Determining and Making Sense of Recruitment Practices for Tourism Academics in the UK

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the influence of neoliberalism and managerialism on the recruitment of tourism academics in the UK. We analyse how sustainable recruitment and retention of talents are in the tourism industry. Importantly, we provide particular focus on sustainable tourism roles, as well as the impacts of COVID-19.

Design/methodology/approach: Qualitative content analysis focuses on academic jobs in tourism advertised on *Jobs.ac.uk* between June 2020 and July 2021.

Findings: Study findings reveal how, in the case of the UK, current educational ideologies, including neoliberalism and managerialism, significantly influence curriculum and recruitment. Such an approach facilitates the hidden curriculum of undisciplined tourism programmes and significantly constrains the prominence of sustainability principles. The development of curriculum, student life course and recruitment of academics are influenced by several variables (personal, environmental, behavioural), which must be identified to enable decision-makers to engage in efficient planning.

Originality: We provide a unique focus on the recruitment of tourism academics encompassing crucial factors like sustainable tourism and COVID-19. The proposed framework creates the foundation for the investigation and discussion of academics' recruitment in different contexts. We also offer several new avenues for future research.

Keywords: Human resource management, higher education, tourism academics, tourism curriculum, (un)hidden curriculum, life course framework

1. Introduction

The recruitment and retention of talent in the tourism and hospitality industry is often presented as a major issue affecting its success (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2020; King *et al.*, 2021; Nickson, 2013). This has become an even more pressing concern during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen significant disruptions to the workplace and patterns of employment (Baum *et al.*, 2020; He *et al.*, 2020). Many talented people have become unemployed or have been in/directly forced to change their jobs in a wider perspective of industries across the world.

Academics in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) perform a vital role in the development of talent (Ladkin and Weber, 2009; Silitonga, 2020) and are tasked with helping students to bridge the gap between academic studies and the workplaces (Young *et al.*, 2017). The dominating area of research that focuses on the recruitment and retention of talent in tourism and hospitality relates specifically to the training and education of individuals and their matching to organisational needs (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2020). A secondary but also significant area of research explores the competition that faces tourism and hospitality graduates within the industry from the graduates of other parties, e.g. medical services, banking and finance and telecommunication (King *et al.*, 2021), as tourism and hospitality businesses infrequently require their employees to have industry-related qualifications but instead emphasise relevant skills (Dale and Robinson, 2001).

These two concerns echo the debates in the industry and academia about whether courses should provide learners with generic knowledge relevant to their chosen industry, or functional knowledge making them specialists within the tourism and hospitality, or market-based knowledge – expertise knowledge linked to the development of niches (Dale and Robinson, 2001). A path toward the solution is undoubtedly partnerships between the industry and academia to co-design hospitality cooperative education programs (Wang et al., 2018; Anderson and Sanga, 2018; Alexakis and Jiang, 2019) and lead hospitality management education (Kalargyrou and Wood, 2013; Gardini, 2018).

Instead of focusing on learners, as a considerable number of studies on tourism education have done so far (e.g. Boella and Goss-Turner, 2020; Dale and Robinson, 2001; King *et al.*, 2021; Nickson, 2013; Young *et al.*, 2017), this exploratory study primarily focuses on academics in tourism, and more particularly on their recruitment, which is still under researched (Ladkin and Weber, 2009). The overall objective of the study is to theorise and make sense of the recruitment practices (specialist/generalist academics) of academics in tourism and related topics in the UK. Subsequently, the research question of the study is as follows:

"What are the different hiring practices (in terms of generalists and specialists) adopted by HEIs in the UK?"

This study is of importance as it explores the characteristics of academics who best support graduates with their development of knowledge and relevant skills to work in the industry. Indeed, it is worth iterating that academics are at the forefront of the development of talents for the industry (Silitonga, 2020).

From a methodological point of view, the study has tracked, collected, and examined job adverts posted on a popular recruitment site for academic posts in the United Kingdom (UK) over twelve months. We employed qualitative manifest content analysis to analyse the adverts in terms of their explicit and implicit curriculum emphasis, focusing on 'sustainability as a current trend (Morrison, 2021). This analysis aims to develop a framework to facilitate understanding how the recruitment of academics influences talent development and management in the tourism industry and guide future research in this field.

2. HEIs offering in tourism and hospitality education

2.1. Neoliberalism and managerialism

HEIs are associated with transmitting knowledge of one group to another (Aslan and Kozak, 2019; Shaw and Allison, 1999) and cannot be separated from their ideological context, meaning that curriculums often vary between institutions and countries (Ayikoru *et al.*, 2009; Kirlar-Can *et al.*, 2021). For instance, in the UK, neoliberalism, which is a dominant ideology (Ayikoru *et al.*, 2009), is particularly prominent in countries supportive of deregulation and privatisation. It appeared at the same time as modern capitalist societies, and related impacts such as free markets and free trade at global level (Sodano, 2016). Despite these types of markets enabling organisations to fully explore all possible options in terms of expansion, it also means that in such markets only the strongest survive (Grain, 2010). Hence, this is the reason that neoliberalism is presented as a negative outcome of freedom (De Feo, 2016), and capitalism at its origin said to be 'predatory' (Krebs, 2018). Having said that, supporters of neoliberalism are arguing that this ideology is to be related to positive terms such as 'freedom', 'democracy', and 'peace' amongst nations, and even argue that, in countries where neoliberalism is not as supported, the level of competitiveness of businesses and other type of organisations is limited (Séraphin *et al.*, 2020).

Neoliberalism impacts on the education system of a country in the sense that: First, it suggests that education should support and contribute to the economy while also demanding that HEIs function as businesses, e.g. competing with each other for students (Ayikoru *et al.*, 2009). Second, this ideology helps to produce a tourism education curriculum that primarily supports the growth of the industry and where HEIs need to design courses that are both attractive to students and viewed as credible by industry stakeholders (Aslan and Kozak, 2019; Ayikoru *et al.*, 2009). The development of a 'knowledge city' model, such as the Silicon Valley (USA), is epitomising the integration of HEIs within the economic ecosystem of countries (Fouchier, 2012; Ingallina, 2012), with HEIs playing a central role in the development of the 'knowledge economy' (Kleibert, 2021). The third aspect of the impact of liberalism is research, which is widely used to calculate national and international rankings (Law *et al.*, 2015). Last, but not least, it is also logical to consider that the recruitment of academics in tourism is also an impact of neoliberalism (Aslan and Kozak, 2019), as, in countries such as France, the recruitment of academics is managed by the government, despite the fact some freedom has been given to HEIs to recruit their staff (Séraphin, 2012). As for the type of academics recruited (speciality/expertise), it is also dictated by neoliberalism as these academics are recruited with regards to how popular a course is with students, to stand out from the crowd (Ayikoru *et al*, 2009; Séraphin, 2012).

Managerialism, which is based on the ideology that suitable management tools can help organisations to achieve their objectives (Klikauer, 2015), is closely related to neoliberalism in the sense that the latter could be considered as a tool for businesses to be more competitiveness. Such influences contribute to what Laasch (2018) and Laasch and Gherardi (2019) call the 'hidden' dimension of academia, i.e. learning, which does not occur through explicit but also implicit education. This hidden curriculum, along with the mission of HEIs to transmit values and knowledge to students, contributes significantly to the type of professional they will be in the future (Barnett, 2021; Fendrich and Lovoy, 1988). For example, the UK will often produce graduates who believe in competition underpinned by capitalistic ideologies. Given that academics are responsible for conveying these values and knowledge to their students (Ladkin and Weber, 2009; Silitonga, 2020; Young *et al.*, 2017).

2.1. Life Course Framework

The Life Course Framework (LCF), also referred to as "life span development" (Huber, 2019), aims to explain an individual's personality and the trajectory of their life from birth to death (Van de Ven *et al.*, 2017). More specifically, the framework can help to understand and analyse an individual life journey or developments at each stage of life (Carpenter, 2010). Three elements are included within this framework. First, social pathways (e.g. social background, country of origin, education, religion, work experience) are factors impacting the positionality of an individual (Boutin, 2013; Carpenter, 2010). The next consideration is how experiences (positive and/or negative) have impacted an individual's life. The final element, transition, relates to periods of life involving crossroads in development such as pre-adulthood to early adulthood or middle adulthood to late adulthood (Carpenter, 2010; Huber, 2019). The related concept of the Social Ecological Model (SEM) explains that the micro-system, or close environment of an individual, gender (meso-system), policies (exo-system) and cultural norms (macro-system), have significant impacts on the choices that an individual makes in his or her life (Carpenter, 2010; Huber, 2019; Pérez-Escamilla and Kac, 2013).

From the perspective of the LCF, the experience of attending an HEI plays a significant role in the life of a graduate as it both produces experiences that can affect the life course and traditionally is experienced during a period of transition to adulthood. The trajectory of graduates from tourism and hospitality degrees' lives will be significantly affected during this time, as they have been exposed to high-level considerations of global issues, as well as topics of importance for their future careers (Fendrich and Lovoy, 1988; Zacher and Froidevaux, 2021), such as environmental issues (Boutin, 2013; Brochado *et al.*, 2017; Goh and King, 2020; Tranter, 2010). Indeed, it appears that many individuals started their support and fight for a particular cause, i.e. activism (Barnett, 2021), when at university (Barnett, 2021; Fendrich and Lovoy, 1988). This study particularly aims to focus on this next.

2.2. Activism

Despite an argument that students less and less perceive higher education as a panacea for their employability (Tomlinson, 2007), HEIs remain a place for the transmission of knowledge and values (Aslan and Kozak, 2019; Shaw and Allison, 1999). The rise of activism as an attitude developed at university (Barnett, 2021; Fendrich and Lovoy, 1988) can lead to a fight for a cause or against a common issue within a community (Barnett, 2021). In general, activists are also most frequently individuals from communities who have the highest commitment or dedication to protecting the environment or heritage (Brochado *et al.*, 2017; Pancer *et al.*, 2007). Activists can be split into different categories: active or passive activists, e.g., part of a protest group or not in a protest group (Tranter, 2010).

Activism and the LCF are connected because age, gender, income, education, marital status and children, political believes, religion and careers all affect the nature and extent of an individual's activist orientation (Brochado *et al.*, 2017; McDonald, 2003; Tranter, 2010). Activism and academics are also connected, as academics are responsible for transmitting related and relevant values and knowledge (Ladkin and Weber, 2009; Silitonga, 2020). Equally important, and in the same line of thought, Cole et al. (2021) shed light on how some academics, whom they refer to as activist-academics, are indeed activists themselves.

Activist-academics are individuals with a critically engaged research agenda (Lyon, 2014), who tend to express a belief in 'the 'real' liberal university and its possibility of justice through social critique and dialogue' (Hoofd, 2010: 7). They express this through their teaching and research (Hoofd, 2010). Having said that, much of activism-academia is specialised in specific areas, such as environmental issues, water management or sustainability, as

highlighted by Cole et al.'s (2021) research in Bali, and also because activism calls for a high level of expertise in a domain (Tranter, 2010). This implies that activist-academia is calling for the recruitment of academics with functional knowledge (Dale and Robinson, 2001) in specific areas of tourism, which stands in opposition to the norms and tendency for HEIs to recruit more generic business academics to teach tourism in the UK due to the influence of the ideologies of neoliberalism and managerialism.

Adding to this, the nature of tourism as a field of study or discipline, which draws its knowledge from various disciplines (Kozak and Kozak, 2017; McKercher and Prideaux, 2014; Xiao and Smith, 2005, 2006; Tribe and Xiao, 2011), can lead to many HEIs seeking generalists rather than specialists in their recruitment processes. The following section will discuss the recruitment practices for academics in tourism in more detail.

3. Recruitment of Academics in Tourism

The recruitment of academics involves drafting a clear job description for the position, preparing for the call, assessing and selecting candidates, and, finally, negotiating working conditions with the selected applicant (Fumasoli and Kehm, 2020). The biggest challenge for HEIs is to find the most suitable candidate (Jepsen *et al.*, 2014). A 2005 report produced by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (Metcalf *et al.*, 2005) indicates that trends in the recruitment of academics in different subjects vary with the changes in student demand. As far as tourism and cognate disciplines are concerned, there is a growing demand from students in the UK, which is the focus of this research. In 1997, there were 33 postgraduate and 66 undergraduate programs in tourism in the UK. By 2009, they were respectively 73 and 141 (Ladkin and Weber, 2009). With a substantial change in 2021, 73 HEIs in the UK were offering 310 undergraduate programmes in tourism (Whatuni, 2021). This prominence of tourism and related educational programs reflects a growing demand for high-quality human resources for hospitality businesses and hospitality educational purposes.

Unlike a tremendous negative impact on the industry side, the breakout of COVID-19 does not seem to have negatively impacted the number of job opportunities for academics in tourism yet (see **Table 2 and 3**). This is predominately because tourism is the powerful driver of employment and economic development in many advanced and emerging economies, proving its resilience to occasional shocks and ability to rebound in a relatively short term (UNWTO, 2020). Additionally, this field of study is relatively new and has witnessed a growing interest in research and study since its very beginning (Ladkin and Weber, 2009; Séraphin, 2012); while the breakout of the virus has also opened a new field of research for academics (Sigala, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2021). That said, although tourism education in terms of job opportunities seems to be coping with the current context, academics are still being impacted in the operational aspects of their duties regarding both research and education (Sigala, 2020; Tuma *et al.*, 2020).

Almost all tourism research focusing on recruitment is about recruitment in the industry (Garcia-Barrero and Erbina, 2021; Yen *et al.*, 2018). Research about the recruitment of tourism academics is quasi-inexistent (Ladkin and Weber, 2009), even in specialised journals such as the *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism* (Meagher, 2017) or the *Journal of Teaching Travel and Tourism* (Zhong *et al.*, 2013). The closest research related to recruitment of academics in tourism has examined career perspectives, opportunities and management (Harley *et al.*, 2001), as well as career barriers, transitions and sustainability (Castro *et al.*, 2020), and the role of gender in academic careers (Ozbilgin and Healy, 2001).

Research carried out by Ladkin and Weber (2009) emphasised that the recruitment of academics in tourism is generic primarily instead of functional or market-based. This previous research has concentrated on academics' background, career profiles, and career strategies.

More specifically, corresponding to the study of Kozak and Kozak (2017), the research reveals that most academics in tourism have a PhD and a wide range of backgrounds such as business, geography, leisure/recreation, sociology, business, finance, accountancy, education, environmental science, agriculture, recreation, maths, computing, and statistics. A significant number of academics have been in the industry before, meaning that moving to education could be considered as a transition phase from the perspective of the LCF. These academics explicitly and implicitly influence curricula development for tourism and their students (Busby, 2001).

The type of jobs advertised by an institution, and the way they are advertised, send a conscious (unhidden) or unconscious (hidden) message to all stakeholders (Jepsen *et al.*, 2014; Metcalf *et al.*, 2005; Trapnell, 2007). Supplemental to the advert, and an essential element of recruitment, a job description should provide candidates with a realistic preview of the organisation and nature of the job, that is to say: purpose, task, duties, responsibilities, performance, objectives, reporting relationships, terms and conditions, remuneration and working hours (Nickson, 2013). A person specification then also provides a profile (personal skills and characteristics required to fill the position) of the ideal person for the job (Nickson, 2013). Information contained within advert and supplementary texts relate to the unhidden and hidden curriculum that the HEI has associated with an academic position. The unhidden curriculum is explicit in the formal messages, formal curricula, and statements of values that are expected to be transmitted (Laasch and Gherardi 2019; Parker, 2018), whereas the hidden curriculum concerns implicit and unconsciously sent messages (Gair and Mullins 2001; Margolis 2001).

As recruitment practices are not considered part of formal education, despite their importance for selecting academics with a vital role in developing and delivering this, jobs advertised by universities in the UK can be seen as part of the hidden curriculum. Newly recruited academics might contribute (even in agreement with the management team) to something unplanned and misaligned with the HEI's original plan. For more responsible learning, i.e. delivering student completes aligned with HEI's curriculum, and for greater control of students' learning, HEIs in the UK need to review their strategy in terms of recruitment. Aspects of unhidden and hidden curriculum and a more responsible approach in the context of transparency concerning curriculum and learning outcomes are shown in **Table 1**.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

4. The study approach

4.1. From theory to practice

The theoretical framework developed in section 2 has essentially highlighted that HEIs, as all other sectors of a society, are largely influenced by the 'milieu' or ecosystem they are immersed in. As a 'milieu' or ecosystem, neoliberalism, which is to some extent the forearm of managerialism, is encouraging organisations to use all means available to achieve their objectives, which is often to gain competitive advantages against competitors, even if these means are also causing some casualties. In HEIs, this influence of the 'milieu' and/or ecosystem means that courses and therefore recruitment of academics might occur for functional/market-based reasons, which can be considered as both supportive for when supporting the growth of the industry, meeting a demand from students, and helping the institution to develop programmes which could support its development, etc., but also as predatory for the exact same reasons, particularly if the strategy adopted is fuelled by a

benchmarking approach. This situation sheds light on the Janus-faced character of tourism education and industry, as for every positive impact there is a negative one (Sanchez & Adams, 2008). Thus, recruitment of academics to teach generic subjects such tourism, events, hospitality etc., or specialised subjects such as sustainability, e-sport, cabin crew, aviation, etc., could also have this ambidextrous nature (Janus-faced character) discussed earlier. Having said that, the purpose of the following sections is to (1) identify if the recruitment of academics in tourism and related topics are specialised and/or generic recruitments, and (2) what it means with regards to neoliberalism and managerialism.

4.2. Data collection and analysis

We have adopted a qualitative content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016) to investigate the relationship between tourism job adverts, academics' recruitment, and the curriculum, based on adverts for these roles over twelve months. This technique "*provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena*" (Bengtsson, 2016: p.9). Our study focuses on academic jobs in tourism advertised on *Jobs.ac.uk*, between June 2020 and July 2021 (**Table 2**). Eighty-seven job adverts were manually analysed to develop a case study of the recruitment of academics in tourism in the UK. Once the relevant job adverts were identified, we followed the standard procedure to run the content analysis, involving the development of themes and categories, coding, critical analysis, and interpretation (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017).

Additionally, we paid attention to the five main issues that should be considered in the planning process: the aim of the analysis, sampling, data collection method, choice of analysis and the practical implications (Bengtsson, 2016). The aim of the analysis reflects the lack of understanding of the hidden –unhidden curriculum gap and the consequences regarding the recruitment of hospitality and tourism academicians. The convenient sample of UK job advertisements was conditioned with the aim of the analysis. We employed qualitative manifest content analysis, suggesting that the focus was on describing what the information (job advertisements) actually said and what was visible in the text. The practical implications of the analysis are discussed using the curriculum - requirements gap framework (**Figure 1**) in the context of the UK, thus enabling inferential and theoretical generalisation (White *et al.*, 2003).

The main content themes and categories within the analysis were aligned with the aim of this research and included: the name of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) recruiting; the geographical location; the type of contract (permanent or fixed-term; full time part-time); when the jobs were put online; the job title; and finally, the subject or speciality. This was the precondition to identifying the gaps between hidden and unhidden curriculum. The last item referring to the subject or speciality is the critical focus of this study and was examined with regards to the frequency of subject or speciality to be taught in order to obtain a comprehensive insight into the type of subjects or specialities universities are interested in; and also to obtain a ranking of the most popular subjects, enabling to identify trends and tendencies; the occurrence of 'sustainability or 'sustainable' as a subject, to have an insight into how UK universities have responded to the increased popularity of sustainability in their recruitment of academics; the typical profile of HEIs recruiting academics specialised in sustainability; and the prioritisation of "sustainability" as an area of expertise.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

5. Results

5.1. Generic and specialised recruitments

From the analysis of job adverts for academic roles in tourism in the UK, it appears that the recruitment of academics in tourism reflects the diverse specialities in tourism offered by HEIs in the UK (**Table 3**). These include: *management*; *hospitality*; *leisure*; *hotels*, *environment*; *education*; *marketing*; *culture*; *ecotourism*; *European policy context*; *food*; *geography*; *heritage*; *human resources*; *international*; *policy*; *museum*; *arts*; *recreation*; *rural*; *sociology*; *anthropology*; *travel*; *sport science*; *conservation*; *administration*; *development*; *planning*; and *urban*. Management is by far the most popular keyword in postgraduate course titles, which is to be expected from tourism's common situation in business departments and business schools (Flohr, 2001).

The recruitment of academics of tourism and related topics in the UK indicates that the recruitment of these first and foremost prioritises generic knowledge, shown by the occurrence of keywords in the title of jobs advertised such as *'tourism'* (44 times), *'events'* (41 times), *'hospitality'* (20 times), and *'sports'* (10 times) (**Table 3**). All other occurrences could be considered marginal. This includes *'sustainability'* which only occurs twice, and yet, it is a significant cause of concern in the tourism industry and related topics (dos Anjos and Kennell, 2019; Sloan *et al.*, 2013), reinforcing these senses of a discrepancy between what happens in academia and industry, particularly when it comes to sustainability (Belmonte-Urena *et al.*, 2021).

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

Simultaneously, the destinations have put in place a variety of long-term and short-term sustainability measures to reduce its impacts on the ecosystems and local communities, such as developing eco-friendly products and services, staff training, or education of children (Halimi, 2014; Arnoult-Brill, 2014; Vialon, 2014; Viennois, 2014; Séraphin *et al.*, 2020). The *Scandic Group* and *Best Western* are examples of corporate social and sustainability initiatives (Auriolle, 2011; Couteleau, 2011). Taking the example of the Senior Lecturer role in Hospitality and Tourism Management advertised at Coventry University (2021), the expertise required by the applicants is expressed in vague, generic terms (*jobs.ac.uk* [Online]): *"The role holder will have high levels of personal competence in the relevant subject area, teaching and learning."* In terms of qualification: *"Doctorate in relevant subject or Masters and equivalent professional experience."* As for the essential knowledge and skills: *"Thorough knowledge of a relevant subject area and all current trends and debates."*

An example of a more functional role (Dale and Robinson, 2001) being advertised is for Sustainable Festival and Events Management at Falmouth University (2021), which provide slightly more specific information:

> *The successful candidate for this role will have a relevant educational and industry background, possess comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of multiple aspects of Festival and Events Management including ethical and sustainable practices and will have good connections with industry and professional practice.*

> *We are seeking to recruit an Associate Lecturer in Sustainable Festival and Events Management to join our School of Entrepreneurship to teach across our Undergraduate Experience Design courses with specific expertise in the field of Festival and Events Management.* (Falmouth University, 2021).

As for the lecturing job in Esports Events Management, advertised at Staffordshire University in February 2021, which is also a functional recruitment role, and based on the COVID-19 context, it could be considered as a market-based role, as Séraphin (2020), as well as industry reports (Eventmanagerblog [Online], 2021), argue that as a result of COVID-19 Event Management students need to have the skills required to deliver online events, due to the collapse of tourism and travel-necessary audiences. However, the job description and person specification do not provide any requirement specific to the subject to be taught.

Despite the discrepancies amongst jobs advertised, whether generic, functional or market-based, or discrepancies amongst job descriptions/person specifications, the recruitment of academics is part of the curriculum and, therefore, impacts students' learning (Table 1).

HEIs have responded to the increased importance of sustainability in the industry through, for instance, the development of the Principle of Responsible Management (PRME), a United Nations initiative launched in 2007 to inject ethical values and promote sustainability awareness within education programmes (Annan-Diab and Molinari, 2017). 37 HEIs where tourism or related topics are taught in the UK are signatories to PRME (see **Table 4**). Additionally, postgraduate HEIs in tourism in the UK have responded to the increased popularity of sustainability in the tourism industry, with 12 postgraduate courses in tourism having the term *sustainability* in their title.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

Although this research has demonstrated a clear commitment to sustainability in UK HEIs providing tourism and related courses, the commitment to sustainability is not reflected in the recruitment of academics in tourism as only 2 jobs out of 87 (2%) are for academics specialised in this area. In the case of sustainability, trends in the industry are reflected in education in terms of the unhidden curriculum, but not in terms of recruitment of academics, a vital aspect of the hidden curriculum for tourism.

One of the reasons why sustainability has still not been achieved not only in the tourism industry but overall (Burrai *et al.*, 2019; Visser, 2015) could also be explained by the lack of activist-academics in tourism, which we would expect to see reflected in more functional and market-based (Dale and Robinson, 2001) recruitment, to inspire and shape the lives of students as part of the hidden curriculum. From an LFC perspective, this means that a critical opportunity to influence graduates through meaningful experiences during a transition stage may be lost, reducing the match (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2020) of these graduates for roles in an increasingly issue-focused industry. In this instance, the neoliberal and managerialist ideologies shaping HEIs can be seen to be working against the sustainability objectives of the industry and civil society. As Laasch and Gherardi (2019) and Parker (2018) argued, HEIs (and particularly business schools) still seem to be failing to prepare students adequately for the moral challenges that they will face.

Finally, we employed four parameters (**Figure 1**), including *values* and *ideologies*, *curriculum*, *LFC* and *recruitment,* to discuss and theorise the recruitment of academics in tourism in the UK. The curriculum-requirement gap framework (**Figure 1**) presented below creates the foundation for comprehensive analysis and understanding of the academic recruitment in tourism and related fields to provoke a much deeper consideration of issues beyond the conscious (unhidden) realm of thinking. Indeed, this paper highlights through Tables 2 and 3 what little regard there appears to be for sustainability in a world in desperate need to address sustainability issues (Hall 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles 2020). Using such a simple metaphor within recruitment could present an argument or reality whereby sustainability becomes an unconscious (hidden) part of day-to-day educational practices (despite university

attempts to integrate such sustainability values and ideologies through curriculums, e.g. through PRME and a focus on SDGs).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

5.2. The sources of influence

The results of the study show that the recruitment of academics in tourism and related topics in the UK are influenced by many factors:

1. Benchmarking. If a particular programme or subject is offered by a wide range of universities, and to remain in the competition, it is important for an institution to also offer it, and therefore recruit in the area.
2. Meeting existing students' needs. As students' fee represents an important part of the income of HEIs (Chapleo, 2015), it is very important for HEIs to offer courses which are in demand.
3. Meeting the needs of the industry. Sustainability and e-sport as indicated in the previous section are of interest for the industry, and, as a result, some universities have started to cater for this need, which now is quite niche, and might represent a financial risk for HEIs (recruitment of staff in the area) if not followed with a demand for students. It could also represent a competitive advantage (Janus-faced character of tourism).

Yet, challenges appear for HEIs when the above factors are conflicting. A potential solution to this issue would be the development of government policies and/or regulations which would be halfway between neoliberalism and central government control. This could be materialised through the development and/or reinforcement of government policies, such as Competitiveness White Papers, such as the one in 1998, which encouraged the development of education provision clusters at regional level, and also a better cooperation between businesses and HEIs (Peck and McGuinness, 2003; Sadler, 2004). As a result of this, Northwest England, for instance, developed clusters in the areas of medical appointment, financial professions, creative industries, tourism, etc. (Peck and McGuinness, 2003; Sadler, 2004). However, this study is going a step further by encouraging an even more specific form of clustering, which would designate specific area of specialities per geographic area, which would limit and/or stop unnecessary benchmarking, and would facilitate the cross-over between industry and students' needs, as well as the provision of courses for these needs, resulting in more market-based academic job recruitments.

However, with a need to rethink tourism and hospitality education, and particularly the delivery model and revenue model (Sigala, 2021), this would encourage even more competition amongst HEIs. Moving away from this competitive trend that HEIs are a part of does not seem possible due to the 'milieu' or ecosystem the UK is emersed in. Another example of the perverse impacts of neoliberalism is the constant quest for the 'triple crown' accreditation, namely AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS that the majority of HEIs in Europe are fighting for (Harker *et al.*, 2016), as part of their branding and marketing strategy to attract students and top academics in their field (Harker *et al.*, 2016; Thietart, 2009; Walters and Mair, 2012).

6. Conclusion and implications

Some major conclusions could be drawn from the analysis. Firstly, the educational ideology or values of the education system of the destination must be considered. In the case of the UK, as elsewhere in the world, it is neoliberalism and managerialism which are influencing curriculum

and recruitment (Aslan and Kozak, 2019). Secondly, the curriculum developed by an education institution can either be hidden or unhidden, as has been established by the literature. Having said that, under the influence of the neoliberalism and managerialism ideologies of the UK education system, recruitment of academics in tourism is said to be generic, as opposed to functional and/or market-based. Thirdly, as for the curriculum, the generic recruitment of academics in tourism in the UK is said to be contributing to the hidden curriculum of tourism programmes. Finally, it has been established that the nature of the recruitment of academics influences students' life course or life span.

This study has highlighted the importance of the macro-system on the education of tourism students in HEIs, as the latter has a major influence on the nature of recruitment of academics, and therefore on the hidden and unhidden curriculum, which influences the life course or life span of students. In other words, what students take from their learning is a mixture of the inputs of different systems (macro, micro, exo and meso), and hidden and unhidden curriculum elements.

Based on this analysis, the tourism curriculum could be said to be undisciplined, reflecting the diversity of the industry, as it is impossible to put it in a box due to the many other disciplines contributing to it (Tribe, 1997). As a result of the undisciplined nature of curriculum and tourism, sustainability in tourism programmes in the UK HEIs finds itself in a difficult position because education wants to fully support the industry's trend. However, on the other hand, this support is moderated by the macro-system. Hence, there is a discrepancy between recruitment in the area, the field courses, and the sustainability commitments of HEIs. This discrepancy could also be referred to as a blind spot, which is a discrepancy between what is wanted and what is achieved and how one perceives itself (Blakeley, 2007). However, research criticising the discrepancy between sustainability initiatives in the industry against what is done in HEIs, such as research carried out by Belmonte-Urena *et al.* (2021), often does not consider the undisciplined nature of tourism curricula.

Figure 1 also demonstrates how the values and ideology of a destination's education system could be considered independent variables which are influencing other factors (Hammond and Wellington, 2013). Simultaneously, curriculum, life course, and types of recruitment are dependent variables, that is, factors changed or influenced by other experimental factors, known as independent variables (Hammond & Wellington, 2013). Identifying those variables is crucial as they can help decision-makers to design their strategy, and more importantly, to prioritise their effort and resources, as it is more effective to focus time, effort and resources on drivers, which are often the independent variables, at the same time, followers are dependent variables (Bellia *et al.*, 2021).

Values and ideologies, curriculum, and recruitment could also be said to be determinants, which are factors that foster or constrain varying degrees of agency (Schill *et al.*, 2020). Determinants could be personal, which relate to knowledge and commitment, environmental, that is to say, related to organisation, communication style, microenvironment; and finally, behavioural, which relates to experience (Schill *et al.*, 2020). Values, ideology, and recruitment could be environmental determinants, while curriculum and life course or life span are behavioural.

Although the findings from single-case studies are often said to be not generalisable, case studies are also said to offer an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or a case (Hammond and Wellington, 2013). As a result of this latter statement, the present study argues that the framework (Figure 1) developed in this study could be adapted to other destinations to develop an analysis and discussion similar to the one developed in this study (inferential generalisation). Additionally, carrying out this type of research is innovative as bridging a gap in terms of literature, as there is no research focusing on the recruitment of tourism academics (theoretical generalisation).

This research could also be embedded within the suggestion of Sigala (2021) to rethink tourism and hospitality education through a new delivery model, revenue model, and, finally, value proposition. A rethink of the recruitment of academics could contribute to addressing some of these propositions. For instance, the recruitment of academics in sustainable tourism with strong IT skills could contribute to the design of simulation games for the teaching of sustainable tourism, as this approach has been suggested as a suitable and innovative way for the teaching of this field of study (McGrath *et al.*, 2020). Last but not least, neoliberalism and managerialism, which are factors influencing the UK education system, are also a growing trend (alongside the marketisation of higher education) at a global level (Harley *et al.*, 2001).

The recruitment of academics in tourism and related subjects in the UK is generic, influenced by the neoliberalism and managerialism ideology of the education system of the destination. This recruitment has influenced the hidden curriculum of tourism programmes, with most programmes being generic in nature. Additionally, taking the example of sustainable tourism, HEIs are not in line with trends in the industry, meaning that this research has identified a blind spot created by a discrepancy between the ideology of the education system and the type of recruitment it has mainly triggered.

The impacts on the life course of students are also significant impacts of recruitment. If the generic recruitment of academics in tourism presents some benefits, it also has some limitations, which can be counterbalanced by increasing the number of functional and market-based recruitments in some areas. Indeed, if we take the example of recruitment of academics specialised in sustainability or sustainable academic activists, they can positively impact the industry's performance as they help develop sustainability activist practitioners in tourism.

The results of this study might encourage HEIs providing tourism and related courses in the UK to review their strategy in terms of course development, and subsequently in terms of the recruitment of academics. Indeed, instead of exacerbating an already existing competition amongst themselves, HEIs might decide to develop service-hubs, which implies that HEIs will discuss ideas in terms of products (programmes development) and come to an agreement for its marketing and provision and delivery; this can avoid unnecessary duplication and competition (Chhetri *et al.*, 2017; Lub *et al.*, 2016; Olds, 2007). The results of this study could also be of use for academics looking for a job, as they clearly indicate the institutions which are recruiting the most, and in which area. Other useful information for academics in tourism and related topics include: the peak time when jobs are advertised, the level of recruitment (lecturer, senior lecturer, etc.), the type of contract offered, and so on.

Future research could look at determining and making sense of recruitment hubs in the UK for tourism academic jobs. Other research could also look at determining the mobility of academics within the UK HEI environment.

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