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PROBLEMS OF TRAINING IN THE SPHERE OF TOURISM IN THE ARCTIC REGION

E. Y. Tereshchenko (a), Z. Y. Zhelnina (a)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Murmansk Arctic State University, Egorov St., 16, Murmansk, 183038, Russia, zzhelnina@yandex.ru,
+79113038238

Abstract

The article discusses the problems of training personnel for tourism business in the Arctic region, which is determined by the trends in the development of cultural industries and the changing role of universities in the region. Cluster policy presupposes a close link between enterprises, authorities and educational institutions, while the university becomes the driver of innovative changes, «smart specialization» and creation of a critical mass of the regional personnel resources. The paper emphasizes that the specialists of Arctic tourism should possess not only technological competencies but also profound cultural knowledge in addition to the ability to think creatively. The materials of the article reveal the directions of Murmansk Arctic State University work and suggest discussing the data obtained during the interview and questionnaires on the topic of professional identity. The results of the research reflected the interest of students and graduates in tourism as a branch of knowledge and sphere of activity, reveals their optimism in assessing their professional success. However, a change of profession was found realistic for young people. The study relates to the university because it is currently undergoing the process of modernization of educational programs, development of teaching technologies, and increased participation in cross-border cooperation in the Barents region. It is necessary to prevent the risks of personnel loss and to encourage the increase in the participation of specialists from other professions through supplementary education and complex creative projects.

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Keywords: Arctic tourism, professional identity, tourist cluster, university strategy.



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1. Introduction

Studying the problems of personnel training in the Murmansk Arctic State University is associated with a change in its status in the region, when the classical task of providing a human resource was extended to the formation of educational products that ensure the brand and attractiveness of investments in the social sphere of the Murmansk region.

In scientific studies of European scholars, much attention is paid to the impact of programs that stimulate educational mobility (academic globalization), but the publication of data on the capabilities of universities in the development of local territories is also growing (Nicoline, Jeroen & Stig, 2013). Each regional university in its own way solves problems related to the realities of the socio-economic life of the region (Akopova & Chernyavskaya, 2014). The most dynamic are the educational practices of universities that are involved in the strategies of cluster policy and cross-border links of the region.

Now, the Murmansk region has such stable clusters as marine and geochemical ones, but equally important is the constantly growing role of socially-oriented clusters, like a recreational tourism cluster and a cluster of northern design. The development of the latter takes place with the participation of the Murmansk Arctic State University, which, in fact, provides educational programs and business contacts for these clusters in order to have fruitful cooperation between young professionals and employers. Model of training specialists for creative clusters creates a unique set of values that are of top priority for regional and professional identity in tourism and cultural industries.

The tourist and recreational cluster of the Murmansk region gives an opportunity to unite the efforts of those who ensure the attractiveness of the Kola Peninsula as a tourist destination and the territory of creative industries development. The latter builds an interest in cultural events, creative crafts and non-standard educational programs. All these aspects form a flow of investment in the non-productive sphere, create favorable conditions for the export of tourist products outside the region. Such processes are especially important in connection with the growing trend of attractiveness of Arctic and northern peripheral tourism (Weaver, 2014).

Nordification of tourism requires systematic knowledge of the circumpolar world, however, the image of the Arctic from the traveler is usually formed intuitively against the backdrop of aesthetic impressions and experience of communication with host guides and / or local residents (Stammler-Gossmann, 2007; Davidson, 2005; Shabaev, Zhrebtssov, Jin, & Taek, 2016; Sarancha, 2016).

2. Problem Statement

Participation of the university in the implementation of regional cluster strategies is conceptually understandable. However, at the same time, this is organizationally new practice that goes beyond classical reproductive education. The following systemic problems can be named here:

1. Vocational training assumes that the competences received will be included in the resources of the «social elevator» of the modern kind, that is, they will create the possibility of managed mobility to achieve economic freedom and personal competitiveness in social relations. However, cultural industries and tourism are very dynamic professional spheres, where creativity and enterprise are the basic conditions for long-term employment in the industry both as an employee and as an entrepreneur. Accordingly, at the training stage such a perspective should be taken into account and reflected in the training activities.

2. The university actually assumes the role of a cultural ambassador of the regional brand, as it presents and updates the cultural codes of the region. They are being presented with new strategic guidelines and offer new creative projects, in which both students and experts can participate. However, tourism and hospitality industry is dominated by a request for technological skills. Consequently, the request for additional vocational education or specialization programs remains uncertain.

These problems are called systemic because they cannot be solved discretely, and the trajectory of the situation development depends on a variety of factors, the influence of which is non-linear and ambiguous. At the same time, MASU has resources to influence the situation, therefore, steps are needed to implement the university's potential to create educational programs focused on the specifics of creative industries and network resources of clusters.

The discussed problems define the research questions.

3. Research Questions

- 3.1. The main issue should be recognized as studying the specifics of the training specialists in the field of tourism, taking into account the requests of the northern tourist industry and the development of Murmansk region tourist brand;
- 3.2. The issue of studying the professional identity in the tourism of northern territories, the basis of which must be laid at the stage of training, is also complex. Nevertheless, the impulse of its development is necessary, through the recognizing the values of its professional activity for the formation of cultural codes of the region.

Each of the issues highlighted has its own significance, but it is advisable to combine practical steps to solve them and to achieve graduates' active professional identity, interest in creative entrepreneurship, and social responsibility.

4. Purpose of the Study

The raised questions compose the purpose of the study – to describe the principles of the university as a platform for creation and testing of educational products necessary for the formation of professional identity and to identify the problems of training personnel for the Arctic region.

5. Research Methods

The study is based on the principles of systemic and anthropological approaches and the research program is presented by a set of mutually complementary methods:

- a method of analysis of educational documents (strategies for the development of the university, educational standards and programs) that reveal the specifics of tourism education;
- a method of questioning and polling in the study of professional identity, the process of mastering professional competences in the field of tourism and creative industries in the region.

The materials of the current study include an overview and comparative analysis of data obtained during the research sessions beginning in 2013, when studies of professional orientations, regional identity and the potential of cultural industries in the Murmansk region were implemented (Mosolova, 2013). The

received data set confirms the representativeness and reliability of proposed conclusions and solutions on the identified problems.

6. Findings

6.1. The role of the Murmansk Arctic State University in training personnel for Arctic tourism

In the paradigm of territorial sustainable development, the quadruple helix model, which describes the interaction of regional authorities, educational institutions, business and the local community, has now become widespread (Carayannis & Grigoroudis, 2016). In this model each subject is an agent (acting subject) and consumer of a non-industrial socio-economic system. However, universities do not have enough efforts to manage the educational process, here we need a description of the bundle “educational product - sectoral functionality - competitiveness in the context of globalization”. Also, this bundle can be presented as “educational programs and technologies - the quality of learning - the scalability of educational practices”. The complexity in these models is determined by the fact that the quality of education can be assessed by the specified indicators, but in fact its result is cumulative in nature with a lot of deferred and additional effects, so it is advisable to combine educational programs and creative projects of different scale. They combine pragmatic business interests and long-term tasks of the region, which are solved within the framework of cluster policy.

The mission of the MASU is to form a human, intellectual and sociocultural potential for the development of the Murmansk region as a key Russian entity in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. The University actively participates in the formation of regional development programs, the representatives of the MASU are part of the project office for the development of the program for the development of the Kola Peninsula of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation, as well as for the Economic Council under the Governor of the Murmansk region and for the profile coordinating and expert councils of executive bodies authorities of the Murmansk region. Among the leading foreign partners of the University in the field of research and innovation are several universities in Scandinavian countries: Arctic University of Norway (University of Tromsø), Northern University of Norway, Consortium of the University of Lapland, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, University of Oulu, etc. The MASU is part of the international university network “University of the Arctic” (UArctic). In the dialogue of experts, the key topic of discussion for several years has been the theme of Arctic competences.

Arctic competences can be defined as a hierarchical model of knowledge, skills and habits that are realized in the professional activity of specialists from different industries to ensure the quality of life of northerners and to increase the effectiveness of management processes of this activity.

Arctic competences in tourism is a collection of knowledge about the history and nature of the circumpolar world, abilities to use the unique resources of the Arctic for recreational activities, as well as readiness for competition in the sphere of cultural industries.

The development and implementation of educational programs with the arctic competences create the distinctive advantages of the MASU as a regional institution of higher education, especially for educational activities in line with the concept of «smart specialization» (European Economic Council, 2015). This concept does not imply restrictions (subjective choice) for establishing the investment profile

and industry concentration of production in the region, “smart specialization” as a complex of basic solutions for regional management involves an interactive process to achieve competitive advantages through effective policy of social capital formation, optimization of long-term investment in infrastructure projects, as well as through the activation of regional clusters.

It should be emphasized that the management of “smart specialization” refers to long-term strategies for integrating resources, but it requires a sustainable market of innovations, products of creative industries and complex network projects (Kutsenko, Islankina, & Kindasa, 2018). The concept of «smart specialization» implies, on the one hand, the growth of the internal potential of the region with high employment and territorial cohesion, and on the other hand - the maximum openness of the region as a socio-economic system, that is, it is the task of attracting external flows of resources and consumers of the regional product. Such a description of the professional sphere most clearly reflects the specifics of tourism, which is a factor in increasing the popularity of the region and the effectiveness of the tourist and recreational cluster of the Murmansk region.

6.2. Regional specificity of the formation of human resources in line with trends in Arctic tourism

The main factor in the development of tourism in the Murmansk region is the growth of the tourist flow to the region. This positive trend was taken into account in the program documents that determine the strategies for managing tourist and recreational activities. Thus, “The Concept of Long-Term Social and Economic Development of the Russian Federation until 2020” considers to the main problems of Russia's socioeconomic development: the strengthening of global competition; a new wave of technological change, reinforcing the role of innovation. The increasing role of human capital as a key factor in economic development.

In turn, the “Strategy for the socio-economic development of the Murmansk region until 2020 and for the period until 2025” (as amended on July 10, 2017) identifies the instability of the regional economic structure, social, humanitarian and environmental risks as problems. The strategy emphasizes that the main problems are common to the Barents region, therefore the Murmansk region is making efforts for joint decisions and actions with the “Arctic neighbors”. This document defines the main direction of development of the Murmansk region as a strategic center of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

The most complete development of tourism in the Murmansk region is disclosed in the “The Program for the Development of the tourist and recreational cluster of the Murmansk region for 2016-2020”, this program is built taking into account the development of event tourism, supporting small businesses, achieving results when introducing the experience of tourist centers abroad, while the main one is the problem of discontinuities between scientific research, pilot projects and the commercialization of innovations (The program of development of the tourist-recreational cluster of the Murmansk, 2018). It is in Arctic tourism that the use of stereotyped commercial models, the unresolved legal issues, gaps in knowledge about the originality of the circumpolar world lead to a significant cultural distortion of tourist activity. The development of the tourism industry increasingly raises issues of quality criteria for tourism products, technology and training (Carcia-Rosell et al., 2017). Therefore, in the analysis of threats to the achievement of the objectives of the development program of the tourist and recreational cluster, the problem of the human resource is singled out, hence the question of training programs for specialists in the

development of tourist territories, organizers of special events, experts in certification and quality assessment in the tourism industry.

Currently, the region can boast of actively developing ethnographic, recreational, sports, marine research, that give new impulses to cultural and educational tourism. Authentic sights of the tangible and intangible heritage of the North can form the content of experiences, events that increase interest in northern culture. The intensity of tourism development in the Barents region is confirmed not only by tourist flows, but also by the dynamics of the number of events that attract tourists. Famous monuments of ancient culture (petroglyphs, labyrinths; medieval northern culture) can be attractors for ethnographic travel, folklore festivals. The border position of the Murmansk region creates prerequisites for educational mobility, the development of cross-border tourism.

The tourism of the Barents region, united geographically, is built on different technologies: a) active – sports, extreme; b) cultural – excursions, event-tourism, “slow tourism” (contemplative, ecological, etc.). At the same time, the demand is growing more rapidly for territorial design competencies. The region is in need of projects for ethnographic centers, theme parks, observation places, ecological pathways. Thus, arose a request for an in-depth understanding of cultural codes, visual communications, a verbal description of meanings for environmental design projects. The independent direction in vocational training has received virtual tourism, whose specialists are entering the first line of cultural heritage promotion, by creating unique projects of augmented reality (Orlandi, Zambruno, & Vazzana, 2014). And yet, information technologies are secondary to deep knowledge, ethics, creative solutions (Aladyshkin, Kulik, Michurin, & Anosova, 2017). Indeed, there is a growing demand for event tourism specialists, as well as those who can offer author's tourist products, excursions, workshops. Definitely, that the priority of the culturological approach is obvious, but now the business is dominating by a technological approach, focused on capacity and market dynamics, as well as the use of branded tourist resources. It can be argued that a simplified understanding of tourism has detaining the development of educational practice (Stroemberg, Ilkevich, & Sakharchuk, 2016).

Now the advantages of the Murmansk Arctic State University in the training of specialists in the field of tourism are determined by the fact that the curricula include the modules of Arctic disciplines, courses about the history of culture in the Barents region and the block of project courses. All of that give a knowledge of tourism in the new levels. The emphasis on culturological competencies reflects the requirements of the time, because in the Arctic territories trips to northern festivals, expedition trips, ethnographic tours, Arctic plein air and other trips are becoming more and more popular, an interesting interactive program becomes the main element of the north rest and tourism.

Such changes determine the task of studying the readiness of specialists in the field of tourism to understand the actual image of their profession.

6.3. Professional identity of the problem of its formation in conditions of instability of the tourist market of the Arctic territories

Specificity of tourism is determined by the fact that the quality of the tourist product in many respects depends on the person who is professionally involved in tourist activities. Such competencies must be culturological and technological, but even more important is the motivation of a specialist, which affects his self-identification in tourism activities.

«Professional Identity» is a well-developed scientific concept that is considered in the mainstream of professional culture, labor psychology and the ethics of labor relations. Professional identity is determined through a personal attitude to the profession, the experience of their professional values, abilities and aspirations to be effective (Krutko & Chalikova, 2016). Therefore, professional identity as a phenomenon presupposes not only an emotionally appraising experience of one's profession, but also includes an activity component - the desire to choose rational, effective strategies for realizing oneself in the profession. It should be borne in mind that the market is building new tests for creative professions with temporary employment, freelancing, transitions from one sphere of labor to another (Volchik & Posukhova, 2016).

This statement of the problem forms a series of questions that allow, in a narrow sense, to identify the student's attitude to the process of his education, and broadly define the symbolic capital of the profession, on which the region's attractiveness as a tourist destination depends, the quality and uniqueness of tourist products.

Since the development strategies of the Arctic territories are among the priorities of state policy, a sufficient number of comprehensive studies are carried out in the scientific community that reveal the attitude of people towards the current situation and assess the prospects for its development.

So, in 2013, data of a large sociological survey conducted by specialists of the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia had been published. It is based on the materials of the survey of 5471 respondents showed that there is a firm opinion in the society that the development of the Murmansk region as an Arctic region is more closely connected with the fishing industry (65%), and the most demanded education is that which is connected with the sea business or the engineering sphere (33% and 23%). While the problem of cultural recreation was mentioned as a quality-reducing problem of life (15%) (Mosolova, 2013).

The Kola Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences carried out research on the views of the population of the Murmansk region on the prospects for the development of the Russian Arctic, the effectiveness of social management and the material well-being of the region. Again, among other data, respondents indicated that the development of the region will be affected by the further development of the Northern Sea Route (57.1%), as well as the oil and gas and fish industry (55.8% and 50.4%). Only a small percentage of respondents indicated that socially-oriented projects and programs (6.8%) will play in the development strategies of the Russian Arctic (Guschina, Ivanova, Kondratovich, & Polozhentseva, 2017).

The analysis of research materials on the personnel resources of the tourism industry in the Murmansk region revealed problems such as staff turnover and staff shortages, a weak dynamics of the renewal of knowledge of tourism specialists, and low activity of professional associations in the development of regional tourism (Mosolova, 2013; Gerashchenko & Mulina, 2013). The results of these studies had been confirmed in the assessments of experts who conducted research in 2015-2016 to form the analytical part of the Program for the development of the tourist and recreational cluster of the Murmansk region for 2016-2020 (section 4.9). The program emphasizes the need for a variety of training programs, networking, and, most importantly, the creation of a system to support youth initiatives and creative projects of the tourism industry.

The sustainability of the problems of the tourism industry in the Murmansk region has determined the task of identifying attitudes toward the profession among those who by now (2018) constitute a potential cohort of specialists in the tourism industry. The trajectory of self-determination in the profession, which was started when young people took a choice of educational institution may change significantly. That's why it is of fundamental importance for the educational process can to determine the forces of forming adherence to the chosen professional path.

In the framework of the project of the Murmansk Arctic State University "Creative City - Territory of Development" (The development program of the MASU, 2017) in 2018 a study was carried out about the professional identity of students studying in the "Tourism" program. The subject of the study is a professional identity as an intangible resource of a specialist in the tourism industry and the basis of the social capital of the profession. The target groups were the students of the college (2nd year, the direction "Tourism" - 20 people), undergraduate students ("Tourism" and "Service" courses - 1st and 2nd year, 28 people), graduates in the direction "Tourism" (2016, 2017 – 14 people), and students who learning in other specialties and having travel experience as part of organized groups (58 people). The last group was included to identify the notion of tourism as a professional sphere from the point of view of specialists from other industries.

In total, four blocks of questions were proposed (the choice of profession, professional competences, the importance of the profession for the development of the region, professional adaptation), for which it was necessary to choose one or no more than 3 answers, while on the form all the answers were indicated in points from 1 to 10 This allowed to bring the data to the same indicators for comparison.

The results of the research showed that the choice of the profession was largely spontaneous; all had alternatives, college students expressed less confidence in the initial choice (30.5%), while undergraduate students of different age groups showed confidence in their initial choice of 56% up to 65%. In support of this choice had put point, that personal interest in travel has leading, second, this profession is more interesting than the others (more than 60%), and third also the cohort of higher education has an intention of establishing their own business (25%).

It is equally important that university students assumed high prestige and demand for specialties in the tourism industry (from 75% to 85%), whereas college students positively stated 42%. At the same time, all participants confirmed that their friends and relatives were supported this choice and now hope for positive prospects of working in the industry, that is implying the steady status of the profession in the labor market and in the social.

According to the respondents, in the structure of the demanded competences social and narrow professional ones occupy roughly the same position, Arctic competences in tourism were singled out by all respondents as a priority, while on a ten-point scale they scored the maximum points compared to others (up to 82%). Questions revealing the attitude of students towards self-education showed that this path is perspective only in 40%. In the questions about forming professional competencies, the answers about the need for several types of practice (up to 75%), personal travel experience (41-60%), as well as communication with specialists (60%) became topical. Such answers require additional research on the topic of the distance learning potential, currently that is positioning as a successful educational practice,

but since it requires self-organization and motivation for self-education, the task of assessing its real relevance and productivity arises.

The highest scores and the number of positive answers received questions from the block about the importance of tourism for the development of the region. The answers reflected the understanding that tourism positively affects the quality of life of the population (72-87%), the growth of the region's attractiveness for industrial and social investment, graduates noted that tourism has an impact on business development in the cluster (82%), however, respondents expressed doubts about the competitiveness of regional firms in relation to capital and foreign enterprises, in an additional conversation pointed to the monotony of tourist products, low mobility in entering markets of other regions.

During the interviews and the completion of the questionnaires, it had been detecting that in the process of training and practice, students became more positive about the chosen profession. In addition, it has noted that they gradually strengthened their understanding of the complexity of the profession. This position was confirming by answering questions about the prospects for the modernization of professional competencies. In the opinion of the respondents, that could be an extension of knowledge in other professional fields (information technology, jurisprudence, culturology, geopolitics, etc.). Moreover, they have the idea that the tourism will have been change significantly over the next 5 years (share of the agreed is more than 65%).

At the time of the survey, all respondents showed optimism about their status in the profession. However, college students and students of the university assumed their readiness for independent work in tourism at the level of 4 points out of 10, while first-year students of the university – 7 points from 10, this indicator is similar to the graduates, who rate their professional independence by 6.8 points. All respondents expressed an interest in further professional development: almost 37% decided that they would engage in self-education, in addition, 67% suggested that they would enter the magistracy. An additional education and a second higher education is expecting to will have got by 40% and 33% respectively.

The section of the study about future is quite peculiar, it reveals the respondents' views about their forecast of work, only 10% assumed that they will have engaged in mass tourism, 47% in the future expect to engage in non-standard tours, 20% - in regional sightseeing tours and 11% in regional active tourism. At the same time, less than 20% of students suggested that they will be leading of the firm, while management of the specialized direction was noted by 34% as the future chance; a master of the development of tourist areas (53%), writing books and articles on tourism (13%).

A modern tendency the participants expressed the idea that they will either organize festivals and other events (30%), or they will become travel bloggers (20%). This position is fundamentally new; earlier similar ideas were not highlighting as a topic for discussion, therefore further comments were significant for understanding the sustainability of interest in such specialized activity, so interest was expressed in the possibilities of creative industries as an integral part of tourism. The skills of visual design, media design, environment design, theatrical productions and organization of outdoor events are in demand here. On this topic, many positive assessments had expressed by those who do not study in the field of tourism, but they believe that events and interactives are essential elements of tourist programs. Interest in tourism as a profession has shown that in the long term specialists from this cohort can be attracted, who will receive additional education in tourism or they will work in the services sector that will provide non-standard

content of travel, design solutions and other innovative practices for tourism. This provides a positive outlook for combining the resources of tourist-recreational and creative clusters in the region.

Students in the long term see their work in the segment of non-standard tourist programs, but in the course of training they are not ready to choose an individual trajectory of vocational training, they are focused on group training, performance of projects under the direct supervision of teachers or specialists of the tourism industry. Professional identity as the driving force of personal growth in students is not a subject of deep reflection, although the prospects for their success in the profession are more optimistic. But there is the problem of staff turnover in tourism, as already at the stage of training, students assume that they can leave and return to the tourism industry depending on the specific life situation, assuming that specialized professional competencies can be quickly restored or re-acquired. Thus, students have a sense of the ability to master the necessary competencies, but they do not show a stable, long-term relationship with the profession. This reflects the deformation of professional identity.

7. Conclusion

Professional identity is an implicit product of mastering the educational program. University, forming a program of practice-oriented learning, assumes the student's personal activity in the development of deep interest in the profession. However, such a branch as tourism has flexible professional competencies - in fact, all of them are cognitive, creative, service-oriented. To prepare a specialist with such competencies, not only basic courses or projects have needed, but also a system for preparing for flexible employment and entrepreneurial stress resistance. However, the training of such a specialist creates the risk of his mobility - the transition from one social role to another, moving from one professional field to other field.

The MASU as a flagship university of the region implements the project "Creative City - Development Territory", which is designed to update the resources of the tourist-recreational cluster and the cluster of northern design that unite the opportunities of those engaged in cultural entrepreneurship. Subprojects in this area of work are always non-standard, emotional, include elements of festive culture, but at the same time that is fixing the image of the profession-game, which forms the risks of professional training.

In strategy of developing of the educational program of tourism, it is necessary to provide solutions to reduce the risks of diversion of trained personnel, as well as to attract specialists from other training profiles to tourism through additional education and complex creative projects.

The development of business relations in the tourism and recreational clusters makes it possible for the MASU to offer educational programs directly to the specialists of the tourism industry, that is, those who have a basic professional identity. However, in this direction one can focus only on deferred demand, when participants express interest in learning, real booking for profile programs is sluggish. The problem is exacerbated, among other things, because such courses allow testing materials for the student audience, and the lack of such opportunities leaves training in the field of theory and practice.

The conducted research opens the next session of studying the professional identity, problems and prospects of personnel training in the field of tourism on the basis of experience and achievements in the

work of representatives of tourism and creative industries, which together form local tourist brands in the Murmansk region.

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