

# DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES CAPABILITIES IN TOURISM: AN EMPIRICAL APPLICATION

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this research project is to analyse how future professionals of the tourism sector can acquire or improve their competences. These professionals must possess a series of competences that have been extensively analysed in the area of Spanish universities that teach the current official tourism studies. More specifically, the White Paper on the Tourism Qualification (2004) contemplates two types of competences: transversal and specific.

Transversal competences refer to the competences that any professional must have regardless of their training and these are also divided into instrumental, personal and systemic competences. Analysis and synthesis capability falls within the first type as well as the capability to communicate in their native language, knowledge of computing, ability to solve problems and ability to make decisions. The most relevant personal capabilities are the ability to work in a team, maintain interpersonal relations, work in an international context, recognise diversity and multiculturalism, possess critical reasoning and maintain an ethical commitment. Finally, the most outstanding systemic capabilities are the ability to learn autonomously, to adapt to new situations, to be creative, to be a leader, to know other cultures and customs, to possess an enterprising initiative and spirit, to pursue quality and be sensitive in environmental-related matters.

On the other hand, specific competences are capabilities that professionals of the Tourism sector must have and these include their disciplinary knowledge (which they must know) and their operative knowledge (what they must know how to do). From the long list of specific competencies that a Tourism professional must have, the ones that were considered most important by the directives consulted were: Have a marked customer-service orientation, work in English as a foreign language, define objectives, commercial strategies and policies, use ITCs in the different fields of tourism, handle communication techniques and direct and manage tourist companies.

Well, based on this study, our aim is to find out how the Tourism students acquire or improve their competences. To do this, in the period September 2006 – January 2007, we have analysed how this competence acquisition process takes place and we have applied it to the subject of Business Organisation and Management, which has a total of 10 ECTS credits and which belongs to the first year of the current Tourism Diploma given by the Autonomous University of Madrid.

An analysis was conducted in this study, through a questionnaire that was handed out to students that normally attend class, regarding which were, at the start and end of the first term of the 2006/7 course, the specific competences that they possessed related to the subject in question and their own transversal competences.

We can advance that the existence of a high level of internal consistency of the competences considered has been verified, obtaining very satisfactory results that show an important learning process, which is more than acceptable in the group of transversal competences and very intense in the group of specific competences of the subject chosen.