focus, collecting data,
organizing data, analyzing and interpreting data, and taking action. Sagor
29 (1992) outlines seven steps, which include selecting a focus, clarifying the-
ories, identifying research questions, collecting data, analyzing data, report-
31 ing results, and taking informed action, all of which should become an
endless cycle.

33   Based on two initial focus groups with five students each relating to cur-
riculum development, one faculty focus group, faculty conversations, and
35 classroom engagement, the initial steps led the authors to explore problems
with students' engagement. Further investigations indicated that graduates
37 often changed their major to accounting, finance, or other business subjects
when applying for postgraduate courses, while those who entered the work-
39 force entered careers outside tourism. Sustained interactions with second,
third, and fourth year students were held over six months, with the purpose

1 of identifying initial issues, beliefs, values, feelings, concerns, and thoughts
so that focused questions could be asked. After this initial engagement, one
3 hundred self-administered questionnaires were distributed to third and
fourth year classes, with an 86% completion rate. The questions related to
5 their motivations in joining the degree program, their opinions on tourism
as a subject and tourism as a future career choice. After each new element
7 introduced in the class (i.e., guest lectures), feedback forms were distribu-
ted, while 10 students at the end of their induced placement were inter-
9 viewed. At the end of the semester an additional focus group, with 10
students was held.
11   The study found that students lacked technical skills and workplace
experience, were insufficiently informed of the nature of the industry, and
13 were unable to develop interests and realistic expectations. The curriculum,
which was modern, focused on classroom instruction and exam results,
15 while ignoring practical skill development and real-life experiences (Zhou,
1991). According to students in the two initial focus groups, this stifled
17 creativity, innovation, passion, and purpose; and initiated a search for
careers outside tourism from second year students onwards. Students also
19 noted that parents were happy with students after searched for alternative
careers. According to some of those focus group student participants, their
21 parents believed that entry level jobs were lesser positions considering their
status as graduates of a prestigious university. Students also expressed the
23 belief that tourism education did not provide useful knowledge, in compari-
son to an accounting qualification. For example, one student said, "We
25 don't learn professional and practical skills throughout the tourism pro-
gram. I mean, the tourism management program is not as useful as techno-
27 logical skills like accounting." Chinese students value job "stability" (Wan,
Wong, & Kong, 2014), with Jaw, Ling, Wang, and Chang (2007) indicating
29 how job stability relates to financial stability in China. Students were con-
cerned that tourism jobs were for high school or vocational graduates
31 rather than for university graduates.

33

Actions to Develop Engagement
35

While many factors contribute to a student's level of engagement; teachers
37 have little control over many of these factors (Lumsden, 1994; Thaliah &
Hashim, 2008). However, during the spring and summer of 2013, the
39 authors, who were employed in the same faculty, trialed a number of teach-
ing and learning techniques inside and outside the classroom environment.

1 These practices were identified by them after research and discussion with students and faculty. The objective was to contribute to students' interest
3 and level of engagement in learning about tourism as a subject and career. The authors sought to imagine, implement, and evaluate research-based
5 instructional practices on a trial basis by bringing in guest speakers from the industry, taking students on tours to international hotels, and organiz-
7 ing summer placements for students. These were voluntary activities and were not assessed via graded assignments or credits.

9   The first guest speaker represented an international five-star hotel at a managerial level. In standard Chinese Mandarin, she shared her difficulties
11 and tough times until she entered a managerial program at the hotel. The second guest speaker was a general manager of a five-star hotel. Born and
13 educated in a western country, he had worked throughout the world before coming to China. The third speaker became a human resource department
15 manager after taking a tourism degree in China. She started working as a waitress at a hotel upon graduation, even though many of her colleagues
17 were high school or vocational school graduates. She worked hard until promoted to a managerial position in a department of an international
19 hotel. The fourth guest speaker worked at a five-star hotel for two years at an entry level position, before promotion to the communication/marketing
21 manager position.

    Students were provided with feedback forms after each speaker, and
23 were invited to an open focus group session. Both through the feedback forms and the focus group, students argued that they did not want to go
25 through tough times before promotion and were not prepared to take an unskilled entry level position upon graduation. They were alarmed by how
27 much time and effort they would need to spend in achieving promotion to a managerial position. While impressed by hard work, resilience, tough-
29 ness, and perseverance (吃苦 or a willingness to "eat bitterness"), they were `AU:4` not motivated to follow a similar path. However, the students were
31 engaged by the second speakers' "life" experiences and high position. Many of the students requested internships immediately after the lecture.
33 The students also noted the fourth speaker's quick managerial journey, and her focus on the need for language skills in her career development.

35   The authors took a group of volunteer students to an international five-star hotel for a tour and provided opportunities for students to interact
37 with hotel managers and staff. Students appreciated the opportunity, and asked to take up placements there over the summer vacation. The institute
39 at that time had no policy or documentation regarding placements. Placement provision in semester seven depended on students' and

1 companies' needs with no staff supervision or site inspections. The students did not keep internship journals and often limited their internships to 2−3
3 weeks in an unrelated industry connected to a family member or used "practical" experiences as a substitute (such as a entrepreneurship
5 competition).

   Ten third-year students, after a competitive interview, were chosen and
7 worked for seven weeks over the summer break in 2013. The content of the placement was designed by the industry partner in conjunction with the
9 authors, and mentored by them, to support positive learning. As a bridge between theory and practice, placements can complement theoretical
11 knowledge (Ge & Wu, 2005). Velde and Cooper (2000) noted how the students grasped "hands on" experience as a "head start" to their career when
13 provided the opportunities. The 10 students were interviewed post-placement and all noted that they learned a lot and were eager to gain
15 more practical experiences to survive in the "real world." Based upon the authors' classroom observations, these students were more engaged in class
17 and in classroom discussions.

19

   Findings and Reflections
21

   In follow up research to evaluate the practices and generate new questions,
23 the authors gathered 86 self-administered surveys from students, which included open-ended questions about motivations in joining the course and
25 future feelings about a career in tourism. The survey tool was only used as a part of the ethnographic study including participant-observation and
27 interviews, not as a primary data source. The surveys were distributed in class in June, 2013. When asked why they joined the tourism program, the
29 majority (61.1%) said they chose the tourism program simply "because of my score for the university entrance exam," with many students feeling the
31 course provided an access to a degree from a good university rather than as a means to an end. Fifty percent of the students agreed that the guest lec-
33 tures were helpful ("Agree": 50%; "Neutral": 37.2%), while students hoped to have more foreign teachers in the tourism program because they felt for-
35 eign teachers are open-minded and use more dynamic teaching methods.

   Given that the foreign teachers were mostly trained in Western Europe
37 and America, they had preservice (pedagogical) training while at university (Fan, 2007), which can enable them to continually investigate their own
39 teaching and assessment practices as well as their students learning.

1 Students associated positive values to foreign teachers not trained in an authoritarian and didactic manner (Ho, 2001; Zhu & Liu, 2004). After ana-
3 lyzing the comments in the questionnaire, the comments primarily addressed three areas, correlated with the finial student focus group.
5   One, practice opportunities: "We need more guest lectures, internship opportunities, and more foreign teachers"; "tourism industry has many
7 opportunities and there are a lot of different ways to solve the tourism problems, not like the eternal correct answer in quotes" "provide us an oppor-
9 tunity for working at least for a short-term and learn more reality of tourism industry. We can contact with the real working environment and
11 to communicate with the managers who are working in tourism industry"; "teach us more about practice and let us know what we can do in the
13 future"; "I want more opportunities to contact with the industry. It will be good to have guest speakers from industry in classes or we can visit hotels
15 or other sites"; and "I hope we can gain practical experiences in daily working in hotels or tourism-related companies. I think it is the limitation of
17 Chinese education."
  Two, international instructors: "They never look down upon any stu-
19 dents who might be considered as 'bad' before. Also, I saw the world through them, in the past, I feel we are isolated from the outside world.
21 However, it is through them that I know what the USA, European countries are like. Because of them, I am more determined to go abroad to
23 experience it by myself." Three, societal recognition: "My mom told me if you are working for a hotel you are wasting your time"; "my mom always
25 tells me to change my major to business"; and "many people say this major is not good."
27   Before arriving in China, the authors were led to believe that students were primarily passive learners. After becoming teacher-researchers (rather
29 than expert educational researchers) by focusing on their own teaching practice and accepting the students' point of view, they changed themselves.
31 This study is in agreement with over 90 action research projects that have disproved the common assertions that Asian students prefer passive learn-
33 ing and resist teaching innovations (Kember, 2000). In sharing their findings with faculty, the authors also challenged staff perceptions of students,
35 the role of active learning, interesting teaching practices, and the need for realistic and structured placement opportunities that involved working with
37 industry partners, theoretical knowledge, and mentors. The authors argued for changes in the relationship with industry partners, longer and earlier
39 industry placement experiences, student tours, and industry guest speakers.

1   *Recommendations*

3   China's labor force is predicted to peak at 751 million in 2015, with fewer, young workers replacing those retiring (Lafraniere, 2011). The need to
5   recruit and retain quality tourism staff is already and will continue to be a central issue, requiring teaching reform as well as industry reform and soci-
7   etal change. While higher tourism education in China plays an important role in supporting tourism development, institutions are often only pres-
9   sured to ensure the continuous supply of human resources to meet industry demand (Lam & Xiao, 2000). Driven by the authors' concerns about stu-
11 dent disengagement, and concerns over their own practices, this paper found that action research allowed both them and students to be more con-
13 fident and knowledgeable. "Informed reflection" (Furlong & Salisbury, 2005, p. 61) impacted teaching practices, colleagues, faculty, and students;
15 and helping the authors "in their ability to promote student learning, to become more proactive in dealing with difficult situations that arise in their
17 teaching, and to acquire habits and skills of inquiry that are used beyond the research experience to analyze their teaching" (Zeichner, 2003, p. 318).
19 Given action research offers teachers "the belief that we may develop our understandings while at the same time bringing about change in concrete
21 situations" (Carson, 1990, p. 167), it changed the author's perspectives of themselves as teachers and their students.
23   This study highlights the need for teachers to engage in the processes of action research to critically influence the future of teaching and learning.
25 Oja and Pine (1989) argue doing so, would enable teachers to become more critical and reflective about their own practices, with Beaty, France, and
27 Gardiner (1997, pp. 84−85) advocating it as "an experiential learning cycle that fuses research, development and evaluation into a dynamic process."
29 While Bai (2009) noted that action research was introduced to China in the 1980s, there is little evidence to suggest there is widespread support
31 amongst institutions to implement an action research approach to teacher training (Bai, 2009; McNiff, 1993). As this study took place in a transna-
33 tional institution (Helms, 2008), it provided the space as well as the finan-cial, physical, and human resources. Abrahamsen (2012) notes that it is
35 private entities, experimental middle schools or colleges with ties to foreign universities in China, do the heavy lifting of educational reform. Many
37 other third level institutions under various ministerial, provincial, and state controls do not have the regulatory, cultural, and logistical leeway to
39 change the curriculum or even commit to researching students' experiences and evaluating teaching practices.

1   Cain and Milovic (2010) believe action research has tended to flourish mainly in cultures where flexibility and constructivism are embedded. The

3 latest educational reforms outlined in a plan called the "State Guidelines for Medium-to-Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan"

5 (2010−2020) may help in providing that flexibility and autonomy as well as the need for educational research methods training in preservice teacher

7 education. Brown (2002) argues that teachers can no longer afford to ignore their role in leading society through the challenges of present and

9 future educational trends. As action research can be imported (Cain & Milovic, 2010), foreign faculty members in China, at least in the short

11 term, will play an important role given the "Thousand Foreign Experts program" launched in 2011 expected to attract up to 1,000 foreign aca-

13 demics and entrepreneurs (Gooch, 2012).

    The educational authorities, tourism administrations, higher educational

15 institutions, and the industry need to work together to create favorable conditions for education development in this field. Curriculum design and

17 mapping should ensure learning outcomes are aligned with teaching and assessment strategies. Program reviews and revision processes in collabora-

19 tion with employers, students, and administrative staff should ensure a student-centered orientation that develops the skills and knowledge

21 demanded by students and the attributes demanded by industry. Given that many "programs and curricula were developed from the educational

23 backgrounds of educators and the previous origin of educational institu-tions" (Shen, 1998, p. 32), educator-centered practice has restrained the

25 sustainable development of tourism education in China (Xiao, 2000). For institutions, it means encouraging practitioners to "participate more widely

27 in consultative meetings on the future development of tourism education" (Dale & Robinson, 2001, p. 34) and design more innovative teaching

29 strategies.

    Rather than allowing the needs of the economy to define their relation-

31 ship with higher education, industry needs to be encouraged to provide guest speakers, academic exchanges, and communication. It includes train-

33 ing teachers with industry placements, shadowing, and secondment to tour-ism businesses. The industry must also engage with society and various

35 elements of the public about its scale, size, and scope. Few tourism associa-tions or businesses are willing to promote a tourism career as a means for

37 creative expression and career development. This requires tourism pro-grams and industry to concentrate on skill and career development with

39 more emphasis on practical training that does not exploit or manipulate students; with the issue of poor placement conditions an on-going concern.

1 Appealing placements and internship positions are effective recruitment
strategies and could address "both the concerns of young people and of
3 their parents" (Wong & Liu, 2010, p. 98). Action research should not be
tied to concrete "outcomes" or "targets" as demanded by industry—an
5 intervention that could potentially constrain learning and distort the
research process (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Finally, both university and
7 administrators need to increase society's understanding of the industry and
build positive perceptions to mitigate parental disinclination to support
9 their child's pursuit of a tourism career (Wong & Liu, 2010).

11

CONCLUSION
13

Despite the large number of graduating students, tourism education in
15 China has not yet entered a golden era, with institutes merely addressing
the industry's need for more workers, without intervening critically and
17 creatively in tourism education. While Chinese policy changes and infra-
structural investment will create the world's greatest inbound and domestic
19 tourist markets, educational reform has by and large not taken place, with
the authors noting the decline in student engagement with tourism as a sub-
21 ject and career at a large tourism program in North Eastern China. While
traditional research methods (quantitative data analyzed by statistical
23 methods) have been used in educational research, action research involves
instructors, administrators, supervisors, other staff members, students, and
25 often parents thinking together.

 While not concerned with generalizability or seeking the ultimate truths
27 behind teaching, the researchers, in their concern over engagement, found
that students within their program expressed their belief that field trips,
29 guest speakers, and internship opportunities not only helped generate a
more realistic picture of contemporary tourism, but also motivated them to
31 reflect and explore the generally held assumptions and stereotypes about a
career in tourism. The authors, in their evaluation of their informed action
33 or "action planning," found that the barriers to a career can be broken
down. While specific to a tourism program in China, this study offers some
35 findings concerning the Chinese social, economic, and political transition.
Without curriculum and school reform by local government officials,
37 administrators, instructors, and others, students will continue to fail to
enter the industry, which in the medium to long term will put the sustain-
39 able development of the industry at risk.

To move forward, systematic changes are recommended, including facilitating the supply of qualified professors and instructors, and encouraging those who study and teach tourism abroad to return with the creativity and innovation that HE in China requires; fostering world-class tourism faculties and institutes, with a broader focus on research as well as strengthening technical and practical capacities (these faculties need to encourage and facilitate more doctoral degrees related to tourism and experiment with seminars, extracurricular activities, workshops, and electives in growing niches); reducing pressure on university administrators to seek high enrollments to maximize profit and facilitating students' entrepreneurial creativity and practical experience by working with the industry' increasing pay for professors and facilitating preservice (pedagogical) training: facilitating the internationalization of tourism education and allowing for a higher degree of university autonomy in academic freedom, admissions, and degree awarding powers; improving the attractiveness of vocational tourism education as well as university degrees; and promoting tourism as a knowledge and technology intensive sector, with long-term career prospects.

	"Altbach, 2007; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeo, & Barch, 2004; Lafraniere, 2011; Wan, Wong, & Kong, 2014" respectively. Please confirm.	
AU:3	The following references are cited but not present in the reference list: "Lam & Zhao 2000; Penfold & Ladkin, 2010; McNiff, 2003." Please provide complete reference details.	
AU:4	Please check the usage of "吃苦" in the sentence "While impressed by hard work…".	
AU:5	Please provide the expansion of "HE".	