Length of Industry Immersion as a Measure of Knowledge and Skills of the Faculty: Basis for Hospitality Management Training Plan

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The hospitality industry offers services for the satisfaction of its guests. The faculty and students in hospitality should be exposed and trained in hotels and restaurants for the exposure of the actual events in the day-to-day activities of this industry.

This study sought to measure the acquired knowledge and skills of faculty based on the length of their immersion which would be a basis for a training plan. This research made use of a qualitative descriptive method that was given to eight faculty members who have undergone training and immersion in a hotel in Manila. An online questionnaire that was validated by three experts was given, followed by a series of interviews for two months. The gathered data were analyzed using frequency and percentage.

The results showed that during the immersion, most of the faculty gained enough experience, knowledge, and skills in the corresponding departments they were deployed but they said that the training was not enough due to the time allotted to them which was only

80 hours. They think that 80-hour training was not sufficient to make them more skillful and knowledgeable. In addition, the hotel managers who were training them were also busy with their respective works while conducting training.   This finding was the basis of a training plan that was created for future immersion of the hospitality management faculty with longer training time and wider experience, knowledge, and skills.

1   INTRODUCTION

Industry immersion is the actual work of a trainee where real-life situations happen. When members of the faculty are exposed to the field, they will experience the authentic day-to-day work of a typical hospitality practitioner. This kind of exposure will enable them to immerse themselves in the industry and update the needed knowledge and skills that make their teaching more valuable as they apply the theories they teach in school. This way, they can guide their students with pertinent and relevant knowledge and skills that are needed in the industry (Hernandez, 2019).

The immersion program has a duration of 10 days which is equivalent to 80 hours of comprehensive training with the industry partners. This will update the hospitality faculty on the latest trends and practices in the hospitality industry and it will also enhance the necessary knowledge and skills that students should possess before and after graduation.

The length of industry immersion plays a vital part in training the faculty members. Their work experience will provide them a different perspective of academic learning, possibilities of growth, and an opportunity to gain a thorough understanding on how to observe proper courtesy, integrity, punctuality and responsibility that they will edify to their students. The knowledge and skills they will gain will not only be limited to the industry skills learned in hotels but will also accentuate the more essential reflective thinking skills and management skills that will help them and their students in their personal development (Learning from work experience, 2019).

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) requires a program that would promote the Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines to undergo practicum training course that will enhance practical knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the industry (CHED, 2010). The faculty immersion, just like students' on-the-job-training program, could be an effective way of developing a significant training plan for the improvement of the faculty and for the benefit of the students.

2. Methods and Techniques Used

This study aimed to measure the knowledge and skills of the hospitality faculty based on the length of their immersion as a basis for a training plan. It made use of a qualitative descriptive method of research. Qualitative descriptive research is a comprehensive synopsis of the usual day-to-day activities and experiences of individuals or group of individuals that produce direct descriptive summary of information (Lambert and Lambert,

2012). The participants consisted of eight faculty members from different universities who have undergone the industry immersion at Pan Pacific Hotel. An online questionnaire that was validated by three experts was given, followed by a series of interviews for a period of two months. The gathered data was analyzed using the

frequency and percentage. A training plan (Appendix 1) was created for longer immersion time.

Instrument

The instrument was answered through an online survey by eight faculty members who have undergone immersion at Pan Pacific Hotel. All eight of them experienced a two-week immersion that is also equivalent to 80 hours of training at different departments.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents of the faculty immersion were composed of eight faculty members (4 males and 4 females) from different private higher education institutions.

The instrument was answered through an online survey by eight faculty members who have undergone immersion at Pan Pacific Hotel. All eight of them experienced a two-week immersion that is also equivalent to 80 hours of training at different departments.

Table 1

Departments Where the Faculty were Deployed

Department	Frequency	Percentage
Housekeeping	2	25%
Food and Beverage	2	25%
Front Office	2	25%
Kitchen	2	25%
Total	8	100%

Table 1 shows that two of the faculty members or twenty five percent were trained in the housekeeping department, another 25% or two faculty members were trained in the food and beverage department, 25% or two faculty were trained in the front office department, and 25% or two faculty were trained in the kitchen. One hundred percent or all of them were able to improve their knowledge and skills in a span of their training period. During the span of their training, 25% of the faculty garnered knowledge and skills in food and beverage, 25% of the faculty honed their knowledge and skills in bread and pastry, 25% of the faculty got their knowledge and skills in bread and pastry, and the remaining

25% had their knowledge and skills in front office. All of them honed their knowledge and skills in all the departments they were trained. Industry immersion raises conviviality, teamwork, and networking. Immersion develops communication and interpersonal skills (Borbye, 2009).

Theme # 1. On Customer Complaints

All of the participants were able to communicate and interact with the guests and developed their self-confidence in oral and written communication. However, one out of eight of the respondents or 12.5% encountered customer complaints.

"I encountered a guest who complained on the soup that she ordered. The soup was not so hot and she wanted it to be served as steaming hot. I immediately addressed the issue by replacing her soup and serving the guest with a very hot soup."

In any case the respondents encountered customer complaints,

"I would try to empathize with the customer, ask for an apology, and respond accordingly." "I would try to keep calm, compose myself, and address the complaint immediately."

"I will tell the guest that everything would be managed more carefully next time."

"I will first apologize for what happened and do what they ask." "I will say sorry and tell them it will not happen again."

"I shall be very apologetic and try to keep the guest calm as possible. I shall offer them an

extra service for their next visit."

"I will stay humble and apologize and try to give them the best that I can."

"I will be responsible for the mistake and will promise the guest not to commit the same

mistake again."

Theme # 1 talks about the article of Taylor (2019) who mentioned that the phrase 'The customer is always right' could be replaced with 'going the extra mile in hospitality' may be the more appropriate phrase in today's world. Suggestions of staying humble and being honest may be respected by a guest especially if extended with deep apology.

Based on the 80-hour training time that was required of them, 50% answered that their training time was enough to acquire the needed knowledge and skills, 25% said that the training time was not enough, and another 25% was not really sure if the training time was enough. Do (2013), in his study said that managers who take charge of training can be stressful due to the training time to train the trainers coinciding with their own working hours.

Participants who thought that the knowledge and skills they acquired during the training were enough to be successful in the field of hospitality were only 37.5% and the remaining 62.5% thought that the knowledge and skills they gained were not enough to make them successful in the hospitality industry. One of the participants said during an interview, that an 80-hour training could be beneficial but very tiring since some of them did not actually work full-time in the hotel but after office hours or during the weekends. Some were not allowed by the deans and coordinators to be absent from their respective classes. That was one of the reasons why they felt they were burdened by the training. For those who answered that the training time was enough had their training during the Christmas break. This way, they were able to work full time in the hotel and were able to concentrate on the training.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study showed that during the immersion, most of the faculty gained enough experience, knowledge and skills in the corresponding departments they were deployed.

However, some of them think that the training time was not enough due to time constraints on the part of both the training managers and the trainees themselves. These findings would be very useful in creating an effective training plan on the time the hospitality faculty would be deployed for their immersion. Though, not all of them experienced customer complaints, they were ready to handle future guest complaints if such cases arise. Faculty immersion should be given emphasis to bridge the gap between the academe and the industry. In this regard, the deans and heads should allow the faculty to work full-time in the hotel to focus on their training, improving themselves and to impart their knowledge and skills to their students.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This is study is limited to all the faculty members who undergone immersion at the Pan Pacific hotel.

My suggestion for the future researcher to have more additional respondents though faculty immersion is very limited given by the school and industry.

For the educational institution is to give more opportunity to their faculty members to be exposed in this kind of immersion for their growth and development.

For the industry partner to allow and accept more faculty members to conduct their immersion.

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