



Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education

Vol. 2, No. 1.

ISSN: 1473-8376

www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/johlste

PRACTICE PAPER

Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism in Higher Education in France

Loykie L. Lominé (loykie.lomine@wkac.ac.uk)

King Alfred's College
Winchester, SO22 4NR, UK.

DOI:10.3794/johlste.21.23

© Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education

Abstract

In terms of Higher Education (HE), France and England have much in common, notably the political agendas of widening access and participation, the development of new information technologies (leading to the re-thinking of teaching methods and research organisation) and the enhancement of research (especially in the perspective of global competition and international recognition). The two countries have nevertheless some important structural differences regarding HE institutions themselves and the organisation of the programmes and qualifications they offer. Based on the assumption that there could be a lot for British lecturers to learn from the experiences of other countries, this paper, synthetical rather than analytical, presents how the four fields of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism are tackled and taught in Higher Education in France.

Keywords: France, Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, Tourism

Introduction

The 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region is the most recent of a series of European agreements aimed at providing a formal (if not official) structure for the acceptance and equivalence of Higher Education (HE) programmes and qualifications across European countries.¹ Particularly important is article VI.1:

¹ In chronological order, the previous conventions have been: the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (1953, European Treaty Series No. 15) and its Protocol (1964, ETS No. 49); the Paris European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1956, ETS No. 21); the Paris European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications (1959, ETS No. 32); the International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean (1976); the Paris Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region

Before coming to England seven years ago, Dr Loykie L. Lominé studied in France where he gained an MSc in Tourism Management at the Université d'Angers. He now lectures in Tourism Management at King Alfred's College, Winchester. His academic interests include the sociology of tourism, special interest markets (gay tourism, sports tourism, holocaust tourism) as well as qualitative research methods. His pedagogical interests include online learning and teaching, assessment strategies and disability issues.

“To the extent that a recognition decision is based on the knowledge and skills certified by the higher education qualification, each [country] shall recognize the higher education qualifications conferred in another, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification in the [country] in which recognition is sought.” (Council of Europe and UNESCO, 1997)

Put another way, across Europe HE qualifications are now *a priori* accepted as equivalent, unless important differences can be identified. Are British and French HE qualifications in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism cognate enough to be regarded as equivalent, or do they present substantial variances? This article provides answers by outlining how those four fields are tackled and taught in HE in France. Methodologically, it builds upon the author’s knowledge and experience of the French HE system and upon secondary data including career guides for students (Charollois, 1998; Sicard, 1998; Vellas, 1998; Engelhard, 2000; Wolski-Quére, 2001) as well as the official websites from the French government (especially from the Ministère de l’Education Nationale and from the Office National d’Information sur les Enseignements et les Professions) and from European Union institutions (notably Eurydice, the Information Network on Education in Europe). Linguistically, all efforts have been made to translate French phrases (e.g. titles of courses and degrees), whilst recognising the limits of this practice in a cross-cultural perspective.

Higher Education in France

Although the early 1990s saw an increase in student numbers (accompanied by the foundation of several new institutions, including four new universities in the Paris region), the total number of students in France has now stabilised at around two million. Around 40 per cent of the 19-21 age group study at HE level and females represent over 55 per cent of the whole student population (Eurydice, 2000).

Structurally and institutionally, in France one distinguishes between universities (almost 90 of them, attended by 70 per cent of French students) which offer mainstream programmes (including Sport, but rarely Leisure, Tourism or Hospitality) and which do not practice selection beyond Baccalauréat qualification, as opposed to the thousands of other establishments, both public and private, which are involved in HE and do select their students (typically through interviews or competitive entrance exams). These latter institutions are sometimes attached to traditional universities and include 100 institutes of technology, 79 teacher training schools, 243 engineering schools and 220 business and management schools. Many (if not most) have idiosyncratic awards schemes, which make the French HE system as a whole, very complex and in real need of simplification. Following the 1998 Sorbonne Declaration (signed by the French, German, English and Italian Ministers of Higher Education) and the larger-scale 1999 Bologna Declaration on the European Space for Higher Education (a pledge by 29 countries to reform the organisation of their HE systems in a convergent way), France has undertaken to clarify the structure of its HE qualifications, yet this much-needed endeavour has paradoxically started with the creation of a new level of postgraduate qualification (DESS: Diplôme d’Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées; higher than a Masters but lower than a Doctorate), and of a new qualification called ‘licence professionnelle’, a three year vocational degree.

There is no French equivalent to the Quality Assurance Agency: the Inspection Générale de l’Education Nationale does not cover HE, which makes it rather comparable to the British Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The Conseil National des Programmes, created in 1989, does include HE, but its role is purely consultative: it mainly publishes reports about disciplines and syllabi, not about specific institutions that would have been visited, assessed and rated. From a

(1979) and the Rome European Convention on the General Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1990, ETS 138).

French perspective, such an approach to HE rather goes against notions such as academic freedom and independence. French academics do not lengthily dispute issues of benchmarking or quality control, but notions such as the values and mission of HE; many key texts in this respect are written not by senior committees or policy-makers, but by philosophers (Derrida, 2001; Renaud, 2002). Similarly, there is no equivalent to the Research Assessment Exercise, nor to the Institute of Learning and Teaching and the Learning and Teaching Support Network – it would be interesting to examine and discuss the extent to which this difference matters, yet this is beyond the objective of this article. From a governmental perspective, the important issues concerning HE are presented in the latest strategic plan which was published in 1999. Entitled U3M (Université du Troisième Millénaire), this political document pinpoints five areas of priority:

- Developing networks, both to enhance regional and national co-ordination and to widen access and participation (with equal opportunity seen as a founding principle of the Republic and the democratic ideal).
- Improving students' living and studying conditions, including residences and catering facilities, building of new libraries, sports infrastructures and cultural facilities (one quarter of the overall U3M budget is dedicated to this aim).
- In a global perspective, further developing international contacts (notably by recruiting more foreign students, who are expected to represent 15 per cent of residents in student halls; special agencies and workspaces are created for their sole use and benefit).
- Integrating new information technologies, which should lead to the rethinking of teaching methods and to the architectural design of institutions.
- Enhancing research, especially with a concern for international recognition.

The renewal of a considerable proportion of HE staff in the next 15 years is regarded as the opportunity to make in-depth reforms in the sector, though for the moment those reforms have been rather limited (Guibert, 2001).

Hospitality in Higher Education in France

To enter the hospitality industry in France, the golden qualifications are practical, non-HE ones (CAP and BEP: Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle and Brevet d'Etudes Professionnelles), comparable to English GNVQs level 1 (Foundation) and 2 (Intermediate), yet there is an increasing awareness and expectation that an HE background will only enhance would-be managers' chances to get promoted, and indeed 43 per cent of French hotel managers today also have an HE qualification (Wolski-Quéré, 2001:105).

The main French HE qualification in Hospitality is the BTS (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur) in Hotel and Restaurant Management. Taught in 156 institutions (including public colleges, private schools and professional training centres), it follows a national syllabus ensuring that all graduates have covered the same curriculum, irrespective of their place of study. The BTS normally lasts two years (which could relate it to a British HND), but students without prior vocational qualification in Hospitality (such as the equivalent of an NVQ level 3 or BTEC Advanced) must do a preliminary year, in effect, making the BTS in Hotel and Restaurant Management a three year course. There is no system of option or possibility for combined studies and joint fields, no flexibility at all, except in the final year when students decide to focus either on Hotel Management or Restaurant Management. The programme is built on 32 hours of classroom contact and interactions per week, with the following breakdown for the first year as an illustration: two hours of French; two hours of first foreign language; two hours of second foreign language; two hours of economics; two hours of human resource management; one hour of law; eight hours of finance; two hours of marketing; two hours of applied sciences; three hours of gastronomy; three hours of food and beverage studies; two hours of professional communications; and one hour of professional maintenance.

Alongside the nationally designed and widely recognised BTS (which attracts over 2,500 students every year) a few universities offer their own programmes in Hotel Management, e.g. a BSc in Hotel Management is taught in Lyon and an MSc in International Hospitality Management is taught in La Rochelle, but these qualifications remain uncommon. A few business schools also offer programmes

and options in hospitality management, for example in Paris at the Académie Internationale de Management, or at the prestigious ESSEC Business School which has created an International Institute of Hotel Management in partnership with the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University.

As a whole, the slant of Hospitality in French HE is very much that of applied management, providing students with the skills (e.g. computing skills) and contextualised knowledge (e.g. financial analysis of hotel accounts) needed at managerial level in the industry. This perspective is rather similar to the British one, which facilitates both the mutual recognition of hospitality HE qualifications, and the movement of hospitality students between the two countries, be it as part of study exchange programmes, placements or full employment after graduation. Hospitality management as an HE field is conceived in similar terms on both sides of the Channel – and indeed all over the world, from Switzerland (with prestigious Ecoles Hôtelières Suisses such as Lausanne, Glion and César Ritz), to the United States (from Cornell University to The Hilton University of Houston). This similarity is an asset that can be put forward when the legitimacy of such programmes is put into question, either by administrators or by other academics wondering why there should be a provision in HE for would-be hotel and restaurant managers.

Leisure in Higher Education in France

With a handful of exceptions (such as the postgraduate programme in Sport and Leisure Management taught at the University of Strasbourg), Leisure has not at all developed as an academic field in France. Three main reasons can account for this major difference with Britain: no specific need or demand has been identified and articulated (by the French leisure industry or by the HE providers themselves); there has been no snowball or imitation effect since the creation of the first few leisure courses; and students willing to work in the leisure industry are traditionally advised to study tourism or sport (Engelhard, 2000:87). That Leisure is non-existent in the French HE system may look paradoxical from a sociological perspective, as work legislation limits the French working week to 35 hours, thereby freeing more leisure time for all workers. It might simply be a delay (albeit an extraordinary one). Following foreign models (such as the British one), French HE might see in the next decade a boom in leisure courses (where the expertise of foreign specialists in leisure education could be needed), yet for the time being the concepts of Leisure Studies and Leisure Management remain totally alien to the terminology of the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, its publications and future strategic development projects. It is true that some professional qualifications for careers in the leisure industry are offered by the Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, but their level is that of GNVQs or BTEC Advanced. Only one of these qualifications is of HE level (comparable to a Masters degree): the DEDPAD (Diplôme d'Etat de Directeur de Projet d'Animation et de Développement) which has a strong management focus, but it is only open to staff already employed in the leisure industry, who have at least three years management experience, as well as vocational qualifications.

The fact that programmes and qualifications in Leisure do not exist in France precludes any comparison with Britain – yet at the same time, and in a controversial way, it can also lead one to ask whether all the existing and developing HE programmes in Leisure in the UK are really necessary.

Sport in Higher Education in France

Unlike Hospitality (where the BTS is such a strong national qualification and has prevented most other programmes from developing independently), and Leisure (which just does not exist), the field of Sport in French HE is characterised by a wide range of programmes and qualifications.

Firstly, there is a variety of two year long HND-like qualifications called DEUST (Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Scientifiques et Techniques); over 30 institutions offer programmes they have designed themselves, e.g. Sport and Management in Bordeaux, Health and Fitness in Lyon, and Sport and Physical Activities for Disabled People in Strasbourg. These programmes all include periods of work experience and enable qualified students to start a career straightaway.

More generic programmes are offered by some 60 universities in the form of a two year-long course called the DEUG STAPS (Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Générales en Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives). The DEUG STAPS is very popular and the demand continues to increase by double-digit percentage rates. Any student with a Baccalauréat can enrol on this programme, yet the drop-out rates are very high; up to 80 per cent by the end of the first year in some places, which might be construed as an unofficial way to select students (Renaud, 2002:26). Many students seem to underestimate the academic slant of the course, mistakenly believing they will mainly play sports, yet in the first year for example, only one third is dedicated to the theory and practice of sports, two thirds of the programme covering natural sciences, social sciences and education sciences, plus a compulsory foreign language (Engelhard, 2000:88).

The DEUG STAPS is very academic and does not readily enable students to work, so the high majority of students stay at university for one more year (to gain a standard degree), or two more years (to gain a Masters degree). Originally designed for students wishing to become Physical Education (PE) teachers, STAPS has now strongly diversified and third year students choose one of five pathways:

- Sport Education, mainly for students wishing to become PE teachers, who will then have to take one of two highly competitive exams (CAPEPS: Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat d'Education Physique et Sportive, the basic qualification to teach in a secondary school; agrégation, to teach in a secondary school or in higher education), where only the very best will succeed (in 1999, 19 per cent of candidates to the CAPEPS and 8 per cent of candidates to the agrégation). This is because the *numerus clausus* is based on the number of PE teaching positions to be filled in schools (just over 1,000 in 1999 for 6,000 candidates).
- Sport Training and Performance, mainly for students interested in a career as professional coach or trainer.
- Sport Management, which includes the study of applied economics, marketing, law and other business-related topics.
- 'Activités Sportives Adaptées' about sports and disabilities (what is called in France 'handisport').
- Sports Ergonomics, mainly for students interested in ergonomics, equipment and design.

Other postgraduate programmes are constantly being created, for example Sport Tourism Management in Montpellier; Sport, Tourism and Regional Development in Toulouse; and Sport and Leisure Management in Strasbourg. They are usually very specialised, as illustrated by the new DESS offered in Bordeaux about 'sliding sports' ('sports de glisse'), such as rollerskating, skateboarding and windsurfing.

Parallel to this, the Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports has an official scheme of qualifications (BE: Brevet d'Etat) for those wishing to specialise in a particular sport. All sports (with a few exceptions, such as bobsleigh and squash) are offered at three levels of qualifications: BE level 1 is the professional qualification necessary to teach that specific sport (be it in the public, private or voluntary sector); BE level 2 (at degree level) qualifies the individual to work with athletes or to occupy management positions; BE level 3 (postgraduate) has a research focus. About 75 schools and institutes nationwide (as well as some professional organisations such as the UCPA: Union Nationale des Centres Sportifs de Plein Air) organise courses preparing candidates for the national exams. These courses have systematically two components: one theoretical component irrespective of the sport (covering biological sciences, social sciences, knowledge of sports institutions and the law, marketing and management, ethics and the spirit of sport) and one practical / technical component (specific to the chosen sport).

In terms of sports courses, programmes and qualifications, the French HE landscape is undoubtedly one of diversity. Very alive and organic, with the regular creation of new specialisations, it seems much similar to the British one.

Tourism in Higher Education in France

A wide range of HE programmes in Tourism exist in France, and like in the field of Sport, each year some new schemes and qualifications are validated and created.

Very comparable to the BTS (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur) in Hotel and Restaurant Management is the BTS in Tourism, for which the national syllabus is taught and assessed in around 200 institutions across the country. Regarded by professionals as the basic qualification for anyone wishing to enter the industry, it is a very popular two year programme, recruiting around 5,000 students a year. Since 2001 (when the programme was streamlined and redesigned) students choose between two pathways, with either a focus on Sales and Production or a focus on Services and Organisation. They spend 33 hours in the classroom per week, in classes of typically 30 students, with the following timetable for the Services and Organisation pathway: two hours of French; three hours of English; three hours of second foreign language; two hours of heritage analysis; three hours of geographical analysis; four hours of economics and law; four hours of marketing; four hours of tourism techniques; eight hours of professional case-studies.

Whilst the BTS is traditionally taught in further education colleges and secondary schools, universities have recently started to offer courses in tourism management, for example:

- Two year programmes on specialised aspects of tourism, such as the DEUST in Cultural Tourism in Limoges, or the one in Multilingual Eco-tourism Guiding in Lille.
- Vocational degrees in Tourism, offered in Aix (with two options: Cultural Heritage or Natural Resources), and Marne-la-Vallée (with two options: Information Technologies or Large-scale Catering Management).
- Masters, for example in European Heritage and Cultural Tourism in Lyon, Rural Tourism in Montpellier. or Corsican Tourism in Corte.
- DESS (regarded as the highest HE qualification in Tourism) for students who already have a Masters, with very specific and practical topics such as the Management of Small Eco-Tourism Businesses (Paris), or French and European Law of the Commercialisation of Tourism Products (Montpellier).

Also, private institutes (where students have to pay potentially high fees, as opposed to all universities and public institutions where the average fees are around £90) offer HE programmes in Tourism, with lengths varying from six months for the Certificate in Ticketing taught at the Ecole Pratique de Tourisme near Paris, to three years at the ESCAET (Ecole Supérieure de Commerce et d'Administration des Entreprises de Tourisme, Aix en Provence).

Conclusion

For Leisure it is not possible to draw comparisons between France and England, however the fields of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism on the other hand seem rather similar, both in terms of breadth and depth, legitimising the argument that the qualifications should rightfully be treated as equivalent by employers and other academic institutions alike. The problem of equivalence is a complex one: beyond the theoretical principles written by representatives of the European Union countries, and beyond the academic view that different programmes in different countries may have similar content and outcomes, there remains a set of deeply anchored cultural views. Consciously or not, many employers when recruiting are likely to give preference to a national, even if that candidate is slightly less qualified or experienced than a foreign candidate. Similarly, to accept, for example, a foreign postgraduate student many universities will start by requesting a variety of documents as if starting on the assumption that the potential student's background is not good enough unless they can prove otherwise. Mentalities too need to change before equivalence of qualifications becomes practice.

This article, outlining how Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism are taught and presented in Higher Education in France, has identified several cross-sectoral issues worth developing further, in terms of recruitment and selection policies, the provision for foreign languages and opportunities for international exchanges.

In France, most programmes of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism operate a form of entry selection. A typical example, though by no means unique, is that of the degree in Heritage, Arts and Culture taught in Arras where last year 400 candidates applied for 40 places (Wolski-Quééré, 2001:137). Across the fields of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism, selection methods are quite standard and would normally include tests of one or two foreign languages (even for sports courses), a competitive exam (for example, a two hour essay to assess the candidates' writing skills, general knowledge and critical thinking), as well as an interview (to assess the candidates' communication skills and motivation). Such screening may seem puzzling if not preposterous on this side of the Channel where recruitment in these fields often tends to be about maximising rather than minimising numbers of students, but the rationale is that it helps maintain the quality of teaching and learning, also ensuring that students are both motivated and apt to follow the course, and to fully benefit from it.

In terms of foreign languages, French HE programmes in Hospitality, Sport and Tourism all include at least one compulsory foreign language, usually English, and a strong case could be made to adopt this practice in Britain - if not for all programmes (maybe arguing that a future PE teacher does not necessarily need to speak a foreign language), then at least for the fields of Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism where professionals are likely to work with foreign nationals at some stage of their career. Both overseas and in this country it is commonly said that, because of the global superiority of the English language, British people do not need to speak other languages, yet this argument does nothing to minimise non-English-speaking visitors' negative experience of a country where staff do not seem to make much effort to welcome foreign visitors. Projects such as the British Tourist Authority 'UK OK Campaign', aimed at attracting more foreign tourists, can only benefit from a workforce open to foreign languages and thereby other cultures. There might also be some legal issues here, as in France for example, by law all Tourist Information Centres must employ at least one bilingual member of staff.

To all intents and purposes, the differences between France and Britain regarding the provision of HE programmes in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism make it quite easy to identify opportunities for international exchange – exchange of ideas as well as exchange of staff and students. The lack of Leisure programmes in France can notably be seen as an opportunity to develop partnerships with French institutions and to allow them to benefit from British academic knowledge and pedagogical skills in this respect. In turn, British colleagues would undoubtedly benefit from learning more about the programmes and qualifications available in their fields overseas, not just out of intellectual curiosity, but also because there is an increasing number of exchange students in Britain, both arriving through individually negotiated partnerships between institutions, or as participants in exchange programmes such as SOCRATES / ERASMUS in Europe.² Knowing more about the academic background and experience of those students in their home countries would help British staff support them by understanding parts of the culture shock they may experience; typically, a French student coming from a BTS in Tourism with 33 hours of weekly contact time with lecturers is bound to have problems understanding that in Britain students of tourism only spend 8 or 10 hours in the classroom.

² Erasmus (*European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students*) is the European Commission's educational programme for HE students, teachers and institutions. It was introduced in 1987 with the aim of increasing student mobility within the European Community, subsequently the European Economic Area countries, and now also the Associated Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Cyprus and Malta. In 1995 Erasmus became incorporated into the new Socrates programme which covers education from school to university and lifelong learning. Socrates-Erasmus can involve student mobility, teacher mobility and curriculum development; it is based on co-operation agreements between HE institutions in participating states. The

References

- Charollois, P. (1998) *Les Métiers du Tourisme*. Paris: Jeunes Editions.
- Council of Europe and UNESCO (1997) *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, The European Treaty Series, n°165. Available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/WhatYouWant.asp?NT=165&CM=1&DF=11/02/03>
- Derrida, J. (2001) *L'Université sans Condition*. Paris: Galilée.
- Engelhard, J. M. (2000) *Les Métiers du Sport et des Loisirs*. Paris: Les Guides de l'Étudiant.
- Eurydice (2000) *Eurydice 2001: The Education System in France*, Information Network on Education in Europe. Available at: <http://www.eurydice.org>.
- Guibert, N. (2001) Jack Lang veut inciter les universités à multiplier les initiatives pédagogiques. *Le Monde*, October 5.
- Renaud, A. (2002) *Que Faire des Universités?* Paris: Bayard.
- Sicard, H. (1998) *Management de la Formation Hôtelière et Touristique à l'Université et en Entreprise*. Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan.
- Vellas, F. (1998) *La Formation Touristique*. Paris: Serdi Publisher.
- Wolski-Quéré, M. (2001) *Les Métiers du Tourisme et de l'Hôtellerie*. Paris: Les Guides de l'Étudiant.