

Conclusions and proposals for improvement from the seminar

'Challenges in university education in the field of Tourism'

The seminar "Challenges in university education in the field of Tourism" was held on 27 February 2019 at the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Girona. It constituted a forum for dialogue and reflection in which representatives from the business world and the university community strengthened synergies in order to achieve improvements in educational programmes.

A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is drawn up below setting out the main conclusions:

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>Substantial number of students (5,325 in 2018) and graduates (800 each year).</p> <p>Good education in planning and public management of destinations and accommodation. Good education in destination companies; this ensures professionals have the ability to interconnect business processes.</p> <p>Significant satisfaction of individuals who recently graduated and other graduates with theoretical and practical training.</p> <p>Good cooperation from the sector with training placements for students and a good rating from students (6.7) with regard to external training placements.</p> <p>High rate of employment (85%).</p> <p>Employment conditions show greater stability than in other sectors (61%).</p> <p>Employers rate the education received by individuals who recently graduated in Tourism as good (7.4).</p> <p>76% of companies offer external training placements and 55% have used the job bank service.</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>Recent university education (Royal Decree 604/1996), in many cases arising from the integration of HEIs into universities.</p> <p>Since it is multi-disciplinary education, the curriculum runs the risk of ending up like a disconnected conglomerate. Teaching staff involved from other departments (business, law, etc.) are often unfamiliar with the sector.</p> <p>Scant education relating to intermediary companies or destination management (sustainability, smart tourist services).</p> <p>Few subjects on ICTs.</p> <p>Usefulness of the Bachelor's degree final-year project given a below-average rating.</p> <p>Low rate of specific suitability (61% performing functions from the study programme). High rate of unsuitability compared to other study programmes (23% perform non-university functions). Employment conditions involve lower salaries than other study programmes.</p> <p>Low willingness to take the study programme again (48%).</p> <p>Companies report shortcomings in languages and personal skills (endeavour, proactivity, etc.).</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Actual disintermediation.</p> <p>Blockchain: will make it possible to reach the actual distributor.</p> <p>Addressing tourism sector problems/challenges.</p> <p>Offer of professionally-oriented institution-specific qualifications.</p> <p>Accreditation of institutions.</p> <p>Forecast of increased employment (53%), the primary reason being company expansion (68%).</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>Over-intermediation or hypermediation of services.</p> <p>Destination companies must "purchase" these services and loss of profit impacts employment conditions.</p> <p>Qualified jobs are centralised within these companies.</p> <p>Data (big data, business intelligence) is concentrated in search engines, hypermediation companies, etc., meaning an added cost to the sector.</p> <p>Businesses are unfamiliar with the education profiles of graduates of Tourism. Major prevalence of microenterprises and SMEs.</p>

	Student disorientation upon enrolling with regard to the education and the conditions in the sector (working hours, etc.).
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To address the shortcomings in terms of education provision it is necessary to:

1. Introduce education on intermediary companies and on destination management.
2. Expand digital education, understood as knowledge of data analysis methods and applications (to gain critical analysis and selection capacity), although not to develop new statistical methods or applications.
3. Improve work on cross-disciplinary skills linked to problem solving and decision-making, and languages.
4. Improve work on specific skills linked to the ability to work in complex, intense and unforeseeable situations; concern for continual improvement and excellence; ability to interpret data; analytical capacity to understand the behaviour in demand in the sector; and knowledge of all dimensions of the service/product offered.
5. Improve the design and delivery of Bachelor's degree final-year projects to enhance their quality and, in particular, to increase student satisfaction.
6. For highly professionally-oriented Master's degrees, assess whether a recognised Master's degree (based on requirements for a minimum percentage of the professors to be doctors) is appropriate or whether a Master's degree specific to the institution is more appropriate.
7. Raise awareness of the need for lifelong learning in order to encompass all possible fields that university education cannot cover (education in revenue management, financial analysis for hotel management, human resource management, big data for smart tourist services, etc.).
8. Speed up the processes for the review of curriculums. This may be done by simplifying existing verification processes or through a curriculum design (modular design, general learning outcomes) allowing for adaptation without the need to change the entire programme specification.

To address the challenges in terms of the inter-disciplinary nature of Tourism it is necessary to:

1. Bring the university structure closer in line with the profile and social demand for such highly interdisciplinary study programmes as those in the field Tourism by means of: research groups, research institutes, fields, areas, departments, etc.; ensuring better ties with the professional community.

To enhance the employability of graduates and the quality of their employment it is necessary to:

1. Set up a strategy to enable companies to be better acquainted with Tourism graduates; and graduates' knowledge of the needs of the sector. This will enhance graduates' satisfaction and ensure they are more suited to the workplace.



2. Refrain from increasing the range of study programmes offered because at the present time supply outstrips demand and the results for access to the labour market do not justify an increase in the programmes offered.
3. Ensure that all future students are aware that they need a proficient level of English and that knowledge of more than one language is desirable. This skill may be enhanced through strategies such as increasing the volume of teaching where English is the language of instruction and making it compulsory to carry out activities in English (deliver projects and presentations).
4. Offer specific education on actual peer-to-peer networks, blockchain and national intermediary companies as this could enhance the quality of employment in destination companies and, as a result, satisfaction among graduates and employers.