

STUDY REGARDING THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING ON LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION IN THE SPA TOURISM SECTOR. A CASE STUDY OF THE HENRI COANDĂ POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL NETWORK

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

This research explores how professional training impacts labor market integration within the spa tourism industry, specifically examining the AMBFKTR program offered by the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network. The goal is to understand the connection between the number of students enrolled in the AMBFKTR program and their subsequent employment in Romania and the EU. A survey was sent to the heads of schools in the Henri Coandă network to collect data on student enrollment, graduation rates, reasons for dropout, and employment outcomes in the spa tourism field. The findings indicate notable differences in employment success across the network. Schools in larger urban areas have higher rates of graduate placement in the spa tourism sector, while institutions in smaller areas face greater difficulty in securing relevant jobs for their graduates. Dropout reasons were mainly due to personal challenges, financial constraints, and scheduling issues. Additionally, while some schools had high employment rates in the spa tourism sector, others showed a weaker connection between the training provided and labor market needs. The research concludes that the success of vocational programs in spa tourism depends on local labor market conditions, the quality of collaboration with the industry, and the alignment of curricula with the evolving demands of the sector. The study calls for stronger partnerships between educational institutions and the tourism industry to improve graduate employability. Future research should expand the focus to include a wider range of institutions and examine the long-term career paths of graduates to assess the lasting impact of these training programs on employment in the spa tourism sector.

Keywords: professional training, labor market integration, spa tourism, vocational education, graduate employability

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INTRODUCTION

We believe that the successful transition of trained professionals into the workforce is one of the clearest indicators of the effectiveness of vocational programs. The spa tourism sector, which continues to expand globally, relies heavily on skilled professionals to meet the growing demand for wellness and health-related services (Neto, 2020). However, there seems to be a lack of research that directly explores how vocational training affects labor market inclusion within this specific sector. We decided to investigate this gap by focusing on the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School

Network, particularly the AMBFKTR (Assistant Manager in Tourism and Hotel Management) program. By doing so, we hoped to better understand how trends in training influence employment outcomes in the industry.

Our decision to study the Henri Coandă Network was driven by its reputation as one of Romania's largest and most respected networks of vocational schools. The network's broad geographic reach and track record of preparing graduates for key sectors, including spa tourism, made it an ideal case study. Moreover, the wealth of data available on student enrollment and graduate outcomes in the AMBFKTR program offered a solid foundation for analyzing trends that could be relevant to

the broader field. In our opinion, the Henri Coandă Network provides a unique opportunity to explore the intersection of professional training and labor market success in a growing and dynamic sector.

We've noticed that previous studies have consistently highlighted the role of vocational training in improving employability (Pardo-Garcia and Barac, 2020; Li and Pilz, 2023; Beer and Mulder, 2020; Succi and Canovi, 2020). For example, Stacey (2015) pointed out how skill-based education is key to helping individuals adapt to the labor market, especially in specialized fields like tourism and hospitality. Similarly, Mooney and Baum (2019) emphasized the importance of targeted training to meet the ever-changing needs of the tourism industry. While these studies provide useful insights, they don't fully address the unique demands and employment trends within the spa tourism sector. We believe that this gap in research is something worth exploring, and our study aims to add to the growing understanding of vocational training's impact on sector-specific job outcomes.

The real value of this study, in our view, lies in its originality and its potential to create meaningful change. We are looking to explore the connection between the number of students enrolled in the AMBFKTR program and their subsequent success in securing employment in the spa tourism industry. By doing so, we hope to not only evaluate the effectiveness of the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network's training but also provide useful insights for educators and policymakers who aim to better align vocational education with the actual needs of the labor market (Lopez, 2020).

Our hypothesis is simple yet important: we believe there is a positive correlation between the number of students who complete the AMBFKTR program and their ability to find jobs in the spa tourism sector. We expect this trend to be influenced by factors like the quality of training, how well the curriculum matches industry demands, and how effectively the network fosters practical skills that can be applied in real-world settings.

Aim and objectives

The main goal of our research is to examine how the professional training provided by the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network influences the integration of graduates into the labor market, specifically within the spa tourism sector. We have outlined several specific objectives to guide our investigation:

1. To assess trends in enrollment for the AMBFKTR specialization over the past three years.
2. To analyze the employment outcomes of AMBFKTR graduates in the spa tourism sector, both in Romania and the European Union.
3. To identify key factors that impact the labor market inclusion of graduates, focusing on the quality of training and how well it aligns with industry needs.
4. To offer recommendations for improving vocational training programs to better support labor market success in the spa tourism sector.

By addressing these objectives, we hope to provide valuable insights both practically and theoretically to the fields of vocational education and labor market studies, with a particular focus on the growing spa tourism industry.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This research centers on the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network, a well-established network of vocational training institutions across Romania. These institutions specialize in various fields, including spa tourism through the AMBFKTR program. We chose this network due to its strong reputation, its alignment with the demands of the spa tourism sector, and the availability of valuable data for analyzing the outcomes of professional training.

Research design

A mixed-methods approach was employed for this study, combining both quantitative data collection and descriptive analysis. The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire, which was sent to the heads of institutions within the Henri Coandă school network.

Questionnaire structure

The questionnaire was designed to collect comprehensive information on student enrollment, graduation rates, dropout reasons, and post-graduation employment outcomes. The questions were organized into the following categories:

- Enrollment trends: number of students enrolled in the AMBFKTR specialization over the past three academic years (2021–2022, 2022–2023, 2023–2024).
- Graduation metrics: total number of graduating cohorts for the AMBFKTR specialization to date.

- Dropout analysis: number of students who dropped out over the last three years and reasons for dropping out, including financial difficulties, personal issues, or curriculum misalignment.

- Employment outcomes: number of graduates employed in Romania and the European Union and number of graduates working in roles directly related to their field of study.

Data collection process

The questionnaire was distributed electronically to the institutional heads within a specific time frame, ensuring consistency across all participating schools in the network. Respondents were asked to provide accurate data based on institutional records to maintain the reliability of the information.

Ethical considerations

To respect the rights and privacy of participants, this study was carried out strictly in accordance with ethical standards. All participating institutions gave their prior agreement, and survey respondents were made aware of the study's objectives, their part in it, and that participation was entirely optional. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity, and the utmost level of confidentiality was

maintained by handling personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Tikkinen-Piri, Rohunen and Markkula,2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, we share the results from our analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire, which focused on student enrollment trends, dropout rates, and employment outcomes after graduation within the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network. The data we examined reveals patterns in how students in the AMBFKTR specialization have progressed, and how these trends relate to their entry into the labor market, particularly within the spa tourism sector. From our perspective, this analysis not only sheds light on the effectiveness of the program but also offers useful insights into how vocational training in this field can better align with industry demands.

For the first question regarding the number of students enrolled in the AMBFKTR specialization over the past three academic years, the data gathered from the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network is as follows:

Table 1

Student enrollment distribution by year and academic year

Academic year	Total students	Year I	Year II	Year III
2021-2022	121	26	21	24
2022-2023	69	17	23	15
2023-2024	76	26	15	20

Source: own elaboration based on the results of the questionnaire

The data we gathered provides an overview of how students are distributed across the first, second, and third years of the AMBFKTR specialization during each academic year. We noticed a slight decline in overall enrollment, from 121 students in the 2021-2022 academic year to 69 in 2022-2023. However, there was a modest recovery in 2023-2024, with 76 students enrolled in total. Interestingly, the distribution across the years varied, with Year I seeing a noticeable increase in 2023-2024 (26 students), while Year II and Year III experienced a drop. In our opinion, this fluctuation could reflect factors like retention rates and other influences on student

enrollment trends, which may warrant further investigation.

We also looked at the number of graduating classes from the AMBFKTR program across different Henri Coandă Post-Secondary Schools. This data is key to understanding the maturity and overall success of the program in various locations within the network. The number of graduating classes is an indicator of each institution's operational history and stability, which can give us insights into how well their training programs are functioning. These figures also shed light on trends in student retention, the longevity of the program, and how well the schools are able to meet the growing demands of the spa tourism industry.

By examining these graduation patterns, we can better understand the factors that influence student success and their integration into the labor market.

Table 2

Number of graduating classes by school	
School	Number of graduating classes
Henri Coandă Brad	0
Henri Coandă Turda	12
Henri Coandă Constanța	17 (first class 2008)
Henri Coandă Oradea	22
Henri Coandă Ștei	0
Henri Coandă Baia Mare	16
Henri Coandă Timișoara	11

Source: own elaboration based on the results of the questionnaire

Our analysis of graduation numbers across different institutions reveals two clear trends. Schools such as Oradea, with 22 graduating classes, and Constanța, with 17, show a long-standing history and strong stability in their AMBFKTR programs. These institutions have experienced growth and higher graduation rates, which, in our view, reflects the positive impact of sustained program development. This finding aligns with the work of Mooney and Baum (2019) who argued that vocational programs with a longer history are more likely to produce higher graduation rates. On the other hand, schools like Brad and Ștei, which have yet to graduate any students, may be facing challenges tied to their recent establishment or limited regional demand and resources. This is consistent with the observations of Stacey (2015), who emphasized the role of local industry demand in shaping graduation outcomes.

We also looked at the dropout rates for the AMBFKTR specialization over the past three academic years across the Henri Coandă post-secondary schools. This data is crucial for understanding student retention and identifying the factors contributing to higher dropout rates, such as personal, academic, or financial difficulties. We believe that dropout rates are an important measure of the effectiveness and sustainability of vocational programs, especially in specialized fields like spa tourism. By examining the trends in dropout rates across different schools, we can gain valuable insights into how various factors, including regional differences and institutional

support, play a role in student retention and overall success.

Table 3

Number of students dropped out by school	
School	Number of students dropped out
Henri Coandă Brad	-
Henri Coandă Turda	8
Henri Coandă Constanța	27
Henri Coandă Oradea	33 (including 8 exmatriculated)
Henri Coandă Ștei	2
Henri Coandă Baia Mare	23 (2021/2022); 10 (2022/2023); 17 (2023/2024)
Henri Coandă Timișoara	41

Source: own elaboration based on the results of the questionnaire

Dropout rates in vocational education programs are influenced by a combination of institutional, personal, and socio-economic factors. Based on our research and previous studies, such as those by Mooney and Baum (2019) and Stacey (2015) high dropout rates can significantly impact the success of professional training programs, especially in specialized fields like spa tourism. From our perspective, understanding the specific reasons behind student dropouts could provide us with crucial insights into how to improve retention strategies and enhance the overall success of the AMBFKTR program within the Henri Coandă post-secondary school network.

Next, we examine the various reasons students drop out of the AMBFKTR specialization. Identifying these underlying causes is vital for finding ways to improve retention and ensure the effectiveness of vocational education programs in sectors like spa tourism. We found that several factors contribute to student dropout, including financial difficulties, personal or family issues, health concerns, and the challenge of balancing work with academic responsibilities. By looking at the reasons students provided for leaving the program, we hope to highlight the most common obstacles to academic persistence. This analysis could provide valuable insights to develop future support mechanisms, helping improve retention rates and better align the training with labor market outcomes.

Table 4

Reasons for dropping out by school	
School	Reasons for dropping out
Henri Coandă Brad	-
Henri Coandă	Inability to attend day classes /

Turda	financial reasons
Henri Coandă Constanța	Inability to attend day classes / financial reasons
Henri Coandă Oradea	Busy personal schedule, could not attend classes consecutively, financial issues
Henri Coandă Ștei	Finances
Henri Coandă Baia Mare	Personal reasons, workplace schedule, personal medical reasons
Henri Coandă Timișoara	Personal reasons, workplace schedule, personal medical reasons

Source: own elaboration based on the results of the questionnaire

From our analysis, it's clear that financial and personal challenges are the primary reasons behind student dropouts in the AMBFKTR program. This highlights the need for focused interventions that can address these obstacles and improve student retention in vocational training programs.

When we looked at employment outcomes for AMBFKTR graduates, we found considerable variation across institutions. Henri Coandă Oradea reported the highest number of employed graduates, with 242 individuals securing jobs, suggesting a strong local demand for spa tourism professionals. On the other hand, Henri Coandă Ștei had no employed graduates, which may be linked to the limited job opportunities in the region for this specific field.

Henri Coandă Baia Mare showed a 90% employment rate, demonstrating the program's success in preparing students for the labor market. Similarly, Henri Coandă Timișoara had 165 graduates employed, indicating good integration both locally and within the broader EU labor market.

These findings reveal that labor market outcomes are influenced by a variety of factors, including regional job demand and the level of institutional support in helping graduates find employment. The data on employment within the spa tourism sector shows a mixed picture, with some schools experiencing strong results while others face challenges in aligning their training programs with market needs. This reflects the diverse nature of regional job markets and the importance of adapting curricula to better meet industry demands.

Table 5

Employment in the field of study

School	Number of graduates employed in their field of study
Henri Coandă Brad	-
Henri Coandă Turda	9
Henri Coandă Constanța	10
Henri Coandă Oradea	50% (of total graduates)
Henri Coandă Ștei	0
Henri Coandă Baia Mare	55% (of total graduates)
Henri Coandă Timișoara	132

Source: own elaboration based on the results of the questionnaire

The results show a mixed level of success in placing graduates into roles within their specialized field of study. For example, Henri Coandă Timișoara has a notable number of graduates working directly in spa tourism, while Henri Coandă Ștei reports no graduates employed in this field, which may be due to a lack of local demand for specialized professionals.

At Henri Coandă Oradea and Henri Coandă Baia Mare, the employment rates in spa tourism are 50% and 55%, respectively. This indicates that while a good number of graduates are finding jobs, only a portion are employed in their specialized area, possibly reflecting the broader challenges in the spa tourism job market.

These results underline the importance of strong connections between educational institutions and the local job market. In our view, improving career services, expanding internship opportunities, and building partnerships with industry players could help better match graduates' skills with available job opportunities in the sector, ultimately improving employment outcomes in the field.

The findings from the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network's AMBFKTR program highlight notable differences in the employment outcomes of graduates, particularly when it comes to securing jobs within their specialized field and overall employment across Romania and the EU. Institutions like Henri Coandă Timișoara and Henri Coandă Oradea have shown success in aligning their programs with market demand, while schools such as Henri Coandă Ștei have faced challenges in helping graduates find work within the spa tourism sector.

This variation points to the importance of local labor market conditions, regional demand for specialized skills, and the

effectiveness of industry connections in shaping employment outcomes. Schools in areas with stronger tourism sectors, especially those in larger urban centers, tend to have higher success rates in placing graduates into the spa tourism workforce. On the other hand, institutions in less developed regions may struggle to match graduates with relevant job opportunities.

Additionally, the proportion of graduates securing jobs in spa tourism reinforces the significance of industry-specific training. While some schools, such as Henri Coandă Baia Mare, have achieved high rates of employment within the field, other schools have seen many graduates seeking employment outside their specialized area.

These results highlight the ongoing need for closer collaboration between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and local job markets. Moving forward, efforts should be directed toward strengthening industry partnerships, expanding internship opportunities, and adapting curricula to meet the evolving needs of the spa tourism sector.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the effect of professional training in the AMBFKTR specialization at the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network, focusing on how it relates to labor market integration in Romania and the EU. The results show different levels of success in employment outcomes across various Henri Coandă schools. Institutions in larger cities, like Henri Coandă Timișoara, tend to have higher employment rates both in the general labor market and specifically within the spa tourism sector. On the other hand, schools in smaller towns, such as Henri Coandă Ștei, have faced more difficulty in placing graduates in roles that match their specialized training.

These mixed results suggest that while vocational training can effectively prepare students for the workforce, its success is heavily dependent on regional factors, including the availability of jobs in spa tourism and the economic strength of the local area. Despite these variations, the research underscores the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and the tourism industry in improving employment opportunities. Incorporating internships, hands-on experience, and forging stronger links with local businesses could greatly enhance the

chances of graduates finding relevant work. Additionally, ensuring that curricula are adapted to reflect emerging trends in the spa tourism sector, such as changing consumer preferences and technological developments, would make the training more relevant and impactful.

Limitations

While this study provides useful insights into the labor market outcomes for AMBFKTR graduates, there are some limitations to consider. First, the research is limited to the Henri Coandă Post-Secondary School Network, which may not fully reflect the broader scope of vocational training in the spa tourism sector across Romania and the EU. As a result, the findings may not be easily applied to other schools or regions. Another concern is the reliance on self-reported data from school administrators, which may be subject to biases or inaccuracies. Additionally, the study lacks direct input from graduates or employers, which would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how well the training aligns with industry needs and student expectations.

Furthermore, the study does not include long-term data on graduates' career paths, as it only covers recent academic years. A more extended observation period would have offered a better understanding of the long-term career outcomes for these graduates, such as job stability, career advancement, and their mobility across different EU regions.

Future research directions

Future research could build on this study by examining a broader range of vocational schools across different regions of Romania and the EU to provide a more comprehensive picture of how spa tourism graduates integrate into the labor market. It would also be insightful to gather feedback directly from graduates and employers through surveys or interviews. This would help to better understand the factors that affect employment outcomes and the actual impact of the training.

Additionally, future studies could explore the specific effects of certain training methods, such as internships, industry placements, and digital skill development, on graduates' employability. Tracking the career progress of AMBFKTR graduates over an extended period would shed light on how sustainable and promising career paths are in the spa tourism sector, especially as the industry evolves with trends like eco-tourism and wellness tourism.

Finally, research could look into the potential for expanding vocational training programs in emerging EU markets, where demand for skilled workers in spa tourism is growing. This would help us understand how education systems can better adapt to the needs of a fast-changing industry, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for future challenges in the sector.

In summary, while this study offers valuable insights into the link between professional training and labor market integration in spa tourism, further research and a wider data collection effort will be needed to deepen our understanding of these complex dynamics.

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