

Lupu, Nicolae; Tanase, Mihail Ovidiu; Nica, Ana-Maria

Article

Perception About Business Education in the Tourism Domain and the Hospitality Industry

Amfiteatru Economic Journal

Provided in Cooperation with:

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Suggested Citation: Lupu, Nicolae; Tanase, Mihail Ovidiu; Nica, Ana-Maria (2014) : Perception About Business Education in the Tourism Domain and the Hospitality Industry, Amfiteatru Economic Journal, ISSN 2247-9104, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Vol. 16, Iss. 37, pp. 800-810

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/168858>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

PERCEPTION ABOUT BUSINESS EDUCATION IN THE TOURISM DOMAIN AND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Nicolae Lupu^{1*}, Mihail Ovidiu Tănase² and Ana-Maria Nica³

^{1) 2) 3)} Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

Abstract

The research aimed at the importance of a well-structured business education, with a view to preparing the future employees for the requirements of the labour market, has become the central point in many key-sectors of the economy. This paper is based on having identified a gap in scientific research in Romania, that of the need to link the skills offered by the higher education system to the needs of the employers from the tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, the following question arouses: „What is the perception of both employers and future employees on the training system for the tourism and hospitality industry domain?”. With a view towards obtaining an answer, the authors have chosen a descriptive type of research, i.e. a survey among students enrolled in the professional masters program Business Administration in Tourism, as well as among managers of representative hotels in Bucharest. The results show that the perception of students and professionals, respectively, are distributed comparatively, - on many aspects, such as the vocational character of the profession, the importance of attitude, of the theoretical and practical grounding -, but also that the profile of the graduate of an economic faculty of tourism, in the posture of candidate on the labour market, is quite controversial. Developing the curriculum, accordingly to the needs of the employers, will reduce the gap between the academic environment, as a supplier of professional formation, and the labour market, as a place where the labour force demand and supply meet.

Keywords: business education, professional skills, hospitality industry, tourism

JEL Classification: A23, J23, J24, L83, O15, P46

Introduction

The labour market is currently experiencing strong dynamics due to increasingly diverse factors, among which: technological development, population migration, its ageing, opening the labour market, diversification of curricula at all levels. Under these conditions, connecting the skills acquired in the education system with the needs of employers is perceived as slightly lagging behind.

This paper aims to identify the perspective of future employees and, respectively, of employers in the tourism and hospitality industry, on the skills offered by the university and, in particular, by the Bucharest University of Economic Studies - within a specialized

* Corresponding author, Nicolae Lupu – nicolae.lupu@com.ase.ro

masters program from the latter. It can be noticed that the subject, pursued in this paper in a highly pragmatic way, in Romania has been under-researched. Mostly, the expressed views were related to the preparation of secondary and especially vocational schools, which train execution staff: cooks, waiters, chambermaids. For the higher education, the researcher faces the lack of studies about the link between the skills acquired during the study programs in the field of tourism and the needs of employers.

The need to correlate the skills to the requirements of the labour market has been rather a subject of the official documents and has been included in various development strategies or action plans, at both European and national level. Vasile and others (2007) have followed the link education - research by analysing the Romanian school performance and its impact on research, technological development and innovation. Tauşan (2010) looked, generally speaking, at the link between curriculum areas and the four fundamental types of learning identified by the International Commission on Education: learning to know, learning to act, learning to interact with others, learning to be yourself. In this approach, changing curricula derives from the need to adapt them more to a number of general principles, especially related to the development of the individual, and less to the particular principles circumscribed to the needs of the labour market.

1. Previous relevant research about the business education in the hospitality industry

From the perspective of relations between the skills offered by universities and those required by tourism operators, there is a series of studies undertaken in the 90s and the first decade of the XXI century. Older studies (Goodman and Sprague, 1991) showed that curriculum revision is necessary due to the increasing role of services in the global economy and the threat coming from business schools focused on the hospitality domain, while more recent studies (Morrison and Mahony, 2003) investigated the historic evolution of managerial education for the hospitality industry, a concept associated with a liberal education, while providing an overview of curriculum change in two universities in Australia and Scotland.

From the perspective of tourism operators, Becton and Graetz (2001) aim at the accuracy with which needs are understood and met by the specialized training programs. Their analysis is based on current reality, that of atomization, dissipation, size diversity and specialization differentiation of tourism operators. A survey of 46 professionals in the hospitality industry in the United States showed an acceptable level of study programs and their correlation with the expectations of employers (Lefever, 1998). The same direction is taken by Jauhari (2006), whose studies evoke a gap between the skills provided by the education system in India, and the needs of the hospitality industry. Practical skills of new employees is the field where things could be improved, along with the development of communication skills. The link study programs - labour market for the Greek tourism industry is analysed by Christou (1999). The in-depth interviews have helped to study the students' perception on tourism education, and management of the education system in the tourism domain. An approach on students practice during the studies and differences that they perceive between school theory and the "real world" of practice site is provided by Zopiatis and Constanti (2007). Following the analysis, in the relation education - hospitality industry, several inconsistencies were identified. In order to reform the curriculum for hotel management in South Korea, an extensive research on skills needs was conducted, formulated by more than 420 managers and hotel management graduates (Yup, 2000).

Determining perception of university students in the UK and one in Holland on the hospitality industry was the research purpose of Jenkins (2001). Also, he looked into the likelihood to search, after graduation, for a job in this activity sector, the geographical area in which the students would be interested to search, the tourism and the position that the graduate has in mind for a period of 5 and 10 years. The results showed that students have a clear preference for a specific department within the hotel, a particular hotel chain or a specific area in the field of tourism. Another international approach on expectations of students towards future jobs in the hospitality industry is provided by Waryszak (1999).

He interviewed a number of 287 students from four universities: Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne, 80 students; Hotel School, The Hague, 107 students; Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, 50 students; University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, also 50 students. The results are different, as the cultural particularities and the need to repeat the study on a larger sample were highlighted. Through a longitudinal study, the authors researched the managerial skills of 3rd year students from an undergraduate program in Australia and the perception about the way in which those were acquired during the three years of study (Breen et al, 2004). Establishing, in the opinion of students, the managerial skills necessary for successful careers and their level of training in the specified skills domain, as well as measuring the gap between the two has been a topic of analysis for Knutson and Patton (1992). In this context, 15 areas of competencies considered important to a successful career in the hospitality industry have been identified.

Barum (1990) follows the expectations of employers from the newest graduates, who enter the system. The study analysed 36 key skills, on a sample of 150 hotel managers. Correspondence between training and management expectations in 3, 4 and 5 stars hotels in Ireland and the most important factors in recruiting future managers were analysed aspects of Connolly and McGinn (2006). Thus, it was found that the hospitality industry shows a strong preference for people with practical skills. At the same time, the abilities to solve problems and make decisions were appreciated, and analytical abilities were considered less important. A different approach is proposed by Barron (2008), which explores one of the most problematic aspects of the hospitality industry: how to attract and retain a critical level of talented individuals.

Therefore, there are three approaches on the relationship university curriculum - needs expressed by employers. The first one analyses the needs of employers and aims at adapting the curriculum. The second one is based on the expectations of students, prospective employees, and balances the educational needs, the needs of employers and students' expectations in a longer time horizon. The last one examines the relationship between education and labour market performance, in a broader perspective, including the hospitality industry.

2. Research methodology

Current status and possible future directions of business education in the tourism and hospitality industry are the scope of a descriptive research conducted in the spring of 2014. The core objective is the analysis of the perception regarding the professional training at an economic faculty specialized in tourism, of both the students and the hotels-employers (hotel managers). The research hypotheses are:

- for the candidate for a job in the hospitality industry, the attitude tends to advance the importance of theoretical and practical training;

- real competences (knowledge and skills) acquired in the economic faculties with a tourism profile are insufficiently correlated with the needs of employers;
- subjects meant towards acquiring the skills necessary for an employee with higher education are given varying importance;
- for the future of the academic training, the practical direction (internship, attracting practitioners to hold the classes, solving case studies, etc.) is more important than the theoretical training (lectures etc.);
- different areas of tourism and hospitality industry (accommodation, food&beverage, travel agencies, air transport, bus transport, tourism entertainment) require relatively high shares - however, different from one area to another – of personnel with higher education;
- the young graduate of higher studies in the tourism field is perceived differently among:
 - Enthusiastic and having great capacity to work,
 - With unrealistic expectations about the workplace,
 - With superficial specific training
 - Interested in the job merely as a springboard for a career in another field;
- on average, after graduating from an economic university with a tourism profile, an employee might be ready to take over as manager of a medium size hotel in about 10 years.

For students, the sample is represented by 69 respondents from the Faculty of Commerce at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Professional Masters Program Business Administration in Tourism. For hoteliers, the sample is formed by managers of representative hotel establishments in Bucharest: Ramada Majestic and Golden Tulip Times - both classified in the 4 stars category, both part of hotel chains operating under a franchise contract; Residence Arc de Triomphe and Christina Caro - 4*; Ibis - 3*, of the eponymous hotel chain, under management contract. For the measurement of collected data nominal, ordinal and interval scales and the Likert rank ordering method were used (Balaure, 2000). Data collection was performed through a questionnaire with closed questions; one open question was added: "Please provide any other comments about business education in the tourism and hospitality industry."

Identification questions refer to the age of the subjects (figure no. 1) and, for hoteliers, to the work experience, in years, as hotel manager (figure no. 2).

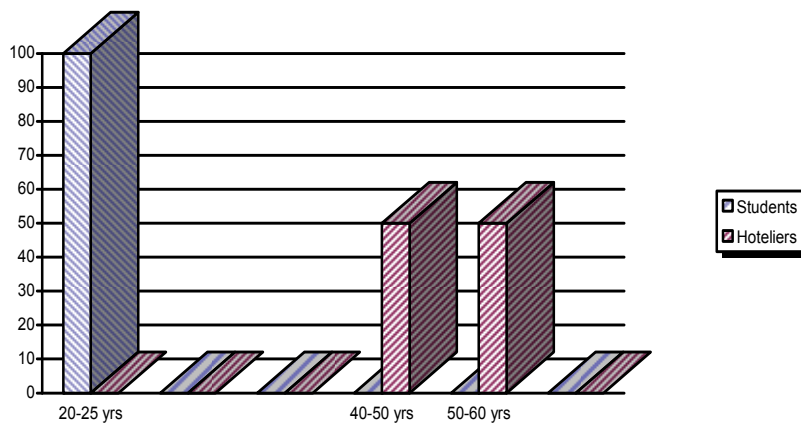


Figure no. 1: Distribution of respondents by age

While all student respondents were included in the age range of 20-25 years, hotel managers are in the range of 40-60 years of age. Regarding the seniority in the hotel manager position, hoteliers also cover a maximum amplitude; however, most of them, 50%, have a period of 10-20 years' experience as managers.

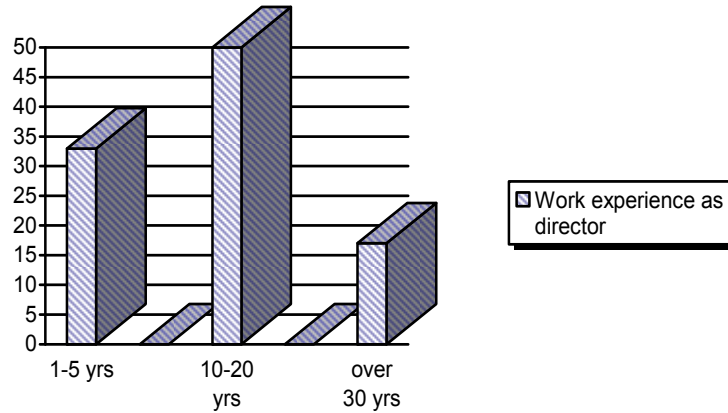


Figure no. 2: Distribution by work experience of the hotel managers

3. Results and discussion

Overall, the results confirm the hypotheses. The perception of both students and hoteliers on the most important attribute that a candidate would have to have for a job in the hospitality industry is the attitude (score 2.52 for students and, respectively, 2.80 for hotel). Theoretical and practical training, respectively appearance, follow (figure no. 3).

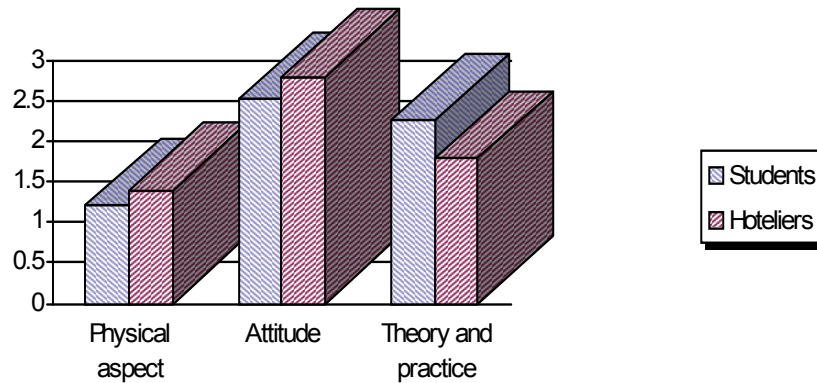


Figure no. 3: Scores of the attributes of a candidate in the hospitality industry

Moreover, compared to students, hoteliers assigned theoretical and practical training a score lower by 0.46. The employment in the hospitality industry - represented by accommodation and food services, tourism and non-tourism profile – has been confirmed as vocational. For academics, the relative emphasis placed on attitude and even physical presence is a challenge.

Moreover, the correlation between the skills acquired in the economic faculties with a tourism profile and the needs of the employers have the same score – 0,17, for both students and hoteliers (figure no. 4).

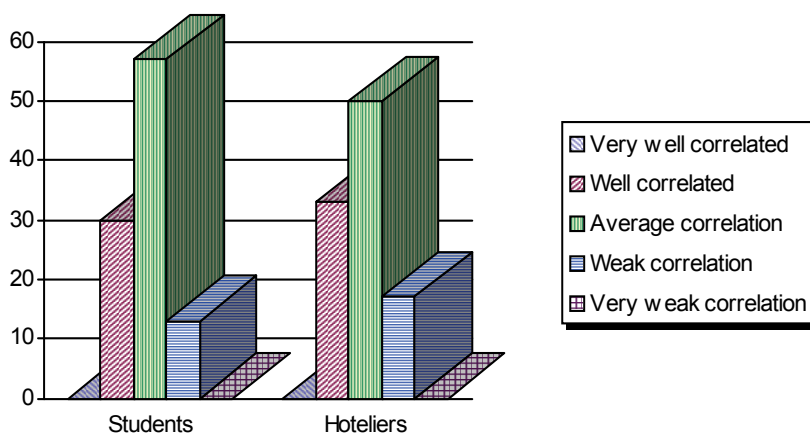


Figure no. 4: Correlation of the acquired skills with the needs of the employers

Given the premise that the experience of hoteliers allows the answers to reflect the reality, it is gratifying that, generally, the student' answers follow more or less the same distribution.

Different proposed subjects, meant towards acquiring the necessary skills for an employee in the hospitality industry, are ranked by their given importance (figure no. 5).

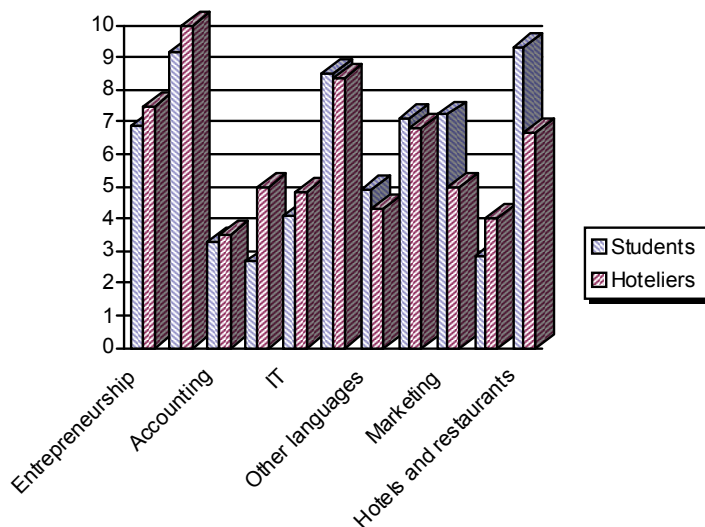


Figure no. 5: Scores according to the importance given to different subjects

The sum of scores of the two sub-collectivities, students and hoteliers, leads to the following, descending ranking:

- Interpersonal communication 19,17;
- English 16,85;
- Hotels and restaurants technique 15,97;
- Entrepreneurship and leadership 14,41;
- Management 13,92;
- Marketing 12,22;
- Other foreign languages 9,24;
- IT 8,92;
- Finance 7,65;
- Quantitative techniques (mathematics, statistics) 6,87;
- Accounting 6,76.

Given the contribution of interpersonal communication towards obtaining the necessary attitudes, its location in the forefront subjects is obvious. Other subjects that might contribute to creating the attitude are history of tourism and ethics.

For the future, the acquisition of skills in the hospitality industry, directions for the university training would follow the order (cumulative scores for the two sub colectivities) (figure no. 6):

- internships, with effective integration into specialized units, 9.22;
- attracting practitioners with relevant experience to hold courses 6.84;
- problem solving and case studies 6.60;
- elaborating of graduation projects that involve solving real-life problems of those units 3.83;
- theoretical lectures 3.50.

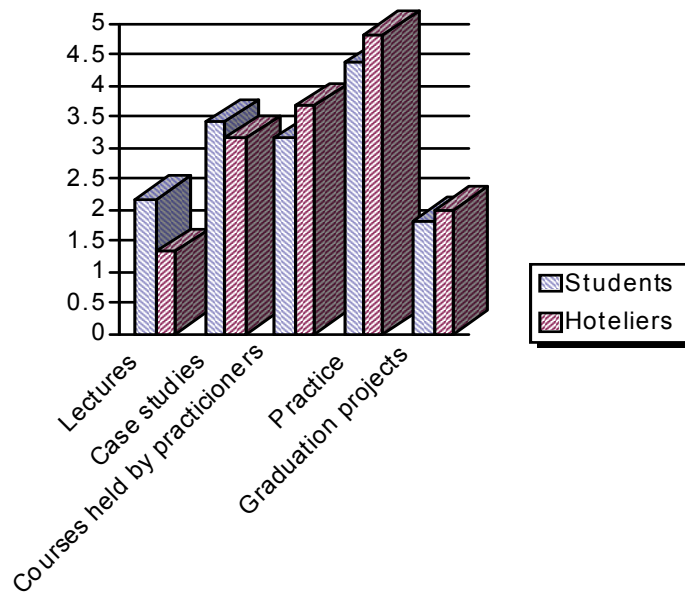


Figure no. 6: Calculated scores for the academic training

The answers to the open question, of both students and practitioners, are regrouping just around the need to increase the share of practice in all forms of manifestation: „more practical training”; „more stories from real life situations in training hours (case studies)”; „business education in tourism (in our country) provides necessary theoretical support, but does not come with practical support in addition”. The success „equation” is given by one of the hotel managers „communication + language + practice x 5”.

The different areas of the tourism sector and the hospitality industry require personnel with higher education in significant, though variable shares. The summarized scores given by the two sub-colectivities are as follows (figure no. 7 and no. 8):

- Accommodation 2.41;
- Air transport 2.39;
- Travel agencies 2.15;
- Food&Beverage 1.18;
- Coach transportation 0.80;
- Tourism entertainment 0.54.

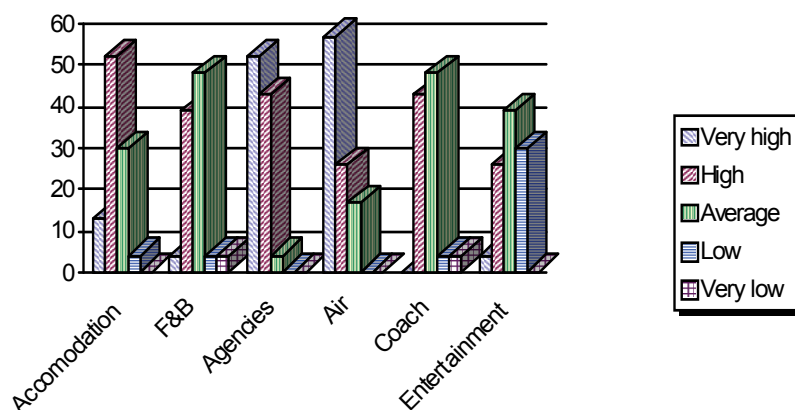


Figure no. 7: Student perception regarding the necessity for higher education

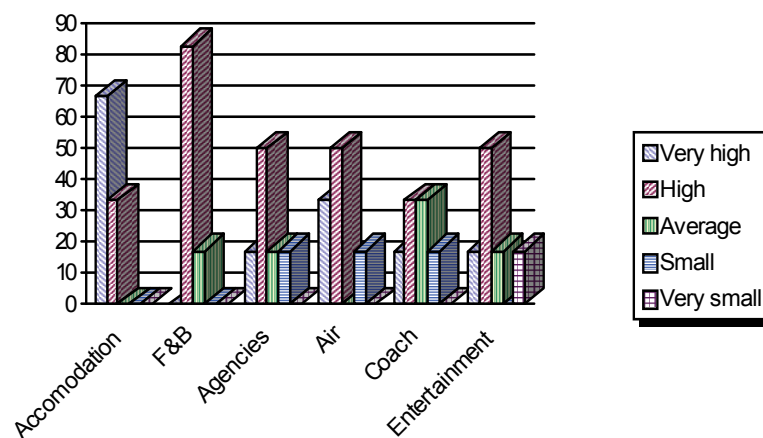


Figure no. 8: Perception of hoteliers regarding the necessity for higher education

When competing for a job in the hospitality industry, the new graduate of higher education in tourism seems to have a controversial profile. The truth is that, in this point, hoteliers think differently than the students: 61% of the students see themselves as enthusiastic and having great work capacity, while 67% of the hoteliers see them as having unrealistic expectations related to the workplace (figure no. 9).

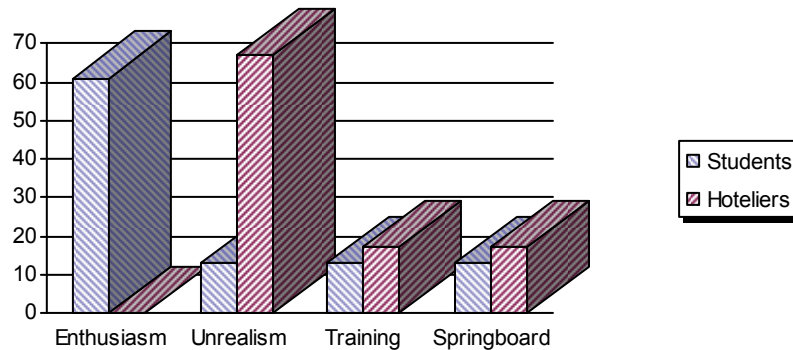


Figure no. 9: Distribution of options regarding the graduate profile

On both sides, a minority indicates the superficial specific training and, respectively, interest in the position as a mere springboard for a career in other field.

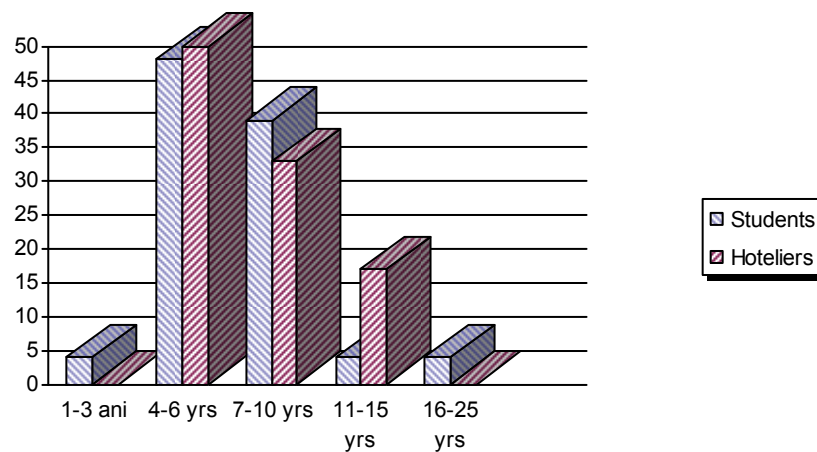


Figure no. 10: Work experience until holding the position of hotel manager

Approximately half of the students, as well as some of the hoteliers, think that after 4-6 years after graduating an economic faculty with tourism specialization, an employee might hold the position of hotel manager in a hotel of average size (figure no. 10).

Conclusions

The research allowed the clarification of a number of useful issues, for both employers and students or the new employees in the hospitality industry. From a theoretical perspective, the importance of the study derives from the relationship between labour supply and demand, on the one hand, and the pioneering nature within national scientific research on the hospitality industry, on the other hand. Deepening the relationship between student, as a future employee, and professionals in the hospitality industry is a first step for future research in the field. If, in general, the views of students and employers are converging, there are issues related mainly to the profile of the graduate, for which perceptions are diametrically opposed. Therefore, future research should further explore these divergent situations in order to identify reasons, causes and implications for the relation employer - future employee.

Students practice with their effective integration into specialized units, attracting practitioners with relevant experience to hold some classes, problem solving and case studies are the main lines of action in the academic environment as a means of connecting the skills acquired with the requirements of the labour market. In these circumstances, POSDRU (Sectorial Operational Programme for Human Resources Development) 2007-2013, through the developed programs, especially within the priority axis 1.2, comes to meet the necessity to correlate these skills. Projects won in the spring of 2014 by the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, will bring students, through the set objectives, a number of benefits: access to relevant skills that the labour market needs, increased labour market integration, the development of skills to exploit theoretical knowledge but also diversification of learning through direct interaction with the business environment.

References

- Balaure, V., ed., 2000. *Marketing*. Bucharest: Uranus Printing House.
- Barron, P., 2008. Education and talent management: implications for the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(7), pp. 730-742.
- Baum, T., 1990. Competencies for hotel management: Industry expectations of education. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 2 (4), pp. 13-16.
- Breen, H, Walo, M and Dimmock, K., 2004. *Assessment of tourism and hospitality management competencies: a student perspective*. In: K.A. Smithe and C. Schott eds. *Proceedings of Tourism research: advances and applications, New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference*. Wellington, New Zealand, 8-10 December. Tourism Management Group, Victoria Management School, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Christou, E.S., 1999. Hospitality management education in Greece. An exploratory study. *Tourism Management*, 20(6), pp. 683-691.
- Connolly, P. and McGing, G., 2006. Graduate education and hospitality management in Ireland. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18(1), pp. 50-59.
- Goodman, R. and Sprague, L., 1991. The Future of Hospitality Education: Meeting the Industry's Needs. *The Cornell H.R.A. Quarterly*, 32(2), pp. 67-70.

- Jauhari, V., 2006. Competencies for a career in the hospitality industry: an Indian perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18(2), pp. 123-134.
- Jenkins, A.K., 2001. Making a career of it? Hospitality students' future perspectives: an Anglo-Dutch study. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 13(1), pp. 13-20.
- Lefever, M., 1998. Curriculum Review How Industry Views Hospitality Education. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 39(4), pp. 70-78.
- Lupu, N., 2001. Nevoia de modele. In: "George Barițiu" University Brașov, 10th Session of scientific communication. Brașov: Omnia Uni S.A.S.T. Printing House, pp. 594-597.
- Morrison, A. and O'Mahony, G.B., 2003. The liberation of hospitality management education. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15(1), pp. 38-44.
- Tausan, L., 2010. New Dimensions of the Curricular Reform. *Annals of „1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia – Philology*, pp. 293-302.
- Vasile V., 2008. *Restructurarea sistemului de educație din România din perspectiva evoluțiilor pe piața internă și impactul asupra progresului cercetării*. Bucharest: European Institute in Romania.
- Waryszak, R.Z., 1999. Students' expectations from their cooperative education placements in the hospitality industry: an international perspective. *Education + Training*, 41(1), pp. 33-40.
- Yup, C.K., 2000. Hotel management curriculum reform based on required competencies of hotel employees and career success in the hotel industry. *Journal Tourism Management*, 21(5), pp. 473-487.
- Zopiatis, A. and Constanti, P., 2007. And never the twain shall meet: Investigating the hospitality industry-education relationship in Cyprus. *Education + Training*, 49(5), pp. 391-407.