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Identity Construction through Tourism Education: Voice from International Students

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Title: Identity Construction through Tourism Education: Voice from International Students

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Abstract:

Although tourism and hospitality (T&H) as HE programmes have achieved the “remarkable growth in numbers” (Airey, 2015: 13), their maturity “is still highly debatable” (Hsu, Xiao & Chen, 2015: 142). The downplaying of liberal education and the high reliance on a vocational approach are believed as an inherent challenge that prevents T&H HE from developing “well-rounded, knowledgeable and thoughtful individuals (Tight, 2015: 95)” and instead is seen as a specialist incubator for the industry (Airey, 2013; Tribe, 2002). Upholding the liberal education approach, this research conducts a multimode exploration of international student’s self-identity (re)construction. Specifically, we focus on how Chinese international students understand their self-development through their overseas education on a daily base, looking specifically at tourism and hospitality programmes. Data were collected through the combination with self-portrait and collage-making, being supported with semi-structured in-depth interview. Unlike previous research which has studied international students as homogeneous groups, this research prioritizes the individual heterogeneities—studying individual experiences as integrally embedded in students’ everyday lives.

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