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**EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF VOCATIONAL TOURISM EDUCATION WITHIN
THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

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Abstract

The steady growth of tourism on a global scale in recent years and the changes associated with globalization in all areas of modern life make scientific and professional communities pay special attention to the quality of training for tourism and hospitality. Given the rapid development of communication technologies, increased student mobility and the active cooperation of scientists and professors, the need for an international assessment of the quality of vocational tourism education is especially relevant. The main contradictions between national approaches to quality assessment in different countries and the requirements of international quality standards in the field of tourism education are revealed. The weak connection between educational institutions and employers from the industry deserves special consideration, as a result of which there is a mismatch between the requirements for quality assessment between the university and the industry.

Key Words

Quality assessment – International standards – Vocational tourism education

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Introduction

Technological revolution is rapidly changing the social order in the world. A growing number of experts argue that mankind will soon face a radical change of economic and social way of life. These changes will be driven by an accelerated development of technologies and related social novelties.

Trends in technologies, like automation, digitalization, and etc. are easily visible since they appear on a physical level and immediately influence all spheres of our life. Social trends, as well as the trends at the intersection of social and technological areas, are less apparent in everyday life. However, it is these trends that form the organization of society, and they set the demand for different goods, services and even forms of labour organization.

In a long-term perspective the new technological transition may lead to a revolutionary breakthrough in labour efficiency and economic development. However, in a short-term perspective it may cause a substantial imbalance in the world economy, thereby aggravating inequality and encouraging the risk of global structured unemployment.

In 2018, according to the World Tourism Organization, the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide reached 1.4 billion, two years before it was predicted to do so. The growth in tourism exports (+4%) exceeded the growth in merchandise exports (+3%). Given this rapid pace of growth, the prediction that international arrivals will reach 1.8 billion by 2030 may be conservative¹.

These figures present enormous potential for the sector and economies globally as tourism is further evolving. Emerging economies are contributing larger amount of travellers to this global trend and are becoming increasingly desirable as destinations as they show greater competitiveness in travel and tourism, thus becoming more attractive as employability hubs.

There is no doubt that the global vocational education sector is undergoing seismic transcendental changes. Moreover, there is no blueprint for this recasting of higher education, it's an ongoing project where globalization, increased mobility and competition mean that restructuring and reforms are constant. Access to participation in higher education is now recognized as fundamental to improving economic performance and, by corollary, community well-being. Massive investment in higher education is taking place in a range of developing countries and the hegemony of the developed countries will be increasingly challenged.

Students entering the uncertain world of the future and, in particular, the vulnerable tourism sector, need different skills, aptitudes and knowledge to succeed; and to achieve this goal, educational systems need radical changes, a fundamental shift and redesign is necessary. Changes in the nature of what is taught and how it is taught are vital. Skills and knowledge sets must be redefined, assessment of tourism education quality needs to be questioned, and we need standards that actually enable students to be prepared for a century of challenges. In tourism, employment in the coming decades must have a very

¹ Report on the 2019 EQAVET Forum: How Quality Assurance supports adults to turn their ideas into reality. 2019. Available at: <https://www.eqavet.eu/top-navigation/news/>

different profile than it does today. In 2030 students will be applying for jobs that do not even exist today, and much of what we teach our students is obsolete by the time they graduate.

The increased complexity of the tourism world leads to the urgent attempt to re-define the essence of the notion “quality” in the context of vocational tourism education as that will have a main influence in the workplace of the future.

Definitions of quality vary and, to some extent, reflect different perspectives of the individual and society. There is a variety of 'stakeholders' in higher education, including students, employers, teaching and non-teaching staff, government and its funding agencies, accreditors, validators, auditors, and assessors (including professional bodies).

There are widely differing conceptual views of quality in use. However, these can be grouped into five discrete but interrelated ways of thinking about quality. Quality can be viewed as exception (that is something special), as perfection (doing things exclusively), as fitness for purpose (its functionality), as value for money (assessed against the standards) and as transformative (change of form).²

According to the Russian school of vocational tourism education “quality as a relative concept has two aspects: 1. compliance with standards or specifications; 2. compliance with customer requests”³. Therefore, the quality of vocational tourism education should be considered in the context of international systems and quality standards, as well as in accordance with the modern requirements of the tourist services market.

Hence, the importance of developing formalized systems aimed at improving and certifying the quality of the education has strongly emerged also in the tourism sector⁴. From an education point of view, quality can be defined as the degree to which the expectation and the perception of the user tend to perfectly correspond among them. In other words, the absence of gaps between perception and expectation means quality and, consequently, a profitable correspondence between supply and demand in an education/training context. A Total Quality approach to education assumes that gaps should be prevented before they occur, stressing the importance to anticipate potential hurdles towards a complete satisfaction of the relevant stakeholders⁵. The increasing interest in training for the “labour market” and emphasis on real world learning-teaching engagements reflect a new look at the criteria of quality assessment⁶. Determining criteria for assessing the quality in higher education requires an understanding of different conceptions of quality that inform the preferences of stakeholders.

² Lee Harvey and Diana Green, “Defining quality”, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol: 18 num 1 (1993): 9-34.

³ V. A. Kalney; S. E. Shishov and E. E. Bukhteeva, *Quality management of the educational process: monograph*; Russian International Academy of Tourism (Moscow: Logos, 2015), 271.

⁴ A. Lewis and J. Tribe, “Critical issues in the globalisation of tourism education”, *Tourism Recreation Research*, Vol: 27 num 1 (2002): 13–20.

⁵ N. Becket and M. Brookes, “Quality Management Practice in Higher Education – What Quality Are We Actually Enhancing?”, *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education* Vol: 7 num 1 (2008): 40 – 54.

⁶ G. Jennings; C. I. Cater; R. Hales; S. Kensbock & G. Hornby, “Partnering for real world learning, sustainability, tourism education”, *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol: 23 num 4 (2015): 378-394.

A analysis of the theory and practice of vocational tourism education, various approaches to ensuring its quality and evaluation allows us to highlight the main contradictions:

- between the steady growth of tourism on a global scale in recent decades and the lack of proper attention to the system for assessing the quality of training for tourism and hospitality;

- between the rapid development of information and communication technologies in business and the insufficient development of these issues in the field of tourism education;

- between an increase in the mobility of students, scientists and university professors and a low number of joint international programs and academic mobility programs in tourism universities;

- between the development of international quality standards for vocational education in the field of tourism within international organizations and the inconsistency of methods and criteria for its assessment at national levels;

- between the desire to train professionals for the tourism industry and the weak connection of educational institutions with employers in the industry;

- between the development of modern professional competencies of specialists in tourism and hospitality and the lack of a flexible system for assessing the quality of the formation of these competencies;

- between the development of universal quality standards for professional tourism education and insufficient attention to assessing the quality of education of individual trajectories of students;

- between the increasing requirements for the quality of vocational tourism education in modern conditions and the poorly developed system of continuing professional education, the effective practice of advanced training and retraining of personnel in the tourism sector.

- between the mass nature of tourist services, the individual nature of satisfying tourist needs and motivations that require expanding the range of profiles and specializations in tourism personnel training, their psychological and pedagogical competence.

Methods

In our work we used the methods of theoretical research:

abstraction and concretization of professional tourism education in the world⁷; modeling the concept of assessing the quality of vocational education in tourism⁸; an

⁷ V. A. Kvartalnov, Theoretical foundations of the formation and development of a system of continuing professional education in the field of tourism (Moscow: 2000) y D. Airey and J. Tribe, An international handbook of tourism education. Elsevier Ltd. 2005.

PH. D. (C) TATYANA N. YEFREMTSEVA / PH. D. (C) JULIA A. KIREEVA / DR. ELENA N. TREGUBENKO
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analogy in the content of international quality standards; theoretical analysis of methods, criteria and quality indicators in assessing professional tourism education⁹; the study of specialized literature on the problems of assessing the quality of tourism education in different regions of the world, as well as empirical research methods:

research on the experience of assessing the quality of tourism education in international organizations¹⁰, educational institutions of tourism abroad and in Russia; a method of expert evaluations of the quality results of vocational tourism education¹¹ monitoring the quality of tourism education using resource and scientific support for training programs; study and generalization of experience in the field of professional tourism education.

The research was conducted in the constructivist tradition – seeking to co-create knowledge between researchers and stakeholders regarding their perceptions and findings towards their professional experiences. The study considered 4 thematic areas: analysis of international quality standards for vocational education in tourism and hospitality in different countries; authoritative scientists' views on finding ways to resolve contradictions in vocational tourism education; current state and prospects to develop an independent assessment system for the quality of tourism education in Russia; recommendations for the stakeholders on the coordination of vocational training programs and the competencies to be formed within the requirements of international quality standards for vocational tourism education.

A large majority of countries have dedicated tourism education policies, strategies and plans for the medium to long-term. There is much similarity between countries in their vocational education policy priorities, which focus on improving competitiveness of the

⁸ UNWTO TedQual Certification System (2019). Available at: <http://academy.unwto.org/content/unwto-tedqual-certification-system> y Forging the talent of tomorrow. The City and Guilds of London Institute Trustees' Annual Report, (2018).

⁹ N. Becket and M. Brookes, "Quality Management Practice in Higher Education – What Quality Are We Actually Enhancing?", *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education* Vol: 7 num 1 (2008): 40-54 y V. A. Kalney; S. E. Shishov and E. E. Bukhteeva, *Quality management of the educational process: monograph*; Russian International Academy of Tourism (Moscow: Logos, 2015).

¹⁰ Cedefop, *Spotlight on VET – 2018 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe* (Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2019); ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals. Handbook. 2013. Available at: http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2013/economic/handbook%20mra%20tourism_opt.pdf; Recommendation on the establishment of European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET. Official Journal of the European Union, Vol: 8 num 7 (2009); Report on the 2019 EQAVET Forum: How Quality Assurance supports adults to turn their ideas into reality (2019). Available: <https://www.eqavet.eu/top-navigation/news/> y Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (Brussels: 2015).

¹¹ Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining quality", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol: 18 num 1 (1993): 9-34; Lee Harvey & James Williams, "Fifteen Years of Quality in Higher Education", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol: 16 num 1 (2010): 3-36; G. Jennings; C. I. Cater; R. Hales; S. Kensbock & G. Hornby, "Partnering for real world learning, sustainability, tourism education", *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol: 23 num 4 (2015): 378-394; V. A. Kvartalnov, *Theoretical foundations of the formation and development of a system of continuing professional education in the field of tourism* (Moscow: 2000) y T. N. Yefremtseva y Y. A. Kireeva, *Travel Skills as an assessment of the quality of personnel training for tourism industry in Russia*. *Vestnik RMAT*, num 3 (2019): 35-40

staff, developing sustainability of tourism destinations, and enhancing the quality of vocational tourism education. The last decades have seen a growing recognition of the importance of the development of international standards in business and education, promotion of local and regional educational programs, supported by international organizations and structures.

Helping organizations and individuals to develop their skills for over 140 years in more than 300 qualifications, City & Guilds is a global leader in skills development. Today City & Guilds Group are a multinational organization supporting the development of skills and knowledge of more than three million people every year, through training, assessment, e-learning and learning technologies¹².

United Nation World Tourism Organization is recognized as an inter-governmental international organizations as well as a leading international organization in the field of tourism. With a purpose of promoting and developing the tourism industry, the UNWTO is conducive to the economic growth, mutual understanding between nations and peace and prosperity. The United Nations World Tourism Organization Education Quality Certificate¹³ is a quality certification with the sole international standard of tourism education, training and research projects, which aims at improving the quality of tourism quality, training and research projects.

The Lisbon Strategy adopted in 2000 is aimed at creating a competitive and dynamically developing economy (including tourism) in the countries of the European Union. The main objectives of this strategy are continuous economic growth, the creation of new jobs, as well as the development of broad social interaction between peoples living in the EU countries. An integral part of this strategy is the development of a single European educational environment that creates unified demands to the quality of qualifications for students in the member states¹⁴.

The European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) brings together the EU member states, the Social Partners and the European Commission to develop and improve quality assurance in European VET systems. The EQAVET Reference Framework is designed to promote better vocational education and training by providing authorities with common tools for the management of quality. The Reference Framework forms part of a series of European initiatives which aim is to recognize qualifications and competences received by learners across different countries or learning environments, thereby promoting modernization, mutual trust and mobility in vocational education and training (VET).

The creation of the world's largest trade and economic bloc of Asian countries (ASEAN), similar to the already existing European Union, and the fact that tourism is given one of the most important roles in the economic development of the new community, led to

¹² Forging the talent of tomorrow. The City and Guilds of London Institute Trustees' Annual Report, (2018): 72.

¹³ UNWTO TedQual Certification System (2019). Available at: <http://academy.unwto.org/content/unwto-tedqual-certification-system>

¹⁴ Cedefop. Spotlight on VET – 2018 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe (Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2019) y Report on the 2019 EQAVET Forum: How Quality Assurance supports adults to turn their ideas into reality (2019). Available: <https://www.eqavet.eu/top-navigation/news/>

the creation of the Agreement on the mutual recognition of qualifications in tourism in the countries of Southeast Asia¹⁵.

Results

Based on expert opinion in the course of the research, we identified several international organizations that have an authoritative weight in the assessment of vocational tourism education in different regions of the world, as well as analyzed the conditions of international certification, methods, assessment criteria and indicators, a set of competencies, and the content of quality standards of vocational tourism education.

The main advantage of City & Guilds Group is its relevance to industry – they guarantee that qualifications truly meet the needs of employers as they've supported the design and development of all Technical Qualifications. The Group provides unparalleled end-to-end support to centers and individuals - from curriculum planning through to onboarding and delivery, they ensure that learners come out with a qualification which is rigorous and enables progression. Quality is of paramount importance for years. City & Guilds help to bring clear thinking to the most challenging issues facing today's people teams¹⁶.

The certification process for UNWTO TedQual is very rigorous, including request for information, pre-registration, entering the auditing process, and audit and certification. According to the World Tourism Organization, for the year 2019, 86 universities have professional certification of the UNWTO TedQual in the world: 15 universities in China, 8 in Mexico and 6 in Indonesia, by 4 universities in the UK and Portugal, by 3 in Spain and Jordan, the only one in the USA (George Washington University). Unfortunately, there are no programs accredited by the UNWTO TedQual Certification in Russia today¹⁷.

The evaluation criteria of the UNWTO TedQual Certification include the following aspects:

1. evaluating the effectiveness of teaching system of the organization,
2. assessing the correlation between the actual educational system and the tourism industry demands,
3. assessing students' recognition for educational system.

The evaluation criteria of UNWTO TedQual are generally applicable to any educational or business organizations while not being accessible for individuals, having it as its greatest disadvantage.

The European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) has developed the Framework as an instrument for improving the quality of VET systems.

¹⁵ ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals. (2013). Available at: http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2013/economic/handbook%20mra%20tourism_opt.pdf

¹⁶ Forging the talent of tomorrow. The City and Guilds of London Institute Trustees' Annual Report, (2018): 72.

¹⁷ UNWTO TedQual Certification System (2019). Available at: <http://academy.unwto.org/content/unwto-tedqual-certification-system>

The quality indicators are as follows: relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers; investment in training of teachers and trainers; participation and completion rate in VET programs; utilization of acquired skills in the workplace; unemployment rate; Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market and etc. to name a few.

The indicators may be grouped in three strands with the aim for the member states, social partners, industry and other stakeholders to work together to:

- improve the quality and relevance of skills formation;
- make skills more visible and comparable;
- improve skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

By establishing a shared understanding among member states of what constitutes quality, the EQAVET Reference Framework increases transparency, consistency, portability and recognition of qualifications and competencies received by learners across different countries or learning environments. The other advantages of the EQAVET system lie in the areas that allow more flexible pathways, enhancing the opportunities for lifelong learning, that enrich the training provision, raise the attractiveness of training programs and enhance their pan-European reputation¹⁸.

EQAVET can be applied at both system and VET provider levels adapted to the different national systems and used in accordance with national legislation and practice not only for the member states of the European Union but non-EU countries as well.

The ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals provides a mechanism for agreement on the equivalence of tourism certification procedures and qualifications across ASEAN countries. This encourages a free and open market for tourism labour across the region and boosts the competitiveness of the tourism sector in each ASEAN nation, while at the same time attracting needed talent to meet local skills shortages. The eligibility to work in a host country will of course be subjected to prevailing domestic laws and regulations of the host country.

The purpose of this agreement is to facilitate the mobility of specialists with certificates in tourism specialties, as well as to improve the quality of services that tourism professionals must provide. This agreement describes the procedure for the mutual recognition of qualifications for all the countries of the Association of Southeast Asia: requirements for 32 posts are presented, from the administrative and economic employee and the specialist in catering to the hotel unit to the tour operator. In addition, the Agreement notes the need for the exchange of the most successful programs in training specialists in the field of tourism with international organizations¹⁹.

For tourism professionals and the industry, Mutual Recognition Arrangement provides the following benefits:

¹⁸ Report on the 2019 EQAVET Forum: How Quality Assurance supports adults to turn their ideas into reality (2019). Available at: <https://www.eqavet.eu/top-navigation/news/>

¹⁹ ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals. (2013). Available at: http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2013/economic/handbook%20mra%20tourism_opt.pdf

- facilitates mobility of tourism professionals based on the tourism competency qualification/certificate;
- enhances conformity of competency based training/education;
- recognizes skills of tourism professionals;
- improves the quality of tourism human resources (graduates are ready to work in the industry);
- enhances the quality of tourism services.

We consider that the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement could serve as a model in the scientific and methodological search of the ways for creating a unified international certification system for quality assurance of vocational tourism education.

Discussion

The development of an independent system for assessing the quality of education in the Russian Federation today is one of the most important tasks in the field of vocational education in the framework of activities aimed at improving the quality of education in general.

Since 2016 the laws on professional standards and qualification assessment have been established, that set out the examination procedure and confirmation of compliance of an employee with a position in Russia. Specialized Qualification Assessment Centers (CSCs) will verify this conformity and issue certificates of qualification, including in the field of tourism and hospitality. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NSPK) under the President of the Russian Federation manages the entire quality assessment system.

Russia has recently joined WorldSkills International (WSI), international non-profit association, whose purpose is to increase the status and standards of vocational training and qualifications around the world, to popularize working professions through international competitions around the world.

The participation of college and university students in the Worldskills professional skill competition allows them to demonstrate mastered professional competencies in practice.

Tourism professionals also joined the movement by hosting the first TravelSkills industrial Championship in Russia in March 2019. The championship was held in three competencies: travel agency activities; tour operator activities; organization of excursion services.

The Championship was attended by professional participants (mandatory requirement: the contestant must be an active employee of the company), schoolchildren, college and university students. It should be noted that the tasks for the participants of the championship were developed by leading industry experts, who in fact guaranteed an objective assessment of relevant knowledge for current and future employees of tourism industry.

The initiatives mentioned encourage the attempts of the stakeholders in vocational tourism education in Russia and other countries that are not yet included in the evaluation procedure of quality of the future professionals in tourism.

The life cycle of occupations is getting shorter. In this regard, it seems more sensible to form a new skill-set rather than to forecast specific occupations and to find ways to evaluate the quality of the qualifications achieved. These skills, once acquired, will help employees ensure their position within a particular activity of the future as they will be ready for subsequent retraining. Moscow School of Management (Skolkovo) has a new report out on what graduates should know and be able to do - "Skills for the Future. How to thrive in the complex new world". The Skills for the Future include a sector by sector review noting the manufacturing trend of uniting production and the services sector (what the OECD called manu-services) and creating a common product experience. In services, in the face of increasing digitalization and automation, the demand for services from which clients have real contact with a person will grow. In the knowledge economy, the key trend changing the workplace landscape will not be the replacement of humans by computers, but the growth of the complexity of tasks²⁰. Basic skills of the 21st century:

-Attention management, concentration and awareness

-Emotional intelligence

-Digital literacy

-Creativity

-Ecological mindset

-Cross-cultural skills

-(Self-) Study skills²¹.

New jobs will emerge in all sectors of the economy in those activities where a personalized approach is required to create a product or a service, where tasks are related to higher cognitive levels (the ability to analyze, synthesize, make independent judgments, and create new things) or require emotional involvement.

Conclusion

Thus, we see the urgent necessity for the partnership model for all the stakeholders in vocational tourism education to cooperate in joined research programs globally. The current goal is to stimulate research and to foster the interaction of researchers in quality assurance of vocational tourism education. It will provide the opportunity to meet the top researchers in small group settings, identify important directions for future investigation, and facilitate scientific collaboration.

²⁰ P. Luksha, Skills of the future: How to thrive in the complex new world. GEF and WS in 2014-2017. (2017).

²¹ P. Luksha, Skills of the future: How to thrive in the complex new world. GEF and WS in 2014-2017. (2017).

Summing up the scope of tasks that are on the international agenda of evaluating the quality of vocational tourism education within the context of international standards we developed Recommendations for all stakeholders on the coordination of vocational training programs. Attention of all parties involved should be focused on four key areas:

1. The increasing importance of flexible learning: (flexible options to study and work; digitalization and distance learning; recognition of informal and non-formal education recognition, and etc.).
2. The changing role of professors and trainers: (technological progress literacy within the teaching profession; digitalization and distance learning technologies; professional assessment; close contact and interaction with the industry, and etc.).
3. The strengthening policies in career skills formation: (improve career and life skills and employment opportunities, ongoing guidance in skills improvement, focus on future competences, and etc.).
4. The guaranteeing approaches to quality assurance: (a learner-centered approach, flexibility in VET provision, trust among the stakeholders, mutual scientific and practical collaboration on local, national and international levels, and etc.).

We call for broad consensus on the need for further vocational system enhancement including greater flexibility regarding services provision, enhanced use of digitalization, improved learner pathways, more integrated and seamless education systems, the importance of career guidance and evidence of the impact of change via data collection and analysis.

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