



Skills and training for the hospitality sector- A study on issues and challenges

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Abstract

The role of skills and skills development through training in the contemporary economy is most important. In the present hospitality sector skill is the most important activity. Despite its low status, it is one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy and faces real challenges in matching its skills requirements to the changing labour market in this country and elsewhere. Broad estimates suggest that up to 10% of the global workforce are employed in tourism and hospitality-related work and as a consequence, this is a sector that cannot readily be ignored. This article addresses about skills training in hospitality industry. The role of skills and skills development through training in the contemporary economy is a matter of considerable academic debate. Generally the hospitality industry is not known as a leader in providing employee training. Seasonal business demands, high employee turnover and many other factors play a role in their ability to provide employee training. According to Jafari and Fayos-Sola (1996), the tourism industry's success will continue to depend on training the workforce. The hospitality leadership development training program is part of employees' training and is a critical ingredient to creating a quality experience for employees and guests. Employees are a central part of service delivery and well-trained employees are able to deliver high quality as they are more satisfied at work. This article considers the skills issues through training in relation to the hospitality sector.

Keywords: hospitality, skills issues and challenges, trained employees and labour market

Introduction

According to Janes (2000), employers also note that staff recruitment and a desire for guest job satisfaction are reasons why training has grown in importance in the lodging industry. Future of tourism and hospitality professionals need to be skilled in a variety of areas and training is growing in importance as more organizations find it a greater priority today than in the past. As labor force issues threaten the success of hospitality organizations, the implementation of a hospitality leadership development training program to develop human capital within the organization is critical. There are benefits for both the organization and the employee. Organizations benefit from the reduced turnover, increased productivity and improved dedication. The employees will develop skills, self-esteem and job satisfaction. The hospitality industry is in need of high manpower and labor in comparison to other industries. There is a certain amount of capital invested in the industry to generate more jobs. According to Bull (1995), it is largely due to the nature of the guest services and the late adoption of technology as well as the newer management process. In some cases, the capital required per job created in the industry is actually higher and not lower. Due to the apparent labor intensive characteristics and the personal services involvement in service delivery, the hospitality industry is known as a 'people industry' that requires 'people skills' from the staff.

Importance of Training

Providing employee training seems to be more difficult in the hospitality industry. There are several issues that impact labor practices within the hospitality industry that do not affect or impact other industries. Seasonal fluctuations in the hospitality industry and high employee turnover makes

training more difficult to deliver yet even more critical to provide. Therefore, it is important to explore the issues of training in the hospitality industry and the challenges posed for the hospitality organizations in order to create effective hospitality leadership development training programs. Bassi and VanBuren (1998) found that of the nine business American organizations categories that studied the customer service category, the tourism businesses spent the least amount on training. VanBuren and King (2000) studied training practices of more than 900 organizations in Europe, Canada, Australia, the United States (U.S.), Japan and Asia. The European organizations spent the highest percentage on employee training in comparison to employee payroll in other countries. The U.S. respondents averaged the most amount spent on training per employee. Asia spent the least amount on employee training in comparison to the percent of their total annual payroll. Herman and Eller (1991) highlighted that the hospitality field has been slow to see the value of training and not considered training as a priority because the industry eliminated the training when times were tough. The purpose of training is to teach employees new behaviors and skills increasing their skills and knowledge in their job and for the organization to be more successful.

According to Brymer (1984), long working hours, low pay, slow advancement and supervisory challenges are all the common characteristics that contribute to job stress in the hospitality industry. All these posed a stress problem and an important concern for the success of any hospitality organizations. Sarabakhsh, Carson, and Lindgren (1989) noted that by offering educational opportunities and career development programs can reduce stress as well as improving hospitality managers' life satisfaction. Law, Pearce, and Woods (1995) reported that some of the best

management practices that were perceived as positive from the respondents to reduce job stress were an approachable management and training.

Value of Training

Mellan (1998) noted the benefits of training to both the employer and employee have been supported by several studies. These studies have assessed the values received by both employers and employees in a variety of organizations (Bergman, 1995; Burke, 1995; Geale, 1995; Senat, 1992). Janes (2000) found that lodging organizations valued training and a perceived value for the employees. The more positively the hospitality establishment valued training, the more the organization would offer to the employees. This implies that organizations who provide more training place greater value on training than other organizations who provide less training. The increase in the value of training promotes and encourages a variety of benefits and the training value must be evident to both the employers and employees.

Employers who provide training indicate improved recruitment, increased productivity, reduced turnover and a more dedicated workforce from the values received from the employee training. This is further supported by Conrade, Woods, and Ninemeier (1994) research findings that 93% of lodging employee respondents stated that training would encourage the employees to stay at a property. Cline (1997) indicated in his study of 500 international hospitality executive respondents that the respondents' exposure of training could improve employee satisfaction. In addition, employees who are provided training indicated that they develop self-esteem, greater job satisfaction and improved wage structures (Goodenough & Page, 1993; Janes, 2000).

Higher-level education and training for hospitality and tourism generally maintains a clear commitment to the development of skills designed to complement more generic educational and business development objectives. In the hospitality context, Gillespie & Baum (2000) consider the changing role of practical, vocational education within hospitality degree programmes and note considerable retrenchment, but not elimination of this process. Busby (2001) analyses the content of tourism degrees in the United Kingdom and concludes that what he describes as vocationalism is a strong feature in provision. Such vocationalism includes the development of specific skills in hospitality and travel-related areas, and, Busby argues, these elements play an important role in ensuring the employability of graduates. Within hospitality, a key skills issue that is bound up in the traditions of the sector, particularly in Europe, is the significance of food and beverage skills development as a necessary stepping stone towards the application of general management skills within hotels. Ladkin's (2000) study of the careers of hotel managers confirms the widely held perception that food and beverage experience remains the single dominant career characteristic of successful general managers, although the revenue contribution of this area is relatively less important than that of accommodation (Horwarth & Horwarth, 1999). Ladkin notes that few successful general managers have significant training or experience in rooms, accounting and marketing functions prior to their entry.

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Employees are a central part of service delivery and well trained employees are able to deliver high quality as they are more satisfied at work. The increased emphasis on training and development of such programs has been fueled by labor issues which are the most obvious problems facing the industry in recent times. Effective leadership enables the organization to be more successful, ability to adjust to the evolving economic pressures and to increase employee satisfaction. The leadership development training program aims to attract the employees to retain in this trade. Therefore there is clearly a need for the hospitality and tourism industries to understand what constitutes effective leadership and how it can be achieved. Different definitions of leadership and important theoretical models will be discussed.

According to Janes (2000), employers also note that staff recruitment and a desire for guest job satisfaction are reasons why training has grown in importance in the lodging industry. Future of tourism and hospitality professionals need to be skilled in a variety of areas and training is growing in importance as more organizations find it a greater priority today than in the past. As labor force issues threaten the success of hospitality organizations, the implementation of a hospitality leadership development training program to develop human capital within the organization is critical. There are benefits for both the organization and the employee. Organizations benefit from the reduced turnover, increased productivity and improved dedication. The employees will develop skills, self-esteem and job satisfaction.

Nature of work and skills in hospitality

Hospitality work (and thus the skills that it demands) exhibits diversity in both horizontal and vertical terms. In a horizontal sense, it includes a Downloaded by [49.203.18.253] at 22:54 22 February 2016 *Tom Baum* 346 very wide range of jobs, the extent depending upon the definition of the sector that is employed. The traditional research focus on hospitality work concentrates on areas that provide, primarily, food and beverage (Mars & Nicod, 1984; Gabriel, 1988) ^[10] and, to a lesser extent, accommodation. Coverage of this discussion is well served by reference to Wood (1997), Guerrier & Deery (1998) and others. Research into wider areas of hospitality work, particularly those that have emerged with the expansion of services and functions in the area (front desk, leisure, entertainment, reservations call centres) is much more poorly served and this study draws on a limited range of work in these areas. The 'newer' areas include functions and tasks that exhibit considerable cross-over with work that falls out with normal definitions of hospitality in food and drink manufacture, office administration, IT systems management and specialist areas of sports and leisure. Indeed, it is fair to say that although there is long-standing debate as to whether the hospitality industry is 'unique' (Mullins, 1981; Lashley & Morrison, 2000), there is little doubt that there is little that is unique about hospitality skills. Most of the skills that are employed within the sector also have relevance and application in other sectors of the economy. Those employed in areas where there is considerable skills overlap with hospitality, such as the areas listed above, may well see themselves in terms of their generic skills area, rather than as part of the hospitality labour market. Some of these skills have been subject to

separate assessment (Ecotec, 2001) in a manner that has value and cross-over implications for the hospitality sector. Vertical diversity in hospitality work is represented by a more traditional classification that ranges from unskilled to semiskilled and from skilled to supervisory and management. This 'traditional' perspective of work and, therefore, skills in hospitality is partly described by Riley (1996, p. 18) in terms that suggest that the proportionate breakdown of the workforce in hospitality is as follows: Managerial – 6%, Supervisory – 8%, Craft (skilled) – 22% and Operative (semi skilled and unskilled) – 64%.

The skills profile of hospitality, in turn, is influenced by the labour market that is available to it, both in direct terms, and via educational and training establishments. The weak internal labour market characteristics in themselves impose downward pressures on the skills expectations that employers have of their staff and this, in turn, influences the nature and level of training that the educational system delivers. There is an evident cycle of down-skilling, not so much in response to the actual demands of hospitality work or of consumer expectations of what it can deliver, but as a result of the perceptions of potential employees and the expectations that employers have of them.

Historically, skills in hospitality were seen almost exclusively in terms of their technical requirements, and this formed the basis of the training agenda pursued by colleges in Europe and, subsequently, almost worldwide in the developing world through funded aid programmes, for much of the twentieth century. Jobs in hospitality, likewise, were constructed on the basis of an accumulation of skills required for specific technical tasks [International Labour Organization (ILO), 1979]. Changes in the nature of work, the impact of technology and customer expectations have forced a fundamental re-evaluation of the relative roles of technical and generic skills in hospitality work.

Skills shortages in hospitality are increasingly seen in terms of generic rather than specific technical competencies. Studies of employer expectations of graduates (Tas, 1988; Baum, 1990; Christou, 1997, 2000) ^[7, 8] note demand for communications, people management and problem solving, as the priority in both the US and Europe. It is, of course, an issue that informs a debate across the service sector – see, for example, Tesco (1999), as well as within the wider economy [Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), 1998; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 2000] with their development of core or key skills. QCA identifies key skills as, communications, application of number, Information Technology, working with others and improving own learning and performance.



Source: Secondary Source

Conclusion

Higher-level education and training for hospitality and tourism generally maintains a clear commitment to the development of skills designed to complement more generic educational and business development objectives. In the hospitality context, Gillespie & Baum (2000) consider the changing role of practical, vocational education within hospitality degree programmes and note considerable retrenchment, but not elimination of this process. Busby (2001) analyses the content of tourism degrees in the United Kingdom and concludes that what he describes as vocationalism is a strong feature in provision. Such vocationalism includes the development of specific skills in hospitality and travel-related areas and Busby argues, these elements play an important role in ensuring the employability of graduates.

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