

The use of professional training for improved performance in hospitality enterprises in the city of Rio de Janeiro

Ana Maria Rocha Faria, (LATEC/UFF) gbeonan@vm.uff.br
Oswaldo Luiz Gonçalves Quelhas (LATEC/UFF) quelhas@latec.uff.br

Abstract

This study analyzes the use of professional training by hospitality companies in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Two questionnaires were handed to hotel managers in order to assess the impact of training as a strategic factor for achieving higher performance in hospitality enterprises. Furthermore, there is a review on the bibliography and history of both professional training and public employment policies.

Key words: Education to Professionals, Service Management, Hospitality Enterprises

1 Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's economic activities with the highest growth levels in recent years (BRASIL, 2000). Above all, it is characterized by its capacity to produce direct and indirect jobs and by its link to tax collection mechanisms, being the activity which most contributes for global economic development.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council – WTTC, the travel and tourism sector has a global turnover corresponding to 10.7% of the world's GDP, having grown by 500% over the last ten years. In Latin America, this percentage amounts to 6.1%, the lowest among all the regions in the world (WTTC, 2003).

Brazil is a country blessed with a great tourist potential, thanks to its weather and territory conditions. In the world's context, however, tourism in Brazil has a long way to go, for the tourist flow to Brazil is far inferior to that of other countries with the same potential.

Tourism implies multiple services, such as transport, hospitality, food, entertaining, travel agency, event organization, translation, tourist guiding, among other, and it also pushes other activities linked to natural and cultural heritage preservation, making it complex to quantify the activity's work force. According to WTTC (BRASIL, 2000), the tourism sector has been responsible for maintaining 260 million job all over the world, which stands for more than 10% of the world's work force.

The sector is estimated to grow by 4% a year within the next decade. In 1994, the tourism and leisure industry was responsible for 7.8% of the GDP, an index above the Latin American average (6.1%), but lower than the world average (10.7%). In that same year, it moved US\$ 45 billion in the country, employing 5.8 million people (directly or indirectly), or 9% of the economically active, being paid 6.1% more than the average Brazilian salary. Therefore, to invest in creating a tourism culture plays a relevant role to provide a greater number of people with opportunities in the formal or informal work market, thus favoring an increased family income (BRASIL, 2000).

The tourism/ hospitality sector leads us to raise, among the sector's entrepreneurs, the need of introducing new paradigms for their human resources conception and management. Thus, this study analyzes the use of professional qualification and training to professionals by tourism and hospitality companies in the city of Rio de Janeiro, as one of the decisive strategic factors not only in obtaining good results in undertakings, but also in making sure they are

successful.

Before moving on to the analysis, however, we should see what is the present behavior like as regards professional qualification and public employment policies around the world and particularly in Brazil.

2. Professional qualification and public employment policies

Changing work qualification requirements does not necessarily mean producing a better trained worker. There are many situations for which less work qualification is required, whereas in others its contents are modified. While there seems to be more room for work changes, most job positions remain whose performance requirements are still exactly the same as before.

In this context, one's academic background is expected to ensure not only competence, skill and qualification, but also, and perhaps most importantly, employability. This new term, which simply means a good chance for one to be and stay employed, and, for the unemployed, a good chance of getting a job, pervades all the modern-day discussions on education to professionals..

Unemployment results in a series of changes translated into precariousness and vulnerability regarding job and work. The most well-known features this process takes are: a growing lack of regulation in hiring and firing; part-time temporary shared jobs from home; extended working hours; increase of working children; high flexibility in activity performance; incentive to informality; precarious pay policies; lessened union power and representativeness; increased individual responsibility over the job; and downfall of solidarity among workers.

According to IADB (2003), good training is also good education, in the sense that it is essential to integrate technical training with conceptual development in order to achieve quality professional background. Training produces economic results (increased productivity, competitiveness, technological transfer) and concrete social results (development of new values, attitudes, and behavior patterns). This serves to justify the idea that investment in training is economically profitable.

Thus, training can be considered as social policy, but not a job generator.

2.1 Professional insertion

Discussions about professional insertion in Brazil are scarce, which in a sense prevents us from having a fully established research field. This scarcity may also be related to the place the subject occupies in terms of priority in social policies. The European experience is different, specially the one in France, whose problems are highlighted in several research areas. We intend to summarize some elements related to the professional insertion of young workers in Brazil while the world of work is going through intensive transformations.

For Doussou (1980), quoted by Trottier (1998), when we examine the future of different professions, there is an outstanding variety of professional paths and trajectories for young people coming from the same kind of background; therefore, there cannot be a linear relation between training and career plan. This vision, according to Trottier, is very close to the thought of planners whose present worry is about the several ways of professional insertion.

In Brazil, the direction given to policies aimed at those excluded from the working market seems to be more concerned about showing the society that there is a worry about the so-called “risk groups” or “vulnerable population”. These people are provided with Professional Education Programs, Education for the Young and Adults, among others. However, such educational background initiatives, when not linked to other public policies of interface and professional insertion, bear very few results. In other words, the individual is prepared to be

prepared.

Finally, when analyzing the professional insertion of young university graduates in Brazil, and most particularly those who look for the tourism/ hospitality sector, we must take into account the fact that the market is characterized by informality. What happens, then, to the young people with this background level? What are the insertion policies and perspectives for these young people?

3. The human capital theory and the Brazilian education for professionals

It is maintained that in the educational field the human capital theory is reinforced as a theoretical and practical tool to solve the employment crisis. Springing from this theoretical hegemony, a set of actions coordinated by the Labor Ministry was encouraged by the Brazilian State, aiming at guaranteeing a higher employability to sectors under risk of criminal behavior. However, a dual statement inside the educational system is detected, since these target-sectors are submitted to a fragmented educational process lacking the fundamental contents necessary to produce a contemporary citizen who should be aware of the political, economic and cultural changes in the globalization processes around economic, political and professional activities.

Knowledge has become a direct competitive advantage to companies selling ideas and relationships, such as tourism/ hospitality, and an indirect competitive advantage to all the organizations that are trying to make a difference by the way they provide attendance to their customers. From now on, successful companies will be the ones that know how to attract, develop and retain people capable of turning an international organization into a dynamic entity, of responding both to customers and opportunities emerging from technology. Thus, companies are challenged to make sure they are capable of facing, assimilating, developing and maintaining these talents.

The human capital theory states that higher education directly contributes to improve individuals' life quality, due to the increased income resulting from better qualification to act in the work market. In other words, increased productivity – resulting from increased training – would benefit individuals through salary raise.

These new capabilities and behavioral patterns, such as flexibility, communication capacity, participation, are considered fundamental within a production model whose goal is to break the sternness of the Taylorist model. Schools are expected to be capable of guaranteeing basic education, through which the student and future worker will be able to acquire new knowledge and adjust to his or her best capacity to the flexibility of the new production standard.

4. Methodology

4.1 As for assessment goals

The problems around the study area pertaining to the individuals' bonds to their work environment and, particularly, the need for these studies on tourism/ hospitality to start analyzing multiple focuses of professional background have led this research to envision the following objectives:

- a) To identify, from a sample made up of intermediate and high level management groups in outstanding tourism/ hospitality organizations located in Rio de Janeiro, how they evaluate the relevance of each activity for the sake of their companies' good strategic result, as well as the success their organizations achieve while performing each activity;
- b) To seek, with the support of the mainstream strategy in this study area, empirical evidence on a set of factors (or strategies) which, as antecedents, demonstrate the distance between what such companies say it is their priority and how well they are able to act under such

priority;

c) To seek, in empirical evidence detected through the assessment stages, possible support for the “microtheories” related to organizational capabilities, specially human capital, excellence and competitiveness, in an attempt to include the studied issue into more encompassing and sounder theoretical points of reference.

4.2 As for the study's presuppositions

The offer of education to professionals for the tourism/ hospitality sector is what is presently essential to the activity. Any study intending to meet the most pressing needs of this sphere, regarding the HR area, will emphasize as being basic the issue of education to professionals, for that is what has to be achieved nowadays as presupposition.

In the 70s, the basic qualification for hospitality and tourism services in the northeastern region was developed by SENAC, which, however, did not always count on the necessary updated equipment and top professionals. In the 80s, in Bahia, SENAC installed its first school-restaurant, thus starting a better structured job.

In the late 80s, other university courses on hospitality technology began to emerge in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Maranhão. In the 90s, different institutions, mostly from the south and southeast, implanted hospitality management courses or created specialization degrees in their business administration courses. There was also an extended offer for the technologist course, at SENAC, to their school-hotels in Águas de São Pedro and Campos do Jordão. From 1994, there has been a very significant increase of university courses on hospitality (technology and bachelor's degree) and tourism (bachelor's degree), and presently these have shown the highest relative growth among new courses.

4.3 As for the study development

This kind of study outline entails the use of samples from a certain segment of the population and the use of standardized instruments to collect data, specially questionnaires.

This methodological strategy, when applied to problems about qualification and training in human resources, is associated to several theoretical, conceptual and empirical issues, object of discussion by some researchers, such as Pubin and Freeman (WAGNER, PUBIN & CALLAHAN, 1988 and PUTTERMAN, 1986).

Thus, the present study tries to highlight some suggestions made by reviews related to the area.

4.3.1 Data collection instruments: making the theoretical model operational

To raise data on the executives and managers' perception, two questionnaires were produced: one on the importance of each activity for the good strategic result of their companies, and the other on how successful their organizations were when performing each activity, particularly the one regarding their employees' competence level. Ten questions were asked, covering the following factors:

- Market share and turnover growth;
- Customer management through improved attendance;
- Investments in strategies to gain technological advantage;
- Highering employees' competence level to meet new market demands;
- Understanding “value” from the customer's point of view;
- Taking up new products and services;
- Expanded capability to develop and supply high value products and services;
- Reengineering working processes;
- Establishing alliances or new enterprises to get inserted in the markets;

- Achieving continuous improvement.

Questionnaire A was meant to measure the relevance of each strategic activity for the company's good result. Individuals would mark 1 to 5 points, where 5 meant “mostly decisive” and 1 “not decisive at all”.

Questionnaire B was meant to measure the success of their organizations when performing each strategic activity. Individuals would mark 1 to 5 points, where 5 meant “mostly performed successfully” and 1 “not performed successfully”.

4.3.2 Participants: organizations, executives, and operational managers

Forty hotels were identified as outstanding in the hospitality sector in the city of Rio de Janeiro, according to ABIH, the Brazilian Hospitality Industry Association. These are establishments of different sizes and supported by major international networks, as well as by domestic investments, even those of pension funds. They are high class tourist hotels, some of which less costly for domestic tourism and business customers.

In order to respond questionnaires A and B there was a selection, among the forty hotels, of ten individuals, either executives or operational managers, corresponding to 25% of the population under consideration.

4.4 Data analysis and discussion

To each factor, the average number of points indicating importance (good result) and performance was calculated, and this made it possible to set a variable for measuring the difference between both, so as to put factor in order. The statistical analysis was made by comparing points marked for importance (good result) to points marked for performance, at a 5% significance level, according to Wilcoxon's non-parametric test.

Below is the table and graphic representation of averages found to the importance of each strategy for good result, performance, and the difference between both.

ORDER OF TEN MAIN STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS					
Factor	Strategy	Order	Average importance for good result ^(a)	Average importance in performance ^(b)	Difference ^(c)
Factor 1	Increased market share and turnover	1	4,9	4,8	0,1
Factor 9	Setting alliances or new enterprises to join markets	2	4,9	4,8	0,1
Factor 2	Customer management by improved attendance	3	4,8	3,8	1
Factor 6	Introduce new products and services	4	4,8	3,8	1
Factor 4	Raise employees' competence to meet new market demands	5	4,7	2,5	2,2
Factor 5	Understand “value” from the customer's point of view	6	4,6	3,9	0,7
Factor 10	Seek continuous improvement	7	4,6	3,8	0,8
Factor 3	Invest strategically to gain technological advantage	8	4,6	2,9	1,7
Factor 7	Expand capability to develop and supply high value products and services	9	4,5	4,2	0,3
Factor 8	Perform work processes reengineering	10	4,1	4,1	0

Table 1 – Order of ten main strategies to achieve success

^(a) In a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means “mostly decisive” and 1 “not decisive at all”.

^(b) In a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means “mostly performed successfully” and 1 “not performed successfully”.

^(c) Average importance mark (for good result) minus average performance mark.

Table 1 shows ten pre-defined factors as the most important, in a hierarchy of importance and performance graduation. The extreme left column, which shows the difference between the importance numbers (good result) and the performance numbers, shows the distance between what the companies say it is their top priority and how well they act on the basis of that priority.

It is worth highlighting draws for factors 1 and 9, both with average 4.9 and 4.8 for good result and performance, respectively, and factors 2 and 6, both with average 4.8 and 3.8 for good result and performance, respectively. For that matter, after consultation, a new order for the ten main success strategies was established, with factors 1 and 9 in the first place, and factors 2 and 6 in the second place.

Table 1 indicates four breaches of 1.0 or more. It is also noted that each of the factors, taken in the set of ten assessors, showed a statistically significant difference between the classification regarding importance for good result and the classification regarding importance for performance. The results were as follows, considering Wilcoxon's non-parametric test, at a 0.05 (5%) significance level:

FACTOR 2 (Customer management by improved attendance)	$z = - 2.640$	$p < 0.05$	$p\text{-value} = 0.008$
FACTOR 3 (Strategic investment to gain technological advantage)	$z = - 2.701$	$p < 0.05$	$p\text{-value} = 0.007$
FACTOR 4 (Raising employees' competence level to meet new market demands)	$z = - 2.754$	$p < 0.05$	$p\text{-value} = 0.006$
FACTOR 6 (Introducing new products and services)	$z = - 2.640$	$p < 0.05$	$p\text{-value} = 0.008$
FACTOR 10 (Seeking continuous improvement)	$z = - 2.126$	$p < 0.05$	$p\text{-value} = 0.033$

Except for Factor 10, all the factors showed highly significant statistical difference ($p\text{-values} < 0,01$) regarding the evaluation of importance for good result and importance for performance. The difference for Factor 10 is significant at level 0.05, and the differences of the other factors (1, 5, 7, 8 and 9) are not statistically significant.

The highly significant differences correspond to differences shown in color on the Table. The significant result at level 0.05 suggests Factor 10 could also be considered with different interest to some other study.

There is an aspect of special significance to this study out of all of its challenges: as indicated by the executives and managers to the networks under consultancy, their hotels are extremely deficient in their attempt to raise their employees' capability in order to face emerging market demands. This strategic element was classified as the third among the ten most indicated ones, with a 4.7 importance graduation (good result), but the researchees attributed to themselves a collective mark of only 2.5 in performance. It is patent that the executives and managers in the tourism/ hospitality sector, within the scope of the city of Rio de Janeiro – who are always trying to find and apply the best and most updated resources in tourist service supply, consider as their worst weakness the management of their employees' human capital.

5 Conclusion

This study's initial goal was to analyze the use of professional qualification and training by tourism/ hospitality companies as a crucial success factor towards a higher performance strategy in hospitality enterprises. Such objective was, we believe, quite challenging due to

two aspects: first, the professional background in view of the vast literature related to the subject and the consequent difficulty to set limits, interrelationships, and borders among the several approaches; second, in trying to analyze, by means of empirical methods and restricted sampling, aspects of people management in a segment where staff professionalization is still superficial, favoring practical application, against theoretical and systematized knowledge.

Human resources qualification and training in hospitality enterprises must go through understanding characteristics and demands of the competitive environment, as well as understanding individual and collective needs associated to creation and learning processes in the organizations.

On one hand, it is patent that we are living in a turbulent environment, where competitive advantages must be permanently reinvented and where low-intensive sectors in technology and knowledge inexorably lose economic participation. In this context, the challenge of producing more and better ends up being surpassed by the permanent duty of creating new products, services, processes and management systems where everybody knows creativity is a working tool. On the other hand, the speed of transformations and the growing complexity of challenges do not let these endeavors to be concentrated on just a few individuals or specific areas in the organizations.

Workers engaged in hospitality enterprises have realized and have been led to realize the need of a considerable increase of their educational and aspirational platforms, while work takes on a central role in their lives.

The realization above points, in a sense, to a great opportunity: that of creating virtuous cycles to awaken awareness of how important qualification is, to improve professional performance and broaden collective competence. Besides, they should turn to improving the life quality of populations, no matter what the involved segment is, what to speak of those engaged in the tourism sector.

In this sense, several studies show that the individual creation and learning processes, as much as the organizational process, demand and imply personal reinvention, that is, they are associated to changes of mental models, cognitive and behavioral maps, as well as to the search of great challenges and internal tension solutions. Furthermore, it is also noted that individuals, in their creative and learning processes, depend not only on a great intrinsic motivation, but also on the interaction with others, a combination of multiple perspectives and experiences, and, finally, personal trial and error processes.

The researched literature, in turn, has shown that the managerial functions in the organizational context entail both lighter and heavier aspects. In this study, we focused our endeavor on analyzing the first element, also commonly known as Human Capital, both by economy theoreticians and by authors intent on classifying the companies' intellectual capital.

Our intention is that, from the contributions provided by this study, the understanding of the impact of human resources qualification and training on the companies' competitiveness help stimulate, even more so, discussion on their several aspects and consequences.

We propose that new researches be undertaken discussing hospitality enterprises in other cities in Brazil.

References

AMADEO, E. A evolução recente da oferta de trabalho e do emprego no Brasil. Notas sobre mercado de trabalho (Recent evolution of job and employment offer in Brazil. Notes on work market). Brasília, n. 1, Jul. 1998.

BECKER, G. Human Capital. Berkeley: Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chap. 2: "Human Capital Revisited": 15-25, 1993.

BLAU, G. & BOAL, K. "Conceptualizing How Job Involvement and Organizational commitment Affect Turnover and Absenteeism", *Academy of Management Review*, , 12 (2), p. 289, 1987.

BRASIL, MTb/SEFOR. Plano Nacional de Educação profissional: trabalho e empregabilidade (National Professional Education Plan: work and employability). Brasília: SEFOR, 1996.

DAVENPORT, T. e PRUSAK, L. Conhecimento empresarial: como as organizações gerenciam o seu capital intelectual (Entrepreneurial knowledge: how organizations manage their intellectual capital). Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1998.

DUBAR, C. "Trajetórias sociais e formas identitárias: alguns esclarecimentos conceituais e metodológicos" ("Social trajectories and identity shapes: some conceptual and methodological elucidations"). *Educação e Sociedade (Education and Society)*. São Paulo, v. 19, n.62, p.13-30, Apr. 1998.

GOTTLIEB, M. & CONKLING, L. *Managing the workplace survivors: organizational downsizing and the commitment gap*. Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1995.

MEYER, J. & ALLEN, N. *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, Research, and Application*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1997, p. 25

PORTER, M. *Vantagem competitiva: criando e mantendo um desempenho superior (Competitive advantage: creating and maintaining higher performance)*. 3rd edition. Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1989.

POSTHUMA, A. "Transformações do emprego no Brasil na década de 90" ("Transformations in employment in Brazil in the 90s"). in: OIT/TEM. São Paulo: Editora 34, 1999.