

**Tourism Education in Ireland.**

**An analysis of the provision of Third Level  
Tourism Education in Ireland focusing on the  
needs of the Public, Private and Voluntary sectors.**

**By**

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## Abstract

**Title: An analysis of the provision of Third level Tourism Education in Ireland focusing on the needs of the Public, Private and Voluntary sectors by Joanna Sweeney**

Tourism education in Ireland has witnessed a transformation within the last four decades since CERT introduced the first fundamentals of training in the 1960's. An analysis of the provision of tourism education in Ireland, focusing on the needs of public, private and voluntary sectors was the main focus of this study and concentrates mainly on third level provision of tourism education within the island of Ireland. The study examines the role of tourism education in Ireland, establishing any current or emerging trends in third level tourism provision. It identifies and analyses the main stakeholders in the Public, Private and Voluntary sectors and investigates if any requirements exist in the provision of third level education.

The multi-faceted nature of the tourism industry has resulted in the provision of a diverse range of educational courses. As a result of this diversity, a question hangs over the status of tourism as a professional discipline within itself.

Other issues identified throughout this study are the over provision of Tourism courses and the current and future disparity within tourism education.

The qualitative nature of the research involved questioning of major stakeholders and educators who influence tourism education provision and developing an overview of the current status of tourism education provision in Ireland identifying the present needs of each sector. Finally several strategies are suggested which may enhance third level tourism education in the future.

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A cairde: go raibh mile maith agat!

Recognition also, to my parents, Brian and Marian Sweeney.

And last but not least Dave, for the editing and advice.

Thank you.

## Declaration

Date

4<sup>th</sup> July 05

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The work in this thesis: "Tourism education in Ireland. An analysis of the provision of Third Level Tourism education in Ireland focusing on the needs of the Public, Private and Voluntary sectors" represents research carried out by Joanna Sweeney under the supervision of James Hanrahan and does not include work by any other party, with acknowledged exception.

Signed:

Joanna Sweeney

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	I
Acknowledgements .....	II
Declaration .....	III
Table of contents .....	IV
List of Figures .....	VII
List of Tables .....	VIII
List of abbreviations .....	IX
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2 – Methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	6
2.2 Tourism Research.....	6
2.3 Key issues of the research.....	8
2.4 Introduction to chosen Research.....	9
2.4.1 Qualitative versus Quantitative Research Methods.....	9
2.4.2 Qualitative Research Methods .....	11
2.4.3 Interviews .....	11
Advantages and disadvantages of Interviews .....	12
2.5 Selection of Research Methodology .....	13
2.5.1 Limitations .....	13
2.5.2 Code of Ethics .....	14
2.5.3 Interview Typologies .....	15
2.5.4 Method outlines .....	17
2.5.5 Research Questions .....	17
2.5.6 Sampling technique .....	18
2.6 Research protocol .....	19
2.6.1 Overview of this study .....	19
2.6.2 Steps in the interview process .....	20
2.7 Field procedures .....	26
2.7.1 Content analysis of third level tourism courses .....	26
2.8 Analysis of data .....	27
2.9 Textual analysis .....	28
2.9.1 Conclusion .....	29
<b>Chapter 3 – Literature Review</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	30
3.2 Defining tourism .....	31
3.3 Tourism in Ireland .....	34
3.4 Tourism policy .....	37
3.4.1 A review of Tourism policy development in Ireland .....	40
3.5 Tourism Stakeholders .....	43
3.5.1 Stakeholder and Academic Contradictory outlook .....	43

3.5.2	Tourism Sectors .....	44
	The Public sector stakeholders educational needs .....	46
	The Private sector stakeholders educational needs .....	49
	The Voluntary sector stakeholders educational needs .....	53
	Public-Private Partnerships (P.P.P's) educational needs .....	55
3.6	Third Level Education in Ireland .....	56
	Structure of the third level educational system in Ireland .....	57
	Current Trends in third level education .....	59
3.7	Tourism education .....	61
3.8	Education and training for Tourism in Ireland .....	66
3.9	Programmatic review and curriculum development .....	70
3.9.1	Conclusion.....	72
<b>Chapter 4 – Analysis and discussion</b>		<b>74</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	74
4.2	<b>The Role of Tourism education</b> .....	75
4.2.1	Educating Students .....	77
4.2.2	Supporting the needs of industry .....	82
4.2.3	Career development .....	87
4.2.4	Enterprise development .....	94
4.2.5	Research .....	98
4.2.6	The responsibility of educators .....	101
4.3	<b>Trends in third level tourism provision</b> .....	103
4.3.1	The trend of increased provision of tourism courses .....	105
4.3.2	Practical application of tourism courses .....	113
4.3.3	Further research in tourism .....	121
4.3.4	Technology .....	122
4.3.5	Industry awareness of trends .....	123
4.3.6	International students .....	125
4.3.7	Environmental issues .....	126
4.3.8	Tracking of graduates and employment within tourism .....	128
4.3.9	Diversity and the frosty Failte .....	129
4.3.10	Unsuccessful tourism courses .....	131
4.3.11	Female orientated industry .....	132
4.3.12	Language provision .....	133
4.4	<b>The educational needs within the public sector</b> .....	135
4.4.1	Qualification .....	136
4.4.2	Awareness of exogenous variables .....	138
4.4.3	Life Long Learning (L.L.L.) .....	140
4.4.3.1	Forming links and networking through education .....	142
4.4.3.2	The need for innovation and new ideas .....	143
4.4.4	The need to attract students into the public sector .....	145
4.5	<b>Educational needs within the private sector</b> .....	147
4.5.1	Specific Skills .....	148
4.5.2	The link between public and private sector educational needs .....	150
4.5.3	Access to courses .....	151
4.5.4	Operational/ functional courses .....	153
4.5.5	Investing in education .....	154
4.5.6	Further education .....	154
4.6	<b>The educational needs within the voluntary sector</b> .....	156
4.6.1	Specific skills .....	157
4.6.2	Understanding tourism .....	158
4.6.3	Funding/support mechanisms .....	160
4.6.4	The research need .....	162
4.6.5	Access to courses .....	163



4.7	<b>Satisfaction with the provision of third level tourism education ....</b>	164
4.7.1	Applied learning .....	164
4.7.2	Links with industry and education .....	166
4.7.3	Over provision .....	168
4.7.4	Feedback from graduates .....	169
4.7.5	Life Long Learning (L.L.L.) .....	170
4.7.6	Too much overlap .....	172
4.7.7	Better funded .....	173
4.7.8	Government policy .....	174
4.7.9	Broader Sectors .....	175
4.7.10	Specialised areas .....	176
4.8	<b>Gaps in the provision of tourism third level education .....</b>	178
4.8.1	Specialisation .....	179
4.8.2	Links between academia and stakeholders .....	180
4.8.3	Student needs .....	182
4.8.4	Personal development .....	183
4.8.5	Expectations of employers and students .....	184
4.8.6	Partnership .....	185
4.8.7	Tourism and discipline status .....	186
4.8.8	Modular courses for part time education .....	187
4.8.9	Practical training .....	188
4.8.10	Transition to higher education .....	190
4.8.11	Top up degrees in Northern Ireland .....	191
	<b>Chapter 5 – Recommendations and Conclusions</b>	<b>193</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	193
5.2	The role of tourism education in Ireland .....	194
5.3	Trends in third level tourism education .....	199
5.4	The educational needs within the public sector .....	204
5.5	The educational needs within the private sector .....	207
5.6	The educational needs within the voluntary sector .....	209
5.7	Satisfaction .....	210
5.8	Gaps in third level tourism education .....	213
5.9	Conclusion .....	218

<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>X</b>
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<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>XXVIII</b>
Appendix A: accompanying form sent to interviewees	
Appendix B: list of interviewees and brief outline of profession	
Appendix C: Course content analysis	
Appendix D: CAO Entry points for tourism courses in Ireland	
Appendix E: Questions asked to students during programmatic Review focus group	
Appendix F: Proposed redesign of National Diploma in Applied Tourism	

## List of Figures:

Fig: 3.1 – The TEP-TEI Conceptual Framework.....	40
Fig 3.2 - Stakeholder Mapping for third level education in Ireland .....	43
Fig: 4.1 – Role of Tourism Education .....	75
Fig: 4.1.1 - Educating students .....	77
Fig: 4.1.2 – Supporting the needs of industry.....	82
Fig: 4.1.3 – Career Development .....	87
Fig: 4.1.4 – Enterprise Development .....	94
Fig: 4.1.5 – Research .....	98
Fig: 4.1.6 – The responsibility of educators .....	101
Fig: 4.3 - Trends in tourism third level provision.....	103
Fig: 4.3.1 – Main Trends in tourism third level provision.....	105
Fig: 4.3.2 – The trend of increased provision of tourism courses.....	106
Fig: 4.3.3 – Practical application of tourism courses.....	113
Fig: 4.4 – The educational needs within the public sector.....	136
Fig: 4.5 – Private sector educational needs .....	147
Fig: 4.6 – The educational needs within the voluntary sector.....	156
Fig: 4.7.1- Satisfaction with the level of tourism education provision.....	164
Fig: 4.8 – Gaps in the provision of third level tourism education.....	178

## List of Tables:

Table 2.1 – Open-ended semi structured interview questions.....	17
Table 2.2 – Quantitative Questions.....	18
Table 2.3 – Steps in the interview process.....	20
Table 2.4 – Field Procedures.....	26
Table 2.5 – Content analysis tool.....	26
Table 2.6 -Summary table of third level tourism course contents.....	27
Table 4.1– Work placement provision.....	90
Table 4.2 – Enterprise Development Provision .....	96
Table 4.3 – Business focused provision .....	97
Table 4.4 – Research provision .....	99
Table 4.5 – Provision of follow on courses .....	112
Table 4.6 – Language provision .....	133
Table 4.7 – Business focused provision .....	149
Table 4.8 –%age satisfaction with the provision of third level tourism education	164
Table 4.9 – Work placement provision .....	189



## List of Abbreviations

AIEST	Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BF	Bord Failte
BBS	Bachelor of Business Studies
CAO	Central Applications Office
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and development
CLMS	Centre of labour market studies
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organisation
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
EU	European Union
EYT	European Year of Tourism
FAS	Foras Aiseanna Saothair
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICPD	Institute of Continuing Professional Development
IDA	Irish Development Authority
IT	Institute of Technology
ITIC	Irish Tourism Industry Confederation
LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
L.L.L	Life Long Learning
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards
NTCB	National Tourism Certificate Board
NDP	National Development Plan
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
PPP	Public- Private Partnership
S.M.E	Small Medium- sized enterprises
TEP-TEI	Tourism Educational Policy- Tourism Educational Implementation Framework
UNSTAT	United Nations Statistical Division
UK	United Kingdom
VEC	Vocational Educational Committee
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Tourism is a major segment of economic and social development in Ireland. The Irish economy has developed rapidly over the last decade and the foundation blocks on which the Irish tourism industry rests today include a traditionally high customer base of 6 million plus visitors, consistently high overall tourist satisfaction ratings, a competent and experienced workforce, a modern and efficient resource stock of accommodation and other attractions, including air and sea transport services. Employment grew in the sector by more than 70% between 1990- 2002- a rate of growth considerably above the 50% growth in employment generally in the economy over the same period (Report of the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003:22).

The structure of the Irish tourism Industry includes stakeholders who are predominantly from the Private sector. These are Irish-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (S.M.E's) in accommodation, restaurants, licensed premises and tourism services and attractions. The industry has a stable representative system that works well with Government Departments and State agencies in a Public-Private partnership to promote the development of the industry. There are also a minority of Voluntary groups who have developed tourism initiatives.

There has been a huge expansion in the provision of tourism courses in Ireland over the last decade. Until relatively recently education and training for the tourism industry in Ireland were centred on the hotel and restaurant sectors. This provision has now spread out into all levels of education from primary level right through to post-graduate level. There are now two Universities, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and 9 Institutes of Technology offering Tourism courses at Third Level.

The title of this thesis is: Tourism education in Ireland. An analysis of the provision of Third Level Tourism Education in Ireland focusing on the needs of the Public, Private and Voluntary Sectors.

The aims and objectives of this study are:

- To identify the role of Tourism education in Ireland.
- To establish any current and emerging trends in third level tourism provision.



- To assess the tourism educational needs generated by Public, Private and Voluntary sectors.
- To determine the current third level tourism education provision in Ireland.
- To investigate if any gaps exist in the provision of third level education.
- To develop recommendations and strategies to ensure adequate, sustainable and a well balanced level of tourism education in Ireland for the future.

It must also be stressed at this point that it was outside the context of this study to include the provision of courses that are under the umbrella of hospitality and craft sphere of activity. It is within this framework that the researcher focused on the coherent provision of tourism education in third level institutions in Ireland with minor emphasis on hospitality programmes. While it is acknowledged that the existing literature pertaining to tourism education does not ignore hospitality, it must be documented that a very close relationship exists between the tourism and hospitality sector not only in Ireland but universally. Moreover the researchers remit within the study was to analyse the provision of third level tourism education and while this has been achieved, the symbiotic relationship that has historically existed between tourism and hospitality must be analysed to achieve a holistic interpretation of the provision of tourism education in Ireland currently. From a philosophical perspective both tourism and hospitality programmes possess similar characteristics such as the tourism industry itself, faculty and types of disciplines under which these programmes are offered. The chief variation arises in the career choice and learning outcomes from such courses. Therefore hospitality could be interpreted as the primary driving force in relation to the service industry and thus these programmes would have a significant service component within the curriculum whereas tourism education in Ireland in particular delivers an industrial and economic based perspective. This ultimately suggests that there are distinctive differences in the learning outcomes from both tourism and hospitality educational courses. To carry out the research effectively, the researcher set boundaries where courses that specifically had tourism in the title were investigated. The title of this research includes the term 'third level' and it is for this reason that courses in the PLC and VEC sector were also excluded. The main focus of this research was concentrated on an analysis of the provision of undergraduate and postgraduate courses

in tourism at third level institutions, namely within the Institutes of Technology and University sector.

The methodology for this study involved extensive analysis utilising four research techniques:

- 1) Qualitative Interviewing stakeholders from the Irish tourism sectors.
- 2) Case Studies analysis of the focus group held as part of the Programmatic Review at the Institute of Technology, Sligo
- 3) A content analysis tool was employed to quantify the current provision of tourism educational courses in third level Institutions currently.
- 4) Literature review identifying national and international authorities in relation to tourism education.

A mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative techniques were utilised within this study. It was confirmed that interviews were the most appropriate method of gathering information. Interviewing is a process that can be compared to a conversation where the conversation is structured in some way. Therefore the Interview process can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured depending on the type of questions presented to the interviewee. The formation of the questions was a significant tool in conducting the interviews where semi-structured open-ended questions were utilised to gather the data for an analysis of tourism education in Ireland. A number of quantitative questions were asked to the academic interviewees to gather up to date information on the current provision of tourism education in Ireland. The construction of the questions involved creating questions that were open-ended which allowed freedom within the interview process. The interviews were conducted over the telephone or face-to-face and the interviews were recorded whenever possible.

A pilot study was conducted to test the research setting and to allow changes to the question structure before initiating the research process. The pilot study was useful and paved the way for the development of prompts which were helpful to keep the interview process in context. The sampling techniques used involved snowballing which allowed for all available stakeholders to be considered. The snowballing process began when the researcher sent formal letters familiarising the interviewees with the research and asking for their participation. Throughout the interview process if any other possible



interviewees were recommended the researcher would also have requested their permission for participation within the study.

A case study analysis of the Programmatic Review of the then National Diploma in Applied Tourism at the Institute of Technology, Sligo was cross examined throughout this study. This involved a focus group of industry representatives that were consulted in order to identify industry needs within the overall reconfiguration of the existing course structure. The minutes from this focus group meeting have been combined within this study to verify trends and identify 'gaps' within industry needs in the existing tourism course provision in Ireland.

A Course content analysis tool was assembled to observe the existing provision in third level tourism courses in Ireland. This involved researching all tourism course curriculums in Ireland and identifying the subject's delivered within these courses. This gave the study a quantitative periphery where the content analysis tool was checked to confirm information or to compare and contrast course provision.

A comprehensive literature review of secondary data in relation to tourism education in Ireland was conducted in this study. The literature has been grouped under headings looking at different aspects of tourism education policy and stakeholders involved. The main authorities on the topic are identified, while key theories are recognised. The current situation of tourism education is reviewed identifying trends. It was recognised within the Literature review that Tourism education and training is available at a variety of levels within the Irish educational system from primary level right up to post graduate level. The educational needs are identified for the public private and voluntary sectors and finally an analysis of Tourism education in Ireland is presented.

An analysis and discussion of the research data involved physically transcribing the interviews that had been recorded. Once the interviews were transcribed, a process of grouping information occurred where similarities and contrasts were identified among the interviews conducted. Further analysis occurred when the researcher compared and contrasted this information to the other three research techniques performed in this study. It was from this analysis that the role of tourism education in Ireland was



identified. The educational needs of the Public, Private and Voluntary sectors were established and levels of satisfaction with the current provision of tourism education in Ireland were verified. Throughout this study trends in tourism third level education were recognised and are listed below.

Recent trends explored within this study include:

- Life-Long Learning
- Specialisation within tourism educational provision.
- Technology and learning
- Environmental awareness
- Cultural diversity and the frosty Failte
- Research in tourism
- Practical application within tourism education delivery.

Finally, a number of 'gaps' were identified within the current provision of tourism education in Ireland. Findings emerged from this comprehensive analysis and it is from these that recommendations are created to strengthen tourism education for the future. It is hoped this study will add to the body of knowledge in relation to tourism education in Ireland. The subsequent section will detail the mixed research technique that has been utilised within this study.

## Chapter 2 – Methodology

### 2.1 – Introduction

The subsequent segment describes the philosophy and processes followed during this study. It justifies the employment of interviews as the research method and discusses the pilot study and the interview procedure. The content analysis tool used to look at the provision of third level tourism education in Ireland is described. Moreover, the steps taken to prepare, implement and analyse the study is detailed. This section will start with an explanation of how and why the researcher chose the research design by addressing the three areas, which are central to the design of research identified by (Creswell: 2003). These are:

- The knowledge claims that are made by the researcher,
- What strategies of inquiry will inform procedures and
- What methods of data collection and analysis will be used?

Thus research could be referred to as a process, which is the empirical investigation of the relationships between or among several variables. This involves a close examination of information that is used to produce or enhance knowledge. (Howard and Sharp 1983:6) define research as

*“seeking through methodical processes to add to one’s own body of knowledge and hopefully, to that of others, by the discovery of non-trivial facts and insights”*. (Drew 1980:4-8) agrees that *“research is conducted to solve problems and to expand knowledge”* and stresses that *“research is a systematic way of asking questions, a systematic method of enquiry”*.

The research tools developed specifically by the researcher to conduct this study are articulated below.

### 2.2 – Tourism Research

The Tourism industry is a labour-intensive service industry, dependent for survival on the availability of good quality personnel to deliver, operate and manage the tourist product. The interaction between the tourist and the tourism industry personnel is an integral part of the total tourist experience.

*“Tourism is defined as the activities of person's travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”*  
(World Tourism Organisation Conference, 1981)

The use of this broad concept makes it possible to identify tourism between countries as well as tourism within a country. Tourism refers to all activities of visitors, including both ‘tourist’ and ‘same day visitors’ ([www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org), 2004-06-09).

On dissection one can deduce “Tourism” as being a product (in the case of an attraction, such as Disneyland, Paris), a service (for example a restaurant) or as a phenomena where people have spread out all over the world to satisfy various needs or wants within that person. These motivational theories have been outlined by authors such as (Plog, 1974) with his allocentric-psychocentric theory, (Maslow, 1970) and updated by (Mc Dermot and Pearce 1991) and other motivational theories devised by (Mc Intosh, 1995), (Cohen, 1972) and (Gray, 1970).

The above theorists outlined the motivations for people to travel, which is the phenomenon of tourist behaviour. Therefore tourism is a multidisciplinary subject which means that a wide range of other subjects influence it namely:

- History,
- Anthropology,
- Psychology,
- Geography,
- Marketing,
- Management and
- Economics in particular which bring to it various ideas and methods of study.

World competition in tourism has grown dramatically as more and more countries realise both the desirability and the necessity of including tourism as a major component of their social and economic structure.

In recent years the tourism industry has become a more cooperative and more coordinated force. Progress has been made in developing research techniques that improve the reliability of travel and tourism data, thus enhancing our understanding of consumer behaviour and spending patterns in tourism. While much progress yet remains to be accomplished, there is little doubt that the level of sophistication in tourism



research is much higher than it was and that there will be continued pressure for even more rigorous information gathering, analysis and interpretation systems (Ritchie & Goeldner 1994:13). In this study, third level education provision for the tourism industry will be investigated.

*“I see the facilitation of learning as the aim of education, the way in which we might develop the learning man, the way in which we can learn to live as individuals in process” (Rodgers 1969:105).*

(Go, 1994) describes Tourism Education as the intellectual development of a person through special skills, such as foreign languages, computational skills, and knowledge of countries and culture without particular concern for specific jobs or responsibilities. The solution may be to forge a partnership between industry and education. Collaboration on policy formulation between the public and private sectors is expected. Consultation between tourism and education policy makers, results in tourism education policies, which can then be translated into tourism education. It is important for policies and their objectives to be clearly specified and to reflect the wishes of the electorate, which is why consultation should incorporate the various groups involved in both fields: Tourism and Education.

In considering the relationship between public and private sector Holder (1992) secretary general of the Caribbean Tourism organisation (CTO) made this statement:

*“I can think of no industry other than Tourism where the interests of the public sectors so closely converge. First, the country is, in the broadest sense, the product...”*

Due to the diversity and nature of the tourism industry the success of this study will depend on an extensive and proficient approach to the collection of both qualitative and quantitative material. A representative and balanced research approach was utilized to ensure all sectors within the tourism community were included.

### **2.3 - Key issues of the research:**

The main issues involved in this study include the following:

- To establish an understanding of the provision of tourism education in Ireland.
- To conduct a literature review on tourism education.
- To analyse the provision of Third level tourism education in Ireland.
- To conduct a fair and balanced study of Third level tourism education in Ireland at the moment.

- To ascertain whether tourism education complies with industry stakeholders needs and wants.
- To examine the existing curriculum taught in tourism courses at Universities and Institutes of Technology throughout Ireland.
- To examine the similarities and differences in tourism courses through comparative analysis of courses throughout Ireland.
- To identify that this study will focus on tourism course provision in Ireland and exclude courses such as hospitality or hotel management courses. The researcher will only analyse courses with tourism in the title and courses that have a tourism qualification as a learning outcome.
- To identify best practice and models from international context and evaluate the possibility of their application within Tourism education policy in Ireland.
- To identify current and emerging trends within tourism education in Ireland.

## **2.4 – Introduction to chosen research:**

The research involved investigating the provision of Tourism education in Ireland. For the purpose of this study, a mixed approach will look at aspects of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. As the primary research will be based on semi-structured interviews, there will be predominant use of qualitative over quantitative research methods. There has been much research into tourism and education in previous years and for this reason quantitative methods were employed to back up information received or as a secondary form of data. A discussion of both quantitative and qualitative research is outlined below.

### **2.4.1– Qualitative versus Quantitative Research Methods**

There are two general categories of research, qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative method is used to obtain information on a particular subject in a social setting and the quantitative method involves the use of statistical procedures to arrive at the desired conclusions. Both types were used in the course of this study, however qualitative methods appeared prominent due to their exploratory nature.

*“The hegemony of one research style deprives social scientists of a variety of other research strategies that have equal, and possibly superior, claims to the mantle of “science”...The complexity of the world around us demands the deployment of a variety of techniques and strong intellectual and methodological discipline, not a commitment to the hegemony of a single research modality” (Whyte, Greenwood & Lazes, 1991:19).*



Qualitative research focuses on the experiences, interpretations, impressions or motivations of an individual or individuals, and that seeks to describe how people view things and why. It relates to beliefs, attitudes and changing behaviour. This method of researching as an alternative methodological approach has gained acceptance in many fields, such as education (Guba, 1987; Le Comte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1987), sociology (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1994; Silverman, 2000 & Whyte, 1981), anthropology (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1973; Rosaldo, 1993 & Van, 1987) and consumer behaviour (Anderson, 1988; Hirschmen, 1985; Holbrook & O' Shaughnessy, 1988). Research in these disciplines has been challenging, providing new dimensions to the body of knowledge in their respective fields.

More recently, researchers have questioned quantitative research because it cannot fully address questions of understanding and meaning (Havitz, 1994; Henderson, 1991; Hollinshead, 1997 & Walle, 1997). This paradigm shift has resulted in a recognition and incorporation of a variety of qualitative methods in selected research efforts but the literature would suggest that quantification is still dominant.

Quantitative research focuses on measuring and counting facts and the relationships among variables, and that seeks to describe observations through statistical analysis of data. It includes experimental and non-experimental research and descriptive research (Sarantakos, 1998:26).

In a review of relevant literature, (Rovelstad and Blazer, 1983) suggested that tourism companies undertook less research than consumer goods organisations. The authors assumed that qualitative research was less methodologically sophisticated than quantitative methods. (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2) defined qualitative research as; *multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter*. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experience, introspective, life history, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.

The above points raise two concerns over qualitative and quantitative techniques in research. Firstly, quantitative research often ignores the human aspects within a study while qualitative research is considered weak without the support of quantitative studies. For the purpose of this research a mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative techniques will be utilised to draw a conclusion.

The qualitative technique used involved engaging in semi-structured interviews using a sampling method known as snowballing.

Quantitative research will be used as a secondary source by analysing statistical data relating to tourism education and in particular tourism courses in Ireland, which has already been researched and published. A series of quantitative questions were also asked within the interview setting to gather quantitative data.

#### **2.4.2 - Qualitative Research Methods:**

During the research method selection process, the researcher chooses a number of methods and studied them in detail. The purpose of this process was to ascertain which method was most appropriate for this particular study. The researcher focused on several methods such as case studies, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, which on reflection pointed towards one outstanding method (Interviewing), which would draw out the relevant information for this study.

Interviewing is perhaps the most common of all research methods. In essence, an interview may be described as

*“A verbal exchange of information between two or more people for the principal purpose of one, gathering information from the others” (Pole & Lampard, 2002:126).*

A detailed account of why interviews were chosen for data collection within this research is given below.

#### **2.4.3 – Interviews:**

Interviews are a social experience, depending on one person, the interviewer, asking a series of questions of another person or group of people. There are many types of interviews, each of which differs from the others in structure, purpose, and role of the interviewer, number of respondents involved in each interview, form and frequency of



administration. In relevant international literature, these interview types appear under many different names. Some types of interviews are employed in both qualitative and quantitative methods; others are used in one research type only. Semi-structured interviews, for example, are employed in qualitative and quantitative research, but structured interviewing is mostly used in quantitative research (Sarantakos, 2003:246). The advantages and disadvantages of interviewing are detailed below:

**Advantages of Interviews: -**

- Flexibility. Interviews can be adjusted to meet many diverse situations.
- Easy administration- as interviews do not require respondents to have the ability to read, handle complex documents or long questionnaires.
- The researcher has control over the research environment. Thus the interviewer has an opportunity to control the conditions under which the questions are asked.
- Control over time, date and place of interview. If the information must be collected at a certain time (e.g. after the evening news or on Friday evenings, etc.), date or place, interviews offer a guarantee that it will be collected according to the specified conditions. Such a guarantee cannot be given when questionnaires are used.

**Disadvantages of Interviews: -**

- Interviews are more costly and time consuming than other methods.
- Interviewing is more inconvenient than other methods, such as using questionnaires as both the interviewer and the interviewee must be present for the interview to take place.
- It offers less anonymity than other methods since the interviewer knows the identity, residence, family conditions and other personal details of the respondent.
- It is less effective than other methods when sensitive issues are discussed. For example, many people prefer to write about sensitive issues than to talk about them (Sarantakos, 2003).

## 2.5 - Selection of Research Methodology

The purpose of the study is to investigate tourism education and the provision of tourism education in Ireland. This involves researching four main categories or stakeholders:

- 1) The Government (the National body responsible for Tourism and public organisations involved in the provision of Tourism in Ireland).
- 2) The Educators (All third level institutions providing Tourism courses).
- 3) The industry (Private organisations providing Tourism services, including Public-private partnerships, PPP's).
- 4) Voluntary organisations involved in the tourism sector.

It is acknowledged that, like all research methods and techniques qualitative approaches have limitations. Interviews were chosen for this research as it assisted in identifying specific information about tourism education in Ireland. It was used to illustrate the stakeholder's actions, decisions and future trends and issues, where the primary focus of the study looked at the matter of assessing the tourism educational needs generated by public, private and voluntary sectors. In qualitative methodology, interviews are semi-standardised and open and use a standard technique of data collection.

The important criteria distinguishing qualitative interviews are the following:

- They use open-ended questions.
- They are predominantly single interviews, questioning one person at a time.
- The question structure is not fixed or rigid; allowing change of question order, even the addition of new questions where necessary.
- They offer interviewers more freedom in presenting the questions, changing wording and order, and adjusting the interview so that it meets the goals of the study (Sarantakos, 2003:256).

Therefore, for this study, interviews appeared to be most appropriate due to the fact that the purpose and scope of the research was to investigate tourism education in Ireland. Scrutiny of all research methodologies lead to the researcher choosing interviews as the most prominent method.

### 2.5.1 – Limitations

A small number of constraints were encountered and these are highlighted in this segment. First of all, it was identified that to allow for the interviews to take place, the



respondents preferred telephone interviewing. This was not as intrusive to the interviewees busy time schedules as a personal interview. The interviews were conducted face-to-face whenever possible and the researcher provided transport to the interview setting when conducting this type of interview. In addition, the geographical area in which the research was set meant that it was possible to interview the relevant sample without the project becoming uncontrollable. Money and resources were also a consideration when choosing the method of researching. Telephone and recording equipment were provided by the Institute of Technology to aid the researcher in conducting the project, which decreased the cost of conducting the study.

### **2.5.2 - Code of Ethics:**

The information that the researcher obtained from the Public, Private, PPP's and Voluntary organisations involved was carefully interpreted and analysed. The information received arose out of sources including interviews and secondary data from archival records, documentation and observation. Throughout this study, the researcher had various responsibilities to all participants involved, whether they were human or non-human participants. These participants' rights were protected and respected during the course of the study, regardless of the size of their contribution. The interviewees were given a number and a vague description of their professions was used when quoting their responses within the text. This was to allow privacy within the study and a full list of respondent's numbers and brief outline of their job title is displayed in appendix 2.

The interviewees were given a choice of telephone or face-to-face interviewing by posting them a letter and a form that outlined *their preference*, which they completed and returned, in a stamped addressed envelope to the interviewer. The purpose and scope of the interviews were explained to the interviewees before proceeding with the process. This involved outlining that the interviews would be recorded for analysis and that the researcher would take notes also. Out of 29 respondents who took part in the study, 21 were interviewed over the phone while 8 were interviewed face-to-face. Telephone interviewing primarily took place with the academic interviewees, when time and distance constraints were a factor for the interviewee. The public, private, PPP's and voluntary sectors made up 6 of the face-to-face interviews; this was due to the fact that all these sectors were in close proximity to the researcher and were therefore



accessible. 20 telephone interviews were recorded for analysis while one interviewee refused to be tape-recorded but did allow the researcher to take notes. This was taken into consideration and the researcher did not record that particular interview. All face-to-face interviews were recorded.

The researcher also had a responsibility to society in general while conducting the study. It was vital that the rights of the scientific community were protected, as the researcher is part of a group of people who have a particular reputation to preserve. This reputation and status must be maintained the way it was before the researcher introduced themselves to the study and the research environment.

### 2.5.3 – Interview Typologies

Interviews have been compared to conversations. A definition of interviews outlined by (Benney & Hughes 1970:191) states that they are

*“merely one of the many ways in which two people talk to one another”.*

Dexter (1970:149) elaborates a little further on the nature of interviews as conversations; he sees interviews as conversations with a purpose.

Interviews can be conducted in different forms such as structured, unstructured or semi-structured.

*Structured interviews* are based on a strict procedure and a highly structured interview guide, which is no different from a questionnaire. This form of interview is employed in quantitative research.

*Unstructured interviews* have no strict procedure to follow of the kind described above. This type of interview involves an element of flow in which probing is initiated to formulate a direction for which the interview should take. The structure of these interviews is flexible and restrictions minimal, being presented in most cases in the form of guides rather than rules. This type of interview is mostly used in qualitative research.

*Semi-Structured interviews* lie somewhere between structured and unstructured interviews. They contain elements of both, and while some are closer to structured interviews, others are closer to unstructured interviews. The degree to which interviews are structured depends on the research topic and purpose, resources and the type of information sought, which of course is determined by the research objective. They can be either qualitative or quantitative techniques.

As this study is a form of analysis of the state of Tourism education in Ireland, it was felt that Semi-structured interviewing using open-ended questioning was the most preferred form of data collection for gathering information on emerging or current trends in the tourism industry. In addition the researcher developed structured questions which were very specific to the research question to collect up to date quantitative data on areas such as student drop out rates and numbers of lecturing staff employed lecturing tourism. This information was needed to back up all qualitative data received. Interviewing as a method of research also has its disadvantages, which have already been outlined above. The selection of respondents to be interviewed must firstly agree to meet the researcher. This is based on schedules and timetabling so that it suits both the researcher and the interviewee. There is always the danger of bias creeping into an interview, largely because, as Selltitz et al. (1962:583) points out,

*“interviewers are human beings and not machines”,*  
and their manner may have an effect on the respondents. Many factors can influence responses, one way or another. (Borg 1981:87) draws attention to a few of the problems that may occur:

*“Eagerness of the respondent to please the interviewer, a vague antagonism that sometimes arises between interviewer and respondent, or tendency of the interviewer to seek out the answers that support his preconceived notions are but few of the factors that may contribute to biasing of data obtained from the interview. These factors are called response effect by survey researchers”.*

In order to decrease bias in a semi-structured interview, it is important to identify such biases and error-producing factors before they occur. The investigator of this research respected the information that was received, and interpreted this information in a manner that was not influenced by their own opinion, as this might have assumed bias on the part of the researcher. In obtaining the participation in the interview, the researcher received permission from the interviewees to utilise their quotes for the study.

A total of 68 stakeholders within the tourism industry were identified (using the snowballing technique) as potential interviewees within the research. A formal letter wishing to seek participation within the study was sent to them. 40 potential interviewees responded to the letter and hence 29 of the above were interviewed as part of the study. (Due to difficulties in obtaining the other 11 respondents their input was



abandoned). Overall this gave a response rate of 59% and an overall interview rate of 42%.

#### **2.5.4 - Method outlines:**

In qualitative methodology, an Interview is semi-structured and open and uses a standard technique of data collection. A significant element of this research was uniformity in recording data. This was important as it assisted in identifying the information that was required for this particular study. It was necessary to define specific aims and objectives before the researcher commenced collecting the evidence. Specific tools were designed to ensure uniformity in recording data such as the use of textual analysis and field procedures, which are discussed in following sections. In addition, a literature review on the topic tourism education teased out the key players within the tourism industry whether they were public, private or voluntary in nature. This proved a useful way to familiarise the researcher with the key authorities and players involved in tourism education in Ireland.

#### **2.5.5 - Research Questions:**

The questions posed to the interviewees are displayed in Table 2.1 below. Seven questions were prepared that directly related to the aims and objectives of this study. Due to the nature of the interviews, a series of prompts are demonstrated under the questions, which the interviewer would have initiated to keep the interviewee within the context of the research. These prompts were utilized if the interviewee did not comprehend the meaning of the question and also to bring the interviewee back to the question if they were not answering the question adequately.

##### **Open ended, semi-structured interview questions:**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) What is the role of tourism education in Ireland?<br/><i>Prompt- industry needs focused</i></li><li>2) Have you noticed any changing or emerging trends in third level tourism provision?<br/><i>Prompt- what the future holds</i></li><li>3) What are the tourism educational needs within the public sector at the moment?<br/><i>Prompt- government funded organisations</i></li><li>4) What are the tourism educational needs within the private sector at the moment?<br/><i>Prompt- small or medium sized tourism businesses</i></li><li>5) What are the tourism educational needs within the voluntary sectors of Irish society today?<br/><i>Prompt- community development</i></li><li>6) Is there adequate tourism education provision in Ireland at the moment?<br/><i>Prompt- enough courses</i></li><li>7) Do any gaps exist in the provision of third level education?<br/><i>Prompt- between stakeholders and academia</i></li></ol> |
|---|

**Table 2.1**



The Quantitative questions illustrated in Table 2.2 below, were used when interviewing those in academic professions. These questions are designed to build more quantitative data on the tourism courses in question and were very useful in analysing tourism education provision in Ireland at this present time.

### Quantitative questions

What is the average drop out rates within your tourism course on a yearly basis?	
How many lecturing staff do you employ lecturing tourism?	
What qualifications does your lecturing staff mentioned above possess?	
-Primary degree in tourism or other disciplines?	
Do you have a budget for guest speakers?	
Do you conduct research on graduates and where they are working?	
- If so, can I have a copy?	
Do you offer the student CRS training (Galileo training)?	
Have you developed links with other colleges as regards tourism?	
Do you offer the students an international field trip?	
Do you offer a distance learning option within your tourism course?	
How long has the course been in existence?	
How many students are currently taking the course?	
Do you offer a dissertation as part of your tourism course?	
Is there language provision within you tourism course?	
Do you offer a work placement/	
-If so, for how long?	

Table: 2.2

### 2.5.6 – Sampling Technique

Sampling is a complex area and a wide variety of sampling strategies exist ranging from types of probability sampling to types of non probability as well as other kinds such as event and time sampling (Blaxter et al: 163). Probability sampling is mostly used in quantitative research and non-probability sampling in qualitative research. The researcher used a non-probability criterion sampling technique called snowballing.

In this style of sampling, researchers begin the research with the few respondents who are available to them. The names of the key players involved in tourism in Ireland have been established through knowledge obtained from a literature review on the subject matter of this study. They subsequently ask these respondents to recommend any other persons who meet the criteria of the study and who might be willing to participate in the project. If and when such respondents are recommended, the researcher approaches them, collects the information required and asks them to recommend other persons who might fit the research design and are willing to be studied. The process is continued until the topic is saturated, that is until no more substantial information is achieved through additional respondents, or until no new respondents are discovered.

The researcher had a number of reasons for choosing this form of sampling. Firstly non-probability non-representative sampling is appropriate for small-scale qualitative research of this kind (CLMS, 2002c). Secondly it was the most practical approach given the subject and the resources available. For example, by choosing respondents that lived or worked within a reasonable travelling distance to the researcher allowed the investigation to be flexible about when and where to conduct interviews. The respondents were also given the option of being interviewed over the telephone, which introduced an element of flexibility for both the respondents and the researcher.

## **2.6- Research protocol:**

It is vital that before the research is conducted for this study that protocols are established. The protocol is a master plan that illustrates the design of the research. It includes the interview questions for the informants, procedures outlined for the researcher and the sources of evidence that will be used throughout the course of the study. The protocol was identified as a major tactic for carrying out the research.

The protocol includes the following areas:

- An overview of the study
- The steps of the interview process
- Field procedures
- Analysis of data
- Conclusions and recommendations

The researcher in qualitative research plays a subjective role where they are personally involved in the research process (Sarantakos, 2003).

### **2.6.1 - Overview of this study**

The primary objective of this study was to analyse the provision of tourism education in Ireland. Information was obtained from Tourism professionals employed within the public, private and voluntary sectors. The primary focus addressed concerned current and emerging trends in third level tourism provision. To investigate if any requirements exist in the provision of third level education was also a focus.

Interviews were conducted with the tourism sector using a sample of tourism professionals. This was carried out using semi-structured interviews that enabled informants the opportunity to provide information on the tourism sector and their needs.



The snowballing sampling technique was utilized to gain a representative sample of interviewees. Practically the researcher was conscious of the amount of data each interview might generate and the time required analysing this data. If the snowballing technique required more respondents then telephone interviewing would be used to contact and interview extra respondents. Substantively, the researcher was guided by the recommendation that

*"most phenomenological studies engage a relatively small number of participants (10 might be appropriate) for a relatively long period of time"* (Rudestam and Newton 2001:93).

The needs of the public, private and voluntary sectors were reiterated by reviewing a focus group that were assembled as part of the programmatic review of the National Diploma in Applied Tourism (NDAT) course within the Institute of Technology, Sligo while also conducting interviews with a sample of the industry itself to confirm industry needs and provision within this sector.

A content analysis tool was utilised to comprehend the provision of courses. This involved acquiring prospectus and searching the Internet sites of Universities and Institutes of Technology in Ireland for their existing tourism courses. The content analysis tool was then utilized to examine the subjects taught within each tourism course and these were compared and contrasted with other courses. This tool was used to provide uniformity when researching course content and every course was analysed using this tool. A comprehensive literature review was also completed on the topic of tourism education to tease out the main authorities on the topics tourism and education.

## 2.6.2 - Steps of the interview process

<b>Steps in the Interview process:</b>
a) Identifying the issue.
b) Determining the type of interview.
c) Seeking the respondents.
d) Developing open-ended questions.
e) Develop quantitative questions
f) Conduct pilot research
g) Revise questions and content.
h) Arrange interview setting.
i) Collecting the data.
j) Field supervision and checks.
k) Completion of the interview.
l) Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.
m) Report the data.

**Table 2.3**



The following are a series of stages that the researcher established to complete the design of the interview process; identifying the issue, seeking the respondents, asking and recording questions, field supervision and checks, completion of the interview (Sarantakos, 1998:259-262).

*a) Identifying the issue:* -an analysis of the provision of third level tourism education in Ireland, focusing on the needs of the public, private and voluntary sectors.

*b) Determining the type of interview:* - Guided or semi-structured interviews, whereby, although the interviewer is provided with an interview guide, there is ample freedom to formulate questions and to determine the order of questions. This is both a qualitative and a quantitative method.

*c) Seeking the respondents:* - the researcher identified potential interviewees through the snowball sampling technique and familiarised herself within the tourism sector by addressing a letter to various tourism professionals to which the researcher wished to interview and the feedback received from these letters gave the researcher a sample of willing interviewees.

*d) Developing open-ended questions:* - the open-ended questions were devised by looking at the aims and objectives of the research and therefore constructing questions that would answer the hypotheses of this study. Pilot research was also conducted to confirm that these questions were clear and non-leading for the interviewee. Modifications of the questions were made which paved the way for the interviews to be smooth and flowing. The overall goals of these open-ended questions were to give a realistic impression of the provision of tourism education in Ireland at this present time.

*e) Develop quantitative questions:* - these questions were devised to establish a list of statistics on topics such as numbers of staff employed, drop out rates within courses (see Table: 2.2). Therefore these questions developed a statistical element to the research and were factual in nature so as to establish up to date quantitative data on the provision of tourism education in Ireland at this present time. This data then

could be used in comparative analysis of already published quantitative data within this area.

*f) Conduct pilot research: -*

*“A pilot study is a small-scale replica and a rehearsal of the main study.”(Sarantakos, 2002: 293)*

This was very important for the interview process so that there was no confusion over what the questions were trying to ask and how they were presented to the interviewee. The pilot research gave the researcher the chance to test run the research and was considered a necessary element within the methodology as it tested the research methods and research instruments and their suitability. It also familiarised the researcher with the environment in which the interview was to take place. Other reasons for conducting a pilot study was to give the researcher the opportunity to practice research in real situations before the main study began and to test the response of the subjects to the method of data collection and through that the adequacy of its structure.

*“In a nutshell, the purpose of the pilot study is to discover possible weaknesses, inadequacies, ambiguities and problems in all aspects of the research, so that they can be corrected before actual data collection takes place.”(Sarantakos, 2002: 293).*

The pilot research was conducted with two interviewees on two separate occasions prior to the main research and this worked well because it allowed the researcher the opportunity to test the recording equipment and develop prompts that could be used to receive the appropriate data.

*g) Revise questions and content: -*After the pilot study was conducted some of the wording and content of the question design was amended to allow control of the interview process in a better way. A series of prompts were also established from the pilot study so that the interviews could be guided and not deviate from the question being asked. In addition the questions were reconstructed so that all obvious bias and leading questions were eliminated from the research question design. This paved the way for the study to go ahead with a well-balanced interview process.



*h) Arrange interview setting:* - A letter familiarising the respondents with the research was sent to Universities, Institutes of Technology and colleges with tourism courses in Ireland. Letters were also sent to a sample of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors. It was expressed in this letter the interest of conducting interviews with a sample of this profession. A form and stamped addressed envelope were also enclosed with the letter on which the respondent could write the time and location available for interview. This form was posted back to the researcher and then the researcher could make arrangements to conduct the interview in a setting that would benefit both parties.

*i) Collecting the data:* - data collection for this study began when the researcher looked in detail at tourism education in Ireland by conducting a literature review on the topic. This collection method was used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews that were carried out using a sample of tourism professionals from various streams of the sector. Interviews were written with this purpose and the responses were recorded so that analysis was possible. A Dictaphone tape recorder was the recording equipment used. A quantitative element in the form of structured questions was also introduced into the interviewing process with academia to build on quantitative data on the topic of the provision of tourism courses. Another element of quantitative data was gathered using a content analysis tool which evaluated all the third level tourism courses in Ireland and their curriculum content.

*j) Field supervision and checks:* -The use of a qualitative research analysis tool such as N-VIVO was considered. However due to the low numbers of interviewees and cost considerations the traditional method was implemented. This involved physical typing out transcripts of the interviews and analysing each one. These were coded, and any themes or emergent ideas or theory were highlighted. Reading, analysing and coding of transcripts, allowed checks for bias, honesty, politeness, objectivity, ethics and interviewer-respondent relationships within each interview.

*k) Completion of the interview:* - the researcher left the research setting with a sense of achievement and with all relevant information for analysis of the study. Ending the relationship between the respondent and the interviewer was accomplished in a spirit of trust, cooperation and mutual respect, and by letting the respondent feel that



the contribution made to the research and to society through the interview was appreciated and valuable.

*l) Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data:* - once all the interview data was gathered, it was then transcribed. The qualitative data was analysed and common elements or answers were examined. This data could then be utilised as a basis for answering the hypotheses of the research. The quantitative information gathered was used to construct the summary table of third level tourism course contents, which is illustrated in appendix 3.

*m) Report the data:* - The interviews that had been recorded were transcribed and analysed. According to Edmund Burke

*“to read without reflecting is like eating without digesting”* (cited in Peter, 1982).

Reading and annotating are processes, which aid the ‘digestion’ of our data (Dey, 1998: 83). All the data was therefore read and reflected upon, looking for directions and avenues to explore within the data.

*“Reading the data means rethinking and redeveloping our ideas. We have to interpret our data in order to analyse it”* (Dey, 1998:94).

The main points in each answer were highlighted and grouped.

*“Grouping data in this way therefore involves developing a set of criteria in terms of which to distinguish observations as similar or related”* (Dey, 1998: 96).

The data was then categorised with each category expressing a criterion (or a set of criteria) for distinguishing some observations from others, as similar or related in some particular respects.

The development of a set of categories allowed the data to be organised under each question heading. Data within each category was compared. A common opinion or thread appeared within some interviews while others gave a contrasting perception to the question

*“in less unstructured research, though some categories may be established in advance, there may still require confirmation in the data, while other categories or subcategories may be derived from distinctions suggested in the data”* (Dey, 1998:98).

The researcher therefore grouped the data from each question into categories and used this to analyse the answer. The selection of data was made by the researcher in terms of

*“what seems significant, puzzling or problematic and the criteria used in selecting data can provide a rich source of ideas for generating a category system” (Dey, 1998: 99).*

The data from each interviewee was colour coded, highlighted and grouped under headings for analysis. This generated discussion of the data looking at comparisons and contrasts between interviewees, previous literature, the course content analysis and the programmatic Review, Institute of Technology, Sligo (2004/2005). Therefore findings and recommendations emerged from the study and these will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The respondents overall were very helpful and interested in the research while one academic found the questions too difficult and requested to see a copy of the questions beforehand. Others found it hard to comprehend the meaning of some of the questions especially questions one and two. Question one asked about the role of tourism education in Ireland, one respondent replied

*“if you add in all the rashers that tourists eat it beats agriculture almost certainly therefore it’s absolutely critical that we have both craft and management training in tourism”. Resp.23 Senior Tourism Officer.*

Question two which looked at trends within tourism educational provision also gave some unusual answers because respondents discussed tourism trends in Ireland and not within the educational sector. It was at these points that the researcher initiated prompts to bring the interviewee back into the context of the research. In most cases, questions six and seven revealed similar answers. Question six dealt with the satisfaction of interviewees with the provision of tourism education in Ireland while question seven dealt with gaps within the provision of tourism third level education in Ireland. In regard to question six, 11 interviewees were satisfied with the provision of tourism education in Ireland while 7 were dissatisfied and 11 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the overall provision of tourism education in Ireland. In addition, within all interviews the researcher found that the interviewees used their own agendas within the answers to the questions identifying issues and gaps that affected them in their professions.



## 2.7 - Field procedures:

Table 2.4 below identifies the ground actions that were accomplished during the research process. This involved physically engaging with the research by interaction with the environment. The field procedures involved the researcher making physical contact with the interviewees in some manner.

### Field Procedures:

Make initial contact with the interviewees by formal letter explaining the research and asking for involvement.
The interviewees should be senior managers or academics in the field of tourism.
Arrange dates and times of interviews
Organise equipment necessary to conduct interviews e.g.: Dictaphone Tape recorder.
Conduct interviews
Ensure that verbal information supplied by researcher is supported with secondary data.
Arrange interviews with all organisations within a particular time period, which is scheduled for February 2005.
If possible, try to ensure that the interviews are conducted within the specific organisations or by telephone at the interviewee's request.

Table 2.4

### 2.7.1 - Content analysis of third level tourism courses

The researcher inspected the tourism courses that are run within Universities and Institutes of Technology at the moment and the use of a content analysis tool while looking at the curriculum ensured consistent research throughout all courses looking for similarities and differences to obtain an understanding of what learning outcomes are achieved by the graduates from these courses. The researcher read secondary information on tourism education in Ireland from the prospectus and by searching the web sites of the educational establishment. The researcher inspected the tourism courses and the main focus included the following:

#### Content analysis of third level tourism courses:

The researcher identifies all 3rd level tourism courses in Ireland.
Collects all literature on these courses.
The literature was analysed focusing on aims and learning outcome of courses.
Identify the points necessary to enter courses
Level the courses are aimed at...i.e. certificate, diploma, degree, post-graduate
If a work placement is part of the course
Is a dissertation a compulsory part of the syllabus?
Is there regional provision within the course outline?
How long has the course been in existence?
Where is the courses situated within the college structure i.e. sociology, Business, Science, Leisure. etc.
What are the learning outcomes from the course?

Table 2.5



This information was invaluable to the researcher as these learning outcomes were compared to the focus group conducted as part of the programmatic review in The National Diploma in Applied Tourism course in the Institute of Technology, Sligo (2004/2005) and also to what the tourism public, private and voluntary sectors perceive to be an adequate and well balanced level of tourism education provision. This data received could also be used as a comparative analysis to other studies conducted internationally such as in the U.K. Table 2.6 outlines a sample of the summary table of third level tourism course contents. The completed table is illustrated in appendix 3. This was referred to within the analysis and discussion section to analyse the current provision of tourism education in Ireland.

**Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005**

Courses and content	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
PhD																													
Masters by research																													
Masters (taught) part time																													
Masters (taught) full time																													
Postgraduate diploma																													
Degree (Honours)																													
Degree																													
Diploma																													
Higher Certificate																													
Syllabus Content																													
Year 1																													
Subjects.....																													

**Table 2.6**

## 2.8 - Analysis of data

The data collected by qualitative interviews was transcribed and a common thread of information was formed. This was achieved by comparing and contrasting information from the transcripts and searching for emergent theory. The result is that a body of knowledge has been created on tourism educational provision in Ireland focusing on the needs of the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Quantitative interview questions were also used within the interviewing process to gain answers to a number of factual questions within the study. These answers generated up to date data, which was of a quantitative nature and therefore could be used to compile information about tourism education provision in Ireland today. A content analysis tool was established to compile data on tourism courses that are in operation in Irish educational centres all over Ireland at the moment. These tools allowed the researcher

seek out the learning outcomes within each course and also the ability of graduates from these courses.

A matrix was also constructed when reading literature on the topic of tourism education for the development of a literature review. This information came predominately from secondary sources. This matrix was used to take account of all secondary data read and therefore a comprehensive literature review was compiled from the data. This literature review allowed the researcher to seek out studies that have already been carried out in the area of tourism education and allowed the researcher make comparative analysis of Ireland and other international tourism educational policies.

### 2.8.1 -Textual analysis

Primary and secondary research has been carried out to analyse tourism education provision in Ireland. According to Barthes (1967) the underlying meaning of a text can be decoded using a set of rules, which structures the text. The interpretation of information was studied and conclusions have been made. Therefore the

*"meanings ascribed by researchers to documents are thus not only a function of the document themselves but also of the researcher's agenda and approach to interpreting them"* (Pole & Lampard, 2002).

To make sure that all primary information required is utilised to its full potential the analysis of interviews was used with the aid of a textual analysis tool. Specific headings were established for this analysis, and the same headings were used throughout all interviews conducted. In the case of secondary information obtained for the process of the research, textual analysis was also considered. The meanings of documents reflect both structure and agency (the latter being the agency) of both author and audience; 'internal meanings' may be of considerable interest, but they are only part of the story. In addition, while Barthes suggests that the validity of an interpretation of the 'internal meaning' of a document can be assessed in terms of its coherence, it is not clear how the researcher is meant to assess the relative merits of competing semiotic interpretations of a comparable degree of coherence. Interpretations cannot really be disentangled from the situations and perspectives of researchers; it is thus not straightforward to separate 'internal meanings' from 'received meanings'. Ultimately, an awareness of stakeholder's agendas whether this is through primary or secondary data has been recognised throughout the study.

## 2.9 –Conclusion

This chapter intended to clarify subsequent chapters, by explaining how and why information was obtained, and how this information was used to answer the overall aims and objectives of the research.

The methodological approach to this study may have humanistic limitations being researched from a qualitative standpoint employing primary research (unstructured interviewing) secondary research through literature, course content analysis and case study of the programmatic review. However, compared to any alternatives, this approach was deemed the most suitable.

It therefore cannot be presumed that the research findings have the full power of generalisation. However, it is hoped that the research process adopted adequately answers the research questions and thus makes a useful contribution to the body of knowledge.



## Chapter 3 – Literature Review

### 3.1 – Introduction

An analysis of the secondary data pertaining to the topic tourism education within relevant literature was grouped under headings, reviewed and discussed. Provision of tourism education now exists at all levels within the educational system. At primary level, a pilot programme is now delivered as part of the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC) people and places project in a number of primary schools. A range of programmes are delivered at secondary level, including the Tourism Awareness Programme and the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) opportunities in Tourism familiarisation programme, offered as part of the transition year. A number of specific courses are taught within the PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) and VEC (Vocational Educational Committee) centres in Ireland. These organisations offer full and part-time tourism education usually with a vocational focus. Community initiatives such as community training and Youthreach training workshops, offer a range of validated tourism programmes to participants with specific educational needs.

At Third Level, tourism education programmes are delivered through the Institutes of Technology, Shannon College of Hotel Management and in the University of Ulster and the University of Limerick. Educational provision in third level colleges is the primary focus of this study and courses range from National Certificate level through to Degree and Postgraduate level and span the breath of Tourism Studies to include:

- Professional Craft Disciplines
- Tourism and Hospitality Management
- International Hotel Management

It is worthy of note here that the chief focal point within this study is the analysis of tourism education and it is for this reason that courses in the hospitality area have been disqualified from the study. Tourism programmes are usually full time and some offer a work placement as part of the curriculum, which ranges between 2-12 months. Part-time third level education also exists and is offered within the Institutes of Technology and Universities where they have been designed to provide an opportunity for people already involved or wish to become involved in the tourism industry. These courses are

now available usually in the remit of Lifelong learning and a variety of specific tourism courses are provided such as:

- Rural Tourism Enterprise Development
- Tourism and customer care
- Marketing for small Tourism Enterprises
- Marine and countryside guiding.

The diverse nature of the tourism industry suggests that multiple entry points and career options provide a wide range of choices for people aspiring to complete formal qualifications for the tourism industry. The flexibility of tourism education through the delivery of courses on a part-time or full-time basis maximises opportunities in providing access to a well qualified workforce that meets the needs of the public, private and voluntary sectors of the industry (Tourism Directory, 2004:36). Therefore, within this segment the researcher attempts to verify the educational needs of these sectors by reviewing the literature from a national and international perspective. An analysis of tourism third level education literature, leads to an identification of trends that will impact on this provision in the future. Finally the section will conclude with a summary of the main themes identified while suggestions on areas of further research are put forward.

### **3.2 - Defining Tourism**

Reviews of the literature reveal a variety of meanings exist for the umbrella term “Tourism”. Differences occur in definitions even between disciplines but the majority of explanations for tourism contain three core actions:

- Movement of people
- Length of stay
- Particular purpose

There have been various attempts made to decide on a universally recognised definition of Tourism, predominately over the last seventy years. In 1937, the League of Nations defined a tourist as a person who travelled away from home for more than twenty-four hours, and travelled for a range of reasons such as business, pleasure, and health or on a cruise ship.



Hunziker and Krapf, two professors, of Berne University in Switzerland (1942), described tourists as people who travelled and stayed away from home on a temporary basis, but were not earning money.

In 1963 the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) broadened the definition further and included the term 'visitor' and 'excursionist' and the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (AIEST) later approved these concepts. In 1968, the statistical commission of the United Nations, following the first intergovernmental conference on tourism, Rome 1963 approved the following guidance:

*"For statistical purposes the term visitor describes any person visiting a country other than that in which he has his usual place of residence for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited."*

The confusion over terminology continued right through the 1970's with papers such as *"The definition of Tourism in Great Britain: Does terminological confusion have a Rule?"* where the author John Heeley (1980) outlined all the diverse perceptions such as conceptual and technical definitions which existed at that time.

Probably one of the most useful works to provide an introduction to tourism as a concept; Burkhart and Medlik's (1981:42) seminal study: - *Tourism; Past, Present and Future* identified five characteristics associated with tourism:

- Tourism arises from the movement of people to, and their stay in, various destinations
- There are two elements in all tourism: the journey to the destination and the stay including activities at the destination.
- The journey and the stay take place outside the normal place of residence and work, so that tourism gives rise to activities, which are distinct from those of the resident and working populations of the places through which tourists travel and in which they stay.
- The movement to destinations is of a temporary short-term character, with intention to return within a few days, weeks or months
- Destinations are visited for purposes other than taking up permanent residence or employment remunerated from within the places visited.

This study gave a clear outline of what a definition of tourism should include.

Tourism definitions vary depending on the agenda and/or profession of the person composing it because tourism is a multidimensional activity, which touches many lives



and many different economic activities. Various definitions now exist and these can be thought of as either demand side definitions (arising out of the motivational demand of tourists) or supply side definitions (the supply of facilities and services to cater for the needs of tourists). This reiterates Leipers (1990) illustration of the tourism system where the demand and supply of tourism products and services are displayed. Tourism definitions are unusual in that they are driven more by demand-side than supply-side considerations with some writers finding this bizarre:

*“Defining tourism in terms of the motivations or other characteristic of travellers would be like trying to define the health care professions by describing a sick person” (Smith, 1989:33).*

The 1990's have seen considerable progress in the development and consensus of definitions. In 1991 more than 25 years after the first United Nations Conference on tourism (and tourist statistics) the WTO organised an International Conference in Ottawa, to review tourism statistics as a basis for consideration by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSTAT) to bring systems up to date. The WTO rightly appreciated the massive expansion of world tourism and the need for improved information for both government and industry. Furthermore the old systems of statistical measurement based on state controls were disintegrating in the developed countries as liberalisation of travel and border crossings led to the removal of checks and records. (Lickorish, Jenkins, 2002:34-36).

The WTO recognised that tourism is essentially an economic force, (although with considerable social and environmental impact) rather than a single industry. Accordingly the principle methods of tourism data measurement must relate to the demand side. As well as this, the WTO paid much attention to the supply side and gave guidance on the need to include tourism in systems of national accounts. It was also decided that supply side economics in tourism must be studied by each main sector (public, private and voluntary) separately.

There is strictly speaking no tourism 'industry' (Lickorish et al 2002:34-36). Tourism had now become a trade, industry and marketplace force and this was the stimulation which led to the World Tourism Organisations (WTO) 1991 International Conference on Travel and tourism statistics - a Conference called to tidy up definitions, terminology and measurement statistical commission (UNSTAT) and published as Recommendations on tourism statistics (WTO and UNSTAT, 1994).

The principal revised definitions agreed (WTO, 1994) are as follows:

1) Tourism comprises

*“The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes”.*

2) The use of this broad concept makes it possible to identify tourism between countries as well as tourism within a country. ‘Tourism’ refers to all activities of visitors including both tourist and same day visitors.

Finally, the most recognised definition in current use according to the international organisation responsible for tourism, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) is:

*“Tourism is defined as the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. The use of this broad concept makes it possible to identify tourism between countries as well as tourism within a country”. ‘Tourism’ refers to all activities of visitors, including both ‘tourists’ and ‘same day visitors’.*

(Source: [www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org), 2004).

Today, this is the most identified definition and is cited in the majority of tourism educational textbooks (Page, 2003; Lickorish et al, 2002; Guiney, 2002; Goeldner et al, 2000; Cooper, Fletcher et al, 1998; CERT, 1997).

### 3.3- Tourism in Ireland

Ireland is divided into two parts, with the Republic covering over three-quarters (26 Counties), a little more than 70,000 sq. km. The remaining portion (6 Counties), Northern Ireland, is under jurisdiction of the UK. During the late 1960’s and through to the 1980’s the Republic was affected by the civil unrest, known as the “Troubles”, in Northern Ireland. However a peace process has been in force in Ireland since late 1994. The current population of Ireland is approx 5.5 million (3.9 million in Ireland; 1.6 million in Northern Ireland). Source :([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com), 2004).

Irish tourism is, arguably, the most successful sector of Irish owned enterprise since the foundation of the state. Six million overseas visitors spent 4 billion Euros in Ireland in 2002, while Irish people took close to six million trips in the country, spending almost 1 billion Euros. The Irish tourism industry embraces a wide range of diverse small and medium-sized enterprises that are predominantly Irish-owned.



The industry supports some 140,000 jobs or one in 12 of all jobs in the economy. Employment grew in the sector by more than 70% between 1990 and 2002- a rate of growth considerably above the 50% growth in employment generally in the economy over that period. Tourism generates as much as 2.2 billion in tax receipts and contributes 4.4% of GNP. The public and private sectors play joint and complementary roles in the development of tourism in Ireland with organisational structures in place to promote partnership (Report of the tourism policy review group, 2003).

The government section responsible for tourism is the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Formed in June 2002 its mission is;

*“ To contribute to the economic, social and cultural progress of Irish Society and the enrichment of its quality of life through promoting sustainable tourism; encouraging excellence in sporting and artistic achievement, facilitating greater access to sport and the arts, and preservation of our cultural inheritance ”* (www.irishgov.ie 2003).

In 2001 the government approved the creation of The National Tourism Development Authority. This new body encompasses the range of tourism support functions previously carried out by Bord Failte and CERT and the President signed this into law in 2003 (www.failteireland.ie 5/11/03). Working with industry groups, Failte Ireland's main focus is the support and development of Irish tourism. This new authority was well received by stakeholders and a clear view was given of their aims and objectives for promotion, development and training within the Irish tourism sector (The Irish Times, 2003; The Irish Independent; 2003, ITIC News, 2004).

It was in September 2003 that Failte Ireland published a report of the Tourism Policy Review Group *“New Horizons for Irish Tourism. An agenda for change”*. Within this document the strategies for Irish tourism from 2003-2012 were outlined. This report gave clear aims, objectives and action plans that would be put in place to steer Irish tourism and will therefore shape Irish Tourism Policy for the foreseeable future. The impact of this report cannot be underestimated and it is for this reason that it has been reviewed within most of the recent literature on Irish tourism. For example, on the topic of human resource development in tourism, the Hotel and Restaurant Times, 2004 stated:

*“the policy document new horizons for Irish tourism published last September has posed the tourism industry with a number of questions that clearly need to be answered. These questions were raised against the backdrop of a new vision for Irish tourism, which described a “dynamic, innovative, sustainable and highly-regarded sector, offering overseas and domestic visitors a positive and memorable experience beyond their expectations”. The report went on however to cite a number of limiting factors that need to be addressed before this vision could be realised. The following is a brief extract of some of the factors referred to:*

- *“A culture of continuous training staff in the industry has not traditionally existed and there remains a lack of structured, systematic training in enterprises”.*
- *“Continuing training for managers and owner managers in particular in the case of SME’s is not at present on a scale that would permit an upward development shift in the sector.”*
- *“A key issue is the relatively low priority given by the industry to formal educational qualification”.*
- *“Levels of professionalism in the sector need to be enhanced and the status and esteem associated with working in the industry must be raised”*
- *“Support from the state for the provision of tourism training in enterprises has been somewhat fragmented and has failed for the most part to promote the development of a structured systemic approach to training in-house.*
- *“Increasing competition to recruit the brightest and the best people available”.*
- *“People are essential to the future development of the sector and a greater level of investment is needed in human resource development to upgrade skill levels.”*

The Tourism Policy Review Group observed that the success and growth of the industry over the last two decades reflected the *“many excellent people within the industry-their initiative, drive, energy, skills, and customer know-how”*. Failte Ireland’s own outlook for 2004 stated that *“ current indications are that 2004 should be a good year for Irish tourism”*, but went on to note *“the key challenges for the Irish industry remains one of regaining competitiveness”*(Hotel and Restaurant Times, 2004).

Failte Ireland (2004) Summary of activities described;

*“The report of the tourism policy review group, New Horizons for Irish Tourism-An agenda for action assigns responsibilities for implementing over 30 of its 70 recommendations to Failte Ireland”.*

Within the Failte Ireland magazine (Tourism Matters, 2004:2);

*“Discussions are also underway with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to provide a parallel diploma programme for those in the industry wishing to develop their knowledge and skills in Human Resource Management (HRM). Responding to the action recommended in the report of the tourism policy review group to support management capability in the industry, a new management development programme has been launched and will commence in November 2004”.*

This is just one example of action taken from the recommendations made within the tourism policy review. Some media reports, while describing this as optimistic, claim that achieving these targets depends on other external forces affecting Ireland as a tourism destination. In an article in the Irish Times (2005) entitled; *“Tourism Targets contingent on infrastructure”*, the author describes that the success of Irish tourism in the future will depend on recognising trends within the tourism industry and looking at long term targets. Mr. Shaun Quinn, chief executive of Failte Ireland said due to



*“the ageing European population that in the coming years, the numbers going on tours as against short break holidays would grow, helping to address the regional imbalance in the Irish tourism sector” (The Irish Times, 11/2/2005).*

Identification of these trends and developing strategies to harness the attractiveness of them will be the aim of the tourism forum. This is a group convened in conjunction with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and Failte Ireland to report progress on the implementation of the strategy and recommendations of the review group some twelve months after its report was published (Travers, 2004). A review of the main authorities on the topic of tourism policy is acknowledged below.

### 3.4 - Tourism policy

Tourism policy can be defined as

*“a set of regulations, rules, guidelines, directives and development/promotion objectives and strategies that provide a framework within which the collective and individual decisions directly affecting long term tourism development and the daily activities within a destination are taken” (Cooper, Fletcher et al, 1998).*

There has been much discussion and debate over the last number of years on the subject of tourism policy (Jenkins, 1980; Lickorish, 1991; Baum, 1994; Amoah, 1997; Spivak, 1997). It is for this reason that academics believe that tourism education has evolved in a heterogeneous and *ad hoc* manner, with limited linkages to the real or perceived needs of the tourism industry (Dieke, P.U.C., 1993: 423-49).

*“Policy is a process as well as a product. It is used to refer to a process of decision-making and also to the product of that process. Policy is spoken of as what is and what ought to be: policy is averting our priorities, and policy should serve the public interest” (Wildavsky, A, cited in Baum, 1997).*

In an article by Jenkins (1980) whose central theme surrounded tourism policies in developing countries, it was suggested that no forms of policy existed before the establishment of the World Tourism Organisation in 1974. In speaking about the WTO, (Jenkins, 1980: 22) stated that:

*“This well developed structure of national and international organisations safeguards and represents the interests of the tourism industry”.*

The article sets out to describe why tourism is an attractive development option for governments and also the constraints of the tourism industry such as seasonality and demand. While the tourism industry is made up of small to medium sized enterprises:

*“without government involvement in tourism policy making, short-term developments can give rise to long term problems” (Jenkins, 1980).*

The European Year of Tourism (EYT) in 1990 was used to highlight the need for a coherent policy for tourism within Europe. Lickorish (1991), in an article on developing a single European Tourism policy made reference to suggest why tourism policy was lacking in many European governments.

*“Social and economic policy makers in general have not regarded tourism as important, and so state bodies responsible for tourism activity are often ill equipped to deal with its development”* (Lickorish, 1991: 178).

The author points out that this maybe because *“Tourists have no vote”* (Lickorish, 1991: 178), which is an interesting motive for disregarding this area within government policy. The initiative of the European parliament to implement the European Year of Tourism in 1990 was fully supported by the trade sectors, who shared the parliaments, hope that this visibility would lead to a greater priority for tourism in the EC,

*“Favourable conditions for tourism growth in the commissions fiscal and development policies and better coordination in implementing those policies”* (Lickorish, 1991: 181).

On the topic of tourism policy, one author, Tom Baum (1994, 1997) dominated research and tourism policy debate for many years. In a study on: *“The development and implementation of national tourism policies”* (Baum, 1994: 185-192) the formulation and operation of national tourism policy is discussed, reflecting a diversity of priorities and circumstances. Hartley and Hooper (1990, cited in Baum, 1994: 185) in a conference paper entitled *“Tourism Policy, Market Research into the 1990's”* note this diversity when they state that:

*“Public sector policy objectives which may be sought from tourism include the creation of income and wealth; maintaining and improving the image of the area, its environment and the quality of life, maintaining and improving links both within and between nations and contributing to the nation's balance of payments position.”*

Baum (1994: 187) reiterated Lickorish (1990) by describing the lack of tourism policy within overall government policy,

*“the existence of formally stated and publicly accessible national tourism policies is by no means universal”.*

Further research on this topic is called for by Baum in the recommendations and conclusions, as this had been the only research conducted since the WTO conducted a similar study in 1975. Ireland was unique at this time because it had always included tourism within policy considerations since the creation of CERT in 1963 and Baum (1994: 191) commended Ireland for this within his research,

*“Irish tourism policy existed with only minor modifications for some 30 years until it was specifically operationalized, with attendant short and medium targets for the industry, following the 1987 general election.”*



In 1997, Baum and Amoah conducted research on the subject matter of tourism education, training and links to policy formulation and implementation. This was an exploratory study and led to the development of the TEP-TEI conceptual framework, (see fig 3.1) to depict tourism policy and its link to tourism education.

On implementation of this framework, Baum (1997:5-12) stated,

*“Canada and the Republic of Ireland provide models which are commendable working examples of how the TEP-TEI Framework can operate.”*

However this does not refer to any particular time frame. It must therefore be decided how often the process of policy formulation is to be undertaken, involving policy makers in the two partnership fields, industry and education (Baum, 1997: 5-12). It is the responsibility of a number of stakeholders (whether these are public, private or voluntary in nature) to ensure a well-balanced and sustainable level of tourism educational provision when formulating and implementing policy.

*“Responsibility in this sense is defused between different bodies, accountable to various government departments and private sector companies and associations. These bodies, frequently, include some or all of the following:*

- *The national tourism organisation*
- *The ministry responsible for tourism*
- *The education ministry (national and/or regional)*
- *The labour/employment/manpower ministry*
- *Public and private sector schools and colleges*
- *Tourism industry companies*
- *Specialist agencies responsible for education and training, certification and related areas.*
- *National statistical collection and analysis agencies*
- *Private sector companies and their sectoral representative associations.”*

(Baum, 1994: 265).

Links must be made between the stakeholders and education to provide educational courses that meet industry needs.

*“What is frequently seen as a practical issue, in that education providers may or may not be delivering appropriate curricula to meet industry’s needs, is also an issue of policy concern and in many respects, it is policy shifts that will be required to provide the lead, and assist the sector and the wider community to face up to predicted changes within tourism and hospitality in the future” (Spivack, 1997: 7).*

Therefore it has been identified that it is imperative that tourism educators keep up dated on trends in the industry so that appropriate course design is accomplished.

Figure 1  
The TEP,TEI conceptual framework

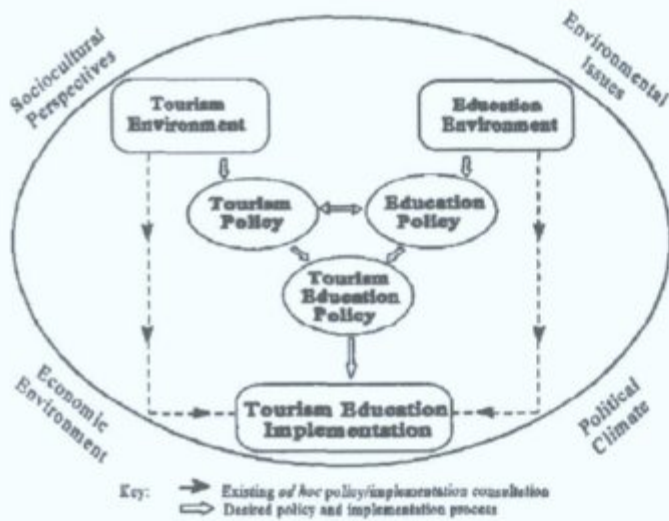


Fig: 3.1

### 3.4.1 - A review of tourism policy development in Ireland.

The first comprehensive statement on tourism policy in Ireland was set out in a government White Paper in 1985 (Report of the tourism policy review group, 2003: IX). Government policy statements have gone through a number of iterations since then in response to changing national and international circumstances and the underlying organisational structures have evolved in keeping with these changes. The white paper gave rise to response from the key industry representative groups. The industry recommended ambitious targets for the sector, which were subsequently adopted by government. Since the late eighties, the prime objectives of national tourism policy were clearly articulated in successive national partnership development plans, and within the EU Community Support Framework for Ireland. Key developments included the following:

- The Programme for National Recovery 1988-1993, which identified tourism as a major instrument of national, regional, economic and social development and set out a number of measures to encourage investment in Tourism, including through the Business expansion scheme and initiatives to open up the airline industry.



- The operational programme for tourism 1989-1993, which through EU grants, funding developed new products, improved competitiveness, marketing and promoted Ireland in new markets such as Japan and Scandinavia and developing package holidays for distribution through travel agents abroad.
- The tourism task force 1992, appointed by the government, made a number of recommendations to support the development of the sector.
- The National Development Plan 1994-1999, a large percentage of EU money was used to finance this investment and the emphasis was on four main areas
  1. Product development including large-scale national and regional projects.
  2. Cultural institutions like the National Museum and National gallery were improved and expanded.
  3. Marketing involved the development of new markets, getting access to Ireland, niche marketing for special interest activity holidays and extending the season.
  4. CERT was to provide training for the unemployed and for early school leavers.
- Bord Failte 's role was re-defined following a review carried out for the government by consultants Arthur.D.Little in 1995. The new emphasis was on international marketing, product development and strategic research, with the out sourcing of non-core functions. This in turn led to the development and launch of the Tourism Brand Ireland project under which Ireland was marketed internationally in line with modern brand practice.
- Overseas tourism marketing Initiative 1995 and Tourism Ireland, the jointly funded all-island tourism destination marketing organisation, was incorporated in 2000. Both of these initiatives were designed to market the whole of Ireland internationally and tourism Ireland due to the terms of the agreement reached in the Multi-party negotiations concluded in Belfast in April 1998.
- Sustainable development –A Strategy for Ireland (1997), published by the Department of the Environment. The principle purpose of the strategy was to

provide a comprehensive analysis and framework, which would allow sustainable development to be taken forward more systematically in Ireland. For tourism education, through Bord Failte (now Failte Ireland), the Dept of Tourism and Trade and the Marine Institute, where appropriate, would commission research to provide a firm basis for the establishment of sustainable tourist numbers. CERT (now Failte Ireland), in conjunction with the education sector would continue to provide suitable training emphasising the sustainable use of resources and highlighting natural products.

- The National Development Plan 2000-2006 (NDP) shifted the prime tourism policy objective from job creation to sustained foreign revenue earnings with a growing emphasis on sustainable and spatially balanced development (in line with the National Spatial Strategy), reflecting the need to ensure the benefits are distributed throughout the country while alleviating any negative environmental impacts. (Report of the tourism policy review group, 2003: 19-20)

Failte Ireland was formed to implement the tourism policy in Ireland under the government Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism in 2003. Today, governments all over the world have recognised the need for tourism policy, which can be direct and/or indirect to support the development of their tourism industries.

Below are a number of key features and trends that have become apparent:

- Increasing emphasis on the environment
- Closer linkages between tourism policy and other policy areas such as arts, sport and culture, economics, conservation and environmental planning
- Greater involvement within local and community development with the implementation of policies relating to tourism.
- Increased networking and initiatives to support their members and the industry and in working with government bodies
- Government bodies and industry associations using initiatives to strengthen the use of information technologies in developing tourism.
- Increasing focus on high standards of public health, workplace conditions and general training. (Report of the tourism policy review group, 2003: 10).



Finally the links between the government and the industry stakeholders involved within the tourism industry cannot be underestimated in the formulating, implementation and researching trends to develop a sustainable and a stable tourism product.

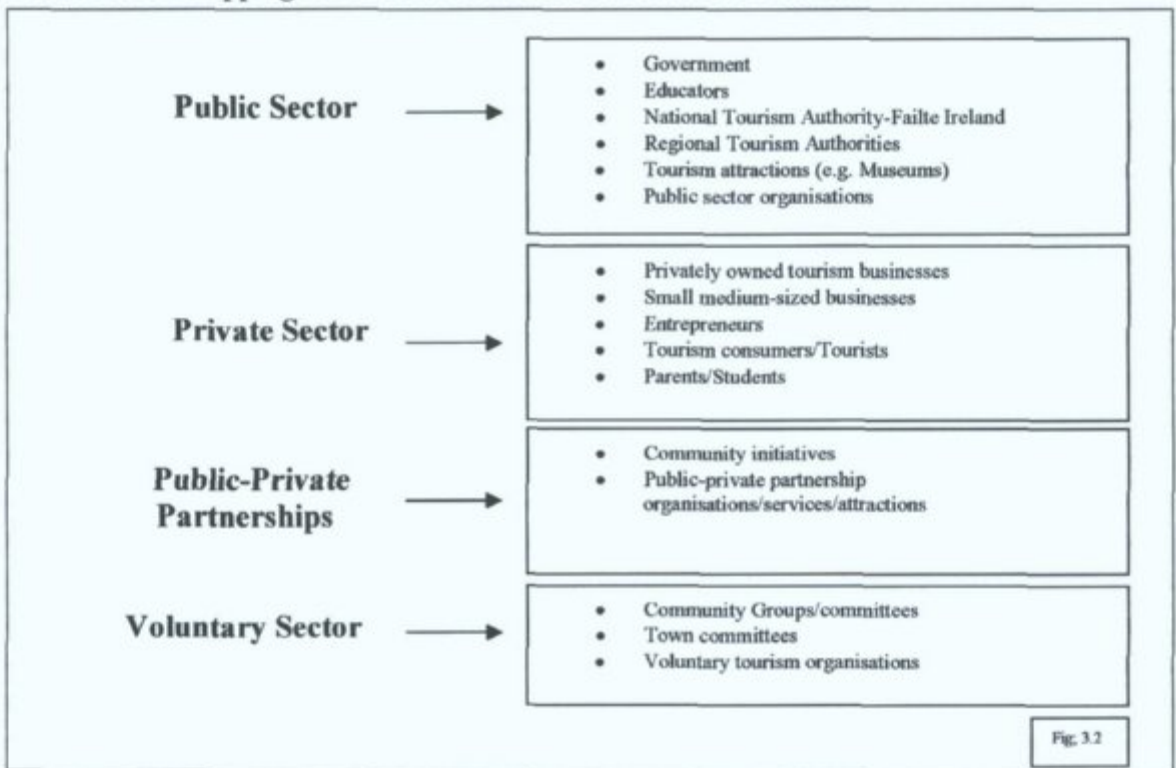
### 3.5 - Tourism Stakeholders

The individuals, groups, institutions and governments with which an organisation deals in the course of its activities are referred to as stakeholders. Freeman (1984, cited in Cooper& Westlake, 1998:94) defines stakeholders as:

*“any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisations objectives”.*

The process of identifying and classifying stakeholders has led to the development of stakeholder mapping. Typically, a mapping exercise of stakeholders which was utilised in this study would include individuals identified in fig 3.2 below.

#### Stakeholder Mapping for Tourism Third level education in Ireland:



#### 3.5.1 - Stakeholder and Academic contradictory outlook

Jones& Phillips (2003) conducted research on the topic of industry and academic’s differing views. This was an Australian study, which involved a qualitative method of observing the differences in the understanding of “research” between industry and

academia. At the centre of the discussion was the difference in understanding of the use of terminology. Research has different meanings, in different contexts. Research to industry often is a form of intelligence gathering to provide contextual background or more often is selectively used and presented to support a pre-determined business decision. In that context the word “research” does not mean “a scientific study”, it would not be described as following a rigorously defined methodology nor be subject to critical peer review. Industry needs results or “*informed opinion*” on which to base commercial judgements. Academics are often more exercised and interested in the research question and the methodology than the results. Academia can better fulfil the research needs of the tourism industry by better understanding of the key issues and providing a greater confidence within the industry of the benefits of academic research. This research also suggested that academia are more philosophical in their approach to research while

*“managers in industry are busy people whose time spent reading what they may consider as peripheral material is limited, any communication must be brief, concise and relevant. It must be presented in such a way that encourages understanding and captures interest” (Jones & Phillips, 2003:292).*

Therefore management are usually more direct in their advance to what their needs and wants are while academics are sometimes vague in their approach, questioning and often pedantic in nature. This gap, which has been identified, can be bridged with communication methods that would help both sectors obtain the research that they require.

### **3.5.2 – Tourism Sectors.**

The public, private and voluntary sectors of the tourism trade can be described (under the umbrella term) as stakeholders in the tourism industry. There has been a significant amount of research conducted on the private sector within the tourism industry (Irvine, 2004; Barrows, 2002; Zhang, 2004; Juwaheer, 2004; Littlejohn, 2004; Buhalis, 2004; Marhuenda, 2004; Ramos et al, 2004; Avcikurt, 2003; Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990). The literature proposes that most tourism businesses are privately owned, small to medium-sized enterprises which would indicate the private sector dominance within the amount of research that has been conducted in relation to this sector. A definition of the private sector suggests that it is the



*"part of an economy in which goods and services are produced and distributed by individuals and organizations that are not part of the government or state bureaucracy. This is opposed to the public sector that consists of industries such as education and unemployment insurance" (www.uslegalforms.com, 26/3/05).*

The public sector within the tourism industry has also been researched but to a lesser extent (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Mc Kercher, 1995; Lennon, 1998). A definition of the public sector identifies it as

*"the part of the economy concerned with providing basic government services. The composition of the public sector varies by country, but in most countries the public sector includes such services as the police, military, public roads, public transit, primary education and healthcare for the poor. The public sector might provide services that non-payer cannot be excluded from (such as street lighting), services which benefit all of society rather than just the individual who uses the service (such as public education), and services that encourage equal opportunity" (www.investorwords.com, 26/3/05).*

The voluntary sector (e.g. community groups, town committees) of the tourism industry, on the other hand is a sector that would appreciate more investigation. The voluntary sector is sometimes unrecognised as part of the tourism system as this sector are very difficult to define in that like the tourism sector they come under an umbrella term of all sorts of voluntary work. Almost anything can be voluntary if one is not getting paid for inputting their time into a project. Adirondack (2000: 1) outlines that the voluntary sector

*"includes charities-organisations whose objects are wholly and exclusively charitable, which may or may not be registered with the charity commission-as well as hundreds of thousands of campaigning, self-help and other organisations which legally are not defined as charitable".*

However, this is an area that would benefit from more research and there also is the assumption that most voluntary tourism groups would consider themselves private tourism businesses and classify themselves under this term.

There is also another type of stakeholder in the tourism industry that is becoming very evident over the last number of years especially in Ireland and this is Public-Private Partnerships (P.P.P). These groups liase together in the hope of obtaining a common goal that will benefit both parties. A Definition of a Public-Private Partnership or, PPP, is

*"an agreement between the public and private sectors with the purpose of delivering a project or service traditionally provided by the public sector" (www.nra.ie, 26/3/05).*

For tourism and hospitality education we should also add students and parents to the list of tourism stakeholders (Cooper & Westlake, 1998). In this article (which looks at the

variations between stakeholders in the tourism industry) Cooper & Westlake (1998), continue to further classify these stakeholders into primary and secondary in nature. Primary stakeholders, being those directly involved in the tourism organisation and secondary stakeholders being those groups who influence or are influenced/affected by the organisation but who are not engaged in direct transactions with the organisation and are not essential for its survival.

This has implications on tourism education in the design and shaping of appropriate curriculum to reflect the stakeholders needs from graduates. According to Cooper & Westlake (1998:95), identifying legitimate stakeholders and their needs and wants from tourism curricula is a challenge for academia. Once the legitimacy of stakeholders has been accepted there are two clear roles for them (Santana, 1997, cited in Cooper & Westlake, 1998:95) which can be classified as “*strategic direction*” and “*measuring performance*”, because effectively the stakeholders instigate the vision and the direction that tourism is taking and also they are responsible for the quality through its measurement. At macro-level, political agendas, industry needs and funding influence the planning of courses, as does the plethora of stakeholders who are involved in the process.

Quality management and consumer behaviour literature provides some insight here, particularly in terms of the identification of the customer, and also the possible ‘gaps’ in expectations of education and training by each of the varied stakeholders (Parasuraman et al, 1985: 41-50). The understanding of the roles of stakeholders and the identification of the ‘customer’ are critical in the efficient delivery of programmes. A review of the literature suggests that there is a sufficient gap between tourism training/education and the stakeholder’s views of what a programme should entail and these are discussed below under each sector.

#### **A) The public sector stakeholders educational needs.**

The public sectors role primarily is helping to develop the tourism sector through direct support for product development, marketing and training/education (Report of the tourism policy review group, 2003:17). This sector is also responsible for a number of activities that are essential to the development of tourism. These include:



- The provision of infrastructure and services, in particular those relating to access transport roads and telecommunications.
- The protection and maintenance of natural, cultural and heritage resources.
- The regulation of building and site development and environmental protection.
- The regulation of business and the labour market
- The determination of fiscal policy. (Report of the tourism policy review group, 2003:17).

The educational needs and wants of stakeholders in the public sector have been researched and reviewed by a number of authors. Factors such as the aging baby boomers and the increases in technology in the workplace are just two main influences on the design and development of tourism education and training for this sector at the present time and this is reflected in the literature.

Armstrong-Stassen & Templer (2005:57-67) in their study on “*Adapting training for older employees*” analysed Canada’s approach to an aging workforce. This involved qualitative researching of HR managers from a variety of organisations from manufacturing, services, healthcare and social services, high-tech, retail, government, education and utilities. The results identified that

*“HR executives in public sector organisations viewed the issue of the aging workforce as significantly more important than HR executives in the private sector”.*

The main findings within this research recognised that access to training, offering specific skills to employees and supplying Life Long Learning (L.L.L.), were key areas of training and development.

There were no significant differences between public and private sector organisations in the extent to which they are currently engaging in the training-related practices and the extent to which they expect to be engaging in these practices in the future. The most common reason given for not engaging in the training-related practices was lack of employee interest. HR executives felt that there was little employee demand for these practices. (The question is whether this perception is accurate and a recommendation was to survey the older employees to determine this). Organisations must build controls into their training and development programs that specifically assess and audit the access of older workers to training opportunities. There were large discrepancies

between importance for retention and extent of practice for training to up date current job skills and to acquire new skills. Organisations must become more proactive in ensuring that the skills of older managerial and professional employees do not become obsolete. In conclusion, this research raised significant concerns. The size of the retiring baby boom contingent and the importance of knowledge workers in tomorrow's economy imply that the retention and utilisation of knowledge workers is likely to become the key challenge of this and the next decade. The results show that Canadian organisations currently are not well prepared to meet this challenge. Access to training continues to be fairly limited and the training itself is not customised to the learning style and needs of older employees and only a small minority of organisations are sensitising their management to older employees and how they may best contribute to organisational effectiveness.

One cannot review tourism literature in regard to employment and educational aspects without expecting the term seasonality to crop up. Jolliffe & Farnsworth (2003: 312-316) conducted research on seasonality in tourism employment and outlined that Human Resource strategies need to be put in place to accommodate this, ranging from "*embracing*" to "*challenging*" seasonality. This dramatically influences industry employment, leading to widespread seasonal employment, underemployment and unemployment. For Human Resource (HR) managers, this creates a cyclical employment environment requiring extraordinary resources devoted to recruitment, selection, training and retention of staff. A continuum is proposed; differing HR practices are identified in the areas of recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation. It is suggested that some government HR development policies support those businesses that "*embrace*" or "*challenge*" seasonality. It is also possible that other factors, such as family management, support the efforts of hospitality managers to "*challenge*" seasonality.

The professionalism and educational background of public sector staff in Australia has been brought into question within a study of public sector tourism, profiling local government officers in Australia. The authors, Mc Kercher & Ritchie (1995) raise a number of questions about the level of professionalism in the local government tourism fields.



*“Local government tourism officers generally lack formal educational qualifications in tourism or marketing and have little prior tourism industry or public sector tourism experience. This sector also records a high turnover rate of between 40% and 50% per annum. In addition, gender preferences were noted in hiring practices; men typically were appointed to manage larger, better funded organisations, while women were appointed as either managers of tourist information centres or to support managerial positions in large organisations”.*

Offering personal development training and Lifelong learning to employees could raise their qualifications and motivation.

Overall, the public sector needs to address the drivers of change and therefore put in place relevant training and educational programmes to impact on these trends. The aging workforce will mean more training needs in the areas of information technology and providing access to courses at a time and place that is applicable to them. The issue of seasonality means that particular Human Resource Strategies need to be put in place to manage and retain staff at certain periods of the year. A key concern is the relatively low priority given by the industry to formal educational qualifications. The tourism sector has traditionally employed a relatively large number of untrained staff, except in areas requiring specific skills and in management and supervisory positions. Levels of professionalism in the sector need to be enhanced, the status and esteem associated with working in the industry must be raised, and areas where pay and conditions remain low need to be made more attractive (Report of the policy review group, 2003:54). The management of the drivers of change and the speed of impacting these trends with relevant educational programmes ensure that education and training are designed to a specification, which will deliver the mandatory manpower with the correct mix of skills and at the right level within the sector.

#### **B) The private sector stakeholders educational needs.**

Tourism is traditionally a small and medium-sized enterprise industry. It is clear that the great majority of tourist facilities are run by small and medium sized businesses. The owner and family members usually run the business. This situation influences the structure of ownership and the level of education and skills of those working in the industry. Moreover, because these sectors are in predominance within the tourism industry, it is no wonder that the majority of literature and research concentrates on this sector. There have been many studies concentrating on the topic of educational needs within this sector (Marhuenda et al, 2004; Peters& Buhalis, 2004; Irvine &Anderson, 2004; Barrows&Walsh, 2002; Zhang& Wu, 2004; Juwaheer, 2004; Littlejohn &Watson,

2004; Costa, 2004; Ramos et al, 2004; Avcikurt, 2003). According to Middleton (1998, quoted in Avcikurt, 2003: 399), approximately 99% of all European tourism businesses are small and medium sized enterprises (employing less than 250 people).

The common definition of the European commission for “small enterprises” specifies that they employ between 10 and 49 people, “*medium-sized enterprises*” employ more than 50 but fewer than 250 (CEC, 1996, quoted in Avcikurt, 2003:401). Information technology, research and an understanding of tourism and the tourism industry were the main educational needs identified by Avcikurt (2003) within the managerial training needs of Turkish small and medium-sized hotel enterprises.

Application of practical skills was also evident throughout this study for example;

*“basic skills training of managers/owners on the other hand, may enable them to use their time, communicate with customers and employees better and reduce the turnover of employees and customer complaints”* (Avcikurt, 2003: 399-404).

A similar survey of small family hotel businesses in Austria, which was carried out in 2003, suggests that the lack of skills leads to

*“informal business practices and processes”* and as a result of this *“poor product standardisation and quality control”* (Peters & Buhalis, 2004: 406-415).

Specific skills in areas such as *“book-keeping, accounting and financial management”* were also stated as required types of education. These skills should be operational and functional in the way they are delivered to the students *“operative work load”*. There was general agreement that *“soft skills (e.g. IT skills, communication, team working, problem solving, numeracy, motivational skills, and literacy)”* should be provided (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004: 412).

Gerry Hawkes, (1990: 14) in an article entitled: *“Why colleges are failing the industry”*, describes how practical vocational education is being dropped in favour of curriculum based on general academic theory. He identifies that cost considerations and prestige are the reasons why some educational institutions are choosing generic business and tourism courses in favour of vocational education.

*“The academic bias of these towards management theory-especially in the final year-is very harmful. Students are conditioned to look down on the practical, action style of management required by any future senior manager.”*

There must be a correct balance between theoretical courses and practical/vocational courses to satisfy the needs of industry.



The poor image of the industry within particular countries was also evident within the literature. The traditional poor pay, working conditions, unsocial hours, and the cultural expectations of the local population regarding jobs in service industries were some of the reasons given for this image (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990:17-35; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004:410). Failte Ireland are attempting to reduce this perception by publishing a magazine "*Get a life in tourism*" and also by promoting the industry more favourably to students. A review of the literature on this topic suggested that in the UK,

*"a large number of college graduates from tourism courses are recruited by retailers, building societies and banks"* (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990: 33).

Quotes such as this one, would question generic tourism courses and the employability of graduates from these courses with the majority of tourism courses available having a business slant and therefore leaving the graduate prepared for a broad spectrum of career opportunities.

The other proposition in the literature was that tourism graduates could command more money in other careers, for example in a study looking at human resource issues in tourism in China,

*"Even on commissions, the average total monthly income is around 1000 RMB. Most qualified international guides graduate with a Bachelor's degree in English or Tourism. Thereafter, it is easy to secure a job in banking, IT or commerce, with a monthly salary ranging from 2000 RMB to 3000RMB. This situation means that tour guides average two to three years at most in the travel industry before they secure a job elsewhere".* (Zhang & Wu, 2004: 426).

Therefore if graduates will receive more income working in another career they are more than likely not going to seek employment within the tourism industry.

A study of the Portuguese tourism sector, involving a round table discussion with participants from industry and education was published in 2004 and gave an interesting insight into the educational needs of this sector. The knowledge of events and innovative ideas were referred to as educational needs because

*"it is possible to anticipate that the referred events will lead to new trends pointing to holidays closer to home, and seen as an experience, either based on cultural attractions or other major sports events such as the European Football Championship".* (Costa, 2004: 403).

Another interesting angle of this study was that the researcher identified that tourists are now more educated themselves and therefore expect a certain level of quality and standard

*“tourists to our country have become more demanding, have a higher level of education, are more willing to travel and demand higher standards of service quality while enjoying shorter holiday periods” (Ramos et al, 2004 cited in Costa, 2004; 404).*

Standards are now very important and Ireland for example market to the discerning high spending tourist who will expect quality and therefore value for money in the process. Within the Portuguese study, qualifications were lacking and a solution was suggested to help reduce this, (one which Ireland have already adopted on the formulation of Failte Ireland) an integrated approach to the training and qualification of human resources within the tourism sector which would be part of the national strategy for human resources training and development aimed at a higher level of service provision.

Life Long Learning again was evident within the literature as an educational need for the private sector (Barrows & Walsh, 2002; Marhuenda, 2004; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004). In the study, *“Developing graduate managers for hospitality and tourism”*, Littlejohn & Watson, (2004: 410) emphasise the need for continued training due to *“the changing social, economic and political environments”* so that employees remain competent and continue as valued and productive members and to enhance personal mobility in the labour market. The Institute of Continuing Professional Development (ICPD)-(launched in the UK in 1998 to raise the effectiveness of professionals by establishing new CPD standards) defines Life Long Learning as:

*“The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and the development of personal qualities necessary for the education of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioners working life”. Other definitions focus more on “updating of professional knowledge throughout ones working life by means of systematic, on-going, self-directed learning.” (CIPD).*

This focus on the individual runs counter to a perception, perhaps more widely held in the past, that continuing professional development has been vocational/professional focused and might therefore appear to have been employer-driven and concentrated on short term upskilling of the workforce and even regarded as an optional extra (Shaw&Green, 1999;Guest, 2000). The benefits of Professional development accrue to the individual, to the organisation where the individual works and to society in general (Barrows & Walsh, 2002).

Overall, whether the organisation is public or private in nature, the demographic trends and the drivers of change in the tourism industry make Life Long Learning a priority for both sectors and individuals across the greater tourism sector.



Forming links and networking between tourism stakeholders has been identified as fundamental within the literature reviewed. The educational sector could invite industry in to help with evaluating tourism programmes while also utilising the industry representatives to give guest lectures, so that they could share practical experiences and skills with the students. In addition, academics should seek to collaborate with industry on applied research and consultancy projects, which would benefit the whole community in the long run. Where possible, students should be encouraged to participate in educational visits to tourism and travel sector operations. This will help them to better understand the practical realities of the industry and employer expectations of graduates (Zhang & Wu, 2004: 427). Another way of exposing students to a working environment was through the value of a work placement within any tourism programme and this was apparent within the literature.

*“Work placements are considered fundamental for learning and acquiring minimal skill levels” (Marhuenda, 2004: 231).*

This introduces the student to life in the workforce and enables them to access there career decisions and make contacts within the industry.

Access to courses at a time that is suitable to those working in the private tourism sector was also desirable within the literature.

*“Workers often encounter difficulties to attend training courses due to time constraints. Companies are trying to make attendance easier by offering training during working hours, for example. The interest in making a career within the company leads these workers to give priority to internal training over external training offers.” (Marhuenda, 2004: 231).*

Whether the training is in the form of a work placement or providing training on site, it cannot be stressed enough within the literature the need for on going training and development for the private sector.

### **C) The Voluntary sector stakeholders educational needs.**

The voluntary sectors are underrepresented within the literature. There is a lack of research volume on tourism voluntary organisations and their educational needs.

*“Education was never meant to be isolated in an Ivory Tower; it must be embraced by those that are taught as relevant to life” (Collins, 2001).*

It is for this reason that any course designed specifically for this sector must suit the needs of the voluntary group. Many studies have been conducted on tourism education

programs. These studies found that education should be business oriented, relevant to the industry and should be supported by incentive industrial training programs. The educational institutions must determine for whom the program is intended and what is expected from it. Moreover, programs should provide students with needed tools and educate them to take responsibility in future work life, thus bridging the gap between education and the workplace (Collins, 2001).

Voluntary groups usually give their time and energy to projects with little or no return (as by definition most voluntary organisations are set up on a non-profit or not-for-profit basis). Despite this, they can make a profit, there however will be a constitutional limit on how much (if any) of the organisations profits can be distributed to its members. All profits or any left over after the permitted distribution must be reinvested in the organisation or used for the organisations constitutional purposes (Adirondack, 2000:1). An education on areas relating to money management or funding are crucial to the success of such an organisation.

Within the tourism industry many voluntary groups are made up of committees, town committees and rural community groups.

*“Value-based community development means a recognition of not just economic values as expressed in the international marketplace, but acceptance and appreciation of ones own culture, past and lifestyle. The ideas, skills, philosophies and heritage can be passed not just from one generation to another, but shared between members of a community and the world”*(Kim 1991:26).

Increasing incomes, employment and education of locals are the most apparent ways of involving community members in the benefit of tourism development (Brohman, 1996; Echter, 1995; Pearce, Moscardo and Ross, 1996; cited in Timothy, 1999:372). The involvement of community members in decision-making, participation of locals in the benefits of tourism and education of locals about tourism are the three notions that form participatory planning. Therefore action on the part of the local community, by participating in or benefiting from tourism, requires some knowledge about the industry and its impacts (Din, 1993, quoted in Thimothy, 1999; 374). It is apparent from the literature, that there is a deficit in the quantity of research on the educational needs within the voluntary tourism sector. The little literature that does exists suggests that this sector would need a broad understanding of the tourism industry while gaining



practical skills such as financial, operational and functional skills to effectively manage the voluntary business.

#### **D) Public, Private Partnerships (PPP's) educational needs.**

While the concept of partnership has existed within the tourism industry for many years, it is only in recent years that formalised structures have been put in place to facilitate the mutual engagement of the private and public sectors in the design and implementation of tourism developments and plans. From an economic point of view, this type of partnership makes sense in that both parties receive what they would like to achieve from the venture.

*“Public-private partnerships (PPP's) are a generic term for the relationships formed between private sector companies or consortia in the development of public sector infrastructure projects sponsored” (Beck and Hunter, 2003:369).*

In an article in 1991 by Charles Owen, *“Building a relationship between government and tourism”*, he emphasised the importance of partnership within the tourism sector.

*“If the public sector and the private sector in any country or in any group of nations sharing close political or economic interests, cannot combine effectively to promote tourism, the potential of this burgeoning industry will not be realised or may be realised only at the cost of say the products quality (and long-term profitability) or the host communities environment and way of life” (1991:362).*

Partnerships in Ireland have become more prevalent in the industry of public services, particularly in relation to non-traditional services such as culture, arts, leisure and attractions. Public-private partnerships exist on different levels and scales. For example in Ireland, the EU INTERREG programme is administered through a joint working group comprising representatives of the NITB, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Failte Ireland (formally, Bord Failte), Department of Arts Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands with the main objective being to

*“present the border region as a desirable holiday destination and to create an image conducive to inward investment” (Fitzpatrick & McEniff, 1992, cited in Greer, 2001:360).*

Partnership has been established on a national scale between the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Failte Ireland (formally, Bord Failte (BF)) in an effort to maximise tourist potential and reduce duplication. Consequently partnerships now exist at various levels and are formed through a partnership between the public and private sector so that delivery of a product or service can be achieved. As these two sectors are merging, it is assumed that their educational needs would be similar to the needs outlined above which are the public and private sector educational needs. However

research is needed into the specific educational needs of this sector, as this has not been identified in the literature although a number of PPP's were interviewed during the research process.

### 3.6 - Third Level Education in Ireland.

This section within the literature review will attempt to uncover aspects of higher education. The structure of Third Level education in Ireland will be clarified and current trends outlined within the literature will be recognised.

There are many fine points encountered when trying to differentiate between the related concepts of 'education', 'training' and 'development'. To dwell on education and on particular in defining third level or higher education, there has been a long history of philosophers, for example *Plato* talked of the acquisition of knowledge as

*"the ascent to see things in the upper world"* (cited in Barrett, 1992: 17).

In the nineteenth century, Cardinal Newman in articulating his view of the purposes of the university said,

*"if we would improve the intellect, first of all we must ascend; we cannot gain real knowledge on a level... in every case, to commend it is to mount above it"* (cited in Barrett, 1992: 17).

The definitions here refer in particular to higher education, hence the reference to rising up or "*mount above*" but to define higher education Barrow, 1991(cited in Barnett, 1992: 61) emerged with a 'suggestive' definition for higher education;

*"a high evaluation accorded to an educative process, where it has been demonstrated that, through the process, the students' educational development has been enhanced: not only have they achieved the particular objectives set for the course but, in doing so, they have also fulfilled the general educational aims of autonomy, of the ability to participate in reasoned discourse, of critical self-evaluation and of coming to a proper awareness of the ultimate contingency of all thought and action."*

The term 'education' is seen to be more generic than the term 'training'. The former focuses on developing the individual as a whole, on personal or professional development. By contrast training is frequently seen as relating to skills development in the artisan and the unskilled (Jenkins, 1980; Baum, 1995a). A related term, 'development' formal, informal or vocational is an ongoing continuous process and can apply to education or training.

Today the distinction between education and training is increasingly obscure. There are arrays of programmes available within tourism education that merge both training and education. This is achieved through competence-based learning, problem-based learning, gaining occupational skills, industry/educational partnerships and of course



through work placements. Education and training programmes have emerged in response to, among other considerations, the following needs for human resource development in a challenging environment:

- Keeping the industry abreast with the latest technology and trends.
- The availability of qualified replacement staff at all times
- Raising the image of careers in tourism.
- Staffing new and growing tourist industries.
- Employment regulation
- Reduction of foreign labour
- Responding to increasingly demanding requirements of customers.

(Amoah & Baum, 1997: 17).

Education and training is therefore vital for the motivation, retention and development of employees within the workplace. It is fundamental to the dissemination of knowledge in relation to the tourism industry for students wishing to seek employment in this area on graduation.

#### **A) Structure of the third level educational system in Ireland**

Third level educational programmes are the product of colleges and Universities. On the island of Ireland, there are 8 universities, 15 Institutes of Technology (I.T.'s, including Dublin Institute of Technology) and a smaller number of specialised institutions including teacher-training colleges offer a range of higher education programmes (Directory of Contact Details, Department of Education and Science, 2004). The above educational establishments offer undergraduate and some offer postgraduate courses in traditional and vocational areas. Within tourism education, Failte Ireland (formally, CERT) offer a range of courses for the tourism and hotel industries. A number of PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) and VEC (Vocational Educational Committee) educational centres exist that provide courses mainly vocational in nature too. There are also a number of private colleges in Ireland that provide courses in tourism also.

Further education and training is education and training that is between post-primary level and higher education. Higher education and training is provided mainly in Universities and Institutes of Technology or equivalent bodies.

The half-decade from 2000-2005 has seen dramatic and sustained developments in the educational environment (Application to the Higher Education and Training Awards

Council for an extension of Delegated Authority to make awards, Institute of Technology, Sligo, April 2004: 14). The existing state-supported Universities all award their own degrees and other awards. The enactment of the qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 has been an important agent of change for Institutes of Technology. As a result of this act the following statutory bodies were established:

- The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)
- The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in replacement of the NCEA
- The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)

The private colleges make awards, some of which are validated by foreign Universities and some of which are validated by FETAC and HETAC and some of these awards are not validated by any outside body.

The National Tourism Certification Board (NTCB) until recently awarded qualifications to learners who accomplished Failte Ireland (formally CERT) courses in the areas of hospitality although Failte Ireland are now offering some FETAC and HETAC courses in conjunction with the Institutes of Technology. There is a consensus that this act has made the stream of education from post leaving certificate to post graduate level much easier with a level now attached to each qualification numbered from 1-10 respectively (Irelands Issues, 2005: 15). For FECTAC alone since its inception, over 200,000 awards have been made (Irelands Issues, 2005: 14).

The objectives of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland are:

- The establishment and maintenance of a framework for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners, regardless of where they were acquired.
- The establishment, promotion and maintenance of the standard of awards of the new awards councils, the Dublin Institute of Technology and any new Universities that may be established and liaison with bodies outside the state for the mutual recognition of awards at trans-national level.
- The promotion and facilitation of access, transfer and progression.

The awarding bodies, FETAC and HETAC are part of the awards council. The aim is that these bodies will be the certification bodies for all of the education and training in



the state other than that in primary and post-primary education and in the Universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology. The general approach is that each council will validate the programmes of the providers subject to the setting of certain conditions. These include policy and quality procedures laid down by the awards council ([www.oasis.gov.ie](http://www.oasis.gov.ie), 18/10/2004).

#### **B) Current trends in third level education**

A number of trends have been identified in this study and these have an impact on the provision and delivery of tourism education in Ireland. The following section will highlight a number of these trends.

The Irish higher education system has recently seen the development of more certified courses for University staff in the area of teaching and learning (O'Neill & Mac Labhrainn, 2004). The continuous Life Long Learning (L.L.L.) within educational institutions is not only intended and designed for the students, third level educational establishments are now providing educational courses for their academic staff to facilitate them in their delivery of courses.

*"The higher diploma in University Teaching and learning commenced in January 2004 in University College Dublin" (O'Neill & Labhrainn, 2004).*

There are now a number of these courses in existence around Ireland. This was needed as unlike other teacher training it has been identified that the training of 'teacher/lecturers' in higher education has been

*"close to non-existent until recent years" (O'Neill & Labhrainn, 2004).*

Educating the educators is therefore a trend in third level education and is an extension of Life-long learning for those in academic professions.

Educational establishments are now seen as open and friendly places whereas they were traditionally seen as a "closed system", informal and uninviting. They now encourage industry participation in designing and shaping programmes. The support for industry contribution to seminars and as guest lecturers on programmes is recognised. The partnership between industry and education is becoming closer with for example application of practical skills such as work placement as an integral part of many courses. The educational establishments add to regional development by contributing a knowledgeable workforce and also offering guidance to the communities. Thus these

organisations have developed from “closed systems” into a more “open system” culture (Ogawa & Kim, 2005, AISHE, 2004).

Learning in later life and Life-long learning education featured strongly where the aging ‘baby boomers’ have proposed that strategies towards delivering courses will have to be addressed. An interesting angle outlined by Bunyan, 2004 suggests that there is and there will be in the foreseeable future a huge uptake in the numbers of people engaging in Life-long learning, for instance

*“older learners in Ireland have been disadvantaged through lack of access and support from the state”.*

There was no free secondary education until 1967 so many older learners were previously denied educational opportunities. Only one-third of adults between the ages 55-64 have completed second level education compared to two-thirds of adults between the ages of 25-34 (Department of Education and Science, 2000: 18). The Equality Authority (2002: 58) suggests that these older adults who have contributed to the economy should now have the opportunity to participate in education themselves.

Another trend developing within third level education is that our globalised society has meant that students are working while also studying and this has an impact on their retention within courses and their grades from these courses. In a study by Conway, 2004 entitled: *“Why do students abandon programs prior to completion?”* a number of reasons were given such as:

- Students are not prepared for the course,
- Didn’t have enough information about it before entering and
- Felt alienated in the college system.

*“This survey also highlighted the poor attendance record for some, and that other students were working during term time”* (Mc Donagh & Patterson, 2002: cited in Conway, 2004).

The lack of motivation among students was also highlighted within this study.

The national points system to enter certain courses was criticised as an area that effected student retention. For example in DIT

*“it was discovered in the faculty of Tourism and Food that 17% of the first year cohort entered with less than 250 points and this was for all courses”* (Costello & Russell, 2003:30, cited in Conway, 2004).

Study skills, meeting deadlines and stress management are embedded in students scoring high points in the leaving certificate but are lacking in those who have entered



on low points. The discipline and motivation that is needed in a college setting leaves these students struggling (Costello & Russell, 2003). A detailed look at the entry points for tourism courses in 2004 (CAO system) is illustrated in appendix 4.

Ultimately, and more importantly Dearing (1997:6, cited in Stewart & Knowles, 2000: 71) sees the development of a range of generic, as well as subject specific skills during higher education as

*"necessary outcomes of all higher education programmes".*

The following section will review the literature on tourism third level education.

### 3.7 - Tourism Education

Three key features of tourism education in Ireland are first, its diversity, and secondly the speed with which it has developed and is constantly changing. The diversity stems from the nature of tourism itself and the wide-ranging needs of the tourism industry. The courses currently on offer range from sectorally oriented courses to general tourism courses, from courses aimed at vocational training in specific skills to those with a more general educational aim, from post graduate studies to training courses for school leavers and from full-time courses prior to entering the industry to part time courses designed for those already at work (Airey, 1979, ITIC News, 2004). Therefore the development of tourism as a subject for study is relatively new and has been very rapid. This is not only the case in Ireland but in other countries as well, for example

*"the first two postgraduate courses in tourism in the U.K. were introduced in 1972 with total enrolments of about 20 students. By 1997 there were nearly one hundred courses in the UK leading to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees" (Airey, 1998: 9).*

In Ireland in 2004 there are almost 300 Tourism/Hospitality courses from PLC level right up as far as post-graduate level (HRD Strategy, Failte Ireland, 2005).

In the last thirty years there has been an explosion of tourism educational provision worldwide.

*"The enormous growth and changing global conditions have created new career opportunities in the emerging profession of travel and tourism" (Hawkins & Hunt, 1987, cited in Schulman, 1994).*

The impact of this expansion of tourism education has had certain implications, for example, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) has undertaken a number of initiatives, one of which has been the establishing of the WTO Institute for Quality in Tourism Education (THEMIS). This initiative promotes global quality, standards, and cooperation in tourism education (Conference Report, 2000).

Tourism education has developed at such an expansive rate that there is still some concerns over whether:

- A core body of tourism Knowledge exists.
- Tourism is recognised as a discipline within educational establishments.
- There is adequate practical application within tourism programmes.
- The importance of work placements has been acknowledged.
- Qualifications of academic staff involved in delivering tourism programmes are applicable.
- Subjects taught within tourism programmes are essential.

The development of a core body of knowledge for tourism at European level was initially mooted at the first ATLAS International conference held in Tilburg in December 1994 (Richards & Bowling, 1998). The ATLAS Thematic NETWORK project spread over three years from 1996-1999 and the aim was to define the scope and content of the study area at European level, by developing a common core curriculum for tourism and leisure. This also involved developing modular based courses in a variety of contexts. One of the main concerns identified by academia is the perceived lack of a core body of knowledge and moreover the lack of discipline status that tourism has received.

This study has identified within the introduction the close relationship between tourism and hospitality. The term tourism itself has been identified as an umbrella term encompassing tourism, travel and hospitality and this is evident in the literature (Chen & Groves, 1999; Ingram, 1996; Lam & Xiao, 2000; Ross, 1997; D'Annunzio-Green & Watson, 2000). In Ireland tourism exists and is equated with hospitality in a number of educational establishments. The most famous example is Failte Ireland where tourism and hospitality education is offered in a number of centres throughout Ireland.

To dissect this relationship a little further a definition of the contrasts between hospitality and tourism education must be recognised. At its most fundamental level, hospitality means a willingness to create an atmosphere of satisfaction. Thus hospitality programmes ought not to be simply seeking learning outcomes that provide basic service to customers (Ross, 1997:125). Moreover, most hospitality programmes are defined as "*lodging and food service management*" (Angelo & Vladimir, 1991; cited in Chen & Groves, 1999:38). These curricula are highly specialist-based and the course



work within the curricula is job related. In contrast to the boundaries set by hospitality education, Tourism education identifies societal expression of leisure time expenditure (Murphy, 1985; Ryan, 1991, cited in Chen & Groves, 1999:38). Therefore the literature identifies that tourism and hospitality education are distinctly different where tourism education adopts a more generalist approach to the content. This would verify why tourism educational courses are frequently attached to other disciplines within educational establishments. A predominant apprehension identified in the literature on tourism education is that academic's find it hard to agree on whether tourism has gained discipline status.

*"The study of tourism and employment noted that travel and tourism professionals are not highly regarded in many countries; therefore, very little emphasis is placed on travel and tourism education."* (Schulman et al, 1994).

The question over whether tourism is a discipline or an emerging discipline is still unanswered (Jafari, 1981; Airey, 1998; Leiper, 2000; Tribe, 2000).

Tourism is multi-faceted in nature and it is for this reason that tourism programmes are usually attached to another relevant discipline for example, marketing, economics, business studies, geography and Psychology. An article prepared (for a special issue on Tourism education) for the Annals of tourism research in 1981 revealed,

*"Tourism by its nature penetrates every aspect of life, whether directly or indirectly. It brings into action or reaction several indigenous factors and creates an environment of its own"* (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981: 20).

The authors also describe tourism as not having discipline status of its own and its frequent attachment to other disciplines such as Business Studies. They also state that governments and universities need to do more and appear to be unwilling to recognise tourism as an important, legitimate field of study which merits the levels of funding accorded to other professional schools and faculties (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981:25).

The debate over whether tourism is now a discipline or not is still ongoing among academics with Leiper (2000:805-809), in an article cited in Annals of tourism research contesting Tribe's article in a previous issue of Annals of tourism research (1997:638-657) where Tribe believes that tourism will not and cannot become a discipline due to

*"Tourism-related phenomena being too complicated, with too many implications, for knowledge to be adequately developed by specialists favouring one discipline".*

Leiper proclaims *"tourism knowledge exists in disciplined form for some scholars some of the time, besides existing for most of the time in one or more fields without specific disciplines for all scholars interested in tourism"*.

Leiper is therefore optimistic about tourism becoming a discipline by ending the article noting that with the expansion of tourism comes with it a discipline of tourism studies. Tribe (2000:809-813) in a comment on Leiper's backlash refers to the definition of a discipline and states that

*"a discipline is, at heart, a body of knowledge that has been organised to some extent, ideally in a formally systematic manner, in a way that helps teaching, learning and research".*

It has been recognised that tourism is debatably a discipline and has not received discipline status solely on its own accord in any Third level Institution in Ireland.

The literature on tourism education also makes extensive reference to the practical application of tourism programmes. There is a need for "Hands on" skills and experience (Martin & Mc Evoy, 2003; Henry et al, 2004; Brotherton et al, 1994; Airey, 1998; Morgan, 2004; Lam & Xiao, 2000; Mc Donald & Hopkin, 2003). For example, Cohen noted: (cited in Schulman et al, 1994:61)

*"that community-college-based tourism programs tended to be more skills and job specific than upper level programs".*

The majority of PLC and VEC tourism courses in Ireland are of this nature, offering the student functional and operational skills to work within the industry. Traditionally, these sorts of programmes in Ireland have been vocationally focused while courses delivered in Institutes of Technology and Universities are more theory based with the utilisation of a work placement being the practical element of the course structure (see content analysis of tourism courses, Appendix: 3).

The placement, which is an integral part of most tourism courses, has been considerable in developing the student's skills and practical application of theory learned. The placement varies depending on the course ranging from 2-12 months.

Work placements are significantly important to any tourism course as they introduce a practical element while also forming valuable networks with the industry (Airey, 1998; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981). Placement employer's reports provide a major source of feedback on the course and on the capabilities of the students. The placement experience and current industry issues are also fed into the course indirectly through students work (Morgan, 2004). The emphasis on practical learning outcomes is very noteworthy within a large amount of literature on the topic of tourism education (Brotherton et al, 1994; Henry et al, 2004; Chen et al, 2000; O'Connell et al, 2005;



Martin &Evoy, 2003; Leslie &Richardson, 1998; Morgan, 2004). The benefits of this system to the three partners: -students, employer and educational institute are well documented. Another way of introducing application of practical skills into tourism education is to include this element into methods of assessment.

The WTO in a conference report on the “*Establishment of a doctoral research network*”, the importance of dissertations within tourism curriculum was identified as very important.

*“The centrality of research, typically recorded in a dissertation was common”*  
(Smith, 2000: 2).

The practical element of researching, gives the students the opportunity to use the learning outcomes from course curriculum in developing a dissertation or research project.

The qualifications of the academic staff lecturing on tourism courses have been scrutinised. The reference was made in particular to the backgrounds from which they come with a large proportion of them qualified within other disciplines (Airey, 1998; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981). The fact that tourism degrees and post-graduate courses did not exist in Ireland over thirty years ago means that tourism is not even a generation old and therefore a number of academic staff lecturing on these programmes are educated in other disciplines such as Economics, Business, Marketing, Geography, History or philosophy.

*“As a result there has been a tendency for academics and others to come forward with their own definitions, concepts and approaches to tourism studies”,* (Airey; 1998:9).

This has an impact on the design of programmes with Koh (1994, cited in Airey, 1998:11) pointing out that:

*“Several studies found that most of the tourism curricula were designed by educators with little/ no representation from the tourism industry”.*

This has a huge impact on tourism education as courses have been designed without any consultation from the tourism stakeholders.

The provision of languages in a tourism curriculum was questioned within the literature. Language Skills and competency of graduates in speaking languages from tourism courses have been questioned and hence the relevance of providing a language element to tourism courses in the first place (Richards & Bowling, 1998; 19; Airey, 1998 ;). There were divided opinions about the extent to which languages should form part of tourism courses.

*“In the UK, for example, languages have been excluded from the core curriculum for tourism, whereas in Spain and Greece language courses are a requirement of central government” (Richards and Bowling, 1998; 19).*

Therefore in Ireland also, the worth that was traditionally attached to languages within tourism courses is diminishing and many courses are making languages an elective subject or eliminating it from courses altogether to make more choice available to the student (Programmatic Review Institute of Technology, Sligo, minutes of meeting, 2004). This has also been highlighted in the course content analysis (see appendix 3) where the majority of courses now offer languages as an elective subject, or do not offer it in the first place as part of the curriculum.

### **3.8 - Education and training for Tourism in Ireland.**

Much economic progress has been achieved in Ireland over recent decades. Incomes and living standards have improved, unemployment has been drastically reduced and the higher education system played a vital role by rapidly increasing the output of well-qualified people with relevant skills. The minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism at the end of year statement on Tourism performance and outlook (30/12/2004) concluded,

*“Tourism remains a vital sector of the Irish economy-a major employer and one of the largest indigenous service industries. Ireland continues to offer attractive holiday proposition and I look forward to seeing the sector grow and develop in 2005”.*

The 2002 Tourism and Employment survey found that some 52% of employees had received formal training (Report of the Tourism policy review group, 2003: 54). With this increase in prosperity, an expansion in the provision of tourism education in Ireland over the last decade has evolved. Moreover, the over provision of tourism courses is a trend that is described within the literature internationally (Airey, 1998; Dale & Robinson, 2001; Lam & Xiao, 2000).

Until relatively recently education and training for the tourism industry in Ireland were centred on the hotel and restaurant sectors. Dublin College of Catering, founded in 1941 was the first college to provide courses while Shannon College of Hotel Management founded in 1952 trains management students. In 1963, CERT, the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training for the hotel and catering industry, was founded. It was a state sponsored agency governed by a council representative of employers, trade unions, educational organisations and Failte Ireland. CERT's brief was extended in 1975 to include tourism and became known as the State Tourism Training Agency.



Initially CERT operated courses mainly in seasonal hotels, but with the advent of the Regional Technical Colleges in 1970 and the provision through CERT's intervention, of schools of Hotel, Catering and Tourism studies in many of these colleges, provision transferred to these institutions.

There are now two Universities and ten Institutes of Technology offering Tourism courses in Ireland. Tourism courses are also available in Failte Ireland (formally CERT) colleges in Killybegs and Dublin or through a number of PLC and VEC centres. A number of private colleges also run tourism programmes.

Courses vary from vocational programmes to generic business programmes with tourism. (HRD Strategy, Failte Ireland, 2005) identified almost 300 courses that exist currently throughout Ireland in the areas of hospitality and tourism at all levels.

In February 2003, the Tourism Policy Review Group invited interested parties to express their views on the long-term strategic development of tourism education. This was to reassess and identify the needs and wants of tourism education and training in Ireland. There were a number of submissions from stakeholders in the tourism industry with suggestions on areas of improvement within the Irish tourism educational sector such as:

- The responsiveness of academic institutions to industry needs where the curriculum on offer is regarded by the industry as *"too academic"* and *"not practical enough"*. The need for the development of skills such as Personal, Communication, Human Resource Skills and Business Skills were requested. The work placement within tourism educational courses was vital but *"work experience placements are poorly structured and badly managed"* by educational institutions. The result is that many students feel frustrated and decide to focus on other areas of employment after graduation (Keaney, 2003).
- Forming a link between education and industry was desired where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives.
- Diversity and Flexibility were identified as trends within Irish society and the tourism educational system must react to these changes. Developing tourism courses to suit the educational needs of migrant workers and people of multi-

racial origins was a priority. Developing modular type courses would allow flexibility and for *Lifelong learning* courses to be delivered at a time, and places that were pertinent to the student. The option of e learning was also suggested for these types of programmes. It was also identified that many people just want to participate in modules of existing programmes for their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

- The poor image of the industry raised concern throughout all submissions with suggestions of ways to counteract this perception such as educational modules in tourism at primary and secondary level to raise awareness of the economic benefits of tourism. This coupled with the close relationship that tourism has with the hospitality industry raises questions in particular, in relation to clear career paths for both sectors. Raising the skills level and career progression within the tourism industry were identified as vital to improve the image of the industry as an employer. The introduction of appraisal, rewards and incentives to employees would help retention rates within the tourism industry.
- Working with industry the education providers and the certifying authorities need to develop career paths for key occupations in the sector and to provide suites of courses to prepare students for these careers.

It was from these submissions of industry stakeholders that Failte Ireland laid plans for the future direction of tourism education in Ireland (CERT, 2003; Keaney.R, 2003; Shannon College of Hotel Management, 2003).

The OECD undertook a review of Higher education in Ireland during 2004 and a call for submissions from interested individuals and organisations in relation to the review was published in the Irish National press in December 2003 (AISHE, 2004). The respondents were both academia and industry representatives including Failte Ireland.

It was identified that the role of higher education was to:

- Engage in knowledge generation-through research
- Facilitate knowledge dissemination- through curriculum design and renewal.
- Contribute to the impact of knowledge application – through liaison with industry.

Again the majority of submissions were optimistic and identified areas of improvement within the higher educational sector mainly based on future trends such as:

- Links between industry and education are desired.



- The Institutes of Technology and the Knowledge Society Report (2003) recognised a trend that is also evident in European countries. The report noted, *“Universities are displaying vocational drift while non-university institutions are engaged in academic drift”* (Submission from Failte Ireland, 2003/2004).
- This it is suggested could lead to confusion around institutional mission and maybe to a situation where academic institutions pursue programmes, which are broadly similar in design and purpose.
- There was reference made to the design and delivery of courses within the tourism industry where they should not be unduly *“academicised”*. Instead they should be strongly anchored in the industry that they service.
- Flexibility in the delivery and design of courses was evident where a move to deliver programmes through shorter, flexible and increasingly modular arrangements would benefit individuals and society as a whole.
- This would generate a culture of Life long learning which was significant in all submissions reviewed for the OECD Report.
- The concern over retention and dropout rates could be counteracted through self-directed learning and the support for e learning and web-based courses.
- In relation to teaching practices in H.E, continuation and follow on education especially between further education establishments and higher educational establishments were desired. Forming links would lead to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for students.
- The realisation that Irish educational establishments are currently recruiting international students to study in Ireland has received mixed reviews. To be successful the Irish Higher educational sector must maintain both a reputation for excellence and a cost structure that will attract these students to Ireland.
- In relation to the increase in cultural diversity in Ireland, over time it may be expected that some of these workers will progress as learners in Higher Education. This will be important both to facilitate the further integration of these workers into the Irish labour force, and in order to develop the higher-level skills that are expected to characterise the industry as a whole in the future. Developing linkages with other international educational establishments to cater for these students is suggested.

- Specialisation and developing “centres of excellence” within certain Institutes of Technology are scrutinized where a demand for these specialisms must be quantified.

(Failte Ireland, 2004; NQAI, 2004; Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2004; Trinity College, 2004; AISHE, 2004; Forfas, 2004). The above points summarise the review submissions printed for the OECD in 2004 to conduct a review of Higher education. Therefore these submissions give a clear representation and up to date account of the main trends that will limit or expand the provision of tourism education and the way that courses will be delivered and marketed in the future.

A number of Institutes of Technology are currently undertaking a programmatic Review, which is a review of all programmes in a Department, and this happens currently every 5 years. This review will allow changes to be written into the syllabi of these programmes usually brought about by trends/ changes within the industry. A summary of the Review undertaken at the Institute of Technology, Sligo in 2004/2005 is described in the subsequent segment.

### 3.9 - Programmatic Review and Curriculum Development

The programmatic review conducted within the *Institute of Technology, Sligo* was used as a case study within this research and in particular the focus group held with industry representatives on the shaping and design of the Bachelor in Business in Tourism which is due to be included in the 2006 prospectus. The objective of a programmatic review is to ensure that courses remain relevant within the context of the employment opportunities of graduates and reflect the primary trends nationally.

In accordance with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the publication of documentation on the structure of education in Ireland, full cognisance was taken of the content of these documents in planning and conducting the programmatic review.

In particular:

- The emphasis on statement of learning outcomes. An emphasis on what the learner will be able to do rather than what the course objectives and content is.
- A division of awards into ten levels, of which levels six to ten are of relevance to the higher education sector.

-Level 6 –Higher Certificate



- Level 7- an ordinary Bachelor Degree
  - Level 8-A bachelor Degree at Honours level
  - Level 9 and 10- are postgraduate awards and broadly equate to the second stage awards as set out in Bologna (www.hetac.ie, 26/3/05)
  - Level 9-A postgraduate diploma or a master's degree.
  - Level 10- Doctor of philosophy.
- (B&H Review, 2004; Institute of Technology, Sligo).

The broad time schedule for undertaking this programmatic review was the eighteen months from January 2004, although a small amount of preparatory work occurred towards the end of 2003. The process to achieve this objective involved a number of activities:

- Consultation with stakeholders
- Compilation of statistics
- Review of existing programmes
- Revision of programmes (if required).

Within the Business and Humanities department at the Institute of Technology, Sligo there have been some relevant trends in the provision of courses since the last programmatic review in 1999. The primary growth area has been Business Studies followed closely by Humanities. Both language and computing courses, in keeping with national trends have shown a decline, especially in information technology. Several initiatives including the development of new courses, activity to combat attrition and directed secondary school visits have been introduced.

It should be noted that the Institute is operating in an environment where the number of second level school leavers is declining at a rate of about 4% per annum. The lowest birth rate occurred in 1994 with 47,929 births. This represents a legion of eighteen year olds in 2012 that will number some 10,000 less than in 2004.

The strategic thinking is concerned with maintaining market share and is concerned with new courses, flexible delivery, summer, distance and day release, mature students and expanded postgraduate courses (Business and Humanities Review, 2004, Institute of Technology, Sligo).

As part of the review of the then National Diploma in Applied Tourism, a focus group was called to decipher the needs and wants of stakeholders. The Programme committee also held a focus group of students currently taking the course to find out their likes and dislikes subject wise and thoughts on the current courses structure. The questions asked appear in appendix 5 of the thesis.

Therefore, through research the programmatic review committee could decide on a new proposed course design that would better reflect industry needs. This new Bachelor of Business in Tourism will be implemented for the academic year 2005/2006. The existing and proposed new course outline is illustrated in appendix 6.

### 3.9.1 – Conclusion

Summaries of the key trends reviewed in the literature that are observed in tourism education provision are:

- The over provision of tourism courses (Airey, 1998; Dale & Robinson, 2001; Lam & Xiao, 2000).
- Need for “Hands on” skills and experience (Martin & Mc Evoy, 2003; Henry et al, 2004; Brotherton et al, 1994; Airey, 1998; Morgan, 2004; Lam & Xiao, 2000; Mc Donald & Hopkin, 2003).
- The long-term sustainability of Tourism (Henry et al, 2004; O’Connell et al, 2005, Department of the Environment, 1997).
- Globalisation and its impact re: foreign investment, ownership, exploitation of workers and profit repatriation (Inkson & Myers, 2003; Henry et al, 2004; Airey, 1998).
- Language Skills; to be or not to be? (Richards and Bowling, 1998; 19; Airey, 1998; Programmatic Review minutes of meeting, 2004)
- Expectations of managers and graduates (Henry et al, 2004:420; Airey, 1998; Dale & Robinson, 2001; Submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003)
- Introducing students to tourism at secondary school (Henry et al, 2004:421; Submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003).
- The tourism curriculum must suit the needs of industry (Brotherton et al, 1994; Chen & Groves, 1999; Mc Donald & Hopkin, 2003, Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; OECD, 2004).



- Life Long Learning (Zhang et al, 2001, Failte Ireland, 2003; Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003;OECD, 2004)
- Research Provision (Jones &Philips, 2003;Busby, 2003; tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; OCED, 2004)

The literature review assembled all the various academic literature under headings and assessed the main themes and opinions. There has been a multitude of literature found on the tourism educational needs of the private sector while the public sector and the voluntary sectors would qualify as areas in need of further research.

There were a number of themes running throughout all of the literature on the provision of tourism education and this was that Lifelong learning (L.L.L) is considered very important to all the stakeholders in the tourism industry whether this is conducted through training in-house or provided for within educational establishments. Another theme that was predominant in the literature suggested that stakeholders desire skills and “*Hands on*” experience as a learning outcome from tourism education. The aging population and the multi-racial society we now live in were also impacting on the design and shaping of tourism education for the future in Ireland.

The public and the private sector both possess similar educational needs but the private sector needs are more specific in the sense that they require specific skills to operate their businesses. The voluntary sector are unrepresented and further research into there educational needs is suggested. In addition a further recommendation for research in this particular area would be researching the educational needs within the public-private partnership (P.P.P) sector as this has only been assumed within this research.

The following segment will undertake an analysis and discussion of the research embarked upon. The interview data was compared and contrasted to relevant literature, the programmatic review focus group of industry representatives and the course content analysis of third level tourism educational provision at this present time. It is from this discussion and analysis that findings emerged in the study.

## Chapter 4- Analysis and discussion

### 4.1-Introduction

On concluding the primary research, the data was analysed and findings were generated. The process of analysis involved transcribing all the interviews; they were analysed several times and then compared and contrasted to each other under emergent headings. The data from each interviewee is coded and grouped under headings for analysis. Diagrams were used to illustrate and displayed the main categories within each grouping. The primary themes were identified while less frequent underlying themes are highlighted and are also displayed on the diagrams.

In order to protect privacy, the interviewees were given a number and a vague description of their professions was used when quoting their responses within the text. This was to allow privacy within the study and a full list of respondent's numbers and brief outline of their job title can be observed in appendix 2.

This analysis generated comparisons and contrasts with:

- Previous literature (discussed in the preceding chapter)
- Programmatic Review minutes of focus group meeting with industry representatives, (May 2004).
- Course Content Analysis, which displays the curriculum content within all tourism courses in Institutes of Technology and Universities currently in Ireland (appendix 3).

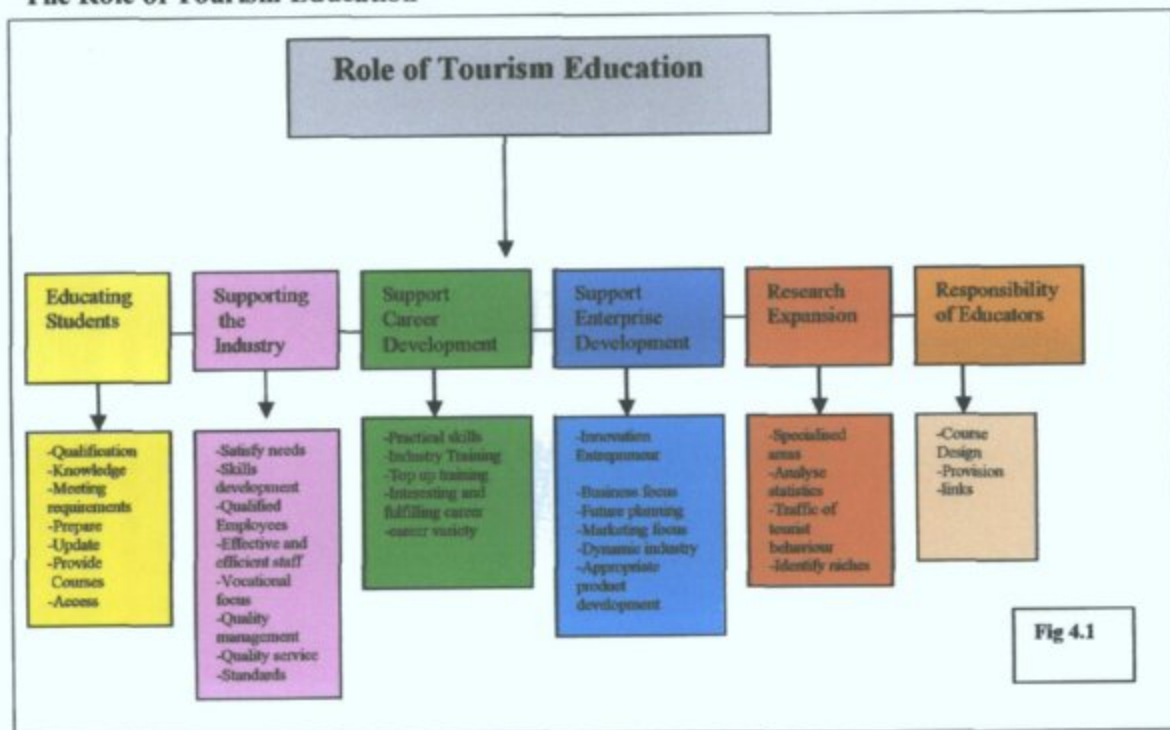
From this investigation, findings emerged which identified key areas relating to the analysis of third level Tourism Education in Ireland, focusing on the needs of the public, private and voluntary sectors. Recommendations, which address these key findings, are discussed in the subsequent section.



## 4.2 – The Role of Tourism Education

The role of tourism education in Ireland has been identified by this study as being both varied and multi-faceted. Moreover these roles are dependent on the stakeholder's viewpoint as can be seen from Fig 4.1.

### The Role of Tourism Education



The Role of Tourism Education in Ireland has been identified as:

- Educating students
- Supporting the Industry
- Supporting Career Development
- Supporting Enterprise Development
- Research expansion.
- The responsibility of educators.

From a supply and demand viewpoint, the majority of stakeholders agreed on educating students as the primary role of tourism education in Ireland. Dissemination of knowledge to students and giving them an understanding in tourism through education was recognised by interviewees as a role of tourism education in Ireland. Tourism courses would prepare students for working life in the industry. Meeting the

requirements of students so that they receive a qualification that will ensure employability and capability in the industry was essential through the supply of courses. Therefore providing courses to aid students in developing careers in the tourism sector would provide a qualified pool of professional graduates available to work in this sector. Access to courses was identified as a role of tourism education because ease of access to courses ensures that these courses are available to meet the requirements of both students and industry in nurturing a career in tourism.

Secondly the needs of industry featured strongly as a role of tourism education with most interviewees outlining that while the role of tourism education was created to pass knowledge of this sector onto students, it also must meet industry needs in the process. Satisfaction with graduates was expected through development of skills to work within the sector. Supporting industry by providing qualified staff that would be efficient and effective operators in the industry ensures a professional tourism product. Tourism education would support industry needs by having a vocational focus and this type of delivery within course design would ensure quality management and service standards.

In addition other roles such as supporting Career Development, was a predominant role within the public, private and voluntary sectors. Tourism education provides practical skills and industry training so that employees are competent within their occupations. A role of Tourism education was identified as providing Top up Training so that students could up-date their qualification and further their career prospects. Due to the expansive spectrum of professions available within the tourism industry, interesting and fulfilling career choices could be sought through tourism education. The varieties of career options within the tourism industry make it difficult to clarify clear career paths for those employed in the industry.

Enterprise and innovation was a strong feature within the industry sampled. The majority of tourism courses in Ireland are business focused but a role of tourism education was the encouragement of new business innovation and idea generation. Educating students about marketing their ideas and enterprises was crucial for an effective tourism product. Planning for the future of the tourism industry was recognised as a role because of the dynamic nature of tourism and its constant changing



due to impacts and trends. It has been recognised that supporting enterprise through tourism education ensures appropriate product development.

Research was identified, as an element which academics and stakeholders also felt was an important component. Expansion in research was identified as a role of tourism education. Encouraging and conducting research in specialised areas guarantee a body of knowledge relating to the tourism sector. Building information on statistics, traffic of tourist behaviour and identifying niche markets were all research roles within tourism education identified by the interviewees.

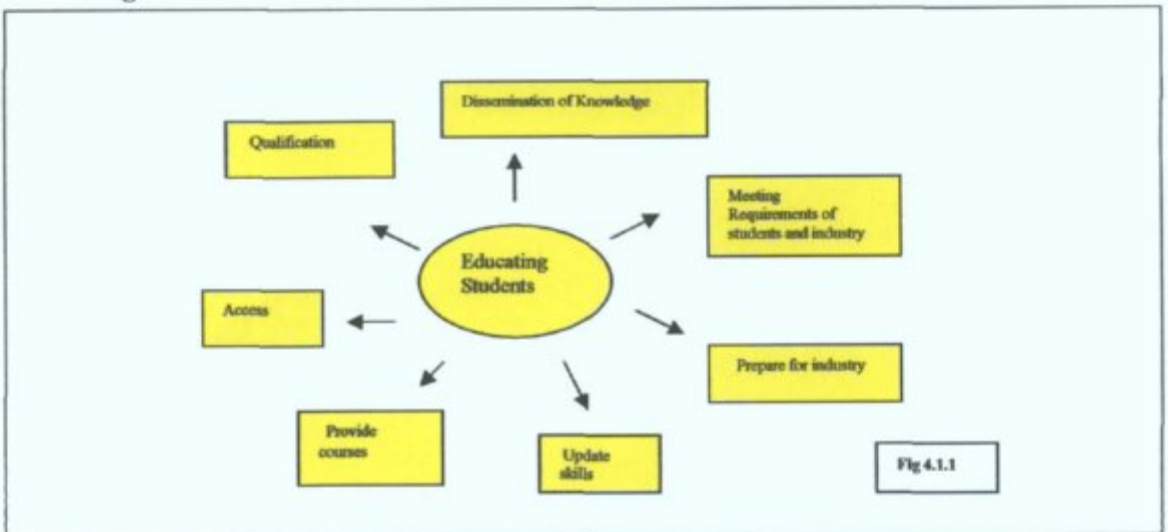
For the academia which consisted of 70% of those interviewed; course design, course provision and meeting the requirements of industry was believed to be a role that linked the public, private and voluntary sectors to education. It is the responsibility of educators to deliver tourism education that is appropriate and it is up to them to make certain that the provision of tourism education meets the needs of stakeholders.

The following segments will further discuss each role in detail.

#### 4.2.1- Educating Students.

An obvious role is to educate people but the interviewees looked at this from different angles as can be seen in fig 4.1.1.

##### Educating Students



## Dissemination of knowledge

75% of academics interviewed, when discussing the role of tourism education in Ireland identified educating students as a central role. However what was interesting was the diverse multi-faceted role of educating students. The majority emphasised the dissemination of knowledge to the student as an important role of tourism education.

*“Well, I think with all education it’s about the dissemination of knowledge, the gathering of knowledge the creation of knowledge and then in turn passing that knowledge on to our students”*. Resp. 3, Academic Institute of Technology.

On the discussion of the role of tourism education in Ireland, some interviewees found it difficult to decipher what the role was with one interviewee pointing out:

*“if you add in all the rashers that tourists eat it beats agriculture almost certainly therefore it’s absolutely critical that we have both craft and management training in tourism”* Resp.23 Senior Tourism Officer.

Another academic when enquiring about the role of tourism education in Ireland, found it hard to discuss;

*“Well I suppose it’s probably difficult to define really”*. Resp.8, Academic, Institute of Technology.

It was found during the interview process that a myopic view was presented of the role of tourism education. The academia interviewed found it difficult to describe the role of tourism education even though this was their chosen profession and one interviewee requested that a copy of the interview questions be sent so to “prepare” the answers before the interviews took place. Overall it was recognised that a minority of those interviewed described a holistic approach to the role of tourism education in Ireland.

This was the first relevant finding within the study, the inability of tourism educators to describe the role of tourism education in Ireland. This “blurred” view would support the literature on the delivery of tourism education where a large number of academia delivering tourism education are more knowledgeable in other disciplines. The fact that tourism degrees and post-graduate courses did not exist in Ireland over thirty years ago means that tourism is not even a generation old and therefore a number of academic staff lecturing on these programmes are educated in other disciplines such as Economics, Business, Marketing, Geography, History or philosophy.

*“As a result there has been a tendency for academics and others to come forward with their own definitions, concepts and approaches to tourism studies”*, (Airey; 1998:9).

This has an impact on the design of programmes with Koh (1994, cited in Airey, 1998:11) pointing out that:

*“Several studies found that most of the tourism curricula were designed by educators with little/ no representation from the tourism industry”*.



This has a huge impact on tourism education as courses have been designed without any consultation from the tourism stakeholders and people designing these programmes are not educated in tourism to an adequate level.

### **Meeting the requirements of students and industry**

Meeting the student's requirements also seemed a very evident role of tourism education with the academia interviewed.

*"We provide a number of courses in tourism meeting the requirements I suppose it's the education involved, required in meeting the student requirements. ...make sure the students on graduation can receive interesting and fulfilling careers in the tourism industry". Resp 8 Academic Institute of Technology.*

Dearing (1997:6, cited in Stewart & Knowles, 2000: 71) sees the development of a range of generic, as well as subject specific skills during higher education as

*"necessary outcomes of all higher education programmes".*

Students therefore must be equipped on graduation with the necessary skills and qualifications to work within the tourism industry. The learning outcomes from courses must be applicable to the work environment so that the graduate will have a level of proficiency that will enable them to work in the industry. This might require delivery mechanisms such as work based learning, guest lecturing and project based learning so that the student is subjected to the realities of a work environment.

### **Access and provision of courses**

Providing courses and access to courses were also seen as a role within the tourism educational sector.

*"First I feel that we are educators were here to provide a service for students wishing to develop a career in the tourism sector and in the broad services sector". Resp 10. Academic Institute of Technology.*

Developing modular type courses would allow flexible delivery at times, and places that were pertinent to the student. The option of e learning was also suggested for programmes such as these. Many people just want to participate in modules of existing programmes for their Continuing Professional Development (Submission to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; OECD Review of Higher Education, 2004). Access to education for all ages is a key trend within tourism education provision at this present time. Courses that are delivered in modular format make it easier for educational establishments to adapt educational programmes to suit the needs of students. Technology and the increase in the demand for e learning courses will see these courses becoming even more accessible to students in the future. Access to education for diverse cultures living in Ireland is also desirable and it is up to educational establishments to

anticipate the demand for these students in the foreseeable future (Submission to the OECD review of Higher education in Ireland, 2004). The access to follow on education from secondary school level up to postgraduate level was supported by the OECD where forming links at all levels was suggested so to allow for continuation in education. Therefore providing access for all people wishing to be educated is a key role of education.

### **Qualification**

Overall providing qualifications to work in the industry was evident throughout all interviews but the level and type of student qualification varied between each interviewee focusing on their profession or point of view.

*"The role of tourism education in Ireland is to provide professional, well qualified, well trained personnel for the industry. Resp 6 Academic Tourism College.*

In February 2003, the tourism policy Review Group invited interested parties to express their views on the long-term strategic development of tourism education. This was to reassess and identify the needs and wants of tourism education and training in Ireland. There were a number of submissions from stakeholders in the tourism industry with suggestions on areas of improvement. Working with industry the education providers and the certifying authorities need to develop career paths for key occupations in the sector and to provide suites of courses to prepare students for these careers (CERT, 2003; Keaney. R, 2003; Shannon College of Hotel Management, 2003). Generally, quality and professionalism within the industry is raised due to education and qualification of people to work in the industry.

### **Preparation and updating skills**

Some academic interviewees emphasised training, preparation and up dating students as an important role of tourism education.

*"To introduce students to the idea of tourism and give them an overall idea just a broad understanding of tourism and then after that I would imagine as they go further into courses...."*  
Resp. 11, Course Coordinator .PLC. *"Tourism education in Ireland in my opinion, it's to prepare the student for the tourism industry".* Resp 13, Administration coordinator. PLC.

The tourism curriculum must suit the needs of industry (Brotherton et al, 1994; Chen & Groves, 1999; Mc Donald & Hopkin, 2003). Many studies have been conducted on tourism education programs. These studies found that education should be business oriented, relevant to the industry and should be supported by incentive industrial training programs. The educational institutions must determine for whom the program is intended and what is expected from it. Moreover, programs should provide students



with needed tools and educate them to take responsibility in future work life, thus bridging the gap between education and the workplace (Collins, 2001).

The public, private and voluntary sectors of the industry interviewed, while not emphasising students within their answers did mention preparation and updating skills as a vital role of tourism education.

*"...the role of education has to prepare people for the sectoral workforce". Resp.22.Public sector tourism authority. "...maybe to follow on training or education in trying to get tourism enterprises in rural areas to work together". Resp.21.Regional Development Executive.*

Learning in later life and Life Long Learning (L.L.L.) education featured strongly within the literature. The aging baby boomers have meant that strategies towards delivering courses will have to be addressed. An interesting angle outlined by Bunyan, 2004 suggests that there is and will be in the foreseeable future a huge uptake in the numbers of people engaging in Life Long Learning, for instance

*"older learners in Ireland have been disadvantaged through lack of access and support from the state"*

Finally, the data collected from interviewees supported the literature on the role of tourism education. The OECD undertook a review of Higher education in Ireland during 2004 and a call for submissions from interested individuals and organisations in relation to the review was published in the Irish National press in December 2003 (AISHE, 2004). The respondents were both academia and industry representatives including Failte Ireland.

*It was identified that the Role of Higher Education was to:*

- *Engage in knowledge generation-through research*
- *Facilitate knowledge dissemination- through curriculum design and renewal.*
- *Contribute to the impact of knowledge application – through liaison with industry.*

The above supports the data received throughout the interview process.

#### **Findings: -**

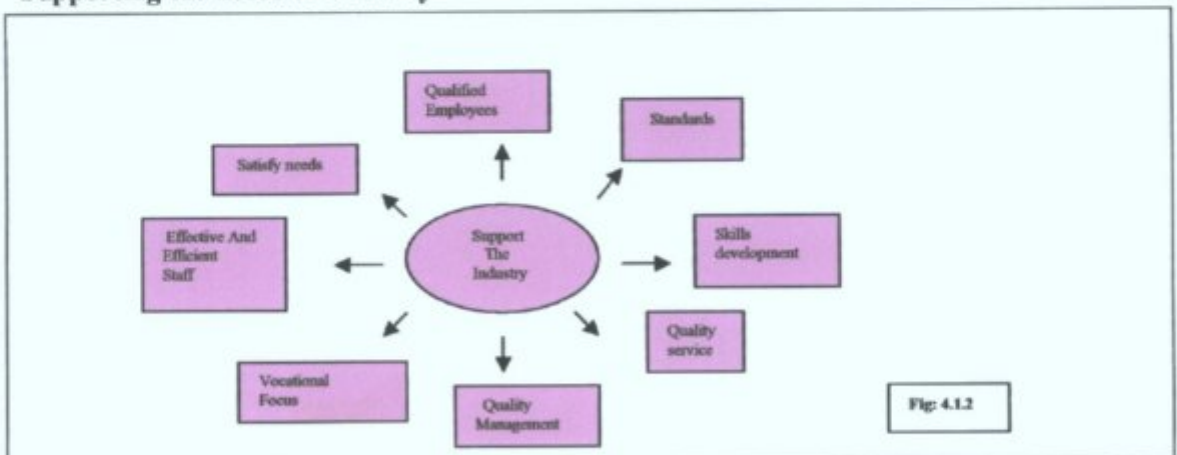
- It was recognised that educating students through the provision and access to courses that would qualify and prepare while meeting the requirements of both the student and the tourism industry is the strongest component within the overall role of tourism education.

- The dissemination of knowledge was recognised as a primary role by most academics however several distinct and different interpretations of this role arose during the interview process.
- It has been verified that some academics found it difficult to identify the role of tourism education.
- Respondents representing the public, private and voluntary sectors weighted preparation for industry and practical skills based knowledge as the main role of tourism education.
- In terms of location and time, providing access to tourism courses is very important and these courses must meet the requirements of both the students and industry.
- Respondents believe that well qualified and well-trained capable personnel contributes to a better quality and more professional tourism product overall.
- Preparation and updating of skills for all ages has been identified as a role of tourism education.

#### 4.2.2- Supporting the needs of Industry.

A noticeable role of tourism education is to support the industry. Again throughout all interviews, industry support was evident in this analysis.

##### Supporting the needs of Industry



##### Satisfy needs of industry

The strongest element within this section was that tourism education should satisfy industries needs and wants.

*"...to match up with industry". Resp.7 Tourism educator.*



This would suggest that again tourism education looks at supplying graduates for the demands of industry.

*“to meet the needs of industry”*. Resp.8, Academic Institute of technology.

This “need” of industry was felt by most interviewees to be the role of tourism education in Ireland. In this context it seemed apparent that the need of industry was to have a pool of qualified graduates available to work within the tourism industry. The benefits of Professional development accrue to the individual, to the organisation where the individual works and to society in general (Barrows & Walsh, 2002). This would agree with submissions made in 2003 to the Tourism Policy Review Group. There were a number of submissions from stakeholders in the tourism industry with suggestions on areas of improvement within the Irish tourism educational sector such as: Forming a link between education and industry was desired where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives. Therefore tourism education is attempting to satisfy industry needs through Failte Irelands objectives for a long-term development strategy for tourism education identified in the recently published HRD (Human Resource Development) Strategy (2005). A role of tourism education in Ireland has been confirmed as satisfying the needs of tourism industry stakeholders.

### **Skill Development**

To have the necessary skills to work within a tourism industry environment or skill development for the tourism industry was a huge support to industry. This depended on what area of work the graduate would be seeking employment.

*“It depends at what level you’re looking at it from whether that’s public sector or whether you’re looking at it from the individual firm”*. Resp.4, Academic, Institute of Technology.

These skills varied between theoretical and practical qualifications depending on the courses in question.

*“to bring people to a level of understanding in so far as the industry is concerned, the sector that they’re in, business thinking and planning and looking into the future and looking at where their business is going to be down the line”*. Resp.9, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology. *“within the sector itself education within the college system then should very much support those that are in the industry itself”*. Resp.21.Regional Development Executive.

From the literature, specific skills in areas such as *“book-keeping, accounting and financial management”* were also stated as required types of education. These skills should be operational and functional in the way they are delivered to the students *“operative work load”*. There was general agreement that *“soft skills (e.g. IT skills, communication, team working,*

*problem solving, numeracy, motivational skills, and literacy*)” should be provided (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004: 412). The need for the development of skills such as Personal, Communication, Human Resource Skills and Business Skills were requested (submission to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003). It can be supposed that knowledge of skills in areas pertaining to the effective daily running of a tourism business is a required role of tourism education identified in both the literature and by interviewees during the process of the research.

### **Qualified employees**

Consequently it would seem that tourism education offers two forms of qualification. That which is theoretical and applied within the workplace or a craft qualification

*“...therefore it is absolutely critical that we have both craft and management training in tourism”*. Resp.23, Senior Tourism Officer.

A key issue is the relatively low priority given by the industry to formal educational qualifications. The tourism sector has traditionally employed a relatively large number of untrained staff, except in areas requiring specific skills and in management and supervisory positions (CERT submission to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003). Levels of professionalism in the sector need to be enhanced, the status and esteem associated with working in the industry must be raised, and areas where pay and conditions remain low need to be made more attractive (Report of the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003: 54) The management of the drivers of change and the speed of impacting these trends with relevant educational programmes ensure that education and training are designed to a specification, which will deliver the mandatory manpower with the correct mix of skills and at the right level within the sector.

### **Vocational Focus**

Traditionally in Ireland tourism courses have been practical with tourism education having a vocational focus with an assortment of courses ranging from front office to air line stewardess training. Interviewees from the PLC sector found this to be the case.

*“I think it is to equip undergraduate students with vocational skills in the tourism industry”*. Resp. 17, Tourism Educator.

It would seem that the role of tourism education from an industry perspective is to provide skilled people in vocational areas. The industry representatives that were formed as a focus group for consultation purposes to redesign and shape the National Diploma in Business and Applied Tourism at the Institute of Technology, Sligo, also discussed the application of practical skills.



*"Students should be able to do practical work-brochure design, web page design. Students could perhaps assist small businesses in marketing a project"* (Tourism industry representative, Minutes of Tourism meeting, 2004).

Respondents agreed that a role of tourism education is to provide vocational education for the tourism industry. Courses must be designed with this in mind and emphasise vocational skills learning in assessment methods and curriculum development.

### **Effective and Efficient Staff**

Qualifications of graduates were undeniably important to support the industry so qualified employees in each area of the tourism sector were essential for the efficient and effective operation.

*"to provide qualified skilled and motivated people to deal with the service industry"*. Resp 2, Academic Tourism College. *"Well I suppose there's really a dual mandate there that you're looking to educate people who are going to be effective and efficient operators in the industry"*. Resp.5, Tourism Educator.

A similar survey of small family hotel businesses in Austria, which was carried out in 2003, suggests that the lack of skills leads to

*"informal business practices and processes"* and as a result of this *"poor product standardisation and quality control"* (Peters & Buhalis, 2004: 406-415).

The Tourism Policy Review group (2003) identify that raising skills and qualifications within the industry leads to professionalism. A role of tourism education has therefore been recognised as providing effective and efficient operators in the tourism industry to deliver a professional tourism product.

### **Quality Management and Service**

Quality management and quality service were also roles of tourism education in Ireland, because without education a quality tourism product could not be delivered to the tourist.

*"I feel that we have a responsibility to some degree to industry in terms of programmes design and shaping the future of the industry in terms of quality"*. Resp.10, Academic Institute of Technology.

Educators therefore have a responsibility in providing programmes that are designed to meet the quality standards of the industry. The White Paper on Education (1995) describes the aims of higher education as follows:

*"Higher education promotes social well-being through preserving, widening and advancing the intellectual, cultural and artistic accomplishments of society; through rigorous sustained and critical evaluations of the past, the present and the possible futures of society; through commitment to the highest standards of research in the various branches of learning; and through equipping society with the particular skills and qualities necessary for economic growth and prosperity"*.

The Institutes have embedded this philosophy of education into operational procedures and have designed modern programmes that are:

- Regionally accessible and regionally focused (Clancy, 2001)
- Focused on the needs of individual learners
- Relevant and responsive to the needs of the economy
- Flexible
- Credit based, within a national system of credit accumulation and transfer
- Promotional of life-long learning
- Quality assured (Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology, 2003).

The literature and the interviewees revealed that it is the responsibility of educators to provide quality programmes that meet the requirements of industry. This can be achieved by liaison with industry in the development of programme design so that courses represent and are responsive to the needs of the economy.

### **Standards**

The overall standard and quality of tourism delivery in Ireland therefore is a role of tourism education.

*"...so I mean it underpins the quality management and the quality of service for the tourist".*  
Resp.23, Senior Tourism Officer.

Supporting the industry with tourism education involves satisfying the needs of industry by supplying qualified, efficient and effective staff with a vocational focus to adequately give a quality service to the tourist.

Quality management and consumer behaviour literature provides some insight here, particularly in terms of the identification of the customer, and also the possible 'gaps' in expectations of education and training by each of the varied stakeholders (Parasuraman et al, 1985: 41-50). The understanding of the roles of stakeholders and the identification of the 'customer' are critical in the efficient delivery of programmes. A review of the literature suggests that there is a sufficient gap between tourism training/education and the stakeholders' views of what a programme should entail.

### **Findings: -**

- On analysis it has been identified that the role of tourism education should give students an overall preparation for a career in the public, private and voluntary sector of the tourism industry.
- Interviewees described that tourism educators must recognise the needs of the industry in the design, implementation and delivery of tourism courses.

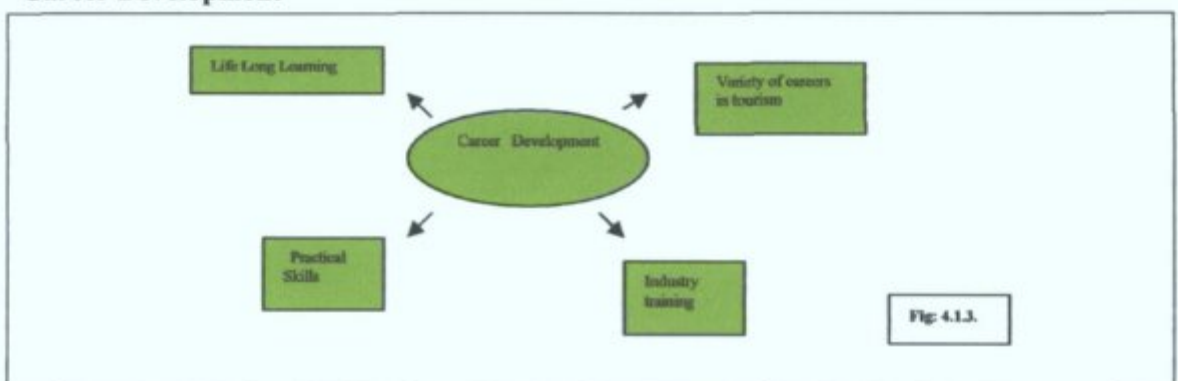


- Interviewees believed that the tourism industry is very dynamic and that tourism courses should reflect this.
- It was suggested by the majority of interviewees that tourism education that currently exists in Ireland within the PLC and VEC sector has a vocational focus.
- The need to update education through gaining the skills of marketing trends and in particular e-marketing was outlined as a role of tourism education.
- Tourism education should address regional needs and look at regional trends and needs of industry specific to their region.
- It was suggested by interviewees that tourism entrepreneurs encourage further networking particularly in rural areas by providing training. (This contributes to the spatial balance of tourism identified by Failte Ireland).
- It has been identified that professionalism and quality can be raised throughout the industry and delivered through tourism education.

### 4.2.3 – Career Development

The role of tourism education in Ireland was suggested by a quantity of interviewees as a way of developing careers in the industry. It has also emerged that the role of tourism education is not only to educate third level students but also people already working in the industry and wishing to further their career prospects.

#### Career Development



#### Practical Skills

Educational courses for the tourism sector allow people to develop their practical skills

*“What we aim to do is train people to work in the industry and try giving them practical skills to work in the industry”*. Resp.12, Coordinator tourism courses, PLC.

This type of training could be very specific such as airline ticketing and fares or front office skills. This component to the role of tourism education was particularly evident among the PLC sector interviewed and the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Specific skills in areas such as *“book-keeping, accounting and financial management”* were also stated as required types of education within the literature. These skills should be operational and functional in the way they are delivered to the students *“operative work load”*. There was general agreement that *“soft skills (e.g. IT skills, communication, team working, problem solving, numeracy, motivational skills, and literacy)”* should be provided (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004: 412). Therefore a role of tourism education is to provide practical training to equip individuals wishing to develop a career in the tourism industry. There were a number of submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group in 2003 from stakeholders in the tourism industry with suggestions on areas of improvement within the Irish tourism educational sector. The practical application in tourism education was highlighted and the responsiveness of academic institutions to industry needs where the curriculum on offer is regarded by the industry as *“too academic”* and *“not practical enough”* was addressed. The need for the development of skills such as Personal, Communication, Human Resource Skills and Business Skills were requested. The literature has therefore identified that a role of tourism education is to gain practical skills for effective career development. It has been suggested that an increased provision of *“soft skills”* to cater for industry needs in the provision and delivery of tourism programmes is desired.

### **Industry Training**

Industry training was identified as a very important factor within the role of tourism education. It was given as a reason for tourism education within almost all discussions.

*“Facilitate industry to get people out there that should know what there doing and I think to fulfil the roles that are available or may come up”*. Resp.24, Managing Director, Tourism Business.

The industry needs to have qualified people to work within certain specialised areas of the sector.

*“But to me the role of education has to prepare people for the sectoral workforce.”* Resp.22, Director of Tourism Authority.

There must be links between the stakeholders and educational establishments to provide courses that meet industry needs.



*"What is frequently seen as a practical issue, in that education providers may or may not be delivering appropriate curricula to meet industry's needs, is also an issue of policy concern and in many respects, it is policy shifts that will be required to provide the lead, and assist the sector and the wider community to face up to predicted changes within tourism and hospitality in the future" (Spivack, 1997: 7).*

Forming a link between education and industry was desired where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives (Submission to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003). The interviewees described a role of tourism education as preparation for industry through training and to facilitate the industry by having a supply of people available to fill all available job vacancies that may arise. The tourism curriculum must suit the needs of industry (Brotherton et al, 1994; Chen & Groves, 1999; Mc Donald & Hopkin, 2003, Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; OECD, 2004). The literature therefore supports the interviewees by describing that the role of tourism education is to ensure that graduates obtain the appropriate skills and training to facilitate industry requirements.

### **Placement**

The value of a placement was also considered as an element of tourism courses that was very significant to develop skills and industry training at first hand but the type of placement that students accomplish would need to be reviewed.

*"...im going to talk about when the people come on there six months placement I find that just that should be tightened a bit, I think its not the fault of the student, I think its probably there peers, there lecturers and the people their put in employment to". Resp. 20, Public-Private partnership officer.*

The value of a work placement within any tourism programme was apparent within the literature as this allowed the student to be exposed to a working environment.

*"Work placements are considered fundamental for learning and acquiring minimal skill levels" (Marhuenda, 2004: 231).*

The type of placement must reflect the course studied and the student must be subjected to acquiring skills that are relevant enabling them to learn from the experience. The literature also agreed with the interviewees in regard to reviewing and tightening placements. The Tourism Policy Review Group (2003) invited interested parties to express their views on the long-term strategic development of tourism education. This was to reassess and identify the needs and wants of tourism education and training in Ireland. The work placement within tourism educational courses was identified as vital but

*“work experience placements are poorly structured and badly managed”* by educational institutions. The result is that many students feel frustrated and decide to focus on other areas of employment after graduation (Keaney, 2003). The course content analysis identified variable placement time frames from 2-12 months depending on the course and that a work placement is not available on all tourism programmes in existence in Ireland (see appendix 3 for complete Course Content Analysis).

**Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005-**

**Work Placement Provision**

**Table 4.1**

Courses and content	DU	DU	DU	UL	DUP	DUP	DUP	LDU	ADU	ADU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU	CDU
<b>PhD</b>																									
<b>Masters by research</b>																									
<b>Masters (taught) part time</b>				MA	MA																				
<b>Masters (taught) full time</b>				MA	MA																				
<b>Postgraduate diploma</b>																									
<b>Degree (Honours)</b>		BA	BA				BA		BA													BA	BA	BA	BA
<b>Degree</b>		BA					BA								BA	BA									BA
<b>Diploma</b>															BA										
<b>Higher Certificate</b>																									
<b>Syllabus Content Year 1</b>																									
<b>Placement</b>				*																			11	11	
<b>Year 2</b>																									
<b>Placement</b>							3		3						6										
<b>Year 3</b>																									
<b>Placement</b>				4-12			3																11		
<b>Year 4</b>																									
<b>Placement</b>																								11	

**Note: numbers signify the months on placement**  
 e= elective  
 For full list of college abbreviations, please see appendix.

It has been accepted that a number of tourism courses have a work placement which is an integral part of the course structure where a student would go out into the work place for a number of months ranging from 2-12 depending on the course in question. While this has been identified as a vital component of a course it has been acknowledged that these work placements are sometimes poorly structured and badly managed. Students don't receive much benefit from it and are left feeling frustrated with the situation, as they have not gained the skills/experience they would have hoped for. The work placement is sometimes viewed, as a way for businesses to utilise these students in doing the tedious tasks that other members of staff would not do given the choice. On



analysis of all of the above information, it is apparent that more emphasis be placed on the provision of work placement within tourism programmes so that students can be exposed to working life within the tourism industry before completion of education.

### **Life-Long learning**

Top up training was a valuable aspect of tourism education for those already engaging in the industry. For the voluntary sectors, this type of training was very useful for their businesses.

*“is that people should be trained in the tourism industry from a marketing end of it, to bring visitors to the area.....and that those marketing points that they use them to help the community groups to bring people to there facilities and their centres”*. Resp.19, Chairperson of Voluntary Enterprise Development.

The public, private and voluntary sectors already part taking in tourism enterprises emphasised marketing as a huge part of top up training for themselves.

*“to better manage and market their product”*. Resp.17, Tourism Educator.

The interest within the tourism sector to keep up to date with trends in the tourism industry was also a reason to carry out top up training.

*“You have the industry who tend to need top up training and basic training, tourism skills and voluntary sector community groups who are involved in tourism or anybody I suppose you could say are involved in tourism. The role is to up skill people so that they’re appreciative of trends of tourism in their region”*. Resp.9, Head of Dept .Institute of Technology

Life-long Learning again was evident within the literature as an educational need for the private sector (Barrows & Walsh, 2002; Marhuenda, 2004; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004). In the study, *“Developing graduate managers for hospitality and tourism”*, Littlejohn & Watson, (2004: 410) emphasise the need for continued training due to

*“the changing social, economic and political environments”*

so that employees remain competent and continue as valued and productive members and to enhance personal mobility in the labour market. The Institute of Continuing Professional Development (ICPD)-(launched in the UK in 1998 to raise the effectiveness of professionals by establishing new CPD standards) defines it as:

*“The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and the development of personal qualities necessary for the education of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioners working life”*. Other definitions focus more on *“updating of professional knowledge throughout ones working life by means of systematic, on-going, self-directed learning.”* (CIPD).

A number of educational establishments support life-long learning where they are looking at innovative ways in attracting students back to a learning environment.

*"In order to deliver on life-long learning agendas, it will be necessary to re-think the nature and structure of educational programmes and to build in flexibility in course design, delivery and structure of awards. To do this effectively, it is important to invest in further developing the skills needed to assess learning, wherever it occurs" (Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology, 2003).*

Therefore addressing the needs of industry for those employees already working within the industry is important so that courses are developed that suit their educational requirements. Life-long learning will be imperative to the survival of educational establishments in the future as it is hoped that this will be a significant method for the recruitment of students. This type of learning is a growth area of Tourism Education and has been identified by stakeholders as a very important service to them and there development.

### **Variety of Careers in Tourism**

From a career standpoint, tourism education was suggested by an interviewee as a platform allowing:

*"Students on graduation ...receive interesting and fulfilling careers in the tourism industry".*  
Resp.8, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology.

The utility of this form of education gave graduates a number of choices as to what type of job they would like to engage in. There are for that reason a number of career varieties available to people whether they are craft or management in nature. Tourism education allows students to dedicate oneself to a craft in for example culinary studies, or by accomplishing management/business type courses to be capable of choosing from a quantity of career choices and development. Finally a role of tourism education in shaping the careers of graduates suggests that employability can be as broad or as specific as one likes depending on the type of course conducted. An expansive number of career varieties now exist within the tourism sector.

A role of tourism education in career development is to supply practical, top up training whether it be craft or management training to encompass an interesting and fulfilling career in the tourism industry.

A review of the literature on this topic suggested that in the UK,

*"a large number of college graduates from tourism courses are recruited by retailers, building societies and banks" (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990: 33).*

Quotes such as this one, would question generic tourism courses and the employability of graduates from these courses with the majority of tourism courses available having a



business slant and therefore leaving the graduate prepared for a broad spectrum of career opportunities.

An obvious role of tourism education is to provide graduates with a career in the tourism industry. This can be disseminated in different ways such as practical training through course design and provision. Industry training in designing these courses to support and facilitate the industry need from graduates. It has been recognised that a work placement is a vital tool in developing links and networking between the students, the educational establishment and the industry. Life-long learning is a growth area in tourism educational provision and has been identified as a method of gaining top up training and knowledge and is becoming a significant method for educational establishments in gaining student numbers.

An expansive number of career choices now exist within the tourism industry where graduates can choose from a variety of career options. Tourism is a multi disciplinary industry and it is for this reason that graduates from tourism education courses have a better choice of career options than other graduates such as those who have studied for a profession for example: medicine or accountancy where the job choice is very clear.

#### **Findings: -**

- All stakeholders have identified career development as an important role of tourism education in Ireland.
- Gaining practical skills has been identified as a role of tourism education so that graduates will have received the appropriate training.
- For effective career development Tourism Education needs to focus on the changing and dynamic industry needs.
- Within career development there seems to be a spotlight on marketing provision by tourism educators.
- The placement component within Tourism Education seems to play a significant role in career development.
- The biggest challenge for career development as a role of Tourism Education is to provide training for the expansive range of careers within the tourism industry (where other educators are providing education for a sole career such as an accountant).

- It is evident that Career development is a continual process and therefore needs to facilitate the continual development of people's careers.

#### 4.2.4 - Enterprise Development.

Enterprise within tourism education was strong amongst the public, private and voluntary sectors in comparison to a few academics interviewed mentioned enterprise development as a role. The responsibility of innovation in the tourism industry is central to rejuvenate tourism products or services and to keep ahead of competitors.

##### Enterprise Development

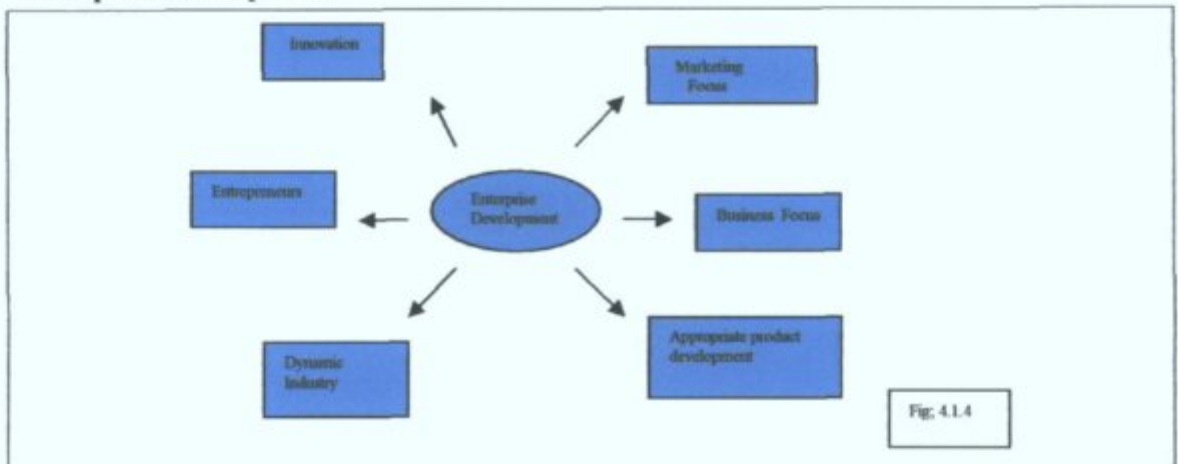


Fig. 4.1.4

*"...the education system have to kind of match that and now there trying to get more innovation in the industry, trying to get more entrepreneurs with ideas and stuff and trying to get a different product going they have to have the education system to match that you know, more enterprise and development". Resp.7, Tourism Educator.*

Enterprise development has been identified as a role of tourism education. Tourism education is responsible for innovation and developing entrepreneurship among students. This can be achieved by teaching people how to develop their business ideas and market these ideas to customers. As tourism is such a dynamic industry a role of tourism education is to keep up to date with trends so that appropriate product development can be implemented.

##### Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Due to the diversity within the tourism industry, new and innovative products and destinations are becoming popular and entrepreneurship is a key factor to tourism development.

*"..what I'm referring to as well, helping to develop tourism enterprises in rural areas and helping them to build capacity". Resp.21, Regional development executive.*



Enterprise development was suggested as an integral part of tourism education and the role of enterprise in the development of new ideas, innovation and product development was very important.

*“Preserving the environment and the cultures that this enterprise takes place in”*. Resp.25, Manager, Tourism Development Programme.

A study of the Portuguese tourism sector, involving a round table discussion with participants from industry and education was published in 2004 and gave an interesting insight into the educational needs of this sector.

The knowledge of events and innovative ideas were referred to as educational needs because

*“it is possible to anticipate that the referred events will lead to new trends pointing to holidays closer to home, and seen as an experience, either based on cultural attractions or other major sports events such as the European Football Championship”*. (Costa, 2004: 403).

Similarly in the focus group meeting for the programmatic review at the Institute of Technology, Sligo, Entrepreneurship was considered an important subject by industry representatives, when designing a tourism programme.

*“With regard to entrepreneurship, it plays a very important part in small business, the market changes every year and people need to be highly innovative and creative. Teaching people to develop skills, presentation skills, political skills, negotiation skills, local tourism policy, tourism change that would work in the region”*(Tourism Industry Representative, Minutes of Tourism meeting, 2004).

The course content analysis identifies that Entrepreneurship is usually delivered in the third year of a tourism course in Ireland.

It is interesting to note that not all courses have Enterprise Development or a related subject within their curriculum. Therefore it has been identified that the Public, private and voluntary sector believe that Enterprise development is compulsory to the study of tourism whereas the educators have not observed its merit. This has been confirmed through interviews conducted and by observing the course content analysis where Enterprise Development is not a strong core element of a lot of courses. Overall, Entrepreneurship and innovation are compulsory subject areas in any tourism course to develop new ideas, product development and initiative within the student as learning outcomes. It has been verified that the implementation of more subjects such as Enterprise Development needs to be addressed.

## Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005

Enterprise Development provision

Table 4.2

### Business focus for a dynamic industry

Courses and content	DU	DU	DU	UL	DUK	DUK	DUK	LIV	AEF	AEF	CEI	UCV	UCV	UCV	UCV	WU	WU	LIV	UCV	FI	EN	EN	EN	EN
PhD																								
Masters by research																								
Masters (taught) part time				MA	MA																			
Masters (taught) full time				MA	MA																			
Postgraduate diploma																								
Degree (Honours)		Dur	Dur				Dur	BA	BA									BA			BA	BA	BA	BA
Degree	BA						BA					BA	BA											BA
Diploma																BA								
Higher Certificate																								
Syllabus Content																								
Year 1																								
Marketing Management and Enterprise Development								*																
Year 2																								
Not available																								
Year 3																								
Entrepreneurship								*	*			*	*								*	*		
Year 4																								
Enterprise development																		*						
Innovation																		*						

Generating business ideas and dynamics in the industry were identified as minor roles within tourism education. Focus on business operation and in particular on marketing activities were also portrayed.

*"I have always believed that the role of tourism in education is to teach people about marketing their ideas, products, services and that they have a fundamental understanding of how a business operates because that is exactly what it is."* Resp.9, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology.

One entrepreneur said that the role of tourism education was

*"basically to promote the industry"*. Resp.24, managing Director, Tourism Business.

The focus group emphasised Entrepreneurship and Marketing to develop business dynamics within students. The emphasis was also on regional development and designing a course that would benefit the region maybe through setting up a business on completion of the course.

*"Look regionally; address regional needs (i.e. heritage aspect). It is important to know what you are going to become. It is good to have the business element with specialisms"* (Tourism Industry Representative, Minutes of tourism meeting.2004).

The core of a majority of tourism courses within the I.T's and Universities is Business focused (see course content analysis below). The majority of Tourism courses are



Business Focused as the titles suggest from table 4.3. It is therefore observed that the business element gives the student, on graduation, more choice in the variety of careers to choose from after completion of the Tourism course.

**Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005**

Courses and content	WU	UI	UW	UL	DUK	DUV	DUY	LJY	ADP	AJY	CUK	DUK	DUY	DUY	WUal 2004	WUal 2005	UW	UW	UI	UI	UI	UI	UI	UI
PhD																								
Masters by research																								
Masters (taught) part time				MA	Msc																			
Masters (taught) full time				MA	Msc																			
Postgraduate diploma																								
Degree (Honours)		Bsc	Bsc		Bsc		BA		BSc								BSc		BSc	Bcom				BSc
Degree	BA					BA				BSc	BA			BSc	BSc									BSc
Diploma														BAI					BSc					
Higher Certificate																								

**Business focused provision**

**Table 4.3**

**Marketing Focus and appropriate product development**

Marketing the industry as a whole appeared as a role of tourism education in Ireland. One interviewee identified appropriate product development through education as a role.

*“One is appropriate product development; I don’t really need to go into that.”* Resp.25, Manager Tourism development programme.

Ultimately, and more importantly Dearing (1997:6, cited in Stewart & Knowles, 2000: 71) sees the development of a range of generic, as well as subject specific skills during higher education as “*necessary outcomes of all higher education programmes*”. The focus group reiterated this point by describing specific marketing skills as very significant elements to a tourism course. For example one industry representative acknowledged the importance of “*Advertising and merchandising*” and there was also an emphasis on web and interactive marketing. The interviewees and the industry representatives from the focus group believe that it is important to know about marketing tourism but moreover it is vital that a graduate can apply the skills of Marketing in a work environment.

Ultimately, only a minority of academics interviewed mentioned Enterprise Development as a role of tourism education while the stakeholders recognised the importance of this subject area and therefore a missing link or ‘gap’ in expectations has been identified.

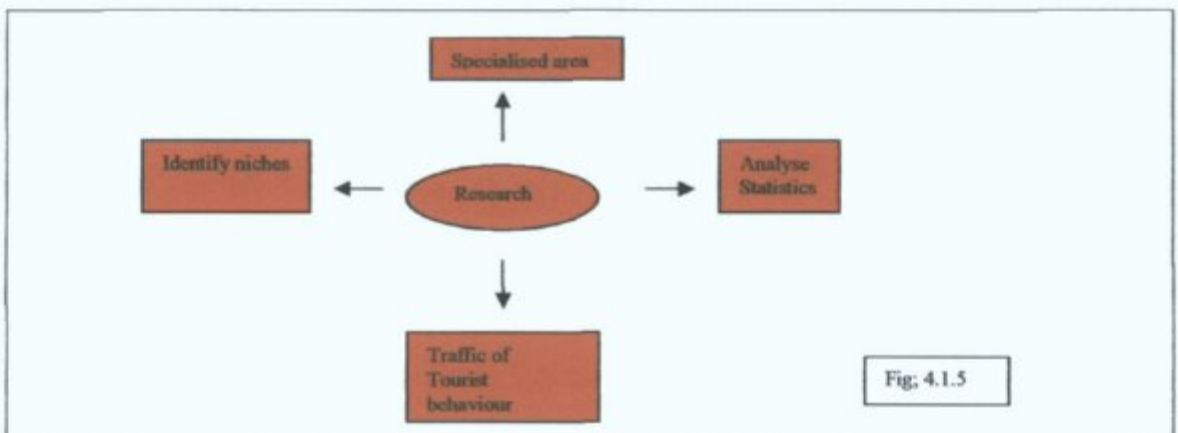
### Findings: -

- The Public, Private and Voluntary sectors interviewed believed that Enterprise Development was a vital role of tourism education while this was not apparent amongst academics interviewed. This is supported by the Content Analysis tool of tourism courses in Ireland where only eight courses have Enterprise Development within the curriculum.
- It was recognised that Enterprise development will help the stakeholders to create different products.
- Interviewees believed that Enterprise Development would teach people about marketing their ideas, products, and services and disseminate a fundamental understanding of how a business operates.
- It was identified that Enterprise Development as a role of tourism education would develop appropriate products and help the industry to build capacity through innovation and entrepreneurship.

### 4.2.5- Research

Research was suggested as a role within tourism education by both academia and stakeholders.

#### Research



There was not a strong consensus among academics interviewed that research was a role of tourism education with only one academic stating that,

*"We are very much involved in research to discover what is going on..." Resp.3, Tourism Academic.* Tourism is at an embryonic stage of development with the majority of research only conducted over the last thirty years. Research within tourism educational institutions is



now becoming increasingly available. A public sector interviewee when discussing the role of tourism education stated:

*"I would expect that the role of that sort of education would be to analyse statistics to chart the traffic of tourists in and out of the country and to look at their motivations and to be able to better market to that tourist population and to maximise the tourist dollar."* Resp.18, General Manager, Public Sector Organisation.

The assumption that the role of tourism education was to look at all of the above is true in only a certain number of courses but could not be applied to all types of tourism education as can be seen from Table: 4.4 below.

### Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005 Research Provision

Course and content	UU	UU	UU	UL	DIV	DIV	DIV	LIV	AIV	AIV	CIT	QMT	QMT	ITS	Ycal ITT*	Ycal ITT*	LIT	REY	PT	SH	SH	UOW DET	UOW DET	
PhD																								
Masters by research																								
Masters (taught) part time				MA	Msc																			
Masters (taught) full time				MA	Msc																			
Postgraduate diploma									*															
Degree Honours		Bsc	Bsc		Bsc		BA	BBS									BBS#			BBS#	Bcom		BA#	
Degree	BA					BA				BBS	BA		BBS	BBS									BBS#	
Diploma Higher Certificate									*					BAT				-BBS	*					
Year 1																								
Research methods I/2		*		*																				
Research methods and ICT			*																					
STUDY Skills and ICT	*																							
Information Technology and Statistics for tourism										*														
Research																								*
Quantitative methods																					*	*		*
Market research(research project)											*													
Year 2																								
Research methods							*		*															
Data analysis																								
Tourism Research														*										
Market research						*												*						
Information systems and quantitative analysis													*	*										
Research methods																				*	*			
Year 3																								
Management research methods																		*						
Marketing research and marketing														*	*									
Research paper		*	*																					
Research methods						*																		
project																				*				
Dissertation																				*		*		
Year 4																								
Dissertation						*																		

Table: 4.4

It has been identified by the course content analysis that research methods is available in a number of courses in Ireland and ranges from first to fourth year depending on the course. The literature also supports researching

*“engaging in research and development is a core function of Institutes of Technology”*  
(Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology, 2003).

The literature also identified the contradictory outlook on research that has been confirmed in the interview process between industry and academia. Jones & Phillips (2003) conducted research on the topic of industry and academics differing views. This was an Australian study, which involved a qualitative method of observing the differences in the understanding of “research” between industry and academia. It was found that academia are more interested in the research methodologies than the results whereas industry want to see results or “*informed opinion*”.

The WTO in a conference report on the “*Establishment of a doctoral research network*”, the importance of dissertations within tourism curriculum was identified.

*“The centrality of research, typically recorded in a dissertation was common”*  
(Smith, 2000: 2).

The practical element of researching, gives the students the opportunity to use the learning outcomes from course curriculum in developing a dissertation or research project.

Consequently a role of tourism education in Ireland would be to conduct and analyse research to provide an enhanced tourism product. In the minutes taken at the focus group meeting, tourism industry representatives described that knowledge of research was very important;

*“I am continually looking for people to research (3/6 months). Students could do this and an area they might decide to go into down the line”.*

Subjects such as data analysis, research methods and tourism research featured also within the course content analysis (see table 4.4 above). Therefore Research and the ability to conduct research as a learning outcome from tourism courses are very evident within course provision.



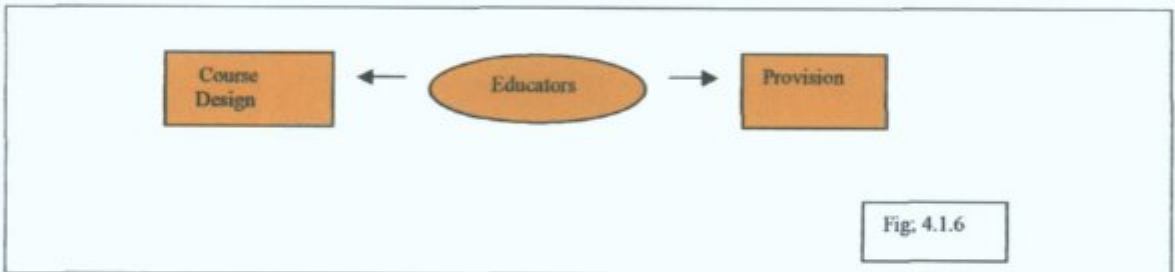
### Findings: -

- Research is an important role of tourism education to keep up to date with new trends in all areas of tourism.
- There is a deviation between tourism educators and industry in relation to research as a role of tourism Education.
- It has been identified that Academics are often more exercised and interested in the research question and the methodology while industry want to see results.

### 4.2.6- The Responsibility of Educators

The responsibility of educators was identified by a number of academics interviewed as a role of Tourism education. Educators are responsible for not only the delivery of courses but also for the design and provision of courses.

#### Responsibility of Educators



Tourism education in Ireland is therefore suggested as being supply driven.

*"...in terms of the type of individuals that are coming out into the workplace and I think that responsibility from the educators perspective begins from the recruitment process at second level, the final years of second level right through to graduation". Resp.10, Academic, Institute of Technology.*

The educational establishments have an element of accountability when it comes to the design and delivery of courses. It is their job to educate capable people that will be qualified to work within the tourism industry. The overall course design must also suit industry needs so that the graduate will be employable and that tourism industries will benefit as a result.

*"I feel that we have a responsibility to some degree to industry, in terms of programme design and shaping the future of the industry". Resp.10, Academic, Institute of Technology.*

Educators must supply courses that are in keeping with industry trends and are therefore in a sense, industry led.

The qualification of the academic staff lecturing on tourism courses has been scrutinized within the literature. The reference was made in particular to the backgrounds from which they come with a large proportion of them qualified within other disciplines (Airey, 1998; Jafar & Ritchie, 1981). The fact that tourism degrees and post-graduate courses did not exist in Ireland over thirty years ago means that tourism is not even a generation old and therefore a number of academic staff lecturing on these programmes are educated in other disciplines such as Economics, Business, Marketing, Geography, History or philosophy.

*“As a result, there has been a tendency for academics and others to come forward with their own definitions, concepts and approaches to tourism studies” (Airey; 1998:9).*

This has an impact on the design of programmes with Koh (1994, cited in Airey, 1998:11) pointing out

*“Several studies found that most of the tourism curricula were designed by educators with little/no representation from the tourism industry”.*

The focus group with industry representatives is just one example of ways that educational establishments are attempting to take responsibility for the design of courses by consulting on subject provision and course content within courses. In the report entitled *“Institutes of Technology and the knowledge Society”* it was recommended that a new government policy statement on Higher Education should include setting out the responsibility on higher education institutions, which are publicly funded, to respond to the changing needs of society by maintaining the relevance of their programmes to the occupational and skill needs of the economy. This in turn should be matched by a commitment from government that public resource allocation would favour institutional plans/strategies supportive of identified national priorities.

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been identified that Educators are responsible for the design and provision of courses.
- The educators have a responsibility to the industry to ensure that graduates will be employable and have a future career.
- The learning outcomes from tourism courses must reflect the responsibility of educators in providing courses that suit industry needs.



### 4.3 – Trends in third level tourism provision

A discussion on trends gave an array of responses, which are displayed on fig 4.3. The outstanding trends, which were mentioned by two or more interviewees within discussion, are colour coded on the diagram. The other trends illustrated on the diagram are trends that were also pointed out by the interviewees.

#### 4.3- Trends in tourism third level provision.

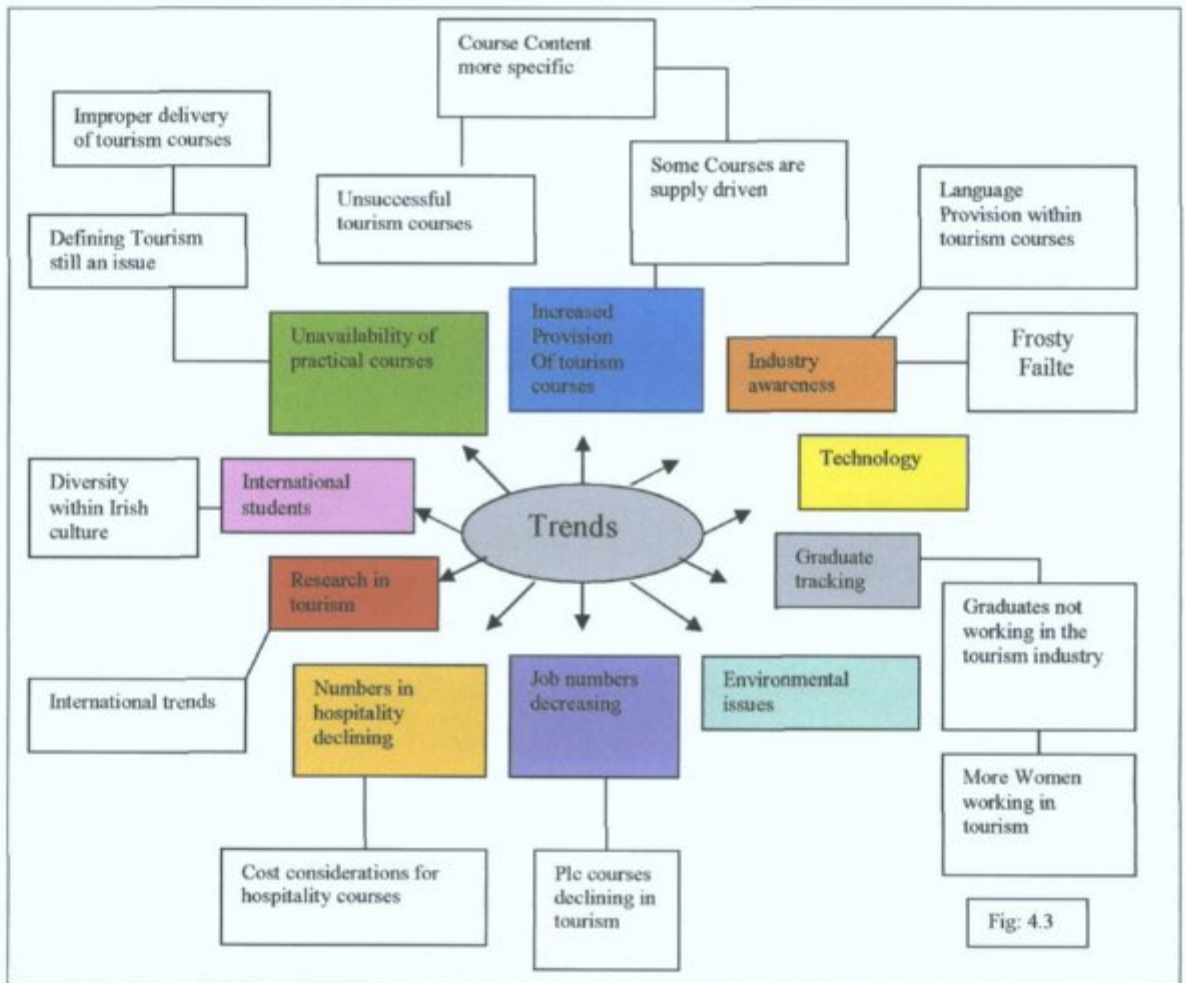


Fig: 4.3

The most commonly declared trend was the increase in the provision of tourism education in Ireland over the last decade with 45% of interviewees mentioning this as a trend within tourism third level educational provision. The second most frequently described trend was the theoretical content within tourism courses and that there is not enough practical application within tourism education curriculum.

Research within tourism is increasing while technology education is a must within course prospectus for example; web-marketing and computer applications are seen as an integral part of a tourism programme. The increase in the amount of international students coming to study in Ireland was a trend that concerned some interviewees. The numbers of people entering and engaging in hospitality education is decreasing, due primarily to the bad public relations this sector receives as regards long working hours, poor pay and conditions.

The environment and sustainability is a huge trend within tourism education and the number of programmes with this education in their syllabus content is increasing. This movement sees more emphasis on sustaining the environment and awareness of environmental issues. Industry awareness or unawareness of trends in tourism education provision was another component within the answers received with three interviewees from the public, private and voluntary sectors outlining the fact that they were unaware of trends in tourism education provision.

The poor tracking of graduates who have completed tourism education was a trend outlined by both an academic and a person working within the tourism sector and the elusion that there are many jobs within tourism in Ireland was a trend summarized by two interviewees, where many graduates who have completed tourism education do not or cannot find work within the industry, so a large number of graduates go onto work within the business or financial services sector as they find it impossible to locate employment within the tourism sector.

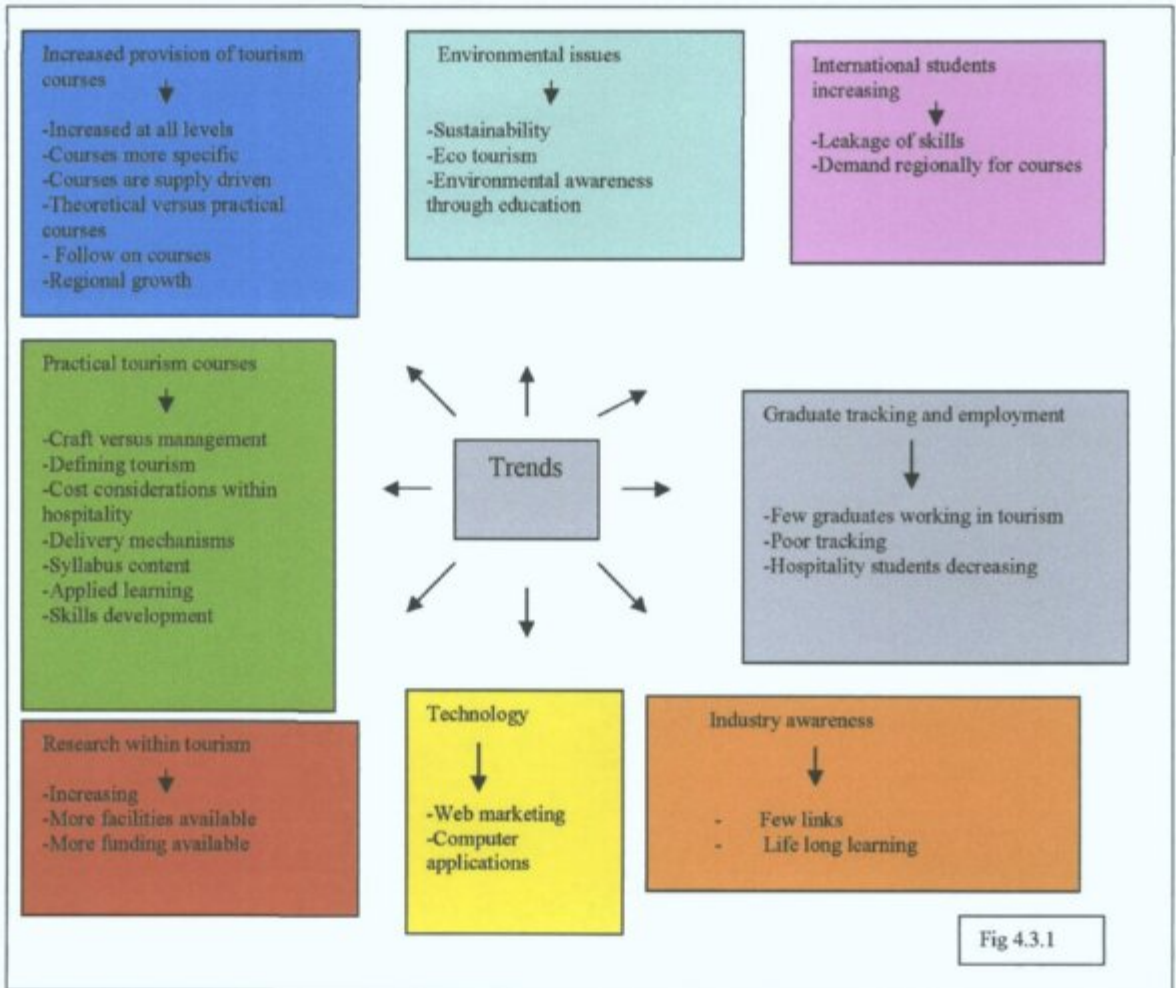
In consideration of the calibre of interviewees utilised within this study, all the trends mentioned within the discussion are displayed under primary or secondary trends. The trends, which are featured on fig.: 4.3, that are not colour coded were mentioned as trends by solitary interviewees and are therefore important but not colour coded as they were not predominant trends within the study. These would be seen as secondary trends with the primary trends being the predominant trends within this discussion. There is also an overlap in certain sections between colour coded or primary trends and secondary trends as there was a link between some of the trends depicted on the diagram and these secondary or uncoloured trends are described under the respective headings depending on how they impacted primary trends within the answer by



interviewees. It is worth noting that in some cases what is expressed as a trend is a personal opinion based on one's world view that may not be shared by all and a mere mention of an issue identified by an interviewee does not automatically make it a trend but non the less they have been recognised.

The main or primary trends are illustrated on fig 4.3.1 below.

#### 4.3.1- Main trends in tourism third level provision



#### 4.3.1- The Trend of increased provision of tourism courses

The provision of tourism education in Ireland was the primary trend within the interviews conducted. As can be seen in fig 4.3.2, this trend encompassed many different angles depending mainly on the profession of the interviewee.

### The Trend of Increased provision of tourism courses

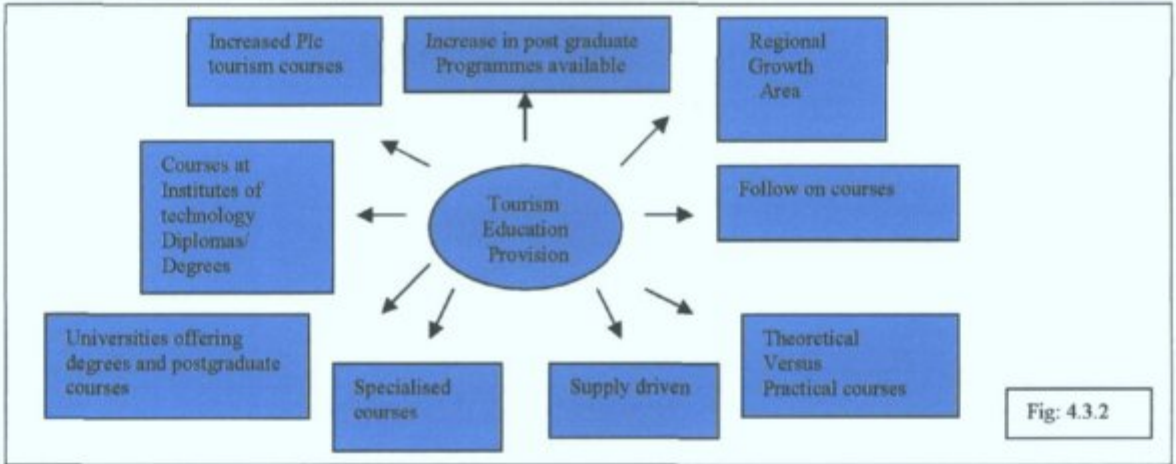


Fig: 4.3.2

### Increased provision at all levels

There was a general consensus that tourism courses in Ireland had increased at all levels over the last decade.

*“...but in recent years we have seen the emergence of a number of masters degree programmes right down to undergraduate and certificate programmes. So it does appear to be a growth area.”* Resp.3, Tourism academic Institute of Technology.

The majority noted that there had been an increase in course provision in Ireland over the last number of years, particularly in master’s provision when a decade ago a master within the tourism field was unheard of.

*“I suppose in broad terms you see an increasing trend in post-graduate work in terms of provision of masters’ programmes specifically taught masters programmes. There are some masters by research as well. But the pre dominant trend has been the provision of post graduate programmes in tourism I suppose over the last number of years.”* Resp. 4, Tourism educator, Institute of Technology.

There has been huge expansion in the provision of tourism courses in Ireland over the last decade. The over provision of tourism courses is a universal trend as described within the literature (Airey, 1998; Dale & Robinson, 2001; Lam & Xiao, 2000). There has been a boost in the number of masters by research and also taught masters, post-graduate diplomas, degrees, diplomas, certificates and PLC courses in Ireland.

Some interviewees discussed an over provision of tourism courses which offer higher qualifications to attract more students to the educational establishments.

*“I think there has been fairly considerable academic drift with higher and higher qualifications becoming more the norm rather than practically based education and training. I also think that a lot of institutions bring in the tourism courses simply because it attracts numbers of students rather than fill any particular need.”* Resp.6, Principal, Tourism College.



The over provision of tourism courses has impacted already on the courses supplied in the PLC sector across Ireland.

*“ but the trends with ourselves are that courses have been declining, we’ve been running it for the past four years at certificate level, we also run diploma level as well but we had to get rid of it next year because the standard of student we have are just not fit for it and it hasn’t been a success but the certificate course is declining so this year we are going to revamp it. We’re bringing in two new modules which is Galileo for the travel agents and then were bringing in cabin crew course specifically train them for cabin crew, so the trend in my opinion is declining.”* Resp.12, Coordinator Tourism course, PLC.

Although the PLC sector are adapting to the changing trends for these courses, the Institutional structure of Irish Higher education has been characterised by a binary system that seeks to maintain a diversity of institutions and separate missions for two sectors i.e. University and Technological/non-university. Recent experience has shown some convergence between the sectors and raises questions as to how clear-cut and stable, in practice, are the separate roles assigned to the different institutions by governing legislation namely The Regional Technical Colleges Acts, 1992-1999, The Dublin Institute of Technology Act, 1992 and The Universities Act, 1997. What is suggested here is that Institutes of Technology have a remit to support the Region but if they are increasingly supplying higher qualifications, are they effectively taking on the role of a university? This debate has been acknowledged in the interviewees conducted and also in the Institutes of Technology and the knowledge Society-Their future position and Roles, which was a report of the expert working group of the Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology (2003). While the provision of Tourism education in Ireland has been quantified within this study, the educational boundaries of both the University and Institute of Technology sectors are ‘blurred’ and is an area that will merit some debate in the foreseeable future.

### **Regional Growth area**

There are now tourism courses available in every corner of Ireland so therefore regionally there has been a growth in tourism education.

*“we developed it in the college in 1998 as a niche area really to meet the demands of the ....region.”* Resp.9, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology.

For that reason tourism education is well balanced spatially throughout Ireland. The focus group made reference to developing a course that would benefit the region.

*“It is important that the course provides the people needed in the region that it is regional based”* (Tourism industry representative, Minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

The regional spread and development of courses over the last number of years have made tourism programmes available to students but there is now a trend also towards more specialised and practical elements to tourism courses. The content analysis of courses in Ireland would reiterate the above points by illustrating courses available spatially throughout Ireland. This trend has been recognised and developments of specialised niche areas of expertise are wished-for to eliminate the problem of overlap between courses (Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; OECD, 2004; council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology, 2003). In the mean time Institutes of Technology should continue to provide and develop multi-level/multi-discipline courses that are informed by and related to national and regional priorities.

### Supply Driven

While this may be perceived as a good time for tourism education, some academics voiced their concerns on the topic of the provision of tourism education in Ireland.

*"..but certainly over the past five, six years I think the regional spread in terms of the provision of courses has grown dramatically and the absolute growth in terms of PLC has been quite substantial. I'd have some concerns maybe about the regional growth, I think there is a need perhaps if this current trend was to continue into the future I'd be a little bit concerned that we would have difficulties in terms of filling some of these programmes from the traditional routes particularly in the regional areas and there needs maybe some collaboration or cooperation between some of the colleges in terms of provision and maybe refinement and further specialisation in order to ensure that we don't end up with non viable class sizes."*Resp.10, Academic, Institute of Technology.

This confirms the points on provision, where we have a spatially balanced level of tourism education throughout Ireland yet it would propose that these courses are supply driven.

*"Programmes are supply driven"*. Resp.29, Head of Dept, University.

The problem here is that Institutes of Technologies and Universities have been offering an array of tourism courses, which are very theoretical, usually with a business slant and the demand for such courses must be addressed.

*"Yes, there's I mean we started our two year diploma in tourism course here in 1990 and at the time I think we were the only one in the country offering a tourism course. At that time there was no third level institution as an Institute or University offering tourism and that is where we had to get validation for our courses outside the country. Nowadays, there are tourism courses of all kinds running in all kinds of institutions, senior colleges, private colleges, Institutes of Technologies, Universities so there's a big change in the number of courses provided."*Resp.14, Head of tourism, Senior College.

The reaction to this statement and others outlined here is that the over provision of courses could be due to colleges now having the authority to validate their own courses



and therefore more colleges are supplying these courses and these courses are being approved for delivery in educational establishments. This has a huge impact on tourism education as some courses have been designed without any consultation from the tourism stakeholders. The OECD undertook a review of Higher education in Ireland during 2004 and a call for submissions from interested individuals and organisations in relation to the review was published in the Irish National press in December 2003 (AISHE, 2004). Within the submissions there was reference made to the design and delivery of courses within the tourism industry where they should not be unduly “academicised”. Instead they should be strongly anchored in the industry that they service.

### **Theoretical versus practical courses**

There is a trend in Ireland of an abundance of theoretical tourism courses usually in the business vicinity with not much practical application within syllabus content.

*“ there probably are too many courses being provided for tourism I think some of the courses being provided are very theoretically based rather than practically based or vocationally based I think...”* Resp.14, Head of Tourism, Senior College.

This trend has been identified by a number of interviewees and some are putting in place steps to counteract this theoretical perspective within courses.

*“Basically the main trend would be towards the foundation degree courses were now offering.... which is a two year course and the final year the student can go to the university of... to complete and it is very much meeting the needs of what the industry wants, there are modules like event management, finance, hospitality and tourism industry work based learning, so it is giving the student practical skills that they need in order to progress on to industry”.* Resp.15, Tourism Educator PLC.

This is just one example of a college that is addressing the issue of practicality in tourism programmes delivered in Ireland.

The predicament of theory versus practice is still very evident within tourism educational programmes at the moment.

*“ From my own experience of theorising tourism to a great degree and there isn't a move towards practicality and I don't mean practicality in terms of you know hospitality but that's a very different field but I think for the students of tourism there isn't enough hands on that's a trend which is a little worrying because your sending students out with information about management systems everything from Maslow to social behaviour but they have no realistic idea of how to best provide a good product”.* Resp. 17, Tourism Educator.

The industry felt that this was a missing link for them when they are employing graduates the reality that a great deal of graduates do not possess practical skills.

*"I couldn't emphasis enough the enterprise side of it because that is what we are lacking like small tourism businesses in the ... region working together to sell a product that is what we are really lacking that at the moment." Resp.21 Regional Development Executive. "...Trend I think is towards a broad Irish thing around the academicisation of education that everything has to become academicised and we'd be fearful of a drift in the I.T.'s towards leaving behind functional, practical skills in favour of more academic interpretations of what tourism is all about." Resp.22, Director Tourism Authority.*

Practical skill development is thus a requirement of graduates but is lacking at the moment within the provision of tourism education in Ireland. Gerry Hawkes, (1990: 14) in an article entitled: *"Why colleges are failing the industry"*, describes how practical vocational education is being dropped in favour of curriculum based on general academic theory. He identifies that cost considerations and prestige are the reasons why some educational institutions are choosing generic business and tourism courses in favour of vocational education.

*"The academic bias of these towards management theory-especially in the final year- is very harmful. Students are conditioned to look down on the practical, action style of management required by any future senior manager."*

There must be a correct balance between theoretical courses and practical/vocational courses to satisfy the needs of industry.

Within this analysis, it has been identified that there is a move towards practical based learning in the I.T. sector. One example would be the focus group who emphasised that students should be able to do practical work such as marketing, web design and research in the form of a dissertation. This has been reiterated in the literature and reasons have been suggested such as the binary system mentioned earlier where educational institutions are increasingly offering higher educational programmes. The Institutes of Technology and the Knowledge Society Report (2003) recognised a trend that is also evident in European countries. The report noted,

*"Universities are displaying vocational drift while non-university institutions are engaged in academic drift"* (Submission from Failte Ireland, 2003/2004).

This it is suggested could lead to confusion around institutional mission and maybe to a situation where academic institutions pursue programmes, which are broadly similar in design and purpose. Secondly, the design and delivery of courses for the tourism industry should not be unduly *"academicised"*. Instead they should be strongly anchored in the industry that they service.



### Specialised courses

With an assortment of courses to choose from, it is not surprising that many educational establishments are now specialising in certain areas or pockets of tourism. To gain competitive advantage within increasing competition between courses, some institutions are developing courses that encompass a variety of specialised subjects in the area of tourism.

*"Yes I think there more focused than they use to be and I think if you look at it there more, a number of years ago they were more generalised whereas now there looking at everything from tourism management to the financial end to the I.T. end so obviously as time moves on they have to move with the times..."* Resp.20, Public-private partnership.

The knowledge of events and innovative ideas were referred to as educational needs because

*"it is possible to anticipate that the referred events will lead to new trends pointing to holidays closer to home, and seen as an experience, either based on cultural attractions or other major sports events such as the European Football Championship".* (Costa, 2004: 403).

In response to needs identified by the stakeholders and increased competition amongst educational establishments offering tourism courses there has been a creation of specialised courses and an example of one (see course content analysis, appendix 3) is Event management which will be introduced in Dundalk Institute of Technology in 2005/2006 academic year. Educational institutions are now finding niche areas in tourism provision for example D.I.T offer tourism courses with an emphasis on marketing. It has been identified in the submissions to the OECD Report on Higher education in Ireland that specialisation and developing "*centres of excellence*" within certain Institutes of Technology must be scrutinized where a demand for these specialisms must be quantified.

### Follow on courses

A trend has been recognised towards follow on courses in tourism; this link would be from PLC level right up as far as University level where students can follow on courses into areas of specialisation.

*"Some of my students would look for follow on courses and a lot of the follow on courses would be hospitality or they would have to go into the business area."* Resp.11 Coordinator, tourism course, PLC.

Ultimately, there has been an expansion of tourism course provision in Ireland in the last decade. This has been spatially balanced and the provision has stretched out from PLC courses right up as far as university level. This has opened the way for follow on courses right up to postgraduate level. There is a tendency in Ireland to offer theoretical

courses over more practical based courses and there is a suggestion that this is because courses are supply driven. The growth in tourism education provision has paved the way for specialisation within tourism course provision with many generalised tourism courses becoming more specialised. The content analysis, illustrated in Table 4.5 identifies that follow on courses are now available in Ireland right up to PhD level.

**Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005**

**Provision of follow on courses**

Courses and content	VO	VO	VO	VL	D17	D17	D17	L17	A17	A17	L17	U17	U17	T17	Y17	Y17	U17	U17	FE	SE	SE	SE	D17	D17
PhD																								
Masters by research																								
Masters (taught) part time				MA	Msc																			
Masters (taught) full time				MA	Msc																			
Postgraduate diploma																								
Degree (Honours)		Bsc	Bsc		Bsc	BA	BSc									BSc		BSc	Bcom				BAM	
Degree	BA					BA					BSc	BA			BSc	BSc							BSc	
Diploma														BAT										
Higher Certificate																								
Syllabus Content																								

**Table 4.5**

The challenges facing Institutes of Technology, as they enter a dynamic and changing future fashioned by regional imperatives, global competitiveness, a new National Spatial Strategy and the process of creating a new European Higher Education Area include the need to strengthen further the strategic alliances with the post-leaving Certificate sector in order to facilitate progression and to jointly focus targeted provision in areas of special strategic importance such as information and communications technology, science and engineering (Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology, 2003). It has been identified that follow on courses is a trend in third level tourism educational provision.

**Findings: -**

- Over provision of tourism courses in Ireland has been identified as a trend.
- The interviewees recognised that there is quite an extensive range of courses available from PLC level right up to post graduate level. This allows students the option to follow on their studies.

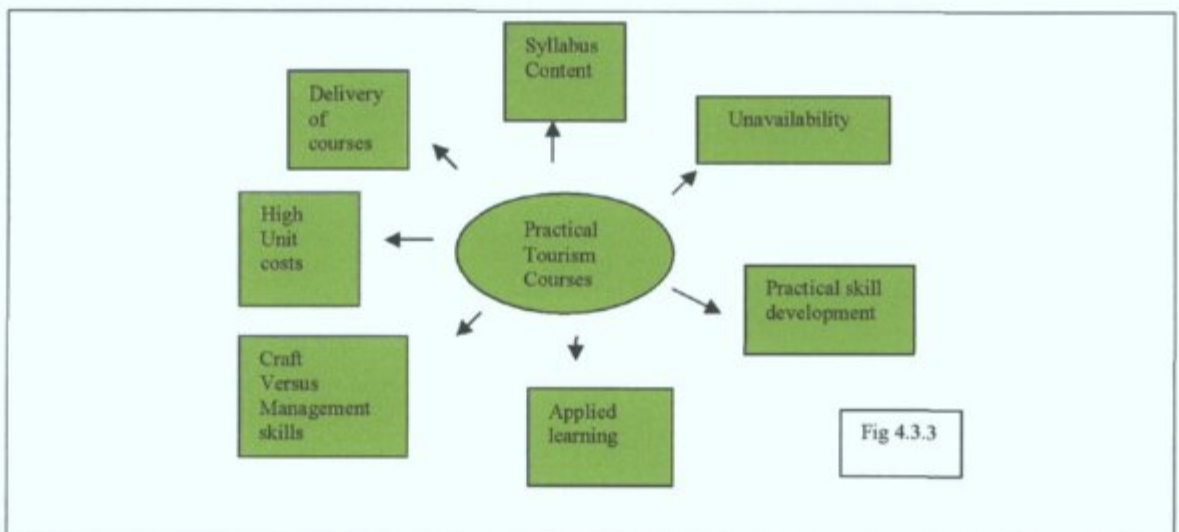


- A trend has emerged where many courses are supply driven but recognise the need to gain competitive advantage in a saturated market and are therefore specialising in certain areas.
- The interviewees have described that courses are increasingly becoming more specialised in response to industry needs.
- There is a need to develop courses that have elements of practical application and less emphasis on the trend of theoretical education within tourism programmes.
- Academic drift has been identified as a trend with higher qualifications becoming more the norm in educational institutions.
- It has been identified that tourism education is regionally spread in terms of provision of courses.

#### 4.3.2- Practical application within Tourism curricula.

Practical application of tourism courses has been outlined as a trend in the above section but merits more discussion as a number of interviewees identified this as a trend within the provision of tourism education. Interviewees in the course of the dialogue process to form an explanation behind this identified many reasons and these are categorized in fig 4.3.3 below.

##### Practical application within tourism curricula



### **Practical skill development and availability**

In the section above the researcher outlined the main trend as identified by the interviewees, which was an increase in provision of tourism courses in Ireland. The following section will put in writing the second most common trend which is the issues surrounding practical course provision, within tourism programmes. The interviewees while outlining that there was an expansion in the provision of tourism courses in Ireland, there was also a lack of practicality within these courses. There was a general consensus by most interviewees that tourism courses were very theoretical with little emphasis on the practical side of learning.

*"....should be more dominant in courses and everything should be kind of related into it more practical I think and work experience is very important I know most courses do it anyway but it should be seen as having more importance in courses."* Resp.7, Tourism Educator.

There was also a general agreement amongst interviewees that this had been noted and that there was a push for more practically based courses in the future. This unavailability of practical based courses was an issue that is being addressed by some educational establishments at the moment within there programmatic reviews or by looking to trends within the industry and asking industry what they would like to see within a tourism programme.

*"we're now offering foundation degree courses which is a two year course and the final year the student can go to the .... to complete and it is very much meeting the needs of what the industry wants, there are modules like event management, finance, hospitality and tourism industry work based learning, so it is giving the student practical skills that they would need in order to progress on to industry".* Resp.15, Tourism educator, Plc.

The literature on tourism education also makes reference to the practical application of tourism programmes. For example, Cohen noted: (cited in Schulman et al, 1994:61)

*"that community-college-based tourism programs tended to be more skills and job specific than upper level programs".*

The majority of PLC and VEC tourism courses in Ireland are of this nature, offering the student functional and operational skills to work within the industry. The focus group also emphasised the importance of developing practical skills as well as the theory behind it, when designing a course. Subjects that should have practical elements attached are marketing, research and information technology (Minutes of tourism meeting, 2004). The availability of the practical elements within courses can be seen in the content analysis (appendix 3) where a majority of courses are theoretical with a business focus. It has been verified within this analysis that there is a move towards practicality within future course design.



## Applied learning

There is a move towards more practical based courses in the future with an emphasis on applied learning.

*"I think maybe all the bodies involved in tourism, the service providers basically that they come together and they can come up with a plan. And say this is exactly what we need, because maybe a lot of the stuff that is being lectured is in theory so it's not put into practice. Its like everything else, its like doing maths in the leaving certificate you know, you learn off the theorems but you never apply them unless your going to be a mathematician."* Resp.20, Public-private partnership officer.

This would support the notion of inviting industry into educational institutions and consulting them on the shaping and design of tourism courses while also researching past students and there overall scrutiny of the course studied.

*" I even know from doing marketing myself that a lot of practical stuff isn't done. I know when I graduated I didn't have a clue. I knew about advertising in theory I didn't know how to put it into practice. You know in so far as doing an out door advertising campaign and the logistics involved in that and the way the market is moving I think we should be moving with it."* Resp.20, public-private partnership officer.

It was suggested within the focus group that students could gain applied learning by engaging with voluntary tourism organisations;

*"It was suggested that students should be encouraged to voluntarily participate in tourism organisations"* (Tourism industry representative, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

The Tourism Policy Review Group invited interested parties to express their views on the long-term strategic development of tourism education in 2003. This was to reassess and identify the needs and wants of tourism education and training in Ireland. Forming a link between education and industry was desired where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives. The applied side of education must be built into the curriculum so that students have an awareness of operative skills for the industry. Through better links with industry, this could be achieved. Cost is a consideration when it comes to applying learning within a course, as equipment needs to be supplied to expose the student to this type of learning. The work placement is a significant tool in exposure to an applied environment where students can operate the skills knowledge taught on the course. A placement where a student is remunerated for working is desired but voluntary participation must also be encouraged.

## Syllabus content

The syllabus content within tourism courses also came up for some scrutiny during the interviews. The content within many tourism courses in Ireland was seen as not applied and over theoretical.

*"The courses they have in the I.T. is similar to other courses, general courses, tourism and business studies or tourism management and I reckon that those courses are mostly management and business studies subjects and from my experience they are a business or management course with a bit of tourism thrown in!"* Resp.7, Tourism Educator.

The syllabus content of many tourism courses in Ireland is business orientated especially in the Institute of Technology sector (see content analysis, appendix 3) and this would confirm the piece of evidence to suggest that most graduates are accomplishing courses which are general business diplomas or degrees with an attached label of tourism. A review of the literature on this topic identified that in the UK,

*"a large number of college graduates from tourism courses are recruited by retailers, building societies and banks"* (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990: 33).

Quotes such as this one, would question generic tourism courses and the employability of graduates from these courses with the majority of tourism courses available having a business slant and therefore leaving the graduate prepared for a broad spectrum of career opportunities.

### Craft versus Management skills

The craft and management streams within tourism programmes on offer gave different levels of provision. There is a trend towards educational establishments offering more tourism/business courses in excess of the craft/practical tourism courses.

*" we don't see it as either or we see it that we need practical programmes and academic programmes, but we'd be afraid of Institutes trying to ramp up there own prestige by moving out of practical programmes and moving into more academic ones driven by staff interests."* Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

This interviewee confirmed the reality that is outlined in the previous section to imply that the over provision of tourism courses in Ireland has been supply driven without much consideration of industry needs.

Although there is an eternal need present for craft skills in the tourism sector, there are two issues surrounding the provision of courses such as these. One, there is less students applying for craft courses in Ireland in comparison to previous years. This is because there are more choices available to Irish citizens in relation to career prospects and also the customary scenario of working life within the craft sector.



*"I suppose it seems to me there is a couple of trends one that is on the craft side its difficult to get people into it, its not as popular as it was and I don't know if that is borne out of numbers."* Resp.23, Senior Tourism Officer.

The other trend affecting the provision of craft courses is that third level institutions are favouring theoretical education over craft education within there establishments.

*"One thing we are concerned about is that craft skills are core skills in delivering the product to the customer, skills around professional cookery, restaurant service, bar and so on.. and if those skills are dampened down their wont be any industry to manage in any event. So there are concerns within the Institute of Technology sector a lot of those skills around professional cookery, bar, restaurant service they tend to have lower class sizes, lower teacher, lecturer/student ratios and significant capital plant equipment and facilities involved and significant consumables and it all gives rise to a high unit cost of a student going through that kind of education."* Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

The poor image of the industry within particular countries was also evident within the literature. The traditional poor pay, working conditions, unsocial hours, and the cultural expectations of the local population regarding jobs in service industries were some of the reasons given for this image (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990:17-35; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004:410). Failte Ireland are attempting to reduce this perception by publishing a magazine "Get a life in tourism" and also by promoting the industry more favourably to students. This point leads on to the next finding within this section, which is that unit costs are affecting the type of tourism course provided within the Irish educational system.

### **High unit costs**

The costs of an educational establishment in providing craft or practical courses are hindering them from supplying these courses coupled with staff considerations.

*"So one of the concerns we would have where Institutes of Technology would drift towards more generalised generic education and not craft education because of unit cost considerations that would be of concern and we would be trying to watch that over the next few years."* Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

The PLC sector have outlined that they would be keen on providing more practical courses in areas such as tour guiding. This type of provision is currently under review by Failte Ireland.

*"We love to see follow on courses in tour guiding and other areas like that and I notice that it's not being provided for at the moment".* Resp.11, Course Coordinator, PLC.

Gerry Hawkes, (1990: 14) in an article entitled: "Why colleges are failing the industry", describes how practical vocational education is being dropped in favour of curriculum based on general academic theory. He identifies that cost considerations and prestige are

the reasons why some educational institutions are choosing generic business and tourism courses in favour of vocational education.

*"The academic bias of these towards management theory-especially in the final year- is very harmful. Students are conditioned to look down on the practical, action style of management required by any future senior manager."*

There must be a correct balance between theoretical courses and practical/vocational courses to satisfy the needs of industry. The Tourism Policy Review Group in the submissions on a strategic development of tourism education described the responsiveness of academic institutions to industry needs. These submissions outlined that the curriculum on offer is regarded by the tourism industry as "too academic" and "not practical enough" and this needs to be addressed by the educational establishments. The need for the development of skills such as Personal, Communication, Human Resource Skills and Business Skills were requested within tourism educational curriculum.

### **Delivery of courses**

The delivery mechanisms of tourism courses were also a consideration within the interviews. For example the experience of academic staff and their backgrounds were questioned and also their still smoke and mirrors surrounding the issue of defining tourism although we have an expansive level of tourism education provision in Ireland currently.

The question over whether tourism is a discipline, or an emerging discipline is still unanswered (Jafari, 1981; Airey, 1998; Leiper, 2000; Tribe, 2000). Tourism is multi faceted in nature and it is for this reason that tourism programmes are usually attached to another relevant discipline for example, Marketing, Economics, Business Studies, Geography and Psychology.

This has been a long debate with academia for many years now. The delivery of tourism courses suffers at the hands of the providers with the majority of tourism courses in Ireland delivered within the business department of most educational establishments.

*"I would question though if it has clearly been clarified what exactly tourism means. What do we mean when we talk about tourism? I think sometimes it seems to me, its kind of a catchall. Often tied in with hospitality for example and so on I think that's an issue that needs to be fruitfully looked at. You know, how do you define a tourist, and so on and so forth. What do we define as tourism?" Resp.3, Academic, Institute of Technology.*

The dilemma of lecturing a subject that cannot be defined by the academic delivering it is a gigantic problem probably stemming from the fact that when these academics were



in college there was no form of tourism education available and as a result of this the majority of academics lecturing tourism courses have come into tourism from other disciplines, namely Marketing, Management and Economics in many cases.

*" I went to a college where that happened that it was a management course we did marketing and stuff like that but what happened was that in teaching marketing they were teaching us about marketing Coca Cola and you know stuff like that they weren't teaching us how to market adventure tourism companies. It was nothing to do with tourism because the lecturers didn't know anything about tourism they had no experience whatsoever about tourism. So they were just teaching us general marketing principles which didn't match up with tourism whereas we did have subjects a couple of subjects on the course that were specifically tourism but it just didn't all match together so I think that's a problem".* Resp.7, Tourism Educator.

The qualifications of lecturing staff within educational establishments must be reviewed. The majority of interviewees from academic professions did not have postgraduate or to a lesser extent undergraduate qualifications in Tourism. It will take a number of years before current graduates will make it into academic professions and therefore it is suggested that through Life-long learning that courses will be designed for those who are lecturing on tourism courses and educated in another discipline. In the mean time the graduates who have accomplished tourism education are not seeking employment within the tourism industry.

*"what's happening is that people are graduating from courses and like you know yourself there not actually going into tourism at all there ending up in the financial services sector, so there's got to be a problem there and I know myself from my research you know all the people in tourism authorities have said that as well. That people who are doing tourism courses aren't doing tourism so there's a missing link there."* Resp.7, Tourism Educator. *"I don't know, I think that a lot of students are not getting the kind of jobs out of these courses that there expected to believe that they will, you know!"* Resp.14, Academic Senior College.

The literature also reiterates these points and describes that this issue will have long term effects on the design of courses;

*"As a result there has been a tendency for academics and others to come forward with their own definitions, concepts and approaches to tourism studies"* (Airey; 1998:9).

his has an impact on the design of programmes with Koh (1994, cited in Airey, 1998:11) pointing out that

*"Several studies found that most of the tourism curricula were designed by educators with little/no representation from the tourism industry".*

Another concern affecting the delivery of tourism courses is the trend towards more courses in the area of Life-long Learning where the delivery of courses must be available at a time that suits the age group of students engaging with the courses.

Ultimately the suppliers of tourism education must look to the needs of industry when developing tourism programmes so that in the long term the students not only benefits but also society as a whole therefore the concerns surrounding syllabus content in the

form of shaping and designing programmes must be looked at. Practical skills are desirable by most interviewees, which suggest that the current provision is lacking in this area. The matter surrounding the delivery of tourism education whether it is staff or syllabi content issues would decrease if Ireland adopted the attitude towards education delivery from other countries such as New Zealand where an appraisal system would benefit both staff and student alike. For the educators who are qualified in other disciplines, Life-long learning in the form of a top up tourism qualification would benefit the quality of tourism education delivered in Ireland.

### **Findings:**

- A trend of over supplying theoretical tourism programmes where the courses are theory based have a business focus and the methods of teaching and assessment are weighted down with theoretical delivery have been identified in this study.
- It has been suggested that in Ireland the theoretical tourism courses are frequently borne out of employee interests and therefore are supply driven.
- There are concerns surrounding the skills development, syllabus content and overall delivery of tourism courses in Ireland at the moment.
- There was an emphasis on the demand for more practicality and applied learning thus gearing the students for working within the industry.
- Applied work based or problem based learning have been identified as important to acquire the skills for a career in the industry.
- It has been recognised that tourism may not have received discipline status within any educational establishment in Ireland.
- A trend has been recognised where educational establishments are favouring the supply of academic programmes over craft programmes due to the high unit cost considerations in delivering such courses.
- It has been recognised as a trend that students are favouring theoretical tourism courses over craft courses.
- Tourism qualifications are quite recent and it was observed that the majority of academic staff are hired without a tourism qualification.



### 4.3.3 – Further research in tourism

There is a trend towards further research in tourism and this featured as a trend by a number of interviewees in third level tourism provision. Tourism as a subject area has only been evolving for the last few decades and so it is no wonder that an interest exists and a boost in the amount of people researching tourism. However, academics when questioned about trends referred to research in their answer.

*“ I think more research, I mean like what you're doing their”. Resp.7, Tourism Educator. “The importance of researching areas such as that are becoming more refined, there becoming more useful than possibly would have been the case ten years ago...”Resp. 25, Manager, Tourism Development Programme.*

The notion of research was very evident as a trend within tourism education. There are now better facilities and courses for research within Ireland, which means that more students are engaging in research and also public sector bodies such as Failte Ireland, now offer grants for research students on a yearly basis. They also conduct their own research on many issues facing Irish tourism such as target markets, volume statistics, expenditure, employment surveys etc to decipher and analyse the state of tourism in Ireland or the drivers of change affecting the industry.

*“I think this research is quite good”. Resp.20, Public-Private partnership officer.*

Overall the interviewees welcomed research and were willing to participate in it.

*“You know I would have some contact with people doing research”. Resp.26, Chief Executive Eco Tourism Enterprise.*

The focus group referred to research within the design of the course at the Institute of Technology, Sligo where the industry representatives were willing to employ students to conduct research on their behalf. The content analysis also has subjects, which are research orientated whether these are research methods, market research or data analysis. Institutes of Technology need to develop their research culture in tandem with their teaching culture. It is obvious that research and innovation support and enhance the teaching effort. Good research informs good teaching. The role of research in course development and the advancement of knowledge, in all disciplines, were recognised in the White Paper on education (1995). Such activities help academics keep up-to-date in their subject areas stimulate new thought and contribute generally to staff development. They can support innovation and competitiveness that will increase productivity growth and social gain at both national and regional levels.

### Findings: -

- It has been identified that the provision by educational establishments to carry out research has increased.
- The amount of funding available for Research has increased within the last number of years.
- Research is becoming more refined and stakeholders think more about research and value the importance of it.
- A trend has emerged between academia and stakeholders in liaison with each other for the purpose of conducting research.

### 4.3.4- Technology

It is no surprise to see technology appearing when having a discussion on the topic of trends, as technology is somewhat a phenomenon that has affected the way people conduct their lives on a day to day basis. The link between technology and tourism course provision happens within the design of programmes. The emphasis given to learning about technology and in particular web-marketing was a trend which many interviewees felt was very relevant to working within the tourism sector.

*"I suppose in relation to the importance of information technology and the importance of that, that it's factored in to the courses. The importance of web marketing, web site design you know all of that has a way of attracting customers to what's on offer."*Resp.1 Academic, Institute of Technology.

The subject "*computer applications*" was believed to be an important part of any course structure.

*"Computer applications have come on in leaps and bounds"*. Resp.20, Public-private partnership officer. The force that the Internet has had on the delivery and consumption of tourism products and services means that technology must be an integral part of any tourism course.

*"..you can see some of the reactionary that courses are following what is happening in the global tourism industry and maybe some of it is pro active and I would really applaud the pro active stuff but trends would be like for instance course design that you would have a little more reference now to E-marketing..."*Resp.25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

The focus group described the importance of information technology but also applying the technology and using it was considered a significant learning outcome from a tourism course,

*"Web design is important, change a web site, multimedia electives"* (Tourism industry representatives, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).



The content analysis illustrates that computer applications are featured on every tourism course. Armstrong-Stassen & Templer (2005:57-67) in their research study on *“Adapting training for older employees”* analysed Canada’s approach to an aging workforce. External factors such as the aging baby boomers and the increases in technology in the workplace are just two main influences on the design and development of tourism education and training for this sector at the present time.

It has been identified that technology is a trend within tourism educational provision. *“Computer applications”* is a subject that is available within all tourism courses in Ireland at present. It is the delivery of this subject that varies from one educational establishment to another. The need is to teach this subject in a practical manner where the student learns by doing. The cohort of baby boomers are excellent candidates for Life-long learning education and due to the advances in technology at such a rapid pace over the last number of years it is proposed that technology education within Life-long learning education is a trend within the provision of education. Therefore computer applications courses that are modular in format allow flexibility of delivery of such courses to meet the needs of students wishing to gain continuous training or life-long learning.

**Findings: -**

- It is proposed that tourism programmes must offer computer applications as an integral part of any course but apply the techniques such as interactive marketing, promotions or E-marketing within course work is vital so that the student will be exposed to these techniques before entering the industry.
- The use of technology must be factored into courses so that the student will be able to understand how technology has a way of attracting customers to what’s on offer.

**4.3.5 – Industry awareness of trends**

The lack of public, private and voluntary sector awareness when discussing trends in third level tourism provision posed many questions for the researcher. These sectors are either not targeted by the institutions, or even consulted as regards courses. They are maybe themselves not interested in topping up their skills in the field. Therefore neither

party are making an effort to bridge a link between industry and educational establishments.

*"I would have to say that we wouldn't be terribly aware being that we're an arts centre and were not in the position to employ people as frequently as we'd like."* Resp.18, General Manager Public Sector Organisation.

The voluntary sector in particular through observation furnished a sense of desperation as regard their plight of existence and when asked about trends, outlined the interest in forming some sort of link with the educational establishments.

*"..we wouldn't have noticed any trends in it because we wouldn't tie up with the Regional College at all from a voluntary sector maybe it's something we should look at. I think there could be something, maybe it could be something for ourselves and the college in the future."* Resp.19, Chairperson of voluntary enterprise development.

Therefore action on the part of the local community, by participating in or benefiting from tourism, requires some knowledge about the industry and its impacts (Din, 1993, quoted in Timothy, 1999; 374). There is currently more interest expressed in devising courses for this sector with many Institutes of Technology considering offering courses to assist these groups in the development of tourism initiatives. The industry consequently expressed that they would have minimal contact with educational establishments as regards their professions but expressed a willingness to form links that would benefit both parties in the future. The OECD undertook a review of Higher education in Ireland during 2004 and a call for submissions from interested individuals and organisations in relation to the review was published in the Irish National press (AISHE, 2004). Links between industry and education were desired. This would generate a culture of Life long learning which was significant in all submissions reviewed for the OECD Report.

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been recognised that educational establishments need to devise courses specifically for the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- The stakeholders seem unaware of tourism educational provision at the moment but wished to form links with educational establishments in the future.
- The voluntary sector would be very appreciative of educational provision that would suit their needs and at a time and place that would be accessible to them.



#### 4.3.6- International students

A number of interviewees recognised the increasing trend in the quantity of international students coming to study in Ireland. While this may be perceived as a benefit to the educational establishment it was observed as a concern especially for Institutes of Technology

*"From my own view in this college, a lot more international students are applying for courses in Ireland in our college as well." Resp.2, Academic, Tourism College. "The trend through which the Institutes of Technology are increasingly taking in significant numbers of international students and taking them into Ireland. We'd have some slight concern over that in the sense that we recognise that overseas students add enormously to the richness of life on campus and the prestige of the institutions." Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.*

The amount of international students coming to study and receive a qualification in Ireland is growing. While this benefits the educational establishment, it is giving college places to international students while demand for these courses regionally must be addressed. The aim of Institutes of Technology is to provide an education for people regionally and to contribute to the regions of Ireland but this is not the case if international students are returning to their country of residence to find employment.

*"We'd have some concerns that Institutes of Technologies should only be trawling for overseas students if they are rock solid confident that there isn't any lingering demand in the region for any other vocational, further or higher education so there's issues there and there's trends emerging and we'd be concerned to open that debate a little bit more over the coming years." Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.*

The realisation that Irish educational establishments are currently recruiting international students to study in Ireland has received mixed reviews (Submissions to the OECD, 2004). To be successful the Irish Higher educational sector must maintain both a reputation for excellence and a cost structure that will attract these students to Ireland. The focus group made no reference to international students.

#### Findings: -

- It has been identified that there is a trend of international students studying in Ireland especially within Institutes of Technology.
- It has been recognised that the Institutes of Technology are obliged to contribute to the region therefore the demand regionally for courses must be addressed.
- The interviewees have suggested that the Institutes of Technology should only consider taking international students if there is no lingering demand for Irish students.

- The trend of the success of International students coming to study in Ireland will depend on the educational sector maintaining both a reputation for excellence and a cost structure that will attract these students to Ireland.

#### 4.3.7- Environmental issues

The environment and sustainability are buzzwords when it comes to tourism education provision in Ireland at the moment. The world wide trend of the environment taking centre stage has been recognised by the government section responsible for tourism the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism formed in June 2002 its mission is;

*“ To contribute to the economic, social and cultural progress of Irish Society and the enrichment of its quality of life through promoting sustainable tourism; encouraging excellence in sporting and artistic achievement, facilitating greater access to sport and the arts, and preservation of our cultural inheritance” (www.irlgov.ie 2003).*

There is a trend of students wanting to receive an education in environmental issues such as sustainability, tourism impacts, and eco-tourism within courses and this has been identified in the interview process.

*“There is more interest on the environment side of tourism; there is a concern on pollution and environmental factors and impacts of tourism.”* Resp.16, Director, Private Tourism College.

The public, private and voluntary sectors also see a need for this type of education as the population of Ireland has increased, this has lead to many environmental problems and sustaining our tourism product for future generations is a very important element within tourism courses.

*“I think that it has changed but I think also things need to come into play more sustainable tourism elements needs to come into it, how to develop products that are more sustainable economically and environmentally and socially ...”.* Resp.21, Regional Development Executive.

These environmental issues are not just a trend within Ireland but globally, as discussed in the literature on the long-term sustainability of tourism (Henry et al, 2004; O’Connell et al, 2005). Globalisation and its impact (re: foreign investment, ownership, exploitation) on workers and profit repatriation are also environmental concerns that are currently being considered as important elements within tourism education (Inkson & Myers, 2003; Henry et al, 2004; Airey, 1998). Within the focus group the industry representatives recognised a need for education of environmental issues.

*“with regard to third year, it was suggested that four different topics be given consideration i.e. Sustainable tourism, Travel agency, Heritage and Rural tourism” (Tourism Industry Representative, 2004.).*



A report entitled: Sustainable development –A Strategy for Ireland (1997), published by the Department of the Environment set out steps that educational establishments should educate students on sustainability. The principle purpose of the strategy was to provide a comprehensive analysis and framework, which would allow sustainable development to be taken forward more systematically in Ireland. For tourism education, through Bord Failte (now Failte Ireland), the Dept of Tourism and Trade and the Marine Institute, where appropriate, would commission research to provide a firm basis for the establishment of sustainable tourist numbers. CERT (now Failte Ireland), in conjunction with the education sector would continue to provide suitable training emphasising the sustainable use of resources and highlighting natural products.

The course content analysis recognises that only three educational establishments since 1997 have courses with environmental awareness elements. Heritage, Tourism and sustainability an elective subject in DIT, Global tourism issues delivered in University of Ulster and Tourism conservation and Heritage in Dundalk Institute of Technology. The Tipperary Institute offers a number of courses in the area of sustainability. There needs to be more emphasis on Environmental and sustainability education in all tourism educational courses in Ireland as only three Institutes of Technology have responded to the need expressed. This would educate students on the environmental impacts of tourism and also the development of sustainable tourism products.

#### **Findings: -**

- Environmental awareness has been identified as a trend by interviewees.
- It has been recognised that Tourism education needs to respond to environmental trends by incorporating subjects with an environmental awareness element, such as tourism planning, tourism management, eco-tourism or sustainable tourism.
- Interviewees have identified more interest in the environmental side of tourism expressed by students; there is a concern on pollution and environmental factors and impacts of tourism.

- It has been revealed that tourism third level education is not supporting Sustainable Tourism even though there is a demand to develop tourism products that are more sustainable economically, environmentally and socially.

#### 4.3.8-Tracking of Graduates and employment within tourism

The employability of graduates from third level educational establishments within the tourism sector has yet to be quantified. Extensive tracking of graduates from tourism courses has been meagre. The trend seems to be craft or specific industry jobs for most graduates from PLC level courses while the Institute of Technology students often have a broader range of occupations to choose from and this is where a lot of graduates are lost to the business sector.

*"The majority of my ones went to the travel agencies and hotel receptions, tourist information centres, heritage centres, airport car hire and some went to airlines and ferry companies."* Resp.13, administration coordinator, PLC. *" I don't know, I think as well that a lot of students are not getting the kind of jobs out of these courses that there expected to believe that they will, you know"*. Resp.14, Academic, senior college.

There is an elusion that students will find jobs in the tourism industry when in actual fact very few end up working within this sector with a lot of graduates taking jobs within the hospitality or business sectors. The literature outlines that tourism graduates could command more money in other careers, for example in a study looking at human resource issues in tourism in China,

*"Even on commissions, the average total monthly income is around 1000 RMB. Most qualified international guides graduate with a Bachelor's degree in English or Tourism. Thereafter, it is easy to secure a job in banking, IT or commerce, with a monthly salary ranging from 2000 RMB to 3000RMB.This situation means that tour guides average two to three years at most in the travel industry before they secure a job elsewhere".* (Zhang &Wu, 2004: 426).

Therefore if graduates will receive more income working in another career they are more than likely not going to seek employment within the tourism industry.

The educational establishments interviewed agreed that they didn't have accurate information as to the whereabouts of graduates from tourism courses due to the poor tracking of graduates. This was not entirely the fault of the educational establishment but the poor response rate received from questionnaires sent to graduates. A number of institutions have Alumni societies who try to keep track of graduates. There surveys are usually internal and used within the college database.



*“There either working in destinations or working for public sector or they may be working in the private sector and there operational manager level or maybe there working for carriers or maybe they have just gone out, it would be very interesting and I’m sure tracking has been done on where those graduates are going it would be very interesting to see where they are and to see the split how many are working in the public sector how many are working in the regions, how many have left Ireland etc...I’d be very interested in that elementary tracking. Where are your graduates?”* Resp.25, Manager, Tourism Development Programme.

The content analysis illustrates the amount of subjects that are delivered within tourism courses. The majority of subjects have a business focus which qualifies the graduate in business as well as tourism, giving the student a broader choice in the type of career pursued. Therefore it has been recognised that these graduates can command a better wage in certain business environments and due to the choices available have an expansive range of careers to choose from.

#### **Findings:**

- It has been identified that the minimal quantity of research shows that tourism graduates are not working within the tourism sector.
- The interviewees have verified the poor tracking of graduates from Institutes of Technologies and Universities.

#### **4.3.9-Diversity and the Frosty Failte**

Ireland’s landscape and culture has diversified greatly over the last decade. We now have all types of nationalities living among us. It was suggested that tourism course provision should take notice of this diversity now in our society and implement courses to train and integrate these people.

*“I see a huge emphasis on things like cultural diversity”.* Resp 5, Tourism Educator.

This is a predicament already within the hospitality sector where large volumes of migrant workers are employed within this sector and the training is usually on the job.

There is also a language barrier in many cases.

*“Throughout all syllabus provision both from the point of view of obviously the diversity of culture in the incoming markets but certainly from providers of the tourism product now in Ireland we have great diversity in people who are operative in the industry here and that’s.... a change in five years”.* Resp.5, Tourism Educator.

Therefore language and cultural training courses are currently being put in place to integrate these cultures into our society as the quality of our tourism product is suffering.

*“so whether that's about accepting diversity, how you deal with diversity, how you educate for that diversity? How you train for it? You know whether its basic language provision, whether its an understanding of various cultures, their practices, their ethos, all the rest of it, and then how you translate what's perceived as the Irish welcome into the provision of their service?” Resp.5, Tourism Educator.*

The OECD estimate that by 2020 there could be much higher standards of living for all, there may also be forces working to widen income distributions, as labour market pressures from trade and technology favour skilled labour relative to unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Ageing populations will also shrink labour forces, so a restructuring of national labour markets is called for. Social and educational policy must focus on these unskilled workers (OECD, 1997:15-17). It has been suggested by the OECD that these migrant workers “will act as a brake on demographic ageing” of the workforce by entering the labour market.

The Irish people over the last number of years especially since the on set of the Celtic tiger have developed a syndrome known as the ‘Frosty Failte’. It has been noted that Irish people are not as friendly as they used to be.

*“I see a lot in customer care and customer service and when we took on students there they weren't very strong with communication skills or dealing with the public.”Resp.24, Managing director, Tourism business.*

The “frosty Failte” exists within all sectors of the tourism industry and it is something that has been addressed by the Tourism Policy Review Group (2003) who are currently implementing their recommendations on raising the professionalism within the sector but it is difficult to change people’s attitudes when there is full employment in Ireland for the first time in its history. This has been noted in the focus group with the industry representatives who outlined the importance of customer service and communication skills within any tourism course.

*“Customer service is very important and they need to be able to deal with the public at all levels” (Tourism Industry Representative, Minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).*

The literature supports the above comments and the Tourism Policy Review Group who invited interested parties to express their views on the long-term strategic development of tourism education in 2003 has documented this by a number of submissions from stakeholders in the tourism industry with suggestions on areas of improvement within the Irish tourism educational sector such as:

- Diversity and flexibility were identified as trends within Irish society and the tourism educational system must react to these changes. Developing tourism



courses to suit the educational needs of migrant workers and people of multi-racial origins was a priority.

- Raising the skills level and career progression within the industry were identified as vital to improve the image of the industry as an employer. The introduction of appraisal, rewards and incentives to employees would help with the retention rates and overall professionalism within the industry.

The content analysis (Appendix 3) also indicates the importance that communication has within the industry by supplying subjects such as customer care, personal development and behavioural science in the majority of curriculum.

#### **Findings: -**

- The interviewees recognised that training courses specifically designed for migrant workers in Hospitality and the tourism industry is a trend with these training courses focusing on areas such as Irish culture, Language and customer service and will become increasingly popular over the coming years.
- It has been identified that the migrant workers will act as a brake on the trend of demographic ageing within our society.
- It has been recognised that tourism education needs to develop graduates who are able to deal with the public at all levels.
- Rewarding professionalism in the industry will raise the profile of the “Irish Welcome”.

#### **4.3.1.0- Unsuccessful tourism courses**

In countries such as Australia tourism courses exist solely without attachment to disciplines such as Business and Humanities. Therefore within other educational establishments internationally tourism exists within the educational system as a discipline of its own. This has not really been the case within Irish educational sectors and any course that attempted to do so was unsuccessful.

*“I think tourism courses on their own are not terribly successful. They appear to be much more successful if they are linked with perhaps tourism and leisure, tourism and sport or tourism and hospitality. I’ve known tourism students at other colleges many of them... on graduation because they are unable to find jobs in tourism, whereas if they have a hospitality or a sport or a leisure background they would find it much easier to integrate”. Resp.8, Academic, Institute of Technology.*

While it has been noted that tourism courses are becoming more specific, it is still of more benefit to the student if the course has another element attached to it. This could be business studies, which are the most popular, sport and leisure, environmental or planning. This has been identified in the focus group where the industry representatives described that

*"It is good to have the business element with specialisms"* (Tourism industry representative, Minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

There is currently no full-time tourism courses in Ireland existing solely disconnected without attachment to another discipline such as business studies or hospitality.

**Finding:** It has been recognised as a trend that Tourism may not be identified as a discipline in Ireland and therefore tourism courses are more successful if they are attached to other disciplines such as business, marketing, management, leisure and Heritage.

#### 4.3.1.1-Female orientated industry

There has been a boost in the number of women employed within this industry. It is almost portrayed as a female oriented industry. One interviewee remarked:

*" the number of people who are coming into the marketing side especially women and the fact that tourism as an industry is becoming increasingly female dominated, I don't know what men do anymore but certainly females tend to be everywhere within the marketing and the service side of failte Ireland or regional tourism or that there all ladies."* Resp.23, Senior Tourism Officer.

There is a trend of the tourism industry-becoming female dominated. The professionalism and educational background of public sector staff in Australia has been brought into question within a study of public sector tourism, profiling local government officers in Australia. The authors, Mc Kercher & Ritchie (1995) raise a number of questions about the level of professionalism in the local government tourism field.

*"gender preferences were noted in hiring practices; men typically were appointed to manage larger, better funded organisations, while women were appointed as either managers of tourist information centres or to support managerial positions in large organisations"*.

One of the most influential women in Irish Tourism has stated:

*"I got a lot of publicity because I was a woman in business when there were no women in business. It was a huge advantage"* (Gillian Bowler, Sunday Independent, 9/5/04).

48% of interviewees were women who held management positions as tourism stakeholders. Thus the dominance of women within the tourism industry has been highlighted as a trend



**Finding:** Gender balance has been addressed with a trend recognised by interviewees towards female dominance within the industry.

### 4.3.1.2 – Language provision

The emphasis on the provision of languages within educational courses is decreasing. The trend is that many educational establishments are now reviewing the level of language provision within these courses and the trend is towards decreasing the contact hours for languages or otherwise giving the student the choice by making it an elective subject. Table 4.3.1 below shows the provision of languages in tourism courses in Ireland with almost half now elective subjects.

**Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005  
Language provision**

Courses and content	VE	VE	VE	NA	DEP	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	REV	
PhD																							
Masters by research																							
Masters (taught) part time				MA	MA																		
Masters (taught) full time				MA	MA																		
Postgraduate diploma																							
Degree (Honours)		BA	BA		BA			BA															
Degree	BA						BA							BA	BA								BA
Diploma														BA									
Higher Certificate																							
Year 1																							
Languages	e	e	*	e		e	*		e	*	e	e	*	e	e	*	e		*	*	*	*	
Year 2																							
Languages	e	e	*			e	*		*	e		*	e	e	*	e		*	*	*	*	*	
Year 3																							
Languages						e			e		*	e	e	*	e	*		*	*	*	*	*	
Year 4																							
Languages						e											e						

Note: e = elective  
\* = Language mandatory

**Table 4.6**

It has been noted in the past that the students within courses on graduation have a poor level of language competency without the odd exception and also students either enjoy learning languages or find it a chore. This was discussed in the focus group where students who study languages in tourism courses usually have a poor competency of it and therefore the benefits of providing languages as a subject would need to be reassessed.

*“Level of competency is important. After three years, you would need to achieve a high standard. Do students have the communication skills to use it? Language is important, but need to reach a high level of competency”* (Tourism industry representative, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

Therefore from the point of view of course design and provision educational establishments have decided to give the students the alternative of studying a language in some cases by putting it up against other subjects or otherwise having languages as a mandatory subject in the first year with choices to continue it in the following year. Some educational institutions have opted not to place languages on their courses at all, for example in LIT the tourism degree has been in operation for three years and when this course was being designed on industry advice, languages were seen as no longer a requirement. (See table 4.3.1)

Interviewees within this study, while not directly mentioning languages as a trend would have referred to the provision of languages within other questions. Just one interview under the discussion of trends referred to language provision as something that had to be taken into consideration when designing tourism programmes.

*“for instance course design that you would have a little more reference now to ...the notion of say for instance of language provision”*. Resp.25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

This is a debate that is very difficult for educational establishments for two reasons, one the decrease in the importance of languages has already been justified and secondly the courses that have languages in the curriculum are under threat of extinction and therefore a problem for the staff employed and lecturing these subjects. The provision of languages being delivered within a tourism curriculum was questioned within the literature. There were divided opinions about the extent to which languages should form part of tourism courses.

*“In the UK, for example, languages have been excluded from the core curriculum for tourism, whereas in Spain and Greece language courses are a requirement of central government”* (Richards and Bowling, 1998; 19).

It is therefore recognised that language provision within Tourism Educational courses varies in importance depending on the relevance it has to the tourism industry within a country.

**Finding:** It has been verified that Languages are not seen as an important requirement on tourism courses anymore with most educational establishments opting to eliminate languages, make it an elective subject or otherwise decrease the amount of contact hours with the student.



#### 4.4- The educational needs within the public sector

The diagram, (Fig: 4.4) displays the educational needs outlined by interviewees within the public sector.

Two categories of individuals have been identified here:

- Employees working in the public sector and wishing to engage in education.
- Students wishing to seek employment within the public sector.

Over half the people interviewed identified proper qualifications for working efficiently and effectively within the industry as the main educational need.

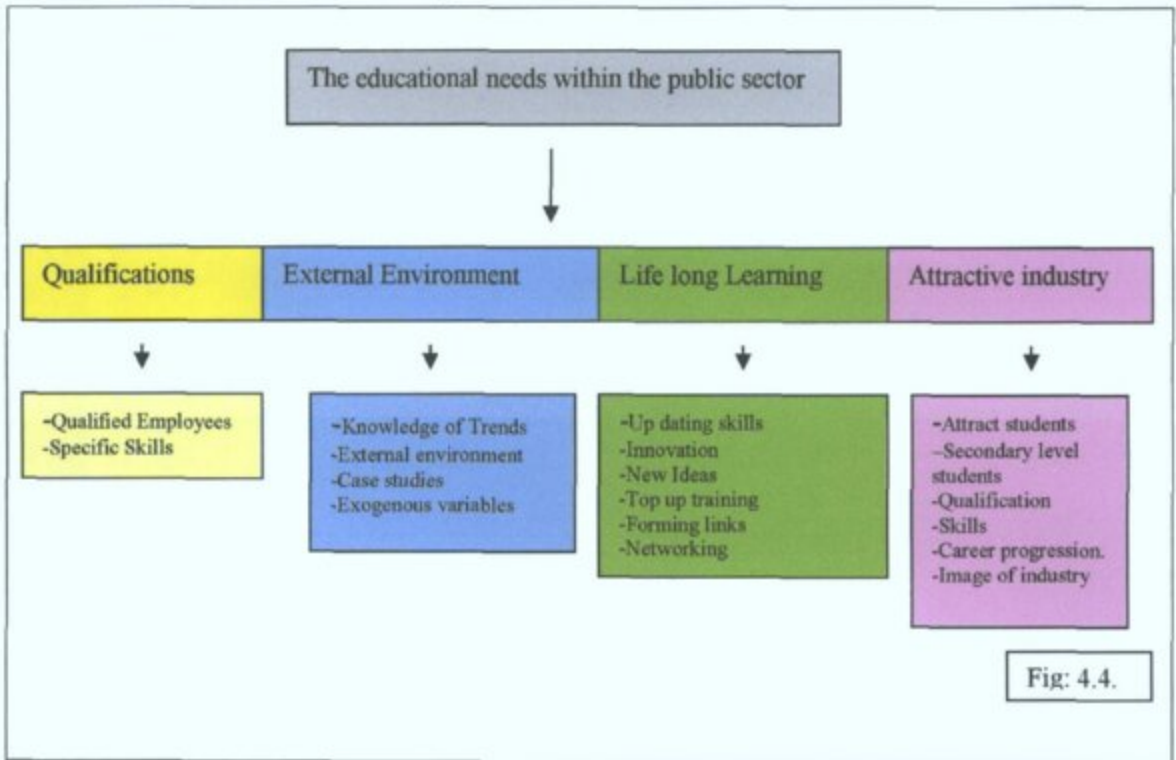
The second most recognised need was the development of specific skills to work in the industry. These were very specific skills such as tour guiding, central reservations systems or strategic marketing skills.

An awareness of international and domestic trends within the tourism industry and knowledge of exogenous variables affecting the industry were also desirable needs. Links that could be developed with academia through education whether it was course design, guest lecturing or Life long learning were stated as a need. Training for the people already engaging in this type of employment were desirable, by up dating those people they would keep up with trends in the industry. Interviewees mentioned a burst of innovation and new product development through educational courses could add life to this sector.

The image of working within the tourism industry could be raised through marketing courses to secondary schools for recruiting students into tourism courses and hence the industry. One interviewee as an educational need within the public sector mentioned language provision.

Overall, it was identified that the interviewees used this question as a method of displaying their dissatisfaction with public sector tourism organisations with one interviewee outlining that Regional Tourism Authorities need to be completely reviewed.

### The educational needs within the public sector



#### 4.4.1 – Qualification

Over half of interviewees recognised a need for qualified employees within the public sector. This not only represents a pool of qualified individuals to work but also laid emphasis on specific skills to operate within the sector. There was also variability in the levels of employment because graduates could enter the public sector for example; tourist offices and Regional Tourism Authorities right up to strategic Management and Marketing positions. This varied depending on the interviewee and their agenda and knowledge of the area.

*“ I would say the main need seems to be within the strategic management and strategic marketing areas. Feedback from the public sector would suggest that they have a preference for students who have an applied knowledge of the industry who have the generic management or marketing skills but have an applied knowledge in the context of tourism hospitality, event, leisure, sports or whatever.”* Resp.10, Academic, Institute of Technology.

This qualification would suit management or marketing positions within the public sector but front office, people skills such as customer care were also mentioned.



*"I mean I would say the Regional Tourism Authorities run the tourist information offices so you need to have trained people to help. You have to give advice and they would need to be computer literate and be able to make reservations and things like that."* Resp.12, coordinator tourism course, PLC.

A report of the Tourism Policy Review Group "*New Horizons for Irish Tourism. An agenda for action*" outlined the strategies for Irish tourism between 2003-2012. The report cited a number of limiting factors that need to be addressed before this vision could be realised. The following is a brief extract:

*"A key issue is the relatively low priority given by the industry to formal educational qualification".*

It is suggested that many individuals working within the public sector have little/no tourism qualifications. The interviewees who stressed the need for qualification within the public sector were usually from an academic background. The professionalism and educational background of public sector staff in Australia has been brought into question within a study of public sector tourism, profiling local government officers in Australia. The authors, Mc Kercher & Ritchie (1995) raise a number of questions about the level of professionalism in the local government tourism field.

*"Local government tourism officers generally lack formal educational qualifications in tourism or marketing and have little prior tourism industry or public sector tourism experience. This sector also records a high turnover rate of between 40% and 50% per annum".*

The literature states that the lack of qualifications among public sector employees is not only a national concern but also international as the above study signifies.

### **Specific skills**

Specific skills were also highlighted as very important, again depending on the areas that graduates would seek employment. The emphasis throughout was that skills should be very functional and hands on.

*"...I mean its implementation skills, right you know we've had people here and they say they're in marketing and they don't know what a DL brochure is over an A4 or an A1 or an A3 which seems a very simple thing. So the actual, some of the skills could be craft related rather than all academic if you know what I mean."* Resp.23, Senior Tourism Officer.

An applied knowledge of these specific skills are desired by interviewees also whether it's through work placement or within the syllabus content in the colleges such as Galileo or world span reservation systems which could be taught within computer applications for example. The content analysis identifies that the majority of tourism courses in Irish Institutes of Technologies and Universities have a work placement usually between 2 and 12 months.

The majority of public sector tourism jobs involve face-to-face communication and as the last section on trends mentioned the “Frosty Failte”, there is a need within the public sector in providing training and putting more emphasis on customer care and people skills.

*“..tourism services obviously customer care would be to the forefront and delivering on what your going to say your delivering is crucial and its fine having it in theory if you don't put it into practice. I suppose customer care and I think that is very much lacking throughout all sectors not just the tourism sector, I think right across the board.”* Resp. 20 Public-private partnership officer.

The subject customer care, communications and personal development are also delivered in tourism courses (see course content analysis, Appendix 3). Finally the public sector needs a graduate who is qualified to function in the position they are employed. They must have a high level of applied knowledge and good customer service skills.

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been recognised by interviewees that qualifications for working in the public sector must include a work placement or applied knowledge of specific skills to work in the area before crossing the threshold into the public sector.
- There is a huge emphasis on customer care and communication skills within the public sector and more assessment of this must be included within the curriculum of any tourism programme.
- It has been identified that there is a preference for graduates who have an applied knowledge of the industry, who have generic management and marketing skills but have an applied knowledge in the context of hospitality and/or tourism.
- A graduate must be able to implement the qualification received within the public sector work environment.

#### **4.4.2 –Awareness of Exogenous variables**

Awareness of the external environment was an educational need of the public sector identified by the interviewees. This could be internationally or domestically and focused on the drivers of change within the tourism industry such as trends and what the future holds. The notion of educating people on the topics effecting tourism in the hope of providing a better tourism product in the future was outlined by a small number of interviewees. The interviewees focused on developing an attentive check on the tourism



industry nationally and internationally namely a knowledge of industry bodies, the roles within tourism production and also Political, Economic, Social and Technological exogenous variables that limit or expand tourism whether these were national or globally.

*"I suppose they would need to understand how the state system works effectively and the inter relationship between the particular sector's that's the first thing. Secondly, we need to be aware of how the political system works."* Resp.4, Tourism Educator, Institute of Technology.

This type of education would benefit undergraduate students, mature students and people engaging in Life- long learning courses. It would give them a real perspective on tourism.

Subjects such as European studies, Research methods, and International marketing or tourism impacts would look at different aspects of the external environment. One public sector interviewee suggested that research methods and evaluating trends were very important educational needs within the public sector.

*"In terms of right up to the minute data, where they are coming from their motivations for coming, what are they spending, what there attending so that would be the priority and then ways to maximise that and trends in tourism..."* Resp.18, General Manager, Public Sector Organisation.

Another interviewee while working within the public sector at the moment expressed a desire to have a better understanding of trends and quantifying the information so it could be evaluated and analysed.

*"I think about a better understanding of international trends you know, out of all the courses that I done I never really got that to be honest and being able to record that, read it where to get the information, that sort of thing would be very important."* Resp.21, Regional Development Executive.

Another aspect of educational needs pointed out in the interviews was the need to be aware of national and international case studies such as mistakes that were made in the past and making sure they do not happen again or innovative tourism products/ services. Being aware of other countries cases would be of huge benefit to somebody working within the public sector.

*" so you know some sort of education around what's happening in other parts of the world in rural areas that makes it work."* Resp.21, Regional Development Executive.

The focus group made reference to exogenous variables suggesting,

*"Syllabi should reflect changes, should cover wider topics"* (Tourism industry representative, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

The course content analysis echoes the above with many courses offering subjects such as Global issues, cultural management and leisure, culture and society. Finally there is an educational need for more awareness of international trends, developing research and

how to quantify it and analysis of case studies to build up an awareness of tourism nationally and internationally.

**Findings: -**

- It has been suggested that knowledge of how the state system works effectively and the inter relationship between the particular sectors is an educational need within the public sector.
- The interviewees acknowledged that right up to the minute data where ways to maximise the information received is an educational need within the public sector.
- An understanding of recording and analysing data was identified as an educational need.
- An awareness of what is happening in other parts of the world such as case study analysis from other countries is an educational need identified.

#### **4.4.3 – Life-Long Learning (L.L.L.)**

Life-Long learning is a term used to describe the continuous training and up dating of skills in today's fast paced society. This raises awareness and introduces a generation of innovation and new ideas into the public sector. The Institute of Continuing Professional Development (ICPD)-(launched in the UK in 1998 to raise the effectiveness of professionals by establishing new CPD standards) defines Life-long learning as:

*"The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and the development of personal qualities necessary for the education of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioners working life". Other definitions focus more on "updating of professional knowledge throughout ones working life by means of systematic, on-going, self-directed learning." (CIPD).*

This form of learning would strengthen links with the public sector while forming an environment of networking amongst like-minded individuals whether this would be between learners or academics. There was an observation of dissatisfaction with some of the public sector bodies and in particular the Regional Tourism Authorities but if employees within this sector connected more with education it would benefit providers of tourism products.

*"well I suppose that you know in the public sector in the tourism authorities people who have actually made their way to the top of tourism authorities don't have any qualifications in tourism". Resp.7, Tourism Educator.*



This would confirm the point made earlier about the provision of tourism education in Ireland where tourism programmes were unavailable until the 1990's. Therefore this is the first finding, the people in higher positions in the public sector are more than likely educated in other disciplines therefore Life-long Learning courses could be put in place to accommodate these people thus up dating their tourism experience.

*"Well I think sometimes having worked in the public tourism sector and having a lot of contact in recent times with it, there is a feeling that there are a lot of people in it that are not trained in tourism and a lot of people whose backgrounds aren't business or marketing, now that's not necessarily a bad thing I don't know to what extent they're up skilling their staff."* Resp.9, Head of Dept Institute of Technology.

An interesting angle outlined by Bunyan, 2004 suggests that there is and will be in the foreseeable future a huge uptake in the numbers of people engaging in life-long learning, for instance

*"older learners in Ireland have been disadvantaged through lack of access and support from the state".*

There was no free secondary education until 1967 so many older learners were previously denied educational opportunities. Only one-third of adults between the ages 55-64 have completed second level education compared to two-thirds of adults between the ages of 25-34 (Department of Education and Science, 2000: 18).

Many interviewees emphasised the need of people employed within the public sector to keep up to date with training and that courses should be provided to facilitate these people. Life-long Learning courses could be implemented at three levels:

- One the senior management who have maybe degrees or post graduate courses in other disciplines and are unaware of case studies and trends within the industry.
- Secondly, regional management or the middle management sector to form networks and up date there skills within the tourism sector and
- Thirdly people on the ground, training in customer care, festivals and events, enterprise development and sustainability.

This type of training could reduce the amount of dissatisfaction with the public sector organisations. One interviewee summed the above points up by declaring

*"I find their knowledge is lacking in certain areas and I think part of the problem is they have brought people in at middle and senior management level who are yes, are graduates may even in some cases have post graduate qualifications they often they have come from business fields, they haven't necessarily worked in tourism before or in some cases their qualifications aren't in tourism they may be in other business fields."* Resp.27, Course Director, University.

Flexibility in the delivery and design of courses was evident in the submissions to the OECD review of Higher Education where a move to deliver programmes through shorter, flexible and increasingly modular arrangements would benefit individuals and society as a whole. This would generate a culture of Life long learning which was significant in all submissions reviewed for the OECD Report.

**Findings: -**

- A need has been identified for education at all levels of public sector from employees in senior management positions right down to ground level.
- Various courses could be developed for the public sector from up dating existing skills to gaining a tourism qualification.
- Life-long learning would be useful in developing networks between like-minded individuals within the public sector.
- It has been recognised that people who have made their way to the top of tourism authorities haven't necessarily worked in tourism before or in some cases they do not possess a tourism qualification and are usually educated in another discipline.
- The extent to which employers are supporting the up skilling of their staff needs to be addressed.

#### **4.4.3.1 –Forming links and networking through education**

While interviewees expressed a need for education within the public sector at all levels, some also pointed out that forming links such as these could encourage debate and feedback on course provision while also allowing the learners on these courses to network with other people working within the same sector. A significant gap was very evident between public sector and the educational establishments which is very apparent in this quote,

*"I suppose originally when we developed the programme here we would have envisaged a role for the Regional Tourism Organisation and they'd come out and lecture but that didn't happen and it's not because their people can't lecture just doing it seemed to be a wee bit beyond them."* Resp.9, Head of Dept, institute of Technology.

There seems to be a missing link but if a programme was designed to up date their skills a bridge could be formed between the two sectors. One interviewee outlined the need of education in forming networks between sectors, putting a face to the name or meeting



certain employees who work within both sectors could develop a relationship and maybe links and networking could evolve from this.

*“The benefit of training as you and I know to an extent what you learn and have your eyes opened but also I think this is probably more important in the long run is the networks that develop through those people on the course connecting with each other and sharing information and sharing experiences and learning together.”* Resp.25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

An evaluation of the literature also makes reference to forming links and networking between tourism stakeholders (Zhang & Wu, 2004; 427). Forming a link between education and industry was desired where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives (Submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; OECD, 2004). The value of this learning and networking cannot be underestimated.

#### **Findings: -**

- There is a need within the public sector to bridge the gap by forming a link and networking that could be built up by engaging in courses.
- Education would allow people to connect with each other by sharing information and experiences and learning together.
- A role could be envisaged for the public sector through education in networking between both the public sector and the educational sector where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives.

#### **4.4.3.2 – The need for innovation and new ideas**

A need has been identified for the public sector to become more innovative and through education develop new ideas, products and marketing strategies.

*“They’ve really got stuck in their ways and you know they need a kind of injection of some innovative new ideas”* Resp.7, Tourism Educator.

Regionally, it would seem that public sector bodies are lacking in the skills to form a dynamic industry and have an element of fear in developing new ideas and strategies and this has been recognised.

*"In general, tourism bodies are a bit disassociated with the ground and unfortunately that's creating a major problem. If you look at the marketing campaigns and how much they have spent over the last couple of years and the effectiveness of it is quite bad so I think they should be inviting more of industry in to listen to and to talk and be very proactive on that."* Resp.24, Managing Director, Tourism Business.

Therefore tourism education could open their eyes to these new ideas and the public sector could learn from examples of situations in other countries. A study of the Portuguese tourism sector, involving a round table discussion with participants from industry and education was published in 2004 and gave an interesting insight into the educational needs of this sector. The knowledge of events and innovative ideas were referred to as educational needs because

*"it is possible to anticipate that the referred events will lead to new trends pointing to holidays closer to home, and seen as an experience, either based on cultural attractions or other major sports events such as the European Football Championship".* (Costa, 2004: 403).

There is an impression amongst the public sector of fear of new ventures and ways of conducting business and this fear transcends into a lethargic attitude towards the tourism industry and the confidence in it.

*"Generally any government agencies that I've dealt with in relation to tourism haven't given me a massive amount of confidence in the industry."* Resp.24, Managing Director, Tourism Business.

Consequently to build an understanding of tourism, development of new ideas and innovation within the industry could reduce this fear. In the focus group, the industry representatives described the importance of introducing entrepreneurship and innovation into a tourism course design.

*"With regard to entrepreneurship, it plays a very important part in small business, the market changes every year and people need to be highly innovative and creative. Teaching people to develop skills, presentation skills, political skills, negotiation skills, local tourism policy and tourism change"* (Tourism industry representative, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

The subject Entrepreneurship is usually delivered in the third year of a tourism course (see course content analysis, Appendix 3).

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been realised that there is an element of fear and lack of confidence within the public sector in relation to innovation and venturing into new business proposals.



- There is an educational need for innovation especially in regard to new product development and marketing strategies within the public sector.
- It has been suggested by the interviewees that the public sector are disassociated with the ground and this is impacting their effectiveness in society.

#### 4.4.4 –The need to attract students into the public sector

The need to attract students into the tourism industry was an educational need outlined in the interviews conducted. There has been a need identified in integrating tourism subjects into the secondary school educational system.

*“I would certainly see a need for tourism education in society some kind of programme at second level that would more impress upon individual citizens the role of tourism and the contribution it makes and those programmes do exist at second level but I’m not sure that they get the kind of support and attention that they might get.”* Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

The poor image of the industry within particular countries was also evident in the literature. The traditional poor pay, working conditions, unsocial hours, and the cultural expectations of the local population regarding jobs in service industries were some of the reasons given for this image (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990:17-35; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004:410). Failte Ireland are attempting to reduce this perception by publishing a magazine “*Get a life in tourism*” and also by promoting the industry more favourably to students. The need would be to attract second level students into the tourism industry through educating them about the importance of tourism to the economy. The need within the college system was to offer the students an education and to retain them within it and therefore qualifying them to work within this sector.

*“I think its important not to overlook the students needs for a general education.”* Resp.3, Academic, Institute of Technology.

The poor image of the industry raised concern throughout all submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group, (2003) with suggestions of ways to counteract this perception such as educational modules in tourism at primary and secondary level to raise awareness of the economic benefits of tourism. Raising the skills level and career progression within the industry were identified as vital to improve the image of the industry as an employer. Overall the image that the tourism industry portray as an employer must be addressed and raising awareness of its importance and elevating its image through professionalism, awards, appraisal and campaigns could counteract this

perception. Failte Ireland has responded to the submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group by developing modules for delivery in primary and secondary schools (Tourism Directory, 2004).

**Findings: -**

- It has been suggested that tourism modules should be delivered at all levels of education.
- The attracting and retaining of students to graduate level so that they are qualified to work within the sector has been identified as an educational need within the public sector.
- There is a need for tourism education in society, to more impress upon individual citizens, the contribution that tourism makes to the economy.
- A need has been identified for an increase in the provision of specific courses relating to the public sector such as advanced tour guiding.
- It has been recognised that the image of the tourism industry can be improved through education.

Overall, qualifications and skills, which have already been analysed in section 4.4.1, were important so that the students could work effectively and efficiently within the industry. Again specific skills were highlighted such as people skills and being able to speak in a foreign language was also desirable.

*“Certainly visitor attractions, heritage centres and public centres I would say the need for advanced guiding skills with some language provision.”* Resp.5, Tourism Educator.

Knowledge of the external environment in relation to trends and exogenous variables that are impacting tourism globally has been identified as educational needs within the public sector. The understanding of how to quantify data and study it was also recognised. Life-long learning for those already employed in the public sector was desirable. This could be utilised to form stronger links between industry and education through the networking that could be developed from these courses.

The image of the industry as a poor employer has been described above and ways of attracting and retaining staff into the industry was another educational need identified for the public sector.

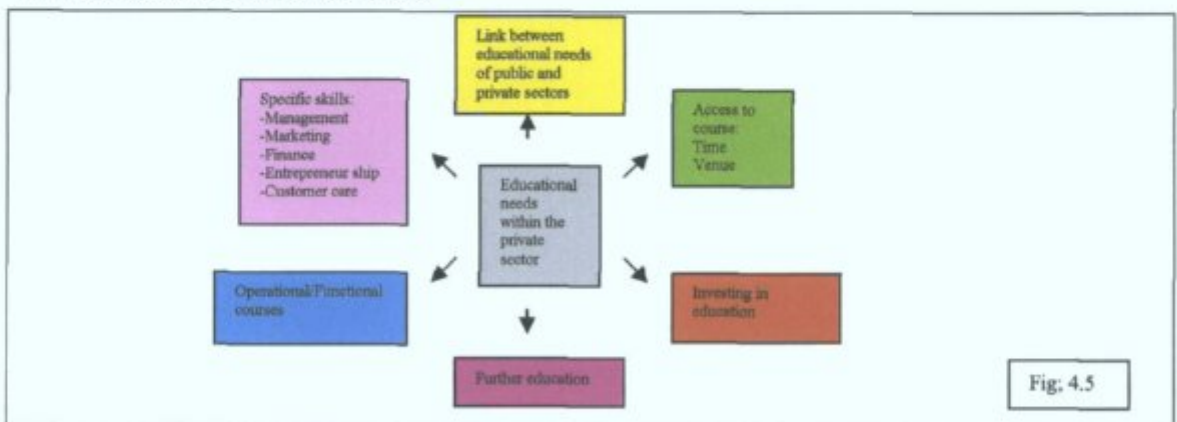


## 4.5 – The educational needs within the private sector.

The educational needs within the private sector were similar to the public sector but emphasised specific skills prominently. The majority of interviewees outlined skills such as Entrepreneurship, Finance and Marketing as vital to the private sector so they could effectively manage their business.

A number of interviewees also summarised the needs of the public and private sectors as one need and found no differentiation between the educational needs of both sectors. Operational and functional courses were the type of programme structure that would be most beneficial to the private sector. The majority of this sector when educating themselves would do so on their own capacity so time considerations and access to courses were an important element in providing educational courses for them. A quantity of interviewees described that although the private sector would have an educational need, actually investing in it themselves was a deterrent to really engaging in education because they didn't want to pay for courses out of their disposable incomes. Some interviewees alluded to the needs of training for migrant workers in the private sector. There was also a need identified to further educate people who were employed in the private sector who already had third level education but could do with some further education in specific areas.

### Private sector educational needs.



#### 4.5.1 – Specific Skills

72% of interviewees recommended specific skills education as a need within the private sector. The type of specific training depended on the agenda and background of the interviewee. For example, the interviewees from the PLC sector mentioned practical skills such as front office skills while academics from Institutes of Technologies and Universities placed more emphasis on entrepreneurial and marketing education.

The core skills were business-focused in specific areas. The specific skills that the private sectors require must also be very functional and geared towards practically applying them in the work environment.

*“...its very specific, its very much geared towards the short sharp exposure to a certain thing like how to design a brochure, should I advertise in magazines, how can I set up a web site, how do I answer the phone properly, how do I do a little market research, all very specific and not to demean it in any way but its quite basic and its quite skills based...”* Resp.9, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology.

Specific skills in areas such as *“book-keeping, accounting and financial management”* were also stated as required types of education in the literature. These skills should be operational and functional in the way they are delivered to the students *“operative work load”*. There was general agreement that *“soft skills (e.g. IT skills, communication, team working, problem solving, numeracy, motivational skills, and literacy)”* should be provided (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004: 412).

This type of education, while it is specific, is very operational and functional to the everyday running of a small to medium sized private business. Information technology, research and an understanding of tourism and the tourism industry were the main educational needs identified by Avcikurt (2003) within the managerial training needs of Turkish small and medium-sized hotel enterprises. Application of practical skills was also evident throughout this study for example;

*“basic skills training of managers/owners on the other hand, may enable them to use their time, communicate with customers and employees better and reduce the turnover of employees and customer complaints”* (Avcikurt, 2003: 399-404).

One interviewee outlined the specific training needs required for setting up an enterprise which he had dealings with;



"I suppose a business plan, everybody needs help with that, marketing plan definitely need help with that, market areas we could target niche groups, how to get into those niche groups, tour groups, how to get into tour groups...." Resp.19, Chairperson of Voluntary Enterprise Development.

A big issue within the private sector is cost and finding out about grant aid and costing for their business, which was also a specific requirement, described by the interviewees.

"basic business development, you know what I mean how to cost as I said you know and who is responsible for what and where can I get funding and access to funds is always a big one." Resp.21, Regional Development Executive.

Therefore the private sector requires specific skills training that can be applied in the work environment and will be helpful to them and their business. The focus group addressed this need by suggesting that it is good to have the business element incorporated in a tourism course but to also have specialisms in tourism. The course content analysis identifies that the majority of tourism courses in Ireland are business focused but with an emphasis on the tourism industry.

### Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents: 2004/2005

#### Business Focused Provision

Courses and content	WU	WU	WU	UL	DUP	DUP	DUP	LEP	LEP	KEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP	LEP
PhD																										
Masters by research																										
Masters (taught) part time				MA	MA																					
Masters (taught) full time				MA	MA																					
Postgraduate diploma																										
Degree (Honours)		BA	BA			BA		BA		BA																
Degree	BA						BA																			
Diploma																										
Higher Certificate																										
Syllabus Content																										

Table 4.7

#### Findings: -

- The interviewees identified that there is a need for specific, applied, functional education within the private sector. The two most important educational areas here were entrepreneurial education and marketing and in particular E-marketing.
- It has been identified that the educational needs within the private sector are very specific in nature and an expansive range of these specific skills exist.
- The predominant need within the private sector is business development.

#### 4.5.2 – The link between public and private sectors educational need.

A small number of interviewee's felt that the educational needs of both public and private sectors were the same.

*" I know there are specific areas of difference between public and private sector but at the end of the day we were talking about the tourism industry in Ireland so you're talking about different aspects of the tourism industry as this applies to the public and the private sector".* Resp.1, Academic, Institute of Technology.

Therefore the development of qualifications, awareness of industry, Life-long Learning and attracting students were also areas of educational need that could be applied to the private sector as well as the public sector with one interviewee stating;

*"I would say probably the same, the same needs there probably hoping to become as big in order to expand. They would be the same needs I would say."*Resp.16, Director, private tourism college.

This is true to a certain extent but the educational needs of the private sector in comparison to the public sector are more specific, functional needs that must take into account access to courses that are at a time and place that suit the individual and there are also cost considerations as the private sector would more than likely have to fund there own educational needs.

*" I would have thought fairly similar I mean I wouldn't have thought there was a massive difference in terms that if you are in a business public or private whereby your business is to attract tourist you need the same information..."*Resp.18, General manager, public sector organisation.

There is no distinction within tourism courses in Ireland between courses designed specifically for the public or private sectors. There is only a distinction in the case of modularisation where certain modules can be delivered to the public or private sectors to suit there specific needs, as is the case for night courses for example. Finally the educational needs of both the public and private sectors are similar in the type of subjects they would be seeking to learn but the nature in which they would be delivered must be applicable to the needs of either sector depending on the student profile.

#### Findings: -

- It has been identified throughout the interview process that the public and private sectors would have similar educational needs in the type of education



they would wish to learn but the private sector needs are more specific and functional.

- The interviewees verified that the private sector consider time, cost and accessibility as factors when assessing educational needs that would not necessarily apply and were not contemplated when consulting the interviewees about the needs of the public sector.
- An understanding of the tourism industry in Ireland, different aspects of the tourism industry as this applies to the public and the private sector have been identified as an educational need.

#### 4.5.3 – Access to courses

The private sector consists of mainly small to medium sized clandestinely owned businesses and most owners would take an active role in the running of such a company. It is for this reason that access to courses has been identified as an educational need of this sector. There is a need to provide tourism education to the private sector but it must be delivered at a time and a venue that is suitable to them.

*“The private sectors are too, people in general are too busy to be coming in doing 40 hours a week or three nights a week learning about their tourism business, they’re actively involved in it anyway so they just need help.”* Resp.9, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology.

Access to courses at a time that is suitable to those working in the private tourism sector was also desirable within the literature.

*“Workers often encounter difficulties to attend training courses due to time constraints. Companies are trying to make attendance easier by offering training during working hours, for example. The interest in making a career within the company leads these workers to give priority to internal training over external training offers.”* (Marhuenda, 2004: 231).

Courses therefore designed for this sector in particular would not need to be too theoretical or burdened down with continuous assessment. Another twist on accessing courses geared towards the private sector would not to assume that the private sector would travel to the educational establishment for the delivery of the course, instead bringing the course to the private sector would mean that it is more beneficial to them. They would appreciate the effort and would feel they received value for money. Two interviewees mentioned incidences where this has happened within rural areas in the past and had worked very well. The venue was also important. One such course took place within a tourism enterprise itself.

*“..for example, it was really good to run the first ...course in the ...area because the ... is a project and there are tourism providers in it that are not totally...maybe some of them haven't thought about tourism yet but some of them did that course and obviously that is adding value to a project that is already there so like using adult training to add value to some sort of theme that is going on in the area is particularly important as well....” Resp. 21, Regional Development Executive.*

This was a very valid quote that had been made by an interviewee, which outlined an adult course geared towards tourism providers. The course was not only brought to the providers so they would have easy access to it but also the course was delivered within a tourism enterprise. This added value to the course and the enterprise in question but also got the providers out there mixing and networking with other individuals with similar interest and needs.

Yet another aspect described by one interviewee, who gave a negative suggestion was that while there might be a need alluded to by the private sector for these courses, the success of them has never been quantified.

*“I have a sense that there is an awful lot of sort of twelve week courses one night a week, an awful lot of that stuff is delivered and its delivered around hospitality and basic marketing and stuff and I'm not sure if its that successful” Resp.23, Senior Tourism Officer.*

Many Institutes of Technologies are now recognising the need to provide such courses and are developing such courses around the country within their Life-long Learning programmes. At the moment Regional access to part-time courses varies strongly. In many key disciplines, part-time course access is restricted or not available. A new national objective, possibly through institutional alliance or collaboration, should seek to provide access nationally to a range of key skill-based courses (Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology, 2003).

Ultimately, contact with education for the private sector is very important for them and the running of their business but when designing and delivering a course to suit this sectors needs, the educational establishment must consider who will be travelling to these courses and from where.

#### **Findings: -**

- Access is a significant factor in relation to tourism education for the private sector.
- It has been verified that the time allocated for the course and the venues are two very important considerations owing to workers encountering difficulties to attending courses primarily due to time constraints.



- The interviewees identified that courses must not be too theoretical and burdened down with a lot of continuous assessment.
- If the educational providers went to the private sector and delivered the course at a venue that suited them it would work better and the private sector would feel that they have received added value from the course.
- It has been identified that attending tourism courses is a good method for the private sector to network with like-minded individuals.
- It has been observed that the success of part-time/evening education has not been established in Ireland.

#### 4.5.4 – Operational /Functional courses

Courses designed and delivered to the private sector must be very applicable to the day to day running of their business and therefore these courses should be operational and functional in nature. This requirement was summarised by a minority of interviewees within the discussion. The course content must not be over theoretical and able to be applied by the student.

*“there strategic or management based at a functional or operational level”*.Resp.10, Academic, Institute of Technology.

The subjects could be core theoretical subjects such as management or marketing but ways of delivering these courses in an applied manner or functional manner would be of benefit to the private sector.

*“we think there is a definite need for business management skills and particularly there is a need for financial management skills, financial analysis and people management skills and probably marketing. If we took those three core streams of business skills people (Human Resources), Finance and Marketing we think there is a big need to support tourism enterprises with those.”*Resp.22 , Public Sector Tourism Authority.

The skills therefore obtained would be beneficial to the running of the private enterprise. The focus group made reference to redesigning the tourism course in this way.

*“Project based learning is excellent for developing skills”* (Tourism Industry representative, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

The work placement in a tourism course is also useful in that the student gets the opportunity to operate the skills learned and function within a work environment.

#### **Finding: -**

- The interviewees described that Courses designed to cater for private sector needs must be functional and operational in nature so they can be applied to the work environment.

#### **4.5.5 – Investing in education**

The private sector, while expressing a need for education also showed reluctance in investing in it with a small number of interviewees identifying money as an issue when educating the private sectors. One interviewee felt very strongly about this stating;

*“well the private sector talk about needing advanced training, talk about needing wonderful customer care, talks about of course cultural diversity, all of that kind of thing. At the end of the day I think they are less prepared to invest in it or wait for it.”* Resp.5, Tourism Educator.

The matter of the private sector paying for education was also raised by an interviewee who stated; *“They’ll only attend if it’s free”*. Resp. 23, Senior Tourism officer.

The only way around this would be to write this education off as a tax break, which would show the integrated nature of the programme. Alternatively, the course could apply for funding. Again if neither of the above were possible, offering the students some added value to come to the course would be of some benefit to them such as publicity for example. Fáilte Ireland has recognised this need and is addressing the issue of investing in people.

*“Meeting this challenge will depend in large measure on how the industry invests in its people, and how in turn it uses this investment to provide more value through staff that are better equipped- both in terms of technical skills and customer relations skills- to deliver the type of quality service expected”* (Hotel & Restaurant Times, 2004:12-13).

This will mean that the private sector will have to fund educational training themselves and therefore invest in their employees.

#### **Findings: -**

- The private sector wants to gain more qualification and knowledge but they do not want to pay for it.
- It has been identified that by offering the private sector an incentive to participate in tourism education would encourage them to engage in it.

#### **4.5.6 –Further education**

There was a need identified, which suggested that further education was desirable to the private sectors. Many of the interviewees suggested that a number of private sector



business people would already hold a higher education qualification so offering specific further courses that would benefit them and their business was advantageous.

*“ you could argue that there is a need for post-graduate degrees around tourism education and tourism policy. There could be an argument for colleges providing masters level degrees that would go into areas such as tourism policy, regional development, economic development all those kind of issues.”* Resp.22, Public sector tourism authority.

One interviewee who is actually employed within the tourism industry displayed a motivation to carry out courses such as this, if it was available.

*“It may be worthwhile that the I.T. sector on a regional basis or maybe one particular to actually look at people like myself who have 10 –15 years management experience have a primary degree and give us a top up degree in tourism and that's not being offered by anybody and that would again very practically introducing us to current trends but also it allows us to network as a group of people. This can not be underestimated”* Resp. 25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

Therefore there is a gap and a need for a type of programme that would target people who are already educated but would like to top up their skills or specialise in tourism as an area of specialisation or expertise. This is currently being researched and a number of educational establishments are recognising the demand for this type of educational provision.

*“As part of its own review of its activities relating to education and training support, Fáilte Ireland is currently examining the range of educational and training support services available to the tourism industry in Ireland, and attempting to identify whether these services represent a good fit with current and emerging people development needs in the industry”* (Hotel & Restaurant Times, 2004:13).

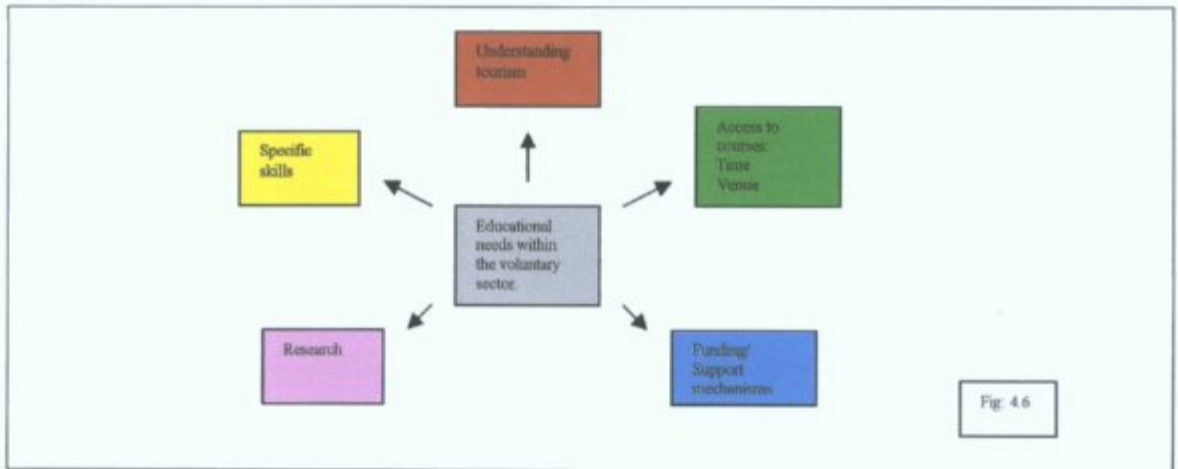
Therefore it is anticipated that Life-long learning courses for such a target market will be developed in the foreseeable future.

### **Finding:**

An educational need has emerged within the private sector for a post graduate diploma or degree in a specialised tourism area such as tourism policy, tourism planning which would be geared towards people working in the industry and who would like to top up there skills or to specialise in a particular area.

#### 4.6 – The educational needs within the Voluntary sector.

The voluntary sectors were similar in the educational needs expressed as the private sector as can be seen on fig: 4.6 below.



55% of interviewees described that being educated in relation to specific skills with the aim of helping with their voluntary tourism business was top priority. Within these specific skills was developing entrepreneurship while emphasising marketing from different angles was very important in getting people to their tourism businesses. The types of specific skills were very practical and a lot of interviewees mentioned computer skills and financial management as very important to them. The skills mentioned were very specific with some interviewees mentioning very detailed skills that they would wish to learn such as resource auditing and writing a funding application, which were two examples used. A small number of interviewees outlined the importance of giving the voluntary sectors a broad understanding of tourism and the tourism industry. This was very strong among these interviewees as they felt that the voluntary sectors abuse tourism in the hope of earning money and have a false impression of the tourism industry and what it entails and this they believe is the reason why many voluntary tourism projects fail. Funding and support mechanisms featured among the voluntary sector with a small number of interviewees describing funding issues as an educational need for this sector. Research and the lack of research within this sector was an educational need identified by an amount of interviewees who discussed how more research would benefit this sector in regard to their needs and wants. The concern over delivering education at a time and place that would be suitable for those taking part was



mentioned by a minority of the interviewees and a further “3% said” they didn’t know what the educational needs within this sector were.

#### 4.6.1-Specific skills

The interviewees when asked about educational needs within the voluntary sector outlined specific skills that they would wish to possess in order to effectively run their business. The two most frequently mentioned specific skills were entrepreneurship and marketing.

*“ I think entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skills, basic finance, marketing, organisational skills...”* Resp.5 Tourism Educator.

Again as was pointed out in the previous section, these specific skills must be very functional and operational so they can be applied to the business on a daily basis. The skills desired are therefore described as very specific but also very basic and functional. Many voluntary sector organisations are doing “*it out of love for something*”Resp.9, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology often with little experience to back it up and consequently they need training and skills development to achieve a level of best practice.

*“ I suppose if I have to name them, they want to know about marketing in terms of market research or even how do we get people to come here or even how do we write a piece for the paper, what papers do we put it in, how do we put a brochure together, how do we set up a database, how do we set up a website...”*Resp. 9, Head of Dept, Institute of Technology.

The skills necessary to carry out business functions are the specific skills needed by the voluntary sector. The educational institutions must determine for whom the program is intended and what is expected from it. Moreover, programs should provide students with needed tools and educate them to take responsibility in future work life, thus bridging the gap between education and the workplace (Collins, 2001).

One academic outlined an appropriate course for voluntary groups.

*“for rural tourism, groups working in rural areas, I think resource auditing is quite important as well I’m talking about environmental audits but social and community audits as well so I think if I was to put together a programme with a series of modules certainly I would have marketing, marketing communications, resource auditing management and management at an operational or functional level, communications module and integrated planning.”*Resp.10, Academic, Institute of Technology.

The researcher agrees that this would be very suitable for the voluntary sector because while the private sector wish also to develop specific skills the voluntary sector

*“ are coming to things usually with very specific skills whereas within the private sector your already making an assumption because they know what there doing the voluntary sector has a tendency to start a project and they mightened necessarily have the skills on board to do that so I think the needs are probably such that a general grounding as regards public administration.. ”*Resp.17, Tourism Educator.

The educational needs within the voluntary sector are more specialised than the public or the private.

There was also emphasis on leadership skills, communication and presentation skills featured very strongly with interviewees also.

*“if you were developing a programme in community tourism wouldn't it be about community leadership and wouldn't it be the leadership skills be the key things...”*Resp.23, Senior tourism officer.

Therefore the core specific skills required by the voluntary sectors are business focused with emphasis on basic operational level subjects such as marketing, computers, finance and communication.

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been recognised that the voluntary sector wish to develop skills, which are specific and operational.
- The predominant educational needs that have been identified within the voluntary sector are entrepreneurship and marketing development.
- On analysis it has been identified that the Voluntary Sector tends to start a project without necessarily having the skills on board to carry it through.
- The overall educational needs of the voluntary sector are business focused with incorporation of “*soft skills*” such as communications and leadership skills.

#### **4.6.2 –Understanding Tourism**

It has been identified by the interviewees that there is a need among the voluntary sector to gain a broad understanding of tourism.

*“again their need is to understand how the broad system operates and how each system interlinks with every other system...”*Resp.4, Tourism Educator, Institute of Technology.

Many voluntary groups decide to set up tourism initiatives without any prior knowledge of the tourism industry and this is a problem in many cases as they fail in their attempts.

*“...tourism educational need there would be one of raising tourism literacy and understanding of tourism.”*Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.



There seems to be a perception of understanding tourism among community groups and also that it is an easy way to make money. Many community groups see tourism as a social jaunt where they can meet and discuss "tourism". An interviewee stated;

*"tourism is not a social panacea! What other agencies would come out to a school hall at 8 o'clock on a winter's night? F.A.S doesn't do it, TEAGEAS don't do it, the IDA doesn't do it and when they do they don't get braided for they're being no tourism in the parish."* Resp.23, Senior Tourism officer.

This interviewee clearly states that there is a general feeling among community groups that they presume they know what they are talking about and a number of voluntary groups would meet in this fashion on a regular basis. In addition another interviewee also made comparisons with other sectors and the community groups. While this interviewee applauded the commitment and dedication that many community groups would have, there is also the fact that many of these people involved don't possess any tourism education.

*"The bottom line is anybody that is prepared to come to a meeting at 7.30pm on a Thursday night after having done a ten hour working day deserves all the help and support they can get. There doing this for nothing.... you've got well intentioned people who are just not very well informed and even the primary building blocks of a destination or tourism industry they really don't know anything about".* Resp.25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

In addition, the evidence within the literature signifies that there is disagreement on whether tourism is a discipline or an emerging discipline and this would contribute to the *ad hoc* manner in which the voluntary sector behaves.

*"The study of tourism and employment noted that travel and tourism professionals are not highly regarded in many countries; therefore, very little emphasis is placed on travel and tourism education."*(Schulman et al, 1994).

The question over whether tourism is a discipline or an emerging discipline is still unanswered (Jafari, 1981; Airey, 1998; Leiper, 2000; Tribe, 2000). There is an underlying perception in society that because people have engaged in tourism in some shape or form, they know about it and can talk about it.

*"..you cannot bring together a voluntary group of people and call a meeting to talk about a specialised health care or the pharmaceutical industry or computers right? But you can call a meeting and say we'll talk about tourism because everybody feels as though they have a legitimate right to talk about tourism and their an expert in tourism because they've been to "Butlins" and they've been to the Canaries they have all been tourists. They've been on the plane with a bag and a passport whereas my argument would be that tourism is probably one of the most competitive industries in the world."* Resp.25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

Tourism is multi-faceted in nature and it is for this reason that tourism programmes are usually attached to another relevant discipline for example, Marketing, Economics, Business studies, Geography and Psychology. An article prepared for a special issue on Tourism education for the Annals of Tourism Research in 1981 revealed,

*“tourism by its nature penetrates every aspect of life, whether directly or indirectly. It brings into action or reaction several indigenous factors and creates an environment of its own”* (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981: 20).

Similarly, because tourism may not have gained a discipline status, it has little weighting and community groups feel they understand tourism without educating themselves about it in the first place. This attitude towards tourism may have filtered down from the level of significance attached to it by educational establishments.

#### **Findings: -**

- A broad understanding of tourism is significant for a community group to see the multi-faceted nature of the tourism industry.
- Voluntary Groups are effectively developing projects with their eyes shut if they do not possess any knowledge of tourism.
- It has been identified that knowledge of how the broad tourism system operates and how each system interlinks with every other system is needed.
- The level of tourism literacy within voluntary groups needs to be addressed.
- It has been verified that tourism may only be an emerging discipline and because little emphasis is placed on travel/tourism education, Voluntary tourism organisations presume that they have an understanding of this dynamic industry and therefore have an *ad hoc* attitude towards development.

#### **4.6.3 – Funding / Support mechanisms**

Many community groups are voluntary where they create and develop projects in their own time using money they receive through fund raising and funding agencies. There are two aspects to this section; one, community groups would like to be educated about funding and two, they would like to get funding to be educated in tourism. Overall, funding is a huge problem for the voluntary sector.

*“there probably is a fair bit of money available for tourism but the voluntary sector doesn't know how to get its hands on it and if there was a course for the voluntary sector I would see that as being a mayor component of it, how to tackle all different funding that is available for us”*. Resp.19, Chairperson of Voluntary Enterprise Development.

Finding out where funding can be sought and how to go about it can be invaluable to the voluntary sector body. Voluntary groups usually give their time and energy to projects with little or no return because what all voluntary organisations have in common is that they are set up on a non-profit or not-for-profit basis. Despite what this sounds like, they



can make a profit, but there will be a constitutional limit on how much (if any) of the organisations profits can be distributed to its members. All profits, or any left over after the permitted distribution, must be reinvested in the organisation or used for the organisations constitutional purposes (Adirondack, 2000; 1).

The interviewees identified a lack of support mechanisms, which could be put in place to help them. The voluntary sector relies on grants and funding to conduct their business but who will compensate them for tourism education. Some interviewees came up with comments on this.

*"The only thing I would say is we need to have some mechanism that allows those people who are involved in tourism projects at community level to be given an introduction to the industry, to the sector if they so wish."* Resp.25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

A support mechanism that would be put in place to assist voluntary groups would be very helpful to them.

*"there should be some mechanism where by if you are involved in a community group that you can call one person to come in and give a one hour presentation to you on what tourism is about and to answer any questions that you may have to give you further information, to give you links to so you can get more information, contact people that you may want."* Resp. 25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

If the public sector didn't see the need for such a service, maybe sponsorship could be an option

*"...there is merits in taking an idea like that to a high street bank and asking them to sponsor a mentor going around maybe making one or two presentations per month per county and literally going and making the same type of presentation. That would be extremely worthwhile and not very costly initiative. That's the type of intervention from a training perspective that is needed on the ground."* Resp.25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

Therefore requiring funding is very difficult for voluntary groups. New and innovative ways must be sought to try and gather much needed funds for these tourism enterprises.

#### **Findings: -**

- Voluntary groups want to be educated about funding but also want funding to be educated.
- It has been identified that the voluntary sector would benefit from a training course that could be delivered, to give this sector an introduction to tourism.
- An educational need identified is training designed to tackle different funding mechanisms that are available to develop their voluntary tourism organisation.

- It has been identified that the voluntary sector would benefit from a support mechanism or group that would be able to advise them and maybe initiate training/networking to ensure that sustainable tourism product development transpires.

#### 4.6.4 – The research need

A few of the interviewees described that there has not been enough research on the voluntary sector in Ireland as little is known about their needs and wants.

*“there’s a research need there to find out the needs of the tourism industry and these voluntary groups would engage in some sort of research ...”* Resp. 14, Academic, Senior College.

There is a need to find out more about voluntary groups and the educational needs of this group can then be deciphered.

There is also a need within the voluntary sector for them to engage in more research so that they can capitalize on their investment.

*“ If tourists were coming to stay overnight or whether there was a need to provide Irish traditional music for example and so for them ways to link in with larger private or public organisations who are attracting tourists to maybe provide the service that they are providing would be a possibility”.* Resp. 18, General Manager public sector organisation.

The voluntary sectors should connect with their customers through market research, maybe to build a profile of what type of visitor they may have coming to their enterprise and also to keep an eye on the competition. It is apparent from the literature, that there is a deficit in the quantity of research on the educational needs within the voluntary tourism sector but it is assumed that this sector would need a broad understanding of the tourism industry while gaining practical skills such as financial, operational and functional skills to effectively manage the voluntary business. The advent of Life-long learning has meant that there is now a development of courses designed for this sector at a time and place that is pertinent to them.

#### Findings: -

- More research is needed into the tourism voluntary sector in Ireland in general.
- The voluntary sector themselves would also need to be able to conduct their own research to capitalise on their investment.



#### 4.6.5 – Access to courses

This has been covered in the last section on private sector educational needs but also was a consideration with the voluntary sector. Courses must be delivered at a time and place that is accessible to them.

*“getting people from the voluntary sector you have to offer them the education at a time and a place that is pertinent to them.”* Resp.17, Tourism Educator.

Education for these groups, in terms of location and timing is very similar to that of the private sector. They are doing it in their own time and therefore it should be accessible to them without too much inconvenience.

**Finding:** Education for the voluntary sector must be available at a time and location that supports and encourages them.

## 4.7. - Satisfaction with the level of tourism education provision in Ireland

When discussing overall satisfaction with the provision of tourism education in Ireland, 38% described that they were satisfied, while 24% were not satisfied and 38% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the provision of third level tourism education.

Percentage Satisfaction with the provision of Third Level Tourism Education

Yes	38%
No	24%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	38%

Table 4.8

The main concerns are represented on fig 4.7.1 and these are described in detail in the following section.

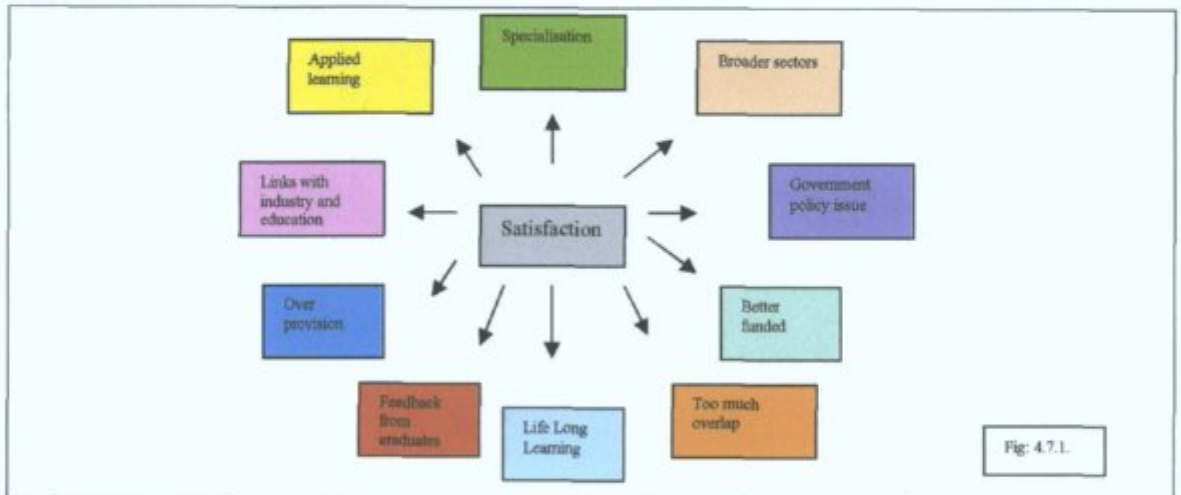


Fig: 4.7.1.

Concerns surrounding satisfaction with the level of third level tourism education.

### 4.7.1- Applied Learning

The concern surrounding applied learning as an element within tourism courses has already been outlined but this was one reason for the dissatisfaction with the level of tourism education provision among interviewees.

*"I think there should be more hands on."* Resp.13 Administration Coordinator, PLC.



There is an abundance of programmes in Ireland but many do not possess elements within the syllabi to suggest that the learning outcomes of the students will be operational and functional to them in industry.

*“well like I said already I think some of it is too academically based you know and a lot of it is set up really to fill college places you know sometimes rather than thinking of the needs of the students.”* Resp. 14, Academic Senior College.

The needs of graduates to have a practical knowledge of the industry on completion of courses are a vital element and have been recognised by interviewees as an area of dissatisfaction with programmes at the present time.

While there will always be a need for some theoretical courses, there is a requirement for an increase in applied learning within course structure.

*“I think the current structure is either undergraduate students looking at theoretical models or also you have students who are going through Failte Irelands training programme formally CERT programmes that are very much about hotel management and catering and there is no grey area and I think there should be!”* Resp.17, Tourism Educator.

One interviewee described the frustration at the level of practical skills that graduates possess on entering the industry.

*“Sometimes you don’t get enough back from them. There not brave enough about what they should know. I don’t know how you do that.”* Resp. 23, Senior Tourism Officer.

Another interviewee described how students could get the most out of tourism courses.

*“I think we need to look at new fun ways of raising skills and capacity at all sectors. You know, if you do it in an academic, holding the stick over people saying you have to train that etc, I think your not going to get the emotional buy in that you need people need to feel that they have to do this”.* Resp. 25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

This has been reiterated in the literature for example Hawkes, (1990: 14) in an article entitled: *“Why colleges are failing the industry”*, describes how practical vocational education is being dropped in favour of curriculum based on general academic theory.

*“The academic bias of these towards management theory-especially in the final year- is very harmful. Students are conditioned to look down on the practical, action style of management required by any future senior manager.”*

There must be a correct balance between theoretical courses and practical/vocational courses to satisfy the needs of industry. Therefore the lack of applied learning within tourism courses was an issue of dissatisfaction for those interviewed. Ways to combat this would be to try and make these courses as applied as possible in the delivery to the student and also to relate assessment to practical and operational procedures. The focus group outlined the importance of applying the design of a tourism course to industry operations as much as possible. Project-based learning, field trips, guest lecturers and

the work placement can achieve this. In this way the student has direct contact with the industry thus making the course more applicable (Tourism industry representative, Minutes of meeting, 2004).

#### **Findings: -**

- Dissatisfaction with the poor level of applied learning has been identified within tourism education where it is viewed as an important element of any tourism course.
- Interviewees recommend that educational establishments must find interesting and fun ways to make tourism programmes more “hands on” so that the students obtain functional and operational skills to work within the industry.
- It has been recognised that some of the courses are too academically based and a lot of these courses are set up to fill college places.

#### **4.7.2- Links with industry and education**

A number of interviewees felt that there was an unsatisfactory link between industry and education and ways of bridging this gap must be devised.

*“A better relationship between the different aspects of tourism out there in I suppose the public, private and voluntary sectors and the colleges that are in operation here in Ireland and actually providing the educational courses.”* Resp.1, Academic, Institute of Technology.

This does happen at the moment as regard validation of programmes but within the normal day-to-day running of an educational establishment, their needs to be more of a partnership with industry. An evaluation of the literature recognises the need for development of links and networking between tourism stakeholders. The educational sector could invite industry in to help with evaluating tourism programmes while also utilising the industry representatives to give guest lectures, so that they could share practical experiences and skills with the students. In addition, academics should seek to collaborate with industry on applied research and consultancy projects, which would benefit the whole community in the long run. Where possible, students should be encouraged to participate in educational visits to travel sector operations. This will help them to better understand the practical realities of the industry and employer expectations of graduates (Zhang & Wu, 2004; 427).

For instance, inviting industry into the educational establishment to lecture and the department within that discipline allocating a budget for this service is just one way that



industry could get more involved. The lack of a partnership with industry was also highlighted by the voluntary sector.

*“it would be nice if there was something done in the local I.T. to link into voluntary groups. You know at the end of the day we are only voluntary and any help and assistance we could get would be fantastic. The educational, I presume the courses that are going on are a big help to the industry but from a voluntary sector we don't see a lot of it to be honest. You know!”* Resp. 19, Chairperson of Voluntary Sector Enterprise.

Therefore both parties must meet and form a link. This could be done from both sides for example; the educational establishment could better market the courses on offer to certain groups in society instead of recruiting students through the traditional channels. Secondly, Industry could get more involved whether it is engaging in Life-long Learning or contributing to existing courses by guest lecturing or allowing students to visit on a field trip basis. They could also lend their name to a database for work placement purposes. All of these simple extras could enhance the partnership with industry.

The Tourism Policy Review Group (2003) reiterated that forming a link between education and industry was desired where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives. Links between industry and education have also been proposed by the submissions sent to the OECD (2004) on the Review of Higher Education in Ireland.

The literature therefore confirms that better links between industry and education are required at Regional and National level (Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology, 2003).

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been identified that dissatisfaction exists among interviewees due to the weak link between education and industry at the moment.
- A better relationship would be formed through networking and linking with each other and this could be achieved through simple procedures implemented between both stakeholders. If the industry and the educational establishment both considered each other further then better links could be fused between the two parties.

### 4.7.3 – Over provision

Education in Ireland has been in an expansive state for the past decade. In a submission to the Irish Government (1999) on the National Development Plan, the Council of Directors of The Institutes of Technology presented the following review of the sector:

*“The success of the Institutes of Technology both in fulfilling their role of training and educating for industry, in adapting to industry needs in a rapidly changing environment, can be measured in their rapid expansion and increased enrolments – increasing from 3,234 in 1975/76 to over 32,000 in 1997/1998. This had grown to 46,111 whole time equivalents by 2001/2002”* (Institutes of Technology and the knowledge Society- Their Future Position and Roles, 2003).

This would put forward that provision of education and training has been supplied relative to the demand of people wanting to participate in it.

Tourism education has expanded rapidly in the last decade. The development of tourism as a subject for study is relatively new and has been very rapid. This is not only the case in Ireland but in other countries as well, for example

*“the first two postgraduate courses in tourism in the U.K. were introduced in 1972 with total enrolments of about 20 students. By 1997 there were nearly one hundred courses in the UK leading to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees”* (Airey, 1998: 9).

The interviewees displayed a concern for this as it is not sustainable and some interviewees described how demand is falling and some courses especially at PLC level will have to be eradicated.

There was also an unease surrounding the many tourism courses within the I.T. sector, which seem to be Business based but have attached tourism to the title. The concern here was with the provision of tourism that the student is subjected to for the quantity of time they are in college.

*“ I think in general in a lot of the I.T.'s there are a lot of business courses that have tourism tagged on, with very inadequate tourism provision but on the other hand then I think if you are going to do a primary or an honours degree I think that its really the business studies element that is the core element. That's the way it has to be. Business studies and tourism but I think then there could maybe be a bit more thought into tourism provision.”* Resp. 5, Tourism Educator.

Students get a general business qualification with tourism tagged on, the educational establishments find it difficult to attract students because of this over provision and industry complains about the competency of graduates who have accomplished these courses.



*"I am of the opinion that there's an over provision, too many places offering similar courses and the result is extremely difficult to attract students or the appropriate number of students to economically run the course." Resp.6, Academic Tourism College.*

The course content analysis identifies that the majority of tourism courses in Ireland are of this nature. Right across the board the educational establishments are finding it difficult to fill college places, this has led to an array of concerns from the points decreasing at entrance level for these courses and utilising international students to fill places on these programmes due to the poor demand regionally for them.

**Findings: -**

- There is dissatisfaction with the level of provision of tourism courses in Ireland.
- It was confirmed by interviewees that course numbers have been expanding for the last decade and most Tourism courses are core business based especially in the Institute of Technology sector.
- It has been suggested that the students are graduating with a business qualification with little emphasis on tourism.
- It has become extremely difficult to attract students or the appropriate number of students to economically run some courses.
- The tourism industry has recognised that graduates do not possess the vocational skills to function within the tourism industry.

#### **4.7.4 – Feedback from graduates**

The over provision of tourism courses in Ireland has led to a multitude of graduates coming out into the workforce. As a result of this many of them do not find work within the tourism industry. The majority go onto further education or work within the business sector. Therefore some graduates who have tourism qualifications do not actually work within the tourism sector.

*" I think maybe feedback from graduates and the amount of people who have been misplaced, who haven't been placed in their chosen profession maybe that says a lot." Resp.20, Public-private partnership Officer.*

While some graduates might choose not to work within the sector, others just can't find employment within the tourism industry. A review of the literature on this topic suggested that in the UK,

*"a large number of college graduates from tourism courses are recruited by retailers, building societies and banks" (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990: 33).*

Quotes such as this one, would question generic tourism courses and the employability of graduates from these courses with the majority of tourism courses available having a business slant and therefore leaving the graduate prepared for a broad spectrum of career opportunities. The other proposition in the literature was that tourism graduates could command more money in other careers, for example in a study looking at human resource issues in tourism in China,

*“Even on commissions, the average total monthly income is around 1000 RMB. Most qualified international guides graduate with a Bachelor’s degree in English or Tourism. Thereafter, it is easy to secure a job in banking, IT or commerce, with a monthly salary ranging from 2000 RMB to 3000RMB. This situation means that tour guides average two to three years at most in the travel industry before they secure a job elsewhere”.* (Zhang & Wu, 2004: 426).

Therefore if graduates will receive more income working in another career they are more than likely not going to seek employment within the tourism industry.

There is an over supply of tourism graduates with business studies and they are not meeting the equilibrium of demand of the tourism industry, so therefore most graduates will find jobs but not necessarily within the tourism sector. Unfortunately the tracking of graduates who have completed tourism educational courses in the I.T. and University sector in Ireland has been very poor with the exception of individual college records or the efforts of the Alumni offices in a number of colleges in Ireland. In the Institute of Technology, Sligo for example, a questionnaire was posted to those students who graduated in 2002 from the Diploma in Applied tourism in relation to the jobs that they were currently employed in. Only four students’ replied to this questionnaire and out of that four, three of those students were not working in the tourism industry. On analysis, student feedback from tourism courses has been very poor and only a vague dearth of knowledge exists on the employment behaviour of these students.

#### **Findings: -**

- Graduates with a qualification in tourism do not necessarily work within the tourism industry with many graduates being misplaced to the business sector.
- It has been recognised that some graduates choose a career that is not related to the tourism industry on graduation.

#### **4.7.5 – Life-long Learning**

Life-long learning is a huge trend with many colleges now looking at innovative ways of attracting students, which does not involve the traditional method through the CAO



system. There is an increasing emphasis on adult education and mature students and the whole area of Life-long Learning. This is something that is presently being adopted within higher education as a method of attracting students (Barrows & Walsh, 2002; Marhuenda, 2004; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004). There is a need for more courses geared towards people who would like to up date their skills or keep up to date with new trends and innovation within the tourism industry.

A number of interviewees identified this dissatisfaction at the moment within the provision of tourism education. There must be courses put in place to facilitate the learning of adults who might already be working within the industry to up date their skills.

*"And the assumption is as well that every student who is going to learn about tourism or has some involvement in it is under twenty five and they are not!"* Resp. 17, Tourism Educator.

There is a 'gap' in the provision for more courses to educate this age group about tourism whether they are already involved or want to develop new skills. External factors such as the ageing baby boomers and the increases in technology in the workplace are just two main influences on the design and development of tourism education and training for this sector at the present time and this is reflected in the literature, Armstrong-Stassen & Templer (2005:57-67).

There is an array of full time courses but very few distance learning or web based courses and this is another area that would benefit those who would like to engage in Life-long Learning.

*"There are probably in terms of full time courses, there are adequate courses. I think to a certain extent if you can't be that full time student there probably aren't because you can't dedicate your whole life 2-3 years of study or 4. There could probably be better direction looking at what's out there for people already involved in the industry".* Resp. 17, Tourism Educator.

Maybe educational establishments could change their marketing techniques to incorporate and attract this type of student. It is certainly a growth area.

*"I think CERT do a bit but they need to do more adult education programmes, so that people with enterprises that their capacity can be built more."* Resp. 21, Regional Development Executive.

Within a previous section it was outlined that current employees within the tourism sector are not necessarily educated in tourism so

*"there has to be a need for more qualified graduates in that area and you know at the same time they have to encourage as many people as possible to want to study tourism to move into the industry or you want people in the industry to come back to education and further their education."* Resp. 27, Course Director University.

Overall a need exists for an increase in educational provision for those interested in Life-long Learning.

The Tourism Policy Review Group (2003) in submissions on the strategic development of tourism education identified that developing modular type courses would allow flexibility and for Life- long learning courses to be delivered at a time, and places that were pertinent to the student. The option of e learning was also suggested for these types of programmes. Many people just want to participate in modules of existing programmes for their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Flexibility in the delivery and design of courses was evident where a move to deliver programmes through shorter, flexible and increasingly modular arrangements would benefit individuals and society as a whole. This would generate a culture of Life-long learning, which was significant in all submissions reviewed for the OECD Report (2004).

**Findings: -**

- Offering more life-long learning educational courses in Ireland was a need identified by interviewees.
- It has been recognised that students need to be attracted back to education.
- The majority of senior people employed within the tourism industry are not from a tourism educational background so Life-long Learning courses would be an ideal way for these individuals to up date their skills and also network with other individuals
- There is a need for access to these courses through distance learning or web based courses so that the students can educate themselves at a time that is suitable to them.

**4.7.6 – Too much overlap**

Interviewees expressed that because of the over provision of tourism courses in Ireland there is, as a result of this too much over lap between existing course contents. A multitude of courses exist all delivering the same subjects and learning outcomes and as a result tourism courses are being forced to specialise in certain areas which is a positive thing giving the student more choice and variety but many courses in their current state offer similar subject areas.



*"The real question now is the mix of education services not the volume of them, it's the mix of them and again it's the question around the balance between business skills and craft skills. Questions around the distribution of all those services across 10 –11 institutes of Technology in particular. There are questions that have to be looked to I think around whether we need to specialise in different locations and reduce the number of places where courses are offered."*  
Resp. 22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

This is evident from the course content analysis (see Appendix 3). Therefore specialised tourism courses are becoming popular with some educational establishments becoming synonymous with certain specialisations.

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been identified that due to the current provision of tourism courses in Ireland there is inevitably an over lap of certain courses being delivered.
- There is a need to give students more choice within tourism courses so certain educational establishments are specialising within certain areas to offer the students variety in course choices.
- It has been suggested that educational establishments need to review their course contents and identify any overlap or similarities to other courses already available.
- A better mix of educational services is called for and not an increase in volume of courses.

#### **4.7.7- Better Funded**

There is a requirement for a better-funded approach toward tourism education in certain circumstances. These certain circumstances include funding more Life-long Learning courses and courses that could be brought out and used within industry to educate individuals already working in Industry about tourism. Therefore this would integrate tourism education and industry by forming a link and partnership between both. The funding could be received from the industry itself or from grant aid where possible.

*"I would like to see a much more integrated approach, a much better funded approach."* Resp. 25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

This type of funding would help to form a link with education and industry and help certain sectors, especially the voluntary sector to provide an appropriate, sustainable tourism product.

### Findings: -

- The industry would like more education but do not want to invest in it themselves.
- It has been identified that a more integrated and better-funded approach towards tourism education is needed.

#### 4.7.8 - Government policy

Ireland has historically, been very proactive in regard to tourism policy. Baum (1994: 191) commended Ireland for this within his research,

*“Irish tourism policy existed with only minor modifications for some 30 years until it was specifically operationalised, with attendant short and medium targets for the industry, following the 1987 general election.”*

The level of tourism education provision in Ireland is increasing all the time and there are many issues surrounding this for example educational establishments can validate courses and receive validation of courses and accessibility to this more than ever before. The expansion of tourism education provision has got to a stage where the government will need to look at the policy issues surrounding the provision of tourism education in Ireland. If courses are supply driven which has been suggested then the appropriate department will need to look at this and try and quantify what the next step will be in relation to the current provision of tourism education. The whole structure of tourism education provision in Ireland will have to be reassessed and maybe certain educational establishments will be given specialised niche programmes to develop, which are already happening, in certain regions of Ireland at present. Therefore a certain amount of current courses will have to be re-evaluated for this to take place. There are definite gap areas within tourism education such as tourism and transport and courses that would look at planning. There is also a need for courses with emphasis on entrepreneurship.

*“There are some of the policy issues perhaps for the government to think of and in terms of entrepreneurship in developing local initiatives off the ground and spreading the thing around to become an issue in the years ahead.”* Resp. 3, Academic, Institute of Technology.

One interviewee proclaimed:

*“Is there a broad understanding as to the importance of tourism at national policy level, I would say no!”* Resp. 4, Tourism Educator, Institute of Technology.

Other European countries would have their own ministry totally dedicated to tourism but in Ireland this is not the case.



The overall provision of courses in Ireland will have to be readdressed. It has been suggested in the literature to segregate courses into niche areas of expertise. This would be an ideal situation in relation to the provision of tourism education in Ireland.

*“ I think there is a debate we need to have around that and I’m thinking for example of something like professional cookery which is pretty much available in 9-10 institutes of Technology at present, and when you talk about world class tourism like government policy talks about world class tourism you know is it feasible for a place like Ireland to have 10 –11 centres of excellence you know in different sub disciplines within tourism or do we need to think about clustering them in 3-4 places and you can imagine what the response of that would be in terms of local issues and local politics.”* Resp.22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

There would have to be a lot of discussion and debate on this topic and is something that will need further research. The submissions to the OECD describe that specialisation and developing “centres of excellence” within certain Institutes of Technology are scrutinized where a demand for these specialisms must be quantified. Therefore the demand for these specialised courses must be quantified before Centres of excellence or expertise are developed.

#### **Findings:**

- Some dissatisfaction among interviewees with government policy on tourism education provision in Ireland has been identified.
- The interviewees described that there is a concern around the provision of tourism education and segregating areas of expertise in regions around Ireland have been proposed.
- It has been suggested that a broad understanding as to the importance of tourism at national policy level is lacking.
- Tourism education needs to have a regional focus by addressing the needs of stakeholders in the region in terms of encouraging entrepreneurship and rural tourism.

#### **4.7.9 – Broader sectors**

While areas of expertise are forming there is a need to develop broader areas of expertise within tourism education provision.

*“Well I’d love to see for example after the student has completed my course that they could go on where they could specialize in a certain area it could be where they do leadership training and management training and say planning and that type of thing into a business aspect but also they could go on and get training in other areas say tour guiding and different areas. At the moment I notice that the students have to either do a business course if they follow on from my course, they have to go and do a business course, that is not specifically related to tourism if you know what I mean.”* Resp. 11, Course Coordinator Plc.

This interviewee who is employed within the PLC sector would like to see broader areas of expertise available so that students have a choice. It has already been identified that there are no courses available at present in the areas of tourism policy, tourism planning and tourism and transport for example but these areas of expertise would be very beneficial to students. Ireland on the whole would benefit from individuals who are educated in these areas. The course content analysis identifies that there are broader subject areas taught at the moment but there is a need to design complete courses in broader areas with not so much emphasis on the Business Studies side of tourism.

**Findings: -**

- There is a need for areas of specialisation in tourism courses in Ireland.
- The majority of courses at present are in the business studies area but offering the student a different aspect from which to study tourism would give the student a better choice.

#### **4.7.10 – Specialised areas**

The over provision of tourism courses in Ireland has forced competition among courses. The literature would suggest that in the last thirty years there has been an explosion of tourism educational provision.

*“The enormous growth and changing global conditions have created new career opportunities in the emerging profession of travel and tourism” (Hawkins & Hunt, 1987, cited in Schulman, 1994).*

It is for this reason that many colleges are now specialising in certain fields of tourism. The general Business and tourism qualification, which is offered by many Institutes of Technology, is becoming dated and interviewees identified areas of expertise, which they would like to see within course contents. This has already been implemented during the programmatic reviews that are taking place right across the country at present for example in (see course content analysis, appendix 3), Dundalk Institute of Technology are implementing an Event Management course in 2005/2006.

*“I think we have become much more specific, much more needs focused and I think offering people opportunities of modules whether they are travel agency, guiding, heritage, whatever you know that there specifically trained for the needs at work.” Resp. 5, Tourism Educator.*

Tourism courses are now becoming specialised and this is good as the graduates will be more capable within the tourism industry and can apply these skills within the work



place. There has been an emphasis on general tourism and business courses, which traditionally have a deficiency of tourism and are very broad allowing the student access too many career choices. While this is good from that point of view, the feedback from industry suggests that graduates are unable to apply the skills they have accomplished in education. Therefore if tourism courses were to become more specialised, it would qualify students and give more specialised and practical skills that they could apply in the workplace.

*“there should be more specified courses I talked about adventure tourism the closest thing we have to that is outdoor education over in Castlebar but that really isn't a tourism course, but you need something touristy like that you've got to have an Adventure tourism course an Honours degree in like eco-tourism you've got to have one in heritage tourism, you've got to get more specific because that's, if we decide in the West of Ireland that were going to try and promote more adventure tourism which is what your one in Failte Ireland is talking about the more activity tourism you got to have the people to actually do that so you got to train them in you know management of adventure tourism....”* Resp. 7, Tourism Educator.

There is a need to specialise in certain areas of tourism, as it is becoming more segregated and developed.

*“Like new things as well like the green box, sustainable development, eco tourism, green tourism if you look at Australia they have one of the best green certification programmes like you'd ever get, like I wouldn't know that only we researched that earlier on for the green box, so you know its new things they do need to be brought into courses and delivered through them you know”* Resp 21, Regional Development Executive.

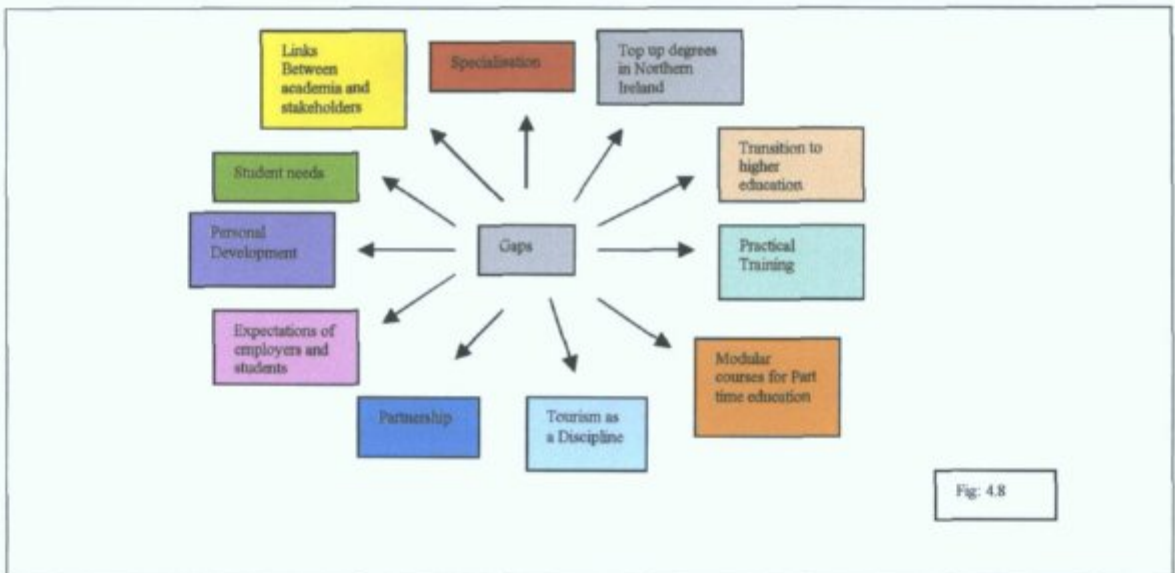
Courses need to diversify and up date themselves. It is no longer good enough to provide a straight Business and tourism course. Programmes are becoming more specialised and this has been reflected in the trends section. There are all types of tourism and specialising in certain areas is what needs to happen to sustain our destinations and the courses that provide individuals to work within these destinations.

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been identified that there is a need for Courses to become more specialised.
- Opportunities of modules that allow the student to gain knowledge in specific areas are desirable.
- New areas of specialisation such as Tourism Policy, Eco-tourism and Tourism Event Management and Planning need to be introduced as complete courses and not just as subjects within tourism courses.

## 4.8 – Gaps in the provision of third level tourism education

This study has identified a number of gaps that are in existence within the provision of tourism education in Ireland at this present time. These are illustrated on fig: 4.8 below.



The most outstanding gap was the area of specialisation within tourism courses with almost quarter of interviewees describing the unavailability of specialised courses in tourism education as a gap. Interestingly, the second most recognised gap was the lack of personal development and empowerment built into tourism educational courses with only a small element of this area touched on in many courses mainly in subjects such as HRM and communication.

Practical skills training again featured as a gap within tourism educational provision with a small number of interviewees recognising the need for more practicality within tourism education. The area of Life-long learning again was a gap and that more modularised courses should be developed so as to deliver this type of education on a part-time basis. The transition of students into higher education was discovered as a gap because there is little emphasis on tourism education in secondary schools while interviewees from the PLC sector felt the transition to third level was also difficult for their students. The expectation of the employers within the tourism industry was ascertained as a gap. There is emphasis on information Technology, applied marketing skills and a high proficiency in a language but in terms of educational institutions



equipping graduates with these skills is undetermined and therefore a gap was identified. Tourism may not possess discipline status in many educational establishments and it is for this reason that tourism as a discipline has been identified as a gap. The other Gaps that have been illustrated on the diagram will be further discussed in the following section.

#### 4.8.1 – Specialisation

There is a current lack of provision of tourism courses that are specialised in certain areas and this has been addressed in the last section on Satisfaction with the provision of Tourism education in Ireland. There is an emphasis on business and tourism in the majority of educational establishments (see course content analysis, Appendix 3). It is for this reason that the specialisation of tourism courses has been identified as a gap. A quantity of interviewees recognised this as a gap with many identifying certain specific courses that should be implemented.

*“The whole area of transport, if you want to go and do a transport degree in this country you can’t do one as far as I know anyway. Whether that’s to study state transport, private transport and of course there’s an awful lot happening in that area at the moment.”* Resp.4, Tourism educator, Institute of Technology.

Event management programmes were another popular gap that interviewees discussed but such courses will be coming on stream next year as a number of Institutes of Technologies will be considering this course for the programmatic review in their respective educational establishments. On the discussion of specialised areas, one interviewee recognised that,

*“Having developed niches where people are improving their knowledge of a particular area is the way to go.”* Resp.9, Head of Dept. Institute of Technology.

Offering the student more choice in the tourism field is the gap that has been identified here. Some interviewees used their own agendas and suggested areas of expertise that they would like to see such as;

*“and I think rural tourism should go down on every single course.”* Resp.21, Regional development executive.

This has already been clarified in the literature review in chapter 3 (Peters & Buhalis, 2004: 406-415) and (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004: 412). The report of the Expert Working Group (2003) on the Institutes of Technology and the knowledge society also support the view of specialisation and has identified the areas of expertise within all Institutes of Technology.

Overall specialisation of tourism education has been the main gap identified by the interviewees.

**Findings: -**

- It has been identified that there is a move towards specialisation of courses especially within the Institutes of Technology.
- Some educational establishments are currently reviewing their courses in the programmatic review, which is currently ongoing within the Institutes of Technology.
- It has been recognised that specialisation is already evolving with one Institute of Technology offering a specialised programme in Event Management.
- There is a 'gap' in the provision of courses in certain specific areas of expertise in Ireland, such as Eco-tourism to degree level, Transport and Tourism complete course to degree level and Tourism Planning complete course to degree level.

#### **4.8.2 – Links between academia and stakeholders**

Educational establishments are now seen as open and friendly places whereas they were traditionally seen as “*closed system*”, informal and uninviting. They now encourage industry participation in designing and shaping programmes (Ogawa & Kim, 2005). A minority of interviewees acknowledged the poor record of links between education and stakeholders as a ‘gap’ within the provision of tourism third level education. This is a two way process where academia need to include the public, private and voluntary sectors in their overall planning and design of courses. Their needs to be more liaisons between both parties as regard guest lecturing, site visits, conferences and seminars. The University of Ulster is addressing this gap by inviting industry to their seminars and conferences and also giving them the opportunity to present at these events (Tourism & Hospitality Research in Ireland, Conference, 2005). As far as industry are concerned, there is a lack of awareness among them in relation to tourism education and courses. This could be better promoted to these groups through specialised marketing campaigns directly targeted for them. The whole area of partnership has been recognised by some Institutes of Technology, between academia and industry but this will need to be expanded more over the next few years.



It has been identified that Life-long learning could contribute towards merging the ‘gap’ between educators and industry. These courses would be invaluable to form networking and linkages between both parties.

*“Where I see the gap, we as course designers aren’t really getting pointers in certain directions that we should move our courses towards. I suppose it’s a two-way flow of information really. What id like to see there is a better contact between the stakeholders and the education providers and by better whereby they would be attending seminars together, networking and developing networks, if there was a good network which I feel there isn’t there at the moment but I’m only speaking from my own personal perspective.”* Resp.1, Academic, Institute of Technology.

An evaluation of the literature also makes reference to forming links and networking between tourism stakeholders (Submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; OECD, 2004; Council of Directors of Institutes of Technology, 2003). In addition, academics should seek to collaborate with industry on applied research and consultancy projects, which would benefit the whole community in the long run. This will help them to better understand the practical realities of the industry and employer expectations of graduates (Zhang & Wu, 2004; 427). The focus group held in Sligo, Institute of Technology as part of the programmatic review is another example of how industry representatives can input in course design. There needs to be a balance between the educational establishments and the public private and voluntary sectors.

#### **Findings: -**

- Forming a link between education and industry was desired where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning, conferences, seminars, site visits etc could be addressed from both perspectives.
- It has been identified that Promotion of Life-Long Learning in a friendly environment to the public, private and voluntary sector by delivering courses at accessible times and places for these employees is a gap in certain regional areas of Ireland.
- It has been confirmed that better contact and liaison is needed between the stakeholders and the educational providers.

### 4.8.3 - Student needs

A small number of interviewees described how students and their needs was a ‘gap’ in the sense that sometimes courses are provided and students accomplish them but when out there in the work force they find it difficult to apply the skills qualified to do.

*“The gaps maybe that elsewhere if you look at maybe the BA degree and the BBS degree and tourism hospitality, we perhaps would have some concerns as to maybe the levels of literacy that students are coming away with on that in other words if students coming out of bachelor degrees have a sufficient grasp of things like financial analysis or like people management and they are very practical things.”* Resp. 22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

Educating students with learning outcomes from tourism courses that are practically based are more beneficial to the student in the long term and they will be better able to apply these skills in the industry. There is usually an expectation among graduates that they will be employed in management positions on graduation but this is often un true with many graduates starting working life at the bottom and working there way up through the ranks in the course of time These differing expectations of managers and graduates has been well documented within the literature (Henry et al, 2004:420; Airey, 1998; Dale & Robinson, 2001; Submissions to the Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003). In a study entitled; *“Why do students abandon programs prior to completion?”* a number of reasons were given such as students not being prepared for the course, didn’t have enough information about it before entering and felt alienated in the college system.

*“This survey also highlighted the poor attendance record for some, and that other students were working during term time”* (Mc Donagh & Patterson, 2002: cited in Conway, 2004).

The lack of motivation among students was also highlighted within this study.

The national points system to enter certain courses was identified as an area that effected student retention. For example in DIT

*“it was discovered in the faculty of Tourism and Food that 17% of the first year cohort entered with less than 250 points and this was for all courses”* (Costello & Russell, 2003:30, cited in Conway, 2004).

Study skills, meeting deadlines and stress management are embedded in students with high point’s but are lacking in those who have entered on low points. The discipline and motivation that is needed in a college setting leaves these students struggling (Costello & Russell, 2003). A number of concerns in relation to students needs within tourism education have been identified as a ‘gap’ within the overall provision of tourism education in Ireland.



### Findings: -

- The student's needs and learning outcomes of a tourism course must reflect the type of work the student will be capable of doing. Therefore the more practical a course the better the student can apply the skills in the workplace. This is especially true for subjects such as financial analysis where the student would need to be able to calculate certain accounts and also in the areas of people management and Human Resource Management that the student would be able and capable of managing people.
- It has been identified as an area of concern the levels of competency that students are graduating college with and it is suggested that this is addressed.
- It is the responsibility of educators to better impress on the students the reality of working life in the industry to avoid any idealistic prospects or misunderstandings between the employer and the employee.

#### 4.8.4 – Personal development

A minority of interviewees overall gave personal development as a 'gap' within tourism education provision. This was interesting with an interviewee proclaiming that there should be a course specifically entitled Personal Development. What they meant was that graduates who come to work in the industry are lacking skills such as face-to-face communication, presentation skills and empowerment. This is an area that they felt should be better assessed within the educational system.

*"I'd imagine, what the service provider would want is someone who would be able to be friendly and helpful towards the customers, good customer service I think that's so important. I don't think we have that a lot here in Ireland and then I suppose they are looking for people who are able to take responsibility and that type of thing as well. We could be lacking in that as well a bit."* Resp. 11, Course Coordinator PLC.

Graduates are accomplishing courses but with a lack of these skills. There must be more emphasis on this within assessment and course provision.

*"I know I harp on about it but I would really drum in customer service as much as possible with people if you could empower staff as well it would be very effective. If you look at the Hilton model and how they train all there staff."* Resp.24, Managing Director Tourism Business.

This interviewee goes on to recommend "*Personal Development*" as a good course. The benefits of Professional development accrue to the individual, to the organisation where the individual works and to society in general (Barrows & Walsh, 2002).

### Findings: -

- Interviewees identified personal development as a gap within course provision. This would entail helping the student to become more empowered and able to deal with situations within the workplace.
- It has been recognised that good communication and customer service skills are a must for working in any tourism enterprise.
- The development of people who would be able to take responsibility is a requirement of stakeholders.

#### 4.8.5 – Expectations of employers and students

The expectations of employers were recognised as a ‘gap’ some interviewees believing this to be the case. In terms of graduates and what the industry expect them to know and the learning outcomes that they possess sometimes do not match. This could be due to a multitude of factors such as courses becoming out dated. Most courses are only revised every four, five years. Areas of applied knowledge might not be up to industry specifications. Sometimes educational establishments do not have the necessary technologies in place to give the student the applied learning needed.

*“Expectations of employers of what they want from graduates or trainees and sometimes maybe educational institutions don’t respond quickly enough to that.”* Resp. 2, Academic Tourism College.

Expectations of managers and graduates have been discussed by a number of authors (Henry et al, 2004:420; Airey, 1998; Dale & Robinson, 2001).

Alternatively there is a gap in the expectations of graduates who have completed courses. In terms of employers when they take on graduates they feel that graduates do not want to start at the bottom and work their way up the career ladder it is important to give students realistic expectations of their working lives after college. This was reiterated in the focus group with one industry representative stating,

*“Students are inclined to think they should go straight to the top”* (Tourism industry representative, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004).

A lot of graduates feel that they should be employed in management at higher positions straight away but only a very few actually receive these jobs because employers not only want graduates to have a qualification but also industry experience.



*"There is a gap in terms of expectations I think. I think that colleges could do more to impress on graduates leaving that when they have that primary degree in their pocket, they really only have a basic platform of skills to go out into the working world and they shouldn't believe that they have the A-Z all the answers in their pocket you know, I don't think you can have that when you leave college so maybe there is a gap around expectations and maybe colleges should try and manage those expectations better that could be another issue."* Resp. 22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

Therefore employers and students' expectations need to be managed better by academia. The educational establishments should impress more on graduates the realities of working life before they graduate to avoid disappointment and misunderstandings between graduates and managers in the tourism sector.

#### **Findings: -**

- It has been recognised that students have high expectations when they graduate and hope to go straight to the top of the career ladder whereas this is very often not the case.
- There is a gap surrounding expectations and academia should try to manage expectations better by impressing on graduates leaving the realities of working in the industry.
- The interviewees have suggested that the educational establishments do not respond quickly enough to industry needs.

#### **4.8.6 – Partnership**

This study has identified that partnership needs to be developed between academia and the public, private and voluntary sectors.

*"I'd love to see the college having a link with the voluntary groups that's involved in tourism provision like when I say a link if it was only to meet maybe once or twice in the year, you know and maybe if you were to bring out students to talk to the voluntary group then I think a lot of the voluntary groups get lost in a lot of the public sector and the private sector there are people, I don't think the voluntary sector is given the appreciation they should get for the work they're doing and at the end of the day you can run it like a business but it's a voluntary group that's doing it you know so I'd like to see some link between the educational system and particularly the local I.T. and our group."* Resp. 19, Chairperson of Voluntary Enterprise Development.

This was restated in the focus group where the design of the course involved industry representative participation in the delivery of the course in the form of field trips, guest lecturing and work placement.

*"Field trips are exciting, heritage and community based developments should be visited"*  
(Tourism industry representative, minutes of tourism meeting, 2004.)

**Finding: -**

- It has been confirmed that all stakeholders involved in tourism delivery would appreciate partnership.

#### **4.8.7 –Tourism and discipline status**

This study recognised in discussion with interviewees that tourism is always tagged onto some other discipline within course provision in Ireland. They view this as a gap because in other countries tourism receives full discipline status and therefore courses are very specific to that field.

*“It hasn't made it as a discipline and you know obviously we'd like to see it being a bit more successful as a discipline in its own right so its for those reasons we'd look a bit askance at endless streams of BA's, BBS (Business studies) you know because were not sure if there uniquely different and sufficiently different we do think they are largely generic business degrees under a different tag and therefore we would have an interest in seeing and supporting the research and preparation of a tourism degree that looked different from what we see at present.”* Resp. 22, Public Sector Tourism Authority.

The reasons behind why tourism is not seen as a discipline are quite clear. The phenomenon of mass tourism is only approximately 40 years old and it is for this reason that tourism has not yet achieved discipline status. An article prepared for a special issue on Tourism education for the Annals of tourism research in 1981 revealed,

*“tourism by its nature penetrates every aspect of life, whether directly or indirectly. It brings into action or reaction several indigenous factors and creates an environment of its own”* (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981: 20).

The author also described within the article that tourism does not have a discipline of its own and is frequently attached to another discipline and that governments and universities need to do more and appear to be unwilling to recognise tourism as an important, legitimate field of study which merits the levels of funding accorded to other professional schools and faculties (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981:25).

*“its less than a generation old so were still trying to get our terms of reference really, for this field so what I'm saying to you that yes it is early days I think that the Irish are smart the Irish respect education there prepared to engage in it and I think now over the next five years we have to get our acts together and make a connection between academia and operation, and the operational tourism world.”* Resp. 25, Manager Tourism Development Programme.

It is hoped that tourism will obtain discipline status in the next few years, as it will be the only way that this field can move forward in the educational system

**Findings: -**

- It has been verified that Tourism courses are largely generic business degrees under a different tag.



- Tourism may not receive discipline status in educational establishments in Ireland solely on its own.
- Tourism education is still at an embryonic stage of development as a discipline but has received discipline status in other countries.

#### 4.8.8 – Modular courses for part-time education

A minority of interviewees identified modularisation as a gap in tourism education. If a course is modular it proposes that it can be adapted to other courses or Life-long Learning much easier. This would suggest that this form of course design could be dynamic in the sense that they may well be reduced, reused and recycled to fit into other course contents whether it was to facilitate part-time education or to assist full-time courses. This would allow greater flexibility when delivering courses and this gap could assist Life-long Learning. The trend is towards more flexibility for to allow for adult education

*“I think there should be more emphasis on offering perhaps diplomas and degrees now and even masters on you know a part time basis. Not everybody can afford to attend on a full time basis and I would like to see more I suppose modular courses and perhaps you know evening courses, block courses and so on and perhaps maybe some industry based courses as well.”*Resp.8, Academic, Institute of Technology.

The modularisation system would allow for old or stale courses to be reconfigured so that this reworking of existing courses would permit students more freedom when wishing to specialise in a certain field.

*“ The fact that most of us have or are going modular I think should allow maybe not the development of new programmes or maybe the reconfiguration of existing ones, so for example rather than launching new programmes in maybe cultural management or environmental management maybe a reworking of some of our existing programmes with more common marketing and management modules in year one and two say at undergraduate level and allowing students to specialise in particular directions in year three if it's a three year programme or year four if it's a four year programme so they graduate with a BA in tourism specialising in environmental management or in heritage management or whatever. I think that is the way we have to go rather than developing whole suites of new programmes per se.”*Resp. 10, Academic Institute of Technology.

If modularisation is adopted within all educational establishments it will limit the danger of flooding the market for courses because modularisation will allow the same syllabus to be delivered within an educational institution and it can be adapted to suit the particular course in question. Modularisation will therefore bridge a gap with Life-long Learning, allowing all sorts of courses the flexibility to be delivered at an accessible time and place.

### Findings: -

- The current lack of modularisation within tourism third level education has been recognised.
- Modularisation will allow for a degree of flexibility within course provision as these courses can be delivered on a stand-alone basis or incorporated into existing programmes.
- It has been identified that modularisation will lead to a growth in part-time and Life-long learning due to the convenience involved in delivering a modular programme.
- There is a predictable increase in the provision of modular courses as educational establishments are currently undertaking programmatic reviews.

#### 4.8.9 – Practical training

Practical training was outlined as a gap amongst interviewees. Courses need to be more practical and applied to industry.

*“The main thing that was missing from our courses is this vocational thing it is you can teach them all the academic stuff but need more hands on...”* Resp, 13, Administration Coordinator, PLC.

The graduates need to be able to apply their learning outcomes to the workplace. The courses should be more functional and operationally focused in their learning outcomes and applied to industry needs. There is an array of theoretical courses

*“were coming out with a lot of theory and we do need to get a lot more practice and I think the placement could gear people towards different places.”* Resp.Regional Development Executive.

There was a huge emphasis throughout all interviews on the placement and the value of a placement. The value of a work placement within any tourism programme was apparent within the literature as this allowed the student to be exposed to a working environment.

*“Work placements are considered fundamental for learning and acquiring minimal skill levels”* (Marhuenda, 2004: 231).

“Hands on”, skill and experience built into tourism education has been described by many authors (Martin &Mc Evoy, 2003; Henry et al, 2004;Brotherton et al, 1994; Airey, 1998;Morgan, 2004; Lam &Xiao, 2000; Mc Donald &Hopkin, 2003). The work placement integrated into any tourism course is a definite and useful tool, for applying all the knowledge and skills delivered in classes. A number of tourism courses in



Ireland offer a work placement as part of the course usually lasting between 2 and 12 months.

Courses and content	ST	SV	SH	SL	DEV	DET	DET	LEV	AJT	AJT	LEV	DET	DET	LEV	LEV	TVAL	TVAL	LIT	WIT	FE	GO	GO	DEK	DEK	
PhD																									
Masters by research																									
Masters (taught) part time				MA	MA																				
Masters (taught) full time				MA	MA																				
Postgraduate diploma																									
Degree (Honours)		BA	BA		BA	BA		BA	BA	BA								BA			BA	BA		BA	
Degree	BA				BA			BA				BA	BA											BA	
Diploma																BA									
Higher Certificate																									
Syllabus Content																									
Year 1																									
Placement				e																		12	12		
Year 2																									
Placement						3			2						6										
Year 3																									
Placement			6-12			3																12			
Year 4																									
Placement																							12		

Work Placement Provision

Table: 4.9

Note: numbers signify the months on placement  
 e= elective  
 For full list of college abbreviations, please see appendix.

### Findings: -

- Practical skills based learning has been identified as a gap within tourism educational courses in Ireland.
- The work placement could gear people towards a career and cannot be over emphasised, which gives the students the opportunity to relate their skills to the workplace.
- It has been identified that tourism courses need more "hands on" skills incorporated into them.
- Graduates are coming out of courses with a lot of theory and they do need to get a lot more practice.

#### 4.8.10- Transition to Higher education

The research has recognised a need for better transition between secondary, VEC and PLC courses into higher education. The interviewees felt that students have a poor understanding of the importance of the tourism industry to the Irish economy and it is for this reason that they suggested more emphasis on this subject within secondary school curricula. Introducing students to tourism at secondary school has already been analysed in the literature (Henry et al, 2004:421). This would bring up the prestige of the tourism industry and allow students the insight into tourism as an area of qualification after completion of the Leaving Certificate. There is currently some reference to tourism and a broad understanding of it is delivered within geography for the leaving Certificate but this it was believed by interviewees that this was not enough exposure to the largest service industry in the world.

*"Probably students when they finish the leaving cert they don't learn anything about tourism in school that might be something in order for them to have more interest in the industry if there told about it before they finish school."* Resp 16, Director, Private Tourism College.

The gap is where students are not introduced to the concept of tourism within secondary school and the relevance and importance of it is not stressed and this needs to be addressed. The poor image of the industry within particular countries was also evident within the literature. The traditional poor pay, working conditions, unsocial hours, and the cultural expectations of the local population regarding jobs in service industries were some of the reasons given for this image (Lockwood & Guerrier, 1990:17-35; Littlejohn& Watson, 2004:410).

There is also a gap between the PLC/ VEC courses available and the transition from these courses into third level education.

*"We have the PLC course and they have the diploma and degree courses and the plan would be that people who do the certificate would be able to go onto continue to go from certificate level onto second year of the diploma course in the I.T's but I mean that the gap there is too big. There's too big of a gap between FETAC certificate level and I.T level."* Resp.12, coordinator tourism courses PLC.

Therefore a flow is needed so that these PLC and VEC courses can incorporate integration and a progression onto higher education. Sometimes there is no progression so that when a student accomplishes a PLC or VEC course it is so general and basic that they find it difficult to carry on education. This is another gap between transitions from



one form to another. While the remit of VEC's is to provide vocational education, it is worthwhile encouraging students to continue giving them the opportunities to carry on in education.

#### **Findings: -**

- A gap has been identified between the differences in learning from secondary level to third level education.
- While it has been identified that tourism education now exists with second level education usually within the subject geography, students need to receive an adequate introduction to tourism in secondary school to educate them about the importance of it.
- There is also a need for PLC's and VEC's to consider the possibilities of carrying on into third level education by giving the students a better basis and understanding of tourism. Often these courses are so basic and generic that if students do carry on to third level there retention rate is usually bad and they find the system very difficult to deal with.

#### **4.8.11 –Top up degrees in Northern Ireland**

There has been a gap recognised between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in regard to the provision of degrees and postgraduate tourism education. There is only one available Honours degree course in Northern Ireland and this has been identified as a gap for students from Northern Ireland wishing to continue on in Third level education. It is difficult for them to make the transition to the Republic of Ireland for third level higher education and they are therefore tied to one choice of educational establishment to carry on education.

*"Maybe that there are not enough colleges offering you know top up degrees in Northern Ireland there would be the University and maybe some of the Further Education Colleges should be thinking of maybe offering that and the students are very limited that once they finish here it's the university and that's it."* Resp.15, Tourism Educator PLC.

While there is over provision in the Republic of Ireland there is under provision in Northern Ireland. As a result of this, the educational establishments in the Republic should consider marketing courses to the students from the North that would like to carry on third level education. At the moment there is only one University for them to make the transition to so there is not enough competition for courses in comparison to the Republic of Ireland.

**Findings: -**

- It has been recognised that there are under provision of ordinary and honours degree courses in Northern Ireland.
- Due to the anticipated growth of Tourism in Northern Ireland, it is suggested that further educational establishments in Northern Ireland should also consider awarding degrees so as to add competition to the third level tourism educational provision in Northern Ireland.



## Chapter 5 - Recommendations and Conclusions

### 5.1 – Introduction

This study analysed the provision of Tourism Education in Ireland focusing on the needs of the public, private and voluntary sectors by comparing and contrasting the data received from four research methods namely:

- Secondary data in the form of a literature review
- Qualitative interviewing of stakeholders
- Case study analysis of the programmatic review at the Institute of Technology, Sligo
- A Content analysis of all third level tourism educational courses in Ireland.

The recommendations and conclusions of this research are based upon extensive analysis and discussion of all of the above under headings. The literature review examined published secondary sources in the relevant areas, while the research process involved qualitative interviewing of tourism stakeholders from the Public, Private and Voluntary sectors of the tourism industry. A quantitative element to this study involved a Content analysis tool, which was utilised to comprehend the provision of tourism education currently in Ireland. This was employed to analyse the courses on offer and the syllabus content and is illustrated in Appendix 3.

Fourthly, the programmatic review, which is currently in progress at the Institute of Technology, Sligo was employed as a case study within the overall research and in particular the focus group with industry representatives carried out in 2004.

As part of the review of the then National Diploma in Applied Tourism, a focus group was called to decipher the needs and wants of stakeholders. Sixteen stakeholders from all sectors of the tourism industry were invited to attend.

The main points derived from the meeting were:

- The importance of interpersonal skills/communication skills
- Not enough tourism subjects on the course in its present state
- Entrepreneurship development in the form of projects, research
- Trend towards regionally based and small tourist operations
- With less grant aid in the future, there is an emphasis on marketing
- Design of revised course must be based on regional needs.

This is on going and is hoped that the proposed revised Bachelor of Business in Tourism will be included in the 2006 prospectus.

Findings emerged from the overall analyses and discussion of all of the above. It is in the following segment that recommendations from this study are identified under the seven headings, which are generally the aims and objectives of the study.

## **5.2 - The Role of tourism education in Ireland**

This study identified that the Education of students in preparation for a career in the tourism industry was the strongest factor within the role of tourism education in Ireland. It has been identified that a deviation exists between the opinion of academic's and the public, private and voluntary sectors in relation to the role of tourism education. On analysis it was confirmed that a role of tourism education is to support the industry needs by supplying graduates who are capable of offering a quality service for an expansive range of careers that exist within the tourism industry. It was suggested that courses should incorporate a work placement as an integral part of any course structure to expose the student to a work environment while courses with a business and marketing focus were the most desired. It has been identified that educational establishments must address the importance of enterprise development within tourism education. On examination, research has been acknowledged as a central role in tourism education to keep up to date with new trends. Again a deviation exists between academics and the public, private and voluntary sectors in relation to research. It was confirmed that research has different meanings in diverse contexts where industry needs results or "*Informed opinion*" on which to base commercial judgements, academics are often more interested in the research question and the methodology than the results. Finally, it has been suggested within this study that it is the educator's responsibility to design and provide quality tourism education and that students on completion of education are capable of working within the industry. As a result the learning outcomes from tourism courses must reflect the responsibility of educators in providing courses that suit industry needs. It is hoped that the following recommendations will strengthen the role of tourism education in Ireland.



## 5.2.1 – Recommendations

- It has been acknowledged that this National Tourism Authority has a specific responsibility for tourism development and education in Ireland. It is therefore recommended that a separate Society or National Body for Tourism Stakeholders and educators is set up to encourage linking and networking between both parties. Forming a link between education and industry was desired throughout this study to encourage collaboration where areas such as syllabus content, assessment methodologies, modes of delivery, research approaches, staff exchanges, work experience placements, career planning etc could be addressed from both perspectives.
- It has been identified in this study that there is deviation between tourism stakeholders in relation to the role of tourism education in Ireland. It is recommended that Failte Ireland in conjunction with educational establishments organise a conference on the topic of the Role of Tourism Education in Ireland to encourage this debate between academics and tourism stakeholders.
- The access to courses could be better improved through the development of e learning and web based course availability to students. It is recommended that revising existing courses so that they can be delivered in a modular format and therefore a degree of flexibility will be attached to the course would better facilitate and also encourage life-long learning.
- It has been acknowledged throughout the study that the majority of tourism educators in Ireland do not possess an undergraduate and/or postgraduate specific qualification in tourism. While a master's course for tourism educators is currently offered in the University of Surrey, England such a course has not been developed in Ireland. A Higher Diploma in Third Level Tourism Education Teaching and learning would facilitate the academic staff

that have been educated in other disciplines but are lecturing specific tourism courses. This specific top-up training course would strengthen the overall delivery of tourism education in Ireland.

- The current procedure for course revision is every four/five years with the initiation of a programmatic review. It is recommended that Educational establishments carry out yearly focus group meetings with stakeholders from the industry to keep the educators up to date with trends and changes in the tourism industry.
- It is recommended that there is liaison between Educators and regional stakeholders in the design and shaping of all tourism educational courses.
- The accountability of educators has been identified as a role of tourism education in ensuring that graduates have developed learning outcomes from tourism education that support industry needs. To ensure consistency, it is recommended that Heads of Departments in educational establishments should monitor this accountability more rigorously through the use of appraisals for academic staff. Continuous monitoring of teaching methods, continuous assessment and overall delivery of courses must be addressed. Students should be encouraged to offer their input through questionnaires about the course on a yearly basis and the educators and the Heads of Departments should oversee this.
- It is recommended that Failte Ireland in collaboration with the Department of Art, Sport and Tourism do more to impress upon graduates the expansive range of careers available within the tourism industry. This could be achieved by facilitating third level tourism students with seminars on career progression and expectations of employers within the tourism industry.
- It is recommended that career guidance councillors at secondary level need to be proactive and liaise more with Failte Ireland and third level educational establishments to encourage students into the tourism industry.



- The work placement has been identified as a vital element of any course structure. It has however been recognised that these placements are often badly managed and leave the student feeling frustrated as a result (Keaney, 2003). It is therefore recommended that all educational establishments offering a placement keep a database of reputable work placement environments. The constant monitoring of the work placement by the educational establishment will make sure that the student will utilise their skills within the placement environment. This should include regular liaison between the educator, the student and the industry where the student is placed. The industry need to liaise more with the educators on needs, wants and expectations from students before the student goes on the work placement.
- It is recommended that all third level educational establishments liaise with each other in relation to the work placement. They could exchange information on reputable work placements and set up a common database that all tourism students could access for work placement information.
- It has been identified within this study that there is a “blurred” view in relation to career progression and it is recommended that educators and the National Tourism Authority, Fáilte Ireland set out clear career progression paths for employees within each segment of the Tourism sector. This would raise the profile within the industry and allow for clear career progression to be implemented so that confusion will be decreased in relation to career development within the industry. It is also recommended that working with industry the education providers and the certifying authorities need to develop career paths and thus career progression by providing a number of courses to prepare students for these specific tourism careers. A booklet outlining such career paths could be utilised by career guidance councillors and students in acquiring career information.

- Tourism education should support regional enterprise by forming stronger links with County Enterprise Boards, supporting and encouraging student progression as entrepreneurs. This could be achieved by forming links to encourage enterprise development in rural areas.
- It is recommended to encourage and support enterprise development that the subject Enterprise Development is delivered on every tourism course for a full year in the third year of all tourism courses.
- It has been recommended that students should liaise with the voluntary sector in relation to site visits and work placement. It is recommended that all tourism courses should be designed with a regional focus and therefore this should be included in syllabus delivery. Research projects and project-based assessment could concentrate on the voluntary sector in helping them to build capacity by utilising students in conducting research and analysing data that is pertinent to this sector.
- It is recommended that educational establishments in conjunction with local communities and regional industries encourage research.
- It is recommended that a National seminar series be organised by Fáilte Ireland in collaboration with educational establishments to facilitate the delivery of tourism research.
- It is recommended that more consistency is needed in the development of tourism research conferences and seminars and the educational establishments encourage industry in the region to present and network at these events.



- It is recommended that faillte Ireland needs to develop strategies and policies that possess a stronger educational focus.
- The responsibility of educators has been identified within the analysis. It is therefore recommended that a government policy is developed that clearly defines the role of educators in the overall delivery of tourism education.

### 5.3 - Trends in third level tourism education

There is an over provision of certain types of tourism courses in Ireland and quite an extensive range of courses are available from PLC level right up to post graduate level. This allows students the option to follow on their studies. Many courses are supply driven but recognise the need to gain competitive advantage in a saturated market and are therefore specialising in certain areas. There is a need to develop more practical based courses with less emphasis on theoretical education and a trend has emerged surrounding the skills development, syllabus content and overall delivery of tourism courses in Ireland. Research is now being conducted in Ireland on the topic of tourism and the provision by educational establishments and also funding available has increased within the last number of years.

By addressing global trends in Tourism programmes, subjects such as computer applications are an integral part of any course. Applying the techniques such as interactive marketing, promotions or E-marketing within course work allowing the student will be exposed to this area before entering the industry is vital. Tourism education needs to incorporate subjects with an environmental awareness element, such as tourism planning, tourism management, eco-tourism or sustainable tourism. Languages are not seen as an important requirement on tourism courses anymore with most educational establishments opting to eliminate languages, make it an elective subject or otherwise decrease the amount of contact hours with the student.

Life Long Learning is becoming a huge trend with educational providers looking for alternative ways of attracting students to their educational establishments in comparison

to the CAO system, which was the more traditional route. Educational institutions must look at targeting courses to public, private and voluntary sectors. It has been identified that the majority of Tourism Educational providers may not target these sectors at the moment. An increase in the provision of training courses designed for migrant workers to educate them in areas such as Irish culture, Language and customer service is desired. There also needs to be more emphasis placed on customer service and customer care subjects within all tourism programmes to instil the “Irish Welcome”.

Many graduates are not working within the tourism sector yet it is hard to quantify where the graduates are employed due to poor response rate in surveys conducted by educational establishments. Graduates can also command more money in other careers and due to the business focus in the majority of tourism courses in Ireland, students are qualified to work in a variety of careers.

Tourism may not be identified as a discipline in Ireland and therefore tourism courses are more successful if they are attached to other disciplines such as business, marketing, management or leisure and Heritage. Recommendations are therefore presented to cater for the drivers of change identified above.

### **5.3.1 – Recommendations**

- It is recommended that the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism in collaboration with Failte Ireland address the over provision of tourism educational courses in Ireland by researching the demand for these courses.
- In order to address the research need and analyses of the provision of PLC and VEC tourism courses in Ireland, the Department of Education and Science in collaboration with Failte Ireland could carry out further research to establish the demand and feasibility of these courses.
- It is recommended that educational providers in their assessment methods focus more on practical application. Problem Based Learning and applied theory must be written into the syllabi of all tourism subjects throughout all tourism courses.



- Research has been identified as essential for tourism education. There is a need for increased awareness of tourism research and it is recommended that the setting up of a Tourism Forum would recognise issues and concerns emerging and open up discussions between tourism researchers. This could be overseen by Fáilte Ireland in collaboration with the Institute's of Technology and Universities in Ireland.
- The trends in global tourism signify that the environment and technology are two very important areas of learning. It is recommended that subjects such as computer applications be an integral part of any course. Applying the techniques such as interactive marketing, promotions or E-marketing within course work so that the student will be exposed to these areas before entering the industry are very important. Project based learning and practical application of subjects whenever possible must be written into the learning outcomes of tourism programmes.
- It is recommended that promotional techniques are utilised to promote awareness of Tourism programmes among the Public, private and voluntary sectors. Educational providers should specifically target these stakeholders and encourage them to engage in life-long learning.
- It has been identified that there is a move towards increased numbers of International students accomplishing tourism education in Ireland. It is recommended that further research is conducted into this area and that Fáilte Ireland and the Department of Education collaborate in the assessment of the demand for Tourism educational courses regionally to address the feasibility of Tourism educational courses in certain areas.
- The failed attempt of tourism courses delivered solely on their own within Institutes of Technology and Universities has been recognised. It is recommended that tourism courses are more successful if they are attached to another discipline. Educational providers will have to look at innovative ways in delivering tourism educational courses for the future based on trends. The

attachment of tourism onto subject areas such as events management and planning, sport and leisure, Policy, Transport or Heritage are ways to diversify the delivery of tourism education for this sector without the generic business element.

- The Department of the Environment (1997) produced a report outlining Sustainable Development in Ireland. It has been identified that educational establishments have not reacted vigorously enough in developing tourism education with environmental awareness modules. It is proposed that tourism educational courses must significantly improve the delivery of sustainable tourism, environmental awareness and related subjects. This is a huge trend and growth area. A demand for this type of education has also been identified within the interview process. Modules with environmental aspects must be a vital part of any tourism course.
- The implementation of a longitudinal study of graduates at national level is recommended to assess where graduates are working, what type of employment they receive from tourism courses, pay scales and to quantify exactly how many graduates who have accomplished tourism education actually do work in the sector.
- It is recommended that communications and interpersonal skills need to be a compulsory component of tourism courses before work placement.
- It has been recognised that the “*Frosty Failte*” in Irish society need to be addressed. In an attempt to highlight the importance of standards and quality, it is recommended that Failte Ireland reward professionalism and host training nationwide.
- This study has identified cultural diversity as a trend in Irish society. It is recommended that Failte Ireland continue to implement training for migrant workers and increase the overall provision of this training.



- It has been identified within this study that all tourism stakeholders would benefit from tourism education but do not want to invest in it. It is recommended that the ministry of Education and Science and/or the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism address this and implement an incentive scheme to those working in the tourism industry and wishing to engage in tourism education. This could be achieved through a tax incentive offered to employees. The overall professionalism and skills within the tourism industry would be raised as a result.
- Sponsorship of training courses could help with the delivery of tourism education to the tourism industry. It is recommended that large national and multinational organisations could sponsor training and implement courses for the tourism industry and this could be delivered on site. This would benefit all parties involved. Courses could be adapted to allow delivery to all stakeholders in tourism whether they are public, private or voluntary in nature. The sponsorship of training would address the lack of investment by the private and voluntary sectors in training where they could receive skills without having to pay for it.
- The feasibility of specialised tourism programmes must be researched at National level. Complete courses dedicated to areas such as the environment, transport and tourism policy could be designed and implemented to benefit the tourism industry and society. These are educational courses that are currently unobtainable in Ireland. Specific tourism courses should give students more choice instead of the generic business and tourism courses, which are in abundance.
- It is recommended that a longitudinal study of the tourism Course Content Analysis (appendix 3) be developed. The majority of educational establishments

are currently conducting programmatic reviews. It is for this reason that course content analysis must be continually ongoing to quantify the subject areas and trends in tourism course provision for the future. This would add to the body of knowledge in relation to *tourism* education.

- The Department of Education and Science in collaboration with Institutes of Technology and Failte Ireland should implement a structure to set out developing a framework, which clearly defines the role of each of the educational Institutions involved in all levels of tourism education.
- It is suggested that educational establishments ensure that educators delivering tourism programmes are appropriately qualified to disseminate such programmes. This could be ensured by offering lecturing staff specialised top-up training courses aimed at specifically tourism educators. These courses could be delivered on site within the educational establishment as part of staff training.
- It has been identified that the gender balance within the tourism industry is in favour of females. It is recommended that further research is conducted into this gender balance at National level to interpret recommendations on how to balance this out for the future.
- Languages as a requirement in tourism courses should be reduced to an elective subject. This will allow students excel in a language or opt for another choice if they are not competent in it. More research into the decline of languages within tourism education is needed to establish why this has happened and to make sure that *this will not* put the Irish tourism industry at a disadvantage in the future.

#### **5.4 - The educational needs within the public sector**

Qualifications for working within the public sector must include a work placement or applied knowledge of specific skills to work in the area before crossing the threshold into this sector. There is a huge emphasis on customer care and communication skills within this area and more assessment of this must be included within the course content of any tourism programme. There is an educational need for research methods to be



taught within tourism education and a need expressed for case study analysis focusing on the drivers of change within the tourism industry so that the public sector can produce a better tourism product.

Education at all levels of public sector from employees within senior management right down to ground level has been recognised where various courses could be developed from up dating existing skills to gaining a tourism qualification and to bridge the gap through education by forming a link and networking that could be put together by engaging in courses.

There is an element of fear and lack of confidence within the public sector and a need for innovation especially in regard to new product development and marketing strategies. There is a need for students to be attracted to the tourism industry. This could be implemented more intensely within secondary school to give the students a broad understanding of the importance of tourism to the economy. The attracting and retaining of students to graduate level so that they are qualified to work within the sector has also been identified.

#### **5.4.1 – Recommendations**

- It is recommended that courses should be developed for people working within the tourism public sector in up dating existing skills, to gaining a tourism qualification.
- An assessment is recommended of the extent to which employers in the public sector are up skilling there employees. This could be done through researching this area or by adapting an appraisal system within the public sector to encourage training and development. From this data, courses could be devised in specific areas to suit their needs.
- Enterprise development needs to be encouraged through educational courses in order to strengthen and widen the variety of the Irish tourism product.

- It has been identified that there is an educational need within the public sector to gain knowledge of how the state system works and the inter relationship between the particular sectors. This sector also emphasised the need for knowledge of researching such as conducting and analysing research. This could be achieved through implementing Top up training.
- It has been recognised that a lack of Tourism education exists within the public sector. It is vital that Failte Ireland and educational establishments recognise the need for Life-long learning courses for the development and updating skills of the public sector employees.
- It is recommended that Life-long learning courses need to be developed for every level of the public sector from senior management right down to ground level.
- It is recommended that networking could be encouraged through tourism educational courses designed for the public sector.
- It has been recognised within the study that the public sector are “*disassociated with the ground*”. The public sector needs to address this by forming better links with all tourism stakeholders. It is recommended that setting up committees within each region that would address these concerns in an open forum could reduce this.
- Secondary education needs to strengthen the tourism component on the geography syllabus to reflect its contribution to the economy. It is recommended that this could be initiated in fourth year, when they are making the choices of what elective subjects to study for the leaving Certificate and this could be an optional subject. This would attract students into the industry and raise the image of the industry as an employer.



## **5.5 -The Educational needs within the private sector.**

A need has been identified for specific, applied, functional education within the private sector. The two most important educational requirements here were entrepreneurial education and in particular E-marketing. The public and private sectors would have similar educational needs in the type of education they would wish to learn but the private sector needs are more specific and functional.

There are also time, cost and accessibility considerations that would not necessarily apply and were not contemplated when consulting the interviewees about the needs of the public sector. When delivering a tourism course for the private sector, access to the course is very important. The time allocated for the course and the venues are two very important considerations. Courses must be applied in nature and focus on Problem based learning. It has been identified that these courses would be a good place to network within the private sector. Further research needs to be conducted into calculating the success of these courses.

The private sector while expressing a need for more education, do not want to pay for it. This need for education must be supported at ministerial level to encourage private sector to up date their education and grant aid this process to facilitate industry.

An educational need has been identified for the private sector to put into operation a post graduate diploma or degree in a specialised tourism area which would be geared towards people working in the industry and who would like to top up their skills or to specialise in a particular area. The following recommendations address the educational needs identified during this study.

### **5.5.1 – Recommendations**

- It is recommended that courses designed for the private sector must focus on business development where the overall delivery must be applied and functional in nature and are not burdened down with continuous assessment

- It has been identified that time and access constraints are a deterrent for the private sector in engaging in tourism educational programmes it is recommended that educational establishments increase the development of life-long learning courses that are specifically designed for the private sector.
- Numerous night courses are currently in existence in Ireland. It is recommended that the success and effectiveness of these night courses must to be quantified at national level. Further research is needed to analyse the success of such training.
- It is recommended that educational providers continue developing web based learning courses for the private sector. The private sector could access the programme at their convenience thus allowing them flexibility of learning at a time and place that is suitable to their need.
- It is recommended that the modularisation of courses would allow the design and implementation of specific courses to suit the needs of the busy private sector.
- It is recommended that courses designed for the private sector should encourage networking through problem-based learning and group research between individuals participating in the course.
- It has been suggested in this study that many private sector business owners would already possess a third level qualification. It is for this reason that post graduate diplomas or degrees in specialised tourism areas need to be designed so that these people can access further education in tourism.
- It has been acknowledged that the majority of tourism enterprises are privately owned, small and medium sized (SME's) in nature. Educational



establishments should address the educational needs of such businesses and formulate courses that would cater for this sector regionally.

## **5.6- The educational needs within the voluntary sectors**

It has been identified that the voluntary sectors wish to develop knowledge of business development. Again specific skills were required; the emphasis was on marketing, enterprise development, communications and financial management. The overall delivery of a course for such a sector must be applied and operational in nature.

A broad understanding of tourism is the overall educational need especially for community groups to observe the multi-faceted nature of the tourism industry. It has been identified within this study that an *ad hoc* attitude towards the development of some voluntary sector projects exists due to this poor knowledge of tourism. Another educational need identified for the voluntary sector is the knowledge and skills needed to conduct research to quantify target markets, trends and develop statistics. Voluntary groups also want to be educated about funding their voluntary organisation.

Again education for the voluntary sector must be available at a time and location that is pertinent to them to encourage participation. The cost of investing in education was also a concern. Finally it has been identified that there is a dearth of research in relation to the tourism voluntary sector in Ireland.

### **5.6.1 – Recommendations**

- It is recommended that tourism educational courses designed for the voluntary sector must incorporate marketing, entrepreneurship and soft skills such as leadership skills. The overall delivery of such a course must have an operational focus.
- The level of tourism literacy within voluntary groups needs to be addressed. It is recommended that an increase in availability of courses for the voluntary sector is needed. The National Tourism Body, Fáilte Ireland and educational

establishments should increase the availability of courses regionally to the voluntary sector.

- It is recommended that a course designed to disseminate an introduction to tourism and the tourism industry would help the voluntary sector to develop better tourism products.
- The analysis has recognised that the voluntary sector would benefit from a public sector support mechanism or group that would be set up to give advice, initiate training/networking and this would ensure sustainable tourism product development transpires from voluntary schemes.
- It has been identified in the study that the voluntary sector would like to gain knowledge in researching, so that they could carry out market research. This must be factored into courses for this sector. It is recommended that the voluntary sector liaise with educational providers on research projects. The utilisation of students where they could conduct research as part of continuous assessment for the voluntary sector would guarantee links and networking between educational providers and the voluntary organisation.
- More research is needed on the tourism voluntary sector in Ireland, as there was a lack of research volume identified on this particular sector. As this study identified the educational needs of all stakeholders in tourism education, it is suggested that future research is needed to concentrate solely on the voluntary sector.

## **5.7 –Satisfaction**

A discussion on satisfaction with third level tourism education recognised that 38% of interviewees were satisfied, while 24% were not satisfied and 38% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the current provision. Areas of concern include; educational establishments finding new interesting and fun ways to deliver tourism programmes. Courses must be functional and operational in nature so that graduates



have gained skills to work within the industry. Better links between education and industry have been stressed throughout this study. Partnership could be developed if a few simple procedures were implemented between both parties.

There is discontent with the level of over provision as course numbers have been expanding for the last decade and most courses are core business courses especially in the Institute of Technology sector. The students are graduating with a business qualification with little emphasis on tourism. The educational establishments find it hard to fill places because of this over provision and the industry feel that graduates do not acquire the vocational skills to work within the tourism industry. It has been identified within this study that graduates with a qualification in tourism do not necessarily work within the tourism industry. Many graduates have been misplaced to the business sector without any choice in the matter, as there is a large supply of tourism graduates in Ireland. There is an over lap of certain courses being delivered and there is a push towards courses becoming more focused forced from the demands of industry and competition in tourism education provision. The following are recommendations to improve the overall satisfaction with Tourism education in Ireland for the future.

### 5.7.1 – Recommendations

- It is recommended that all course contents and learning outcomes from tourism programmes be operational and functional in nature to reflect the needs of industry.
- It has been identified that there is an over provision of tourism courses in Ireland. This is an area that will need to be addressed and it is recommended that debate between Failte Ireland, Educational Establishments and the relevant Government Departments will assess the development of “*areas of expertise*” or “*centres of excellence*” around Ireland in relation to access and delivery of tourism courses.
- It has been recognised that a quantity of graduates are not working in the tourism industry on graduation. More research is needed by Failte Ireland, educational establishments in collaboration with the Department of Arts, Sport

and Tourism to decipher the reasons why students who accomplish tourism education are not working within the tourism industry.

- There is a need to increase Life-long learning education courses in Ireland. These students could be attracted back to education through marketing campaigns. The majority of senior people employed within the tourism industry are not from a tourism background so Life-long learning courses would be an ideal way for these individuals to up date their skills and also network with other individuals. There is a need for access to these courses through distance learning or web based courses so that the students can educate themselves at a time that is suitable to them.
- It is recommended that specialisation of tourism courses in locations around Ireland would reduce the amount of overlap in tourism educational provision. This would provide specialised areas of study in educational establishments around Ireland but the specialisation would become synonymous with that particular educational establishment through time, as is the case with DIT where it delivers Tourism-Marketing courses, Sligo Institute of Technology having an environmental focus and Limerick University recognised for Tourism Policy.
- It is recommended that the overlap between tourism educational courses in third level institutions in Ireland could be reduced if there was better consultation processes and policy between all educational establishments when designing and implementing tourism courses to identify similarities and comparisons.
- The Department of Art, Sport and Tourism must address government policy in relation to tourism and readdress the importance of tourism at national policy level.



- The Department of Art, Sport and Tourism must formulate policy on the provision of tourism education in Ireland.
- The Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Art, Sport and tourism must formulate policy on the responsibility and roles of tourism educators in society.
- It has been recognised that the leaving Certificate points of students entering tourism courses is low compared to other courses. It is recommended that a capping of the CAO points system is implemented for tourism courses so that quality students enter the tourism educational system and this would develop both the image and increase the overall professionalism within the industry.
- The reduction in the number of places available on tourism courses would raise the points to enter these courses within each Institute of Technology. This would ensure viable class sizes and individual attention to the student. The industry has referred to developing professionalism and quality within the tourism industry and if the educational establishments adopted this initiative it would develop quality tourism managers running the tourism industry in Ireland. In addition, this coupled with specialisation would reduce the over provision of tourism graduates.
- Introducing the student to the industry through ‘hands on’ experience is very significant. This could be done through practical application in the syllabus development. Introducing field trips, guest lecturers and project based learning and problem-based learning into tourism courses are ways to add a practical element to the course.

### **5.8 - Gaps in third level tourism education**

The research identified a number of gaps in the provision of third level tourism education and recommendations for these gaps are outlined below:

1) In relation to course structure, specialisation of tourism courses is needed and the learning outcomes from these courses must reflect the type of work the student will be capable of doing. Therefore the more practical a course the better the student can apply the skills in the workplace. Application of knowledge received throughout the course was identified as a gap in certain course structures. Subject areas such as personal development are desirable in a tourism course, thus helping the student to become more empowered and able to deal with situations within the workplace.

2) Employer and student expectations sometimes contrast where students have high expectations when they graduate and employers have high expectation of graduates. It has been identified in this study that sometimes their learning outcomes do not match the expectations of the employer. Students often think they should be employed in management positions on accomplishing education whereas employers in the industry employ graduates at ground level so they can gain industry experience and work there way up the ladder. As a result of this a gap around expectations has been identified.

3) Tourism may not have received discipline status and this has been identified as a gap in tourism education. Tourism is still at an embryonic stage of development as a discipline but has received discipline status in other countries. The third level educational system in Ireland does not have a tourism course solely existing on its own, running on a full time basis and this has been recognised as a gap.

4) Modularisation is a way of adapting syllabi so that they can be in modular format and therefore a degree of flexibility will be attached to them as they can be delivered on a stand-alone basis or incorporated into existing programmes. This has been identified as a gap because there isn't adequate availability of such courses at the present time. The more subjects that become modular, the more flexible the delivery of a course becomes. It can be used within the majority of courses if in this format whether these courses are full time or part time in nature.

5) There is a gap between the learning techniques from secondary level education to third level education. Students need to receive an adequate introduction to tourism in secondary school to educate them about the importance of it. There is also a need for PLC's and VEC courses to consider the possibilities of students carrying on into third



level education by giving them a better basis and understanding of tourism. Often these courses are so basic and generic that if students do carry on to third level there retention rate is usually bad and they find the system very difficult to deal with.

6) There has been a gap recognised between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in relation to provision of degrees and postgraduate tourism education. There is only one available Honours degree course in Northern Ireland and this has been identified as a gap for students from Northern Ireland wishing to continue on in Third level education. At the moment there is only one University for them to make the transition to Higher Education so there is not enough competition for courses in comparison to the Republic of Ireland. There are under provision of ordinary and honours degree courses in Northern Ireland.

### 5.8.1 - Recommendations

- It has been identified within this study that specific tourism courses need to be designed in areas focusing on the environment, planning, policy and transport. It is recommended that educational providers develop such courses maybe in conjunction with there proposed "*centres of excellence*" (Institutes of Technology and the Knowledge society, 2003) for example Sligo Institute of Technology has a centre of Sustainability and a Tourism course with an environmental aspect could run parallel to this centre.
- It has been identified throughout this study that better links are needed between stakeholders and educational providers. It is for this reason that the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism in collaboration with Failte Ireland recognise this gap and set up a National Tourism Forum. The role of this body would be the forming of stronger linkages between all tourism stakeholders.
- It is recommended that Failte Ireland in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science carry out research into the current competency of graduates from tourism courses.

- The expectations of employers and students will have to be readdressed. It is the educator's responsibility to paint a realistic picture of working life in the tourism industry and this must be delivered to the student throughout Tourism Education. It is recommended that representatives from Failte Ireland carry out visits to all third level institutions with tourism courses and give seminars and guest lectures on working within the tourism industry.
- It has been recognised that personal development is a desirable subject on all tourism educational courses. It is vital that problem-based learning, communication and customer service skills are factored into all course structures.
- It is recommended that educational establishments carry out yearly focus groups with industry. It has been recognised that the skills employers want from graduates is not supplied quick enough by educational establishments currently.
- Partnership is desired between educational establishments and stakeholders. A partnership officer must be appointed within all Institutes of Technology to liaise with tourism stakeholders and represent the college regionally at meetings, conferences, seminars and events.
- Tourism may not have received discipline status in Ireland at this present time. It is recommended that Failte Ireland and the educational establishments do more to recognise the discipline status of tourism. Formulating course structures, researching and gathering a body of tourism knowledge is currently offered in an unstructured manner. If Failte Ireland carried out more of these functions in conjunction with Institutes of Technology, maybe a discipline of tourism could be recognised.
- The availability of Modular courses has been identified as a gap. It is recommended that educational establishments increase the amount of modular



courses by reworking existing programmes. These courses could then be delivered in Life-long learning departments of educational institutions.

- It has been identified as a gap the theoretical focus of tourism education in Ireland. It is vital that all tourism courses have a work placement to introduce practical training and application of skills into this educational provision.
- It has been recognised that there is a gap between the transition from secondary school to further and higher education. It is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science in collaboration with Failte Ireland to ensure that there is a flow to the tourism educational system. Better links between secondary, further and higher educational providers are needed when designing courses so that students have the option and the learning outcomes from courses to follow on their studies to higher education.
- While there is over provision of tourism education in the Republic of Ireland there is under provision In Northern Ireland. As a result of this and due to the anticipated growth in tourism in Northern Ireland, the educational establishments in the Republic should consider marketing courses to the students from the North who would like to carry on third level education.
- With the number of tourists visiting Northern Ireland increasing, the further educational establishments in Northern Ireland should also consider awarding degrees so as to add competition to the third level tourism educational provision in Northern Ireland.
- With the growth in tourist numbers due to initial advancements of the peace process in Northern Ireland, the Educational sector within the six counties may have to increase current provision of tourism courses especially at degree and Post-graduate level.

- Throughout this study, it has been acknowledged by the researcher that there is a current shortage of research in the area of tourism education in Ireland. While this study has contributed to the body of knowledge in the area of provision in tourism education in Ireland, it is recommended that such research should be encouraged and continued so that a body of knowledge in this area can be appreciated.

## 5.9. – Conclusion

This study attempted to analyse the current provision of Third level tourism education in Ireland. It also focused on the educational needs of the public, private and voluntary sector. The aims and objectives outlined that the role of tourism education in Ireland be identified. The outstanding role of tourism education was to educate students followed by supporting industry, enterprise and career development. A role of tourism education was to conduct research. The responsibility of educators in providing courses and designing and researching courses was also recognised as a role. It was found that there was a deviation between the roles of tourism education among interviews and therefore it has been identified that the role of tourism education needs to be clarified. A number of initiatives have been recommended within this study to strengthen the delivery of Tourism education in Ireland. It has been identified that Enterprise Development, Work placement and Research Techniques are vital elements of any Tourism course to encourage Entrepreneurship and Career development.

This study has identified a significant number of trends in third level tourism education. These trends were identified to analyse the current provision of tourism education in Ireland. Due to the diverse nature of the tourism industry, the overall contribution of this research will only signify a snap shot in the history of tourism education. The exogenous and tourism related trends that are currently affecting the provision of tourism education in Ireland may not be as relevant in the future.

A number of recommendations in relation to further related research have been identified in this study. Such further areas of research include the tracking of graduates from tourism courses, the educational needs of the tourism voluntary sector and a longitudinal course content analysis. Moreover the overall dearth of a body of tourism research in Ireland has been verified.



The educational needs of the public sector have been identified in this study. It was found that the public sector want qualified employees with specific skills before crossing the threshold into employment in the Public sector. There is also a need to attract students into this sector. It has been identified in this study that the image of the industry needs to be raised so that quality employees can be recruited.

The main educational needs for the public sector identified within this study were:

- Communications and customer care
- Awareness of the external environments and the drivers of change in the industry
- Research techniques
- Innovation

Life-long learning courses must be implemented for all levels within this sector. This form of education would be useful developing networks it has been identified in this study that many public sector employees do not possess a qualification in tourism and it is for this reason that life-long learning would up-date there existing skills. The current provision for up- skilling staff within the public sector therefore needs to be assessed.

The educational needs within the private sector are specific skills functional and operational with a focus on entrepreneurship and marketing.

Business development is the predominant educational need. It has been identified by many interviews that the educational need of both the public and the private are similar. Access to courses in relation to the time and venue due to the busy lifestyle of many private sector employees is very important. The cost of investing in education is a factor for the private sector. Further education in the form of post graduate diplomas was also desired.

The educational needs of the Voluntary sector include Specific skills such as:

- Entrepreneurship
- Marketing
- Business skills
- Leadership
- Soft skills (such as communications and presentation skills)
- Funding
- Understanding tourism.

- Research skills

Funding/support mechanism or group that would be able to advise them and maybe initiate training/networking to ensure sustainable tourism awareness was identified as a need for the voluntary sector. It was identified that more research is needed within this sector overall.

The overall satisfaction with the provision of tourism education in Ireland was identified within this study with 38% of interviewees satisfied, 24% dissatisfied, 38% neither satisfied or dissatisfied. Areas of concern were highlighted such as;

- applied learning
- links between industry and education
- over provision of generic business and tourism courses
- feedback from graduates
- Life-long learning needs to be increased
- Too much overlap between tourism courses within Institutes of Technology
- Better funded
- Government policy
- Broader sectors
- Specialised areas.
- 

A number of Gaps have been confirmed within this research and recommendations were highlighted within the last section. The gaps are listed below:

- Specialisation of tourism courses
- Links between education and industry
- Student need-competency to be addressed
- Personal development
- Expectations of employers and students
- Partnership between industry and education
- Tourism and discipline status
- Modular courses
- Practical learning
- Transition to higher education
- Top up degrees in Northern Ireland.



Finally, the contribution of this research to tourism stakeholders has identified a number of educational needs and gaps that currently exists in the Irish tourism educational sector. It is therefore proposed that a review of the recommendations is undertaken in the next five years so that a re-evaluation can be undertaken. It is hoped that the research aims and objectives have been addressed within this study and that it will add to the body of tourism knowledge in Ireland.

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## **Appendices:**

Appendix A: accompanying form sent to interviewees

Appendix B: list of interviewees and brief description of profession

Appendix C: Course content analysis

Appendix D: CAO Entry points for tourism courses in Ireland, 2004

Appendix E: Questions asked to students during Programmatic Review focus group

Appendix F: Proposed redesign of National Diploma in Applied Tourism



# Appendix A

**Institute of Technology, Sligo  
Research:  
Tourism Education in Ireland**

**Thank you for participating in this research.**

Please fill in this form below and return in stamped addressed envelope provided.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like to participate in this research?

A) Telephone

YES

NO

Appropriate date and time available for interview:

Contact telephone number:  
(If different from above)

B) Face-to-Face

YES

NO

Preferred date and time available for interview:

Preferred location:

Thank you for your co-operation with this research.

All information supplied will be strictly confidential

For more information contact: **Joanna Sweeney**

Tel: 086-8685988

E-mail: [sweeney.joanna@itsligo.ie](mailto:sweeney.joanna@itsligo.ie)



## Appendix B

## **Appendix B**

### **List of interviewee's numbers and brief outline of profession**

<b>Interviewee Number</b>	<b>Outline of profession</b>
<b><u>1</u></b>	<b>Academic Institute of Technology</b>
<b><u>2</u></b>	<b>Academic Tourism college</b>
<b><u>3</u></b>	<b>Academic Institute of Technology</b>
<b><u>4</u></b>	<b>Tourism educator Institute of Technology</b>
<b><u>5</u></b>	<b>Tourism educator</b>
<b><u>6</u></b>	<b>Academic Institute of Technology</b>
<b><u>7</u></b>	<b>Tourism educator</b>
<b><u>8</u></b>	<b>Academic institute of technology</b>
<b><u>9</u></b>	<b>Head of Dept Institute of Technology</b>
<b><u>10</u></b>	<b>Academic Institute of Technology</b>
<b><u>11</u></b>	<b>Course coordinator, Plc</b>
<b><u>12</u></b>	<b>Coordinator tourism course, Plc</b>
<b><u>13</u></b>	<b>Administration coordinator, Plc</b>
<b><u>14</u></b>	<b>Academic Senior college</b>
<b><u>15</u></b>	<b>Tourism educator, Plc</b>
<b><u>16</u></b>	<b>Director Private tourism college</b>
<b><u>17</u></b>	<b>Tourism educator</b>
<b><u>18</u></b>	<b>General Manager Public sector organisation</b>



<b><u>19</u></b>	<b>Chairperson of Voluntary enterprise development</b>
<b><u>20</u></b>	<b>Public-private partnership officer</b>
<b><u>21</u></b>	<b>Regional Development executive</b>
<b><u>22</u></b>	<b>Public Sector tourism authority</b>
<b><u>23</u></b>	<b>Senior tourism officer</b>
<b><u>24</u></b>	<b>Managing Director, tourism business</b>
<b><u>25</u></b>	<b>Manager tourism development programme</b>
<b><u>26</u></b>	<b>Chief executive eco- tourism enterprise</b>
<b><u>27</u></b>	<b>Course Director, University</b>
<b><u>28</u></b>	<b>Tourism educator Institute of Technology</b>
<b><u>29</u></b>	<b>Head of Department, University</b>

## Appendix C



## Summary table of Third Level Tourism course contents:

2004/2005

Course and content	UU	UU	UU	UL	DIT	DIT	DIT	LIT	AIT	AIT	CIT	OMT	OMT	ITS	Total 197*	Total 197*	117	WTT	FI	SH	SH	ESD	DM
<b>PhD</b>																							
Masters by research																							
Masters (taught) part time																							
Masters (taught) full time																							
Postgraduate diploma																							
Degree (Honours)		Bac	Bac																				
Degree																							
Diploma																							
Higher Certificate																							
Syllabus Content																							
<b>Year 1</b>																							
Tourism studies	*	*	*	*																			
Tourism and Visitor Studies																							
Tourism Business Studies																							
Tourism Destinations																							
Tourism and Leisure sector and heritage																							
Cultural management																							
Leisure, Culture and society																							
Front office operations																							
Public Administration and policy																							
Organization and Management I																							
Culture and tourism																							
Tourism Planning and policy																							
Tourism studies																							
Business Administration																							
Economics																							
Economics of tourism																							
Tourism Economics and Development																							
Intermediate Macroeconomics and Tourism																							
Economics																							
Accounting																							
Financial Accounting I																							
Accounting and finance for tourism																							
Financial Management																							
Management Accounting and decision making																							
Business Administration and law																							
Tourism services Marketing																							
Management principles																							
Management in Tourism Enterprises																							
Enterprise and Services Management																							
Tourism Management																							
Strategic Services management																							
Introduction to marketing and Business Environment																							
Marketing and Customer care																							
Tourism Marketing																							
Marketing for the hospitality																							
Marketing Management and Enterprise Development																							
Strategic Marketing for Tourism																							
Research methods 1/2																							

Research Methods and ICT	*	*	*	*	*																	
Study Skills and ICT																						
Computer Applications	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Information technology workshop																						
Computer Applications and data summary																						
Business Information systems																						
Internet Marketing																						
Internet Advertising																						
Information Technology & Statistics for tourism																						
Information systems	*																					
Accounting & Costing																						
Financial Maths																						
Communications																						
Communication and customer care	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Customer Care																						
Communications and personal Development																						
Business Communications																						
Behavioural Science and Customer Care																						
Personal Development																						
Front Office procedures																						
Marketing communications	*																					
Organizational Studies	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Operations																						
Operational Analysis and control I																						
Human Resource management for tourism																						
Tourism Planning and development	*																					
International tourism trends	*																					
Economic Appraisal and Evaluation Techniques	*																					
Research																						
Quantitative methods																						
Strategic Marketing for tourism																						
Market Research (Research projects)	*																					
The management of transport operations																						
Tourism Law																						
Law																						
Math's and statistics																						
Business Maths	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
World Geography	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Contemporary Tourism Markets	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Emergence of	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Travel Trade IATA Studies	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Intercultural studies	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Strategic Product Development	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Heritage, Tourism and sustainability	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Irish Heritage Studies	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Introduction to the Events industry	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Events, conferences and meeting planning	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Food and Beverage Studies	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Accommodation services and Front office	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Cultural Resources in context	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Theories of tourism	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Landscape and heritage	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Arts Theory and practice	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Languages	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Work placement	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Disertation (number of months)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Year 2																						
Tourism services and visitor management																						





Year 3												
Tourism Studies												
Tourism planning and development	*	*										
Tourism Policy and planning												
Tourism & Hospitality Studies including law												
Literary, Cultural & Heritage Studies	*	*										
International Tourism												
Intercultural studies												
Contemporary issues in tourism												
Strategic tourism management												
Maths												
Business and society												
Management												
Strategic Management												
Sales Management and customer care												
Support services management												
Finance	*	*										
Financial management												
Financial Management and management Accounting												
Accounting												
Management Accounting	*	*										
Financial Accounting												
Economics 1												
Managerial Economics												
Human Resource Management	*	*										
Personnel Management												
Marketing Management	*	*										
Tourism Marketing Management												
Tourism Services Marketing												
Marketing for Tourism												
Public relations application												
Entrepreneurship												
Tourism Enterprise Development												
Innovation and entrepreneurship												
Tourism Enterprise Management												
Project Management												
Protocols and Technology												
Multimedia studies												
Management of sustainable information systems 2												
Web Development												
Information Technology												
Hotel Management information systems												
Strategic Issues	*	*										
SME Operations and development												
E-commerce												
Language	*	*										
Legal Studies												
Tourism Law	*	*										
Business Law												
Company and competition law												
Law for Event Policy & Planning												
Marketing, Incentives, Conventions and exhibitions industries	*	*										
Employee Researching and development												
Management Research Methods												
Marketing Research and marketing	*	*										
Research Paper												
Research methods	*	*										



Project												
Logistics management												
Operations & Quality Management											*	
Operational Analysis and Control 3												
Work placement (number of months)												
Electives (subject to demand and availability)			6-12								13	
Event marketing and sponsorship												*
Event project management 1/2												*
Industrial relations												
Food, Beverage and Accommodation Management								*				
Communications										*		
Advanced Communications												
Communication management										*		
Business communications												
Management Communications												
Discretion											*	
Year 4												
EU Policy and law										*		
Strategic Tourism and hospitality marketing										*		
Global to local Economics geography										*		
Tourism Marketing Seminars										*		
Tourism Management										*		
Business policy										*		
International Business										*		
Strategic Human Resources										*		
Project management										*		
Employment law										*		
Management Science										*		
Marketing Management										*		
Industrial Relations framework and development										*		
Corporate Finance										*		
Innovation										*		
Enterprise Development										*		
Tourism Management										*		
Discretion										*		
Electives (subject to demand and availability)										*		
Languages										*		
Placement (no. of months)										*		13
Other												
Links with other colleges										*		
Guest speakers										*		
Distance learning system										*		

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

- AIT- Atlone Institute of technology
- CIT-Cork Institute of technology
- GMIT- Galway MAYO Institute of Technology
- DUN DIT- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- DIT- Dublin Institute of Technology
- FI- Failte Ireland
- IIT- Tallaght Institute of Technology
- IIT TRAL- Tralee Institute of Technology
- SH- Shannon college of Hotel Management
- ITS- Sligo Institute of Technology
- LIT-Limerick Institute of Technology
- UL-University of Limerick
- UU-University of Ulster
- WIT-Waterford Institute of Technology
- # SEMESTERISED
- e- Elective subject
- \*# = subject delivered in second semester



## Appendix D

## Appendix D

### CAO Entry points for Tourism courses 2004

CAO Course code:	College	Final Points	Median points
<b>Degree courses</b>			
DK 752	Dundalk IT	240	305
LC 931	Limerick IT	310	340
LC 941	Limerick IT	315	345
SN001	Shannon college of Hotel Mgt	430	531
SN002	Shannon college of Hotel Mgt	545	584
FT402	Dublin Institute of Technology	325	345
FT406	Dublin Institute of Technology	320	345
<b>Diplomas/ Certificate</b>			
AL028	Atlone Institute of Technology	145	245
CR041	Cork Institute of Technology	310	365
GA241	Galway –Mayo IT	230	365
GA867	Galway-Mayo IT	AQA#	255
LY080	Letterkenny IT	-	-
LC961	Limerick IT	180	240
SG135	Sligo IT	145	240
TI002	Tipperary Institute	95	235
TL120	Tralee IT	140	240
TL140	Tralee IT	250	345

#AQA : All qualified applicants accepted on this course.



## Appendix E

## **Appendix E**

### **Student focus group- national Diploma in Business Studies in Applied Tourism March 2004**

*Maximum 40 minutes*

*Purpose:*

*Requirement for peer review and to deal specifically with course structure/design with the hope of receiving useful comments to be incorporated into a revised programme*

#### **Discussion Questions**

##### **Opening Question**

What was your motivation for enrolling on this course?

1) What do you like most about the course?

Probe- why? Own ability? Relevancy?

2) What do you like least about the course?

Probe for comments

3) Are you aware of any courses like this one in the country?-probe any comments

4) What improvements would you like to see made to the course?

Probe subjects removed or new subjects added on? Subject content changed?

Probe-placement and applied tourism

5) On completion of the course, do you feel you will be suitably qualified to work in the tourism industry?

Probe re the specific areas

6) Have you any comments to make on continuous assessment/contact hours etc...

7) How important are the progression routes attached to the course?

Probe- current BBS

8) What field of work would you like to be in on completion of this course?

##### **Closing question:**

**Would you recommend this course to a friend?**

**Anything else you wish to say....**



## Appendix F

## Appendix F

### Programmatic Review 2005

### Redesign of National Diploma in Applied Tourism

#### Course structure:

#### YEAR 1

<b>Current:</b>	<b>Proposed:</b>
Introduction to Tourism	Tourism principles
Tourism management	Communication and interpersonal skills
Computer applications 1	Computer applications 1
Marketing and customer care	Introduction to modern business
Financial accounting	Adventure tourism and tourism field trips
language	<b>Electives:</b>
	Language
	Financial accounting

#### YEAR 2

<b>Current :</b>	<b>Proposed:</b>
Management accounting I	Management accounting 1
Computer applications 2	Computer applications 2
Macro tourism	Eco tourism and tourism management
Applied tourism	Marketing for tourism
Tourism research	Work placement
Work placement	
language	<b>Electives:</b>
	Language
	Cultural tourism

#### YEAR 3

<b>Current:</b>	<b>Proposed:</b>
Economics	Economics
Human Resource Management	Sustainable tourism planning
Tourism services marketing	Applied marketing
Promotions and technology	Tourism/business law and tourism entrepreneurship
Language	Tourism research sessions and dissertation
Legal Studies	<b>Electives:</b>
	Language
	Human resource management
	International marketing