



## RESEARCH ON THE QUALITY OF UNDERGRADUATE TECHNOLOGICAL TOURISM EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract** *Tourism industry, as a component of tertiary education segment, characteristic to services, is closely related to the direct provider, to the professionalism, skills and attitude of the personnel involved in the chain of manufacturing and delivering the touristic product. The direct relationship between any given client and the staff of a travel agency, within the hotel, restaurant or other such categories of tourism officers, triggers a system of more special and particular relationships (Cooper, 1996)). In Romania, touristic profile education consists of economic high schools having tourism classes, higher education institutions with faculties or specializations in tourism – services including Bachelor Degree studies, Master Degree studies and PhD School, which are all related to the Ministry of National Education, with the state or private education on the one hand and the vocational training system, by means of the National Authority for Qualifications (ANC) which is under the subordination of the same aforementioned ministry, on the other hand. In order to determine the extent as to which the training and education within the undergraduate technological education with a tourism profile provides for the training of the staff working in the tourism field, one has conducted a poll.*

### Key words:

Education, tourism, quality, research

### JEL Codes:

C 44, H 75, L 83

### 1. Introduction

Tourism industry, as a component of tertiary education segment, characteristic to services, is closely related to the direct provider, to the professionalism, skills and attitude of the personnel involved in the chain of manufacturing and delivering the touristic product. The direct relationship between any given client and the staff of a travel agency, within the hotel, restaurant or other such categories of tourism officers, triggers a system of more special and particular relationships. These latter relationships that are based upon discretion, confidentiality, diplomacy shall be developed within the limits of professional ethics, in compliance with the standards and procedures that are specific to the field, as established by virtue of international regulations and by the regulation of each and every single organization activating in the tourism field.

In Romania, touristic profile education consists of economic high schools having tourism classes, higher education institutions with faculties or specializations in tourism – services including Bachelor Degree studies, Master Degree studies and PhD School, which are all related to the Ministry of National Education, with the state or private education on the one hand and the vocational training system, by means of the National

Authority for Qualifications (ANC) which is under the subordination of the same aforementioned ministry, on the other hand (1).

Nine years ago one has closed down the Schools of Arts and Crafts (SAM) which provided for the vocational training of young people for basic jobs in the hotel industry, following their graduation of the secondary education. Thus, secondary school graduates wishing to attend SAM classes have found themselves in need to enroll in high school education. In these schools, focus was mainly on specialization specific theoretic and hands-on training. By means of this undergraduate education restructuring process, a large part of the competences within the SAM – related curriculum have been integrated into those competences characteristic for the first cycle in high school.

### 2. Undergraduate technological tourism education in Bucharest Municipality

*In Romania* there are economic colleges having tourism classes in all county capital cities. In *Bucharest Municipality* there is a large network of such education institutions. The higher education institutions network includes a number of 24 such institutions, of which 12 are state institutions and 12 are private education

institutions. The undergraduate institutions network is organized as per sectors, according to the data

provided in tables 1 and 3.

**Table no. 1. Primary and secondary education in Bucharest**

District ~ 110.000 students	Number of units: 166	
	State	Private
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>17</b>
District 1	24	6
District 2	28	2
District 3	29	2
District 4	22	
District 5	24	3
District 6	24	4

**Source:** School Inspectorate of Bucharest Municipality

Part of these secondary school graduates stands for the potential candidates for economic colleges. One such example is represented by School no. 24 in

Bucharest, where part of its students has chosen to go to technological colleges.

**Table no. 2. Status on the admission in high schools of no. 24 School graduates during the period 2011 – 2014**

Year	No. of students having undergone an admission exam	Students having chosen the economic technological education	
		No.	%
2011	53	6 E CM -2 CK-0 CX-2 CH-2	11%
2012	45	4 E CM - 1 CK - 0 CX - 2 CH - 1	9%
2013	35	2 E CM - 1 CK - 1 CX - 0 CH - 0	6%
2014	34	4 E.....CM - 2 CK - 1 CX - 0 CH - 0	18%

**Source:** data processed from [http://scoala24.eduteca.ro/?page\\_id=336](http://scoala24.eduteca.ro/?page_id=336)

**Legend:**  
 CM - Madgearu College  
 CK - Kirițescu College  
 CX - Xenopol College  
 CH - Hermes College

While analyzing the data hereby presented one may first of all find the reduction of the number of students / graduates choosing a high school education form. Of

the latter, in average 4 such students choose to go to economic colleges, the percentage of those choosing one such specialization being somewhere between 6

and 18%. Whereas the number of students choosing economic colleges has dropped. Out of the data hereby analyzed, one may notice the fact that the level of school performances of those having made that option is good, being above the class average.

The high school network in Bucharest includes 133 units, of which 6 have a tourism technological profile. The latter are: The V. Madgearu Economic College, C. Kirițescu Economic College, C. Crețulescu Economic College, A. D. Xenopol Economic College, Hermes Economic College, Viilor Economic College.

According to the information being analyzed, having as source the portal.edu.ro forum, which has been accomplished in partnership between the Ministry of National Education and SIVECO Romania (7), the grounds based upon which one chooses such a profile and certain economic colleges are: the fact that they are close to a student's home, the perspectives of gaining large amounts of money, the easy way to get good marks.

**Table no. 3.** High school and Post – High School Education in Bucharest

District ~73.0000 students	Number of units 133	
	State	Private
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>16</b>
District 1	27	5
District 2	26	2
District 3	19	6
District 4	16	
District 5	11	
District 6	18	3

**Source:** The School Inspectorate of Bucharest Municipality

Economic colleges stand for 4,5% of the overall high schools in Bucharest.

### 3. Research on the quality of undergraduate technological tourism education

#### 3.1. Characteristics of the group under study

The present research has been conducted within a well known economic college in Bucharest which has been certified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The structure of classes and of the specializations provided by this college is as follows:

- 8 classes of the 9<sup>th</sup> form (Technician in Economic Activities / English, Chinese, French, Spanish intensive classes, Technician in Tourism);
- 8 classes of the 10<sup>th</sup> form (Technician in Economic Activities / English intensive classes, Technician in Tourism);
- 8 classes of the 11<sup>th</sup> form (Technician in Economic Activities, Technician in Tourism);
- 7 classes of the 12<sup>th</sup> form (Technician in Economic Activities, Technician in Tourism);

All in all there are 31 classes with 955 students, of which 557 female students and 398 male students.

The structure of tourism qualifications provided by the economic colleges is the following:

- in the 9<sup>th</sup> form, one teaches education subjects relating to the Tourism – Food specialization,
- in the 10<sup>th</sup> form, one teaches education subjects/ tourism modules relating to the Tourism – Food specialization (M.E.C.I. 2009),

- in the 11<sup>th</sup> form, one teaches education subjects/ modules relating to the qualification of a Technician in the tourism field,

- in the 12<sup>th</sup> form one teaches the education subjects/ modules relating to the following qualifications: Banqueting Organizer, Technician in Tourism, Hotels Technician, Gastronomy Technician (M.E.C.I. 2008).

The training course for the students choosing tourism as their option involves the following stages:

- in the 9<sup>th</sup> form, the education subjects are common for all classes,
- in the 10<sup>th</sup> form one makes the distinction between the food specialized classes and the tourism specialization classes,
- in the 11<sup>th</sup> form, one makes the distinction between the classes specialized in the travel agency field and the ones specializing for the hotel industry field.

The hands on practice across the entire 4 year period of studies, includes an overall of 15 weeks allotted as follows:

- in the 9<sup>th</sup> form, 3 such weeks in the school lab,
- in the 10<sup>th</sup> form, 3 such weeks in the practice facilities,
- in the 11<sup>th</sup> form, 4 such weeks in the practice facilities,
- in the 12<sup>th</sup> form, 5 such weeks in the practice facilities, of which one such week shall be allotted for the certificate (M.E.C.I. 2008).

The group under study consists of students in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> tourism classes. Of the overall 90 such students, who have been kind enough to provide answers to the questionnaire questions, over 80 % have been students in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> form. The poll has been conducted in the period between the 27<sup>th</sup> of April and the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2015.

Prior to drawing up the said questionnaire, one has conducted the following stages: the directed interview (students, teachers), direct observation, pilot investigation for the testing of premises and the improvement of questions to be asked. The questionnaire includes a number of 15 questions, of which 3 such questions are for identification purposes.

The main objective of this poll has been represented by the determination of the extent as to which the training and education within the undergraduate technological education with a tourism profile, provides for the training of the personnel in the tourism field. The secondary aims have been represented by the following: the motivation students have when choosing such a specialization, the extent as to which the curriculum meets the requirements, the determination of the hands on practice efficiency, the identification of the training/assessment methods that students prefer.

The working premises have been the following: there is an objective motivation in choosing one such specialization, students are attracted by the tourism field, however later on few of them decide to go on and pursue such a career, one prefers the training methods having applied characteristics, students' practice is short and inefficient.

### 3.2. Data analysis

Having processed the data picked up from the questionnaire, the following have come up:

- ▶ the sample consisted of 90 students, of which: 62% female students and 38 % male students;
- ▶ of the overall number of students included in the research, only 12% were in the 9<sup>th</sup> form;
- ▶ In a percentage of 81% students come from Bucharest and only 18% of the said students are from the rural environment;
- ▶ The largest number of students have chosen for college upon the suggestion made by their parents / or their family (55%) while 24% have made that choice out of their own initiative;
- ▶ The first position in the classification regarding the motivation having laid the foundation for one's choosing such college is represented by: the school reputation 55%, on the second position it is the fact that the college is close to the student's home, this fact standing for 44%; the wish to acquire a qualification in the tourism field is the motivation of only 23% of the overall individuals having been questioned;

- ▶ In terms of the expectations students had prior to their enrollment in the tourism specialization, the situation is as follows: 78% wished to find a job in the tourism field and only 63% wished to gain competences that are specific to working in tourism: 67% aimed at getting a good / very good level of school training, 45% wish to gain competences in the foreign languages field, while 44% of the students have thought of the possibility of gaining larger amounts of money;

- ▶ The students having been questioned feel that the school curriculum structure provides for an appropriate training for one to pursue a career in tourism, as follows: to a very large extent, 48%; to a large extent, 38%; to a relatively large extent, 12% and only 2% to a small / very small extent,

- ▶ The appreciations in terms of the length and method of hands on practice accomplishment have been stated to be appropriate for one to pursue a career in the tourism field, as follows: 45% to a very small extent, 34% to a small extent, 7% to a large / very large extent;

- ▶ Students believe the following to be the most attractive training methods, as per the following order: didactic story 88%; role play 82%; dramatizing 79%; simulation 78%. One has less appreciated the following: description, 35%; discourse, training, 35%; rotating communication, 32% and the didactic exercise, 42%;

- ▶ The process of training within the class is organized under the following forms: 74% by frontal training; 44% by group – based training, 35% by team – based teaching and 7% by individual training;

- ▶ The training – education activities for students are conducted as follows: 67% in the lab, 63% in the cabinet, 50% in the school workshops and 5% by means of trips or visits;

- ▶ Students prefer being assessed by the following methods: 74% in writing but 83% by questionnaire; 68% by help of computers; 45% by an essay, 12% by observation and 23% by oral examination;

- ▶ the level of appreciation in terms of the degree of objectivity of any such assessment within the training process is presented as follows: 64% to a very large extent; 22% to a large extent and only 3% to a small extent;

- ▶ Students believe the school role is: to educate within the spirit of value, 75%; to develop personalities, 65%; to develop a career, 51%; to educate for personal security, 25%;

- ▶ In terms of the degree of knowledge of the provisions of the school Internal Order Regulation, the things are as follows: 13% are aware of the same to a very large extent; 12% know the same to a good extent; 15% know it to a very small extent; 25% know it in a relatively large extent and 35% know it to a small extent.

#### 4. Poll – related conclusions

Students choose the tourism specialization in the economic colleges in a percentage of 80 % upon their parents' advice or out of their own initiative. Tourism attracts them, however few intend to and plan on working in the field in which they have got their qualification. Given the current circumstances, the undergraduate technological tourism education does not provide young people with: an appropriate practical experience, the education for their personal security. Students prefer the following training methods: didactic story, dramatizing, however they are less willing to be orally observed or assessed.

We believe it to be a great help for the hospitality industry if one re – establishes the Arts and Crafts Schools, where focus should be placed on the development of specific competences that are characteristic for the basic jobs in tourism. These schools graduates may go on with their specialization – related training by means of the presented system.

The best solution in order to increase the qualitative level in undergraduate technological tourism education is represented by the dual education. In those colleges with tourism specificity, with a 3 year length (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> forms), as of the first year, the classes of students shall be divided in two, part of the students shall attend a theory – based semester, while the second half shall experience the practice segment. In the second semester, the two groups shall swap places.

During the practice carried out in contracted practice facilities, the economic agents (hotels, travel agencies, restaurants) may identify a number of students who shall have the opportunity to be employed in the future. For those students showing an interest for any given employer, one may provide scholarships and other benefits up to courses completion.

The practice mentors shall attend pedagogical training courses and shall be co – interested in order to be really useful to the new and developing young people.

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