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THE EVOLUTION OF PROGRAMS AND TEACHING METHODS FOR TOURISM AND LEISURE ECONOMICS: THE UNIVERSITY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN KRAKOW

Abstract: The aim of the article is to answer the question: what can non-economic universities do to improve their curricula for economic modules and methods of implementation? Literature review, participant observation and descriptive statistics were used based on an original set of 430 projects from the 'Marketing of tourism and leisure services' course for the academic years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17. Adopting a student orientation as a long-term partner in the information exchange process, in line with the concept of relationship marketing, contributes to the intensification of the didactic process aimed at broadening knowledge of economic reality.

Keywords: economics didactics, marketing didactics, academic education, education, universities, feedback.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tradition of education in the field of tourism and leisure in terms of economics implies an extensive presentation of basic knowledge in the disciplines of economics, management and marketing, finance – and then in reference to the specificity of the tourism and leisure industry as a field of management. While such a system of content is typical of universities with an economic profile, it is not always feasible in universities for which economics is not the basic but a complementary discipline.

The aim is therefore to answer the question: what can non-economic universities do to improve their curricula for economic modules and methods of implementation? This question was based on the assumption that the efficiency of teaching could be improved and at the same time emphasize the specific nature of those universities which combine general and vocational education. This issue is addressed by a set of research questions:

1. How far do the conditions of education in a non-economic university determine the teaching of economics?
2. What types of learning outcomes for economic subjects – knowledge, skills and social competences – can and should be posed to students of a non-economic university?
3. Can the integration of content across economic subjects improve the quality of teaching?
4. Is it possible and efficient to integrate a set of didactic methods within all economic subjects?

The answers to these questions will be based on the experience of many years of teaching in this area at the University of Physical Education in Kraków. The method used can be described as a case study that illustrates the ongoing efforts to optimize teaching, including the improvement of subject curricula and the way they are implemented, in response to changing conditions in higher education (HE), the observation of learning outcomes and the feedback received from students.

2. GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR ECONOMICS TEACHING IN 'TOURISM AND LEISURE'

Awareness of the conditions under which learning takes place in every HE institution is essential to understand the role of particular subjects in the study program of a particular field, as well as the proper formulation of the goals and the effects they are intended to achieve, and the development of programs and selection of teaching methods (see KUPISIEWICZ 2012). These conditions are determined primarily by the external environment, in particular formal institutions (legal norms) regulating the functioning of HE institutions. The last decade has brought about a fundamental change in these conditions in Poland. Former education standards have been abolished (*Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education...* 2007), introducing in their place the assumptions of the Bologna Declaration. This gave universities the opportunity to modify existing learning objectives and free the formulation of curricula, as well as to create new fields of study.

According to the former education standards applicable to 'Tourism and Leisure' in 2007-12, a first degree graduate should have general knowledge from the field of economics as well as the ability to apply it in the sphere of tourism and leisure, including preparation of a tourist and leisure offer for different groups of clients (in the course of running a business or working in one), but also in social or public organizations (*Education standards...* 2007). Qualifications were acquired by the student in basic economic content and their field of study. Within the first: 'content components of education' such as 'Economics' and 'Management'; and within the second: 'Economics of tourism and leisure'. At the same time, they were assigned a minimum number of hours to complete the expected learning outcomes (*Education standards...* 2007). In other subjects there was also content related to economics, both at first and second degree levels.

A second degree graduate should have been prepared to undertake independent managerial activity in tourism and leisure, which means the ability to make decisions independently and to solve problems encountered in business, including the management of tourism and leisure enterprises, as well as creative work in such enterprises, and other tourism and leisure organizations (*Education standards...* 2007). These qualifications were supposed to be acquired within the framework of basic content and the field of study, but the components we are interested in were only in the second group: 'Marketing of tourist and leisure services', 'Tourist product',

'Management of tourist and leisure enterprise' (*Education standards...* 2007). In this situation:

- clear demarcation of learning objectives at first and second degree levels (preparation for work in tourism and leisure on the basis of general economic knowledge as well as managerial activity carried out within a business or in employment);
- division of education content into basic and field of study (familiarizing students with general economic knowledge, and only after this to tourism and leisure);
- the considerable number of issues that make up the content of particular subjects (each constitutes an independent part, and its program covers a wide range of knowledge);
- no clear separation of content between particular subjects (for example conceptualization and product planning).

The Bologna Declaration signed in 1999, is being introduced in Poland. Among strategic objectives and assumptions is the qualification framework which, expressed in the language of learning outcomes acquired within and outside education and the institution, would allow qualifications to be compared in a Pan-European environment (CHMIELECKA 2013). The learning outcomes expressed in the *Polish Qualification Framework* (2007), are described in terms of knowledge, skills and social competences in both fields, the first should be assigned to one of the eight education areas and these areas, in principle, correspond to academic disciplines¹. Although academic education already included elements of vocational training, the implementation of the Bologna Declaration clearly changed the existing proportions between general and vocational education in favour of the latter (WRÓBLEWSKA 2008).

The proposed organization of HE gives universities a high level of autonomy in the development of education programs (CHMIELECKA 2013). They do not have to restrict their offer to strictly defined disciplines, or the program assigned, but can freely shape them. It seems that the change has made it possible to highlight particular universities. For preparing for work in tourism and leisure, this has resulted in a deepening specialization (alongside traditional 'Tourism and leisure', HE institutions have started related fields such as 'Tourism economy') and diversity of profiles, noticeable especially at academies of physical education as well as universities and economic academies. It is therefore necessary to consider to what extent the conditions are determined by the profile of the HE institution, characteristics of the subject and the program (see WOJCIECHOWSKI 2000).

3. GOALS AND PROGRAMS IN ECONOMICS IN 'TOURISM AND LEISURE' IN NON-ECONOMIC UNIVERSITIES

The profile of a HE institution can be analysed in formal terms indicating the type of university, or referring to its mission and short- and long-term goals (SZCZECZOWICZ 2014). The University of Physical Education in Krakow is a state university (*Statute...* 2015) specifically revealed by the disciplines taught connected with physical culture. Although its academic tasks include primarily the natural and human basis of physical education, sport and rehabilitation as well as tourism and leisure, it also covers how to meet the needs of participants of physical culture. This is particularly evident at the Faculty of Tourism and Leisure, which justifies its inclusion by teaching its students elements of economics.

For 'Tourism and leisure' at the Faculty of Tourism and Leisure a general profile was chosen, both at first and second degree levels bringing to it a relatively broad spectrum of issues. The subject is tourism and leisure, understood in terms of spatial and physical activity. This subject is of an interdisciplinary nature, and that is why it has been placed in several areas, medical, health and physical culture were chosen as complementary, along with interpersonal and environmental interactions through the social sciences, natural sciences and humanities. It has been assumed that tourism and leisure phenomena are considered from the point of view of the needs and capabilities of the individual, and all references outside physical culture should be subordinated to this perspective (*Description of teaching for first degree studies...* 2012). In the case of the second-degree level the social perspective was given more weight, by setting the goal of preparing graduates for creative and managerial roles; therefore in terms of social competences entrepreneurship was introduced (*Description of teaching for second degree studies...* 2012).

All this points to the auxiliary role of economics and this distinguishes this academy from economic universities preparing graduates to work in the tourism/leisure industry. This is reflected in the learning outcomes in which economics has a small share. They concern, at first degree level, basic knowledge about tourism and leisure as a branch of the economy, knowledge of the principles of creating and developing tourist and leisure enterprises, along with their management and functioning. Following this, skills should be developed to interpret economic phenomena occurring in tourism and leisure, to prepare an economic analysis in terms of tourism and leisure and implement management functions in an organization (*Description of teaching for first degree studies...* 2012). At

the second degree level effects refer especially to knowledge of the principles of strategy formulation which enable entrepreneurs to efficiently provide goods and services that meet tourism and leisure needs, but also knowledge of relevant spatial management and state policy. Based on this, the ability to organize a tourist or leisure company should be developed by gathering necessary resources as well as their effective and efficient management, including the correct use of marketing instruments (*Description of teaching for second degree studies...*, 2012).

This, in turn, translates into a program that specifies detailed conditions for the completion of subjects. At the first degree level, there is an economic module whose characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. List of subjects in the economic module in Tourism and Leisure in the University of Physical Education in Kraków at first degree level

No.	Subject	Semester	Number of hours
1	Economics	1	60
2	Economics of tourism and leisure	2	45
3	Management	3	60
4	Marketing of tourism and leisure services	3	45
5	Accounting fundamentals	3	45
Sum of hours			255

Source: authors, based on the academic program (www.awf.krakow.pl, 09.06.2017).

At second degree level, the central place of economics is found in 'Tourist enterprise management' and 'Tourist and leisure policy' (Table 2).

Table 2. List of subjects in the economic module in Tourism and Leisure at the University of Physical Education in Kraków at second degree level

No.	Subject	Semester	Number of hours
1	Tourist enterprise management	2	60
2	Tourist and leisure policy	3	60
Sum of hours			120

Source: authors, based on the academic program (www.awf.krakow.pl, 09.06.2017).

This concerns only compulsory subjects. Much of the content is included in the curriculum and taught within specializations both at first and second degree levels. Their characteristics are not presented only information that is relevant to the research questions.

4. TEACHING PROGRAMS FOR ECONOMIC SUBJECTS: FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION STANDARDS TO CONTENT INTEGRATION

Subjects including economics in 'Tourism and leisure' at the turn of the 21st c. were under the education standards obligatory at that time. They imposed goals and program content. In spite of this, HE institutions had some degree of freedom in choosing the particular content of lectures and exercises, as well as the methods of imparting knowledge, skills and competences to students. Therefore, the curricula of economic subjects in different HE institutions were not completely uniform, and in the University of Physical Education in Kraków itself were modified with the passage of time. At the end of the 1990s, lectures were devoted to macroeconomics and exercises to microeconomics (*Short course curriculum...* 1998). The justification was that microeconomics is directly related to the functioning of markets and companies that meet the social needs of tourism and leisure.

A change in the approach was made in 2007 when a traditional system was introduced where lectures were devoted to the presentation of macro and microeconomics theory, and exercises to discuss and implement tasks aimed at acquiring knowledge by students and the practical skills of using it. The outlines of particular units were developed, adopting a unified way of organizing exercises by all teachers. For each exercise, sets of tasks were prepared to solve during the classes, related to the preceding lecture, as well as the content of the analytical tasks that the students performed in teams. As a result of the adoption of this agenda, it was necessary to limit the information provided to students.

Although this change of content distribution between lectures and exercises, along with the annually refined materials for exercises, should be evaluated positively, the teaching of economics in the University of Physical Education in Kraków still faces serious problems. A small number of hours devoted to teaching the fundamentals of economics compared to economic universities, and the scarcity of textbooks fully adapted to these conditions. While in economic universities teaching covers traditionally two subjects, i.e. micro and macroeconomics, each of which has a minimum of 60 hours, in the case of the physical education universities, teaching is usually completed in the 60 hours provided so it can be only be basic. In addition, it is problematic to delineate basic (economics) and content (tourism and leisure economics) – especially in the context of the operational objective of the Bologna process, namely the development of

interdisciplinary education (*Short course curriculum...* 1998). Although such an approach is justified in the education of economists, in the context of tourism and leisure, in which economics is part of the complementary content, it may not be fully efficient. In the latter case, students not only do not put the economic perspective of tourism and leisure over axiological and behavioral perspectives, but sometimes they are not sufficiently prepared based on the modeling of real sites and phenomena; especially because economics, as a subject of general education, is already taught in the first semester of undergraduate studies.

In the course of improving the teaching programs for economics in the University of Physical Education in Kraków, the concept of merging into a two-semester subject of content, which in the current system of education is transferred within the framework of 'Economics' and 'Economics of tourism and leisure' is being tried. Such integration would allow for a permanent link between what is general (basic economic knowledge) and what is specific, i.e. reflecting the specificity of an important part of the services sector, which includes tourism and leisure as a field of management. In other words, it is a matter of finding answers to a frequently asked question by students: what is the connection between this general economic knowledge and the foundations of tourism and leisure? Following this idea, work is ongoing on the program of the subject, which would combine the presentation of the basic issues of micro-, meso- and macroeconomics with current examples in tourism and leisure, as well as work on this type of textbook.

For students to assimilate economic knowledge remains a cornerstone of HE in management, marketing and accounting and the biggest changes were made in marketing. At the time of the abolition of the former standards, 'Marketing of tourism and leisure services' was transferred to first degree level to complement the economic module, omitted before, by a look at business activity taking into account the needs and desires of consumers. At the same time, the traditional way of teaching marketing has been abandoned for marketing planning, taking into account that marketing is a subdiscipline of economics and also business practice (WIKTOR 2002). Since then the lecture has been devoted to presenting the essence of marketing to satisfy the needs and desires of consumers and subsequent stages of marketing planning. Exercises are dominated by student presentations of marketing plans that they are successively preparing on their own. In this case, general market knowledge is immediately transferred to the specialist interests of students, which is in line with the their demand for combining theory and practice in marketing teaching (KOLNY, MACIEJOWSKI 2002).

5. METHODS OF TEACHING ECONOMICS: FROM STANDARD TEAM TASKS TO INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM TASKS

Changes in organisation were not limited to program issues. Teaching methods have been modified too bearing in mind both the specificities of particular subjects and the relationship between them and their order on the study plan.

Therefore, it was assumed that the initial contact of students with economics as part of a lecture can be enriched only by discussing the content of individual lectures and solving tasks that require no creativity but assimilating the elementary skills of analyzing, interpreting and processing economic data. For these exercises, an 'audit form' was adopted (see KALISZEWSKA & KLASIŃSKA 2008), implemented in a uniform way of organizing classes where a set of interpretative and computational tasks was prepared for each unit. Some tasks are solved individually, others as team-work. Students are assessed on the basis of their work during the exercises. Different ways of distributing these tasks to students were tested: both delivering them during the class, allowing students to evaluate current work or forwarding in advance and allowing students to prepare for classes.

While it is sensible to present students with interpretative and computational tasks typical for different topics, because of the necessity to develop and consolidate the elementary skills of manipulating economic data, part of each exercise was devoted to team analytical tasks. For every exercise a three-person team develops a topic that requires the discovery of empirical data from public statistics, and then submits this data to analysis according to the guidelines given individually to each person. These tasks correspond to the class topics, and their presentation is combined with a discussion moderated by the teacher. This creates a set of tasks that allows both consolidation of knowledge from lectures and control of the skills in its use.

A similar set of methods is used within 'Economics of tourism and leisure', while the tasks given to students serve less to improve analytical skills, but rather to understand the characteristics of tourism and leisure as a business area. Therefore, these tasks are based only on empirical data. At the same time, student activity differentiation is gradually being developed, aimed at broadening opportunities for choice in tasks. The target is similar to the 'analytical tasks', which have now taken the form of presentations of readings from source documents assigned to particular units.

Experience of the implementation of this way of organizing work indicates that it allows the interests

of students to be maintained in the content of the classes and supports their activity. Students are faced with the need to perform a variety of tasks from listening to speakers, who in a creative way revise the topic of the previous class, through discussion, to deciding a new topic and solving related tasks.

Difficulty levels progressively increase according to the principle 'from simple to complex' (see KUPI-SIEWICZ 2012). It is then assumed that students are able to describe economic phenomena by acquiring, interpreting and processing public data and are prepared to carry out tasks requiring greater independence and even creativity. Therefore, the curriculum of 'Marketing of tourism and leisure services' provides project work, consisting in the preparation of marketing plans. This task, due to its high degree of complexity, is divided into clearly identified sub-tasks, spread over the whole semester. Each student receives information about the structure of a marketing plan, which is discussed in detail in subsequent lectures, and on this basis prepares and performs field research and market segmentation, develops a product, distribution, promotion and price plan. Further elements are presented during exercises where they are subjected to group discussion, and in addition twice a semester they submit in writing partial plans, so that they can receive accurate feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of their work. This is done in written and oral form: the teacher discusses the writing as a group and then during the exercise general remarks indicating typical, repeated errors or deficiencies, while also posting online comments addressed to individual students on their work. Students are also encouraged and sometimes obliged to contact the teacher. All this is part of 'involved didactics' (BUK-CEGIELKA 2016), using active learning methods and learning by doing (BIAŁEK & CYRAN 2013).

The preparation of the marketing plan was originally intended as a team task, given its high level of complexity. Over time, due to real difficulties in assessing team members' contribution to the end result, despite the fact that each student was responsible for a specific part, assessment was decided by an individual task. This made it easier to assess students' work, but also allowed them to differentiate between tasks, resulting in closer relationships with students who showed more ability and willingness to go beyond the necessary tasks. The individualization of the task, therefore, makes the student a partner in a 'real dialogue' with the teacher (see CZERWIŃSKI 2008), and between peers for common goals (DENEK 2016). It also allows for improvement in the student's writing, which is a complementary but important effect of the exercise (BIAŁEK & CYRAN 2013).

Initially, it was considered that in each group there were marketing plans related to different types of

Table 3. Project work topics from 'Marketing of tourism and leisure services' at the University of Physical Education in Krakow (%)

Academic year	Leisure enterprises					Tourism enterprises		
	providing sport coaching services	providing sport and leisure facilities and open spaces	providing catering services for residents	providing wellness or beauty services	other	tour operators	providing accommodation services	other
2014/2015	35	11	8	8	9	10	8	11
2015/2016	36	16	8	8	6	18	3	7
2016/2017	27	21	10	6	8	15	6	7
Three year average	33	16	8	7	7	14	5	8
Three year average	73					27		

Source: authors.

business and various types of tourism and leisure, i.e. tour operators, hotel facilities and leisure centers. Ultimately, this approach was abandoned, and now, every student can propose an interesting venture in the field of tourism or leisure. This allows students to be more interested in tasks assigned to them, and those with undisclosed preferences are forced to reflect on their future career path. At the same time, it makes it easier to work with both a 'capable' and a 'weak' student.

It is worth mentioning that students are more likely to propose topics related to leisure activities than to tourism, which is an expression of their focus on meeting the needs of people using free time at their place of residence (Table 3).

The data set consists of 430 projects from three years. In the topics chosen by students, leisure service businesses are dominant, with a significant proportion of tourist commerce businesses (tour operators) and tourist service providers (accommodation establishments). The pattern is relatively stable with an average of 73% for leisure service companies. Considering specific themes, the two most significant, covering almost 50%, are companies providing sport coaching services (especially fitness and dance), as well as the provision of sport and leisure facilities and open spaces (especially fitness clubs and gyms).

The disclosure of students' preferences, perhaps not only of the University of Physical Education in Kraków, is a useful prerequisite for programming their further education. The latter can be done by placing greater emphasis on the leisure content of other subjects (or more commonly referring to examples of projects in this area – case studies), but also by changes in the specializations offered at the university or taking up work aimed at launching new

courses including at postgraduate level. These transformations may, perhaps, direct physical education academies towards a stronger specialization in education related to the programming and servicing of recreational forms of leisure time – as already pointed out by S. LISZEWSKI (2011).

6. CONCLUSIONS

In pursuing the aims of the article, it should be assumed that in the activities of non-economic universities for the improvement of teaching curricula, it seems useful to adopt an orientation borrowed from the 'relationship marketing' subdiscipline, which treats the student as a client, a partner in a long-term exchange process, leading to an expansion of knowledge of economic reality. Because information is the subject of exchange, social communication, cybernetics and information economics will improve the efficiency of teaching and emphasize the specific nature of non-economic universities, joining elements of general and vocational education.

Within this framework based on experience, participant observation and data collection, the main components of such a teaching orientation should include:

- preparation of current, original teaching materials, from textbooks, through lecture notes to exercises and analytical tasks;
- building a multi-channel relationship with a student using both direct contact and available information and communication technologies (e-learning);

- differentiation of relations to ‘capable’ and ‘weak’ students;
- improving the effectiveness of feedback in a teacher-student relationship, testing different ways to acquire it;
- multicriteria evaluation of a student's work, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, with elements of self-assessment.

In reply to the detailed questions put forward in the introduction, it can be said that:

1. The conditions of non-economic university education are defined in part, but do not determine the objectives of teaching economics that should skillfully balance between socio-economic and specialization content.
2. The effects of teaching economics at a non-economic university applied to the University of Physical Education in Kraków seem to be up to date and appropriate. The changing predispositions of students should be considered, which not so much stimulate the narrowing of the academic dimension of economic education as the improvement of a teachers' didactic work.
3. Integrating the content of economics can improve the quality of education, justifying both deductive links between general and more specific subjects, and encouraging the complexity and coherence of the learning process in modular education.
4. It is possible and effective to reconcile teaching methods within all economic subjects, moreover, it is purposeful. It requires, however, in-depth analysis and improvement of teaching methods and techniques used in particular subjects in conjunction with appropriate allocation of educational content.

Adopting and applying ‘relationship marketing’ in the process from the point of view of an academic teacher is a demanding task, given the cost of adopting such a system. However, it should be noted that the effects of such an approach, although not immediate, are satisfactory for both students and teachers. A student who is encouraged by the reliability of the teacher's approach reciprocates and enriches the research process associated with the didactic process.

ENDNOTES

¹ For the sake of accuracy, it is noted that given fields of study can be included inside many academic disciplines

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Article received:
12th November 2017
Accepted:
18th December 2017