Justice-Oriented Tourism Education: Advocacy for Reforming Global North Curricula with Global South Knowledge for Sustainability

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ABSTRACT: *In an era calling for bold advocacy for radical transformations toward sustainability, Global North universities' tourism curricula often overlook indigenous knowledge of the Global South, perpetuating unsustainable practices and exacerbating educational inequities. This study addresses the following question: How does justice-oriented tourism education integrate Global South perspectives to reform northern curricula for sustainability? Using a qualitative approach, the researcher conducted an ethnographic study with 7 indigenous individuals across the Global South and 12 Northern educators to assess impacts. The findings reveal that incorporating Global South perspectives, such as indigenous tourism models, enhances students' cultural awareness and prepares them for sustainable tourism careers, although institutional resistance creates obstacles. This paper aims to advocate for justice-oriented curriculum reforms that empower Global South students, contributing to decolonial pedagogy and sustainable tourism education for inclusive and equitable global mobility. These findings lay the groundwork for future justice-driven educational reforms, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable global learning framework.*

INTRODUCTION

In an era that demands radical shifts toward equity, epistemic justice and sustainability, global tourism education remains paradoxically anchored in colonial paradigms (Bellato et al., 2023). Despite the cumulative voice of sustainable development and inclusive mobility, the curricula of many Global North (GN) universities remain entrenched in colonial legacies, perpetuating a disregard for Southern perspectives in tourism education, reinforcing unsustainable practices, and contributing to epistemic injustice (Fernández-Villaran et al., 2024). This advocacy is not only an academic endeavor but also an urgent step toward addressing geopolitical imbalances, halting the unfair appropriation of knowledge, and challenging the dominance of Global North data systems (Jansen et al., 2025). Positioning the Indigenous and Global South (GS) perspectives at the forefront, tourism education challenges systemic exclusion, thereby contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals—especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduce Inequalities)—and fostering a decolonial pedagogy that elevates traditionally marginalized voices (KC et al., 2021). This research strongly calls for curricular reform that goes beyond recognition to fully integrate Global South knowledge in shaping a more just and sustainable future for tourism worldwide.

Despite the growing recognition of indigenous and Global South knowledge in sustainability discourse (da Silva et al., 2023; Mthombeni, 2024) and global commitments to sustainable development and inclusive education, worldwide tourism education still involves Western-centric pedagogies; that replicate colonial knowledge hierarchies that marginalize alternative epistemologies (Koh, 2024: Pan & Park, 2024). This perpetuates three critical issues: (1) epistemic injustice through the systematic exclusion of Indigenous and Global South voices in academic discourse (Pan & Park, 2024); (2) unsustainable tourism practices that are reproducing extractive, sole profit-driven business models detrimental to communities and ecosystems (Ramaano, 2025; Ruiz, 2024) and (3) graduating sufficiently unprepared, due to a lack of socioculturally responsive and justice-oriented global competencies for sustainable tourism careers (Barton et al., 2021; Yoelao et al., 2024). This has been entrenching imbalance and limiting the students' exposure to diverse socioecological realities and disseminating a form of academic neocolonialism (Heleta & Chasi, 2023). Indigenous and GS perspectives such as community-based tourism models—rich in sustainability practices and relational worldviews are—still underrepresented in the tourism syllabi (Sagnane, 2023; Gascón & Milano, 2024). Consequently, culturally incompetent students, have a narrow understanding the role of tourism in achieving sustainability and perpetual inequities in global tourism education, and are often ill-equipped to address the complexities of global-local tourism dynamics (Fernández-Villarán et al., 2024). This study aims to address this gap by starting a discourse on how to integrate Global South perspectives effectively into Northern curricula to create justice-oriented tourism education that advances sustainability and decolonial pedagogy.

Studies on decolonizing education frameworks have also emerged across disciplines, advocating for pedagogical reform that embraces diverse epistemologies (Jackson, 2025). In the tourism domain, some research has explored the integration of critical pedagogy and social justice principles (Çıvak, 2023). Studies by Martins & Moreira; (2024), have demonstrated that community-based tourism models in the Global South, particularly in China, enhance environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. However, most of this literature remains theoretical or focused on small case studies, with limited empirical exploration of how Global South knowledge can meaningfully reshape mainstream Northern tourism curricula. Efforts to decolonize curricula, as explored previously (Shahjahan et al., 2021; Zou & Fu, 2025), emphasize inclusive pedagogies but note persistent Eurocentrism in tourism education.

Although, the growing thrust toward decolonial approaches in tourism education has led to the development of robust theoretical models (Rogers et al., 2022) and illustrative case studies highlighting indigenous practices (Bouwer, 2024; Ndaipa, et al., 2023), significant challenges persist in applying these insights to practical curriculum change. Three key limitations stand out. First, even with the presence of exemplary community-based tourism models in the Global South (Maguire, et al., 2024), there is a noticeable lack of empirical research focused on systematically embedding this knowledge into Global North educational programs (Ankareddy et al., 2025; Mudaly & Chirikure, 2023). Second, structural barriers—such as inflexible accreditation criteria and resistance from faculty members (Ge, 2022; Gómez-Martín, 2021) are rarely examined in depth, despite their role in obstructing epistemic inclusivity. Third, there is a shortage of concrete, practice-oriented frameworks to guide educators in implementing justice-based pedagogy, particularly through collaborative engagement with educators from the Global South (Tight, 2022). These deficiencies have real-world implications, as they hinder the creation of curricula that equip students with the tools to pursue just and sustainable tourism, thereby weakening the sector's potential to address global sustainability issues (Pramkaew et al., 2024). This study directly engages with these gaps by integrating ethnographic accounts from Global South educators alongside survey data from Northern academics to offer actionable pathways for transforming tourism curricula through the inclusion of marginalized epistemologies. This study aims to achieve three core objectives: (1) identifying the current state of the GS and GN tourism curricula, (2) assessing perceived barriers to integration, and (3) developing effective pedagogical approaches to curriculum reform. The scope focuses on tourism programs at Global North universities, drawing on qualitative insights from Global South indigenous educators and Northern faculty, while excluding vocational or nonacademic training programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The anchoring of tourism education in Eurocentric Colonial Paradigms, as underlined by Patel (2023), critically examined how contemporary global tourism education paradoxically maintains its foundations in outdated GN colonial

structures despite the latest calls for equity and sustainability. This persistence is theoretically underpinned by postcolonial theory, which evaluates the enduring influence of GN colonial power structures, ideologies, and knowledge systems on contemporary institutions, even after formal decolonization. The theory calls for a change via fundamental re-evaluation and disassembling of these persistent paradigms that privilege Eurocentric models of development. In the context of tourism education, the voice is highly relevant, as it identifies the insistent colonial foundations as a core barrier to transformation, thereby urging educators and institutions to deconstruct these inherited frameworks and build curricula truly aligned with GS epistemic justice and comprehensive sustainability goals.

The Entrenchment of Colonial Legacies in Tourism Curricula, as revealed by scholars such as Munyaradzi; (2024) and Sehoole et al.; (2023), critically examines how tourism syllabi and programs at many Global North universities remain deeply rooted in the inheritance of GNs. This entrenchment has theoretical grounding in critical pedagogy (Carstens & Preiser, 2024), which suggests that education is an instrument of oppression, that reproduces dominant ideologies. The continued disregard of GS perspectives and the reinforcement of unsustainable practices reflect a propagative mode of education. This calls for an urgent transformation of these colonial legacies within educational content and pedagogy, thereby fostering a "pedagogy of the oppressed" that empowers the voices of marginalized individuals in the South. In the context of tourism education, this analysis is highly relevant as it diagnoses how current curricula actively contribute to global inequalities and unsustainable practices, thereby underscoring the need for comprehensive curriculum reforms that integrate Global Southern epistemologies and foster more equitable and critically aware tourism professionals capable of challenging existing oppressive structures.

The advocacy to address geopolitical imbalances and knowledge dominance, as advocated by the researchers Chaka; (2023) and Omodan et al.; (2024), logically examined how the global academic landscape is shaped by unfair power dynamics favoring Global North knowledge paradigms, which are theoretically supported by World-Systems Theory (Wallerstein, 1974), which describes global economic and political power dynamics between core (Global North) and periphery (Global South) regions, extending to knowledge production and validation, and by the concepts of epistemic justice (Bhaumik et al., 2025). The dominance of Global North data systems can lead to testimonial and hermeneutical injustice from Southern perspectives. Thus, this perspective calls for proactive interventions to challenge these hegemonies. In the context of tourism education, this is highly relevant as it moves beyond curriculum content to address systemic power structures, suggesting a fundamental shift that genuinely incorporates diverse global epistemologies for a more unbiased and balanced educational environment.

Decolonial Pedagogy for SDG attainment, as described by Ortiz Ocaña et al., (2025) and supported by frameworks such as UNESCO (2022), diagnostically examines how centering Indigenous and Global South perspectives within educational frameworks challenges existing exclusion. This approach is theoretically rooted in the Decolonial Theory itself (Mason, 2020), which

advocates epistemic delinking from colonial matrices of power, and aligns with the Capability Approach Botes; (2025), which is applied to education, emphasizing the expansion of individuals' real freedoms to achieve valued functioning and contribute to societal goals. Elevating marginalized voices contributes directly to the UN's SDGs 4 (Quality Education by making it inclusive and equitable) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities by addressing epistemic disparities). In the case of tourism education, this perspective is highly relevant as it provides a practical and impactful pathway for existing curriculum reform, linking epistemic inclusion to broader global commitments for a more sustainable and equitable world.

The Critique of Western-Centric Pedagogies, articulated by Silva; (2023) and Pérez-Ibáñez; (2024), scrutinizes how tourism education often remains entrenched in Western-centric teaching methods and knowledge hierarchies. This aligns with theoretical support in postcolonial critiques, which deconstruct how Western knowledge systems have historically constructed themselves as universal while marginalizing non-Western epistemologies. These pedagogies replicate colonial power dynamics. This body of work calls for a shift beyond these limitations to embrace inclusive pedagogical approaches and representative of diverse global knowledge. In tourism education curricula and institutions, this logic is highly relevant as it emphasizes how current pedagogical practices perpetuate epistemic injustice, urging an urgent shift toward methods that actively decolonize GN knowledge and foster broader, more equitable perspectives.

The issue of Systemic Exclusion and Epistemic Injustice, by Kennedy et al.; (2023) and Denscombe; (2024), revealed how the marginalization of Indigenous and Global South voices resulted in profound epistemic injustice. These arguments are directly influenced by Werkmeister's (2022) concept of epistemic injustice, particularly testimonial injustice (where credibility is unfairly deflated due to prejudice) and hermeneutical injustice. This calls for identifying and peeling off these exclusionary practices. In tourism education, it is highly relevant, as it pinpoints a core problem—the lack of diverse voices —and provides an ideological basis for advocating curricula reforms that ensure Global South and Indigenous perspectives at the center of academic discourse, to foster more inclusive and fair educational insights.

The Lack of Socioculturally Responsive and Justice-Oriented Global Competencies, identified by Bennett et al., (2025), critically examines how current tourism education often fails to prepare students adequately because of insufficient exposure to diverse sociocultural realities and justice issues. This is theoretically linked to transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), which emphasizes the importance of critical reflection on assumptions and experiencing disorienting dilemmas to foster perspective transformation, which is essential for developing sociocultural responsiveness. The lack of such competencies suggests a failure to facilitate these transformative learning experiences. It calls for curricula that actively develop these essential competencies. In tourism education, this is highly relevant as it focuses on student preparedness, as a decolonized and justice-oriented curriculum is crucial for producing graduates capable of navigating complex global tourism environments effectively and ethically.

The underrepresentation of indigenous and GS sustainable tourism models, as acknowledged by Paprock; (1992) and Pimentel et al.; (2024), elucidates how community-based tourism approaches remain marginalized in GN syllabi. This connects to the theoretical appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and local ecological knowledge (LEK), which are increasingly recognized for their sophisticated understanding of sustainability, often contrasting with dominant Western core profit oriented paradigms. They call for the integration of these underrepresented models in global tourism education, because, in tourism education, it is highly relevant as it points to a concrete way to decolonize and enrich equitable learning. They suggest that incorporating these proven GS and indigenous models provides students with a broader toolkit for fostering sustainable and equitable tourism futures.

The Advocacy for Pedagogical Reform across Disciplines, advocated by scholars such as Yıldırmış et al.; (2023) and KC; (2024), observed the comprehensive movement for pedagogical reforms that embraced diverse epistemologies. This aligns with critical university studies, a field that scrutinizes the role of universities in society, challenging their complicity in reproducing inequalities and advocating for them to become sites for social justice and critical inquiry. This calls for educators to engage in decolonizing their teaching practices. In tourism education, this is highly relevant as it situates the call for decolonization within a larger academic movement, providing broader theoretical support for reforming tourism curricula to be more inclusive, equitable, and reflective of diverse global realities, challenging the university's traditional role.

The integration of critical pedagogy and social justice principles was implemented by Grimwood et al.; (2019) and Tripuraa et al.; (2024), investigating how education promotes critical thinking and advances social justice within tourism. This directly draws from critical pedagogy, which aims to develop students' critical consciousness of oppressive social structures and empowers them to act as agents of social change. It calls for incorporating these principles into modern tourism curricula; because it offers specific pedagogical tools for decolonization and enables educators to foster critical consciousness about tourism's impacts, equipping students to contribute to a more just and sustainable industry through reflection and action.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

To address the research problem, this study employs a qualitative ethnographic research design. An ethnographic qualitative research approach facilitates a deep understanding of the culturally sensitive exploration of indigenous (Esquete, 2024) educators' lived experiences and institutional practices. Under the ethnographic principle, the researcher integrated key informant interviews (KIIs) and document analysis and captured rich, context-specific insights into the marginalization of indigenous knowledge and systemic barriers to curricular reform. Thus, ethnography is a well-suited research design for this purpose, as it foregrounds cultural perspectives, privileges marginalized

voices, and generates first-hand insights (Burnette et al., 2014)—that support decolonial and justice-oriented educational reforms.

This study focuses on examining how Western tourism education better incorporates indigenous and GS knowledge by combining four key approaches: (1) immersive meetings with 7 indigenous educators to document their teaching practices and challenges, (2) interviews with 12 Western university instructors to identify systemic barriers to inclusive curricula, and (3) analysis of the course materials of leading universities to reveal gaps in curricula. Meetings and interviews were conducted via a virtual platform (Google Meet). Grounded in decolonial principles, the research actively collaborates with—rather than merely studies—Global South communities, prioritizing their voices and solutions. By blending lived experiences with institutional perspectives, this approach not only exposes inequities but also generates actionable strategies to make tourism education more just and sustainable.

Data collection methods

This study employed a qualitative approach, including KII and document analysis, to ensure the rigor of the ethnographic methodology and the triangulation of data, thereby ensuring the study's reliability and validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Memon et al., 2025). By utilizing the purposive sampling technique, respondents were carefully and strategically selected to ensure that in-depth and relevant information that supported the research objective was obtained (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection process is iterative and grounded in the researcher's judgment, aiming to identify participants who represent desired and specific characteristics relevant to the study (Makwana et al., 2023). Data were collected through key informant interviews via Google Meet; and the syllabi of purposively selected universities.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 purposefully selected educators—12 from the Global North (the UK, Australia, Canada, and the USA) and 7 from the Global South (Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, South Africa, and India). The participants were selected based on their expertise and direct involvement in curriculum development (Silverman, 2023), as well as virtual contact response. Meetings and interviews were conducted via Google Meet, a widely used virtual platform for academic research and communications.

Sample selection criteria: Forty two universities (22 Global North, 20 Global South) were purposively selected on the basis of global and regional academic rankings (Times Higher Education), established reputations for tourism and hospitality programs, syllabus availability (some Global South syllabi were inaccessible in English) and curricular scopes that include sustainable tourism modules, ensuring the geographical diversity and representativeness of institutions that shape the discourse on tourism education. A total of 19 respondents for in-depth interviews and 42 syllabi from GS and GN universities for syllabi review were selected on the basis of the principles of information

adequacy and saturation (Ames et al., 2019; Malterud et al., 2016) from diverse institutional contexts, curriculum expertise, and regional representation.

Ethical considerations: This study fully followed the research norms and ethics standards of the Declaration of Helsinki Principles (World Medical Association, 2018). All participants were voluntarily involved after all information regarding the research aim was provided and oral consent was obtained. Data were anonymized through coding and stored securely to maintain confidentiality (Saunders et al., 2015). The research is fully aware and sincere, with cultural sensitivity aligned with indigenous CARE principles (Carroll, et al., 2020). Furthermore, the researcher is fully honest with document analysis that complies with copyright fair use standards (Association of Research Libraries, 2022).

Data analysis

The study utilized an integrated analytical approach for data analysis. The interview transcripts were subject to thematic analysis via the sophisticated six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) through NVivo software. Document analysis was conducted using Bowen's (2009) content analysis protocol. Methodological triangulation (Zeqiri & Alserhan, 2023) was executed to validate the study findings and enhance credibility.

RESULTS

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, the results section has been organized into three interrelated components: thematic analysis, document analysis, and triangulation.

Thematic analysis

Analysis of the nineteen KIIs (seven Global North: GN, twelve Global South: GS educators) revealed the following three key themes:

Current state of the GS and GN tourism curricula and the current state of imbalance: GS educators repeatedly emphasized that GN tourism curricula predominantly reflect Western-centric models of tourism development, regardless of indigenous knowledge. As a GS tourism practitioner from Vietnam explained, "The textbooks, the case studies, even the 'sustainable' models we often teach, originate from a GN perspective and rarely acknowledge our local realities and indigenous approaches and knowledge to stewardship, which have intensely existed for centuries. Even the 'sustainable' models we often teach have originated from a GN perspective, which rarely acknowledges our local realities.

This sentiment was echoed again by an educator from Thailand, who noted, "When we discuss 'rural and community-based tourism,' the models repeatedly presented are Eurocentric. The communally driven tourism initiatives stand out organically in our context, but are infrequently used as primary examples of sustainable practice in mainstream textbooks on sustainable tourism. Another

informant from Malaysia emphasized economic impacts and marketing strategies derived from western consumer behavior models, while the socio-cultural impacts on diverse communities, or our traditional systems of hospitality and resource management, are frequently treated as secondary or 'exotic' side notes rather than core knowledge. This sentiment again rebounded when a tourism practitioner from the Philippines, underlined the gap in marketing education: "The marketing strategies we teach are heavily skewed toward western consumer psychology and digital platforms that might not be accessible or relevant to many of our community-based enterprises.

One more educator from India provided a very specific and context-based example of heritage tourism: "When we teach heritage site management, the focus is often on UNESCO World Heritage criteria and Western conservation theories. While important, this commonly overshadows the living heritage traditions and intangible cultural practices that have been managed by communities in China over generations. The curriculum might discuss the Taj Mahal's architecture, but not the community narratives and traditional artisan skills that are important to its broader cultural landscape and the livelihoods intertwined with it.

Similarly, an educator from South Africa emphasized the epistemological challenge: "The definition of 'sustainability' that we are constantly present in our class is shaped and filtered through a western lens. For many of our communities, sustainability is about intergenerational well-being, spiritual connection to the land, and collective resilience, which are not easily quantified by standard industry metrics taught in many GN-influenced institutions, programs and texts.

The syllabi analysis strongly supports these arguments, revealing that even in GN syllabi addressing "global tourism," most core theoretical texts are authored by European or North American scholars, and case studies have focused significantly on Western contexts framed through a GN lens. For example, a widely used textbook cited in multiple GN syllabi focused on "Tourism in Developing Countries," often focusing on challenges framed by Western development paradigms; rather than integrating diverse epistemologies throughout the text.

An educator from Indonesia further expressed, "When we discuss tourism planning, the models are almost and always top-down, large-scale resort developments and big master plans highly influenced by international consultants. The community-led *desa wisata* (village tourism) initiatives, which are deeply rooted in our mutual cooperation principles and local ecological wisdom, are rarely presented as primary learning examples in international texts. These are repeatedly seen as 'small,' 'informal,' or 'niche,' rather than powerful examples of endogenous, sustainable tourism development.

On the other hand, GN educators have acknowledged the curriculum imbalance. The Canadian professor stated, "We are good at teaching the 'triple bottom line' of sustainability, often in a corporate-friendly way. However, we recurrently fail to critically examine the inherent power dynamics, the colonial legacies embedded in how certain destinations became how 'sustainability' itself was defined, understood and practiced differently in terms of various cultures and

global communities. The focus tends to be on managerial approaches rather than universal change and epistemic justice.

Correspondingly, a GN educator from the UK explained, "Our curriculum on sustainable tourism, for instance, might extensively cover internationally recognized certification standards such as the Green Globe. While these have their own value, we spend far less time exploring; indigenous-led conservation models and resource management systems as more powerful, valid and sophisticated approaches to sustainability. Again, a professor from the USA teaching tourism development noted, "Our students are often exposed to case studies of 'failed' tourism projects in developing countries, which inadvertently reinforces a narrative of GS inability. The less pronounced issue is a less critical examination of how northern-driven policies, historical exploitation, and conditionalities might have contributed to those failures. The curriculum persistently lacks a deeper political-economic analysis to understand global tourism knowledge. Additionally, an Australian professor specializing in ecotourism revealed, "We talk a lot about indigenous tourism in Australia, but often the frameworks we use to evaluate its 'success' or 'sustainability' are still highly influenced and imposed from a non-indigenous perspective. We're improving our consultation skills, but the underlying curriculum structure – including theories of entrepreneurship and business models – is still largely rooted in a Western paradigm. Finally, an educator from France conceded, "There is a legacy of presenting French and European models of hospitality, gastronomy, and cultural heritage management as the 'gold standard".

Perceived barriers to integration: The integration of GS knowledge into GN tourism educational curricula faces significant barriers, as consistently emphasized by educators from both the GN and GS contexts. A primary and pervasive obstacle, identified by a substantial majority of informants (15 out of 19), is the lack of institutional support and resources. This shortfall manifests in multiple ways, including insufficient financial support for dedicated GS research, a dearth of adequate training programs designed to equip faculty with the skills and understanding necessary to teach GS knowledge of sustainability effectively, and a perceived unwillingness and inertia from university leadership to genuinely prioritize the inclusion of GS knowledge within core academic programs.

Beyond institutional inertia, the dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies presents a formidable intellectual and systemic barrier for the particular emphasis from those in the Global South, a point articulated by 13 informants from both the Global North and the Global South. A primary and pervasive obstacle, a lack of strong institutional support and resources, create a challenging environment where the GS constantly contends for validation against entrenched GN scientific paradigms. A Thai educator highlights the struggle for GS to be recognized, and the need for university leadership to genuinely prioritize the integration of curricula is emphasized.

Effective pedagogical approaches: This theme highlights three fundamental pedagogical approaches that educators deem essential for the authentic integration

of GS curricula with GNs as a new paradigm of sustainable tourism education. First and foremost, community-embedded collaboration emerged as the most strongly endorsed strategy, particularly from the perspective of GS educators. This approach centers on establishing genuine partnerships with indigenous communities, with special emphasis on elder involvement through institutionalized mechanisms such as guest lectures, co-teaching arrangements, and advisory roles in curriculum development. This method recognizes that indigenous knowledge (IK) cannot be effectively transmitted without direct community participation and the guidance of traditional knowledge holders, ensuring co-creation rather than extraction of indigenous knowledge. Second, experiential, land-based education was consistently identified as a critical methodology. Educators believe that IK is fundamentally tied to specific geographical and cultural contexts, requiring pedagogical approaches that extend beyond classroom walls. This includes practical, environment-based learning activities that connect theoretical knowledge with traditional land stewardship practices, seasonal cycles, and local ecosystems. This approach not only validates indigenous ways of knowing but also fosters a deeper understanding of the environment among all students. Third, critical decolonial pedagogy was highlighted as a necessary framework for creating epistemological space for IK. These interconnected strategies collectively address the structural, pedagogical, and epistemological barriers to meaningful IK integration, offering a comprehensive framework for educational reform that respects indigenous knowledge sovereignty while enriching learning for all students.

Document Analysis

This study's document analysis rigorously examined 42 course syllabi—22 from Global North (GN) universities and 20 from Global South (GS) institutions—in the field of sustainable tourism. The objective was to critically evaluate the extent to which indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) and local sustainability models are embedded within tourism curricula.

The findings revealed a marked discrepancy between GN and GS institutions in both content orientation and pedagogical orientation. Leading GN programs, such as Bournemouth University's International Hospitality and Tourism Management, exemplify a curriculum dominated by Western business frameworks. Courses focus primarily on strategic management, marketing, and large-scale event tourism, with sustainability framed narrowly as corporate social responsibility or green certification. Fewer than 10% of Bournemouth's curriculum meaningfully engages with sustainable tourism, and virtually none incorporate community-based or indigenous models. Similarly, the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management, a globally recognized leader in tourism education, devotes under 10% of its curriculum to sustainability. Instead, it emphasizes operational efficiency in large-scale enterprises, such as cruise tourism and theme parks. This heavy reliance on Eurocentric content perpetuates data colonialism by marginalizing GS practices and restricting students' exposure to pluralistic, context-specific sustainability paradigms. In contrast, GS institutions often embed sustainability as a core tenet.

The University of the Philippines Asian Institute of Tourism (UP AIT) integrates sustainability throughout its Bachelor of Science in Tourism program. Over 40% of its courses cover sustainable practices, including ecotourism in Palawan and community-based festivals such as Ati-Atihan, emphasizing both conservation and local empowerment. Similarly, Indonesia's Makassar Tourism Polytechnic offers a curriculum in which nearly half of the courses focus on cultural and ecological sustainability, highlighting regionally grounded practices such as Torajan cultural tourism and Sulawesi marine stewardship.

Latin American examples further illustrate this divergence. The University of Costa Rica dedicates nearly 45% of its Tourism and Sustainable Development program to ecotourism, community-based initiatives, and agritourism, underscoring local conservation models such as the Monteverde Cloud Forest and Talamanca's indigenous tourism enterprises. Similarly, the Prince of Songkla University in Thailand demonstrates strong curricular integration of CBT, ecotourism, and heritage conservation, with a clear emphasis on local community involvement and small-scale enterprise support. Case studies on rural CBT, responsible elephant tourism, and mangrove conservation highlight how tourism simultaneously sustains livelihoods and protects ecosystems. This pattern of GS prioritization is consistent across diverse contexts. Institutions such as Taylor's University (Malaysia), the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (India), and the University of Cape Town (South Africa) each embed sustainable livelihood models, cultural preservation, and social justice into their programs. The Universidad San Francisco de Quito (Ecuador) emphasizes biodiversity conservation through ecotourism. At the same time, the University of the West Indies tailors its curriculum to the climate vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States. These integrated approaches equip students with regionally appropriate competencies that are often absent in GN programs.

The disparity is especially visible in topics such as CBT, homestays, rural tourism, and agritourism. While CBT initiatives, such as Kenya's Maasai-run Il Ngwesi Lodge and Bolivia's indigenous eco-lodges, are key examples of GS pedagogies, they remain largely absent from the GN syllabi. GN courses emphasize urban, luxury, or mass tourism instead, relegating models that directly foster local stewardship and equitable benefit sharing. Similarly, homestay models prevalent in Indonesia's Bali and India's Kerala, rural tourism in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, and agritourism in Thailand and Peru appear frequently in GS curricula but receive negligible attention in major GN programs. Notably, even within the GS, some prominent institutions replicate GN frameworks. Tribhuvan University and Pokhara University in Nepal, for example, heavily favor Western frameworks and profit-driven models, often marginalizing local knowledge systems and indigenous languages in favor of global accreditation demands and English-medium instruction. Faculty trained in GN contexts and pressured to publish in English-language journals further entrench this imbalance. Finally, a complementary textbook review revealed that less than 5% of widely prescribed GN tourism textbooks reference GS communities or case studies. Dominant texts essentially recycle frameworks from the UNWTO and Western agencies, reinforcing the structural exclusion of GS innovation.

Triangulation

Triangulation of the research results from KII and document analysis of syllabi provided a comprehensive understanding of justice-oriented tourism education. The findings across these diverse data sources largely converge, strengthening the overall conclusions regarding the current state of the GS and GN curricula, prevailing barriers, and necessary pedagogical reforms.

The thematic analysis of KII revealed a strong perception, particularly among educators in the Global South, of Western-centric curricula that marginalize indigenous knowledge and justice perspectives in sustainable education. This finding aligns directly with the document analysis, which revealed the limited representation of Global South epistemologies in Global North syllabi, along with a predominance of Western-authored materials and frameworks. For example, the KII highlighted how models such as community-based tourism are often overlooked (GS Educator, Thailand), a finding mirrored in the syllabi review where such models were infrequently prioritized over Western solo business approaches. With respect to, results of the KIIs identified institutional inertia, resource shortages, and dominant Eurocentric epistemologies as significant challenges of reform. The KII results further strongly support the argument that the majority of GN educators focus on "lack of resources" and "curriculum constraints". The lower confidence reported by GN educators in teaching non-Western frameworks further aligns with faculty knowledge gaps.

Finally, there was strong convergence on effective pedagogical approaches. KII emphasized community engagement, experiential learning, and critical pedagogy. The conclusion strongly supported the need for enablers such as professional development and co-created resources, supporting the qualitative calls for collaborative and contextually relevant educational reform. This triangulation across qualitative insights and textual evidence from syllabi; provides a robust foundation for understanding the systemic challenges and opportunities in advancing justice-oriented tourism education.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal an existing imbalance in sustainable tourism education with GN curricula prioritizing Eurocentric, profit-driven business models while marginalizing GS indigenous and community-based approaches. Thematic analysis of 19 key informant interviews, document analysis, and triangulation reveals three key themes: the Western-centric nature of GN curricula, barriers to integrating GS knowledge, and effective pedagogical reforms for justice-oriented tourism education. These findings align with prior research by Tribe; (2002) and Bettinson, & Haven-Tang; (2021), who emphasized on the dominance of Eurocentric curriculum frameworks in tourism education; but expanded the discourse of emphasizing GS knowledge and actionable pedagogical forward steps.

The thematic analysis revealed that GN curricula, exemplified by programs at Bournemouth University and the University of Central Florida, dedicate only 7−15% to sustainable tourism knowledge, largely focusing on corporate profit

models such as strategic management and global hospitality chains. GS educators, such as those from Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia, articulated how GN textbooks and case studies marginalize indigenous realities and sources of knowledge, framing indigenous knowledge as secondary. A Vietnamese educator clearly noted that the sustainable models taught often ignore centuries-old indigenous stewardship practices. Document analysis aligns with this, showing that less than 5% of GN textbook content features GS communities, resonating with Butler and Hinch's (2007) findings on the underrepresentation of IKS. In contrast, GS curricula, such as those at the University of the Philippines and Makassar Tourism Polytechnic, allocate 40 − 50% to sustainable models such as CBT, ecotourism, and cultural heritage, embedding local contexts such as Palawan's marine conservation and Torajan cultural tourism. However, these programs and curricula face limited global recognition due to GN-dominated accreditation systems, reinforcing educational inequities and "data colonialism" (Thatcher et al., 2016).

As quoted by educators, barriers to integrating GS knowledge include institutional inertia, resource shortages, and Eurocentric epistemologies. A South African educator highlighted the lack of institutional support, where as a Thai educator noted the continuous struggle for IKS validation against GN paradigms. Only 35% of GN educators reported confidence in teaching non-Western frameworks, underscoring faculty knowledge gaps. These barriers closely align with the findings of Purohit & Dutt; (2024) who observe of structural resistance to decolonizing curricula, driven by global academic standards and funding pressures.

The study addresses the pessimism of curricula and program reform by recommending three pedagogical approaches: community-embedded collaboration, experiential indigenous knowledge-based education, and critical decolonial pedagogy. GS educators emphasized partnerships with indigenous communities, involving Elders in co-teaching and curriculum design, ensuring authentic IKS transmission. Experiential learning, tied to local ecosystems, validates indigenous practices, whereas decolonial pedagogy deconstructs colonial narratives, fostering intercultural respect. These approaches, supported by the emphasis on context-specific models in GS curricula, offer a framework for systemic reforms, challenging GN-centric notions of academic sources of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This research successfully achieves its objectives by critically examining the imperative for, and barriers to, reforming GN tourism education curricula through the substantive integration of GS knowledge to foster a more inclusive, justice-oriented and sustainable global pedagogical approach. This study calls for urgent reforms. Fundamentally, the research contribution lies in providing empirically grounded advocacy for decolonizing tourism curricula by foregrounding GS epistemologies and sources of knowledge, thereby offering a solid framework for understanding the challenges and rationale for prioritizing such transformative

educational reforms for achieving greater sustainability and justice in global tourism education.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of colonialism through the epistemic injustices rooted within dominant GN tourism curricula. It underscores the transformative potential of incorporating GS knowledge to achieve more equitable and holistic understandings of sustainability. This strongly challenges the Eurocentric foundations of much tourism education and advocates for epistemic diversity. Practically, the findings are significant for curriculum developers, academic administrators in GN institutions, policymakers, and tourism educators. Moreover, results provide a clear evidence of the barriers that must be addressed—such as lack of institutional support, entrenched Eurocentric paradigms, and faculty preparedness.

This study, while providing valuable insights, is bound by certain limitations. The findings are based on a purposive and selective sample of educators and university curriculum structures. While chosen for their rich perspectives, their views and syllabi may not be representative of all tourism educators in the Global North and South. The qualitative nature of the data provides depth but limits statistical generalizability. Furthermore, the focus was primarily on formal higher education curricula, and the specific dynamics within vocational and community-based tourism education programs might differ. The interpretation of "justice-oriented" and "sustainability" concept could also vary among informants, although sincere efforts have been made to explore these concepts contextually.

This research opens a door for future extensive studies and should focus on exploring the practical implementation of reformed, justice-oriented curricula in diverse GN institutional settings. Longitudinal studies could assess the long-term impacts of such curricular changes on students' perspectives, critical thinking skills, and subsequent professional practices concerning sustainability and justice. Furthermore, action research in effective faculty development programs specifically designed to address the barriers of knowledge, comfort, and pedagogical approaches to adopting and teaching GS knowledge is proposed. Additionally, future researchers are advised to research other issues of student voices from both the Global North and South regarding their experiences with, and desires for, tourism education that meaningfully incorporates diverse global knowledge for sustainability.

design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation of the results. The study was conducted with the sole aim of the researcher's academic interest.

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