

EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A FACTOR OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CROATIA

Scientific paper

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to point to the characteristics of secondary (STE) and higher tourism education (HTE) in Croatian tourism and to stress its shortcomings that directly affect the qualification structure and the quality of those employed within tourism in the Republic of Croatia.

Hypothesis was that in order to increase the quality and competitiveness of Croatian tourism it is necessary to increase the number of highly educated experts in all business organizations in tourism.

Methodology – General scientific deduction and analysis methods were used to interpret the secondary data sources. The secondary data were collected from statistical reports, scientific and professional articles, and some Internet web sites. Additionally, the primary research was also conducted; to evaluate the efficiency of each education level the Delphi method of surveying experienced tourism experts was used.

Approach – Efficiency of work in tourism, regarded as a labour-intensive economic activity, is the basic factor of labour efficiency and competitiveness, and consequently of economic effects in tourism. A specific characteristic of tourism is that it evaluates, on an economic basis and through labour and capital, natural and sociocultural resources, thus producing added value. Starting from the fact that the employment function is one of the most important economic functions of tourism, this paper investigates and presents the role of formal education system (STE and HTE) in education of experts who would prospectively work in tourism in the Republic of Croatia.

Findings – Although the results of this analysis of STE and HTE system for tourism purposes in the Republic of Croatia makes it possible to say that there are relevant institutions and quality personnel that participate in this education process, when employment be taken into account, then the lack of highly educated experts (university and polytechnic level) becomes evident for tourism purposes in practice. The quality of experts working in top-management positions in tourism is also unsatisfactory.

The originality of the research results from the fact that the primary research was conducted to test the hypothesis. This research confirmed the hypothesis of the paper that to increase the quality and competitiveness of Croatian tourism it is necessary to increase the share of highly educated experts working in tourism.

Keywords education system, efficiency of the human factor in tourism, tourism in Croatia

INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental resource of increasing the quality of work, and consequently it is the key component of tourism development.¹ To meet the employment requirements in tourism in the Republic of Croatia, education of

¹ Bartoluci, M., Upravljanje razvojem turizma i poduzetništva, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2013, 350.

prospective employees is realized at three schooling levels: the secondary and higher education within the system of formal education on the one hand, and as informal education on the other. Such lifelong education implies expert improvement after regular education and is most frequently realized according to the work-and-study scheme. This type of scheme implies education through special courses and is not frequently pursued, which does not decrease its importance in tourism.

By critically analysing the formal education system in Croatian tourism, the goal of this paper was to point to its characteristics and to stress its shortcomings that directly affect the qualification structure and the quality of those employed within tourism in the Republic of Croatia. Since the quality of education is not the same at all levels, this directly results in inadequate qualifications of people employed in tourism in Croatia.² Tourism is globally known for its capability to absorb large numbers of unqualified workers³, as well as workers with lower qualifications⁴, and this is particularly expressed in Croatia. This statement can be corroborated by the official statistical data for the year 2012. Highly educated workers (polytechnic and university education) amount to only 13% of the people employed in accommodation and food services. Only 17% workers are qualified for such jobs, and most workers have secondary education (55%), which points to the importance of secondary vocational tourism schools. As much as 15% of workers employed in Croatian tourism are unskilled, unqualified and semi-qualified workers.⁵ Unfavourable qualification structure of employees is frequently said to be one of the biggest problems of Croatian tourism.⁶ Such a finding should be complemented by the information regarding the quality of their work, regardless of the obtained qualifications for certain jobs, this quality being directly affected by the education system focusing on the requirements of tourism that is consequently in the focus of investigation in this paper.

The aim of this paper was to identify the efficiency of the secondary and higher education in Croatian tourism. From this aim the research hypothesis was derived that in order to increase the quality and competitiveness of Croatian tourism it is necessary to increase the number of highly educated experts in all business organizations in tourism. General scientific deduction and analysis methods were used to interpret the secondary data sources. The secondary data were collected from statistical reports, scientific and professional articles, and some Internet web sites. Additionally, for the purpose of testing the hypothesis of this study, the primary research was also conducted. To evaluate the efficiency of each education level in tourism the Delphi method of surveying the experts in tourism was used. The research was carried out from 3rd to 15th December 2013 through electronic mail on the population of 52

² Opačić, V. S., Bogdan, Lj., "Problems of Employment in Catering and Tourism". Proceedings of the Međimurje University of Applied Sciences in Čakovec. 1(1). Retrived: 20 January 2012 from: <http://hrcak.srce.hr/55557>. 2010, 1.

³ Cooper, C., Hall, M., Contemporary Tourism: An International Approach. Elsevier, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2008, 298.

⁴ Costa, C., Carvalho, I., Cacador, S., Breda, Z., Future higher Education in Tourism Studies and the Labor Market: Gender Perspectives on Expectations and Experiences", In: Prebežac, D., Schott, C., Sheldon, P. The Tourism Education Futures Initiative – Activating Change in Tourism Education. Routledge, London and New York, 2014, 194.

⁵ CBSa, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Zagreb, 2013, 144.

⁶ Bartoluci, M., Upravljanje razvojem turizma i poduzetništva, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2013, 350, 42.

experienced tourism experts of different profiles. In total, 35 of the responses were received, giving a representative response rate 67% and a valid sample for research having in mind a relatively small population of experts. In the structure of the sample, 57% of the respondents in this research were tourism experts from scientific and education institutions, 14% were from public administration (Ministry of Tourism, state and local governments and similar institutions), 23% were from business (travel agencies, hotels, etc.) and 6% of the respondents were from the tourism boards, thus covering all areas relevant for tourism. The structured questionnaire consisted of six main questions, five of which were close-ended with answers offered. The subjects were asked to evaluate certain elements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from one (very bad) to five (very good). Although questionnaires were distributed by e-mail to the known respondents, the results were statistically processed on an anonymous basis. The open-ended question served to collect useful suggestions of the subjects regarding the Croatian education system aimed at educating the personnel necessary within tourism. A portion of the yielded results from this primary research regarding the quality of formal education for tourism and the quality of employed persons in Croatian tourism are analysed in this paper. Another, very short, primary research was done on the graduate fifth-year students of Tourism at the Faculty of Economics & Business from Zagreb in the academic year 2013/2014 with the aim to determine the reasons for choosing to study tourism. The data were collected by using an anonymous questionnaire that contained four close-ended questions. In total, 66 responses were collected.

SECONDARY TOURISM EDUCATION (STE) IN CROATIA

STE in the Republic of Croatia is realized at 18 specialized vocational schools. These schools have different names, e.g. catering-tourism, hotel-tourism or economics-trade and catering school, etc. and offer programmes of different duration (from three to four years) and contents, depending on the profile of occupations for which the students are educated. The only available piece of information pointing to the quality of secondary schooling in Croatia is the Decision Regarding per Curriculum and per School Quotas for the Enrolment into the First Form of Secondary Schools in the Academic Year 2013/2014, published by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia⁷. The granted enrolment quota of 2,829 students into 18 vocation tourism schools amounts to 5% of the total planned quota of students enrolled in secondary schools in Croatia for the academic year 2013/2014. The planned enrolment per school was between 140 and 252 students. Besides these schools whose orientation is completely on tourism, tourism-oriented curricula are realized in 86 other secondary schools, mostly in comprehensive schools or secondary schools of economics, for which the intake quota for 3,188 students was planned; however, classes with a smaller number of students are planned in these schools. The intake quota totalling 6,017 students was planned for vocational schools in tourism at 104 secondary schools, which

⁷ MSESRC, Ministry of science, education and sports of the Republic of Croatia (MZOS; Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa). Odluka o upisu učenika u I. razred srednje škole u školskoj godini 2013./2014. Zagreb: published at 26 April 2013. Retrived: 10 September 2013 from: <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=12406&sec=3339>. 2013.

represents 10.8% of the enrolment quota of all secondary schools in Croatia in analysed academic year. At this education level there are five basic occupations for which the students are most frequently educated – cook (34% of the enrolment quota), waiter (24%), hospitality-tourism technician (16%), tourism-hospitality commercialist (10%) and pastry cook (7%). The analysis of tourism-focused curricula has shown that they are mostly meant to incorporate the study of a single foreign language, while the study of other foreign languages has been planned only for the programmes for hospitality-commercialists and hospitality-technicians, which is confusing if one takes into account the fact that about 90% of the total tourism overnight stays in Croatia are realized by foreign tourists.⁸ These personnel are frequently going to be in direct contact with the guests, among which foreign guests dominate. Further, some other special skills (e.g. necessary for the personnel working in wellness, the personnel rendering services connected with adventurism or a special diet, etc.) and contemporary knowledge (especially the knowledge of information technologies) are not planned in these curricula. This shows that such curricula do not follow market trends in which diversification occurs on a daily basis due to the diversification of tourism offer in other competitive tourism countries, which ultimately leads to strong polarization of tourism interests and needs. For example, research on personnel having this education level in the European Union (EU) shows that employers increasingly more frequently seek the knowledge of information technologies and multifunctional expertise, i.e. the so-called “multitasking” skills (maids and cooks, and similar combinations), which is a direct consequence of the dominance of small and medium entrepreneurs in the HORECA sector within the EU.⁹ Also, they simultaneously demand a significantly wider spectrum of professional training than the one to be found in the Republic of Croatia.¹⁰ According to the latest forecasts of renowned tourism experts from all over the world in the year 2030 new knowledge and new skills will be sought from those employed in tourism for jobs that are nowadays not yet known and not yet recognized in a tourism market.¹¹

The primary research done with the domestic tourism experts regarding the versatility of tourism-oriented curricula at STE level in Croatia showed that these curricula received a low average mark of 2.7. Assuming that such an evenly limited structure of curricula also points to their quality and poor adaptation to market needs, as much as 40% of the experts regarded these curricula as unsatisfactory and gave them very low marks (1 and 2), which is presented in Figure 1.

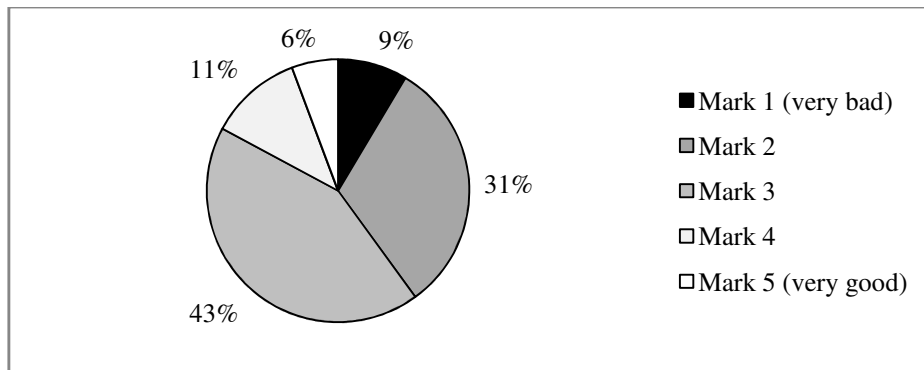
⁸ CBSb, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Tourism – cumulative data, First Release, Number 4.3.2/11. Zagreb. Retrived: 10 December 2013 from: <http://www.dzs.hr/>. 2013.

⁹ CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. Trends and skill needs in tourism, Luxembourg. Retrived: 10 Januray 2012 from: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/upload/information_resources/bookshop/472/5165_en.pdf. 2005.

¹⁰ Bartoluci, M., Hendija, Z., Budimski, V., “Specific aspects of tourism education system in the Republic of Croatia”, 2nd Advances on Hospitality and Tourism Marketing & Management Conference. CD from International conference, 31 May 2012 – 3 June 2012, Corfu Greece, 2012, 3.

¹¹ Sheldon, P., Prebežac, D., Fesenmaier, D., R., The Tourism Education Futures Initiative: An Introduction. In: Prebežac, D., Schott, C., Sheldon, P. The Tourism Education Futures Initiative – Activating Change in Tourism Education. Routledge, London and New York, 2014, 1.

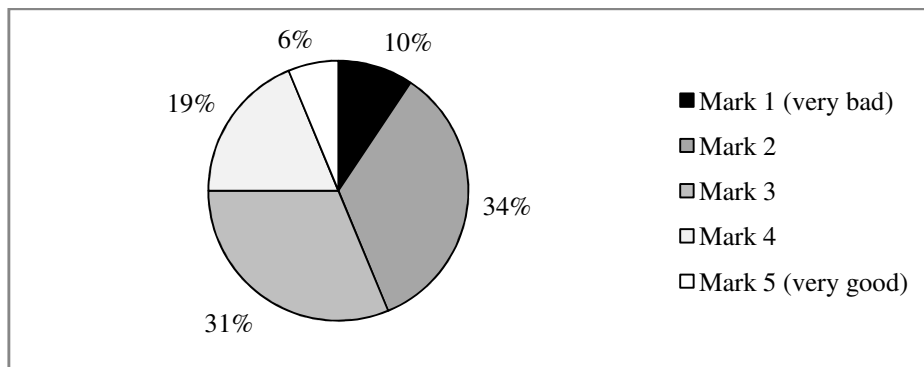
Figure 1: **The evaluation of the versatility of tourism-oriented curricula in STE in Croatia**



Source: authors, 2013, Zagreb.

A very important element in vocational education of the personnel needed in tourism are practice classes, the existing ones being evaluated by the subjects in this research with a very low mark (2.8), as presented in Figure 2. As for the analysis of the structure of marks, the share of low marks was high (43% of the experts evaluated the existing practice classes with marks 1 and 2), which points to the fact that the existing organization and quality of practical training does not meet the market needs.

Figure 2: **The evaluation of the inclusion of students in practical training in STE in Croatia**



Source: authors, 2013, Zagreb.

The dissatisfactory quality of the secondary-school-educated personnel working in tourism and the range of practical training included in curricula realized in secondary tourism-oriented schools resulted in dissatisfaction of employers with the quality of the personnel. The most frequent comments of employers at the recently held 16th Congress of hotel managers in Zagreb (December 2013) related to the fact that the

people they employed, e.g. cooks, waiters and maids, i.e. the occupations most frequently represented in vocational schools curricula, were insufficiently educated.¹²

Technical support in secondary schools received a below-average mark of 2.8. Although the teachers who realize the classes in vocational schools received a somewhat higher average mark of 3.4 by the experts, i.e. the subjects in this research, this mark should still be regarded as low, because the teachers are the fundamental carriers of vocational education for occupations that dominate in Croatian tourism.

The comparison of the obtained results of the primary research with the earlier evaluation of STE in the Republic of Croatia by Mičić points to the chronic shortcomings of this system, and these shortcomings come down to the following: the lack of qualified teachers conducting classes and professional training in tourism; inadequate technical support in schools (which influences the quality of classes and realization of the planned programmes); limitation of the connection between the public and private sector in general, significant lack, due to the unfavourable general economic situation in the country, of scholarships, granted by private entrepreneurs, for students in vocational occupations in tourism.¹³ Acquiring theoretical knowledge is still the dominant teaching practice, and there are not enough practical training classes. The basic problem of vocational education in tourism in the Republic of Croatia results precisely from the poor connection between education system and practice and vice versa. Internal vocational training is also neglected as a permanent quality enhancement programme, as well as the lifelong education programmes. The result of this is the low mark of the quality of experts and qualified workers in tourism (secondary school education, skilled worker qualifications, etc.) presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Quality and a sufficient number of skilled workers in tourism in Croatia (in %)

	Total number of answers = 100%				
	Mark 5 (very good)	Mark 4	Mark 3	Mark 2	Mark 1 (very bad)
Quality of skilled workers in tourism in the Republic of Croatia		25.7	54.3	20.0	
A sufficient number of skilled workers in tourism in the Republic of Croatia		17.6	44.2	35.3	2.9

Source: authors, 2013, Zagreb.

¹² Plješa, S., *Hotelijeri: fale nam kadrovi*, Zagreb: Privredni vjesnik. No. 3805. Published: 2 December 2013, 2013, 16.

¹³ Mičić, Z., *Ljudski resursi u turizmu – jedan od ključnih razvojnih izazova*. Cavtat, 25 – 27 October 2006 lecture at the congress "Days of Croatian Tourism". Retrived: 10 Januray 2012 from: http://www.mint.hr/UserDocsImages/micic_cavtat06.pdf. 2006.

Due to the relatively low marks given for the quality of curricula in secondary schools, the low mark received by the expert personnel (secondary school qualifications, skilled worker qualifications, etc.) employed in tourism for their quality was also expected. According to the results of our primary research, tourism experts, i.e. the subjects in primary research, gave them the average mark of 3.1. For every fifth subject, their quality of work does not deserve a higher mark than the modest 2, and 54% of the subjects were of the opinion that the quality of this personnel deserved the mark of 3. The number of these workers proved not to be satisfactory either, since the experts noticed the lack of such personnel in tourism (the mark of 1 was given by 3% of the experts and the mark of 2 by the additional 35%). At the already mentioned 16th Congress of hotel managers the lack of personnel in catering and hotel management (72% in the food and drinks sector, 50% of workers who work at reception desks) was particularly emphasized.¹⁴

The last five years saw the weakening of interest of young people for vocational education in tourism since the share of students attending tourism-oriented pupils in the total number of all secondary school students decreased from 9 (in the academic year 2006/2007) to 8.7% (in the academic year 2009/2010).¹⁵ The main shortcoming of STE is the poor interest of young people for such occupations.¹⁶ It should be emphasized that Croatian government has depicted in time the problem of this poorer interest, and subsequently the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia invested, in the period between 2008 and 2011, approximately 4.1 million euros into programmes aimed at encouraging STE, into technical support of secondary schools that educate such personnel and into granting the scholarships for students who wish to pursue their future careers in tourism.¹⁷ Additionally, in December 2011 the Strategy of the Development of Croatian Tourism until the Year 2020 was completed, and in it special emphasis was put on human resources, i.e. on increasing the quality of personnel working in tourism.¹⁸ In October 2013 the Suggestions for the Improvement of STE, issued by the Institute for Tourism in Zagreb, were presented¹⁹, as well as the suggestions for founding the reference centres of excellence within the system of vocational education in tourism and catering, the so-called CapTure.²⁰ Although some

¹⁴ Plješa, S., Hotelijeri: fale nam kadrovi, Zagreb: Privredni vjesnik. No. 3805. Published: 2 December 2013, 2013, 16.

¹⁵ CBS, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Zagreb, 2012, 474.

¹⁶ Bartoluci, M., Hendija, Z., Budimski, V., "Specific aspects of tourism education system in the Republic of Croatia", 2nd Advances on Hospitality and Tourism Marketing & Management Conference. CD from International conference, 31 May 2012 – 3 June 2012, Corfu Greece, 2012, 12.

¹⁷ MTRC, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia. Novosti: Vijesti: Ministar Bajs potpisao ugovore o dodjeli 600 tisuća kuna bespovratnih potpora za projekte u programu „Turizam bez zapreka“. Zagreb. Announced: 20 September 2009. Retrived: 10 Januray 2012 from: <http://www.mint.hr/default.aspx?id=5606>, 2009.

¹⁸ MTRC, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia, Strategija razvoja turizma do 2020. godine. Bartoluci, M., Boranić-Živoder, S., Hendija, Z., Ivandić, N., Krešić, D., Marušić, Z., Telišman Košuta, N., Tomljenović, R., Trezner, Ž.: Čimbenici razvoja turizma u RH II: obrazovanje, suvremene tehnologije i inovacije, turističko posredovanje te marketing, promocija i imidž Hrvatske. Zagreb: Institut za turizam. 2011.

¹⁹ Ćorak, S., Tomljenović, R., Prijedlozi za unapređenje srednjoškolskog obrazovanja za potrebe turizma u Hrvatskoj. Institut za turizam, Zagreb, 2012.

²⁰ MTRC, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia. Centri izvrsnosti za jačanje konkurentnosti ljudskih potencijala u turizmu. Announced: 3 July 2013. Retrived: 16 December 2013 from: <http://www.mint.hr/default.aspx?id=10107>. 2013.

measures for the improvement of STE system in the Republic of Croatia saw the light of day, the warning, however, should be stressed that the changes in education system are not yet evident, so that a relatively long time is necessary from its reformation to the moment when the results become visible in economy.

HIGHER TOURISM EDUCATION (HTE) IN CROATIA

As most European countries, Croatia has joined the Bologna process in 2001 by implementing it into higher education system in 2005. All study programmes were coordinated according to the requests brought by this process, and all students who graduate from Bologna studies receive ECTS credits and are entitled to the diploma supplement that is valid within the EU, which gained more importance since 1st July 2013 when Croatia became the member of the European Union. The Bologna system consists of three studying cycles – undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate studies, which determines the duration of studying (3-8 years), and the tourism studies in Croatia are organized accordingly.

Before conducting the analysis of HTE system in Croatia, it is necessary to emphasize the specifics of tourism studies. Globally, higher education system in the field of tourism is a relatively young discipline whose origins can be traced to the 1960s.²¹ Similar studies were also organized in Croatia, i.e. in Opatija²² and Zagreb²³. In the world, at first, tourism was integrated into economics and geography studies, but later it was connected to some other scientific disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology and other social sciences. In Croatia, in its early starts, tourism study was mostly connected to the economics studies – it is usually taught within the economic faculties' programmes. However, since tourism is not yet regarded as a separate scientific field, the data concerning the tourism study is still quite scarce. The only available information is related to education programmes within the field of tourism, as well as to the institutions that conduct these programmes in the Republic of Croatia, whereas there is no information about the number of students that graduate from these institutions.

Why do students decide to study tourism? Most of them enrol in this study programme for all the wrong reasons, mostly because of adventurism and glamour²⁴, because they perceive tourism through the prism of tourism journeys, of sunny beaches with the strong 'jet set' image. Many of them, completely unrealistically, expect to become top managers immediately upon graduation. However, the reality is completely different, since employment in tourism often has quite the opposite reality, not connected to the

²¹ Cooper, C., Shepherd, R., Westlake, J., *Educating the Educators in Tourism - A Manual of Tourism and Hospitality Education*. World Tourism Organization and University of Surrey and Hospitality Education, Madrid, 1996, 4.

²² Avelini-Holjevac, I., "Trideseta godišnjica visokog školstva za poslove u turizmu i hotelijerstvu u Opatiji". *Turizam*, 39(4), 1991, 118.

²³ Čavlek, N., Bartoluci, M., Prebežac, D., Kesar, O., *Turizam – ekonomske osnove i organizacijski sustav*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2011, 4.

²⁴ Cooper, C., Shepherd, R., Westlake, J., *Educating the Educators in Tourism - A Manual of Tourism and Hospitality Education*. World Tourism Organization and University of Surrey and Hospitality Education, Madrid, 1996, 5.

illusions the students have when enrolling the faculties.²⁵ The other extreme is represented by the individuals that have no desire to search for employment within tourism industry, since they realize, immediately upon graduation, that these occupations have many disadvantages (seasonal and/or underpaid jobs, unstable working conditions, etc.). They decide to seek for safer and better paid jobs within some other services.²⁶ Some students are aware that tourism has positive impacts on economic growth, the increase in employment rate and environmental protection.²⁷ In order to collect the information concerning students' motivation to study tourism in the Republic of Croatia, in the academic year 2013/2014 the authors conducted a short research among the graduate students of tourism. The results showed that most of the students decided to study tourism because it is a large, growing, global economic activity (46% of students), because it contributes to Croatian economic growth (27%), because it offers the possibility to find a job during the time of global economic crisis and recession (16%) and because it enables the protection of Croatian natural resources (10%) alongside other less important reasons. These results give a clear picture of how young people in Croatia perceive their employment opportunities within tourism industry. Even though finding jobs in tourism is not easy, students still decide to study it and try to improve their opportunities to be competitive in the job market. This research confirmed the results of an earlier research (conducted in the academic year 2011/2012 when the questionnaire was circulated among 112 students of this study level²⁸), which points to the actual interest of Croatian tertiary-level students for tourism studies and their wish to find a job in tourism upon graduation.

Nowadays, out of the total number of 122 colleges in Croatia, tourism is taught at 15 higher education institutions (8 faculties and 7 polytechnics).²⁹ Of these 15 institutions of higher education most are public institutions (11), and four are private. Contemporary HTE in Croatia is very complex and provides various possibilities of education and training. It is conducted at three levels of education – universities, polytechnics and colleges. The aforementioned 15 institutions are running 39 different tourism programmes, which represents the modest 3% of all study programmes that were approved by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in 2011.³⁰ Even though one could argue that there are many such study programmes in Croatia, it

²⁵ Fidgeon, P. R., "Tourism education and curriculum design: A time for consolidation and review?" *Tourism Management* 31, 2010, 706.

²⁶ CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. Trends and skill needs in tourism, Luxembourg. Retrived: 10 Januray 2012 from: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/upload/information_resources/bookshop/472/5165_en.pdf. 2005, 128.

²⁷ Cooper, C., Shepherd, R., Westlake, J., *Educating the Educators in Tourism - A Manual of Tourism and Hospitality Education*. World Tourism Organization and University of Surrey and Hospitality Education, Madrid, 1996, 99.

²⁸ Bartoluci, M., Hendija, Z., Budimski, V., "Specific aspects of tourism education system in the Republic of Croatia", 2nd Advances on Hospitality and Tourism Marketing & Management Conference. CD from International conference, 31 May 2012 – 3 June 2012, Corfu Greece, 2012, 5.

²⁹ AZZVO, Agency for Science and Higher Education, Polazne osnove za mrežu visokih učilišta i studijskih programa u Republici Hrvatskoj, Retrived: 10 January 2012 from: <http://www.azvo.hr/>, 2010, 8.

³⁰ MTRC, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia, *Strategija razvoja turizma do 2020. godine*. Bartoluci, M., Boranić-Živoder, S., Hendija, Z., Ivandić, N., Krešić, D., Marušić, Z., Telišman Košuta, N., Tomljenović, R., Trezner, Ž.: *Čimbenici razvoja turizma u RH II: obrazovanje, suvremene tehnologije i inovacije, turističko posredovanje te marketing, promocija i imidž Hrvatske*. Zagreb: Institut za turizam. 2011, 11.

is only after the comparison with a country like United Kingdom that the actual situation becomes visible. There were 1,160 study programmes in the field of tourism in that country in 2008³¹, which were mostly interdisciplinary (economics, geography, communicology, event management, adventurism, sustainable development tourism, tourism journalism, tourism within public sector, food and tourism, tourism and pop music, Japanese and tourism, etc.), which makes it possible for British students to have better employment opportunities in tourism, which results in the better quality of services provided at all levels of tourism offer in United Kingdom.³² The personnel with better tourism education enable all service providers to choose students with higher levels of educations, and experience shows that such employees are simultaneously more productive.³³ This is also one of the main reasons because of which one should strive to increase the number of workers with higher education in Croatian tourism.

Of the previously mentioned tourism programmes, most or almost half (19 programmes) are realized at the low levels of tertiary education – 12 of them as professional studies and 7 programmes as undergraduate professional studies. The number of tourism programmes is inversely proportionate to the level of studying as are the variations in the number of students. The number of students declines with the increase of the level of education. Graduate study implies 13 programmes that are mostly realized (11 of them) as university studies, whereas postgraduate tourism studies imply seven programmes, all of which are taught exclusively at universities.³⁴ Only a small number of students decide to study at postgraduate studies (partially because of the personal financial reasons). As for the programme contents, most programmes (11 of 39) are in the field of management (management in tourism, tourism management, sustainable development management, rural tourism management, etc.). Such programmes are mostly realized at all community colleges, mostly at lower study levels (professional ones). HTE in the Republic of Croatia is mostly directed towards education of various profiles of managers, but also of other highly educated experts for the areas like finances, book-keeping, public procurement, planning and analysis, auditing, controlling, marketing, etc. This is the reason why graduate students can find a job in other areas as well. The second most represented study programme is business economics with the major in tourism (8 programmes), which predominates at all universities. There are 7 programmes that are related to culture in tourism. Besides that, tourism study in the Republic of Croatia is connected with health, sport, agriculture, ecology, small and medium entrepreneurship, etc. When comparing the study programmes of various higher education institutions that educate students for work in tourism industry in the Republic of Croatia, it is possible to conclude that education at all levels (college, undergraduate and graduate study) is

³¹ Fidgeon, P.R., "Tourism education and curriculum design: A time for consolidation and review?" *Tourism Management* 31, 2010, 706.

³² Bartoluci, M., Hendija, Z., Budimski, V., "Specific aspects of tourism education system in the Republic of Croatia", 2nd Advances on Hospitality and Tourism Marketing & Management Conference. CD from International conference, 31 May 2012 – 3 June 2012, Corfu Greece, 2012, 5.

³³ Fidgeon, P.R., "Tourism education and curriculum design: A time for consolidation and review?" *Tourism Management* 31, 2010, 707.

³⁴ Bartoluci, M., Hendija, Z., Budimski, V., "Specific aspects of tourism education system in the Republic of Croatia", 2nd Advances on Hospitality and Tourism Marketing & Management Conference. CD from International conference, 31 May 2012 – 3 June 2012, Corfu Greece, 2012, 5.

provided mostly by faculties of economics. Further diversification of these programmes will make it possible to produce experts who will be able to meet the requirements of the very demanding tourism market.³⁵

Upon implementing the Bologna process in Croatian higher education system, the mobility of students became possible, i.e. it became possible for the students to complete their undergraduate studies at one faculty and then continue their graduate study at some other faculty either in Croatia or abroad (the ERASMUS project at the Faculty of Economics & Business in Zagreb). Within the doctoral study at the Faculty of Economics & Business in Zagreb the students can go abroad to other universities through the student exchange, and the foreign students included in the Erasmus Mundus programme attend the doctoral study in tourism at the Faculty of Economics & Business in Zagreb.³⁶

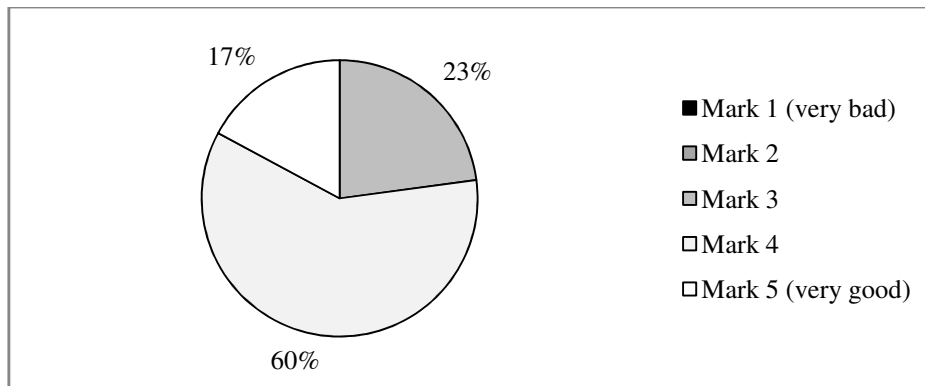
HTE in Croatia is well organized because of a wide range of education opportunities at various levels of higher education. However, the shortcoming in this matter is that HTE programmes are not enrolled by many students. If the number of such students were greater, this would provide the improvement of personnel structure of those employed in Croatian tourism.

The conducted primary research regarding the quality of the tourism-oriented classes at various faculties showed the satisfaction of domestic experts, the subjects in this research, as regards: the number of faculties, which received a high average mark of 4.0, the quality of teaching staff that also received a high average mark of 3.9, as well as the quality of curricula that received the average mark of 3.8. Polytechnics fall behind universities in these indicators, one reason perhaps being the fact that they offer lower-level higher tourism-oriented education. It is interesting to analyse the structure of the marks for the quality of the teaching staff at faculties – unlike the teachers at secondary schools, the teaching staff at faculties received above-average marks (77% of the teaching staff received the marks of 5 and 4), which is presented in Figure 3.

³⁵ MTRC, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia, Strategija razvoja turizma do 2020. godine. Bartoluci, M., Boranić-Živoder, S., Hendija, Z., Ivandić, N., Krešić, D., Marušić, Z., Telišman Košuta, N., Tomljenović, R., Trezner, Ž.: Čimbenici razvoja turizma u RH II: obrazovanje, suvremene tehnologije i inovacije, turističko posredovanje te marketing, promocija i imidž Hrvatske. Zagreb: Institut za turizam. 2011, 20.

³⁶ Bartoluci, M., Hendija, Z., Budimski, V., "Specific aspects of tourism education system in the Republic of Croatia", 2nd Advances on Hospitality and Tourism Marketing & Management Conference. CD from International conference, 31 May 2012 – 3 June 2012, Corfu Greece, 2012, 6.

Figure 3: **The evaluation of the quality of the teaching staff at the faculties at which tourism study programmes exist in the Republic of Croatia**



Source: authors, 2013, Zagreb

As was the case with secondary school teachers, practical training seems to be the main shortcoming of higher tourism school education, which was confirmed by the outstandingly low average mark given to it by the experts (2.3). Their main criticism regarding this level of education related to the students' practical training in tourism. Here are some suggestions: Compulsory students' tours should be introduced; Connection with practical situations should be addressed; Students need more practical training; Students should participate in all jobs in tourism, as well as in catering and hotel management from the first year of study to be able to gain insight into the importance of the quality of services rendered; Students should participate more in project designs aimed at meeting the requirements of industry; More practical training is necessary; Practical experience of students should be provided during the tourist season when there are no classes at faculties; Business and faculties should be better connected; A stronger connection between business and HTE is necessary; Conditions should be created for better and more quality realization of practical training; Both the students and the teaching staff should have more contact with practice in tourism; Practice abroad should be compulsory; More practical training is necessary, particularly abroad; More concrete case analyses during practical training are necessary; A better and more intense practical training, etc.

Although the results of this analysis of HTE system for tourism purposes in the Republic of Croatia makes it possible to say that there are relevant institutions and quality personnel that participate in this education process, when employment be taken into account, then the lack of highly educated experts (university and polytechnic level) becomes evident for tourism purposes in practice. The quality of experts working in top-management positions in tourism is also unsatisfactory. Every third expert in this research stressed that Croatian tourism lacks educated managers (31%), which is presented in Table 2. Almost two thirds of the surveyed experts were of the opinion this structure was average (the mark of 3 was given by 54% experts), below average (the mark of 2 was given by 9% of the experts), although it should be noted that these personnel received somewhat better marks than those with a lower education level. This has confirmed the basic research hypothesis that in order to increase the quality

and competitiveness of Croatian tourism, it is necessary to increase the share of highly educated experts in tourism.

Table 2: **The quality of the personnel at management positions in tourism and a sufficient number of managers in tourism in Croatia (in %)**

	Total number of answers = 100%				
	Mark 5 (very good)	Mark 4	Mark 3	Mark 2	Mark 1 (very bad)
The quality of the personnel at management positions in tourism in RC	2.9	34.3	54.3	8.5	
A sufficient number of managers in tourism in the Republic of Croatia	2.9	14.3	51.4	20.0	11.4

Source: authors, 2013, Zagreb.

Croatia's accession to the European Union provided prerequisites for the improvement of HTE for tourism purposes: greater mobility of students and teachers was made possible, better scholarship opportunities were created, participation in international projects and the application for funding and encouragement programmes of the EU are now possible, scientific publications are encouraged, as well as professional symposia, research in tourism, etc.

Higher education has a special role in the development of a society because it creates personnel which are, by being more educated, more ready to encounter all development challenges of contemporary society – from using new technologies, the Internet, information, etc. Croatia follows the trend of developed countries in the world by increasing education opportunities for tourism purposes at the highest education level, and the diversification of such curricula enables the development of human resources that will be able to meet the requirements of the diversified tourism market.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the analysis of secondary data and the results of primary research it becomes evident that the chronic problem of Croatian tourism is connected with secondary education for tourism purposes, the more so because most of the people employed in Croatian tourism have secondary education. The quality of higher education for tourism purposes is significantly better; however, the number of such experts is not satisfactory and it should be increased, since they are the carriers of tourism development.

Still, how much attention is paid in Croatia to the improvement of the quality of human resources in tourism which are the key renderers of tourism services? There is no awareness that the competitiveness of Croatian tourism highly depends on people directly participating in tourism, however, it especially depends on people, who are

indirectly connected with this economic activity, and their work quality. The primary research confirmed the hypothesis of this paper that to increase the quality and competitiveness of Croatian tourism it is necessary to increase the share of highly educated experts working in tourism. To be able to implement this recommendation, it is necessary to:

- change the image of tourism, increase the reputation of employment in tourism by pointing in media to the constant growth of demand for such experts, as well as to point to the advantages of employment in tourism for women, for the young people and for those with a lower education level, as well as to point to the opportunities to achieve additional income during high tourist season,
- improve all levels of education (from secondary school to higher education),
- provide possibilities of lifelong learning, as well as of the improvement and promotion of employees,
- provide international certificates for employees,
- observe the changes on the demand market (what guests want and expect), and constantly adjust the offer to market changes (follow the competition) – it is not enough to settle the current needs for workers, but it is crucial to bear in mind the future.

Based on everything stated above it is possible to conclude that a quality human factor has an irreplaceable role in sustainable tourism development of the Republic of Croatia.

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