EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: Grounding the Tourism Curriculum

This research note seeks to outline fundamental thinking in the philosophy of education which might inform further analysis of tourism and hospitality curriculum design. There is not a single compelling meaning for the term curriculum. It has been variously defined as a set of educational plans, learners' experiences, a field of study, and subject matter/content (Cooper, 2002; Ratcliff, 1997). In all of these accounts, the underlying view is that curriculum strongly affects students, educators, and members of society (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Zais, 1976). Tribe (2015) contends that curriculum decision making is based on what he called 12Ps such as power, pals, precedent, pragmatism and parochialism to name just a few factors, thus, "curriculum can at worst be accidental, path-dependent, ill-informed and merely adequate" (p. 18). Despite the extensive points raised in this list, it can be maintained that the contribution of philosophical enquiry remains underutilized, even overlooked in curriculum design (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Our discussion positions philosophical concerns at the heart of curriculum development. Philosophical considerations provide frameworks for an institution's aims and goals, subjects to be taught, teaching and learning experiences, and assessment methods (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Tribe, 2015).

We contextualize this discussion with the case of tourism higher education in Indonesia. By 2008 and with the emergence of tourism as a nationally desirable field of study, two types of undergraduate programs, vocational and academic bachelors, were well established. Nevertheless the separate purposes and compositions of these continuing programs is not always clear. A contemporary review of curriculum documents of 12 reputable tourism institutions in five major cities in Indonesia demonstrates that the vocational approach overlaps with the academic path. The replication of subject matter can often be found across the curriculum of the two programs. The entanglement of the programs has created a great deal of confusion for various stakeholders. For example, the same treatment is given to students from both programs during job recruitment since the industry cannot detect the differences.

The philosophical approaches which might assist in clarifying the desirable separation of such tourism degree programs appear in multiple variants. Four major philosophies of education have been widely acknowledged: perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. Perennialism and essentialism that rooted in Plato's idealism and Aristotle's realism seek to foster intellectual development. Although perennialism and essentialism both emphasize knowledge, the latter incorporates more contemporary thinking and newly emerging knowledge fields. The perennialism curriculum fosters rationality, ethics, aesthetic and spiritual values. Essentialism stresses cognitive development, conceptual thoughts and problem solving skills that are useful in today's world (Dunn, 2005; Kauchak & Eggen, 2011; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

The more contemporary educational philosophy, progressivism and reconstructionism, are largely based on the centrality of human experience as the key in the process of knowing. The progressivism curriculum is an activity oriented curriculum aimed at individual development, emphasizing real-world tasks and problem solving. A reconstructionism curriculum supports active learning concerned with society's problems and contemplates ways to address challenging issues (Kauchak & Eggen, 2011; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). In adopting an educational philosophy, it is common for institutions to employ an eclectic approach by

embracing two or more philosophies that are believed to be best practice (Dunn, 2005; Oliva, 2005).

Epistemology, a branch of philosophy that contemplates the nature and sources of knowledge has been a central force for curriculum design (Zais, 1976). Young (2013, 2014) advocates epistemic access or students' entitlement to knowledge. Additionally, Young identifies 'powerful knowledge', which is constructed from the work of specialist communities/disciplines. This form of knowledge is different from the common day-to-day knowledge. It is specialized and systematic. Subjects are seen as resources to acquire powerful knowledge that go beyond (everyday) experiences. The subjects are created through re-contextualization of the knowledge of the specialist communities. They may be diverse in structure, concepts and power, depending on the topic of interest.

A prominent contemporary position in tourism education is Tribe's (2002) Philosophic Practitioner that promotes tourism stewardship and employment. The philosophic practitioner curriculum emphasizes the development of knowledge and skills through an integration and balance of liberal and vocational elements, defined as vocational action, reflective vocational, reflective liberal, and liberal action. The framework is drawn from Schon's Reflective Practitioner that endorses competent and reflective practitioners, based on personal experience and self-evaluation/self-reflection in constructing ideas to acquire knowledge (Tribe, 2002). The concept of reflection is also acknowledged in Doll's (1993) post-modern position. Doll's curriculum framework encourages critical thinking through an interactive approach and exploration to discover new ways of understanding the world. Doll suggests four components in post-modern curriculum: richness, recursion, relation, and rigor. Another tourism curriculum structure is a curriculum space, advocated by Dredge et al. (2012). This curriculum model was built on Tribe's Philosophic Practitioner and integrates the Aristotelian domains of knowledge, capabilities, and practical wisdom (phronesis) in the context of the life-long learning.

Reverting to the Indonesian case mentioned earlier, the separation of the academic and vocational curriculum framework as presented in Figure 1 draws upon the works of Tribe, Dredge et al., Young, and Doll by synthesizing the following points. First, the philosophic practitioner ideology is reflected in both academic and vocational strands in which the reflective and action approaches coexist. The academic mode largely emphasizes liberal reflection and action ideas that embolden creative and critical thinking and challenge the practices of the tourism world by adopting an ethical agenda. The vocational system on the other hand, reinforces the acquisition of knowledge and transferable skills for employment, as well as the ability to reflect and appraise the vocational action. Second, *episteme* (knowledge) and *techne* (capabilities/skills) should complement both educational styles depending upon the programs' aims and curriculum. The subjects are selected based upon powerful knowledge construct. Knowledge acquisition always require concepts and practical activities (Young, 2014). It is important for the learners to know and to do something by applying the concepts to solve problems or to describe a phenomenon. Indeed, Young maintains that the defining characteristic of any education (general or vocational) lies in the epistemic enquiry. Regardless of the emphasis of the educational mode, learners should develop a practical wisdom that embodies intellectual and moral virtues.

Complex
knowledge

Academic
strand

*Reflective liberal
and action
oriented*

*Phronesis
(Practical wisdom)*

*Episteme
(Powerful
knowledge
construct)*

*Vocational action
and reflective
oriented*

Vocational
strand

Simple
concept

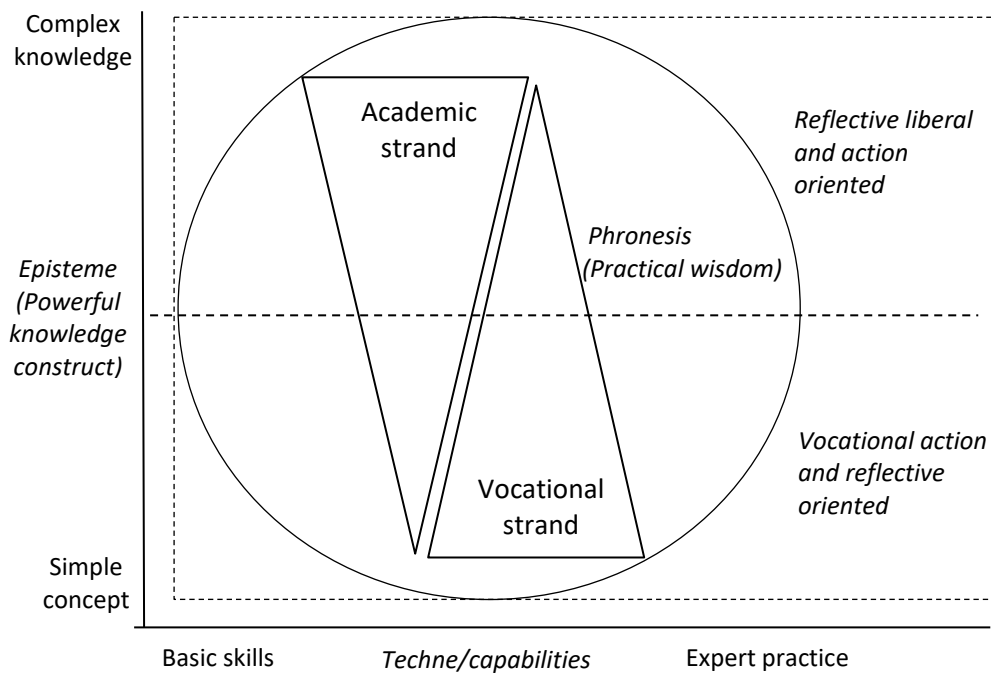Basic skills   *Techne/capabilities*   Expert practice

Figure 1. The positioning of vocational and academic education in the curriculum framework

The proposed curriculum framework is eclectic, rooted in the amalgamation of educational philosophies: essentialism, progressivism, reconstructionism, and post-modernism. The essentialism and progressivism positions are reflected in the mastery of concepts, analytical skills, experiments and experience, active learning and a real world tasks. The adoption of reconstructionism seeks to address critical issues in tourism such as socio-economic impacts and tourism trends. The open system of post-modernism is utilized to encourage rigorous exploration, interaction, and reflective recursion to promote higher order competence. In this context, a cultural approach to the curriculum is favored if the local and global cultural perspectives can offer an insightful hermeneutic frame.

When such underlying philosophies have been clarified, questions regarding subject matter, methods of instruction, and assessments may flow more easily in fleshing out the design of the curriculum. Furthermore, the competencies gained and developed by tourism students depend on the whole educational journey in which the tourism curriculum is framed (Tribe, 2002).

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