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ENHANCING TOURISM WORKFORCE COMPETENCIES: A FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

To develop an integrated strategy for workforce training and employment in tourism at the state level, several key questions must be addressed. These include identifying the types of tourism services in demand, methods for segmenting tourists, and the availability of recreational resource inventories. Strategic planning also requires clear policies for supporting tourism entrepreneurship, with an emphasis on licensing, certification, and regulatory compliance. Additionally, there must be effective mechanisms for enforcing travel safety and environmental laws, along with comparative analyses of employment legislation to protect the rights of citizens working abroad.

Only after addressing these questions can accurate forecasts of the demand for various specialists be made. To identify the necessary competencies for tourism sector workers, a survey is needed, targeting employers, graduates, and the academic community to outline the key skills required of modern professionals. The process includes developing, testing, and finalizing a model of specialist requirements, alongside analyzing relevant organizations that contribute to regional workforce models. Key principles for conducting the survey involve ensuring employer participation, selecting recent graduates, and considering international research standards in gathering comprehensive data from all stakeholders.

To effectively prepare personnel for Ukraine's tourism industry, a series of comprehensive measures is needed, including studying successful foreign systems that emphasize continuous, multi-level, and phased education. Improving the quality of higher education for hospitality professionals is closely tied to the development of an uninterrupted training process and the creation of new educational standards that reflect modern industry demands. Continuous professional education should address the need for competitive, high-skilled workers who meet market demands and contribute to the economic success of enterprises.

Emphasizing both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, the educational system must focus on industry-specific knowledge, fostering communication skills, and a global perspective on hospitality trends.

The analysis of university curricula and the flexibility of new educational standards highlights competitive advantages for institutions with

high-tech profiles. Incorporating subjects from related technological fields enables comprehensive specialist training. As technology rapidly evolves, reshaping traditional professional expectations, higher education must adapt by emphasizing personalized learning, core skills, and practical experience.

Employers increasingly demand professionals with modern competencies and practical experience, necessitating their involvement in education at all stages. Continuous professional education, particularly in tourism, is crucial for training highly qualified personnel, which will drive the competitiveness of Ukraine's tourism services.

In light of the significant financial resources invested in the retraining and professional development of tourism industry personnel, it is essential to focus on challenges that, according to experts, reduce the effectiveness of these programs. Key issues include excessive academic focus with insufficient practical competencies, lack of conditions for developing innovative skills required in today's environment, a formalized approach to training, and weak connections with corporate learning programs.

Addressing these challenges is critical to improving the quality of human resource development in the tourism sector. To ensure effective training, it is vital to align educational programs with industry needs, fostering both professional and innovative skills that meet the evolving demands of the tourism market.

Another significant challenge is the inadequate language training of graduates in specialized tourism programs. In today's globalized environment, fluency in foreign languages is a fundamental component of quality service standards. Improving the quality of tourism education in Ukrainian higher education institutions can be achieved by expanding internship opportunities and engaging representatives from professional employer associations in the training process.

Factors contributing to the effective development of professional competencies include labor market monitoring, enhancing research quality, integrating research outcomes into education, and advancing interactive learning methods. However, the current system of professional development does not fully compensate for the deficiencies in university education. Moreover, the high cost of training programs and staff turnover present substantial financial risks for tourism firms, leading to a significant outflow of qualified personnel, which negatively impacts service quality.

Oftentimes quality training programs for staff are inaccessible to most Ukrainian tour companies and hotels due to their high costs, compounded by the risk of staff turnover. Investing in the training of young employees does not guarantee their retention, even in the short term. High turnover, driven by factors such as seasonal work and low wages, is a significant risk that affects

service quality. Additionally, poor interpersonal communication skills and violations of basic service norms further degrade customer experiences, as evidenced by frequent complaints of unprofessional behavior in tourist feedback. Long-standing service traditions, shaped by limited tourist options, hinder the adaptation of the industry to modern customer needs, making interpersonal relations crucial in shaping perceptions of tourism services.

The current higher education system in tourism either neglects or inadequately addresses the need for specialized communication training for professionals. The shift from traditional "guest-host" relations to a commercial hospitality model calls for a thorough modernization of staff training in Ukraine's tourism industry. Emphasis should be placed on developing ethical standards, communication skills, and conflict resolution abilities. Challenges such as outdated service traditions and misinformation about job conditions negatively affect employee motivation. To mitigate these issues, adaptive strategies like personalized interactions between teachers, employers, and students, as well as reflection on career choices and values, can help.

The evolving demands of the tourism market necessitate a shift in educational practices toward developing adaptive skills and collaborative competencies, rather than focusing solely on individual competitive advantages. As client preferences shift toward unique experiences, a scientific approach to refining the training and retraining systems for tourism professionals becomes crucial, with an emphasis on both professional skills and communication culture.

In conclusion, developing a comprehensive strategy for workforce training and employment in Ukraine's tourism sector requires a holistic approach that addresses industry demand, regulatory frameworks, and educational reform. Tailoring education to meet modern market demands will involve integrating practical skills, foreign language fluency, and interdisciplinary knowledge to create well-rounded professionals. Additionally, fostering collaboration between academic institutions, employers, and policymakers is crucial to adapting training models to evolving global trends. Future research could focus on exploring best practices from international systems and enhancing the role of technology in shaping tourism education and workforce development.