Tourism Education in Nigeria

L.C. Ekechukwu, Ph.D,
Department of Archaeology and Tourism,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Introduction

Tourism has made an enviable mark as a major contributor to the socio-economic prosperity of many nations across the world today. According to experts, tourism has emerged as one of the highest income-yielding industries in the world in addition to being an important instrument for preserving and showcasing the cultural heritage of any society. It could act as a catalyst for raising the level of social life of the visitors and the visited. As a labour intensive industry it is capable of creating jobs in a wide range of enterprises from restaurants and hotels to the travel trade, leisure and recreation, and visitor attraction of all sorts. This has a corresponding multiplier effect on such sectors of the economy as small and medium enterprises, transportation, the cultural industry and manufacturing. Tourism is a unique industry in which resources are relatively inexhaustible and technological demands are comparatively low.

Nigeria is one of such countries in the world that is inundated with rich and alluring tourism resources that are capable of transforming the country into a haven for both domestic and international tourists, if proper attention is paid to the development of this sector. Unfortunately, this is far from being realized due to a number of factors among which is a poorly articulated policy on tourism education that has not only failed to serve the expanding learning needs of the field, but has also come short of producing the requisite and knowledgeable manpower that could move the industry to enviable heights. The absence of a sound and vibrant policy on tourism education has undoubtedly robbed this country of the much needed manpower that could assist in harnessing the abundant resources in tourism beckoning for attention and development.

This paper examines the national policy on tourism as well as the practice of tourism education. It suggests some tourism education approaches that could provide for both the formal and structured aspects of learning and the informal aspect that could guarantee a life-long learning opportunity, all of which could broaden the scope of tourism education in Nigeria.

The Tourism Policy for Nigeria

A national tourism policy was developed for Nigeria in 1990. This policy derives its inspiration first from NEPAD Baseline study on Tourism and secondly from the pronouncement and determination of the Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to develop and market

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Nigeria as a tourism destination. The policy thrust is to develop sustainable tourism by capitalizing on heritage diversity as the basis for promoting domestic and international tourism.

The main policy objectives are to:

1. Protect and promote Nigeria's cultural heritage as a resource for home grown socio-economic development.
2. Encourage community and public partnership in tourism development.
3. Generate foreign exchange, enhance income redistribution, alleviate poverty and create employment.
4. Promote Nigeria as a desirable tourism destination within the context of Africa's cultural renaissance.
5. Promote geo-political integration, healthy international cooperation and understanding; and
6. Ensure environmental sustainability in the development of tourism resources.

To ensure the success of the policy, four pivotal areas were earmarked for proper attention. These are: Security; Planning; Research and Development; and Promotion and Marketing. The Research and Development aspect, for example, stipulates that the development of the tourism industry in Nigeria shall follow a systematic process that takes into account the World Tourism Market, competitiveness of products and attractions within the African sub-region and indeed within the North-South Tourism Axis of Africa. The development approach envisaged will be holistic taking into account all human environments, social, economic and political factors to enhance broad flow of tourists within the tourism zones. Local communities will partner in the planning and implementation of tourism projects in their communities to ensure that they derive economic benefits from the tourism projects sited in their areas. Such benefits will come in the form of employment and income generation, infrastructural development and preservation of the people's heritage.

In the area of capacity building, the policy stipulates that government shall initiate training programmes in the tourism, travel and hospitality industry through specialized institutions such as the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), the Nigerian Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOURS) and the tertiary institutions in the areas of tour guiding, hotel and resorts management, catering and so on. Nevertheless, the level of participation and involvement of the tertiary institutions in human capital development through tourism education to raise the needed manpower to fast-track tourism development and promotion in Nigeria leaves much to be desired. In order to ensure sustainable tourism development, the policy stipulates that Government would ensure gender equality and sensibility by way of providing special assistance to women cooperatives from the Tourism Development Fund to improve their earning capacity. To ensure environmental sustainability, the policy stipulates that

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be carried out in respect of all major tourism projects. This is important because tourism is a land-use activity and like other land-use activities, tourism projects impact heavily on the landscape. The need to incorporate Environmental Impact Assessment studies in Tourism Education Curriculum, therefore, becomes apparent.

The policy also focused on the development and promotion of a number of products in which the nation has relative competitive advantage over other tourist generating countries of the world. These include cultural tourism products development and promotion to generate huge domestic and international tourist traffic for the country, hosting of international conferences and sporting activities; promotion of safari/Eco-tourism, given the country's rich biodiversity and shopping tourism. Other areas that will be encouraged are agro-tourism, beach and youth tourism, health resorts development to harness the tourism potential of the numerous Warm/Hot springs and waterfalls in the country. The policy is to take cognizance of the National Master Plan on Transportation in order to integrate tourism within an overall transport implementation strategy. Finally, the policy assigned roles to the public and private sectors as well as voluntary organizations.

Role of the Public Sector

Government will among other things, provide the enabling environment for the provision of infrastructures, initiate laws to protect local and foreign investments and tourists, maintain control over standards and development of the tourism industry observing strictly the previous development strategies as may be stipulated in the Master Plan. It shall also develop Nigeria into a regional hub that will coordinate and facilitate air travels to other parts of Africa.

Role of the Private Sector

The private sector is to serve as the executor of tourism programmes. The policy emphasizes that the private sector will be encouraged to provide necessary super-structure and material/technical basics such as good standard tourist accommodation, holiday resorts, amusement parks, restaurant and casinos. It shall be involved in tour operating, tour guiding, provision of facilities for conferences such as public address systems, transportation, travel arrangements, frontier receptions for organized tourism packages, among others. It shall also organize national events in collaboration with national and state tourism organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations as well as package festivals, and develop excellent standard souvenir entrepreneurship at tourist destinations. In addition, the private sector shall be involved in creating environmental awareness on Eco- tourism, national parks, urban and rural hygiene at tourist centre. The policy also stipulates that every tour operator shall obtain a certificate of operation from government having satisfied all requirements before being allowed to operate. Foreign tour operators that want do

business in Nigeria are encouraged to do so but must be affiliated to licensed tour operators in Nigeria. The policy recognizes the Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria (FTAN) as the umbrella body of tourism and tourism related associations established to coordinate all the activities.

Role of Voluntary Organizations

Voluntary Organizations such as the Rotary Club, Lion's Club, Golf clubs, and others, are to participate in the development of the nation's tourism industry through the development of recreational parks, promotion of international meetings and image of the country among their members all over the world.

Institutional Arrangement

An institutional framework for the implementation of the tourism development process shall be constituted. It will comprise the Presidential Council on Tourism, Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism, states and local governments. The Presidential Council on Tourism shall among other things be responsible for the finalization of the tourism policy. It shall set targets for development from time to time as shall be initiated, developed and presented by the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It shall also discharge such leadership role that shall be initiated, developed, and presented by the Ministry as well as give final approvals on the usage and disbursement of the Tourism Development Fund.

Role of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC)

The policy recognizes the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) as a technical organ of government and therefore stipulates that the body should be restructured to assume a technical posture of professionalism and effectiveness. It shall formulate guidelines for tourist accommodation grading for the state governments to implement. This shall be achieved through the world Tourism Organization and International Labour Organization. It is important to note that in trying to discharge this mandate of tourist accommodation grading, the apex tourism organization in Nigeria has faced a lot of challenges from some state governments that are unwilling to accede to the demand of the policy. The policy states that the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) shall coordinate the accommodation grading exercise through well-trained inspectors and its sectors' Coordination Department. The body shall ensure compliance of state tourism organizations with standards and regulations as laid down by the Federal Government and also issue certificate on annual basis to all approved, certified and graded tourism accommodations and facilities.

Roles of State and Local Governments

State governments shall among other things implement policies jointly agreed upon at the Presidential Council on Tourism. These shall include:

- Allocation of tourism lands at concessionary rates
- Initiating viable tourism projects and operating within the framework of the national tourism master plan.
- Promoting both inter and intra state tourism.
- Maintaining security within the state and tourism destinations.
- Encouraging the formation of tour operating entities and licensing them within the rules to be jointly set up by the Presidential Council on Tourism.
- Setting up and operating aggressive information and marketing strategies for the state tourism products through nationally controlled and organized website of the Federal Government
- Cataloguing all tourist events and developing a calendar of events to be placed on the Nigerian website. The state governments shall also preserve and protect tourism assets in their domains.

The local governments on their part, shall operate within the regulations set up by the state governments, conform with the planning strategy as set up by the relevant authority. It shall contribute to security in the local areas and encourage adequate hospitality to visitors as well as contribute to the development of tourism infrastructure, and encourage cultural activities and environmental cleanliness in their respective locality. The local governments shall also encourage small-scale enterprises aimed at the production of souvenirs, arts and crafts among others (Adapted from the National Tourism Policy, 1990).

The History and Practice of Tourism in Nigeria

Tourism in Nigeria, as in other countries of West Africa, has an old beginning. This could be traced to about the 4th century AD, when the great empires and kingdoms began to emerge in the West African Sudan. These empires and kingdoms played an active role in promoting and nurturing tourism in the pre-colonial period. This was because they played host to such foreigners as scholars, travelers, adventurers and traders who in turn paid homage to the rulers of these empires and kingdoms. Da' Silva (1985 in Ekechukwu, 2002) is of the opinion that Nigeria hosted her first European tourists in 1472 when the first batch of Portuguese arrived in Lagos. According to Modupe (1980) the first attempt to manage Nigeria's tourism resources especially the cultural aspect, under British Colonial Administration was made with the establishment of Colonial Antiquities Commission and the Federal Department of Antiquities by an Act of Parliament in 1953, thus, showing the importance of cultural resources in tourism promotion. The Commission was mandated to identify and preserve national monuments and antiquities (Olokesusi 1987 in Okpoko and Okpoko 2002).

In 1959, an Ad-HOC committee on tourism was inaugurated under the auspices of the Nigerian Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This Ad-hoc committee later paved the way for the establishment of the Nigeria Tourist

Association, a quasi- government organization in 1962. The Association was charged with the responsibility of promoting tourist amenities and facilities in Nigeria and to render financial assistance to the states to leverage tourism of that level. It was also charged with the promotion of a healthy domestic tourism programme in the country and international tourism for its foreign exchange and other benefits (Da' Silva 1985; Olokesusi 1987; Okpoko and Okpoko 2002). In 1963, the practice of tourism in Nigeria was taken to another level when the Nigeria Tourist Association became a member of the International Union of Official Travel Organization now World Tourism Organization, (WTO), an International Organization that fosters the growth and promotion of tourism world-wide. It is on record that no serious effort was made in the immediate future to provide a pragmatic government policy that should give financial and administrative impetus to tourism development as well as foster tourism education in Nigeria. It was not until 1975, thirteen years after the establishment of the Nigeria Tourist Association, that tourism received a positive attention in the nation's economic planning with an allocation of N120 million by the then Military Government (Okpoko and Okpoko 2002). By Decree 54 of 1976, the Federal Military Government established the Nigeria Tourist Board. The Board was charged with the responsibility of promoting the development of tourism in Nigeria through co-ordinated researches, planning and publicity. Following the establishment of the Nigeria Tourist Board, most State Governments inaugurated their State Tourism committees as demanded by the decree. These State Tourism Committees were mandated to take positive measures to harness the tourist potential within their respective domains. A number of States took steps to constitute or reconstitute their tourism committees and they include Lagos State in 1985, Kaduna State in 1986. Some state governments like Plateau also endeavored to involve the private sector in tourism development. The Plateau Amusement Park Limited, proprietors of Jos Amusement Park and the Roc Hotel Limited, owners of Jos Sheraton Hotel, are two of such government and private sector investments (Okpoko and Okpoko 2002). Experts are still of the opinion that in spite of the provisions of Decree 54, only a few of the tourist attractions in the country enjoyed either Federal or State Government support (Olasebikan, 1987). As a result of mounting debt burden and increasing desire to reduce the overdependence on crude oil exports as the nation's main source of foreign exchange, the Government decided to diversify its revenue base. One of the "preferred sector industries" for achieving this dream was the tourism industry. In view of this and in line with aspiration of the people, tourism was accorded a ministerial status with creation of the Ministry of Commerce and Tourism in 1985.

In 1990, the Federal Military Government launched a blue print on tourism to demonstrate its commitment to development and promotion of tourism into an economically viable industry. The main thrust of the policy and the strategies to be adopted as well as the institutional framework

necessary for the implementation of the strategies have been outlined above. To address the shortcomings of Decree 54 and provide the right answers for the development of tourism in Nigeria, Decree 81 of 1992 was promulgated, establishing the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC). The statutory responsibilities of the Corporation have also been highlighted above. In realization of the intricate relationship between culture and tourism and the need to promote the practice of tourism at the grass-roots, the Federal Government created the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The Ministry proposed a new Master Plan for the development of the country's tourism industry and this dream was realized a few years ago when the Master Plan was officially launched. Although Nigeria's tourism industry has come a long way the desired impact is yet to be felt.

Shortcomings of the Tourism Policy and Practice

The National Tourism Policy as was launched in 1990, failed to articulate a pragmatic strategy that could help develop a functional tourism education for Nigeria. Even the age-long practice of tourism has not given a boost to tourism education that could help the people develop the right attitude towards the protection, preservation and management of their heritage resources which are important ingredients of tourism. Although tourism has been practiced in one form or the other in Nigeria, however the emergence of tourism as an academic discipline is a nascent phenomenon. The late beginning of tourism as an academic discipline could be traced to poor response given to it by successive governments in this country. As pointed out above, the National Tourism policy, which is about the only political instrument that could give impetus to the realization of a sustainable tourism education, failed to give it a voice in the educational system of this country. Consequently, tourism as a discipline has continued to play adjunct role to some other disciplines and sometimes subsumed under any discipline with which it shares affinity. This ugly trend has also raised the contentious question of domicile for the discipline of tourism in Nigerian Universities and is still raging. Apart from a few polytechnics and universities in the country that have seen the urgent need to establish tourism in their various faculties, many institutions are still dragging their feet over it while some are outrightly uninterested and could do anything to kill the idea. It is important to note that the number of tertiary institutions offering tourism and related courses are still a far cry from what should be expected from a country with rich and diverse cultural and natural tourism resources that could be transformed into unspeakable wealth when the requisite man-power is available. Although the National Tourism Policy stipulates that government shall initiate training programmes through specialized institutions such as the Nigerian Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) and the tertiary institutions, it failed to define and articulate very clearly the role of tertiary institutions in this enterprise. It is also sad to observe that the universities and research institutes in this country have hardly been involved

in surveys and researches on tourism and this does not make for a healthy growth of the tourism sector. The absence of any form of tourism curriculum in our secondary educational system should be a source of concern for our educational planners. The detail about the recent pronouncement on the establishment of tourism education in Nigeria is yet to be in the public domain.

Apart from the manpower supply issue which is in the domain of the formal education sector, the informal sector of tourism education has equally suffered some neglect. This is due to the low impetus given to public awareness on the importance of tourism and its promotion. This low level of advocacy has accounted for the poor tourism culture among Nigerians, which has denied the people an opportunity to play their stewardship role towards protecting, and preserving these valuable heritage resources. It is sad to note that a lot of people in this country do not attach much value to their cultural heritage which are important ingredients for tourism development. Attention should therefore be paid to the informal tourism education sector in order to carry the people along the process of developing and promoting Nigeria's tourism resources so that the nation can join other countries like Egypt, Kenya, The Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago to make fortunes out of her abundant tourism endowments.

Suggested Approaches to Sustainable Tourism Education in Nigeria

It is a well-known fact that tourism's knowledge base is not just increasing as new fields of tourism are emerging everyday but is also expanding. To meet this challenge there is the urgent need to provide both formal and informal tourism education opportunities for the people of this country. At this juncture, it is important to distinguish between formal and informal education. Formal education is a more structured aspect of learning that provides knowledge fundamental and germane to a field and takes place in a traditional academic setting.

Formal education attempts to explore new opportunities for pedagogy (the theory and practice of teaching) in any discipline. It tries to reflect pedagogy in a discipline. Recent developments within the field of education and the increased use of electronic technology have significantly expanded the possibilities for teaching and learning, for collaboration and networking, and for building a strong community of practice among professionals (Dardes, 2009:6). There will be the need therefore, to research and apply such innovations in teaching and learning to the field of tourism education.

Informal learning on the other hand, attempts to contextualize and expand upon formal learning by taking it beyond the classroom environment and applying it to situations and circumstances in real life. In other words, it provides education that extends well beyond traditional academic settings. It helps in evolving a learning society in which individuals enjoy opportunities throughout their lives to expand knowledge and adapt their skills to

changing circumstances (Faure *et al*, UNESCO 1972 in Dardes, 2009). Education planners often focus on the more structured aspect of learning and often neglect or overlook the importance of the non-formal or informal learning in the development of professionalism.

To serve the expanding learning needs in the field of tourism there is the urgent need to focus seriously on tourism education and training in this country. To achieve this, there is the need to create networking opportunities for experts in the academia (the education sector) and the industry that would contribute to further development of the tourism profession. This collaboration between the industry and the education sector is necessary, since the tourism industry is the major employer of graduates from the educational institutions. In order to evolve a functional and sustainable tourism education for the country, our educational institutions at the secondary and tertiary levels should introduce tourism education into their curricula. Such curricula should be able to provide not only a more structured aspect of learning, but also one that gives practitioners the opportunity to acquire skills outside the boundaries of traditional classrooms. This then means that a period of internship or industrial attachment should be provided for all students offering tourism at the tertiary level of our educational system. To build a thriving tourism industry in the country, there is the need for collaboration between the academia and the industry in tourism researches. Results from such joint ventures will go a long way to bolster not only the activities of the industry but also tourism education in the country. Financial support is imperative for a successful take off and sustenance of tourism education in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, lends support to the call for a National Tourism Fund to which governments at all levels and the private sector will be mandated by law to make contributions. Such fund will be made available for researches, industrial training of students, provision of facilities for teaching and learning and also help to promote tourism education at both formal and informal levels.

Since tourism is multifaceted and multidisciplinary, inputs for teaching especially at the tertiary level must come from such faculties as the Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Management, Education and Agriculture and only experts in the field of tourism should be engaged for such exercise. It is also advocated that tourism should be a free-standing department in the various faculties where it may be domiciled in our tertiary institutions and not as adjuncts to other related disciplines. To ensure effective teaching and learning, there is the need to encourage writing workshops and other avenues for producing didactic resources that can be used in tourism education and training contexts.

Conclusion

Nigeria is blessed with a wide spectrum of natural and cultural tourism resources whose potential have hardly been harnessed due largely to low investment in Human capital that can effectively manage the industry and

take it to the desired heights. A tourism policy that recognizes the importance of tourism education that will provide for both formal and informal learning opportunities that could generate the quantum of manpower needed to manage the industry is seriously canvassed by this paper. Such education will not only make the people the stewards of their heritage, but will also contribute to the development of these resources with the attendant socio-economic benefits.

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