Human resources issues in the tourism of extreme island destinations

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In an era of increasing emphasis on quality in the delivery of tourism services, service quality and the human support such service demands can be looked upon as a competitive opportunities as well as strategic issue. Consideration of the role of human resources in creating quality and its efficient management has widely been recognised as one of the most important methods to improve quality and competitiveness. At the same time, the tourism industry, worldwide, is characterised by ambiguous attitudes to investment in human capital, inflexible employment practices and an unsustainable approach to its development (Jithendran & Baum, 2000). Often perceived purely in operational terms (Baum, 1993), the management and development of human resources in tourism is readily described as an example of *adhocism* in that formal planning of a long-term and strategic nature rarely takes place within the sector. It is also an area of activity that has repercussions far beyond the operational domain in organisations and clearly impacts on the marketing and financial effectiveness of tourism businesses.

This generic analysis with respect to the role of human resources in tourism is of direct relevance in the context of tourism services and experiences which are located in what co-authors to this volume describe as extreme tourism destinations, whether extremity is this context relates to remote location, insularity or climate or, indeed, a combination of all three. Indeed, this chapter will endeavour to demonstrate that the challenges faced by organisations operating within extreme tourism destinations with respect to: (1) labour market features; (2) sourcing and recruitment of staff to work in the sector; (3) employee retention; (4) training and development; and (5) career progression, are different in both kind and extent from the issues faced by destinations located in more 'normal' tourism environments.