

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN THE TRAINING OF FUTURE TOURISM PROFESSIONALS

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***Abstract.** The concept of educational tour (field trip) and the importance and role of educational tours in the training of future tourism professionals are explored and analysed in the paper. The concept of educational tourism is formulated and the types of field trips are identified in the result of the research. A sociological survey with the aim to find out opinions of tourism students on the necessity, preferable types, and duration of field trips was conducted as well.*

Research methods: the logical construction method, scientific induction, synthesis, the monographic method, methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis for processing the survey results.

***Keywords:** educational tourism, professional competence, field trips.*

Introduction

Nowadays, particular attention is focused on the development of professional competence both in the process of student education and staff professional activities, since the mastery and competence are the key elements for efficient operations as well as the instruments (not only the results) to achieve a deeper understanding. However, the transformation of the economic life related to the industry reforms determines the need for employee qualities that have been under-demanded in the labour market before: liability, interest, and initiative. The specifics of the tourism industry, which is related to delivering services and providing security for tourists, establishes increasing requirements for the staff qualification. Key elements of the personnel competence is a set including knowledge, skills, abilities, behavioural stereotypes, efforts, and communication techniques. Professional competences may be developed during a field trip, which is a part of the educational tourism (Procter, 2012; Wong & Wong, 2009).

The pace of the development of knowledge, techniques, and technologies determines the changes in the content, direction, and nature of professional activities. New requirements for the employee qualification level demand to search for new approaches for the evaluation of qualifications. The above

mentioned brings the up-to-date competence-based approach in the vocational education system (Aleksandrou & Field, 2005; Wichard & Hans, 2015). It involves a new ideology, which interprets the educational content deriving from the result.

Contemporary innovative processes in science and education lead to the dynamic development of pedagogical theory and practice. Some educational technologies that have been successfully used in the past, such as educational tourism, are still up-to-date, since they are based on the fundamental, not-outdated educational and upbringing principles. Educational tourism is commonly used in various educational systems – in Russia and the UK – by the specialists of sectoral pedagogy (Zholobova, 2006; Belyaeva, 2007; Bhuiyan et al., 2010), and is estimated to be a highly effective teaching technology and, at the same time, a way of organizing the study process.

Within a wide range of the issues related to the formation process of the professional competence of tourism specialists, **the issues** related to the use of educational tourism activities in the study process justified by Procter L., Wong A. and Wong S., Pogodina V. and others (Procter, 2012; Wong&Wong, 2009; Pogodina, 2009) **are raised** in this research.

The research hypothesis is based on an assumption that, under the circumstances of modernization of tourism vocational education, professionally relevant competences are formed using the advantage of educational tourism.

The research aims to investigate and determine the role of and the need for educational tourism in the training of future tourism professionals.

The research methods: the logical construction method, scientific induction, synthesis, the monographic method, methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Theoretical aspects of educational tourism

The method using journeys (trips) with the educational purpose has been established in pedagogical science a long time ago. However, the common approach to the concept „educational tourism” is still not established in Latvia. Also, the problem of how to make the optimum use of the method in order to build the professional competence of students is present, and the topic is scarcely reflected in the scientific pedagogical literature. Thus, it can be concluded that the concept „educational tourism” is relatively new, so it has to be defined, its content should be outlined, and the classification structure should be specified by developing criteria for its efficient use in the training of tourism specialists in line with the needs of the labour market. The nature and role of educational tourism in the world are studied by Rodger (Rodger, 1998), Paul and Trent (Paul & Trent, 1999) and others.

In Latvia, field trips can be used at all levels of the education system: secondary education, vocational education, higher education, and lifelong learning.

In the academic literature, educational tourism is regarded as a phenomenon of the integration of education and tourism by organizing tourism as an educational activity to achieve the objectives and meet the targets determined by the curriculum. It is focused on the formation and development of significant qualities of an individual that are expressed as universal, general professional, and specialized competences (Chen et al., 2008; Hoffman, 1999; McLegan, 1997). A description of the educational tourism concept in different sources is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 **Definition of educational tours (field trips) (authors' construction)**

| Source | Definition of a field trip |
|---|---|
| British Dictionary (2012) | An expedition, as by a group of students or research workers, to study something at first-hand. |
| American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2011) | A group excursion for the purpose of first-hand observation, as to a museum, the woods, or a historic place. |
| Collins English Dictionary (2014) | An expedition, as by a group of students or research workers, to study something at first-hand |
| Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary (2010) | 1. A school trip to gain first-hand knowledge away from the classroom. 2. A trip by a researcher to gather data first-hand, as to a geological, archaeological, or other site. |
| Cambridge Dictionaries Online (2016) | A visit made by students to study something away from their school or college. |
| Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words by Diagram Group (2008) | An excursion by staff and students to study at first-hand something of interest or relevance to a course. |

Educational tourism has its roots in the ancient world. Yet, depending on the socio-economic, political, cultural, and historical circumstances, at different historical stages of its development, it had its own peculiarities. In Europe, the tradition of international journeys with educational purposes arose in the 9th century due to the increasing number of universities. Starting from the 12th century, the academic and student exchanges had already a persistent tendency to evolve. Affected by the ideas of the great Enlightenment thinkers (J.Lock, J.J.Ruso et al.), at the end of the 17th century and in the first half of the 18th century, several European educational institutions practiced the excursions and expeditions for their students. From the middle of the 19th century, the establishment and specialization of the new types of higher education institutions in Europe and America had a positive impact on the dynamics of the

international student mobility. From the middle of the 19th century, the leading pedagogues of Russia were the promoters and organizers of educational tourism. Among them, renowned geographers N.A. Golovkinskij, D.N. Anuchin, V.I. Vernadskij, and others shall be mentioned (Pogodina, 2009).

As pointed out by William (William, 2010), the pedagogical and didactic base for the development of the educational tourism concept lies in the sectoral (tourism) pedagogy, which is defined as a science about the laws of education and upbringing of an individual by using tourism instruments. Educational tourism is one of the most important concepts of tourism pedagogy. By its functional nature, it represents a form of educational process organization, which is implemented outside the educational institution. An integrative phenomenon of educational tourism occurs in the result of combination and mutual interaction of educational and tourism activities (Figure 1).

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|----------|--|--------------------------|
| Field of activities | | | | | | |
| Structure of activities | Tourism | | Educational tourism | | Education | |
| Activity | Tourism activities | | Educational tourism activities | | Educational activities | |
| Subject of activity | Tourist | Tourism organizer | Educational tourism organizer | Student | Student | Teacher |
| Means and conditions | Final purpose. Potential of tourism resources | | Potential of educational tourism. Real objects and environment | | Pseudo-real objects and environment | |
| | Natural | Cultural and historic | Natural | Cultural | Content of education | Environment of education |
| Needs or demands to be met | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation • Cognition • Communication | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho-physical • Emotional • Social • Intellectual • Creative | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • Projects • Games • Research • Communication | |
| Implementation of activity | Travel | | Educational tour | | In-class and out-of-class | |
| | Individual or in group | | Individual or in group | | Individual or in group | |
| Result of activity | Satisfaction of tourists' needs | | Forming universal, professional and specialised competences | | Satisfaction of students' needs | |

Figure 1 **Integrated operational model for the concept “educational tourism”**
(adapted by the authors, based on Pogodina, 2009)

Educational tourism is focused on a number of students' basic needs: physiological, psycho-physical, emotional expressions, social, needs for a change, self-actualization needs, intellectual development, the exploration and development of creative potential (Abubakar et al., 2014). All of them should be considered when designing field trips or professional tours.

Professional tours are an amply widespread type of tourism when a student-tourist (a future tourism and service professional) participates in a trip that is arranged within the framework of a professional study course. For instance, during the trip organized within the course “Hotel Organization and Management”, students get familiar with hotel quality evaluation criteria, equipment, reservation systems, management and operations of other service departments; within the course “Catering Services” – they get acquainted with

catering service quality evaluation criteria, etc. Thus, the students combine studies with their leisure; in addition, they have a chance to not just see and experience service technologies but as well to test them as potential employees at the specific workplace and to improve their competences.

Tourism is inseparable from the cognitive process (Millan, 1995; Moscardo, 2016), which allows to satisfy students' interest in new facts, fascinating phenomena, craving for the positive emotional experience related with the acquisition of new information. The purpose of a journey has to be considered as the most important element of the tourism operational system determining the demand components, grounds for the choice and the content of the journey. Particularly, during cognitive field trips, tourists (students) can be offered the opportunity to acquire some study courses.

Prolific experience on the educational efficiency of trips, tours, and expeditions is accumulated by the pedagogues of Russia (Pogodina, 2009; Zholobova, 2006; Vaganova, 2004), Turkey (Arslanturk&Altunoz, 2012), the United Kingdom (Jacobson et al., 2009).

Types of educational field trips

Currently, the most important direction of intercultural exchange is presented by international relations in the field of education, especially in higher education. The student community is traditionally distinguished by mobility and communicability, craving for the change of the place, travelling and continuous search for new knowledge and information. Therefore, international educational contacts shall be considered as some of the most prospective aspects of humanitarian cooperation developing dynamically, since the modern international education practice presumes that the entire education or a part of it is obtained abroad. The activation of student, master student, doctoral student and teacher exchange takes place due to progress in science and technologies and in the process of European and global integration. The international tourism trends and nature of its development in the sector of higher, vocational, and secondary education are impacted by the operations of international nature. Currently, one of the most popular programmes designed for university students is *ERASMUS+* adopted within the framework of European integration. Participation in the programme allows students to improve their knowledge of foreign languages, to develop communication competencies, to raise the level of their individual independence, altogether forming the students' socio-cultural experiences, promoting their socialization.

The analysis of various educational tours existing in the tourism market or being used in the study process has led to the classification of the field trips (Table 2). The exploration of the recent offer, content, and specificity of the

field trips allow to identify the main types of educational tourism. Those are: science-profile field trips (landscape, ornithology, ecology, geology, etc.), cultural and historic heritage tours (archaeology, ethnic, military patriotic, religious cognitive, pilgrimage, etc.), foreign language study tours, sports-training tours, etc. The diversity of types and methods used for the organization of field trips allow introducing new ideas, improve the tourism product production process and expand the range of educational and tourism services.

Characteristics of educational tourism as an innovative form for the organization of studies have to be based on the fundamental changes in defining the contemporary educational objectives, principles, and approaches.

Table 2 Criteria and types of field trips (authors' construction)

| <i>Criteria for classification</i> | <i>Types of field trips</i> |
|---|---|
| 1. Category of participants | Schoolchildren |
| | Students |
| | Professionals |
| 2. Purpose | Developing universal competences |
| | Developing general professional competences |
| | Developing special professional competences |
| 3. Theme | All-inclusive |
| | Environment sciences |
| | Humanitarian |
| | Social and economic |
| | Technical |
| | Professional |
| 4. Number of participants | Individual |
| | Groups |
| 5. Method of organization | Individual |
| | Organized |
| 6. Didactic targets | General pedagogic |
| | Subject-focused |
| | Interdisciplinary |
| 7. Orientation to personality structure | Informative |
| | Operational |
| | Emotional and moral |
| | Heuristic |
| 8. Organization of activities | Passive |
| | Dialogue |
| | Problem solving |
| | Creative |
| | Virtual |

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9. Area (territory) | Local |
| | Regional |
| | International |
| 10. Market of field trips | Language study tours |
| | Sports study tours |
| | Professional study tours |

In January 2016, the authors conducted a pilot survey among the students of the study programme „Entrepreneurship” with specialization „Tourism business manager” and the bachelor programme „Hospitality Management” at the Rezekne Academy of Technologies with the aim to find out the students' opinion and the demand regarding the necessity of field trips to improve the process of studies. Particularly, the students were asked about the types, preferable duration, and the price of the field trips they would like to take. Thirty two students were surveyed during the research.

Two (7%) of 32 students answered that they were not interested in the field trips, indicating the following reasons: lack of time due to the work, sport training activities, possibly high costs, and poor knowledge of foreign languages. Other 30 students affirmed that the field trips were necessary and they would like to take part. The field trip classification criteria and classification of educational tourism markets were used to identify what were the most, the least and the average demanded field trips (Figure 2).

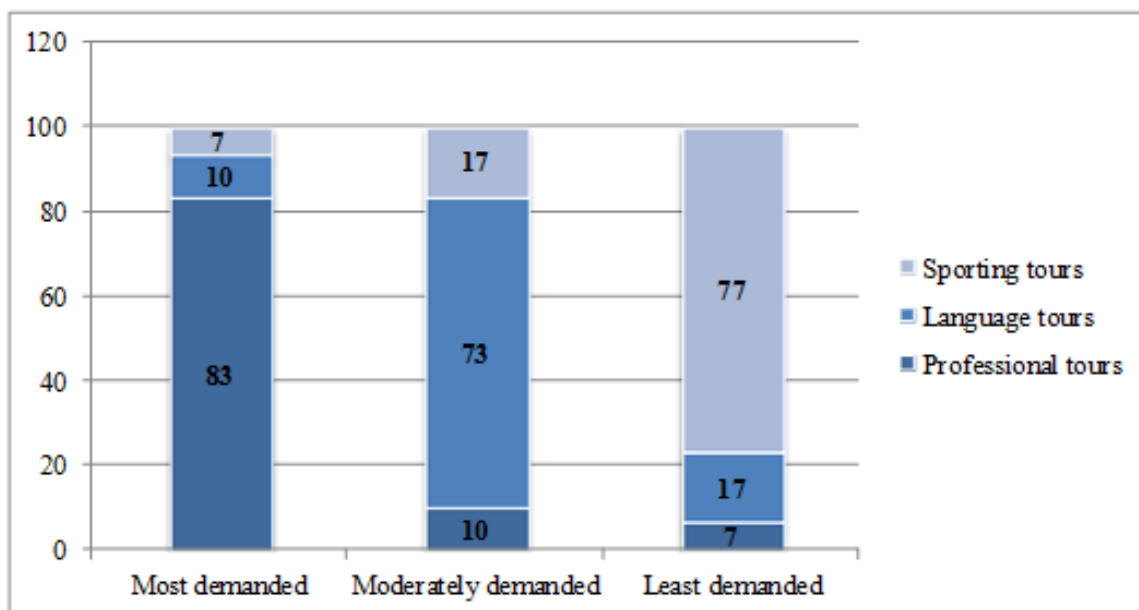


Figure 2 Demand for the field trips, % (authors' construction)

The results of the survey demonstrate that sporting tours are not popular among the students, still, they are chosen, too, especially by those in favour of doing sports. The top named sport tours would include football, volleyball, basketball, floorball, orienteering, and tennis.

The students interested in business language, negotiation management, as well as the students interested in international tourism are appealed to the educational tours offering foreign language studies. Most of the respondents would like to study English in the United Kingdom or the United States, as well as the world's most common languages: French language – in France, Italian – in Italy, German – in Germany, Spanish – in Spain, Japanese – in Japan.

The highest is the demand for professional tours.

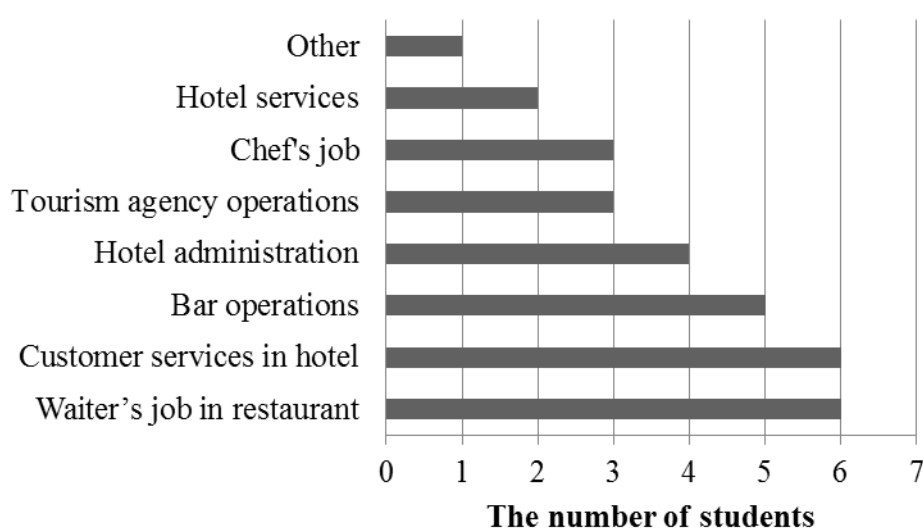


Figure 3 **Demand for the professional tours (authors' construction)**

As shown in Figure 3, the most students would like to have further training in hotel and restaurant operations.

All the respondents would be interested to receive additional services during the field trip: excursions, a swimming pool, a sauna, massage, bars, discos, meetings, festivals, contests, which are the additional services traditionally offered by tourism companies in the hospitality industry.

The duration of field trips, as pointed out by the students, could be from 1 week up to 6 months, and the respondents would be likely to pay from EUR 50 to 500, depending on the duration of the tour.

The acquisition of special theoretical knowledge in the field of tourism and service is the basis for developing the professional grounds, though the students' practical skills are mainly formed during the field trips. (Zholobova, 2006)

Field trips as a particularly effective form of learning can be used in the study programmes designed for the training of tourism professionals (for example, the second-level professional higher education bachelor study

programme „Entrepreneurship” with specialization „Tourism business manager” and the bachelor study programme „Hospitality Management” at the Rezekne Academy of Technologies).

Summary

The educational tourism concept in the scientific literature is regarded as a phenomenon of education and tourism integration by organizing tourism as an educational activity to achieve the objectives and meet the targets determined by the curriculum that is focused on the formation and development of significant qualities of an individual that are presented in a form of universal, general professional, and specialized competences (Chen et al., 2008; Hoffman, 1999; McLegan, 1997).

An analysis of the educational tours currently offered in the tourism market or being used in the study process has led to the classification of the field trips (Table 2). The exploration of the recent offer, content, and specificity of the field trips has allowed to identify the main types of the educational tours.

The research study has revealed that the highest demand is for professional study tours. Most of the students would like to have further training in hotel and restaurant operations.

The duration of field trips, as pointed out by the students, could be from 1 week up to 6 months, and the respondents would be likely to pay from EUR 50 to 500, depending on the duration of the tour.

The results of the survey demonstrate that sports tours are not popular among the students, nevertheless they are being chosen, too, especially by those in favour of doing sports. The top named sports are football, volleyball, basketball, floorball, orienteering, and tennis. Within language tours, the students would like to learn English in the United Kingdom or the United States.

Field trips as a particularly effective form of learning can be used in the study programmes designed to train tourism professionals (for example, the second-level professional higher education bachelor study programme „Entrepreneurship” with specialization „Tourism business manager” and the bachelor study programme „Hospitality Management” at the Rezekne Academy of Technologies).

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