

TOUR GUIDING, ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND LEARNING: LESSONS FROM AN ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPANY

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ABSTRACT:

The article examines the impacts of organisational culture on the learning and development of tour guides. Drawing on a case study of a small, entrepreneurial tour company, the paper considers the nature of the organisation's culture, the tours it provides, including their narrative contents and the processes of organisational learning and socialisation. The paper suggests that the development of a learning culture within such an organisation may benefit from the provision of appropriate learning opportunities among the guides and facilitators who coordinate guide development.

INTRODUCTION

Guided tours and tour guides have been examined from a number of perspectives. Social scientists have considered guide roles and functions (Cohen, 1985; Katz, 1985; Cohen *et al.*, 2002), the individual and collective experience of tours (Gorman, 1979; Schuchat, 1983), including the factors that shape the experience (Pearce, 1984), while practitioners and management academics have focused either on the vocational aspects of tour guiding (Pond, 1993; Collins, 2000; Mancini, 2001) or the broader issues surrounding professionalisation, training and certification (Ap and Wong, 2001; Mason and Christie, 2003; Black and Ham, 2005). This paper argues that while this body of work addresses issues of training, role development and their impacts on the tour experience, it largely neglects the organisational aspects of tour guide management that shape the learning processes of guides. To address this gap in current knowledge this paper draws on a study of an entrepreneurial tour company and examines the relationship between the organisational culture of the company, including the processes of learning, and the way related issues have influenced the development of the tours. Particular emphasis is placed on the narratives employed on the tour and the way they help to construct the overall experience. The paper questions how particular types of narratives are produced, learned and reproduced within the company and among the guides. Finally, the paper reflects on a series of recommendations for this company as a way to identify a series of general issues for organisations facing similar challenges.

The paper begins with a review of existing work on tour guiding, with particular reference to the training and development of guides. The subsequent sections discuss issues surrounding entrepreneurship, organisational culture and organisational learning. After a brief discussion of the research methodology and the research context, the next part reviews the case study organisation and its tours. The subsequent part examines in further detail the learning processes in the organisation and the penultimate part of the paper discusses the lessons that may be learnt from this case, before drawing some conclusions.

RESEARCH ON TOURS AND TOUR GUIDING

Guided tours and tour guiding have been studied by a number of authors, and research is often one of two types: social science inquiry based or managerial. Social science inquiry based studies of guided tours and guiding focus on the performances of guides and the roles they assume, and the experience of guided tours, including the tourist-guide encounter. Cohen (1985), Holloway (1981), Fine and Speer (1985), Katz (1985), Cohen *et al.* (2002) and Reisinger and Steiner (2006) examine guide's skills, their potential roles, and the ways in which performances of these roles create particular tourist experiences of place and history. These studies help to understand the complex, performative nature of guiding. Pearce (1984) goes further and considers the emotional, cognitive and environmental factors that shape the tourist-guide interaction, the tourist experience and subsequent perceptions of the experience. His study also highlights the need to distinguish different types of tours in terms of their structure and content. More importantly, Pearce's study highlights the tensions inherent in training tour guides, and provides hints at potential solutions.

One of the difficulties of training guides lies in the balance between ensuring that the guide's talk is accurate, from an academic or scientific perspective, and not insisting that the guide give only a planned, well-researched lecture to the tourists. Some of the tours studied appear to have found better answers to this dilemma than others. For example, the response of the city tour directors has been to encourage guides to research and develop their own individual tours using the organization's resources and the experiences of other guides. (Pearce, 1984: 142)

Salazar's (2006) work illustrates how Tanzanian guides learn their trade through class instruction and the first-hand experience of guiding. However, his study does not consider the organisational aspects of guide management or learning. Salazar's (2005) earlier study of Indonesian guides makes brief but overt references to the organisational aspects of guiding and guide learning. He focuses on one licensed venue: the "Traveller's Bar," from which the guides operate, and states that the owner advises the guides on clothing, and also organises meetings with the guides "...to discuss their work and evaluate their professional progress..." Salazar (2005: 638). Salazar's study is limited in detail but points to some of the informal learning opportunities and the organisational factors that facilitate this type of learning.

The issues of guide training and development have been considered in greater detail by management academics, who view guiding as service provision and who focus on such issues as professionalisation and certification. This type of research often considers formal training and development programmes (cf., Mason and Christie, 2003; Black and Ham, 2005), but they reveal little about the cultural contexts in which learning occurs. Ap and Wong (2001) and Zhang and Chow (2004) recommend that licensing, coupled with formal training programmes, offer credible ways to improve guiding practices. In reference to such courses Zhang and Chow suggest "...professional and experienced guides could be invited to share their experiences..." (2004: 90); Ap and Wong (2001: 556) make passing reference to the possibility for apprenticeships in companies, but neither of these studies consider the organisational aspects of learning.

Social scientific inquires into guiding and management studies of guide professionalisation provide useful points of reference for researchers, government bodies and commercial organisations interested in guide training and development. However, these bodies of work largely ignore the organisational aspects of guiding and they do not consider how related issues influence the process of guide learning. To address this gap in knowledge, this paper draws on the case study company to examine the link between organisational culture, entrepreneurship and guides' learning. The paper does not claim the case study is representative of all entrepreneurial tour companies. Nevertheless, the issues faced by this company will help practitioners and academics gain insight into the organisational factors that shape tour guiding and guide learning.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Organisational culture is the consistently reproduced values and beliefs, which are reflected in the actions of its members, and in the organisation's structure and distribution

of responsibility (cf., Deal and Kennedy, 1988; Schein, 2004). Culture is linked to the way information is disseminated, how power is distributed and decisions are made, and it is reified in such symbols as brands, corporate logos, job titles and uniforms. The key issue for the current discussion is how the organisational culture of a small entrepreneurial company impacts on the guides and their learning processes. To understand this it is necessary to consider a) the way entrepreneurship affects organisational culture and b) the potential tensions between the practice of guiding and the culture of an entrepreneurial organisation.

There are numerous definitions of entrepreneurship and it is not possible to provide a lengthy discussion here (cf., Dewhurst and Horobin, 1998; Morrison *et al.*, 1999; Thomas, 1998). However, a review of the literature points to a number of recurring characteristics. Within small, entrepreneurial organisations, the visions and values of the founders are usually central to shaping the organisational culture, and owner-managers are often at the centre of decision making – relying on intuition, improvisation, innovation, experimentation and personal relationships (see e.g., Goffee and Scase, 1995; McCrimmon, 1995; Deakins and Freel, 2006). Chell (2001) drawing on the earlier work of Hofstede *et al.* (1990) suggests the cultures of entrepreneurial organisations, particularly those in the relatively early stages of existence and development, typically have low levels of hierarchy, fluid boundaries with much of the power and influence being exercised by the owners, who assume numerous management roles and perform a range of administrative duties. This may be evident in an entrepreneurial tour company, but the nature of guiding means that there are likely to be a number of competing forces that correspond to different models of organisational culture.

In Handy's (1993) typology of organisational cultures, entrepreneurial organisations are examples of power cultures, which are like spider's webs with the owner-manager at the centre. However, in a company organising guided tours this type of managerial influence is a centripetal force that may operate in contrast to the centrifugal forces produced by the guides. Tour guiding is more akin to what Handy (1993) calls a person culture, in which individuals act semi-autonomously in providing the service experience. Guiding is an individual task and the guide is in an isolated position from which to shape his or her performance. Interrogating the organisation's culture may therefore help to explain the practice of guiding, but it is also important to consider the relationship between organisational culture and the learning that underpins practice. In order to examine these issues in the case study the following section introduces the notion of experiential learning and discusses a number of academic approaches that help to understand the relationship between learning and organisational culture.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

There are numerous competing theories that have been applied to the study of organisational learning (cf., DeFillippi and Ornstein, 2006); however, a prominent and highly relevant approach in this context is the experiential learning model developed by Kolb (1984). Since publication, Kolb's model has been subjected to rigorous critique and examination from a broad range of disciplines (cf., Michelson, 1996; Holman *et al.*, 1997;

Reynolds, 1997). Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that it identifies the key elements in the processes of experiential learning and it remains an important theory of learning (cf., Kolb and Kolb, 2005). Kolb (1984) proposed that learning was a process involving four stages. Learners initially engage in *concrete experiences* i.e., when they participate in activities, which is followed by *reflective observation* on that experience. Following this reflection, learners engage in *abstract conceptualisation* during which they identify general rules explaining the experience. Emerging ideas are then developed through *active experimentation* which is informed by previous learning and individuals once again start the learning cycle.

In addition to this rather insular picture of individuals' learning, it is important to recognise that organisational learning occurs through interaction between staff and between staff and managers. The social dimension of learning was examined in detail by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) who argued that organisational learning occurs through four interrelated processes: socialisation, externalisation, combination and finally internalisation. More specifically, they suggest that shared experiences lead to the overt expression of ideas that are then synthesised and adopted as tacit knowledge. Wenger *et al.* (2002) emulate these themes in their call for organisations to develop communities of practice – groups of individuals with a shared concern or interest, who develop their knowledge and expertise through continued interaction. Wenger *et al.* (2002) distinguish communities of practice from operational teams and formal departments, which may be functional groups that have clear tasks and objectives and whose members are assigned by management. Communities of practice are more likely to be self selective with membership being dependent on a sense of affiliation, mutual identification and commitment to the development of shared knowledge. Communities of practice are, therefore, idealised and ideologically loaded forms of relationships between individuals. They may overlap with and cut across business objectives and organisational functions, but they are fundamentally about sharing information and caring about the mutual development of knowledge. Nevertheless, in order to nurture communities of practice, organisationally appointed individuals may help facilitate ongoing interaction between employees.

In order for this type of collaborative learning to occur, an environment and setting must exist where shared values and practices can be developed. Such learning is often thought to take place in formal spaces such as class and training rooms; however, authors acknowledge the informal nature of many learning spaces, describing them as any place, physical or virtual, that enables learning to occur (Johnson and Lomas, 2005; Wedge and Kearns, 2005). Furthermore, it has been suggested that an informal setting is often preferable to ensure that a relaxed and collegiate atmosphere is nurtured (Long and Ehrmann, 2005). Wenger *et al.* (2002) and Graham and Nafukho (2007) suggest that the creation of spaces that allow for learning through socialisation may contribute to the establishment of a broader culture of learning within the organisation. This paper examines how experiential learning is evident in the entrepreneurial tour company and the how the organisational culture may influence the learning processes of guides. Moreover, it discusses how the management can build on the existing processes of experiential learning and develop collaborative approaches through interventions in the organisation's culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THE STUDY CONTEXT

Methods

The research was conducted over four years, during five visits to Budapest that lasted between three to five weeks. The initial study had two aims: first, to understand the nature of the experience provided by the walking tours; and second to provide the owner-managers with feedback to help improve the quality of the tour experience and the guides. The study was conducted in several stages and utilised a mixture of overt and covert research. In the first stage, an in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted with the two owners of the company. The interview was recorded, transcribed and used to gain knowledge of the company's history as well as the organisational culture and its development. This formal interview was then followed up by a series of informal interviews and conversations, which were used to elaborate on the themes that emerged through the subsequent stages of data collection.

The following stage of the research involved a mixture of overt and covert participant observation of 30 walking tours with 16 different guides. Participant observation has been employed in numerous studies of guided tours and tour guiding (cf., Gorman, 1979; Holloway, 1981; Dahles, 2002). Participant observation was used to gain subjective, first-hand insights into the tour experience. Accompanying the tours provided the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the guides and other guests. Moreover, as Adler and Adler (1998) argued, the researcher could draw on a range of sensory data, which was then used in the interpretative process.

The first tour was taken with the full knowledge of the guide; however, because the guide was conscious of being observed by someone in direct contact with the managers, his performance was severely affected. Consequently, it was agreed with the owner-managers that the initial tours with other guides should be attended covertly to get a more authentic impression of typical guide behaviour. The problems surrounding covert participant observation in the study of leisure activities have been discussed by a number of authors (see Lugosi, 2006), and Seaton (2002) highlighted some of the problematic issues surrounding covert research of the tour experience. The two principal concerns are ethical and methodological. First, regarding the ethical implications of the study, neither the guides nor the tour participants gave permission for their actions to be observed and recorded. Academics have engaged in lengthy critiques of undisclosed or covert research, focusing on the lack of formal consent, invasion of privacy, the risks for unwilling participants and researchers, and the disregard for people's right not to be studied (e.g. Bulmer, 1982). Critics of covert research (*ibid.*) and those advocating participative research (Christians, 2005) maintain that total honesty and the full inclusion of participants in studies are fundamental ideological principles of research. Pragmatists cite the practical reasons and discuss the contextual factors of field research in their justifications for using covert methods (Lugosi, 2006). The ideological discourses presented by ethicists and enlightened qualitative researchers are useful points of reference in developing a study, but field research often presents challenges that need to be addressed pragmatically. Within this study a utilitarian approach (Christians, 2005) was adopted that weighed the risks and benefits of adopting a covert rather than an overt

role. When the tour was attended overtly the observer effect clearly disrupted the guide performance and there was a risk that knowledge of the study would have led to unnatural behaviour among the guides in future tours. For the managers, it was important ascertain how the guides perform during the tours. This was the principal reason for adopting a covert role. A second reason was the nature of the research context and the type of data that was gathered. The public nature of the walking tours and the practice of tour guiding meant that the study was less vulnerable to criticisms of invasion of privacy. Furthermore, personal information about tour participants was not recorded and the relatively small amounts of data collected about their behaviour were not deemed to represent a risk to them. Nevertheless, having attended at least one tour anonymously, the guides were told about the research and most participated in informal interviews. Subsequent tours were then attended overtly and emerging issues were discussed with the guides during informal conversations during and after the tours.

The second important issue surrounding the research was data recording. The mobile nature of the tour made it difficult to take extensive notes. This was made somewhat more difficult when the tours were attended covertly. To solve this, the researcher usually walked at the back of the group in between stops and made a series of short notes in a small note book. This type of note-taking, which is often employed in participant observational studies of leisure activities (cf., Palmer, 2001; Seaton, 2002; Lugosi, 2006), quickly developed into a form of shorthand, and acronyms and short comments were used to help recall particular details. These notes were expanded afterwards into 1-3 page summaries of the tours – often on the same day or night the tour was attended. Overt recording of the narratives provided by the guides was not practically possible; nor was it necessary to the study. Once an initial typology of the narratives was established, it was more important to gain a better understanding of which particular types of narratives were important to different tours.

Data collection and analysis broadly followed the sequences outlined by Adler and Adler (1998) and discussed in further detail by others (cf., Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Spradley, 1980): initial familiarisation with context and cultural phenomena, inductive generation of conceptual themes and typologies through a process of coding, and refinement of concepts, types and themes through comparison with existing ones. Data collection, therefore, involved concurrent interpretation and analysis. Initially, observations of the tours were unfocused, general in scope and descriptive. These observations were analysed and specific issues were identified regarding the different narrative components of the tours and the varying tour structures developed by different guides. This led to focused observation of specific behaviours that helped to identify when and how the tour contents and structures varied. During subsequent tours several issues were examined in greater detail including: greetings and initial interactions of the guides with the groups, tour structure, including the routes, number of stops, length of stops, pace and the use of time, communication, including the use of English, loudness, pace of delivery and also interaction with guests in between stops, knowledge both of historical and current information about places of interest, events and activities in the city and entertainment, including the use of humour. Finally, the researcher engaged in selected observation of particular aspects of the tours: the narratives, which were categorised according to their accessibility and the extent to which they drew on the life experiences of the guides. Comparisons of the tours and their contents highlighted the importance of the learning process, which was then examined in further detail during informal interviews and

conversations with the guides.

The observations by the researcher as well as the emergent themes of the study were discussed extensively with the owner-managers. They were also given draft copies of publications and invited to review them. The managers were also given a one page summary of the observations of each guide and the tours they led. These summaries were subsequently passed on to the guides and the managers discussed with them the researcher's observations and reflections.

Research context

The case study company was established in 1998, but the partnership has since dissolved and it is currently run by one of the owner-managers. The company's core business was providing walking tours and the owners, drawing on their own tourist experiences, had a relatively clear vision for their business. This can be summarised in two aims: first, the company targets particular segments within the Hungarian inbound market, generally aiming for lower budget tourists, short-term visitors and backpackers. Second, in opposition to monologic tour formats involving large numbers of tourists, the walking tours, which last between 3-6 hours, are designed to be intimate, small-scale and dialogic. A parallel can be drawn here with Dahles' (1996) study of walking tours in Amsterdam where senior citizens orchestrate an idiosyncratic cultural encounter as part of an informal tourist experience. In both cases the guides offer a personal perspective on the city and its cultures. Within the case study organisation, guides are encouraged to offer their own opinions on events and places. Guides frequently offered critical opinions on sites, museums, exhibitions, theatres, bars and restaurants, based on their own personal experiences.

The company is fully tax paying, employs licensed guides, uses multiple forms of advertising media and the manager is strategic in his development plans. However, the characteristics of entrepreneurial culture are evident. For the first five years, the majority of the managerial functions (excluding the guiding) were performed by the owners. This organisational frame, in which the vision of the founder continues to define the company's activities and where management is directly involved in the everyday operations of the organisation, is typical of small entrepreneurial ventures. For example, the owner relies on personal contacts with hostel operators and agents who disseminate information about the company.

In the past five years the company has diversified into other areas of activity including bicycle rental and two internet cafés. This is significant for two reasons: first, establishing multiple work sites and new areas of organisational activity has challenged the power culture and reinforced the importance of person culture among the guides because the owner has had to devolve responsibilities to others in the organisation. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the company was initially run from an apartment and the guides would meet the owners individually. This lack of a formal work place where employees could interact for extended periods was critical in influencing the organisational culture and the learning process of the guides. The establishment of the

internet cafés and bicycle rental shops provide opportunities for lengthier interaction between the guides and the potential to establish the learning spaces discussed above. The following section outlines the three principal tours offered by the company and then discusses the types of narratives provided by the guides.

THE TOURS

The general tour

The tour includes a basic introduction to Hungarian culture and the principal tourist sites/sights of Budapest. However, even here the guides each have an individual input into the way they influence tourist perceptions, expectations and behaviours. Guides often share their personal opinions about historical facts and contemporary places, which subsequently inform consumer choices about visiting museums, hospitality venues and shopping districts.

The communist tour

This second type of tour focuses on the socialist history of Hungary and Budapest. The official tour format has changed several times over the past four years; initially visitors were taken to a number of historical sites such as the small enclave which saw some of the fiercest fighting during the 1956 uprising, and Csepel: a large “proletariat” residential/industrial district of the city. During the visit to Csepel the visitors were taken to a small local bar, which was presented as an authentic cultural setting where alcohol can be consumed in the same way as local workers had done (and continue to do). The tourists were then taken (via public transport) to the Statue Park, which houses statues that were associated with the former political system. The Statue Park remains part of the tour but variations have included a visit to a large housing estate and an apartment which was furnished as it would have been during the socialist period.

The pub crawl

Visitors are taken to a number of licensed establishments and are shown some of the more exotic aspects of the city. More importantly, after the official tour is over, guides take visitors on to other places and regularly accompany tourists on longer drinking sessions. At different stops on the tour, tourists are offered samples of local drinks and encouraged to enjoy themselves. Moreover, they are encouraged to engage in spectacular forms of consumption to amuse other members of the group. Guides ask tourists to participate in a competition to see who will do the most original or outrageous thing. Examples of winners have included a shy single Indonesian traveller who stood up in a bar and sang a traditional folk song and two girls who had their private parts publicly shaved in one of the bars. A young man who subsequently drank the glass of foamy liquid used to rinse the razors did not win.

From an organisational point of view, the pub crawl is the most difficult tour to shape and orchestrate centrally. Guides will sometimes offer narratives that are reminiscent of those provided on the other walking tours, pointing out particular tourist sights and commenting on them, but much of the interaction between guides and tourists is informal and jocular. The guides all commented that the pub crawls are always different as the atmosphere is largely determined by the participants.

Tour narratives

An important aspect of the tours is their narrative content, which can be classified as one of three types: *public*, *obscure* or *personal*. Public narratives consist of openly available general information, and include such facts as the locations of buildings or monuments, travel advice, significant dates and historical events. Most of this information forms the popular place-image of Hungary and is accessible via the most basic marketing, promotional or tourist information literature. The general city tour is largely made up of these types of narratives and this type of knowledge. Many of the facts and figures would already be known to a Hungarian citizen schooled and living in the country, and the nature of this information makes it easy to train guides to convey it.

Obscure narratives can only be obtained either by consulting specialist literature or, through someone with a personal knowledge of Hungarian culture. These narratives are spatially and culturally unique and offer an alternative perspective on Hungarian culture. They are often mythical and anecdotal, and frequently reinterpreted or reconstructed by the guides due to their elusive nature. Accounts include specific stories concerning buildings, sites, events and people. An example of this type of narrative is the stories of the statues of Lenin outside the factory gates of Csepel. One of the guides explained that the original statue was made of poor quality material and began to rust severely, but prior to a visit from a Russian delegation was secretly replaced during one night with a new statue. The story was meant to illustrate the poor quality of manufacturing during socialism and the influence of the Russian state. Another story of the statue by a different guide placed it within the context of a demonstration when protestors placed a loaf of bread in Lenin's open hand to signify their need for food rather than political rhetoric. These types of narratives are central to the communist tour and the pub crawl, but references to this type of knowledge are also used in the company's marketing to differentiate all the tours from others in the market.

Personal narratives are stories of events that occurred during the guide's life or those of friends and relatives, and/or in locations that are intimately known to them. They are often autobiographical, purely anecdotal and therefore the most ephemeral types of information. Guides leading the city tour and the pub crawl were often asked about their experiences of hospitality venues. The older guides on the communist tour always drew on their experiences of participating in Hungary's *úttörő* (pioneer) youth movement, schooling in the socialist regime and their childhood experiences of places and institutions. During the travel on public transport, tourists would continually quiz guides and encourage them to retell stories from their lives. Their personal narratives were also used to animate sites along the tour. For example, during one of the visits to the Statue

Park, the guide retold her experience of throwing snowballs at the belt of one of the large statues and being reprimanded by an adult. At another stop on the tour, the guide pointed to a block of flats and retold the story of radical poetry readings that were held in the basements of this type of flats. She said poorly educated police informants often attended these events, so poets would stand up, announce they would read Shakespeare (a popular and supposedly uncontroversial artist) and then proceed to read out their own work.

All three types of tours contained personal narratives, but these were particularly central to the communist tour and the pub crawl. The guides often personalised their tours through these types of narratives, and therefore, these stories offered the most intimate ways of engaging with the guides and the cultures they represented.

The presence of the different types of narratives has important implications for the training and development of the guides and also for the choice of guides for particular tours. The next section elaborates on the impacts of the tour format, including the narrative content, and the organisational culture on the learning processes of the guides.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: TRAINING, TRANSLATION AND REPRODUCTION

Training for consistent quality service delivery is difficult under any circumstances, but training for a role that is ambiguous and dynamic, in a loose organisational culture, is even more challenging. In the case study company, the tour format is prescribed by the management but guides are encouraged to individualise their tours. Initially, the owners accompanied new guides on tours to assess performance and offer feedback. However, this had a number of problems: first, the tension that arose because of direct managerial surveillance, which inevitably influenced guides' performances; and second, as the organisation grew, the management did not have time to devote to this activity.

In general, understanding the preparation of guides relies on considering the life experiences of the guides and their learning processes. The life experiences of the guide are important because the guides must draw on their own experiences and communicate these in an entertaining way. This is an essential aspect of the communist tour and the pub crawl. However, guides leading all three types of tours are expected to share their personal opinions and offer advice to visitors on specific places, venues and attractions. Although some of this information can be learned through a formal training process, the most important source of information for guides is direct experience of specific places or, at least, engagement with people who have such experience of places.

Concerning the training, guides are given a tour script, which, as indicated above, was written by the two managers. However, new guides are encouraged to accompany experienced guides' tours, and a considerable part of learning and organisational socialisation takes place during these tours. This informal, experiential learning process can be understood through the notions of *reproduction*, *translation* and *individualisation*. New guides learn through a process of reproduction when a more experienced guide

shows the tour to the trainee. For the new guides this represents the concrete experience and reflective observation processes described by Kolb (1984). However, variations from the tour script in the performance of experienced guides are often reproduced during subsequent tours led by new guides. The tours all varied, to some extent, in their structure, route and content. When asked why guides went to certain places, via certain routes, they frequently said this was the route the previous person took who showed them the tour. This highlights the impact of social learning for new guides and the experiential learning of existing guides in the development of guiding repertoires. This also points to the potential limitations of relying on the observation of other guides' tours, and the issues raised by the absence of further interaction between guides, which could facilitate socialisation.

The second part of the learning process is translation. It again reflects some deviation from the script, but also deviation from the examples shown by other guides. In Kolb's (1984) terms, guides had engaged in a process of reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation and they had moved on to develop their own concrete experiences. Closely linked to this is the idea of individualisation, where guides, influenced by personal characteristics, specific perceptions of the guide role, and the different people on the tour, reshaped their tours and engaged in an ongoing process of active experimentation. Guides changed the routes according to the weather, the size of the group, the type of people on the group, and often according to their own mood. In this way the guides made their tours distinctive, reflecting their guiding principles. This degree of experimentation provided opportunities for guides to continue engaging in experiential learning and to develop new tour repertoires.

From a narrative perspective, stories were frequently retold in different ways, often with different emphasis, and different endings, which changed their impact. Some of the guides included crucial pieces of information while others omitted them. For example, during one of the visits to the Csepel district, the guide pointed to a dented, rusting loudspeaker hanging on one of the lampposts. He said speakers like these played propaganda songs during factory opening and closing times to motivate workers. The tourists were told to listen to these songs at the entrance to the Statue Park, where a CD compilation is played on a loop. A different guide told us in great detail about the hidden symbolism of the park's construction. For example, there are three front gates to the Statue Park but only the side gate is ever open. The entry through the "kiskapu" or small gate is a playful physical representation of a Hungarian saying: getting things done via the small gate, meaning to circumvent official channels. This type of entrepreneurialism was rife during socialism and illustrates the nature of existence during this period. All the tours were stylised as the guides employed their own accents into the delivery: some guides offered contrived animations of small events while others trivialised important historical and social facts. Some guides did not provide these types of obscure narratives and focused instead on public narratives.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The challenges faced by this organisation are likely to affect other small entrepreneurial

organisations engaged in guide training and the provision of guided tours. The difficulties emerge from the tensions between the forces of dynamism and formalism, and by extension, Handy's (1993) power and person cultures. The entrepreneurial organisation's culture is loosely organised and emerging. Coupled with this is the fluid and idiosyncratic nature of tour guiding. These forces often conflict with demands for consistent levels of service quality and a certain degree of stability within the organisation that allow it to grow sustainably. Furthermore, any attempts by the manager to orchestrate the learning process or service provision centrally are undermined by the multiple demands on his time, the spatial distribution of the organisation's different functions and the autonomy of the guides. The study also suggests that the guides continue to develop and customise their tour scripts, routes and stories over time as their experience grows. Currently their learning is often insular with little opportunity for social learning between guides, and between guides and the managers of the company. This section discusses some of the key lessons that can be drawn from this case that can help managers facing similar challenges to gain greater influence over the delivered service and to facilitate the learning of the guides.

Regarding the changes in the routes and variation in the narrative content, it is possible to schematically map out particular tours and identify each of the critical stops along the tour. The key facts, figures and narratives for any particular stop can be summarised on one or two pages and stored in a loose-binder folder. Issuing each guide with a copy allows them to add to it and change the order of the pages to reflect their own interpretation of the tour. This will make it possible to vary the structure of the tour by changing the sequences of stops, but each stop will continue to have a checklist of information and anecdotes that inform the guides. Individual copies may of course lead to idiosyncratic versions of the tour and it may be more beneficial to maintain a central copy which is updated with facts and figures, but with the route structure remaining unaltered. It may also be useful to maintain electronic versions of the central copy.

This type of quality initiative may offer a firm starting point for learning and consistent service delivery, but the development of key guiding competencies and the exchange of public, obscure and personal narratives involve a more fundamental cultural intervention. In any tour company, there will always be guides who are superior to others in terms of knowledge, personal experience or interpersonal ability. By differentiating between guides, both financially and through formal status, the more experienced and better quality guides can assume responsibility for training others. The training process for the guides would still draw on the principles of reproduction and translation, but the process of learning can be monitored more closely and consistently by the experienced training guides, who accompany new guides on tours, offering advice and critical feedback. Sufficient flexibility can be retained within this process to allow for individual guides to experiment with the details of their tour, while continuing learning through the feedback from tourists. The introduction of such training opportunities represents a formal intervention into the experiential learning cycle, affording the managers some degree of control over the guides' development and service delivery, while also providing opportunities for the cross-fertilisation of ideas. The introduction of such measures could enhance the experiential learning process by providing feedback and resources upon

which guides draw on when reflecting on their experience, developing new ideas and experimenting with them.

However, this is a rather formalised hierarchical approach, which stops well short of the development of a community of practice. The challenge is to establish a participative learning culture so the process of guide training is perceived as occurring within a supporting culture instead of through management control and indirect surveillance. The difficulty in developing such a culture lies in the individualistic nature of guiding and the existence of a person culture, which may undermine a sense of collective interest among the guides. Nevertheless, the interventions identified in this paper can help develop a learning culture through increased feedback, collaborative learning and resource provision. Through this engagement, relationships can be developed between individual guides, and between guides and the management, where colleagues share reflections on their experiences and emerging ideas. This represents an overt attempt to build long-term collaborative relationships and to establish a community of practice through which social learning can occur.

Wenger *et al.* (2002) suggest that communities of practice are dependent upon a sense of shared identity as well as shared interest, which require ongoing interaction as well as a collegiate atmosphere. One of the key steps necessary to help facilitate and develop this collegiate atmosphere among the guides is a space where they can meet in a relaxed and informal manner (Wenger *et al.*, 2002; Long and Ehrmann, 2005). Such learning spaces provide opportunities for the guides to exchange advice on best-practice and share up-to-date information as well as narratives. The challenge for the case study company was the absence of a formal office building where guides could interact. The internet cafés provide physical places in which to organise regular formal meetings as well as encouraging informal interaction. However, the notion of a learning space is not only a reference to the use of physical buildings; a forum of exchange can also utilise electronic or paper media that helps to maintain ongoing communication.

The establishment and perpetuation of learning spaces may become the responsibility of training guides, but the challenge is to encourage the guides to engage in ongoing development. If guiding is low paid and perceived to be transitory work, especially among younger guides, there is little incentive to invest in developing their skills. Therefore, it is necessary to establish fair and constructive forms of performance appraisal, which may come from mystery shoppers, but should ideally utilise experienced colleagues. Finally, it is clear that such organisational learning must be underpinned by appropriate forms of rewards (financial, social and esteem based), which, in Wenger *et al.*'s (2002) terms, reinforce the value of collaborative learning and thus encourage staff to invest in their individual and collective development.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that previous research on tour guiding has paid insufficient attention to the influence of organisational culture on learning or the contextual factors

that shape the training of guides. The current study has contributed to existing knowledge by examining the organisational cultural forces that shape guide development. The paper highlighted how the loosely organised culture of an entrepreneurial company may affect guide interaction, as well as pointing to the role of organisational space (or lack thereof) in shaping interaction between guides. It discussed the ways in which an individualistic person culture (Handy, 1993) and experiential learning influences the guides' development. It also considered the influence of social learning on guide training and socialisation. Moreover, the paper distinguished between the types of narratives employed on the tours, and it argued that the learning of different narratives may require alternative learning processes. Easily accessible facts and figures in the form of public narratives may be gleaned through formal education or commonly circulated sources of information. However, specialist information or obscure narratives, and personal narratives, which often stem from the personal histories of guides and their own experiences, may not be accessible through such sources. This type of knowledge is often learned through ongoing interaction with other guides.

Focusing on the individual and collective learning processes, the tour narratives and the organisational cultural factors highlighted a number of issues that may hinder or help the development of the guides. A number of interventions that can be made to the process of experiential learning, colleague-led development and organisational socialisation have been identified. This paper has argued that providing spaces for guides to meet and discuss experiences opens up a new range of learning opportunities whereby individuals can learn through ongoing relationships and interactions. It has been argued here that the provision of learning spaces and learning opportunities, either through physical or virtual means, is central to the creation of a learning culture. Furthermore, the introduction of more formalised guidance and monitoring by the more experienced guides can help ensure that best practice is shared. It may also temper the centrifugal forces of the person culture and thus afford the owner-managers with greater influence over the largely autonomous guides.

The findings and recommendations presented here are likely to be applicable and transferable to other small, entrepreneurial firms specialising in guided tours. The study demonstrates that while applied learning is likely to develop through the experiential approach in such organisations, opportunities to engage employees in social learning practices may be beneficial. Understanding the organisational cultural dimensions of individual and social learning thus enables managers to cultivate management strategies that enhance the process of guide development.

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