

A reflective journey through *Teaching Tourism*: Values-based education for transformative learning

Yurika Shibamoto^{a,b}

^aFaculty of Tourism, Wakayama University, Japan

^bCenter for Tourism Research, Wakayama University, Japan

Abstract

Tourism education plays an increasingly vital role in a world where tourism has matured into a complex global phenomenon. This brief report explores values-based teaching and learning in tourism through a reflective autobiography of the author's experiences in the workshop "Teaching Tourism – Values-Based Transformative Learning Experiences" at Hokkaido University. Key findings for implementing values-based tourism education highlight three essential points. First, tourism educators must critically reflect on their beliefs to identify their values and positions. Second, fostering dialogue among students is crucial for developing diverse perspectives, with educators facilitating discussions thoughtfully to explore differing viewpoints. Finally, educators, as collaborative learners, should create open and inclusive classroom environments by incorporating creative learning approaches. These findings aim to enhance both teaching and learning in tourism, preparing students to navigate tourism's complexities and contribute meaningfully to society.

Keywords

Tourism education
Values-based education
Transformative learning
Reflective topical autobiography

Introduction and background

Tourism education holds the potential to significantly influence the world (Tribe, 2002; Dredge et al., 2015; Edelheim, 2022), particularly in terms of its capacity to foster future transformations (Edelheim, 2020) in those involved in tourism. These transformations are shaped by transformative learning, which involves questioning and changing one's worldview to enhance one's understanding of the world (Edelheim et al., 2022; Hayes & Tucker, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). Given the pervasive role of tourism in contemporary society, the objective of tourism education extends beyond merely imparting knowledge (Edelheim et al., 2022). It encompasses the development of a sense of responsibility, empathy, integrity, and social awareness in students (Dredge et al., 2015), which encourages them to consider the impact of their actions on society and the environment rather than focusing solely on economic growth and development (UNESCO, 2020). These qualities are essential for future tourism professionals, enabling them to make decisions and act in alignment with ethical and social values, both personally and professionally. This approach is particularly relevant as critics of contemporary tourism education often argue that universities prioritize economic indicators over the development of socially responsible citizens (Edelheim, 2020). It is therefore imperative to investigate methods of integrating values into the teaching methodology of tourism education.

This brief report reflects on the author's experience exploring a values-based learning approach in tourism education. The methodology of this report is inspired by Stuart Hayes's "A Reflexive Journey through Curriculum Space(s)" (2019), which uses a reflective topical autobiography (RTA) framework. This methodological approach combines immersive self-exploration with stages of incubation, illumination, and contemplation, with the goal of connecting individual experiences to broader social contexts. By employing the RTA framework, Hayes (2019) examined his own experiences and provided an opportunity for profound insights into both personal and professional growth.

This approach facilitated a reflection on my own experiences and observations during the course at Hokkaido University titled "Teaching Tourism – Values-Based Transformative Learning Experiences," allowing me to gain a deeper understanding of the key components in applying values-based learning in tourism education. The objective of this paper is to contribute to the development of tourism education in the future, first by presenting the findings of the observations made and, secondly, by offering insights into the researcher's perspective and the actual situation in the classroom.

Reflective Report Context: Teaching Tourism

The course titled "Teaching Tourism – Values-Based Transformative Learning Experiences" was offered as a part of Hokkaido University's summer program, the Hokkaido Summer Institute, from August 23 to 30, 2024. The course emphasizes values-based learning as a pedagogical approach within the context of tourism education. In this context, the term "value" is understood to refer to a guiding principle that influences behavior, decision-making, and interpersonal interactions.

The course was led by two professors in the field of tourism studies, namely Johan Edelheim and Marion Joppe, who are principal members of the Tourism Education Future Initiatives (TEFI) network, whose objective is to advance tourism education and research through a progressive approach (Dredge et al., 2015). By integrating practical learning experiences and theoretical foundations based on the activities of TEFI, Edelheim, Joppe, and Flaherty (2022) authored a textbook, *Teaching tourism: Innovative, values-based learning experiences or transformative practices*, as a pedagogical resource for tourism education, which serves as the guidelines and supplementary material for this course. The learning pathway was designed for tourism educators, graduate students, and practitioners. A total of eight individuals, including two educators, five graduate students, and one practitioner, from six different countries (China, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the United



Kingdom, and the United States) participated in the course, and all activities were conducted in English. Those participating in the course as educators in the field of tourism were encouraged to explore the complex and interconnected nature of tourism and to develop the skills necessary to assist students in navigating multifaceted ethical and social situations in the context of tourism. The course, which draws upon the comprehensive content of the textbook, was conducted in accordance with the specified content and schedule outlined in Table 1. Participants were encouraged to collaborate with the instructors to reflect on pivotal concepts and to explore methods for integrating values-based education into their pedagogical approaches.

Aligning with the approach of Hayes (2019), the description provided below is in the first person. In my capacity as a participant in the course, I engaged in the course activities in the dual role of both a learner and an observer. I am a project assistant professor and coordinator for global engagement at the Faculty of Tourism, Wakayama University. My responsibilities include the coordination of tourism programs taught in English and the promotion of international programs designed to develop communication skills and problem-solving skills. In light of my professional and personal experiences, I am convinced that it is of the utmost importance to expand and diversify the perspectives of students engaged in the study of tourism. However, I do not possess a background in tourism studies. Thus, my objective in participating in this course was to expand my perspectives and understanding of tourism education.

Reflections and Discussion

Values-Based Learning as Self-Exploration

Teaching the different values that shape tourism requires educators themselves to possess an understanding of their own values and to recognize their own position in terms of how they perceive and understand the world. Furthermore, being aware of one’s own values serves as “the foundation for the creation of learning experiences for others” (J. Edelheim, personal communication, August 24, 2024). This can be elucidated through self-exploration while examining one’s ontological, epistemological, or axiological position. Reflecting on my experience during the period between the beginning of the Teaching Tourism course and the preparation of this paper, self-exploration contributed substantially to the development of an understanding of my approach to learning.

Nevertheless, the process of self-exploration proved to be a significant challenge, necessitating considerable effort and dedication. On the first day of the course, the professor explained

the concepts of philosophy. It was an introduction to the task of analyzing one’s own learning methods and worldview in relation to ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Ontology is the study of being, while epistemology is the study of knowledge, and axiology is the study of value or goodness (Edelheim, 2014). For someone like me with limited exposure to philosophical foundations and a dearth of academic training, such an endeavour represented a formidable challenge. In my efforts to gain a comprehensive understanding of these complex concepts, I found myself confronted with a multitude of confusing ideas and perspectives. Without a clear understanding of the three philosophical concepts, I had to start working on the assignment, engaging in a critical reflection on my own learning method and worldview. I engaged in introspective reflection on how I see teaching and learning and articulated my personal approach to learning. This led to my gaining a slight insight into the interconnectivity between my perspective on educational values, my worldview, and the aforementioned philosophical concepts. However, I sensed that I had not yet fully internalized the material.

Edelheim et al. (2022) argue that educators often tend to assume that students will accept the material as they do. Therefore, a program such as the Teaching Tourism course that targets students of different backgrounds should be designed with questions that are accessible to each of the different learners. Sample questions created by the author are provided below.

Axiological Questions

- What values should guide sustainable tourism practices? How can these be instilled in tourism students?
- What roles do empathy and social responsibility play in shaping a student’s approach to tourism?

Epistemological Questions

- What types of knowledge (e.g., scientific, experiential, cultural) are most important for tourism students, and how should they be integrated into tourism curriculum?
- To what extent should students’ learning experience in tourism be based on personal experience versus theoretical study?

Ontological Questions

- How do tourism students’ personal backgrounds influence their comprehension of the tourism industry and its impacts?
- How can tourism educators help students see tourism as a complex, interconnected field that affects and is affected by various social, environmental, and economic factors?

Table 1. Teaching Tourism Course Content

Day 1	Introduction: Teaching values-based tourism – didactic assumptions
Day 2	Lived values: Political and ecological
Day 3	Lived values: Social and cultural (field trip to Otaru)
Day 4	Lived and aspirational values: Economic and ethics
Day 5	Aspirational values: Stewardship and mutuality
Day 6	Aspirational values: Knowledge and professionalism
Day 7	Symposium: Presentation of personal values-based teaching material/mentoring experience

Note. Source: Edelheim and Joppe (Course material, August 24, 2024).

These examples are not created with an aim to question the importance of philosophical concepts and their integration into the classroom. Rather, it is proposed that the creation of a series of questions to assist learners in comprehending these concepts will result in a more profound understanding of their perceptions of reality and the values they ascribe to it. This enhanced understanding will also have a beneficial effect on self-exploration.

Values-Based Learning as a Transformative Learning Experience

Besides self-exploration, my experience of learning values-based tourism demonstrated the importance of discussion in terms of sharing worldviews with each other. Discussion provides a forum for learners to compare their own perspectives with those of others. This allows learners to realize that others have perspectives similar to their own or to become aware of their own biases and provides them with the opportunity to consider alternative viewpoints. Dialogue with others is generally essential for transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2007), and transformations can occur when students question their values and worldview as well as reflect on their own learning (Edelheim et al., 2022). Additionally, it is also important to organize and clearly articulate the nature of the changes in one's own perceptions before and/or during the reflection period, which teachers might assist students with.

The course contents of Teaching Tourism, as illustrated in Table 1, delineate the classification of values into various domains: politics, environment, society, culture, economy, ethics, stewardship, mutuality, knowledge, and professionalism. The discussion on these values with fellow participants and the two instructors proved to be an intriguing process for me, as it afforded me the opportunity to examine the disparate worldviews held by both my peers and instructors. It made me realize how these values are seen differently, with a multitude of interpretations by each individual, and are formed within each person's own reality. The well-organized nature of the discussion, with the instructors providing supplementary comments and clarifying the comments of individual students, also helped me easily understand the subject. The discussion allowed me to adjust my understanding in accordance with new information and experiences, construct a new perspective on reality, and enhance my understanding of the relationship between the individual and society. This, in turn, led to new self-awareness. Edelheim et al. (2022) state that this is not an inevitable result of exposure to a new perspective and that it requires humility to accept that one's previous value system is not universally applicable. Moreover, to accept this, it is crucial to be able to articulate the nature of the transformation in one's own perception, which may occur during the process of self-reflection.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report underscores the transformative potential of values-based education in tourism, emphasizing its role in fostering critical self-awareness, ethical understanding, and social responsibility among both educators and learners. Through reflections on the Teaching Tourism course at Hokkaido University, it highlights the importance of educators critically examining their own values and beliefs to create inclusive, dialogical, and innovative learning environments. Values-based learning, as explored through self-reflection and collaborative discussions, serves as a pedagogical approach that deepens understanding of the interconnectedness of tourism's social, environmental, and economic dimensions. Integrating creative and multimodal teaching methods further enhances the learning experience by empowering students to engage with diverse perspectives and real-world challenges.

The findings of this report advocate a reconsideration of tourism education, with an emphasis on the development of empathy, sincerity, and a sense of responsibility, rather than on conventional economic indicators. As tourism continues to influence and be influenced by a rapidly changing world, values-based education is emerging as an important framework for equipping students to navigate its complexities while fostering meaningful societal contributions.

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Yurika Shibamoto is a Project Assistant Professor and Coordinator for Global Engagement at the Faculty of Tourism, Wakayama University, Japan, and a member of the Center for Tourism Research at the same university. She joined Wakayama University in 2017, bringing extensive experience from both the public and private sectors in Japan and internationally. In her current role, she has been actively involved in several research projects focused on international education and tourism programs at Japanese universities.