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VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE IN PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM LABOUR FORCE: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

ABSTRACT:

The importance of volunteering is globally recognized by the UN. We speculate that the socially beneficial activity on a voluntary basis should be an important component of modern development strategies, for travel and tourism in particular. The process of training specialists in this sector has to follow the current trends, including the sustainability imperative. The volunteer experiences - as a way to preserve and strengthen universal human values manifested around the world - ground the eventual means of its practical implementation in the education and professional training of future travel and tourism proficient by the Department of Regional Studies and Tourism of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The cooperation between the academia, stakeholders, public organizations, and the city of Kyiv administration (KCSA) within the framework of the Academy of Hospitality project of 2021 proves the feasibility of taking into account the new systems of productive interplay within the "teacher-student" format, the priorities of world and European experience in the process of training tourism managers and volunteers. Preservation of rights and responsibilities of tourism managers, personal growth and practical professional training put focuses on the awareness of the need for lifelong learning.

INTRODUCTION.

COVID-19 harmed the travel and tourism (T&T) industry which has been one of the most profitable and promising sectors of the economy. However, world experience and practice of economic, social and political stability of developed countries confirm the fact that the geographical position of the state, natural and climatic resources, historical monuments and cultural achievements become a common good often thanks to tourism. In a view of the current challenges of the world T&T market, the training of specialists in this sector gains crucial importance.

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Continuous professional growth and self-education during professional life definitely add novelty to the diversification of T&T experiences nowadays. A tourism manager - a specialist who organizes, forms, sells, and serves more and more demanding clients - remains one of the most sought-after professions in the leisure and entertainment industry. The innovation of T&T activities can be achieved through familiarizing with the world experience of the so-called "volunteer movement", including "voluntourism".

The world community recognizes the volunteer movement as a means of preserving and strengthening universal human values, realizing the rights and responsibilities of people and human potential. UN confirms the importance of volunteering in the global dimension [1]. In fact, socially useful activity on a voluntary basis should be an important component of modern development strategies, for travel and tourism in particular.

Innovative for Ukraine Academy of Hospitality project pioneered the practice of training volunteers for tourism development in the capital of the country. This project constituted part of the City Target Program for the Development of Tourism in Kyiv for 2019-2021 [2] implemented by the Department of Tourism and Promotion of the Kyiv City State Administration (KCSA). This unique project exemplifies that cooperation between local governments, public organizations, academia and es enables initiatives aimed at further self-development and practical adaptation of T&T labour force to be monitored and surveyed in the future for further policy-making.

TRAINING OF T&T PROFESSIONAL IN THE FACE OF MODERN CHALLENGES.

The T&T industry around the world is suffering losses and designs counteractions to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic consequences. At the same time, the current situation should be considered both as a problem and also as an opportunity to bring the T&T sector in Ukraine to a qualitatively new level corresponding to the sustainability imperative [3, 4]. The acceleration of the recovery under the increased epidemic risks needs special attention to the system of training personnel for tourism. A complex of external and internal factors - globalization and integration, the dynamic development of information and communication technologies, the cardinal shifts in the educational needs of the market economy - has led to the transformation of the labour force training. This process actively acquires the signs of learning through innovation and informatization.



In fact, learning is a two-way process. On the one hand, learning means purposeful independent assimilation of new experiences by a person, the development of his/her personal and professional qualities. On the other hand, learning occurs constantly, even without realizing that certain knowledge is being acquired. The professional competencies of an employee constitute an integral part of professionalism. "Competent" person in his/her field (from Lat. Competens - appropriate, capable) means "... being an expert in a certain issue, authoritative, full-fledged" [5]. Based on the above the structured definition of professional competence includes quality, property, or condition of a specialist ensuring - together or separately,- his/her physical, mental and spiritual compliance with the needs, requirements of a particular profession, speciality, specialization, qualification standards, and the official position he/she occupies [6].

The personality of a professionally competent T&T specialist should manifest its internal integrity, where the value system interlinks the professional and personal qualities. Any professional knowledge, before being embodied in activities, should gain value sense, become the inherited conviction of a specialist, his/her evaluative and conceptual categories, attitudes, and behavioral stereotypes. Professionally significant individual qualities constitute an attribute to which external characteristics and requirements create the individual significance of a specialist. A T&T proficient both performs professionally managerial functions and takes into account the specifics of a tourism enterprise. The latter means a system where everyone runs activities at their own level and is a subject of management, has a certain operational function, and professionally works with people. In carrying out functional duties, T&T employee has to be able to effectively solve standard and non-standard situations and problems by executing specific professional operations and ensuring the competitiveness of an enterprise.

Noteworthy, the basic list of competencies requirements for a specialist in the field of T&T remains almost unchanged. Each candidate must thoroughly know the industry, in which he/she plans to work, specifics, have leadership qualities, be aware of the intricacies of planning, organizing, accounting, analyzing and controlling production and economic processes of an enterprise [7]. The effective operation of an enterprise depends both on a high level of competitiveness and sufficient economic potential, as well as on the competence of its personnel. For successful operation, T&T enterprises need highly qualified, competent and labile proficient, who can quickly adapt to changeable T&T market conditions.

The academic staff faces the task of developing a competencies model of a bachelor graduate correlated with the standards of higher professional education of the third generation. The process of reorientation of modern education from "knowledge" to a competency-based approach serves as the key and mandatory condition for modernization and approximation of education and training to the international standards [8].

Undoubtedly, the improvement of training requires, first of all, the development of qualitatively new approaches to solving problems of managing the process itself. In higher education, the above means to clearly see the benchmark and the ultimate goal of such training. Usually, the reference point is the specialised qualification characteristic of an employee.

The professional development of T&T specialists represents a multifaceted phenomenon that has a continuous and adaptive nature and covers a set of interrelated components. The latter include legislative framework, national, regional and corporate training programs for employees, principles, methods, content, forms of training in the workplace within the industry, self-education. So, professional development basically occurs through on-the-job training, which remains one of the key means of improving the professionalism of employees.

For a long time, the majority of graduates from educational institutions in Ukraine lacked experience in T&T practice. The drawback of sufficient practical skills inhibited the development of T&T industry of the country. Employers had to conduct training directly at the workplace, wasting time and money. However, institutions of T&T education have to provide for the competitiveness of their graduates in the labor market. The above reasons the cooperation between the T&T company and the educational institution itself.

The disunity of theory and practice constitutes a rather significant problem. Basically, university graduates have often a set of good theoretical knowledge behind them, however, the necessary condition of already acquired work experience limits their prospects in a job search [9, 10]. This leads to the problem of young specialist employment and the lack of qualified personnel.

At the same time, tourists - consumers of services - become more knowledgeable and demanding. Their perception of the level of service, requirements for recreation, and even knowledge of geography and foreign languages are increasing every time and may prevail the knowledge of graduates of the specialized educational institutions. Accordingly, the T&T companies' management tries to find an employee both with special education, but also with a high level of erudition, creativity, communication skills, the



ability to work in a team, and certain personal qualities.

Thus, the current T&T development requires more effective approaches to training. One of them is a competency-based approach, the mission of which is to bring education in line with the needs of the labor market. The modernity of this approach is based on the culture of self-determination, that is, the ability and willingness to self-actualize, self-determine, and self-develop [11, 6]. A future specialist needs to develop skills that would help him/her quickly adapt to the changing situation in the labor market and new requirements. The difference between a competent specialist and a qualified one is that a competent specialist has both specific knowledge, skills, and the ability to apply them in his/her work. The implementation of a competency-based approach in teaching students is a combination of traditional forms (lectures, seminars, practical work) with modern interactive learning methods. The most utilized include case studies, business games, master classes, and project presentations. Cooperative learning and working in groups contribute to the application of modeling and forecasting methods in professional activities, the design of alternative ways to solve problems. The personnel development in tourism and hospitality is a systematic and organized training of qualified specialists in hotels and other accommodation facilities, facilities and means of recreation, catering, as well as business, health, sports, and educational facilities.

In summary, the professional training of T&T graduates by the national educational institution should include [6, 7] the mandatory components as follows:

- 1) knowledge of legislative and regulatory acts, international norms of T&T activities;
- 2) knowledge of the T&T industry, its development trends, the geography of tourist flows, history, culture, economy;
- 3) human resource management, leadership, problem-solving skills, teamwork;
- 4) one or more foreign language competencies;
- 5) computer literacy;
- 6) professional knowledge of the Ukrainian language and the ability to competently answer any question of the client;
- 7) awareness of and readiness to serve any tours that may be required by the consumer;
- 8) personal development skills, effective self- and time management, communication skills, making presentations using international standards, etc.

VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SYSTEM OF TRAINING FOR T&T INDUSTRY.

The highest professionalism of an expert in T&T means the ability to decipher the wishes of the client. In order to achieve the desired result, the tourism manager plays more than just a passive participant role. It is not just the issue of presenting the product. It is an issue of capturing the client's attention, demonstrating the future impressions, dream of vacation, and after proposing to purchase high-quality T&T services.

The World Declaration of Volunteering notes that volunteering is the foundation of civil society and promotes the need for peace, freedom, security and justice [12]. In particular, during periods of crisis volunteering plays a specific role in relieving the social tension by supporting the most disadvantaged categories of the population; ensuring a dignified life for citizens unable to take care of themselves due to objective circumstances; overcoming failures of the state social policy, primarily through prompt response and the provision of effective targeted social assistance that meets the needs and demands of a particular person. At the same time, it is extremely important to spread humanistic and altruistic ideas and sentiments in society.

The global significance of volunteering is underscored by the United Nations recognizing that voluntary community service should be an essential part of any strategy aimed at solving problems, especially in such domains as sustainable development, including poverty alleviation, health protection, hazard warning and timely response, social inclusion, tackling inequality and discrimination. Relevant provisions of the UN Resolution and the recommendation to support the volunteer movement invite governments of all states to include volunteering in national development plans as an integral component of achieving sustainable development goals [13]. Conventionally, the entire range of volunteer projects can be divided by types of activities, goals and objectives that they are designed to solve:

- humanitarian projects represent the most common spectrum of volunteer initiatives, including various types of assistance, primarily social advisory and human rights services for different categories of the population. In T&T it means assistance to various categories of foreign tourists in their tourism activities and experiences;
- environmental projects focus on the preservation of nature, overcoming the consequences of man-made accidents, supporting the activities of national parks and reserves (for example, Volunteers in Parks);



- cultural and historical initiatives aim at preserving historical monuments, the country's cultural heritage, including the intangible one (e.g., “Historical Interpretation Volunteers” project).

In particular, the above range reflects various aspects of the possible cooperation of public organizations, T&T industry and academia involved in the training of tourism managers. The same frameworks shape possibilities for professional development, self-improvement, and self-education of teachers of the higher education institutions.

The growing interest of Ukrainian society in the diversification of the volunteer movement in its different manifestations, however, lacked the legal regulation. Before 2011 such activities were spontaneous. The valid normative legal act regulating volunteer activity - the Law of Ukraine "On volunteer activity" - was adopted on April 19, 2011 [14]. The general legal grounds of volunteering also include the Constitution of Ukraine, other laws, international treaties, normative legal acts, among which the General Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which clearly state that “any person has the right to freely associate in peaceful associations” [14, 6].

The Universal Declaration of Volunteers - adopted at the XI Congress of Volunteers in Paris on September 14, 1990 – reveals the emphasis on a voluntary choice that reveals personal views and positions; contributes to improving the quality of life, avails personal growth, and deepens the sense of solidarity; promotes more balanced economic and social development, as well as the creation of new jobs and professions. The International Board of Directors of the International Association of Volunteer Efforts at the XVI World Conference of Volunteers (January 2001, Amsterdam (Netherlands) adopted the Universal Declaration on Volunteering [15, 16].

Comparison of a traditional tourist with a volunteer reveal that the tourist during the holiday consumes service of the tourist package, however, the volunteer creates social services by providing his help on the spot. One in five European tourists is willing to volunteer on holiday. Recent survey suggests that 7% of European respondents are ready to participate in volunteering during their leisure time [17].

The international practice shows numerous examples of cooperation between public organizations conducting volunteer activities and tour operators. Their activities contribute to an increase in the number of volunteer organizations and the volume of financial resources. Tour operators diversify their income by joining up with volunteer organizations and sharing travel

experiences with them.

At the same time, local governments, together with public organizations and businesses, are able to establish unique projects aimed at further self-development and practical adaptation of specialists in T&T and their teachers. In particular, on July 1, 2021, the City of Kyiv State Administration launched the Academy of Hospitality (AH) project [2]. Innovative for Ukraine AH aimed at training volunteers for tourism development in the capital of the country. The project is implemented within the framework of the City Target Program for Tourism Development in Kyiv for 2019-2021 by the Department of Tourism and Promotions of the KCSA in close cooperation with other departments, which are responsible for safety, transportation, and comfort for tourists in Kyiv. This project brought together authoritative organizations, namely: the All-Ukrainian Association of Guides (<https://uaguides.com/>), the Golda Meir Civil Society Development Institute (<http://goldameir.institute/>), the Kyiv Press Club (<https://mediahub.kiev.ua/>), and the pioneer in tourism education in this country - the Department of Regional Studies and Tourism of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (<https://tourismknu.kiev.ua/>).

The AH project has a rather ambitious goal: to train a pool of T&T volunteer assistants to promote Kyiv within the framework of the official tourism brand of the capital (Kyiv - the city where it all begins), including the improvement of hospitality standards, stressed the head of the Department of Tourism and Promotion of the KCSA, Mrs. Marina Radova, during the press conference devoted to the start of the project [18]. She noted the skirmisher character of the free for participants project, which has the goal of training volunteers to help tourists. First of all, the goal of the project is to promote Kyiv as an international destination, which complies with European hospitality standards. Director of the Golda Meir Institute for the Development of Civil Society, Mrs. Tatyana Graban, assured the involvement of the best professional trainers in tourism, volunteering, international experts, as well as specialists in security and the provision of pre-medical care, etc.

The recruitment of project participants took into account the results of a candidates survey. The project divided AH training into three intensive courses combining theory and practice, namely: Kyiv - a tourist center; volunteering in the field of hospitality; practical skills of volunteer assistants for the development of tourism in Kyiv.

As a result of the three-month training, the AH students acquired knowledge and skills in informational support for tourists; learned the intricacies of various types of tourism activities: gastronomic, medical, event, sports, festival



tourism; got acquainted with the technique of self-defense and the provision of first aid in practice. A number of original excursion tours around Kyiv served the creativity examples and inspiration for the listeners and teachers-participants in future educational and training processes in academia.

On September 27, 2021, the Kyiv City State Administration issued the certificates to the first Academy of Hospitality graduates, most of whom were lecturers and instructors of the T&T higher educational institutions. Noteworthy, that during the period of study, the students of the HA have already performed the functions of volunteer assistants at the “Mandrui Ukrainoiu” (*Travel across Ukraine*) festival by helping to present the tourism potential of the capital and some unique locations of the country.

Noteworthy, 308 thousand foreign tourists have visited Kyiv in the first half of the year 2021; the number of domestic tourists, according to the estimates of tourist organizations, amounted to more than 500 thousand people [2]. These facts confirm the need for further attention of local authorities, higher education institutions, public organizations, and businesses to such projects and involvement of the most motivated segments of the educational sphere (teachers and students), who will together nurture the volunteer movement in tourism.

The AH as a pilot project provides a training course for volunteers to work in the hospitality industry in Kyiv. Accordingly, the Department of Tourism and Promotion of the Kyiv City State Administration plans to conduct such courses annually. This project increased the motivation for socially useful activities, including non-traditional for Ukrainians - volunteering in tourism; it paves the way of acquiring new useful knowledge and practical skills, which, of course, serve self-development, improve the level of qualification and proficiency of T&T labour force, sprout in the branding of Ukrainian tourism, popularize it around the world.

CONCLUSION.

Professional training of tourist personnel includes a cognitive, functional, activity, and personal component. The conceptual ideas of continuity, openness, participation, advanced development shape the professional development and aim at meeting the social, corporate, and individual educational needs of T&T labour force on the ground of a competence-based approach.

The leading tourism destinations experiences in the professional development of T&T specialists, the progressive ideas and best practices

implementation in accordance with Ukrainian realities, of course, can contribute to the reform of education, retraining, and advanced training tourism specialists in Ukraine.

The increase in the efficiency of personnel training in T&T largely depends on acquiring practical skills, awareness of the modern T&T technologies, systemic relations with employers. The training under modern circumstances of social development - even more than before - cannot be completed by vocational training in academia, even if it includes the maximum of opportunities for mastering practical knowledge and skills. The learning process should be continuous, carried out in various forms, including adaptation and professional development programs for employees within the organization, self-education, and self-development. These standpoints tailed education and training provided by the Department of Regional Studies and Tourism of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv from 1991 and its devotedness to participate in volunteering experience projects. Volunteering experience in professional training of T&T labour force deserves further monitoring of projects like the Academy of Hospitality of Kyiv and surveying of their feasibility in responding the current challenges.

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