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Inter-institutional cooperation as a prerequisite for the human resource development in the tourism sector

Abstract. The aim of this article is to investigate theoretical assumptions of inter-institutional cooperation as a prerequisite for the tourism human resource development. In times of uncertainty and rapid changes such sectors as tourism face many challenges. As one of the main factors influencing the successful adaptation to the changes can be mentioned the competencies of the human resources, which shall be developed constantly. Due to the systematic nature of the tourism sector, inter-institutional cooperation can be treated as prerequisite for the human resource development in this sector. Participation of different stakeholders in the human resource development for tourism sector may bring the common benefits on different levels and positively influence the development of such sector.

Keywords: inter-institutional cooperation, human resource development, tourism

Introduction

Inter-institutional cooperation, as an object of scientific research, have been studied by scientists all over the world for the last few decades. This phenomenon has gained interest because of the changes taking place in both business and public sectors. With growing uncertainty, accelerating changes, growing market dynamics, there was a need to focus on partnership-based networks, to share available resources, information and knowledge in order to achieve competitive advantage and better results (Ahokangas et al., 2015) The origins of inter-institutional cooperation lie in the concept of cooperation. Raidienė (2011) described cooperation as a process, during which organizations exchange information, jointly perform tasks, share resources and develop each other's specific abilities in order to obtain mutual benefits and achieve common goals by sharing risks, responsibilities and rewards. The tourism sector and tourism destinations operate on the basis of a system, the creators and providers of tourism services and products are dependent on each other. In general, when assessing the competitiveness of the tourism business sector and/or the direction of tourism, the development of

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tourism human resources has a significant impact. The competencies of tourism human resources, readiness to adapt to innovations and other trends in the tourism sector have a direct influence on the results of the competitiveness index (Navickas and Malakauskaitė, 2009). The mentioned measurement of the competitiveness factors of the direction of tourism and the tourism business sector allows to assess the level of competitiveness and make appropriate decisions, which create prerequisites for the creation and development of tourism competitiveness in the world economy. In this context, the complexity of the tourism sector is noticeable, the implementation of the common goals of tourism depends on the cooperation between tourism business entities and national institutions.

The aim of this article is to investigate theoretical assumptions of inter-institutional cooperation as a prerequisite for the tourism human resource development. The objectives of the article are: 1) to analyze the theoretical assumptions on the inter-institutional cooperation; 2) to prepare and represent the retrospective of the interaction of tourism human resource development and inter-institutional cooperation. Theoretical analysis, synthesis and generalisation were used as the scientific methods in order to achieve the stated aim, seeking to investigate meaning of inter-institutional cooperation in the context of human resource development in the tourism sector.

Theoretical assumptions of inter-institutional cooperation

The phenomenon of inter-institutional cooperation has been widely studied in the scientific world for three decades, although the concepts and insights presented by scholars differ, conceptually the approaches boil down to the statement 'win-win relationship' in which at least two organizations cooperate (Provan, Fish and Sydow, 2007). Collaborative relationships are a key part of many organizations' strategies, but one can find different opinions about collaboration. On the one hand, collaboration helps not to be limited to the resources and experience of one organization, on the other hand it can have a negative impact on the speed of progress and decisions. According to Huxham and Vangen (2005), the added value of cooperation can be considered the advantage of cooperation and the lack of benefits of cooperation and the challenges related to it – collaborative inertia. The inertia of cooperation manifests itself through the insignificance of the results of agreements, inefficient processes, disappointment, which is inseparable from the achieved success. According to Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar and Colle (2010), the most important conditions for successful cooperation are a properly defined purpose of cooperation and properly identified and selected cooperation partners.

Cooperation goals can be examined using different perspectives: of such goals, organizational goals, individual goals; goals can also be explicit, assumed or implied. Leng Leng Chong (2013) points out the importance of maintaining the goal of cooperation through multiple interests.

Huxham and Vangen (2005), who extensively studied the phenomenon of collaboration, proposed a list of recommendations for collaboration, the main ones being the following:

- collaborate only when necessary, as collaboration with other organizations is complex and resource-intensive. If the benefits and advantages of cooperation are not obvious, then it is not worth doing. It is important to find out whether it is possible to achieve the same benefits if the organization operates independently;
- recognize that the process will not be fully controlled, the collaborative environment and partners will change. Achieving a collaborative advantage will require leveraging partners' energies and skills.

The theory of cooperation creates a holistic picture of it. Organizations practicing cooperation with other organizations face issues of organization, form, efficiency, and communication. The most common challenges associated with collaboration are:

- *Communication* – cooperating parties are characterized not only by different goals, but also by different organizational cultures, communication traditions, ideologies and procedures. Collaboration that cross the public-private divide can be particularly problematic;
- *Trust* – cooperation is not possible if there is a lack of trust between the parties involved. Conventional wisdom is a prerequisite for successful collaboration;
- *Leadership* – the cooperating parties must be driven forward and motivated, the leadership aspect must necessarily appear in this process;
- *Ambiguity* – it is difficult for organizations to agree on common goals, create mutual understanding and manage trust and power relationships with partners if they do not know, for example, who their partners are;
- *Tensions, dilemmas and frustration* – some of the problems during cooperation are difficult to solve, which often causes tension and frustration;
- *Different views* – differences of views are inevitable in multilateral situations. They are not limited to defining goals and shaping identity;
- *Changes and dynamics* – cooperation is not static, its structures are dynamic, what affects the stability of trust. In the process of change, the balance of power may change at both the macro and micro levels (Huxham and Vangen, 2005).

It must be stated, that regardless of the growing interest in inter-organizational relations, researchers and practitioners use different concepts to describe this interaction: inter-organizational partnership, inter-institutional partnership, inter-institutional cooperation, inter-sectoral cooperation, networks, network management, association, alliance, union (Raidienė, 2008). There is a lack of consensus on the main aspects of the content of these forms.

Going deeper into the topic of inter-institutional cooperation, it is noticeable that in this context a number of scientific works discuss the topic of strategic alliances. Strategic alliances can be defined as agreements between organizations (partners) to achieve common goals (Idoraitė, 2009). Strategic partnership can be equated with cooperation when the cooperation is purposeful. Recently, in the context of strategic alliances and cooperation, researchers pay particular attention to learning and knowledge sharing.

According to the authors, strategic alliances or other inter-institutional relations based on partnership, have a positive influence on organizational and inter-organizational learning, knowledge sharing, the skills and competencies available to the organization, thus the negative impact of uncertainty is reduced (Leng Leng Chong, 2013). It can be assumed that the sharing of knowledge, the development of human resources is one of the reasons that encourage organizations to gather and cooperate.

Retrospective of the interaction of tourism human resource development and inter-institutional cooperation

A dynamic network of private and public tourism organizations enable the combination of available opportunities and resources, creating prerequisites for integrated added value creation in order to meet tourist needs (Hopenienė et al., 2009). Alignment of interest becomes an essential condition for successful cooperation. Organizations tend to foster cooperation when cooperation and its benefits are in their best interest. Intense competitive situation results in the fact that it is difficult for one organization to have all the skills and resources necessary to gain and maintain a competitive advantage (Giedraitis and Ribačonka, 2019). Cooperation between tourism organizations can significantly contribute to the reduction of skills shortages. In the scientific debate, there is still a lack of consensus on what role the state should play when it comes to human resource development in the tourism sector. However, it should be noted that researchers tend to agree that the development of human resources allows tourism companies and destinations to operate efficiently and competitively in the modern economy. The topic of human resource development is undeservedly marginalized in strategic tourism planning documents (Liu and Wall, 2006). Human resource issues in tourism are poorly understood, and in many theoretical and practical studies of tourism development, methods do not summarize recommendations related to the integration of human resource development into the tourism planning system (Baum and Szivas, 2008). The involvement of public and private entities in the human resource development planning process should take place at different levels: local, national, international, involving organizations, governments. Governments and organizations at different levels have documents related to tourism development, but they rarely talk about the development dimensions of HR and its coordination with other dimensions. It is also worth mentioning the often occurring problem – in regional and municipal administrations level, issues of tourism planning and management are decided by employees, who do not have special training (Armaitienė, 2004). Hall (1994) proposed a framework for tourism policymaking. It should be noted that the proposed integrated approach is not applied in the context of human resource development. The model emphasizes the influence of interest groups and organizations on the formation of tourism policy and the resulting institutional agreements (Fig. 1).

Stakeholders play an important role in the context of human resource development at local, national and international levels. Organizations providing tourism services, tourism associations, tourism development and marketing agencies, labor market agencies, higher education institutions, trade unions, governments can be considered

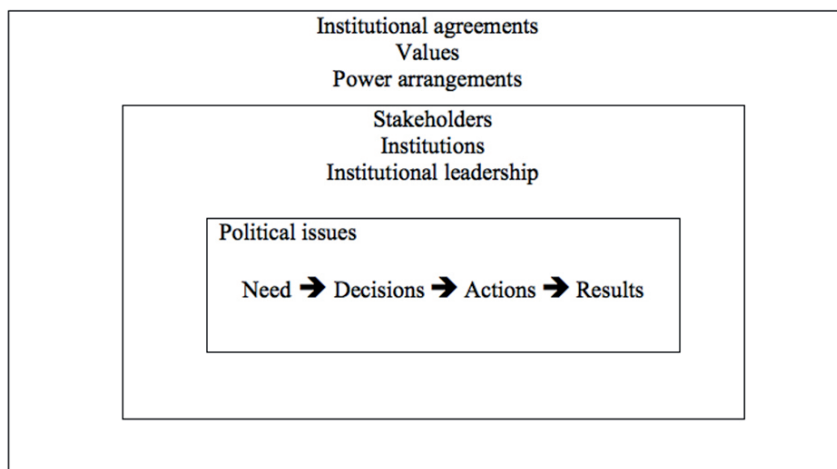


Figure 1. Tourism policy making model

Source: compiled by the author, based on Hall (1994), Velasco (2017), Katunian (2021).

interested parties. The tourism sector is fragmented and operates on the basis of sub-sectors. Various associations, such as associations of hotels and restaurants, tourist agencies, guides, etc., clearly reveal this trend. For example sub-sectors do not conflict with each other in the context of human resource development, but their interests are specific, and in many cases even different. The aforementioned fragmentation also poses challenges for tourism and hospitality training organizers and higher education institutions. Without a common agreement in the sector on the development of human resources, it is difficult for training providers and higher education institutions to respond to unmet or even conflicting needs. Baum (2001) also notes that education and training are closely related to political decisions, so discussions should take place more often in the tourism sector, protectionism is encouraged, democratic political processes are emphasized.

Ignoring the issue of human resource development in tourism development planning can have negative consequences (Liu and Wall, 2006). Various international initiatives are emerging to ensure the dichotomy of the tourism sector and training organizers and educators: UN World Tourism Organization Academy; European Commission project „New Skills Agenda for Europe” etc. The tasks of these and other international initiatives are to promote the development of tourism (and not only) human resources, the dialogue between tourism business and tourism education, to update educational programs, to promote the sustainable development of tourism, to empower tourism employees and potential employees with the help of knowledge and expertise (Katunian and Țirnelă, 2018). According to Schuler and Jackson (2006), in this context, dialogue and inter-institutional cooperation is a necessary condition not only for the development of human resource, but also for the overall harmonious development of the tourism sector. The tourism sector is constantly changing, the requirements for the competence

of employees are also changing, so it can be assumed that training programs, study programs, etc. must change dynamically. This approach should also find its place in the national tourism planning documents, linking it with tourism development priorities, the expected need for human resources.

Diffley et al. (2018) state that in order to realize the potential of human resource in the future, in order to ensure the provision of quality tourism services and tourism products, it is important to invest in the development of highly qualified employees, applying the principle of cooperation. Expert group in Ireland (2015) investigating the future skills of the hospitality and tourism sector indicated that there is currently a trend towards a lack of shared leadership and coordination in developing the skills of the sector. The adoption of a collaborative approach in the development of human resource has a positive impact on the development of the entire sector and the quality of services provided (Joos and Burbach, 2017). However, it must be admitted that the development of human resource in the context of inter-institutional cooperation is still relatively rarely studied by researchers (Nolan et al., 2020). Researchers tend to agree that human resource development consists of many components: formal and informal training, HR development policies, teaching and learning processes, practices, work-related skills development, employee training and learning, knowledge management, learning leadership, employee-manager relations (Sung and Choi, 2018).

Many policy documents indicate for human resource development of sectors such as tourism. Looking from this perspective, it is observed that researchers tend to agree that the capacity of human capital, the development of human resource is one of the main factors determining the successful development of tourism (Jaworski et al., 2018). Although scholars agree on the issue, the importance of stakeholders engagement in human resource development remains one of the key challenges in the tourism sector and on the political agenda (Nolan et al., 2020). It should be mentioned that both more formal human resource development and less formal human resource development require the appropriate form of cooperation. Various forms of cooperation are possible, apart from the already mentioned strategic alliances: consortia, cooperation networks, licensing, virtual organizations, strategic cooperation agreements, etc. (Gulati, Wohlgezogen and Zhelyazkov, 2012). There are following forms of inter-organizational interaction, naming them from the highest level dynamics to the lowest level dynamics: integrative cooperation, union, partnership, cooperation, networks, interaction in competition (Raidienė, 2008).

Analyzing the forms summarized above through the prism of knowledge, networks can be considered the most promising form of inter-organizational interaction. The basis of network management is information, sharing the available information relevant to entities participating in network activities. Involvement and participation in network activities can be attributed to low dynamic inter-organizational interaction. For the aforementioned reason, it is important to measure and ensure the effectiveness of networks (Ahokangas et al., 2015). Analyzing through the institutional prism, it should be mentioned that managers of small and medium-sized tourism companies in the context of HR development often face conflicting statements of institutional logic, which

created tension, but at the same time, opportunities for the development of tourism human resource in the future (Bailey et al., 2018). Organizational theories presuppose the idea that organizations in the institutional context contribute to the formation of a common culture of human resource development (Farndale and Paauwe, 2018). The orientation of part of the forms of inter-organizational interaction towards information sharing, indicated the need to create and develop the environment and culture for the development of human resource. In this way, the prerequisites for reducing the uncertainty, social pressure, and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage are created.

Conclusions

To conclude, tourism sector and tourism destinations operate on the basis of a system, the creators and providers of tourism services and products are dependent on each other. In the context of rapid changes the success of tourism development depends a lot on the human resource development, into which it is suggested to include different stakeholders, with possible different forms of inter-institutional cooperation.

Collaboration helps to overcome limit of the resources and experience of one organization, however, it is important to mention, that it can have a negative impact on the speed of progress and decisions. The most important conditions for successful cooperation are a properly defined purpose of cooperation and properly identified and selected cooperation partners, stakeholders. Stakeholders play an important role in the context of human resource development at local, national and international levels. Organizations providing tourism services, tourism associations, tourism development and marketing agencies, labor market agencies, higher education institutions, trade unions, governments can be considered interested parties. A dynamic network of private and public tourism organizations enable the combination of available opportunities and resources, creating prerequisites for integrated added value creation in order to meet tourist needs. Ignoring the issue of human resource development in tourism development planning can have negative consequences.

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