STUDENTS' PREPAREDNESS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract - The purpose of this study is to determine the level of preparedness to work in the hospitality industry of the 4th year Hotel and Restaurants Management students of Surigaodel Sur State University- Main Campus, Tandag City. Particularly, it measures students' skills that are needed in the industry. To this end, the study used quantitative research design employing an adapted survey questionnaire to collect the necessary data. Results show that students are prepared to work in the hospitality industry based on the excellent rating they have disclosed on their skills. They have developed the necessary skills required by the industry. However, there are still areas in the HRM curriculum that needed further improvement.

Keywords - Students' preparedness, Hospitality industry, Generic skills, Functional area skills, Concentration area skills

I. INTRODUCTION

The responsibilities of entry – level managers in the hospitality industry are continuously changing. Successful leaders have the enthusiasm to respond to the changing needs and challenges of their organization (Woods & King, 2002). Some of these challenges are due to the changes affecting the hospitality industry today. Consequently, the curriculum used to prepare entry level managers in this field should be designed to fit the demands of today's industry. This study highlights the importance of hospitality and tourism industry and the provision of training and education services to meet those needs most especially to the new graduates of Hotel and Restaurant Management, an extensive literature review on the opportunities and issues related to the employment of employees in the hospitality industry and a comprehensive analysis of the skills, characteristics and attributes needed to succeed in the hospitality and tourism industry.

According to Peddle (2000), employers question the success of higher education programs in developing employability skills of graduates. Employability skills are skills that are basic and generic in nature, but very valuable in assisting every person entering the workforce. Some people consider employability skills as core skills, key skills, transferable skills, general skills, non - technical skills, and/or soft skills (Robinson, 2006).

On the other hand, hospitality sector is one of the world's fastest – growing industries. However, huge problems still exist in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce (Burton, 2008). Accordingly, two enduring things observed in the industry are (1) high staff turnover which affects the ability to deliver a consistent brand experience, harming business and (2) not enough people see the growing industry as an opportunity to build their careers (Druce, 2007). By contrast, Walker (2006) points out that, staff turnover is not a bad thing. He argues that some mild turnover can be beneficial because it allows staff to move up the ladder to more senior positions, giving them new opportunities. Moreover, it allows the business to bring in new blood, new people, new ideas, enthusiasm and motivation which are beneficial for a company to increase productivity.

Hence, research on this industry is important, especially in the hospitality industry, which is known for its traditional approach in terms of human resource management. It aims to develop an understanding of the current situation concerning hospitality graduates' as well as hospitality managers' skills and competencies and career development.
Changes have to occur in the provision of training and skills development in the hospitality industry. However, these changes are often recommended by academics and not necessarily accepted by the industry. All focus group participants recognized that higher and general skills have to be added to the crafted curriculum as employees need to be more responsive to the changing environments. In essence, a balance needs to be found between practice and theory. The second main concern emerging from the research is that the industry is not very attractive to the new generation of graduates, who favour a better work/life balance than that offered by the hospitality industry. For these reasons, the industry should also focus on developing a more attractive image in terms of role, wages and career development.

II. THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Bandura's Theory of Social Cognitive Development. This theory explains that students' feelings about their ability to perform academic tasks (self-efficacy beliefs) predict their ability to achieve the tasks. Moreover, both reinforcement and punishment influence learning and behaviour in several ways. One of the ways is how "expectation about probable future consequences

affects how people cognitively process new information (Ormrod, 2003).
Reinforcing learning requires paying attention and mentally processing it in an effective fashion (Ormrod, 2003). Bearing that theory in mind, it can be asserted that the students learn many things that they never express because there is no reinforcement expressing them. It could be argued that on one hand many of the employability skills that are not typical technical skills could be undermined by students if they are not directly tested for evaluated on those skills, if their grades are not affected by those skills (extrinsic reinforcement), and/or if they are not intrinsically motivated to master those skills for future use. On the other hand, students could be very competent in performing some employability skills if they are tested or evaluated on those skills, if their grades are affected by those skills (extrinsic reinforcement), and/or if they are intrinsically motivated to master those skills for future use.

Due to fast paced changes in the hospitality industry, with great emphasis on employability skills that interest employers there is a need to determine the level of competence that graduating senior students in hospitality management programs possess before moving on to workplace.

The schematic diagram as shown in figure 1 presents that students must have or develop their standard or Generic Skills which are the following: (1) Communication skills, the students must know how interact to other people; (2) Conceptual Skills, the students has the ability to react on certain situations or problems they meet, how and what should they if they are in that situation; (3) Analytical Skills, the students would be able to evaluate and could be able to find answers to the possible problems; (4) Teamwork, the students could be able to tie up with other persons; (5)Leadership Skills, the students has the power or ability to lead other people; and (5) Interpersonal Skills, the students relate to or build relationship between people.

Another thing to consider is, the students have the fundamental curriculum related skills from their studies, work and training experiences such as experimental learning and application, experienced – based learning and application, understanding current issues and practices in the hospitality industry.

In addition, the students possess and have knowledge in other areas or skills which are very important thing to consider. They must have the expertise on Functional Area Skills such as marketing, information technology, human resource, and hospitality operation. Added to that is Concentration Area Skills such as lodging, tourism, food and beverages, events, and others. These factors could contribute and attention, not only the university but the students are prepared enough to work in the hospitality industry.

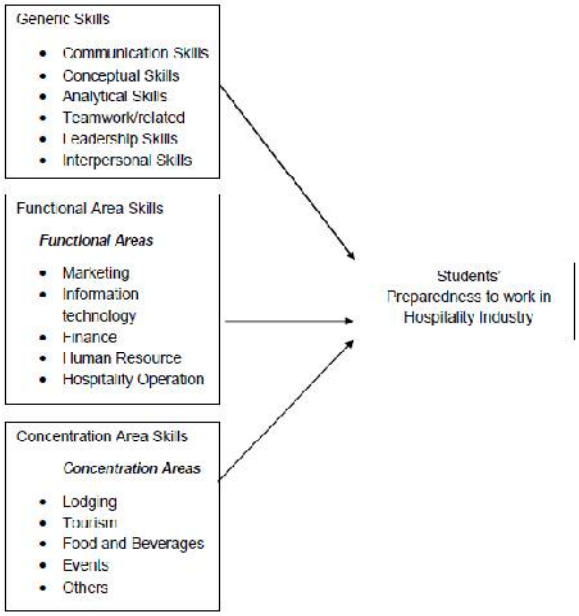


Figure1. Schematic Diagram of the Study

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to determine the HRM 4th year students' level of preparedness to work in the hospitality industry. The preparedness of the HRM students is assessed based on their generic skills, functional area skills, concentration area skills.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study uses quantitative research design. It is conducted in Surigaodel Sur State University (SDSSU), specifically in the College of Business and Management (CBM). The respondents are the 48 Fourth Year Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) graduating students who are enrolled in the Second Semester, Academic Year 2015- 2016.
An adapted survey questionnaire from Cheng (2008) is utilized as primary tool in gathering the data for this study. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part deals on how the school affects students' capability and capacity on the course they are taken and they want to enhance or develop how they are prepared in some skills as follows: communication, conceptual, analytical, team work related, leadership, interpersonal and curriculum related skills. It also measures how far they learned during academic years of their studies. The second part deals on how ready they are to engage to some actual scenarios such as physical and conceptual jobs. It quantifies how equipped they are in working the concept "Hospitality".
Respondents' answers are treated with frequency counting, ranking and weighted mean to treat the data

to answer different problems. The following scoring is used:

4.21	-	5.00	-	Excellent
3.41	-	4.20	-	Above Average
2.61	-	3.40	-	Average
1.81	-	2.60	-	Below Average
1.00	-	1.80	-	Poor

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the extent of students' preparedness in hospitality industry in terms of generics skills.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Rating
Communication Skills	4.28	Excellent
Conceptual Skills	4.31	Excellent
Analytical Skills	4.13	Above Average
Team work related Skills	4.31	Excellent
Leadership Skills	4.28	Excellent
Interpersonal Skills	4.16	Above Average
Curriculum related Skills	4.36	Excellent
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.26**	**Excellent**

Table 1.Extent of Students' Preparedness in Hospitality Industry in terms of Generic Skills

The table show positive regards of the respondents towards their preparedness in the hospitality industry in which most of them give an excellent adjectival rating. Among the indicators, the highest weighted mean are communication and conceptual skills, teamwork related and leadership skills and the curriculum related skills.

It demonstrates the effectiveness of the HRM curriculum to its students and how it moulded them to become better off with their chosen field of study. Nevertheless graduates of the HRM course would be as much useful and competitive in the hospitality industry with other graduates from other different universities.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Rating
1. Applying hospitality marketing Fundamentals	4.19	Above Average
2. Applying hospitality promotion Techniques	4.04	Above Average
3. Applying human resource function and policies	4.08	Above Average
4. Applying supported population and labor relations in the US	4.19	Above Average
5. Analyzing accounting data	4.10	Above Average
5. Applying hospitality financial management fundamentals including real state	4.10	Above Average
6. Use of IT in the hospitality industry	4.19	Above Average
7. Applying analytical skills related to the hospitality industry	4.17	Above Average
8. Knowledge of lodging and food service systems and Revenue Management & Reservation system	4.28	Excellent
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.15**	**Above Average**

Table 2.Students Preparedness in the Hospitality Function Areas

Table 2 shows the students' preparedness in the hospitality functions areas which demonstrate affirmative response from HRM students. The survey has an excellent adjective rating on the indicator knowledge towards lodging and food service systems and Revenue Management & Reservation System. The other indicators such as Applying Hospitality Marketing Fundamentals, Applying Hospitality Promotion Techniques, Applying Human Resource Function and Policies, Applying Supported Populations and Labor Relation in the U.S, Analyzing Accounting Data, Applying Hospitality Financial Management Fundamentals Including Real State, Use of IT in the Hospitality Industry and Applying Analytical Skills Related to the Hospitality Industry got a uniform result which is Above Average Rating. The Overall Weighted Mean is 4.15 equivalents to an Adjectival Rating of "Above Average". The result shows how well the students are familiar with the hotel and restaurant business which require much of their knowledge in the hospitality industry.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Rating
1. Clear understanding of critical issues related to food and beverage management	4.19	Above Average
2. Identifying types of beverages and knowledge of beverage management	4.21	Excellent
3. Meetings and convention management	4.18	Above Average

skills		
4. Event management skills	4.13	Above Average
5 Demonstrating catering function and Skills	4.12	Above Average
6. Applying managerial and supervisory skills in different functional areas of hotels and resorts	4.12	Excellent
7. In depth club knowledge and fundamental of club management	4.12	Above Average
8. Understanding both internal and external casino environment	4.0	Above Average
9. Applying casino management competencies	4.04	Above Average
10. Applying management competencies in travel and tourism	4.22	Excellent
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.15**	**Above Average**

Table 3.Students' Preparedness in the Hospitality Concentration Areas

The tabular data shows positive results from the respondents who give excellent adjectival ratings on some of the indicators. Respondents show positive response in terms of preparedness on identifying types of beverages and knowledge on beverage management system. Other indicators which have an excellent rating are the effectiveness in terms of managerial and supervisory skills in different functional areas of the hotels and management competences in travel and tourism.

The results show the competence and proficiency of the students in HRM course and how well are they familiar with their field of study. High weighted mean further implies positive production of students well versed and knowledgeable with the hospitality concentration areas.

Indicators	Weighted mean	Adjectival Rating
1. Readiness to work in the industry	4.13	Above Average
2. Satisfaction with learning in the hospitality program	4.12	Above Average
3. Quality of education in the current Program	4.27	Excellent
4. Received great education from the hospitality program based on what was paid for	4.31	Excellent
5. Gladness in majoring hospitality and tourism management	4.22	Excellent
6. Hospitality in tourism management as good course of the study	4.16	Above Average
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.20**	**Excellent**

Table 4
Level of Students' Overall Preparedness

Table 4 reveals the results the level of students' overall preparedness. It shows that there areas where students get an adjectival rating of excellent such as quality education in the current program, received great education from the Hospitality Program based on what was paid for, gladness in majoring Hospitality and Tourism Management.

It simply denotes that they are enjoying and interested with the course, Hotel and Restaurant Management. Other areas such readiness to work in the industry, satisfaction with earning in the hospitality program, hospitality in tourism management as good course to study get an adjectival rating of above average. It shows that their learning is not yet enough to battle in the actual duties and handle some responsibilities on the field they are chosen. The overall weighted mean is 4.20 described as excellent. It implies that they are willing to take chances to learn and gain knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

With the positive response of the students, it can be deduced that the 4th year HRM students of Surigaodel Sur State University are prepared to work in the hospitality industry after graduation. They have developed the necessary skills required by the industry. However, there are still areas in the HRM curriculum that needed improvement. The University shouldimprove some areas of their HRM curriculum especially the area that do not have higher adjectival rating.It should focus on giving its student's quality on-the-job training that will surely help hone the graduates in becoming better professionals in their chosen field. The University should be aware on globalization and competency so they can produce productive and high skilled graduates prepare for gainful employment.

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