

EDUCATION, JOBS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TOURISM: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES IN THE CASE OF TASMANIA

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ABSTRACT: Tourism promises to be the panacea for many economic and social inequalities, particularly in regional areas. Tasmania, Australia, is one of those places. Combined with aspirations for higher levels of educational attainment and a prospering tourism industry, optimism is evident on the island. However, while tourism is growing its economic contribution, the workforce is dominated by low-skilled, low-pay occupations. The promises of economic prosperity, better jobs and social equality through a better educated workforce and a growing tourism sector are challenged; tourism may be exacerbating social inequalities. This paper analyses the political economy of tourism in Tasmania by addressing two issues. The first is the economic and social expectations attached to tourism. The second is the existence of job polarisation. This discussion outlines the contradictions for tourism: 1) how jobs and workers' education are mismatched, 2) the economic status of workers, and 3) how benefits are distributed in society.

KEY WORDS: Tourism; job polarisation; inequality; tourism jobs; educational attainment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leaders, policy-makers and industry groups support improving educational attainment as the panacea to economic and social inequalities in Tasmania, Australia. Concurrently, the same groups espouse the value of the tourism sector and its role in the state's economic and social

turnaround. Consequently, it is assumed that more jobs in the visitor economy and well-educated graduates will improve the state economy. This paper looks at this relationship.

Tasmania's economic and social challenges are well documented (Denny and Polkan, 2015; Eslake, 2016, 2017, 2018; West, 2013). Public debate tends to identify that Tasmania's low educational attainment compared with other Australian states requires Tasmania-specific action at the level of individual students, their families and communities (Rowan and Ramsey, 2018). During a wide-ranging interview, the Governor stated that "if we could do just one thing to improve the lives of many Tasmanians, let's get better educated" (Drucker, 2018).

For many places, tourism growth is welcomed and celebrated. It is an industry that has been promoted by the United Nations for developing countries over the decades (Ferguson, 2007) and is identified as one of the top five super-growth industries of the future for Australia (Deloitte, 2013). Tourism is an engine of economic development for Tasmania. Tasmania is experiencing a surge in visitor numbers and spend within the tourism sector, promising to generate revenue and jobs. Yet, at the same time, reliance on tourism as a means of economic growth and employment creates risks. Locally, resentment of the growth in visitor numbers is increasing (Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania, 2018).

A record 1.32 million people visited the island state in the year ending June 2019, up 1.0 per cent on the previous year. In addition, total spending increased by 4.0 per cent to A\$2.5 billion (Tourism Tasmania, 2019). A growing number of Tasmanians do not feel they have benefitted from tourism growth. Like many emerging tourism destinations, Tasmanians are becoming concerned with how increasing tourism will change their island (Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania, 2018). Many Tasmanians are also experiencing cost of living pressures as long-term rental properties are converted into short-stay visitor accommodation (Eccleston *et al.*, 2018; Jacobs *et al.*, 2019). Despite creating jobs, the benefits of tourism are not being distributed evenly. There are emerging concerns that tourism may be exacerbating social inequalities (Burness, 2018; Farnsworth, 2018).

Education and tourism can be regarded as interesting repositories of desire in Tasmania. Yet raising educational attainment and growing the tourism economy, whilst important, may not succeed as a panacea, as this paper will explain. In fact, the neoliberal logic for tourism has at least three consequences: 1) how jobs and workers' education and are matched; 2) the economic status of workers, and 3) how the benefits are distributed in society.

Using data from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), this paper confirms that the tourism industry is growing its economic contribution in the state and is contributing to job polarisation. Tourism employment is dominated by occupations that require low levels of educational attainment. There is a mismatch between educational requirements and educational attainment within the workforce; indicating both over-qualification and under-qualification are prevalent in the sector. While highly skilled jobs are evident, most are low-skilled and precarious.

This paper reveals the political economy of education and tourism in Tasmania. It also accentuates two issues facing policy makers globally. The first is the economic and social expectations attached to tourism. The second is the existence of job polarisation in the sector. In the next section, the Tasmanian context of this paper is outlined, followed by a short review of the political economy of tourism. The data and method are then presented, followed by the findings. The paper concludes with a discussion of the mismatch in expectations and realities of the tourism industry in the context of jobs and work, education and society.

2. SETTING

In many places, tourism is increasingly regarded as contributing to desired social and economic development goals. Tasmania is one of these places. Prosperity in the tourism sector is expected to generate wealth and create jobs. And in the context of a growing industry, the workforce should be trained and educated to support a maturing and increasingly sophisticated industry. Politicians and policy makers seek ways to deliver industry relevant education and training, distribute economic benefits across society, and manage community expectations regarding tourism.

The dominant economic and social policy discourse in Tasmania reflects Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Becker, 1964). The Premier, industry peak bodies, and other community leaders suggest Tasmanians can anticipate future success across a range of social, health and economic domains if the state's education participation is improved. The authoritative discourses situate education as a crucial marker for the modernisation of societies, but also as the requisite individual capital that is theoretically achievable by all (Smith *et al.*, 2017).

Since 2015, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), in collaboration with the Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS), have published an annual *Tasmania Report*. The reports contend that the most important thing that needs to be done in order to

improve Tasmanians' material living standards relative to those of other Australians, is to increase the levels of educational participation and attainment (Eslake, 2016; 2017; 2018).

After being elected and forming government, the Premier of Tasmania, declared that education was at the 'heart of his vision', describing it in the following terms:

“Because a better education usually means better health, and positive outcomes in family life and community participation. And a much better chance of getting a good job. And it's a vision of a Tasmania that is more economically productive and prosperous as a result... that leads to improving education outcomes to give every young Tasmanian their best shot in life, and to lift our State as well. This is central to my vision for our State.” (Hodgman, 2014).

There is a tendency in Tasmania to regard education as having an instrumental personal and collective role as part of a services-based economy. The Premier, in another State of the State address, asserted:

“[...] we're responding to the demand in our growing economy for more skilled Tasmanian workers... we want to ensure that more young Tasmanians are equipped with the skills they need for a good job [...] we'll invest in areas of strong growth, for example in returning Drysdale [a hospitality training school] to its rightful place as a centre for excellence to train Tasmanians to work in our booming visitor economy” (Hodgman, 2017, p.3).

He further stated;

“From day one, our Plan's number one priority has been to build a modern economy and create jobs by backing our competitive strengths—like tourism.... As the Premier for Tourism, my Government will continue to strongly support a sector that is a pillar of our economy, and our beautiful island, our community, and our brand” (Hodgman, 2017, p.3).

More specifically, growth in tourism plays a central role in the Government's aspiration to create jobs in the state;

“The Majority Liberal Government is the strongest supporter of tourism, and the jobs it supports right across the state” (Hodgman, 2018).

3. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TOURISM

What, why and how people make choices—education and work, for example—is central in understanding the political economy of any social system. People can choose the industry in which they work and pursue the study they desire. Political economy in this paper takes the broad view that the mechanisms in the economy that distribute wealth and benefit are defined by relations between business, government and the community. Laws, regulations and customs are created to enhance prosperity and development. However, relations between the state and the market are heavily contested. Nonetheless, there is a consensus that many societies today have embraced neoliberalism, including in Australia. Neoliberalism has become the dominant Western political economic paradigm, and neoclassical economics and capitalism have come to determine not just the economic conditions of life, but access to livelihood for most people (Wright, 2018). The way prosperity and welfare are created and distributed has come to characterise the political economy of a place. In the context of a liberal economic and political ideology, individual freedom is central. Society must provide the environment that allows one to pursue one's dreams, ambitions and aspirations. Educational opportunity is a means for the individual to do that. The tension between the individual, the economy and society has not dissipated in the 21st century. While individuals have the right to choose, the choices made can always be shaped and manipulated; for example, through social policies, marketing and human resource management strategies. At the same time, governments around the world embrace neoliberalism; however, they also need to serve the needs of their communities and constituents, as well as those of business.

Tourism has become a driver of neoliberalism as it has become an economic platform to monetise hospitality, landscapes, wild animals, lived cultures, heritage and other priceless objects, sites and sights (Duffy, 2013), particularly in regional areas. Ecotourism and sustainable tourism, often seen as an alternative to mass tourism, is merely an expansion of the neoliberal reconfiguration of value and is tied intricately to global capitalism and its dependence on international markets. Tourism has been able to create and reformulate new commodities that visitors want or are made to want. As a result, Duffy (2013) argues that tourism is a driver in the globalisation of neoliberalism. Besides deriving monetary value through financial mechanisms for tourism products, many attractions, such as nature, have intrinsic values that are symbolised through tourism, often through the images used in branding, marketing and soft power.

Education is promoted as a means for many to improve their social economic well-being in the future. Good jobs of the future require skilled labour. The education system is designed to improve both employment potential and productivity. HCT (Becker, 1964) proposes a close link between qualifications, skilled work and prosperity. There is a myriad of work in the tourism sector and a wide range of roles have expanded—including tourism, academics and policy-makers. Tourism service workers manage, serve, support and produce desirable experiences for visitors. HCT theorists assert that the job market matches human capital to relevant, available jobs.

HCT is embedded within the general framework of neoclassical economics in which labour is integrated as a factor of production, albeit, a constructed one (Bowles and Gintis, 1975). The overarching premise of HCT is that both society and the economy will benefit from investment, such as education, in people. At the individual level, this benefit manifests itself as improved lifetime earnings, and, at a macro level, in increased productivity and economic growth, as suggested by the Premier of Tasmania in the earlier quote. HCT assumes a scenario in which productivity is maximised by the achievement of equilibrium between the supply of, and demand for, human capital (Becker, 1964). The upskilling, or professionalisation, of the population through increasing the level of education is expected to lead to increasing competitiveness and demand for higher level skills, ultimately expanding employment opportunities, the availability of work and social cohesion. The greatest criticism of HCT is of its emphasis on the supply side and assumption of a perfectly competitive market, meaning that the contribution of education to economic growth may be over-estimated (Keep, 2017). Critically, HCT ignores the nature of demand in the labour market (Blaug, 1976). It is this demand in the labour market that dictates the economic exchange value of education. Raising the education level of a population has become a key focus of economic growth policies around the world but as this study will demonstrate, educational attainment in the tourism sector is not rewarded in the labour market.

This century, particularly since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the professionalisation of the workforce has shifted to that of polarisation (Denny, 2019). Polarisation of the workforce is an increasingly pervasive feature of advanced economies (Salvatori, 2015). Disproportionate employment growth in the top and bottom of the occupational skill distribution presents considerable challenges for policy makers. More recently, an additional key feature of the composition of job polarisation is

the increasing proportion of higher educated persons employed in lower-skilled jobs and a shift toward less than full-time employment, resulting in scenarios of over-qualification and under-employment (Autor and Dorn, 2013; Goos and Manning, 2007; Goos *et al.*, 2014). Since the GFC, a further defining characteristic of the polarisation of the workforce is the increase in the share of lower skilled jobs, predominantly in the services sector (Autor and Dorn, 2013). Together, these indicate an over-supply and/or lack of demand for higher educated workers, contrary to the hypothesis of HCT and the expectations of policy makers; the ‘education mismatch’ (Holmes and Mayhew, 2016; Keep, 2017).

Polarisation of the workforce could also be considered an outcome of the contemporary nature of capitalism today. As Hardt and Negri (2018) point out, over the last half century the sectors of capitalist production, previously industrial and agricultural, have been radically transformed; everything that exists in contemporary society is related to capital (Fuchs, 2018). Of concern is that politics and many public institutions have become shaped by the logic of capital. Over time, the educational system produces more similarly skilled workers to help valorise capital but at a lower wage level (as market forces determine there is more supply than before). Consequently, the embedded logic of promoting sunrise industries, like tourism, with the promise of lucrative jobs will not serve the interest of the workforce in the longer term when the educational system is geared towards over-supplying skilled labour. Job polarisation is then not just about the changing nature of work, but the skills that are actually in demand and can valorise capital.

This mismatch of educational training and the tourism industry reflects a neoliberal political economy. Dredge and Jamal (2013) have argued the competing demands of business, government and community, and the diversification of power in a neoliberal exercise, may not lead to public interest. Similarly, Shone *et al.* (2016) argue that a more intrusive and dominating role of local government in tourism development creates another set of politics; policy makers are then seen to take sides. Furthermore, government interventions may address market failures but are often replaced by public sector ones. These contrasting views focus on different issues. Shone *et al.*, (2016) highlight the classical challenge facing politicians and policy makers; unpopular decisions need to be made. Dredge and Jamal (2013) show that bad policies can result when the state surrenders its power to the market. These concerns reflect the political economy of tourism in society, and how education and workers’ interests are negotiated in the sector.

4. DATA AND METHOD

To address the three key issues in this paper, data from several sources is used to quantitatively analyse the expectations and realities of the contribution of the tourism sector to the Tasmanian economy and community. Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania (TICT) data explains the expectations attached to the sector as well as identifying the rising dissatisfaction associated with the increased number of visitors to the state. ABS data, including the TSA, Census of Population and Housing and National Accounts, as well as Tourism Research Australia (TRA) data is used to explain the realities of the contribution of the tourism sector to the economy and community.

Applying the international standard for quantifying economic contributions of the tourism sector to data for Tasmania from the ABS Australian National Accounts: State Accounts for Gross Value Added by Industry Sector and the direct tourism value added by industry from the TRA State Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA), the tourism sector in Tasmania is analysed in terms of its contribution to the economy, employment and income.

Included in the TSA are estimates of tourism consumption, direct tourism output, value added and gross domestic product (GDP) as well as employment, the focus of this paper. Persons employed in tourism-related industries will generally provide services to both visitors and non-visitors. As such, tourism employment is derived for each industry by applying the tourism value added industry ratios from each of the benchmark years to employment estimates for each industry in subsequent years. As the ABS notes, the method of using the tourism value added industry ratios involves an assumption that the employment generated by tourism in each industry is in direct proportion to value added generated by tourism in the benchmark year.

First, the share of Gross Value Added (GVA) for tourism for each industry sector is calculated (Table 1). Second, employment in the sector is determined and third, the corresponding level of educational attainment and labour force attachment is analysed.

Employment in the tourism sector in Tasmania is calculated using the 2016 ABS Census of Population and Housing industry (ANZSIC) and occupation (ANZSCO) variables by applying the tourism value added industry ratios in Table 1. That is, tourism employed persons is derived by multiplying the total number of employed persons in the industry by the proportion of total value added of the industry which is related to tourism.

Table 1. Tourism Share of Industry Gross Value Added, by ANZSIC Industry Division, Tasmania and Australia, 2016/17.

	Tasmania	Australia
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.18	0.0
Mining	0.18	0.0
Manufacturing	0.18	0.0
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	0.18	0.0
Construction	0.18	0.0
Wholesale trade	0.18	0.0
Retail trade	14.2	8.9
Accommodation and food services	81.88	45.4
Transport, postal and warehousing	24.20	13.7
Information media and telecommunications	0.18	1.3
Financial and insurance services	0.18	0.0
Rental, hiring and real estate services (excluding ownership of dwellings)	4.15	2.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	0.18	0.0
Administrative and support services	4.09	3.8
Public administration and safety	0.18	0.0
Education and training	3.48	5.4
Health care and social assistance	0.18	0.5
Arts and recreation services	15.16	13.5
Other services	0.18	1.1
Ownership of dwellings	4.10	2.7

Source: Tourism Research Australia, State Satellite Accounts, author calculations

To enable greater exploration of the educational achievements of Tasmanians working in tourism, further analysis of those employed in the sector is undertaken using the ABS occupational classification system (ANZSCO).

For this research, employment in the tourism sector is disaggregated by occupation to the ANZSCO 4-digit level which provides the required skill level to undertake the job, and the corresponding workers' highest level of educational attainment by ASCED 3-digit level. Workers with a Certificate III are assumed to have 2 years' experience and therefore appropriately qualified for Skill Level 3 occupations. This process enables analysis of whether the workers educational attainment matches the educational level requirement of the job they are employed in.

ABS Census data is also used to analyse labour force attachment and income for those employed in the tourism sector, as well as those studying concurrently.

5. EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

Tourism carries many expectations for Tasmanians, particularly that tourism is good for the economy, that it creates employment, that it is good for small business, and that it promotes Tasmania more generally. For three consecutive Consumer Sentiments Surveys administered by the TICT since 2009, over half of Tasmanians believe that the tourism industry provides a greater contribution to the state's economy than any other sector (Figure 1). These expectations have been increasing with time (TICT, 2018). However, and significantly, the greatest contribution to the Tasmanian economy is actually that of the health care and social assistance industry in terms of both contribution to Gross State Product (GSP) and the share of employment (ABS, 2016). This is not recognised at all by Tasmanians responding to the TICT surveys.

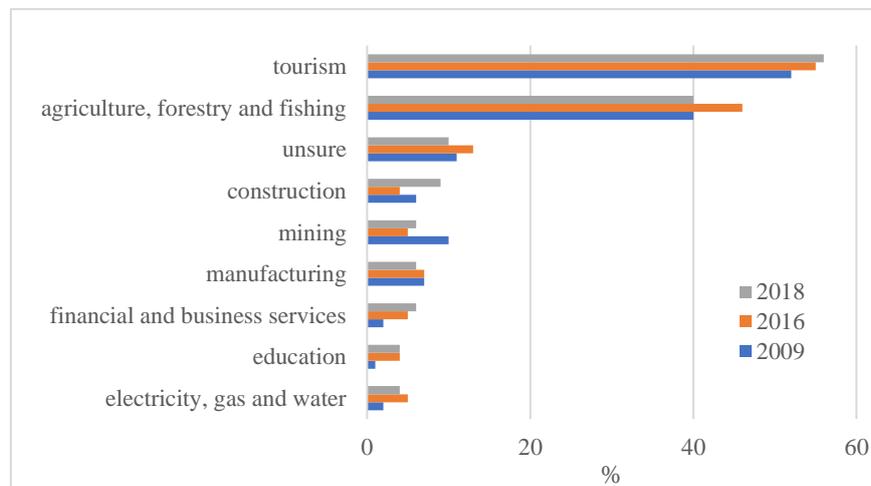


Figure 1. Perceived Industry Sector Providing Greatest Contribution to the Tasmanian Economy. Source: Consumer Sentiment Survey, TICT, (2018)

That said, the Tasmanian tourism sector contribution to the state economy is the highest of any state or territory, and 3.8 percentage points higher than the Australian tourism sector to the national economy (6.1%).

However, it is not the greatest economic contributor to the state, contrary to Tasmanians expectations. In 2016/17, the tourism sector (the sum of direct and indirect tourism) contributed almost 10 per cent of Tasmania's GDP, the third largest contributor in terms of GVA behind the health care and social assistance sector (13.1%) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (10.3%). The combined direct and indirect tourism sector employed the greatest proportion of the Tasmanian workforce, with a share of 15.8 per cent (7.9% direct tourism), followed by health care and social assistance (14.7%), retail trade (11.3%), which forms part of the tourism sector, and education and training (9.6%).

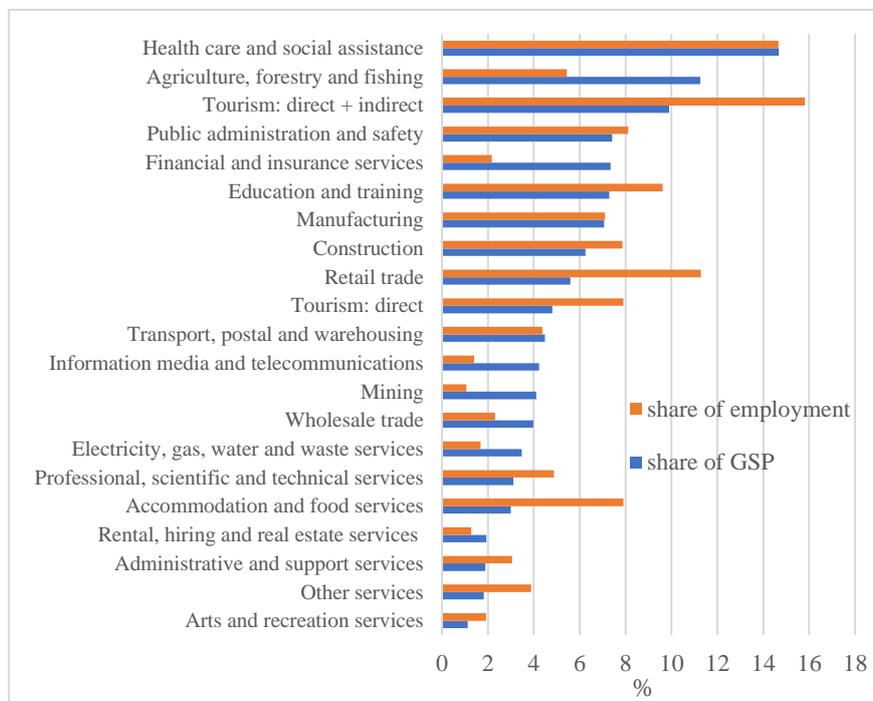


Figure 2. Contribution to the Tasmanian Economy, Share of GSP and Employment, Industry and Tourism, 2016/17. Source: TRA, State Satellite Account, 2016/17; ABS National Accounts, State Accounts, 2016/17; Census of Population and Housing, 2016.

In reality, there is growing dissatisfaction amongst Tasmanians regarding the increase in tourist visitation to the state, as evidenced from the 2016 and 2018 TICT Consumer Sentiments Surveys (Tourism Industry Council

of Tasmania, 2018). Four in five Tasmanians now believe there are negative impacts associated with an increase in visitor numbers to the state, increasing from two in three in 2016. These negative impacts are related to road infrastructure and congestion, environmental impacts and increasing prices for locals, including housing. Since the 2016 survey, three additional negative impacts have been identified as associated with increased visitation to the state; over-crowding, lack of accommodation and prices rises. This provides evidence that the benefits of tourism are not being distributed equitably in society. See Figure 3.

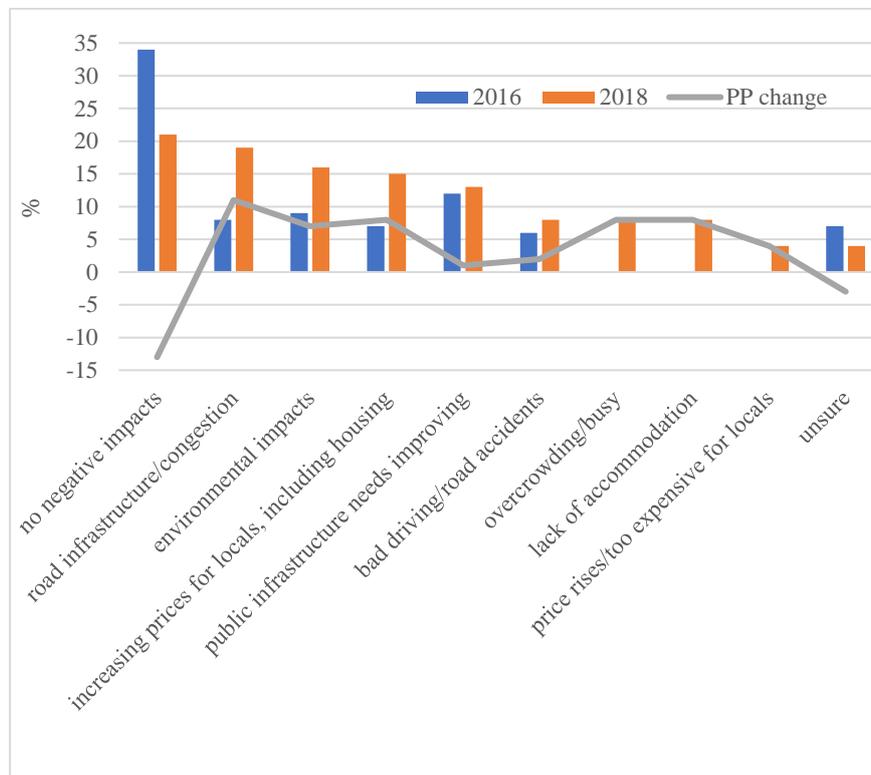


Figure 3. Perceived Negative Impacts Associated with Increased Visitation to Tasmania. Source: Consumer Sentiment Survey, TICT, (2018).

6. WORKFORCE POLARISATION

In total there were 20 334 people employed directly in the tourism sector in Tasmania in 2016, representing 9.8 per cent of the Tasmanian workforce (ABS, 2016).

The largest employing tourism sub-sectors were cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services with 7 916 workers, nearly two in five of all tourism sector workers (39.4%), followed by accommodation services (15.4%), and pubs, taverns and bars (8.4%).

Of the jobs in the tourism sector, over two thirds (67.2%) require a formal qualification of no more than a Certificate II level (e.g. waiters and baristas), with the largest proportion (37.6%) requiring either a Certificate I or no post-school qualification at all (e.g. sales assistants and kitchenhands). Six per cent of tourism workers require a bachelor's degree or higher (Skill level 1), 13.7 per cent require an associate degree, advanced diploma or diploma (skill level 2) including management level roles such as retail or restaurant managers, and 13.1 per cent require a Certificate IV or III (Skill level 3), occupations such as chefs or cooks. See Table 2 and Figure 3.

Table 2. Top 20 occupations, Tourism Sector, Tasmania 2016.

Occupation	Number	Skill level
Sales Assistants (General)	2 637	5
Waiters	1 900	4
Kitchenhands	1 316	5
Bar Attendants and Baristas	1 132	4
Chefs	1 059	3
Retail Managers	844	2
Cafe and Restaurant Managers	660	2
Fast Food Cooks	649	5
Cooks	629	3
Housekeepers	586	5
Cafe Workers	444	5
Truck Drivers	441	4
Hotel and Motel Managers	441	2
Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers	402	5
Commercial Cleaners	390	5
Receptionists	322	4
Delivery Drivers	215	4
Other Accommodation and Hospitality Managers	209	2
Bus and Coach Drivers	206	4
Shelf Fillers	166	5

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2016).

While the tourism industry is dominated by occupations which require low levels of formal educational attainment, there is also evidence of mismatch between educational requirements and actual attainment within the workforce, indicating both over-qualification (23.1%) and under-qualification (35.3%) of workers in the industry.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of the tourism workforce by educational requirements for the occupation (skill level) and the actual educational attainment achieved by the tourism workforce.

While 29.6 per cent of the tourism sector jobs are classified as skill level 5 occupations, three in five (59.5%) tourism workers have completed either a certificate I or hold no post-school qualifications at all, indicating a substantially high level of under-qualification in the tourism workforce. At the same time, 13.1 per cent of the sector's jobs are classified as skill level 3, yet 20.0 per cent of the workforce hold a certificate IV or III, indicating considerable over-qualification. Similarly, for jobs classified as skill level 1, there is a higher proportion of the workforce with bachelor's degree or higher qualifications than required (11.7 per cent compared with 6.0 per cent). Further, there is a substantial level of under-qualification for workers employed in jobs classified as Skill Level 2 and Skill level 4.

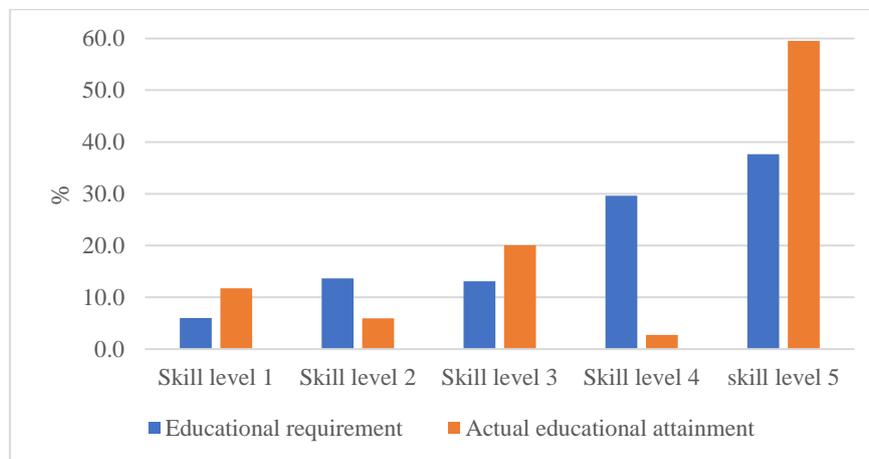


Figure 4. Tourism Workforce by Skill Level, Educational Requirement and Actual Educational Attainment, Tasmania, 2016. Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2016).

Table 3 shows the proportion of tourism industry workers in classified skill level occupations by their actual level of educational attainment. The highlighted cells show the proportionate correct match of educational attainment level to occupation skill level. The cells to the left of the highlighted cell indicate the proportion which are over-qualified and the cells to the right show the proportion which are under-qualified. This measure does not incorporate skill specialisation or field of study, which could disguise over- or under-qualification. The considerable levels of over-qualification and under-qualification also does not necessarily mean there is a skill mismatch; however, as over/under-qualification measures can hide skill heterogeneity or tacit knowledge and skills acquired through experience and on-the-job training (Quintini, 2011).

High levels of under-qualification exist for all occupational skill levels. Two in five workers employed in skill level 1 occupations were under-qualified, over two thirds of skill level 2 workers were under-qualified, over one third of skill level 3 workers were under-qualified as were three in five skill level 4 workers. This is likely to have a considerable impact on the tourism sector's productivity.

On the other hand, there is also considerable over-qualification in the workforce. One in five (18.2%) workers employed in skill level 2 jobs were over-qualified, 14.5 per cent of skill level 3 workers and over a third (34.2%) of skill level 4 workers were over-qualified. In addition, 5.0 per cent of workers in skill level 5 occupations hold a bachelor's degree or higher qualification where no post school qualifications are required.

Table 3. Highest Level of Educational Attainment by Occupation Skill Level, Proportion, Tasmania.

	Bachelor's Degree and over	Advanced Diploma or Diploma	Certificate IV and III	Certificate II	Cert I and NPSQ
Skill level 1	58.4	10.5	10.4	0.2	20.5
Skill level 2	18.2	12.6	22.9	1.5	44.8
Skill level 3	7.8	6.7	48.8	1.8	35.0
Skill level 4	9.6	5.4	19.2	3.1	62.7
skill level 5	5.0	2.9	11.3	3.7	77.2

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2016).

In addition to the tourism sector being dominated by low-skill occupations, the sector is also dominated by less than full-time employment. Over half of the sector’s workforce is employed part-time (54.8%). Nearly two thirds (64.4%) of the workforce are employed in the accommodation and food services sector and, of those, 61.7 per cent are employed part-time. The retail trade sector makes up 15.9 per cent of the tourism workforce, of which, 54.8 per cent are employed part-time. On the other hand, for those employed in the transport, postal and warehousing sector, which makes up one tenth (10.5%) of the tourism sector, 65.4 per cent are employed full-time (Figure 5). Jobs and worker’s education are not well matched in the tourism sector, a consequence of the neo-liberal logic for tourism.

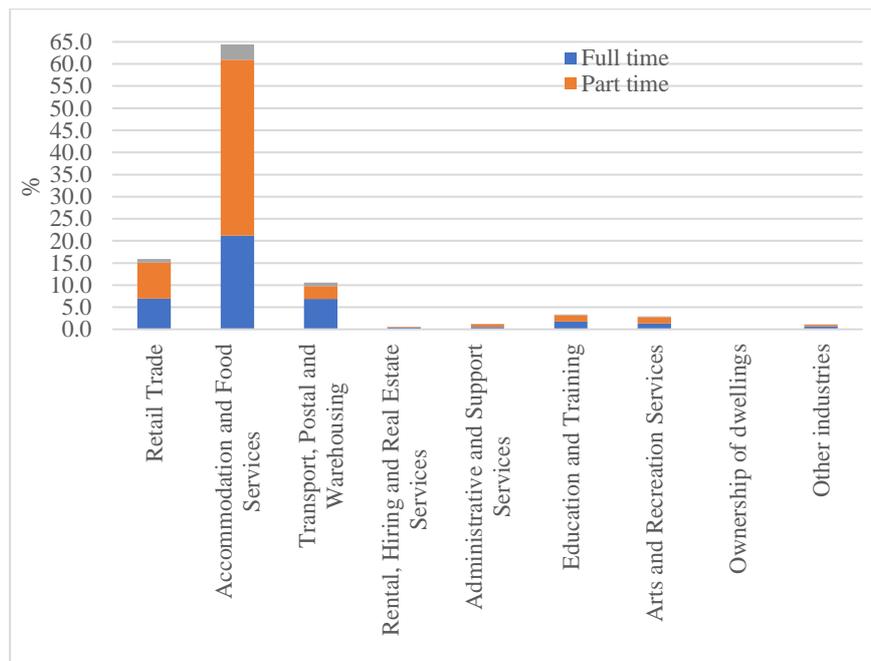


Figure 5. Proportion of the Tourism Workforce by ANZSIC Industry Sector and Labour Force Status, Tasmania, 2016. Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, (2016).

7. COMBINING WORK AND STUDY IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

Working in the tourism sector, particularly the accommodation and food services industry, is often considered a short-term employment option for those pursuing higher education opportunities. For that reason, the high proportion of the tourism workforce with no post-school qualifications could be explained by students supplementing their income and supporting their lifestyle as they study. However, the data suggests otherwise. Less than a third (29.6%) of the accommodation and food services workforce is also enrolled in an educational institution, the remaining 70.4 per cent are not studying at all. Of the accommodation and food services workforce, 12.7 per cent are also secondary school students, 10.5 per cent are university students and 5.5 per cent are studying a vocational education and training (VET) qualification. These findings suggest that most workers in the tourism sector, or the accommodation and food services sector more specifically, are not pursuing further education or training concurrently with their work (Figure 6).

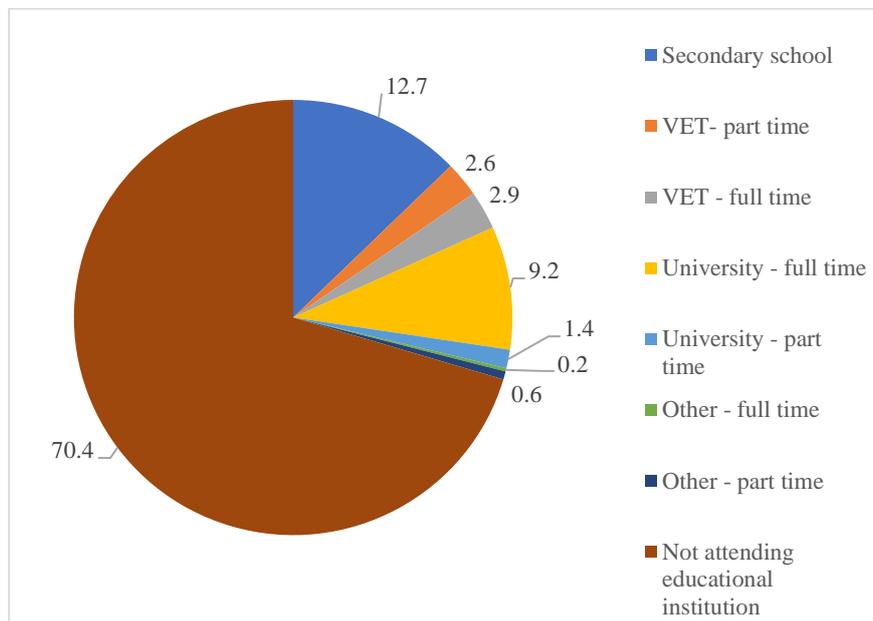


Figure 6. Proportion of the Accommodation and Food Services Enrolled in an Educational Institution, by Type of Institution, 2016. Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2016).

8. INCOME

Over four in five (82.8%) Tasmanian tourism workers' total income is less than the median wage for all Australian workers; approximately \$55 063 per annum. A third (32.4%) of the tourism workers' income is less than \$20 799 per annum (\$399 per week) which is considerably below the poverty line of half the median household income, equivalent to around \$433 per week for single persons (Australian Council of Social Service and University of New South Wales, 2018) (Figure 7).

This suggests that while the tourism sector in Tasmania creates jobs and is the third highest employing sector in the State, most of the workforce earn less than the median income and a third are living below the poverty line. This reflects the low-skilled and the less than full-time nature of employment in the tourism sector. It also reflects the economic status of tourism workers and the consequences of the neoliberal logic for tourism.

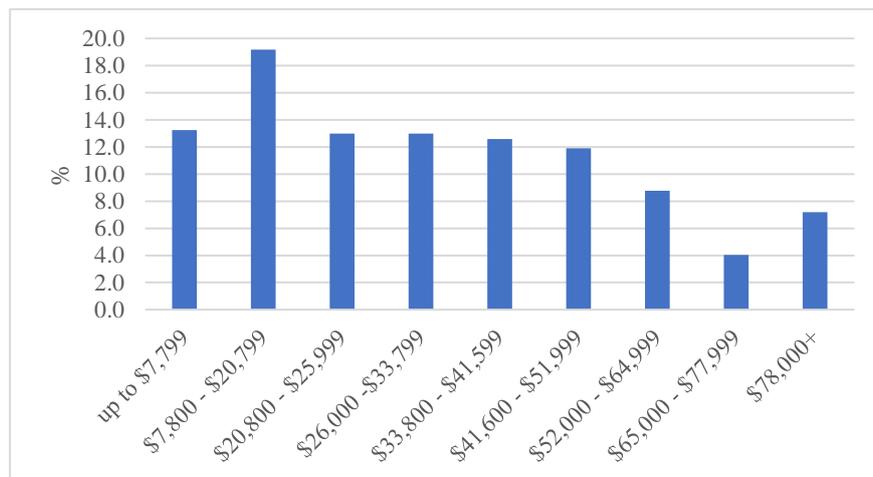


Figure 7. Income Distribution, Tourism Workers, Tasmania, 2016. Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2016).

9. DISCUSSION

It is commonly argued by community and political leaders that improving educational attainment in Tasmania is a key policy lever to enhance social mobility, improve productivity and address social issues. Yet, as the analysis shows, the political economy of tourism in Tasmania

reveals some contradictions. Tourism takes the form of contemporary capitalism in Tasmania and has three detrimental consequences in the form of job polarisation, a mismatch of jobs to education and skills and failure to share the benefits of tourism to workers and society.

Tourism growth is welcomed and encouraged as an industry with the potential to increase jobs and distribute benefits within local economies. The emergence of job polarisation in the composition of the tourism workforce is troubling. The mismatch between education and training and the job needs of the tourism industry reflects a neoliberal political economy. The mismatch has contributed to both over- and under-qualification of workers in the Tasmanian tourism industry. The invisible hand of the tourism job market has not matched educational qualification with employment. This has the effect of constraining social mobility as some workers are marooned in roles where their earnings are commonly less than the median Australian wage, and, worse still, a third are living in poverty.

Job polarisation is an example of the crisis in the current system. From the evidence provided above, deepening understanding of the implications of patterns of job polarisation in Tasmania and globally is essential. Rethinking of contemporary capitalism is needed. Once we comprehend the implications of job polarisation and the sorts of economic alternatives that can reduce it, we have a solid basis for social action that can make a difference (Livingstone, 1999; 2009).

Achieving this laudable future state may not be possible, as the job polarisation case demonstrates. Policy makers' current approach results in making capitalism more palatable through the positioning of new economic growth sectors (such as tourism) as an engine of jobs growth while deeper issues of the distribution of benefits and utilisation of skills are unaddressed. Indeed, a comparison of the occupational skill distribution between 2006 and 2016 for Tasmania, pre and post GFC, demonstrates heightened job polarisation for the whole workforce accompanied by marked within skill level and occupation group changes as well as spare capacity within the workforce (Denny, 2019).

There is a need to go behind the rhetoric of tourism growth and educational attainment to encourage a deeper consideration of the issue at stake in the hope that together academics, policy makers, the industry and workers can realise their visions for their future (Denny *et al.*, 2019).

10. CONCLUSION

This paper suggests the need for a constructive re-politicisation of contemporary capitalism in the context of tourism. The evidence does not support the rhetoric of increased educational attainment and tourism jobs and growth delivering a better future for Tasmania, nor Tasmanians.

Tourism employment is concentrated in lower skilled, low-paid, less than full-time occupations. More than a third of the tourism workforces' earnings are below the poverty line. Indeed, the growth of the sector, now the third largest employer in the state of Tasmania, may be undermining social mobility and improved life chances, as well as contributing to growing dissatisfaction within the community. As such, growth in the tourism industry is unlikely to assist Tasmania to achieve the shift in the level of educational attainment of the population required to improve its social and economic well-being. The political economy of tourism in Tasmania has three consequences that entrench inequalities: how jobs and workers' education are matched; the economic status of workers, and the distribution of tourism benefits within the local community.

Since the 1990s, Australia has embraced neoliberalism. The case of Tasmania affirms this, but in the context of a prospering tourism industry, it also accentuates potential discontent for workers and the community. While personal and community investments are made to educate the population to achieve the same educational level as other Australian states, the promised rewards have not been realised. Even so, competition in the labour market subverts the expectation that education and training hold the key to one's future.

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