

# The Innovation and Practice of the “Tourism Management + English” Talent Cultivation Model Based on the New Liberal Arts Concept\*

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In the context of globalization, there is an urgent need to cultivate interdisciplinary talents with knowledge of tourism management and proficiency in English. Guided by the New Liberal Arts concept, the “Tourism Management + English” talent cultivation model has emerged. Taking the tourism management talent cultivation of Hainan province as an example, this article analyzes the issues present in traditional tourism management programs and proposes a construction framework that involves conducting in-depth industry research, improving management systems, increasing financial support, implementing strict and standardized management, optimizing talent cultivation plans, highlighting distinctive training features, and strengthening industry services.

*Keywords:* New Liberal Arts, interdisciplinary application, current status, talent cultivation, pathway

## Introduction

In 2017, Hiram College in America led a trend of education and innovation, taking the lead in presenting the concept of New liberal arts, which means a close combination between traditional liberal education and modern education to boost the modernization and multi-development of liberal arts education. Afterwards, China officially introduced this concept and promote it, aiming at through the integration and innovation giving new life to the education of liberal arts. In November, 2020, The Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education issued the “Declaration on New Liberal Arts”, pointing out the developmental direction for the new liberal arts. The core of new liberal arts lies in “new”, which is not only a kind of heritage towards traditional liberal arts, but also a kind of innovation and breakthrough. The new liberal arts is devoted to breaking the limitation of traditional liberal arts and broadens the field and depth of the new liberal arts by optimizing, upgrading traditional subjects and majors or implementing the intersection and fusion. The Innovation and Practice of the “Tourism Management + English” Talent Cultivation Model just embodied the application of the concept of new liberal arts.

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## **Literature Review on the Cultivation of the Talents in Tourism Management Based on the Concept of New Liberal Arts.**

The research is centered on CNKI as the major document search platform, standing for China National Knowledge Infrastructure. It is a comprehensive knowledge resource and digital publishing platform in China, offering extensive academic resources including journals, dissertations, conference papers, and other scholarly publications. By the end of May 30th, May, the topic on the cultivation of the tourism talents has been deeply probed into on the database of CNKI. Through the query of the key words “tourism management of the new liberal arts”, 72 copies of academic papers and 2 copies of master degree dissertation have been obtained. After the rigorous data screening and cleaning, 72 copies of academic papers and one copy of master degree dissertation are thought as closely related to the topic of this research and taken as research samples, among which 6 copies of academic papers are indexed into Chinese core journals. These papers have lasted for six years ranging from 2019 to 2024. However, the average papers published are less than 12 copies, which indicates that the study of the new liberal arts in tourism is in the initial stage, but in an increasingly development state. At present, the study of the new liberal arts mainly focuses on the following aspects.

### **The Cultivation of Tourism Talents and Reforms of the Traditional Talent Cultivation Mode**

The history of the major of tourism management can date back to the year of 1979. Relatively, the major of tourism management is an old one in China; therefore, many scholars proposed opinions and ideas on the tourism management, talent cultivation and the development of tourism management. For instance, Li (2023, p. 100) and Bai (2023, p. 123) respectively put forward the reformation suggestions towards the tourism talent cultivation under the background of digital and Artificial intelligence times, stressing in the new technological and social environment, the talents in the major of tourism management should be equipped the techniques and knowledge which should be quite different from the traditional talent cultivation.

### **The Curriculum Innovation and Practice and Tourism Plan**

Some scholars focus their study on the tourism plan and curriculum development, especially in the teaching methods, practice mode and curriculum innovation in the background of new liberal arts. Xiang and Deng (2023, p. 143) explores the tourism plan and curriculum development from five aspects under the background of the new liberal arts, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary and integrated teaching methods in curriculum innovation.

### **The Case Teaching and System Construction in Tourism Management**

Some scholars lay their emphasis on the case teaching methods, effects and the system construction. Lin, Guo, and Yuan (2023), Tian (2023) respectively put forward their own opinions towards the case teaching system in tourism management of applied undergraduate colleges and they also suggest combining ecotourism with applied curriculum reformation and practice. In their study, they lay emphasis on the the value and prospect of case teaching in the tourism management teaching.

Based on the above analysis, it can be found that in the background of new liberal arts, the curriculum reformation of tourism management has got some progress and achievements in the past several years. However, one thing is needed to note that the integration of tourism management and English major is relatively few. In the past years, the study mainly focuses on one major, that is, the tourism management. Under

the background of the new liberal arts, the study of two major integration provides broad space, promoting the innovation and development of compound talent training model for tourism management majors.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Population and Sample**

The study is mainly focuses on the existing problems of tourism management talent cultivation and corresponding solutions. Therefore, the population chiefly includes the following three parts: universities that set up tourism management, the enterprises which are related to tourism management and the students of tourism management major. The reasons why the three parts are included are that universities are the main organizations providing education and training of tourism management major, the enterprises related to tourism management major are the places where students work after graduation and which are importance places to check the quality of talent cultivation. In terms of the undergraduates and graduates, they are the direct beneficiary and participators of talent cultivation, who has the most direct feelings and feedback toward talent cultivation.

Correspondingly, the samples consists of three parts. The first part is three universities, which are all in Hainan provinces, one public university and two private ones. Since the CPC Central Committee granted Hainan the strategic positioning of “Three Zones and One Center” in April 2018, Hainan Province has achieved remarkable results in the process of comprehensively deepening reform and opening up, with outstanding achievements in high-quality economic and social development. Among them, tourism, as the leading industry in the modern industrial system, has increasingly highlighted the demand for high-level, highly qualified, international, and application-oriented talents in tourism management. Therefore, the research on the tourism management talent cultivation of Hainan’s universities are of great importance.

The second part is six enterprises which are closely related to tourism management and have established long-term cooperation with universities. The enterprises are hotels, tourism companies and travel agencies.

The third part are graduates randomly chosen from the three universities. Their different backgrounds and experiences will be beneficial to the talent cultivation.

### **Research Design**

In this study, the quantitative method and the qualitative method are both employed to analyze the existing problems in the traditional tourism management cultivation and corresponding solutions.

In this study, both online and offline questionnaires are utilized as a relatively cost-effective, swift, and efficient means of collecting vast amounts of information from a large sample of interviewees.

Three kinds of questionnaires are used in the study of the existing problems of present tourism management talent cultivation. One is for universities, the other is for enterprises , and another is for students.

Interview is also employed in the study to know about the needs of enterprises and students.

Inference involves drawing conclusions based on facts or premises. In this research, both abductive reasoning and deductive logic are employed. Based on the data collected through questionnaires and interviews, the problems and their corresponding solutions are identified.

### **Data Collection**

In this research, 500 questionnaires were distributed and 492 were successfully retrieved. SPSS 26.0 was utilized to assess the validity of the collected data. Firstly, Cronbach’s alpha was employed to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaires. The results indicated a high overall validity of 0.952. Secondly, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify the primary components of the questionnaires and verify their structural validity. The findings revealed a KMO coefficient of 0.967 and a Bartlett’s test of sphericity with a p-value less than 0.001, suggesting that the data had ideal validity.

On-site interviews and questionnaires were the primary methods used to gather data on existing issues in tourism management talent cultivation. Secondary data sources included articles, papers, treatises related to tourism management talent cultivation, and new liberal arts. The on-site interviews were conducted in universities and enterprises.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **The Existing Problem of Tourism Management Talent Cultivation**

The present tourism management talent cultivation is not closely related to the concept of new liberal arts. The new liberal arts lay focus on the integration of majors and cultivate the compound applied talents. However, the present talent cultivation concepts have been formed in many course or major management staff’s minds. Excellent concepts are the foundation of actions. Without advanced concepts as guidance, the talent cultivation is just a kind of repetition of “the old story”.

The second problem embodies in the inadequate interdisciplinary integration. The tourism management program lacks effective interdisciplinary integration with disciplines such as foreign languages and literature or management sciences when aligning with the professional qualities and competency requirements for new liberal arts talents in international tourism management within the industry. This lack of deeply integrated teaching models results in students finding it difficult to acquire comprehensive and systematic knowledge and skills, leading to a phenomenon where what is learned is not applied and what is applied is not learned.

The third problem is that university teaching does not match the needs of enterprises. Owing to the fact that many universities make few investigation towards enterprises’ needs when making the plan of talent cultivation. This way of working in a vacuum hardly cultivates the talents that satisfy the enterprises’ needs.

In the process of cultivating the tourism management talents, the traditional tourism management program has failed to effectively leverage the synergistic effects among multiple entities such as the government, enterprises, schools, and research institutions, and has not fully employed the advantages of educational resources. This lack of a multi-entity collaborative education mechanism has led to issues such as dispersed resources and inefficient processes in talent training, making it difficult to meet the demand of the tourism industry for high-quality, internationalized, and application-oriented composite talents in tourism management.

### **The Solutions to the Existing Problems**

The solutions towards existing problems in the tourism management talent cultivation is to adopt the mode of the “Tourism Management + English” talent cultivation model based on the new liberal arts concept.

**Form the concept of new liberal arts.** Deserting the traditional thoughts of only focusing on the tourism management is the first step to form the concept of new liberal arts. For the model of “tourism

management+English, the management staff and teachers need to think how to combine based on the concepts of new liberal arts to break away from the limitations of traditional thinking patterns. Taking Hainan province in China as an example, Hainan is an international province and tourism is its pivotal industry. English is an important ability for students who major in tourism management. Therefore, when designing the talent cultivation plan, the concepts of integrating these two majors are of great importance.

**Listen to multiple voices to make the talent cultivation plan satisfied with the needs of enterprises.**

The concepts are the foundation to realize the new liberal arts. When making the talent cultivation plan, which is the blueprint of students' future, must be consistent with the needs of enterprises, which means listening to multiple voices from enterprises and students. For example, in Hainan, based on the construction of Hainan free trade port, professional supervisors of tourism management should visit the enterprises to fully master the key elements of the national and Hainan's international tourism management industry, including business types, job distributions, capability requirements, and listen to the employment needs of enterprises. In terms of the talents of tourism marketing, a great number of marketing means and strategies should be mastered to promote tourism products and boost the popularity and attractiveness of tourism destinations. In the perspective of tourism product plan and sale, itineraries, tourism products should be planned and designed in order to sell and promote. In the aspect of tourism service and reception, tourism guide services, hotel service, catering service and so on should be provided for tourists. All these posts are closely related with tourism plan and design, tourism marketing, tourism product design and selling. All these posts all require the talents with English. That is to say, such talents could have a broader job market and more chances.

Besides, students should be listened to in order that it is better to know about students job goals, their English levels, their eagerness for majors and enterprises.

**Optimize the talent cultivation plan.** A reverse design approach and implementing it in a forward direction are adopted fully align with the talent needs of local areas, industries and enterprises and optimize talent cultivation programs, focusing on the cultivation of students' knowledge and abilities, processes and methods, emotional attitudes, and values, and constructing an educational system that integrates “Tourism Management + English + Information Technology + Internships and Practical Training.” To be exact, in the first year, the courses mainly focus on English reading, listening, speaking and writing and some basics of tourism management. From the second to the third years, all the courses are taught in English. That is to say, it is of great necessity to provide students an English environment. The courses consists of required ones and optional ones which are based on social needs and students' requirements.

One thing needs to be noted that all the students must study ideological and political courses which help to cultivate students to set up right concepts toward life, money, professions and so on.

**Guarantee the sound system.** The sound system is the guarantee to realize the education of new liberal arts. Taking the international cooperation program of tourism management of Hainan Tropical Ocean University, their system is established based on several parties.

The tourism management of Hainan Tropical Ocean University (HTOU) is an international program with IMC Krems University of Applied Sciences (IMC). Under the background of the new liberal arts, the management mode of this program also embodies a kind of integration which include two parties. The teaching management for first-year foundational courses at HTOU is based on a combination of the university's own

teaching management system. For the second to fourth years, which constitute the project phase, a blend of IMC and HTOU’s teaching management systems is adopted. A management system characterized by collaboration, co-cultivation, co-governance, and co-training among multiple entities, including the school, the Austrian IMC, and enterprises, is established and improved. The management system and institutional framework are refined through joint efforts by the Chinese university, partner enterprises, and foreign institutions, with a teaching steering committee formed to carry out specific tasks. To ensure the teaching quality and talent cultivation standards of the Sino-Austrian cooperative education project, the project team and relevant departments have formulated a teacher qualification system in accordance with the special meeting resolutions of the university’s party committee, thereby guaranteeing the quality of instruction. The Austrian side reviews and approves the English resumes of all teachers involved in the project phases. Regulations concerning specific teaching aspects such as the orientation ceremony for incoming students, exemption from exams, interviews for admission to the Sino-Austrian project, and final exams have been established to further standardize teaching management. For instance, students who score 6 or above in the official IELTS test during their first semester are exempt from the four IELTS courses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, significantly boosting their motivation to learn the language.

**Equipped with the excellent teaching group.** The new liberal arts stress the combination of different majors. That is to say, the teachers should not in one major, especially for the mode of “tourism+English”. The teaching groups need to be formed by teachers of English major, teachers of tourism management, the teaching staff from enterprises and foreign teachers. The combination will offer students more choices of curricula. For the foreign teachers and Chinese teachers of English major are responsible for improving students’ language levels, whilst teachers of tourism management contribute to the cultivation of knowledge and ability of students’ tourism management. For the teachers from enterprises, they mainly shoulder the responsibilities of students’ social practice and internship. For example, in the International problem between HTOU and IMC, to cultivate applied and international-oriented tourism talents, the program takes advantage of distinguished locations and the high-quality resources of high-star international hotels in Sanya of China and collaborates with top international tourism enterprises to jointly nurture international applied talents in tourism management. For ten years, the program has established solid connections with a great number of renowned enterprises both within and outside the Hainan province in China, setting up professional internship and training bases with them. These include Beijing Universal Resort, Shanghai Disneyland, Chimelong Resorts in Guangzhou, Raffles Qingshuiwan, Haikou Huacai International, Park Hyatt Sanya, Edition Sanya Yalong Bay, Rosewood Sanya, Ritz-Carlton Sanya, and Sanya Sunshine Hotel, among others. Presently, the school-enterprise cooperation has achieved a level of specialization and internationalization, with over 200 hours of instruction provided by externally hired part-time teachers from enterprises and the industry. Together, they actively explore and promote a mutually beneficial model for talent cultivation through school-enterprise cooperation.

**Rigorous rules as a guarantee for talent cultivation.** Under the background of the new liberal arts, students of the mode of “Tourism+English” need to learn more than the traditional major of tourism management. Rules are the guarantee for nurturing talents.

First, sufficient funds are the foundation. Taking the program of HTOU and IMC, besides the daily routine expenses, they specially set up the language scholarship to award the students who pass the IELTS to spark

students’ interest in learning English. For the students whose grades are at top 10, they are sponsored to short-term study in China’s internship enterprises and IMC.

Second, the process management is also a guarantee for talent cultivation. The process management include students’ attendance in class, exams, class presentations, activities, all of which need rigorous rules to make sure the quality of talent cultivation. For instance, the International Program between HTOU and IMC has strict rules for students’ study. It makes efforts to strengthen exam management, enforce exam discipline, improve the academic evaluation system that organically integrates process assessment with outcome assessment. After students complete their first year of general foundation courses and before they enter the second year of project-based learning, a joint evaluation team comprising Austrian and Chinese teachers will be established to make an evaluation about students in a wide variety of aspects, including their project resumes, motivation clarification of learning the major, language proficiency, and thinking and solving abilities. At the end of each academic year, students are required to write an annual paper and are assigned to their supervisors. Prior to graduation, a joint evaluation team comprising both Austrian and Chinese teachers will also be formed to conduct topic presentations and thesis defenses on students’ professional foundation courses and core courses. Through rigorous and standardized management, students will develop their learning attitude and habits.

Third, the teaching quality evaluation system is of great necessity for cultivation of talents. Through teachers’ symposiums, students’ forums, questionnaires, interviews, the teaching quality is monitored and adjusted based on the findings and results of evaluation. Therefore, this is a dynamic process.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In the background of internationalization, tourism have greater needs for the talents who not only understand tourism management but also have strong abilities in English communication. Based on the concept of new liberal arts, the mode of tourism management +English is an excellent practice and innovation towards the traditional tourism management.

However, there are some limitations in this study. For example, the samples are five hundred. If there were more, there would be better. For the case study, only one university’s international program was taken as an example. In the future study, the research scope should be enlarged and increased different samples of universities and enterprises in the hopes of getting more extensive, more representative research conclusion.

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