

The forming of health tourism specialisation in the teaching supply of Szolnok College-business faculty

(Az egészségturizmus oktatásának alakulása a szolnoki főiskola üzleti fakultásának képzési kínálatában)

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Introduction of the College

Since 1993, Szolnok College has been one of the most dynamically developing institutions in Hungarian higher education. It has now become an intellectual and educational centre for the Hungarian Great Plain. The College operates a branch in Budapest, and also provides extensive distance learning facilities. In the past five years, Szolnok College has doubled the Majors offered, including International Business, Business & Commerce, *Catering & Hotel Management*, *Tourism & Hotel Management* and during the last years, the student numbers have grown almost tenfold.

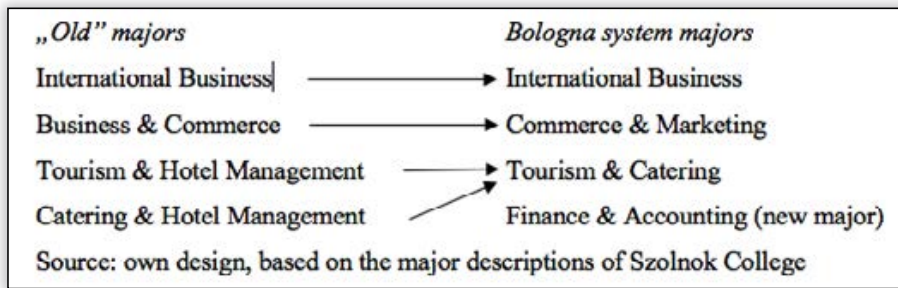
But in the semesters of 2007-2008, as the effect of the new matriculation system, what is strongly Budapest centred, the number of the students drastically decreased, as in the other small colleges out of Budapest.

For the successful survive, the Szolnok College try to working towards becoming a major (or an important) European-focused Business School in the East of the European Union, retaining important national values and embracing the best international standards in theory and practice. Building on the commitment of a dedicated staff supplemented by highly qualified external lecturers and native speakers, the College is introducing a range of subject taught in the English language, eventually leading to the award of international degrees, diplomas, and vocationally-focused qualifications.

Majors of the Szolnok College in the past, and in the new Bachelor system

Szolnok College currently teaches students to Bachelor degree level in four Majors, and paralelly the outrunning „old” majors. The 1. figure shows, how changed the old majors into the new majors.

Figure 1.: *Changes in the majors of Szolnok College*



Source: own design, based on the major descriptions of Szolnok College

As can be seen in this figure, the earlier existing Tourism & Hotel Management and Catering & Hotel Management majors were transformed into one, and a totally new major was created, Finance & Accounting. That was necessary to make some changes on the faculties in order to better align with the Bologna Process. The Bologna process has some disadvantages too, next to the advantages. For example in this case the number of the earlier majors decreased: Tourism and Catering majors together. That's why the number of the subjects decreased, and can be found decrease in staff number too (growth of unemployment between lecturers). Another disadvantage can be the less traineeship period (practice time) for students, and this new major isn't known on the labour market. Some of the experts, directors from the hotel business have doubt about this new major, because of the lack of traineeship period, and the lack of earlier existing subjects. According to the view of the colleges, the competition between these small colleges will strengthen.

Originally the period of the qualification was in the full-time course 8 semesters, which includes at the 8th semester manager assistant practice. At the 5th or 6th semester will be 3+3 months long (hotel + travel agency) practice, and during the 3rd semester one week in travel agency, during the 4th semester one week hotel practice. (The correspondence, distance learning, and post-graduate qualifications take also 8 semesters, but it doesn't include the practice semesters.) The purpose of the qualification was to train such specialists, those are able to plan, organise, coordinate, execute the business and non-profit, management activity in the field of tourism (catering) and hotels. They have up-to-date theoretical knowledge (management, marketing, economics), necessary skills, and are able to communicate in foreign languages, that fits to the needs of the labour market. Another purpose is to prepare them for the university-level economics studies. They can choose between different specialisations, like Free-time management, *Health tourism*, Water tourism, Hotel management.

Connects with the North-Plain Region tourism development human resource management strategy

Nowdays the Tourism grew into popular job, and appears in the (over)supply of the higher education. The tourism, catering, hotel managements is an important element of the economist degrees, mostly with it's strong practice oriented background. As the situation of correspondence or postgraduate students, to complete their basic degree (e.g.: geography teacher), usually choose the tourism, as second or third degree.

In the changing higher education, according the Bologna process, the number of subjects and practice period decreased (major contractions). Paralelly, the number of institutes, those offers Tourism& Catering (BA) faculty will increase, and the competition will stronger and stronger. The hungarian labour market hasn't information about this new faculty, about it's profession contents, and hasn't enough trust in it.

The North-Plain region has valuable higher education traditions, the main base of the tourism training situated in Szolnok. Additionally in the University of Debrecen (Faculty of Nature Sciences) or in Nyíregyháza College can learn in Geography faculty, where they have tourism content subjects too. Also can be mentioned the higher vocational trainings (two years studies), as Tourism manager or Travel guide. In Master level can mention the University of Debrecen (Regional Development and Agriculture Faculty), where can be take part in specific tourism studies, but small number of students.

While there is overqualification in the higher education, there are lack of some professions in the tourism sector: lack of valuable and useable health tourism special knowledge, and also lack of well trained labour (in lower level) in the catering. But the higher vocational trainings (two year studies) spread form the basic level to advanced or higher level trainings, focused on catering and hotel business.

According the System of Standarized Job Predicamental (FEOR) as some years ago, the third most popular job group is the financial (economic) assistant (17,9%), techincal (informatics) assistant (18,7%), trade and catering jobs (15,8%). Analysing the job positions, the tourism area got the „altering” postion, and there's no tourism area jobs mentioned as „failing position”or „seeked positions”, „permanently filled positions”.

In the region can be found two of the nine official registered training institutes (according Accomodation National Economic Main section), which is outstanding in the country level. Although the oversupplied labour market offers enough good qualified labour in tourism, but according the regional experience, there's lack of the well trained middle leaders in the hotels of the region (like F&B, banquet manager, wellness expert)

The regional experience shows, that the travel agents, medical masseurs, cooks,

waiters are well prepared, but compared to the country statistics, the language knowledge is not enough. Example: at the reception desk is enough one foreign language in conversational level (intermediate level). The situation is more worse in other jobs, like housekeeping, F&B, bath and therapy divisions, there's no or only a little language knowledge. The accommodation service and catering shows dynamic increase from 2001 in the national economy, and if the linear trend remains, it will grow in the future.

Strategic points of the regional human resource development

The main points of the human resource development strategy in the field of medical and wellness tourism are the followings:

1. Making connections with the sanitary
2. Modern development strategies
3. Support of indoor bath complexes
4. Modernisation and upgrading of thermal and medical baths
5. Creation of health tourism centers attached to hospitals
6. Development of medical tourism centers attached to rehabiliation, physiotherapy, recreation centers
7. Development of complex health tourism products (packages)

Human resource development elements connected with higher education:

- Support of high vocational trainings (according the specific demand of the region)
- Installation of the Tourism & Catering (Ba) major to the higher education, support the infrastructural background of practice
- Installation of the Tourism & Catering (Ma) major to the higher education
- Support of advanced (correspondence) trainings like marketing-management, total quality management, environment
- Support of foreign language (especially english and german) courses for the workers of tourism sector, develops their communication skills
- Support „Tourist friend” attitudes in the region

The new subjects of the Health Tourism specialisation

Now I introduce the wide range of the subjects of the specialisation (connected with the human resource development strategy), those try to fit for the labour market needs. The aims and short description of the contents of the subject are the follows.

Health oriented alimentation

The subject reviews the basic requirements of the health oriented alimentation, its role in health prevention and the possibilities of the dietetic methods of widespread diseases connected to malnutrition by promoting dietetic services in catering in practice. The subject gives a survey of nutritional-physiological role of foodstuffs, eating habits of the Hungarians, the requirements of proper alimentation of different age-groups. The subject discusses the requirements of menu- planning based on nutritional recommendations, the general and specific features of planning-, and organising in catering depending on health status, the possibilities of dietetic treatments of widespread diseases connected to malnutrition, the connection between wellness life-styles and alimentation, health orientation, preventive attitudes, consciousness, being well-balanced.

Recreation

The students can get acquainted with the basic concepts of body-, and health-culture, the forms of recreation and the beneficial effects of physical activities on health. The aim of subject is to call the attention to the importance of recreation and the necessity of establishing a healthy life-style.

The course highlights the role of physical activities in health prevention and preservation, and the opportunities of condition surveys. (tests, and methods of measuring fitness)

The subject discusses the basic concepts and interpretations of recreation and sports recreation, supports the importance of physical activities in establishing a healthy life-style by transferring ideas about recreational and training theories (training, loading, training devices and methods, skills development) giving a survey of domestic and Western European habits of spending the leisure time, providing help in the management of sports events and programmes.

The course acquaints the students with different sports and rehabilitating programmes as being the main demand elements in health tourism, the importance of exercise as a main tool of health prevention.

The aim of the wellness

Subject is to provide theoretical and practical knowledge of organising leisure time and wellness programmes. By using this acquired knowledge the students will be able to set up, organise and arrange wellness programmes for people of different ages, preliminary training, and motivation. The students get to know the various concepts of wellness and health, their content elements, and the supply ele-

ments of health and wellness services, the possible forms of wellness programmes will be also introduced.

On the basis of domestic and foreign case studies the students can get familiar with the definition, types, and role of animation in tourism.

Furthermore, the subject discusses those personal (experts and their work) and objective (devices, establishments) factors that form the background of wellness programmes.

During the semester the students will take part in mini-golf and bowling trainings that serve the acquisition of some life-time physical activities that represent a constituent of wellness programmes.

Health marketing

The main objective of the subject is to discuss the most important marketing tasks in health tourism and the main characteristic features of health tourism products by synthesising the students' theoretical and practical knowledge. The course surveys the basic elements of health tourism, definitions, the situation, and role of health tourism on the domestic and international market.

The subject will introduce the subjective and objective factors of health tourism, and the main characteristic features of the services, transfer information on the motivation system of health tourism, market segments, and target markets. The course will also deal with the condition-system of health tourism, the main characteristic features of services, the direction of product development and forms of spa concept. Other topics that will be included in the course material: levels of planning, partnerships – cooperation, mutual marketing. There will be case studies to use the acquired theoretical knowledge in practice. The students will prepare a marketing plan of a health-, wellness programme in the framework of team work.

Psychological harmonisation

The aim of the course is to draw the attention to the importance of psychological harmony in health prevention. In the framework of the subject the students will be acquainted with the different character types, methods used in character building, and stress relief. The subject discusses the concept of mental hygiene and its importance in health tourism. By obtaining this sort of knowledge the students will be able to treat the stress-level of the guests in their surroundings and help them to keep their psychological harmony. The application of psychology in the field of tourism gains more and more importance. Different relaxation techniques and ways of psychological harmonisation and character building (Shultz autogenic training, yoga, stretching, massage techniques, meditation) will be demonstrated by providing theoretical and practical knowledge. The students can get familiar with the alternative

motion methods (Tai-chi, Wing-Chun kung-fu, Chi-kung, and PNF exercises) of the Far-East. The course provides an opportunity to practice these techniques and treatments in the form of group trainings: social balance, sociometry, group programmes, and character trainings. The students get to know those therapies, and other treatments of wellness hotels that appear as important demand elements in keeping the psychological harmony and stress relief

Fun oriented sport

The aim of the subject is to acquaint the students with tennis which is one of the most popular manager sports and one of the most fashionable supply elements in wellness hotels. By using this acquired knowledge the students will be able to do this sport successfully and develop such important character features as healthy competitiveness, willingness to fight, fair-play that are indispensably important not only in sports fields but in the business life as well.

The students will learn about the origin of tennis, tennis equipments, rules of the game, exercises to improve skilfulness, achieving ball-rocket connection, improving sense of ball, the domestic and international tournament system of tennis.

Besides the technical acquisition of tennis (forehand and backhand stroke, serve, etc.) the subject provides opportunity for practicing correct motions and playing individual and twin matches which make the motion more enjoyable. Deeper acquisition of tactical knowledge is provided by video analysis. As each paired ball-game, tennis also helps to get to know the partner better and strengthen the competitive moral which is very important in the business life as well.

Wellness hospitality

This subject presents the role and the current situation of the health- and wellness tourism which is a prominent potential in the tourism sector in Hungary. It introduces the students to the material and financial requirements of launching and operating a business in this field. The students will learn during the lessons about the maintenance of the market competitiveness, the application of the marketing mix, the possible communication methods and the establishment and operation of trade unions. During the course case studies and individual creative assignments will be applied to develop the students' skills. The students will get acquainted with the legal environment for the health- and wellness hotels and the list of services financed by the social insurance. Further topics to be covered: the special characteristics of the health- and wellness services, product development, role of marketing in the health- and wellness tourism, different ways of communication and financing wellness hotels. In group projects the students will apply the special knowledge concerning the health- and wellness hotels.

Conclusion

As I introduced the problems and also the touristic opportunities, human resource capacities, training institutes, local higher education institutes, and the growing demand of the labour market for tourism area, we can be optimistic in the future, because there can be find hope to jump over the economic problems, decreasing situation. With enough goodwill, support, well trained and well motivated labour force the region can stand successfully in the competition of the other regions of the country, and also the regions of the EU.

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