

## **Using Tourism Education in Valorizing Heritage for Improving Tourism and Economic Activities in Lebanon and NW Syria**

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**Abstract:** *This project provides perspectives on educational institutions that may encourage local development through educational tourism, based on a scoping assessment of the literature. Educational tourism is a type of tourism in which the primary or secondary purpose of the tourist is learning what the industry needs.*

*Tourism is a concept, in which lots of International students might be classified as educational tourists, this idea will be discussed in this research more in depth according to the findings. While, their stay will be beneficial to them as well as the location they visit n. In this case, universities (and to some extent schools too) can help actively to increase learning at the destination and build interactions between tourists and local stakeholders the local economy's long-term viability; certain reports on individual examples are described.*

*We contend that any organization that organizes or manages educational events should consider the tourism component and/or programs, in order to take advantage of the destination's prospects for achieving goals, including for higher education institutions (HEIs) as main stakeholders for tourism education purposes.*

*In terms of learning objectives, this research focuses on educational tourism in relation to HEI students in particular. International mobility programs, which, in terms of their overall experience, are educational tourists, while leisure and tourism activities are available at the destination. Finally, further studies are needed, in order to add to this mixed research stud that presented the validation of our relationship.*

**Keywords:** *educational tourism, local development, resource valorization.*

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### **I. Introduction**

This paper seeks to examine the growth and development of tourism education in Lebanon. So naturally, one needs to understand what is meant by this, since in Lebanon there is a current gap in the literature. This is a subject that has received relatively scant attention since the publication of a number of seminal papers produced in the mid to late 1990's and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Bou Melhem, 2021).

Tourism education is *the way tourists destination prepare the human resources to be able to work professionally* in the developing the tourism sectors. ... More educated people who take a part in destination tourism development would depict the better quality of life, for both tourists and local people at the destination.

According to Bou Melhem (2021) tourism education has developed from relatively humble origins to that of a subject taught in a wide variety of education institutions. It examines what programmes seek to achieve in terms of knowledge skills development and preparing students to meet the labour needs of the tourism industry. It also reflects on where tourism education is going in terms of courses, course philosophy, levels of study, subject content and teaching and learning strategies.

A number of key themes or issues will be highlighted all central to the thinking of the curriculum planner. These include an analysis of curriculum models, the importance of developing academic vocational and key transferable skills and the need to add value and increase employability. Although this is common practice in the West, it is seriously lacking in Lebanon now (Bou Melhem, 2021)

This is a major issue for discussion since most of the major Phoenician kingdoms ancient capitals nowadays, in both coastal Lebanon and NW Syria are threatened by terrorism, corrupt regimes, and conflicting political agendas, thus preventing the establishment of smart or sustainable tourism around these sites. Yet, in terms of relationships, the sites in the Lebanese Sahel and in Northern Phoenicia will be discussed with the intent to

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evaluate if their potential is actually worthwhile preserving. Thus, this research will address the following issues in its introductory chapter prior to moving to upcoming chapters, where by detailing in excruciating details the state of affairs of preserving the potentials of these sites, irrespective if rural, coastal or urban (Saule, 2004; Corluka, et al., 2016; Al-Sawi, 2018).

Yet, Tourism education plays a major role in preparing students to gain professional and practical skills required by the tourism industry. Given that the tourism industry is a labor-intensive sector, it is undeniable that practical find the opportunity to apply what they have learned into practice and to develop personal skills and abilities. In this study, it is aimed to reveal the importance of practical training in tourism education. Since, practical training is an important part of tourism education programmes in which the students figure out their role as a potential employee in the real workplace as well as gain skills and abilities in the tourism industry (cf. Bou Melhem, 2021).

### **1.1. Background of the study**

As the success or failure of any research pertaining to tourism education is contingent on whether or not the authorities are willing to consider reforming the system, education is a great power that a country can have to influence generations to come (Airey & Tribe, 2006). So, we urgently and critically need our youths to be the custodians of Lebanon (and Syria's youth to take care of Syria), whilst we must train them to focus on sound education so as to erode away the oligarchy's influences great things can be achieved in terms of sustainability, tourism and economic development, as sustainable tourism is now the trend worldwide, post pandemic according to recent UNWTO (2020a, b, c, d, 2021) statistics, and the 900 bn Euro global revenues deficit must be curbed by revamping all tourism activities worldwide, especially in Lebanon and in Syria suffering from corrupt regimes and unstable geopolitical situations (See: El-Bacha, 2019)

### **1.2. Problem statement**

As the current research addresses major issues in the way that the corrupt Lebanese and Syrian currently address the valorization issues pertaining to handling natural assets with care, great things can be achieved in both Lebanon and Syria by just preserving these assets, as once Mr. Carlos Ghosn, Ex. Renault and Nissan CEO recently said in a televised interview, your assets are only valuable once you fructify them, this is partly why in Lebanon, we are indeed in deep economic despair because of the blatant mismanagement of the incompetent authorities is now clearly obvious.

Mr. Ghosn presented the oil and gas issue, let alone the northern and southern border disputes, at raw state are worth 40 bn USD, yet if fructified, like Elon Musk commends that as assets work for us, and not us for them, valorizing them may give them a net worth of 500 bn USD and thus close our debts for sure, some other experts noted this in the md 1990s, while ponziists in the Lebanese BDL and banks were already committing fraudulent acts (Kiyosaki, 2010). What is ironic s that the corrupt elite know how to fructify assets which ae not theirs as they embezzled out all our savings from the banks) since they stole our monies for 3 decades, and well, there is no excuse, as El Bacha (2019) put it. They put us in this mess and chaos, its' their job to get us out of it. As sustainability is not concerned for blaming each other, we must now have the priority to focus on producing quality and responsible citizens, focusing on ways to enhance jobs and improve our economy (Youness, 2017).

### **1.3. Research Question**

The research question(s) is (are):

RQ 1: *Will valorizing the cultural and natural assets of the Lebanese Sahel and NW Syria) enhance the tourism potential in those areas?* (Saule, 2004; Al Sawi, 2018)

RQ 2: *Will encouraging in the necessary curricula reforms trigger the authorities to encourage the International community's imposed reforms?* (Fidgeon, 2010)

And, RQ 3: *Could tourism education enhancement in Lebanese and Syrian curricula encourage the authorities to effectively valorize these resources?* (Airey & Tribe, 2006).

The following questions were adapted from Bou Melhem's (2021) research, as they complement the current research queries:

1. *Does the Lebanese curriculum need to be updated to fit the students' needs and interests?* To us, it must.
2. *What are the ways for a remarkable shift in the curriculum to make the students more involved in the society?* The educational sector needs to showcase the benefits of the tourism sector as an employer.

3. *Is the secondary stage curriculum giving the students clear ideas and opportunities to choose their appropriate career?* So far, and according to previous studies, it is not (Bou Melhem, 2021)
4. *Is the given information about tourism in unspecialized courses give sufficient vision to be engaged in this field?* We need to investigate the current outlook of the available curricula.
5. *Is the insertion of a specialized course in the curriculum at the secondary stage, a better way to orient the students toward the tourism industry?* School counselors can focus on this (Corey, 2012).
6. *To what extent the touristic education at this stage responds to the youth's needs?* To date, it is not.

#### **1.4. Research Aim and Objectives**

This study aims to resolve a critical issue in a region in Northwestern Syria that lacks material evidence, in the sense which one of the various major sites, having major Phoenician artefacts which were attested in this period, in this area are worth preserving. Although the study also sets out to discuss the potential in Lebanon too, its Iron Age material culture was pretty much clearly defined, so it will discuss this period in the study area. Both Schaeffer (1948) and Baramki (1961) analyzed the area's chronologies, allowing us to assess the tourism potential of any site from that period in the region, which is the subject of this research. Since Ras Sharma was substantially destroyed by the Sea Peoples in 1200 BC, although the inhabitants were apparently still living along the coast at Lattquia and Tartous. Still no evidence exists as to where the displaced populations went.

This explains the potential of a population shift from Ras Shamra to Tell Marquié, but it doesn't explain what happened to the people living in the ancient site of Tell Jamous, which is said to contain Phoenician artifacts. A potential research question can be addressed. So, *were there any other locations in the vicinity that produced material culture that was worth preserving for tourism purposes?* No one knows yet whether Tell Marquié, Tell Jamous, or any other site in that region (primarily in northern Lebanon and Northwestern Syria) is worth preserving, and that is the question that this research aims to answer (see: Hachem, 2020). Mheidle (2020) gives us some insight as to preserving a destination's natural resources.

As a result, the success or failure of tourism in the Northwestern Syrian sites is highly contingent on the conception and utilization of tourism players of local resources as well as their attempts for development of tourism activities. ad how locals view it (e.g. Tichaawa, & Mhlanga, 2015). The study helps in assessing the current situation of that unexcavated site and in highlighting the weaknesses as well as providing alternatives and ways to make better use of resources by addressing *how will the valorization of resources aid in the development of tourism in the North Western Syrian coastal sites?* We gather from past research that this helps.

Since this research seeks to address the current state in prominent archeological sites such as those in the Coastal region in Lebanon and the key Northwestern Syrian sites in order to initiate the whether or not valorizing their cultural or natural resources for the purpose of enhancing the economic development of the designated study area through tourism practices, as proposed by Horst (2009) and Abu Aliqah and Al-Rfou' (2010), Al Sawi (2018) among others will be beneficial for the respective Lebanese and Syrian Department of Antiquities or not. Bellos (2019, 2020) adds that collaborations among stakeholders re a necessity.

We can only imagine what happened during this chrono-cultural epoch in Levantine archeology because there is no unified chronology in Phoenicia. It is impossible to identify the exact chronology of the Iron Age across the entire territory without first studying the extant remnants. Because CFA Schaeffer's Hiatus was not prevalent over all areas, it's critical to note which period is absent or present in the researched site. So, the research's current goal is to look at the coastal and maritime activities of these places, with an emphasis on all sites witnessing destruction as pertaining to the literature whether or not the sites the study expects to investigate for their tourism potential effectively have shown artefacts worthwhile preserve in terms of valorization. *So why do we bother?* Well to insist that our youths will be best custodians of these lands!

Hachem (2020), for instance discussed about how the Authorities through SOLIDERE and the CDR ignored the inestimable potential of the Minet El Hosn Ruins which harmed tremendously the possibility to have preserved unique sartefacts showing unique military harbor structures, had H.E. Gaby Layyon, nearly a decade ago, then Minster of Culture, who voted for its destruction in lieu of preserving it. These are the striking dilemmas that El-Bacha (2019) and Hachem (2020) respectively raised. Therefore, the research will focus on the issue if enhancing education will help in increasing the valorization potential.

We consider the case of Beirut, through the SOLIDERE and CDR episodes, to be a dramatic failure in terms of tourism potential preservation, while preliminary research pointed out that Tyre, in spite of flaws in its valorization of resource did a better job than Beirut. Yet, in articles written by both Dr. Nicolas Carayon, and Dr. Patricia Antaki, both unanimously agreeing that the anarchic urbanization plan in South Lebanon threatened the ancient harbor strictures near the Prehistoric Aadloun Grotto.

Therefore, the current research, through addressing the above queries will use mixed methods and will propose, through action research a direct course of action compelling the Lebanese and North Syrian Province authorities to immediately consider valorizing the potential of all natural and cultural resources from Tyre all

the way to Ras el Bassit, as Coastal archeological sites offer tremendous tourism potentials. By Cultural assets, one refers to the archeological sites in the Lebanese (and NW Syria) Sahel areas, as well as areas in Mount Lebanon that show potential interests in terms of Tourism potential as well.

In terms of Tourism Education, this study will intend to set groundbreaking ideas that the entire tourism, cultural and educational sector, as these sectors need to work hand in hand as the tourism is expected to boom post Pandemic (Cooper & Shepherd, 1997; Fidgeon, 2010; International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2020; Rogoff, 2020). Fidgeon (2010), Olivia (2012) and Ornstein & Hunkins (2018) provide the curriculum design and philosophical bases in proposing a shift in the Lebanese Educational program from a traditional one to a progressivist one, as reforming the system needs to start from tit base, the pedagogic system (see: Ozmon & Craver, 2003).

Besides, it was discovered recently that the entire system needs reforms to benefit from IMF aids, thus this is a good step in proposing a way to implement the needed change, one classroom at a time, irrespective if at school or in college. This is important as Fidgeon (2010) tells us about the importance of the junction between curriculum design and tourism education whilst, Gould (2018) addresses how can archeology be used to enhance the tourism industry, Thus, this study will bridge the gap.

### **1.5. Research Hypotheses**

As this research will rely on sequential explorative methods, using action research, for the qualitative part we will be answering the current research questions, as per the quantitate part, we must test the a posteriori hypotheses, in an a priori way, as one goes from specific, to general, an back to specific in terms of approaches, we ought to come up with three (H0, H1, and H2), until we formulate or test them. Considering that action research necessitates a priori hypotheses (a posteriori hypotheses will be considered for the qualitative part as that don't need to confirm anything), *the numeric hypotheses should be in this form:*

*H0: No Correlation between tourism education and valorization*

*H1: Positive Correlation between tourism education and valorization*

*H2: Negative Correlation between tourism education and valorization*

### **1.6. Context of the study**

Thus, here is what the study seeks to measure, whether or not enchanting tourism education will affect valorizing heritage sites in Lebanon and NW Syria or not (Cooper & Shepherd, 1997; Saule, 2004; Airey & Tribe, 2006; Fidgeon, 2010; Al Sawi, 2018). Yet, as the authors formerly discussed the context of this study in a previous section under a different title, they will summarize briefly this point here. Since this study sets to discuss the importance of valorizing natural and cultural l sites for tourism, it becomes impotent to discuss this through a curriculum design aspect as Fidgeon (2010) discussed last decade.

## **II. Literature review**

This study addresses the two main issues pertaining to tourism potential enhancement through valorization on natural and cultural sources and through curriculum design. This chapter briefly discusses both issues as respectively addressed by Gould (2018) and Ornstein & Hunkins (2018), for general issues and to Hachem (2020) for issues pertaining to Lebanon lack of valorizing natural resources with the Ancient Harbour of the Vth Century BC. These cases illustrate how the lack of tourism education impedes on valorization.

Yet, incidentally, Gerges (2020) mentioned the 2020 August 4 Blast of the port of Beirut, so incidentally we lost in a decade two major port structures, the ancient ones and the current one. It was so shocking to see that we had to mention it, as this is a big problem! And illustrating why we need to find a solution is the current objective of this research. Ozmon & Craver (2003) reminds us about the danger of outdated curricula which we discuss.

### **2.1. Issues in valorizing tourism potentials**

The majority acknowledge that one needs to valorize our resources for enhancing tourism as a way to preserve ancient sites through economic development, as oil and gas resources will not be available indefinitely, a concern since Lebanon is still not considering sustainability, inspire of its benefits, according to the first key finding. (Youness, 2017; Pradhan et al., 2017).

Yet, long-term resource valorization might promote tourism, and that the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) should engage with the Directorate General of Urbanism (DGU). Rather than competing with one another as the research showed that people mostly agree that valorizing cultural and natural resources



are important. Hachem (2020) fissures Beirut while Al Sawi (2020) goes over Tyre. Saule (2004), Corluca et al (2016) and Gould (2018) are the sources we chose to show the importance of valorizing cultural resources in respectively rural, coastal, or any other setting relying on archeological remains

Questions 1, and 2 show a majority of responses agreeing. Hachem (2020) confirms that, and yet the oligarchs still favored the anarchic development of SOLIDERE and the CDR at the expense of our cultural and natural heritage sites. As Question 3 shows a 2/3 to a 1/3 majority of people not being aware of the significance of valorizing resources, Hachem (2020) assumes that the level of tourism education is lacking since we notice that in his article he described how savagely the real escalate developers of the currently bankrupt Venus Tower project destroyed the old Persian Harbor. Yet, today we also know that Al Sawi's (2018) study of valorizing Tyre is equally unknown. Thus, this knowledge gap must be addressed ASAP! Clearly, the educational system needs reform, since progressivists or constructivists will propose solutions for educating Lebanese (and Syrian youths for becoming quality citizens.

Incidentally both Al Sawi's (2018) and Hachem's (2020) accounts can be compared to those of Sidon and Jbeil in how their municipalities valorized their resources, and, we see that responses are generally agreeing with respect to the importance of preserving natural (or cultural) artefacts in valorizing the resources to ultimately aid in economic recovery and development a much needed thin in Lebanon now. Taking Hachem (2020) into account, it was noticed that a majority of responses in agreement preserving sites to enhance tourism Al Sawi (2018) and Gould (2018) also agree and confirm that the results are agreeing with the exiting literature. Gould's (2018) book is a must read! Besides, a 94% agreement to a 6% disagreement with the following about how archeologists can help in the valorization of resources. This is just as how geologists can help with the natural resources valorization.

Taking how the oligarchic mafia would not dilapidate its assets, issued from the robbery of our saving from the banks, now fructify the assets, one expects the authorities to valorize its natural and cultural assets. Yet, Hachem (2020) said that with Bey 194 the Lebanese authorities clearly did not. So this question shows a tradeoff among responses. Still, the Cronbach Alpha Value was estimated at over 0.95 (cf. Cronbach, 1951). Hachem (2020) assumes that since SOLIDERE has a policy to raze everything to the ground with the plow, which means once they do this the ancient remains (natural or cultural) worthwhile to valorize, the resources will be gone forever.

Today, one realizes that Hachem (2020) also agrees with the results since there is must to collaborate with the Department of Antiquities and the Department of Urbanism, kit as the Educational sector needs to pitch in and to be reformed such that Tourism Education get integrated to the Lebanese curriculum(Cooper & Shepherd, 1997). Olivia (2012) commends that people become constructivists ad teach our youths to solve problems pertaining to this gap, namely since they still did not address sustainability yet (Youness, 2017).

Mheidle (2020) pointed out that as "*Hiking contributes to nature conservation, and development of local communities*" this one way that valorizing natural sites can help tourism. He noted that such activities "*do affect sustainable development*" in the areas proposing such activities since there was a varied demand in nature based activities (cf. Mheidle, 2020), However, Mheidle (2020) stresses this urge in his study as such, we preserving natural resources are nearly as important as preserving cultural ones, hence raising this issue.

## **2.2. Issues in estimating the Lebanese Curriculum at current state**

Tables 1 and 2 respectively address the issues pertaining to the evaluation of the Lebanese Curriculum. Basically according to Olivia (2012), this is low quality program. Accordingly, this program is not engaging, teacher centered, as all activities revolve around the instructor teaching skills to students, where student participation in the progressivist sense is discouraged, making this a low quality program: It ignores cultural diversity, and has a narrow focus and is not worthwhile. There is no self-assessment, learning is demonstrated to the teacher and assessment is contrived. Table 1 shows both the curriculum and the instructional indicators, while Table 2, its assessment indicators (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

*Do we agree with the curriculum's current state?* Without a doubt, we do not! Because the world is focusing on blended learning and 21st Century Skills, as well as other learning styles that focus more on project-based or phenomenon-based learning, guided practice and/or any other type of self-assessment, . These are significant, but still, the Lebanese curriculum continues to emphasize classical and/or key subjects, which tourism education is not a part of. Pragmatism and existentialism are now the norms, and they contribute to Constructionism, Reconstructionism, and/or Progressivism (Fidgeon, 2010). Thus, its radical change must be imminent (cf. Ornstein & Levine, 1997, Olivia, 2012; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

Tales 1 and 2 help us understand the dynamics of the Lebanese curriculum, which is poor quality and is obsolete in terms of progressivism since according to Ornstein & Levine (1997, 2008), our curriculum is still following traditional principles. Olivia (2012) and Ornstein & Hunkins (2018) agree as well.

**Table 1:** Curriculum and instructional indicators (Bou Melhem, 2021).

Theme Rubric			
Curriculum Indicators			
<i>High Quality</i>		<i>Poor Quality</i>	
Identifies and supports district standards and benchmarks or curriculum goals	Supports district standards and benchmarks or curriculum goals	Little connection to standards and benchmarks or curriculum goals	No connection to district standards and benchmarks or curriculum goals
Connects many curriculum areas	Connects at least three areas of the curriculum	Connects two areas of the curriculum	Focus is only on one area of the curriculum
Promotes cultural diversity	Respects cultural diversity	Ignores cultural diversity	Shows disrespect for cultural diversity
Real world, worthwhile, and meaningful	Real world connection	Narrow focus rather than conceptual	Not worthwhile

Instructional Indicators			
<i>High Quality</i>		<i>Poor Quality</i>	
Accommodates each student's ability level	Provides for multiple ability levels	Age appropriate	Not age appropriate
Engages all learners, including teacher	Engages most learners	Engages only half of the learners	Not engaging
A variety of resources, including technology, easily accessed by students	Adequate resources, including technology, easily accessed by students	Limited resources, but easily accessed by students	Few resources, distributed only by teacher
Balances skill instruction with constructivism, investigation, inquiry, and problem solving	Balances skill instruction with at least two other types of learning	Mostly skill instruction	Skill instruction only
Balances child directed with teacher directed	Some direction comes from the child	Teacher directed	Student participation discouraged
Skillful ways of grouping	Flexible rather than fixed groups	Mostly ability level grouping	Ability level grouping only
Many opportunities for collaboration	Some opportunities for collaboration	Little opportunity for collaboration	Collaboration discouraged

This deserved further study, since now the advent of Online Education in 2020 changed the entire way in which education is transmitted from pedagogists to learners. Progressivists follow a different educational model.

Therefore, issue at hand, pertaining to the dynamism of the tourism industry in the selected study are was briefly reviewed as well as was the Lebanese Curriculum, and the lack of motivation of the Lebanese state to valorize Lebanon natural and cultural resources (Ornstein & Levine, 1997; Mitrut & Constantin, 2008; Alicia, 2012; Al Sawi, 2018). Ozmon & Craver (2003) also raise the issue of the poor quality of outdated programs.

Ornstein & Hunkins (2018) discussed how outdated the Lebanese curriculum is. Yet, the integration of tourism education as a tool to encourage resources valorization becomes imminent (see: Airey & Tribe, 2006, .Arcodia & Dickson, 2009; Fidgeon, 2010; Olivia, 2012). This requiring arguments to convince the readers of the importance in tourism education in valorizing resources, as this needs progressivism (Olivia, 2012).

### III. Methodology

This research must adopt a pragmatist's view, since it is addressing a major research and business problem that requires an immediate solution, through proposed course of action. Both Creswell (2012) and Olivia (2012) were discussing the importance of these views as well, since Lebanese Curricula needs to be progressivist and go to constructivist orientations. Both Brynman (2012) and Edson et al (2017) encourage the authors to adopt adductive approaches as they need to start by formulating a posteriori arguments, to then propose a priori reasoning for testing these hypotheses. The current approach is also guided by Ozmon & Craver (2003). They advocate progressivism, an educational philosophy which is based on pragmatism.

Based on the above action research was selected, a mixed methods approach that necessities data collection strategies from both interviews followed by structured surveys, in that order, whereby both Creswell (2012) and Saunders et al. (2019) agree that these are mixed methods approaches, and that is why the authors finally chose this approach. Ozmon & Craver (2003) agree as well.

As said before, the researchers used mixed methods, but specify now that they use the sequential explorative method, starting qualitative and then ending up quantitative. In terms of time horizon, the authors ascertain that they will use cross sectional time horizons, since this research will be a one-time study. Last, but not least, the instigators will use with the selected method, both purposive and random sampling to respectively follow the interview and survey data collection sampling strategies Creswell, (2012).

The research design, which in fact the 6 layers that were discussed in this section, are summed up in Figure 3 (Saunders et al., 2019) Thus the two tables helped us focusing on our research design which we will rely on both Saunders et al (2019), Mheidle (2020) and Bou Melhem (2021) since our data comes from these studies respectively in terms of research design, secondary data pertaining to tourism activity and tourism education, the three elements our research needs to formulate its study design, following the presentation of the findings, which include both interpreting primary and secondary data.

**Table 2:** Assessment indicators (Bou Melhem, 2021)

Assessment Indicators		Assessment Indicators	
High Quality		Poor Quality	
Teacher uses many ways of assessing process and outcomes of students in a natural context	Teacher uses at least two ways of assessing in a natural context	Assessment takes place in a natural context	Assessment is artificial and contrived
All students have an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways, including use of technology, to others, including parents	All students demonstrate their learning to at least one person, other than the teacher	A few of the students demonstrate their learning to others	Learning is only demonstrated to the teacher
All students self-assess	Opportunity for self-assessment	Little opportunity for self-assessment	No self-assessment

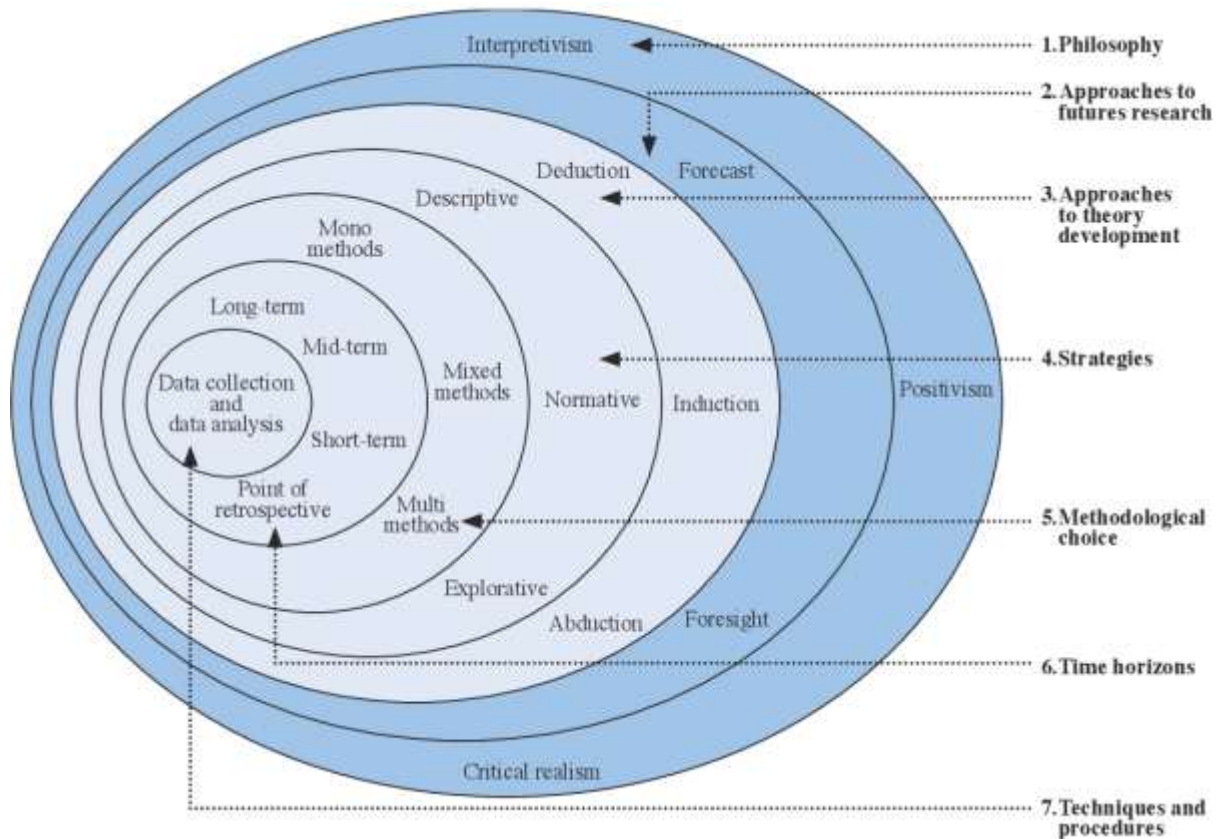
#### IV. Findings

The findings to *whether or not we should be implementing the culture of tourism in the secondary stage curriculum* is based on Bou Melhem’s (2021) research. She discussed the importance of implementing tourism education in secondary schools in Lebanon through addressing this first question in her research. Everyone who is into education in Lebanon is very conscious that the Lebanese curriculum is outdated and need to be amended from the roots, for a simple main reason that contents and strategies didn’t witness any changes, and old philosophies still adopted in many schools to an extent that it is not weird anymore that students grasp knowledge from media means more than learning from scholar programs (Bou Melhem, 2021), even though tourism does bring great benefit to the country in terms of sustainability (see: Mheidle, 2020). These comprise some of the secondary data we analyzed.

Nowadays, the youths are looking for new challenges and opportunities and having ability to adapt with other cultures. They seek to be more creative and express different emotions that exceed the expectations and influence the society. In the first reading of the reality of the Lebanese curriculum, in secondary stages, a lack of awareness toward the tourism education has been noticed. And according to our experience, as students unprepared for further subject academically, it was an ambiguous path to discover and gain its professional and practical skills which are required by the tourism industry.

The Tourism sector has pretty much developed recently, especially that it moved from being simply an activity to a science; where it became a vital need. Universities provides specialized courses in tourism majoring in hotel management, travel and tourism, and touristic guide. Knowing that this domain is taught as practical courses in the curriculum of private and public vocational schools. As mentioned before, that tourism is not only an art but it is also a science, so the second question she raises is addressed here: *why it is not taught as the rest of science materials in secondary level of the curriculum?*





**Figure 3.** Research onion diagram used to derive the study design (Saunders et al., 2019).

This is the third question: *Why secondary period/level is considered?* Because these programs are assigned for students between 15 and 18 years old, the period that shapes the growing up phase and grasping knowledge. At this level, students’ emotional learning tendencies become more obvious to continue their higher education and choose the appropriate career. Seeking for change, an educational course highlighting tourism sector is essential to inform students of this period about its importance and offers to them more job chances and choices in the future.

Through an examination of the methodology of secondary teaching, the authors pointed out to the existence of chapters in different courses, which contain general information and overviews about tourism in Lebanon. Thus, Bou Melhem (2021) addressed these last three questions to find out. Firstly, *is given information about tourism in these unspecialized courses, sufficient to give that science its right?* Secondly, *does the insertion of a specialized course “Touristic education” into the curriculum, is a better way to orient students of secondary period and enriching them by the culture of tourism?* And, lastly, *to what extent does the touristic education course responds to the youth’s needs?* Ozmon & Craver (2003) guide us in the methods.

#### **4.1. Survey Results**

Before conducting the survey, a pilot study was conducted, where 10 people responded to a 10 questions survey monkey questionnaire. According to Bou Melhem (2021), the literature shows similar studies which were conducted pertaining to this issue and stress on the importance to implement tourism education curricula in order to help valorize a country’s resources. So, the researchers expect the result to be well correlated and the results to be both valid and reliable, as Cronbach alpha of the survey that was interpreted in Bou Melhem (2021) was high. It was evidenced that *there is a clear link between the role of tourism education with a country’s cultural and natural resource valorization and inserting such courses in the secondary school curricula will help students be oriented to the tourism sector.* Cronbach Alpha value is shown for the survey in Table 1 (cf. Cronbach, 1951).

So, Question 1 “*Valorizing heritage for improving tourism and economic activities in the region is an important concept in Tourism Education*” was unanimously agreed y all survey subjects. Question 2 “*Valorizing the cultural and natural assets (of the Lebanese Sahel and NW Syria) enhances the tourism potential in those areas*” was also nearly agreed pretty much by all respondents. This means, that valorizing a country’s resources



is an important aspect of tourism education and that this activity does enhance both tourism and eventually economic activities in those areas.

Question 3 “*Encouraging in the necessary curricula reforms trigger the authorities to encourage the International community’s imposed reforms*” was agreed by 40% neutral by 50% and disagreed by 10% of the respondents. It can be said that there is a tradeoff here as nearly the same number of people agree and were neutral about this. Question 4 “*Tourism education enhancement in Lebanese and Syrian curricula encourage the authorities to effectively valorize these resources*” shows that 90% of the respondents agreed to this and only 10% refuted the idea. Combining both questions stipulate that respondents agree about tourism education does help people in understanding the importance of Lebanon and Syria to valorizing their resources for ultimately improving their economy, through enhancing tourism activities, as Saule (2004), Corluka et al. (2016) and Al Sawi (2018) denote. This is what Bou Melhem (2021) had argued initially.

Question 5 “*The Lebanese curriculum needs to be updated to fit the students’ needs and interests*” shows the same results as Question 4. This means that the majority of the survey subjects agree with the fact that both our curriculum desperately needs to modernize, and as Bou Melhem (2021) discusses, shifts from traditional to progressivist, while enhancing the development of tourism education curricula. Question 6 “*There are ways for a remarkable shift in the curriculum to make the students more involved in the society*” was agreed by 80% and was considered neutral by 20% of the survey respondents.

Question 7 “*The secondary level curriculum is giving the students clear ideas and opportunities to choose their appropriate career in terms of hospitality and tourism nowadays amid the pandemic*” was at nearly equal proportions agreed, neutral and disagreed, with a slight preference for those respondents who agreed. Thus, validating this statement, that indeed tourism education helps more than hinders students in their career choices, for those who want to specialize in this field, as Bou Melhem (2021) suspected initially.

However, Question 8 “*The given information, about tourism in unspecialized courses, is providing sufficient vision to be engaged in this field*” shows more of a tendency towards agreeing than disagreeing, yet, this statement was deemed as neutral by most survey responses. This is since half of the responses were neutral, versus, the rest nearly trading off with those in favour and those against that the available information adequately helps the youths in getting informed (cf. Bou Melhem, 2021).

Finally, Question 9 “*The insertion of a specialized course, in the curriculum at the secondary school level, is a better way to orient the students toward the tourism industry*”, just as Question 1, was unanimously agreed by all survey subjects. While, Question 10 “*Tourism education at this stage responds to the youth’s needs (Respond in terms of Post pandemic pedagogy)*” was agreed and considered to be neutral by the same amount of people while less than a quarter of the respondents disagreed. So, the remaining responses were equally divided amongst the favourable and the neutral responses, with a slight tradeoff. So, from Figure 4, the researchers see that overall, 69% agree, 20% are neutral and 11% disagree that *Tourism Education does valorize heritage for improving tourism and economic activities*.

#### **4.2. Other results**

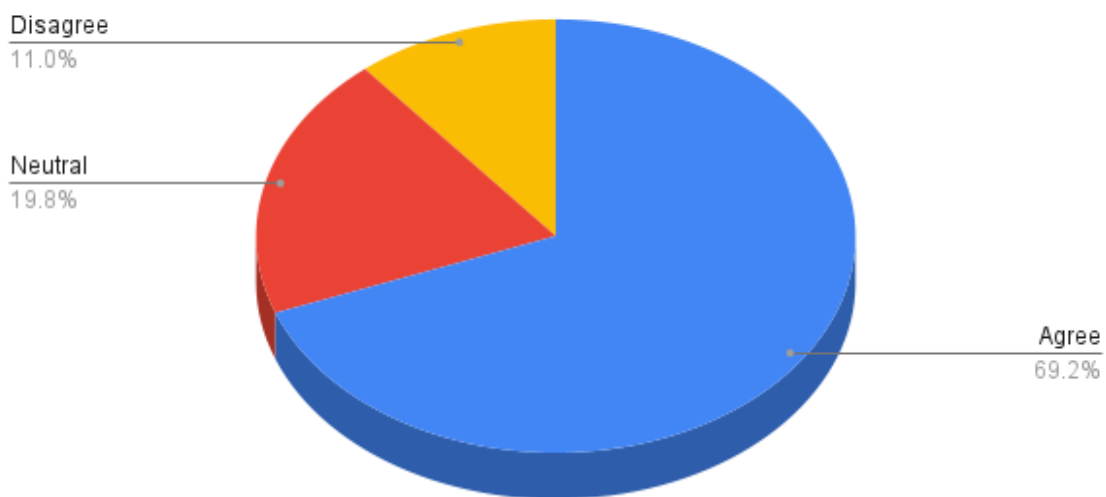
The conclusions in Bellos (2019) were fascinating because they were based on what we would do in our city/village. According to him, 92 percent of respondents agreed with the premise, while only 8% disagreed. Whereas, only 8% of people believe a scenario like BEY 194 or Minet El-Hosn (Beirut Phoenician Harbour) will happen in their village or city. However, 92 percent would support, persuade, or defend their local government in conserving their history. Yet, almost 91 percent of respondents would take a firm stand if the same issue that occurred with the purported Phoenician Harbour occurred in their city/village.

Only 38% of those polled were aware of a study or project being carried out in Tyre, while 62% were unaware, this according to Bou Melhem (2021) is a result of the lack of Tourism education. Bellos (2019) pointed out that is an excellent question. *Is this a planned action on the part of the central authority?* Yes, as the authors believe it to be the case. Around 85% of respondents believe that exposing their city to the cultural scene will boost tourism. Only about 15% of people don't. As a result, the majority agrees, while cultural tourism is important for sustainability (Bellos, 2019, 2021; Bellos & Knio, 2021).

One can see that the vast majority of responders (92 %) either strongly agree or agree that archeology is useful to tourism. Only 8% of respondents do not agree or disagree. It was found that the same proportion of people responded to previous questions on the secondary data, which were interpreted along with the primary data sources, were investigated. Through their acceptance of contributing when responding to the survey, it was noticed that 92 % of the survey subjects that Bellos (2019) approached (who either strongly agreed or agreed that *archaeological site protection and economic growth go hand in hand*) agree to the statement. This is something that demands more attention, especially in the current context, as strengthening the resolve for enhancing tourism education curricula (Bou Melhem, 2021).

The role of archeology and heritage management in enhancing GDP was established had 92% of respondents agreeing that aggressive action is required. The same minority, who are neither agreeing nor disagreeing (see: Bellos, 2019) or do not believe that *there is a link between archeology and GDP*. The aforesaid minority also refuse to participate or take a stand. Well, *is it true that investors squander and destroy assets?* Bou Melhem (2021) believes that is a difficult question to answer and noticed that this appears to have been misunderstood by respondents, since the majority of them said "yes, investors destroy assets." As a result, caution was required when evaluating the results of this question, as experts believe the question may be biased, erroneous or not yielding proper answers (cf. Cronbach, 1951). It is believed that Tourism education is a must here, and effectively evidence that a country's assets (natural or cultural) needs to be preserved and fructified, as Mr. Carlos Ghosn mentioned in his interview (cf. Bou Melhem, 2021).

## **Tourism Education does valorize heritage for improving tourism and economic activities**



**Figure 4:** Survey results showing an agreement with our research question, which validates H1.

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>0.933333333</b>
<b>Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation</b>	<b>0.987608971</b>
<b>Split-Half with Spearman-Brown Adjustment</b>	<b>0.993765862</b>
<b>Mean for Test</b>	<b>3.333333333</b>
<b>Standard Deviation for Test</b>	<b>2.624669291</b>
<b>KR21 (use only 0 and 1 to enter data for this)</b>	<b>0.752688172</b>
<b>KR20 (use only 0 and 1 to enter data for this)</b>	<b>0.752688172</b>

**Table 1:** Cronbach alpha value showing a well correlated survey.

The poll participants show agreed indeed understood the point since "Once an asset is gone, it ain't coming back!" and correctly present the case as both Bellos (2019), and Bou Melhem (2021) discussing the role of tourism education in enhancing the activity on how valorizing a site will enhance its tourism activity. So, if one assumes that an asset (valued item, structure), gets destroyed, it is lost permanently. Thus, these poll questions were in phase with the literature analysis even though some recorded responses painted a different picture of asset preservation and destruction.

Finally, the point Bou Melhem raised about tourism education and collaboration with the Department of Antiquities (DGA) and the Department of Urbanism (DGU) agree that the DGA and DGU should collaborate. Here, as a means of resolving the problem, *the city will be presented with the option of preserving natural and*

*cultural treasures, which will boost tourism.* Only 15% of the subjects disagreed, and this was pointed out in the past few years, in the absence of tourism education curricula, not because the people want the collaboration to occur, as it already seems to be the public sentiment, the DGA and DGU were reported working against each other (cf. Hachem, 2020). This, together with the secondary data we discussed in the literature review provided us with enough data to discuss pertaining to both primary and secondary data pertaining to all of our arguments related to the importance of valorizing resources, as both Mheidle (2020) and Bou Melhem (2021) that valorizing both a country's natural and cultural heritages will greatly benefit tourism, especially in times when the industry needs to focus on sustainable development and on domestic, wellness and nature based tourism in lieu of mass and luxury tourism, as it was the case pre pandemic (UNWTO, 2020a, b, c, d, 2021).

#### **4.3. Summary**

The majority acknowledge that we need to valorize our resources for enhancing tourism as a way to preserve ancient sites through economic development, as oil and gas resources will not be available indefinitely, a concern since Lebanon is still not considering sustainability, inspire of its benefits, according to the first key finding. (Youness, 2017; Pradhan et al., 2017). Tourism education indeed seems to play a role here, as Bou Melhem (2021) discusses in her research, and since that was the case, the authors therefore accept H1 and reject H0 and H2. As previously stated, the research discovered that *long-term resource valorization might promote tourism, and that the DGA should engage with the DGU, rather than competing with one another* (Hachem, 2020; Bellos, 2019). This is also an evidence that Tourism education is important here.

The investigators chose to base the current investigation on Al Sawi (2018), Gould (2018), Bellos (2019) and Bou Melhem (2021) as one strongly believes that tourism education is a solution, since more than 80% of people agree that valorization is important. Yet, in Lebanon people are still swayed by the opinions of the 20%, which includes corrupt oligarchs, SOLIDÈRE, the CDR, and developers, who have silenced the 80% who support valorization. As a result, there is a pressing need to adopt tourism education so that we can lead by example and ensure that Lebanon's heritage is preserved by its youth. This is why revamping the Lebanese curriculum to make it more progressivist and constructivist is a critical step toward ensuring that our youth receive the high-quality education they require to ensure Lebanon's long-term survival for years to come since it entered into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **V. Concluding remarks**

As shown by 92% of the respondents, they basically accept or agree to do something henceforth with archeology, archeologists or tourism as a way to preserve the ancient sites, through economic development. This should as a result improve GDP! *Lebanon has these assets, what is it waiting for?* Oil and gas may not be there eternally, yet the ancient sites will. So let's get moving. It Is NOT SOLIDERE who will help, it is in fact destroying and undermining GDP in the long run. Thankfully only 8% maybe favouring its barbaric actions to heritage. Hence this minority doesn't think archeology helps in tourism management or improving GDP. Hence, we are in Business!

As noted, 85% of the respondents agree that protecting an archeology site in the long run can improve tourism, they agree that the DGA and the DGU should work together. This implies that they should not work against each other, as it is actually the case. As 15% only disagree. This says that positive Economic development does play a role in enhancing tourism. For us, this implies that there is also a link with implementing the culture of tourism in the secondary stage curriculum, as both are related. Though, further studies are needed in order to effectively study this link. This section entails the responses of all the research questions:

*Is the given information about tourism in unspecialized courses give sufficient vision to be engaged in this field?* The study can conclusively say there is a clear lack of information as the youth, at present is not necessarily aware of the best practices about preserving and valorizing our resources.

*Is the insertion of a specialized tourism education course in the curriculum at the secondary stage, a better way to orient the students toward the tourism industry?* Definitely, already as the current investigation showed, the youth will be exposed to other orientations than just business, engineering, law and medicine so, more contact to tourism education will enhance our youths for choosing this sector for a future in tourism, as post pandemic this industry will need worldwide major reforms, as globally it lost over 900 bn USD in lost revenues from the Pandemic, which ought to go sustainable (UNWTO, 2020a, b, c, d, 2021).

*To what extent the touristic education at the secondary stage responds to the youth s needs?* Well, if the youths desire Lebanon to outgrow the mess the corrupt oligarchy left us in since 1992 they will definitely get exposed to alternative solutions for future careers and raise general awareness in the sustainable tourism era, and the era contributing to sustainable development in general (Youness, 2017).

Limitations are basically the time spent for the research and the pandemic. Both contrasts only allowed us to go for interpreting secondary data, while working on comparing them with the study's primary data, the authors were able to present quality results as the surveys they chose were both reliable and valid.

In terms of recommendation, this is addressed to the Ministry of Tourism, as it is highly recommended they hire archeologists as permanent consultants, henceforth. Since archeologists are the best people to work as tour guides, they can be great added value (on the workforce), to enhance tourism. At the time when the Tourism ministry was responsible for archeology, in the 1960s, it took care to make the monument look nice and to proceed with reconstructions after it got a subsidy by the USAID in the mid 1950s. *Why not it considers to become involved again with archeology?*

The Ministry of Culture should impose/control erratic destructions of sites through legal or illegal excavations, regardless who orchestrates them, so that the DGA can better supervise and control the sites who maybe or are deemed endangered by the UNESCO world's heritage list. They need also to make archeology more attractive to potentially attract more students. For example, LIU as an educational institution should include in its curricula (either through its SoBU, Arts and Sciences, Engineering and/or Education units), classes in archeology, geology, or any subject that it deems useful to answer this new trend.

The Education ministry could be interested to collaborate with the Ministry of Culture and with the Ministry of Tourism, since initially, in the mid-1940s the Education ministry was responsible for archeology. This could interest H.E. Abdul Rahim Mourad, our University President, since he was Minister of Education several years ago, and having the chance to add such programs to LIU will make this richer and better. This also adds impetus to our resolve in proposing secondary schools also get a chance to have tourism education as an imposed curriculum with the intention to revamp the sector, through enhancing Tourism education curricula (Bou Melhem, 2021).

The Ministry of Public Works, the Syndicate of Engineers, the DGU or any other party against preserving heritage (especially SOLIDÈRE) as a way to improve tourism or GDP henceforth need to change their mindset and work together with the DGA and the Ministries of Culture, Education and Tourism. According to Bellos, (2019), this collaboration is a must!

Finally, the contribution to knowledge (Beirut governors and all development agencies, the political elite, and all their representatives need to stop making their age old excuses after the public gets access to this "knowledge"), literature (proofs of the contributions for and against valorizing sites were dug up), originality (only two studies were conducted on heritage management by two LIU students, to date. So, the current study differs in the sense that the model from those two studies were adapted to a different case) and practitioners (all stakeholders involved with valorizing any resource for economic growth) were highlighted. This is going to be heightened once tourism education is implemented as endorsed by both Bellos (2019) for valorization issues and Bo Melhem (2021) for tourism education implementation in secondary schools.

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### **Appendix: Blank survey questions**

Valorizing heritage for improving tourism and economic activities in the region is an important concept in Tourism Education?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

Will valorizing the cultural and natural assets of the Lebanese Sahel and NW Syria) enhance the tourism potential in those areas?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

Will encouraging in the necessary curricula reforms trigger the authorities to encourage the International community's imposed reforms?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

Could tourism education enhancement in Lebanese and Syrian curricula encourage the authorities to effectively valorize these resources?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

Does the Lebanese curriculum need to be updated to fit the students' needs and interests?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

What are the ways for a remarkable shift in the curriculum to make the students more involved in the society?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

Is the secondary level curriculum giving the students clear ideas and opportunities to choose their appropriate career in terms of hospitality and tourism nowadays amid the pandemic?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

Is the given information, about tourism in unspecialized courses, providing sufficient vision to be engaged in this field?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

Is the insertion of a specialized course in the curriculum at the secondary school level, a better way to orient the students toward the tourism industry?

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree

To what extent the touristic education at this stage responds to the youth's needs? Respond in terms of Post pandemic pedagogy.

Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree