# ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COOPERATION IN AZERBAIJAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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#### Introduction

As a matter of fact, the development of each country nowadays depends on the quality of its nation's education. The foundation for certain development of a nation starts with the development of its human resources. The improvement of a knowledge-based economy of today has given rise to a transformation in higher education. Tourism higher education, as a major platform for personnel potential development for the tourism industry has a very close relationship with the economic development of the tourism industry. On the other hand, despite the rapid growth in the past decade, tourism higher education still faces uncertainties in terms of the content and nature of tourism degrees, and this reduces employment opportunities for tourism graduates.

In Azerbaijan context, tourism higher education also faces great challenges in the development of personnel potential for tourism industry. Tourism education is a young trend in Azerbaijan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Considering the tourism potential of the country it can be said that the study can be improved parallel to the sector. Besides that, focusing on the development of the other oil-gas industry sectors in the Azerbaijan Republic, improvement is demanded at tourism education, as well. Nevertheless, it is obvious that tourism study is nothing without practical trainings.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1. To identify specific characteristics of tourism education;
- 2. To investigate international experience in tourism education;
- 3. To analyse the existing infrastructure and facilities available for tourism education and training in Azerbaijan and quality of skills provided by these institutions:
- 4. To investigate cooperation between education and industry in order to identify a gap between education and industry in tourism sphere;
- 5. To offer some suggestions and solutions to improve the quality of skill supplied to the industry and also how to develop tourism personnel potential

by developing cooperation between industry and education based on the findings of the study.

The research questions are:

- 1. What is the current tourism education infrastructure of Azerbaijan?
- 2. Does tourism education meet the needs of the tourism industry?
- 3. How can university and industry cooperate in order to develop tourism personnel potential?
- 4. To what extent is the situation of the existing infrastructure and facilities available for tourism personnel training and progressing developed in Azerbaijan?

The investigation aims to study the current situation between tourism industry and education as well as the attitudes of students and tourism employees towards such a partnership. To this end, students who study at tourism-related faculties and employees who work for tourism sector have been surveyed and their impressions and demands regarding the collaboration have been analysed.

The importance of the investigation is that it is the first empirical study in Azerbaijan about the current situation of education-practice partnership and its drawbacks. Furthermore, the study enlightens some tricks for the related organizations.

The elements of the investigation are tourism companies, and students who study at tourism-related faculties. According to information announced by Ministry of Culture and Tourism there were 338 hotels and hostels, and 295 tourism companies in Azerbaijan. Besides that, Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University stated that more than two thousand students were studying at the university currently. Considering these numbers, 50 and 70 employees and students relatively were targeted. After controls of the questions it was decided that the analysis would be conducted over 42 and 64 questionnaires respectively.

Representatives of hotels and tourism companies in Azerbaijan and students of Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University were added into the scope of the survey. Other students who study tourism but at different universities were not included in the research. In order to reach comparable results, the respondents in only Baku limited the survey. Despite the possibility of generalization the results to the whole element, it would be beneficial to test it by survey that is more detailed, in the future.

#### Literature review

Education in the field of tourism has produced quite a few articles (Hyland, 2001, p. 677). These comprise a call for higher education to support

students with competent flexibility for them to get, inspire, and analyze new areas of study, including collective trans-disciplinary subjects that move marginal or unexplored areas to the focus of discovery (Lashley, 2011, p. 18). But despite these alerts, tourism remains an undeveloped subject area with few relevant or global educational systems. Many of the topics within the tourism literature are similar; simply revising and rehashing these topics (Stergio, Airey, and Riley, 2002, p. 149). The focus of this literature includes the extensive education literature, making any analysis incomplete. Thus, when exploring the topic of general tourism education, it is not surprising to find no core curriculum and no uniform body of knowledge (Scott, Puleo, and Crotts, 2007, p. 257).

It is difficult to put a determinate date on the start of tourism education but it seems to have been during the 1960s that there were a number of key changes in tourism, in education and in society more generally, which led to the emergence of tourism "both as a clear area of study in its own right and as a subject for study to diploma and degree level and for research. During that decade many of the early tourism programs began. The tourism programmes of the 1960s and 1970s were highly vocational in aim and content, highly restricted in the knowledge base on which they could draw, and highly based on economics and business studies" (Airey, 2005, p. 13-24).

As noted earlier by the authors (Airey, 1995, p. 4), the growth of tourism as an activity, the expansion of further and higher education, as well as an increased recognition and respectability of vocational education provided a fairly potent set of influences that encouraged what would now be called "educational entrepreneurs" to launch the first tourism programmes. These sought to understand, explain, and prepare prospective employees for the tourism sector. In the words of one of the pioneers, John Burkart, the courses were designed to leave the students "surprise free" about what they would find in employment. These origins are still reflected in the aims, methods, content, and location of many of the existing programs, which include, for example, industry placements, practical field visits, and case studies with a strong business management orientation.

Tourism education began as a development of technical/vocational schools in Europe. These schools highlighted training in foundation abilities such as hospitality, hotel management and related business skills. The need and demand from the public and private sectors influenced the prompt growth of tourism studies and the development and establishment of departments of tourism at institutions of higher education in addition to technical schools (Butler 1999, p. 7-25).

According to the authors there has been much discussion over the past decade into the provision and content of tourism education.

According to Croy and Hall (2003, p. 32) tourism industry is comprised of many different types and levels of work at a variety of organizational levels, which requires different types of skills to enhance social transformation through holistic education. These skills are only achieved through the development of qualified teachers to teach at high school level to advance, satisfying and meeting tourism education demands specifically (Jurowski 2000, p. 99). Cooper (2000, p. 30) noted that in many developing countries the educational system has attempted to keep up with the demands of rapidly growing tourism industry. There were many arguments that educational institutions such as high schools and universities have not been able to prepare the necessary human resource base for a growing industry either in terms of number or quality.

According to Reeve (2004, p. 189), the concept of cooperative education began in the United Kingdom (UK) in the late 1800s, in the United States of America (USA) in 1906 and in Canada in 1957. Reeve (2004, p. 189) points out that cooperative education is now practised in more than 60 countries around the world. According to Groenewald (2003, p. 1), the original aim of cooperative education is to enhance student learning. The purpose and role of cooperative education can be regarded as multifaceted when the complexity and the various role-players are considered. It must be remembered that from a student's point of view career clarification is the most important (Coll & Eames, 2004, p. 274). One of the purposes of higher education is to prepare people for work, but perhaps a better definition would be that its purpose is to give people the tools with which to reflect and learn from experience (Thorne, 1995, p. 184). According to Coll and Eames (2004, p. 274), students want well-paid jobs soon after graduation.

However, limited research has been conducted into the outcomes of cooperative education partnerships generally, but particularly in the field of tourism and hospitality. The Business Council of Australia (1990) that has several cooperative education partnerships with a range of universities, mostly in the field of information technology, believe that these partnerships enhance the level and improve the range of education offerings as well as fostering closer links between business and education.

#### **Methodology of the Investigation**

The investigation contains two parts: theory and practice. Through the theoretical phases features of tourism-related education and problems at development of human resources at the mentioned sector have been explained. Furthermore, tourism study at the Azerbaijan education system

and the necessity to organize Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University have been described in the theoretical parts of the investigation. In the practical section, survey has been applied.

Inquiring was conducted for both university students, and tourism firms in order to achieve data and comparable analysis. The questionnaires for both groups were structured in three parts. The questionnaire with students gathers information regarding respondents' features, their impressions about the current situation of tourism study, and their attitude/expectations to/from a partnership between tourism industry and education. The questionnaires for companies investigate the topic from the point of view of the tourism industry, so they contain questions regarding the company structure as well as their attitude toward the partnership. Both groups were asked 10 questions.

In the survey section, face-to-face inquiring of quantitative methodology was applied. The questionnaire examples used during the survey were demonstrated in the addition part of the investigation.

The questions were prepared according to the multiple-choice query format. The sixth question of the student questionnaire, the 3-point Likert Scale was used. All questions were prepared on the basis of previous similar studies.

#### **Findings of the Investigation**

As data gathering tools, the questionnaires were prepared in three sections. The first part consists of demographic characteristics of respondents such as study field; tourism sector; names of students; their qualifications to achieve career and sectors of companies. The respondents answered questions regarding their impressions about and attitude toward a partnership between university and industry in the second part. In the end, they gave their recommendation how to improve that collaboration.

Furthermore, this chapter also aims to find the answers to the questions set in the research purposes and find the relationship between the variables defined.

First, it would be relevant to assess the demographic indicators of survey participants. More than half of the respondents (53.1%) are students who study Tourism and Hospitality. Whilst another majority state that, they are studying at the Management Faculty of the University (37.5%). Furthermore, some respondents are educated at the other faculties such as Tourism business, Management of tourism and Transportation industry.

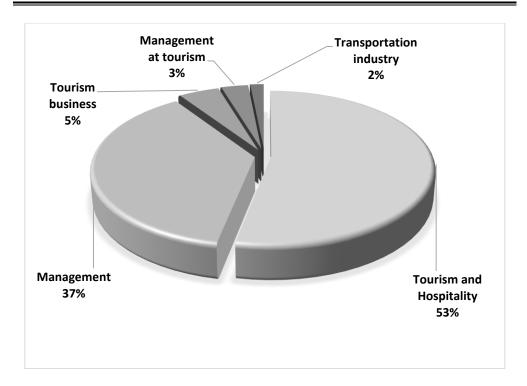


Fig. 1. Result on RQ. 2, Education survey

The answers of respondents regarding career are varied, as well. The share of the ones who intend to work as civil servants is more than the others (28.1%). Respondents who choose Hotel industry follow with 23.4%. Students who want to test themselves at restaurant and cafe jobs take 17.2%. The most interesting thing is that 15.6% of the participants do not want to work in the sphere of tourism.

Table 1 Result on RQ.3, Education survey

| RQ.3 In which tourism sectors would you like to work? |           |            |  |
|---|-----------|------------|--|
| Tourism sectors                                       | Results   |            |  |
|   | Frequency | Percentage |  |
| Civil service   | 18        | 28.1%      |  |
| Hotel industry  | 15        | 23.4%      |  |
| Restaurant/café                                       | 11        | 17.2%      |  |
| I do not want to work at tourism industry             | 10        | 15.6%      |  |
| Other   | 9         | 14.1%      |  |
| Transportation  | 1         | 1.6%       |  |

However, there is not such a diversity among professional respondents. The majority of respondents are representatives of hotels (71.6%). The rest are of tour agencies (28.6%).

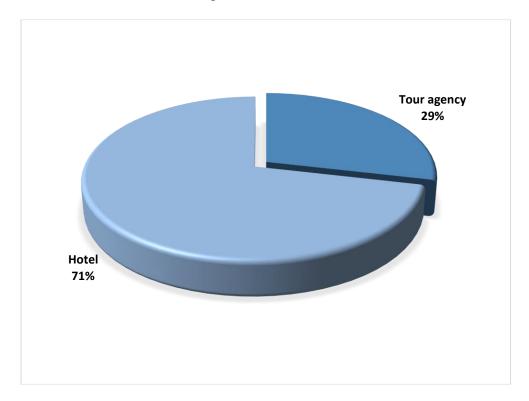


Fig. 2. Result on RQ.2, Industry survey

Within the survey, companies were separated according to employee number. The results show that the majority of local tourism firms (61.9%) employ fewer than 50 workers. After the analysis it was found out that big companies that have more than 101 employees are 23.8%. The firms which have between 51 and 100 employees take a 14.3% share.

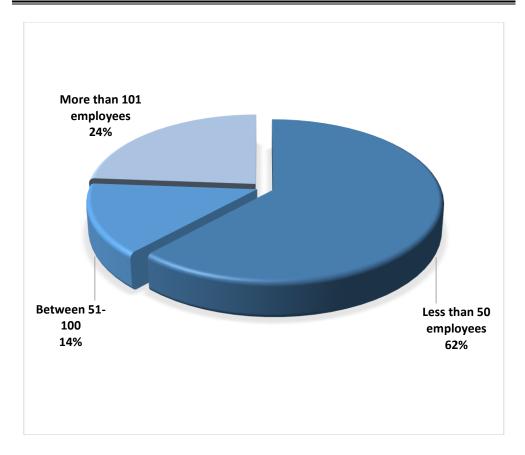


Fig. 3. Result on RQ. 4. Employee number

Nevertheless, the survey demonstrates that the number of tourism educated personnel is not proportional to the whole number. Even there is not a company which employs more than 101 workers with a relevant study background. In 88.1% of the companies, employees who studied tourism are fewer than 50. However, more than 51 tourism-trained (university study) employees work in 11.9% of the firms.

Result on RQ.5, industry survey

Table 2

RQ.5 How many employees with tourism education background operate at your enterprise?

Employee number

Results
Frequency Percentage
Fewer than 50 employees

37 88.1%

Between 51-100

5 11.9%

Table 3

### The assessment of main questions

The main questions refer to the current situation of local tourism study and the attitude toward it. The questions analyse the mentioned content from the point of view of students and professionals. Notes by participants are analysed comparably.

During the investigation, students were asked if they had attended a job interview. From the results it is obvious that three out of four attended either a practice or a job interview at least once. The rest quarter (25.0%) state that they had not had such a situation.

Result on RQ.4, Education survey

| RQ.4 Have you ever participated at any job interview? |           |            |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Students answer                                       | Results   |            |
|   | Frequency | Percentage |
| Yes   | 48        | 75.0%      |
| No  | 16        | 25.0%      |

According to the opinions of students who have already participated in interviews, working practice is more important (60.4%). However, 29.2% state that practice abroad is more significant. Tourism study abroad ranks third with 20.8%. Only 16.7% express the importance of general tourism education during interviews.

Table 4 Result on RQ.5, Education survey

| RQ.5 What kind of problems have you met during interviews? |           |            |
|--|-----------|------------|
|  | Results   |            |
| Problems   |           |            |
|  | Frequency | Percentage |
| The most significant is practice                           | 29        | 60.4%      |
| Foreign practice   | 14        | 29.2%      |
| Foreign tourism education                                  | 10        | 20.8%      |
| Tourism education  | 8         | 16.7%      |
| Local practice   | 4         | 8.3%       |
| Foreign language   | 3         | 6.3%       |
| Benefits from lecturers with an international              | 3         | 6.3%       |
| education  |           |            |

Unlike students, professional respondents think that tourism education in foreign countries is more important (52.4%). Nevertheless, during employment the significance of practice and general tourism education is obvious from the results. Both categories take 50% percent respectively.

Result on RQ.6, Industry survey

Table 5

| RQ.6 Which criteria is more important in recruit | tment process? | ?          |
|--|----------------|------------|
| Cuitaria   | Results        |            |
| Criteria   | Frequency      | Percentage |
| The most significant is practice                 | 21             | 50.0%      |
| Foreign practice                                 | 11             | 26.2%      |
| Foreign tourism education                        | 22             | 52.4%      |
| Tourism education                                | 21             | 50.0%      |
| Local practice                                   | 2              | 4.8%       |
| Benefits from lecturers with an international    | 12             | 28.6%      |
| education  |                |            |

Besides, the opinions of respondents regarding their advantages to work in the sphere of tourism have been studied as part of the investigation. An overwhelming majority (73.4%) note that their education of tourism is the main advantage they possess. 57.8% think that their work practice is advantage to work in such a sphere. Only 15.6% achieved practice abroad and they state this qualification as their main advantage.

Table 6 Result on RQ.7, Education survey

| RQ.7 What kind of advantages do you have for working in tourism sphere? |           |            |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Adventeges  | Results   |            |
| Advantages  | Frequency | Percentage |
| Nothing   | 3         | 4.7%       |
| Working practice in abroad  | 10        | 15.6%      |
| Outlook   | 1         | 1.6%       |
| Foreign language  | 3         | 4.7%       |
| Tourism education in abroad   | 2         | 3.1%       |
| Tourism education   | 47        | 73.4%      |
| Practice  | 37        | 57.8%      |
| Benefits from foreign lecturers at a local                              | 8         | 12.5%      |
| university  |           |            |

Students responded questions about their satisfaction with tourism education in the country, as well. Most students (65. 6%) are partially satisfied with the local tourism education. Although they think that the mentioned education is good, they note that there are still some problems to solve. Approximately a quarter of student participants are dissatisfied with the local tourism study. Just 7.8% think that everything is normal about the training.

Table 7 Result on RQ.5, Education survey

| RQ.5 Are you satisfied with the tourism education in Azerbaijan? |           |            |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Answers  | Results   |            |
|  | Frequency | Percentage |
| Yes  | 5         | 7.8%       |
| No   | 17        | 26.6%      |
| Partially  | 42        | 65.6%      |

The participants who have experience in a foreign country are three times more than those who do not. The results are 76.6% and 23.4% respectively.

Table 8 Result on RQ.6, Education survey

| RQ.6 Do you have any experience abroad? |           |            |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Americans                               | Results   |            |
| Answers                                 | Frequency | Percentage |
| Yes                                     | 15        | 23.4%      |
| No                                      | 49        | 76.6%      |

Students' opinions regarding the collaboration between their university and tourism industry vary. The majority (78.1%) confirmed such a partnership, however, 14 students (21.9%) state that there is not such a collaboration and if there is, they are unaware of it.

Table 9 Result on RQ.8, Education survey

| RQ.8 Does your university have partnership with tourism enterprise? |           |            |  |
|---|-----------|------------|--|
| Awareness   | Results   | Results    |  |
|   | Frequency | Percentage |  |
| Yes   | 50        | 78,1%      |  |
| No  | 14        | 21,9%      |  |

Despite that, specialists of tourism enterprises think differently. The awareness about the collaboration is 50-50 among the professional participants. Although half of them think that there is a collaboration between the organizations, the rest half think there is not.

Result on RQ.8, Industry survey

Table 10

| RQ.8 Does your company have | e partnership with | an educational |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| establishment?              |                    |                |
| Awaranasa                   | Results            |                |
| Awareness                   | Frequency          | Percentage     |
| Yes                         | 21                 | 50.0%          |
| No                          | 21                 | 50.0%          |

The mentioned subject was also asked in a different way to professional participants and the main feature, which is significant for them during such a partnership, was attempted to clear out. 83.3% say that they prefer development of qualified employees in such a partnership. The rest 16.7% think that monetary benefits are much more important for them.

Result on RO.9. Industry survey

Table 11

|  | 5617 . 6 7  |                 |
|--|-------------|-----------------|
| RQ.9 What is your company preference     | regarding p | artnership with |
| educational establishments?              |             |                 |
| Preference for                           | Results     |                 |
| Preference for                           | Frequency   | Percentage      |
| Material benefits                        | 50          | 16.7%           |
| Professional human resources development | 14          | 21.9%           |

The partnership between tourism enterprises and career agents is interesting, as well. So, 61.9% of the professional participants state that their company has such a collaboration. Nevertheless, 38.1% do not need such a partnership.

Result on RO.7. Industry survey

Table 12

|  | J         |            |
|--|-----------|------------|
| RQ.7 Does your company have cooperation with any recruitment agency? |           |            |
| Cooperation  | Results   |            |
|  | Frequency | Percentage |
| Yes  | 26        | 61.9%      |
| No   | 16        | 38.1%      |

Within the survey, students were asked about their expectations from the cooperation between their university and the tourism industry. The results showed that the majority of the participants do not have any expectations from such a partnership. The reason for 50% of the students' disinterest toward the partnership is their unawareness. On the other hand, some of them think that everything is "OK" and they do not need additional work. However, 15.6% think that the participation of professionals who work for the tourism industry is inevitable in lectures. The same amount of participants (15.6%) state that they need experience at the partner firms under the collaboration. 10.9% approach the partnership a bit differently. They prefer it after graduation and think that it would be satisfactory if the companies employ graduates. 7.8% of the participants state the importance of visual lectures at the partner organizations.

Table 13 Result on RQ.10, Education survey

| RQ.10 What kind of expectations and recommendations do you have for |           |            |
|---|-----------|------------|
| cooperation between university and industry in the tourism sphere?  |           |            |
| Answers   | Results   |            |
| Allswers  | Frequency | Percentage |
| Experience at the partner companies                                 | 10        | 15.6%      |
| Organisation of lectures by professionals from                      | 10        | 15.6%      |
| industry  |           |            |
| Organization recruitment process of graduates                       | 7         | 10.9%      |
| Organisation of practical lectures in industry                      | 5         | 7.8%       |
| fields  |           |            |
| Preference of practical knowledge during                            | 3         | 4.7%       |
| lectures  |           |            |
| Setting up consultant department at university                      | 3         | 4.7%       |
| Invitation of lecturers with tourism education                      | 1         | 1.6%       |
| background  |           |            |
| Cooperation with universities abroad                                | 1         | 1.6%       |
| Organisation of internships in companies                            | 1         | 1.6%       |
| Signing cooperation with companies                                  | 1         | 1.6%       |
| I do not have any idea  | 32        | 50.0%      |

Similar to students, some groups of professional participants also think that everything is satisfactory in the collaboration between them and universities. So 42.9% do not have extra expectations. However, the majority have expectations from the partnership. 23.8% of participants state that

experienced lecturers should give lectures. Another majority (19.0%) agree with students about organizing practices and inviting them to partner companies. 9.5% think that organizing practical workshops can be satisfactory, as well. The most interesting finding is that some specialists are not pleased with practices. 4.8% state that students must be attracted to companies relevant to their qualification and knowledge.

Table 14 Result on RQ.10, Industry survey

RQ.10 What kind of expectations and recommendations do you have for cooperation between university and industry in tourism sphere?

| Angyrong  | Results   |            |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Answers   | Frequency | Percentage |
| Invitation of lecturers who possess work experience           | 10        | 23.8%      |
| Organizing a students' practice semester at partner companies | 8         | 19.0%      |
| Organizing practical workshops for students                   | 4         | 9.5%       |
| Students should be chosen according to their qualifications   | 2         | 4.8%       |
| Training human resources according to the demand of industry  | 1         | 2.4%       |
| Prefer lecturers with international background                | 1         | 2.4%       |
| Organizing lectures by industry professionals                 | 1         | 2.4%       |
| Setting up exchange programmes for lecturers                  | 1         | 2.4%       |
| I do not have any idea  | 18        | 42.9%      |

#### **Conclusion**

This study provides both theoretical information and empirical evidence related to the industry-education cooperation in tourism.

While investigating tourism education the importance of education and industry-education cooperation in the tourism sector is also discussed in a literature overview. The relationship between tourism industry and education is significant for the employability of tourism graduates. Tourism industry constitutes an important sector for the employment and the development of the local economies; thus, the development of human resources is crucial in order to achieve a comparative advantage in a highly volatile and competitive tourism industry.

The study showed that limited research in Azerbaijan, however, has systematically explored what the tourism industry needs, and the extent to which tourism higher education meets these needs. In order to bridge the research gap, this study was conducted with the aim of investigating what kind of cooperation can be conducted between tourism industry and education.

In order to learn, how the theoretical study on the industry-education cooperation in tourism sector finds confirmation in practice, the survey was conducted with the purpose to study the current situation between tourism industry and education, as well as the attitudes of students and tourism employees towards such a partnership.

Students who study at tourism-related faculties and employees who work for the tourism sector have been surveyed and their impressions and demands regarding the collaboration have been analysed. Inquiring was conducted for both university students, and tourism firms in order to achieve data and comparable analysis. The questionnaires for both groups were structured in three parts. The questionnaire with students gathers information regarding respondents' features, their impressions about the current situation of tourism study, and their attitude/expectations to/from a partnership between tourism industry and education. The questionnaires for companies investigate the topic from the point of view of tourism industry, so they contain questions regarding the company structure as well as their attitude toward the partnership. Both groups were asked 10 questions. In the survey section, face-to-face inquiring of quantitative methodology was applied.

Consequently, the graduates and industry representatives suggested that there should be a close collaboration between the educators and the industries.

#### Recommendations

Taking into account all discussion it is possible to offer the following for the development of cooperation between tourism education institutions and tourism industry:

Relations between industry representatives and tourism enterprises have to be consultative. For this reason, forums, conferences, meetings have to be organized regularly. It is desirable that, these enterprises have to be organized in the form of different associations and unions. Thereby, these relations can be effectively coordinated and standardized. At the same time, in this form, a joint board can be established.

- Exchange programs have to be implemented between tourism enterprises and education centers. Industry representatives can work as an instructor in the education centers in certain periods of time and teachers can work in different jobs in industry. Thus, both parties can increase the mutual understanding and establish a two-way more effective curriculum and support for the development of the parties.
- The independent tourism awards have to be established by education centers. These awards can play a special role in involving businesses to collaborative operation in the local market. Industry representatives can be awarded in different nominations and at the same time it is also possible to involve students in these awards.
- Industry ventures have to be involve in the development of curriculum. It is desirable to learn the INDERCORE system of Canada.
- To establish board of trustees for education ventures. Especially, in condition of financial independence, it can develop the relations between higher institutions and industry and can increase the transparency in the management of higher education centers.

Thus, the world modern practice proves that, relations with industry are necessary for higher education institutions. Particularly, high competitive tourism sector demands it much more. The knowledge and information gained, mutual development, increasing of competitiveness of destinations, challenges of other industries make it necessary for every party.

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# ОЦЕНКА СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА МЕЖДУ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕМ И ТРУДОУСТРОЙСТВОМ В ТУРИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ИНДУСТРИИ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА

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Резюме: Целью данной статьи является исследование влияния сотрудничества университета и индустрии на будущее развитие профессиональных кадров в туристической сфере Азербайджана. Несмотря на широкое развитие туризма, существуют проблемы с кадровым потенциалом в Азербайджане. Известно, что индустрия туризма критично относится к уровню подготовки кадров в туристических учебных заведениях. К сожаленью, туристическая индустрия Азербайджана состоит, в основном, из иностранцев, и этот факт доказывает пропасть, существующую между туристическим образованием и индустрией. Если будет существовать пропасть между ожидаемым результатом в туристической индустрии и туристическим образованием, то невозможно будет добиться устойчивого развития в этой сфере.

Для изучения причин, создающих эту пропасть, в статье был сделан анализ инфраструктуры существующих в Азербайджане туристических учебных заведений, а также даны рекомендации в направлении создания сотрудничества между образованием и индустрией.

Исследование было проведено между туристической отраслью и образованием, а также отношение студентов и работников туризма к такому партнерству. Изучались студенты, которые изучают связанные с туризмом факультеты и сотрудники, работающие в секторе туризма, и проанализировали их впечатления и требования в отношении сотрудничества. Запросы были проведены как для студентов университетов, так и для туристических фирм с целью получения данных и сопоставимого анализа. Однако исследование показало, что ограниченное исследование в Азербайджане, систематически изучает то, что нужно туристической отрасли, и степень, в которой туризм высшего образования отвечает этим потребностям. Следовательно, выпускники и представители туристской отрасли предложили, чтобы было тесное сотрудничество между преподавателями и туристскими отраслями. Представители опроса внесли предложения, касающиеся сотрудничества, такие как отношения между представителями индустрии и туристическими предприятиями, которые должны быть консультативными, программы обмена должны быть реализованы, должны быть созданы независимые туристические вознаграждения.

**Ключевые слова:** туристическое образование, сотрудничество, кадровый потенциал, туристическая индустрия Азербайджана.

**JEL:** E24, L83, M53.

## ОЦЕНКА НА СЪТРУДНИЧЕСТВОТО В ОБЛАСТТА НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО И ЗАЕТОСТТА В ТУРИСТИЧЕСКАТА ИНДУСТРИЯ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАН

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Резюме: Целта на настоящата разработка е да се проучи влиянието на сътрудничеството между университетите и индустрията върху по-нататъшното развитие на кадровия потенциал, зает в областта на туризма в Азербайджан. Въпреки че туризмът в Азербайджан продължава да се развива, той е изправен пред значителни предизвикателства, свързани с кадровия потенциал. Известно е, че туристическата индустрия отправя критики към обучението по туризъм за това, че хората не са достатъчно добре подготвени за работа в сферата. За съжаление, в наши дни се забелязва, че по-голямата част от работната сила заета в туризма в Азербайджан се състои от чужденци, а този факт доказва, че съществува пропаст между очакваните резултати в туристическата индустрия и обучението по туризъм.

За да се разберат причините за съществуващата пропаст, в статията се прави анализ на инфраструктурата на съществуващите учебни заведения в Азербайджан и се дават препоръки за изграждане на сътрудничество между образованието и индустрията.

Проучването е проведено с представители на туристическата индустрия и образованието. Представено е отношението на студентите и служителите в туризма към подобно партньорство. Анкетирани са студенти, които учат в туристически факултети и служители, работещи в туристическия сектор, и са анализирани техните впечатления и изисквания по отношение на сътрудничеството. Проучването е проведено както със студенти, така и с туристически фирми, за да се съберат данни и да се направи сравнителен анализ. Проучването показва, че малкото проведени изследвания в Азербайджан систематично изучават това, от което се нуждае туристическата индустрия и степента, в която висшето образование по туризъм отговаря на тези нужди. Следователно, студентите и представителите на отрасъла предлагат да има тясно сътрудничество между обучаващите институции и отрасъла. Участниците в проучването правят предложения по отношение на сътрудничеството, например, че взаимоотношенията между представителите на индустрията и туристическите предприятия трябва да имат консултативен характер, да се осъществят програми за обмен и да се учредят независими награди в сферата на туризма.

**Ключови думи**: обучение по туризъм, сътрудничество, кадрови потенциал, туристическа индустрия в Азербайджан.

JEL: E24, L83, M53.

# ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COOPERATION IN AZERBALIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to investigate the university-industry cooperation influence on further tourism personnel potential development in Azerbaijan. Although tourism in Azerbaijan continues to grow it faces considerable challenges in the field of personnel potential. It is well-known that tourism industry has criticised tourism education for not adequately training people for employment in the industry. Unfortunately today the majority of workforce in the tourism industry of Azerbaijan consists of foreigners and this proves that there is a gap between tourism education and industry in Azerbaijan. If there is a gap between the outcomes expected in the tourism industry and tourism education, sustainable development is impossible to be achieved in that sphere.

In order to understand the reasons leading to that gap, the article analyzes the infrastructure of the existing tourism educational establishments in Azerbaijan and recommends that cooperation between education and industry be created.

The survey involves tourism industry and education as well as the attitudes of students and tourism employees towards such a partnership. Students who study at tourism-related establishments and employees who work in the tourism sector were surveyed and their opinions and needs regarding the collaboration were analysed. The survey was conducted for both university students and tourism firms in order to obtain data and make a comparable analysis. The study shows that limited research in Azerbaijan, however, has systematically explored what the tourism industry needs, and the extent to which tourism higher education meets these needs. Consequently, the graduates and tourism industry representatives suggested that there should be a close collaboration between the educators and the industries. Representatives of the survey made suggestions related to cooperation such as relations between industry representatives and tourism enterprises, which have to be consultative, exchange programmes have to be implemented, and independent tourism awards have to be established.

**Keywords:** tourism education, cooperation, personnel potential, Azerbaijan tourism industry.

**JEL:** E24, L83, M53.

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