

AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM IN VIETNAM: THE LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT— Tourism and hospitality industry is one of the largest and rapidly growing industries not only in Vietnam but also in the world. In Vietnam, it creates lots of jobs for different kinds of people and generates large amount of revenue. Whether the hospitality and tourism businesses succeed or not would mainly base on how customers feel about the service and the service value perceived. The need for outstanding service delivery, improved service quality, excellent customer satisfaction has led to better strategies in training human resource. The availability of well-trained employees plays an important role in the success of any tourism and hospitality businesses. However, there is a severe shortage of skilled manpower both in quality and quantity in tourism and hospitality industry in Vietnam, which have a large impact on customer satisfactions. There is a lack of proper training in most of the training programs in Vietnamese institutions, which cannot be recognized internationally. There is a real need for better training programs in schools and universities so that skilled workers are able to provide high quality services for both domestic and international customers. This paper analyzes the negative impacts of the lack of training on service quality, the current situations of human resource in Vietnam, and presents some weaknesses and recommendations for human resource training in Vietnam.

Keyword — Training, Tourism and hospitality industry, skilled human resource, service quality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's hospitality and tourism industry has recently been increasing. Due to the advantages of transportation and better road systems, more and more people can travel for their relaxation or work in oversea countries. So, the large number of international and domestic tourists traveling to Vietnam is rising. Many favorite domestic destinations have been chosen by international tourists. Das [1] indicated that Vietnam has been selected as one of the world's 10 fastest-growing tourism destinations by the United Nations World Tourism Organization in 2018. According to Vietnam Industry and Trade Information Center [2], Vietnam is striving to reach the top three countries in Southeast Asia for tourism and hospitality growth and in the top 50 countries with the world's leading tourism competitiveness. When the fast growth of the tourism and hospitality industry makes it a key economic sector, well-trained human resources are greatly in high demand. However, Vietnam is facing a shortage of qualified staff to serve not only domestic tourists but also international ones. It is very important to develop effective training programs to deal with the lack of qualified staff, especially in four or five international hotels and travel agencies which target at well-trained staff to increase their performance efficiency. Human resources must consistently provide the best service quality, which is one of the most essential key factors to gain sustainable competitive advantage [Ali et al., 3] to ensure guest satisfaction and retain customers. Currently, most of the universities in Vietnam have not produced enough graduates majoring in tourism and hospitality to meet the increasing needs of the field. The reports of the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Tourism indicated that Vietnam had 284 training institutions including 62 universities, 80 colleges, 117 intermediate schools, 2 training firms, and 23 vocational centers in 2011. Compared in 2007, the number of training institutions went up 3.5 times [Loan & Hieu, 4]. Ho Chi Minh City in particular has around 50 universities and colleges that have tourism and hospitality training courses. However, only 60 percent of new graduates can meet the demands of the employees [Vietnam, 5]. Vietnam National Administration of Tourism stated that "there is a real need of nearly 40,000 employees to work in the field, but only about 20,000 students graduated from training institutions, of which only about 1,800 university and professional college students, 2,100 tourism college students, and 18,200 intermediate level students. In addition, there are about 5,000 primary and less than 3 months of vocational training" [Hien, Cuong et al.,6]. Furthermore, new graduates are not qualified enough to meet the current employers' standards. Most businesses have to retrain around 60-70% of newly graduating students [Hien, Cuong, et al., 6]. Besides, there is a lack of high-quality staff with international standards of quality and practical experience working in most of the training organizations. The total workforce is about "5,000 people including 2,000 lecturers and teachers, 2,580 trainers, and 540 managers, serving training at all levels. Of the 2,000 lecturers and teachers as estimated, only 259 have a master's degree or higher" [Hien, Cuong et al., 6]. The purpose of this study is to make an analysis on how the shortage of human resource training negatively affects service quality, provide an overview of human resources' current situations in Viet Nam as well as present some weak points in most of the training institutions and recommendations for human resource training in Vietnam.

II. THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE LACK OF PROPER HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING ON SERVICE QUALITY

Employees play an important role in delivering excellent and prompt service to different kinds of customers with different cultural backgrounds, different behaviors and personalities. Thus, they are the most valuable assets of the businesses. Hospitality businesses can greatly and sustainably develop if well qualified staff are employed to deliver consistent excellent service [Waqanimaravu & Arasanmi,7]. In fact, human resource training is significantly important in providing better service quality, improving employee performance and acquiring competitive advantage. When there are no opportunities, accessibilities and supports for human resource training, then service quality delivery and competitive advantage will be negatively affected. There are two major impacts for the shortage of human resource training on service quality.

The first one is high customers' dissatisfaction. Quang mentioned at the conference "with the human resources already lacking the training and supervision not being strict enough, service quality will suffer" [tuoitre, 8]. Indeed, unqualified staff lack adequate hospitality knowledge and skills to provide satisfactory customer service resulting in dissatisfied customers. The shortage of employees training results in poor performance and unqualified employees are unaware of their job functions, that have a negative impact on staff abilities to cope with customers and that leads to customers' dissatisfaction [Martinelli, 9]. It is impossible for people who do not have the right qualifications for hospitality jobs to provide high-quality service. The business sales will be declined if unhappy customers switch to other competitors who are able to supply good service quality. The most common issue caused by unskilled staff leading to high customers' disappointment is that service employees lack cultural knowledge of foreign customers. Palacio & Santana [10] said that people who have high level of cultural intelligence - the cognitive, the emotional and the behavioral - have an ability to deal with many situations. The cognitive intelligence indicates the full knowledge of different cultures people have. The emotional intelligence shows the willingness and motivation of the people in learning different cultures. The behavior intelligent refers to capacity of a person to adapt to new cultural environment. So, staff with these three components of definitely ensure guest satisfaction as they can handle and adapt with different kinds of cultures. The second problem resulting in customers' unhappiness is staff's language proficiency. Nguyen Van Phien, who is a senior director at real estate firm Novaland, mentioned that students who have just graduated from universities or vocational schools do not have good communication skills and foreign language skills. Around 45% of tour guides and 85% of front desk staff from hospitality businesses cannot communicate well in English [Le, 11]. Indeed, employees with low language proficiency are unable to have effective communication in workplaces which causes misunderstanding between servers and customers or communicators and receivers. Unsuccessful in oral communication, written communication and non-verbal communication lead to communication breakdown-a failure of exchange information.

The other is high staff turnover which greatly affects service quality. Businesses do not have enough staff to serve guests and a limited number of workers would be physically and mentally exhausted to provide good service for customers. The staff leave the job because they feel that they cannot get career advancement due to training deficiency. According to Amo [12], workforce without proper training do not have capability to do the job effectively, which makes them not feel pride in their good work and none of their job goals can be met resulting in staff turnover. The businesses with increasing workers quitting jobs find it hard to attract potential job candidates. Moreover, losing motivation at work is another reason to quit the job owing to high work pressure from customers. Nickerson [13] mentioned that "Herzberg's Two Factor Theory or known as Motivation-Hygiene Theory is one of the ways to identify intrinsic components that contribute to satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the workers". Employees usually do not perform well in their work when they lack motivation. In reality, most of the businesses urgently need workers to work for them; so, they rush their training processes for new recruited employees in a short period of time. When new employees are not trained well enough to serve customers properly, especially foreign visitors, they get lots of complaints, anger, and bad words from customers. Eventually, this results in demotivation of work and leave the job.

III. CURRENT SITUATIONS OF WELL-QUALIFIED HUMAN RESOURCE IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN VIET NAM

The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism reported that there are more than 6,035 million tourism jobs including indirect jobs, accounting for 11,2%. Particularly, 2,783 million direct tourism jobs are created, accounting for 5.2 % of total employment. In 2018 There were more than 1.3 million people working in tourism and hospitality industry and only 42% of employees were academically trained in the field, 38% moved from other jobs and 20% did not have formal training [Vietnamnet, 14]. According to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, there are more than 40,000 tourism and hospitality workers needed a year, especially skilled and well-trained staff while the number of students graduating from universities and vocational schools is around 15,000 per year [Vietnamnews, 15]. This is one of the reasons why Vietnamese

tourism and hospitality businesses are behind other international businesses in other countries. Furthermore, because of the shortage number of staff, most of the tourism and hospitality enterprises hire employees without official training to work. This has a negative influence on the industry since these workers do not have professional and necessary skills to do the job properly. The data released from VNAT indicated that more than 13 million international visitors arrive in Vietnam and 73 million domestic tourists travel around Vietnam. However, there are only around 13,000 workers who are qualified enough to provide good services to international travelers [vietnamnews, 15]. In addition, the percentage of tourism and hospitality employees with good language ability is low. Staff with good language proficiency account for 60%, in which the number of staff using English is 42% of total workforce. Other languages such as Chinese, French and others take up 5%, 4% and 9% respectively [Hien, et al, 6].

Training programs in most of the tourism and hospitality universities and vocational schools are not good enough to train high quality staff to work internationally like other countries. Thai Thi Phuong Hoa, vice-director of Kent International College indicated that “Human resources in Vietnam’s tourism industry still lack proper training in hospitality, tour guiding, or proper qualifications recognized internationally” [tuoitrenews, 8]. Training courses in tourism and hospitality are offered in more than 50 universities and vocational schools in Ho Chi Minh City [Vietnamnews, 15]. However, according to the survey of Vietnam human resources in tourism projects, around 60-70% of newly graduates need to be trained again due to the big gap between academic theory input and practice contexts learnt in their schools [vietnamnews, 14]. Nguyen Quoc Ky, General Director of Viettravel, stated that most of the travel agencies had to spend up to one year retraining new graduates to meet the company’s requirements [Vietnam, 5]. In Vietnam, there is no university asserting that the quality of training in the industry suits the needs of international corporations. Around 50% of graduates said that they find it hard to find jobs in their areas of specialization [Le, 11]. In addition, universities and colleges in Vietnam lack qualified lecturers who have master or doctorate degrees in tourism and hospitality. Human resource with insufficient English language proficiency is also an obstacle hindering their lecturing and doing research in English resulting in student’s dissatisfaction. Weak workforce of educational institutions is the main reason why schools are unable to produce high qualified supervisors, managers or assistant general managers who have good management skills, leadership skills, human resources training skills to meet international standards.

IV. THE BASIC WEAKNESSES IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY’S HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES IN VIETNAM

A. THE CURRICULUM CONCENTRATING MORE ON THEORY THAN PRACTICE

Theory and practice do not go hand in hand. Time for practice is much less than that for theory. It is true to say that most of the universities have short internship periods, about three months in their four years of university, which proves that supposition is more focused than application. In my university, hospitality students only take a three- credit course-about 45 periods on restaurant skills which cannot guarantee to have enough knowledge and skills to work for international brands. After graduations, students will not have sufficient intensive experience to handle the job professionally. This leads to the fact that human resources are trained but do not meet the wants of big brands and if forced to hire new people, businesses still have to retrain, which takes their time and money. According to a survey by Job street, more than 60% of the survey respondents in tourism field mentioned that knowledge gained at school does not meet current employers’ needs because there is no link between theory and practice [Hien, Cuong, et al., 6]. In order to have the human resources to meet the recruiters’ demands, enterprises in the tourism sector in Vietnam must invest significant money to retrain new members after accepting them to work for their companies.

B. A LACK OF EFFECTIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS AND HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP A PRACTICAL CURRICULUM TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RECRUITERS

Tourism and hospitality training institutions in Vietnam do not invest much time and effort to make close connection with businesses to develop a practical curriculum which can train graduates with the practical skills needed by hospitality and tourism businesses. In fact, new graduates do not meet the needs of tourism agencies and hotel. According to professor Lanh [16], “tourism markets require more foreign languages, soft skills, professionalism, leadership and management skills, information technology, highly specialized skills while new tour guides only are equipped technical skills, and little practical skills. There is a gap between vocational training programs with Vietnam’s Tourism Occupational Standards (VTOS)”. It is true that the large number of graduates is not ready for the job since they lack the skills to perform adequately in the workplace and need training or re-training to meet the wants of the industry [Hai, 17]. The main reason for this is the unsuitable and unprofessional curriculum which causes the mismatch between training organizations’ training capacity and the industry’s real demands. Tran and Swierczek found out the current needs of the employers and had assessments on graduate quality and skill delivery in training schools’ courses. They had a survey on “251 department managers, and 2,555 students, including 717 final-year students and 1,838 students in other years, from four

universities" [Hai, 17]. The result was that students' quality and skill delivery were seen to be below standard. Indeed, Vietnamese education system currently does not prepare students for the skills needed in the industry, particularly with respect to the skills required to engage in hospitality businesses with international connections. Unpractical and ineffective curriculum of most of training institutions results in unwell trained staff who do not have skills, knowledge required to work internationally.

C. LIMITED FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN TRAINING AND NOT MEETING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS.

Most of the school facilities and infrastructure in Vietnam today are not in good condition to produce high quality graduates. The first limitation is large class sizes which do not allow lecturers to manage their classes effectively. Let's take my university as an example. A speaking English class has 45 or 50 students which results in ineffective language training because lecturers are unable to pay enough attention to each student in order to help him or her with his or her individual work. The reason for this is that the school does not have enough space for learners, so universities have to put many students in one large class which becomes a problem for class management. Secondly, time and rooms for learning how to set up tables and chairs for hospitality and tourism students would be an issue for a good outcome. Small practice rooms and limited time for using the room have negative effect on students' mastering the skills necessary for future jobs. Last but not least, facilities in the practice rooms cause two problems for students. One is that there are always more students than pieces of equipment provided for a particular purpose, which leads to a waste of time for both teachers and students because they have to wait for their turn and do not have time to do the job until they master it. The other is that these school facilities and equipment are not similar to the ones in the hospitality businesses especially the international ones. This is the reason why businesses need to train graduates again when employed.

English teaching materials are another reason for low-level English proficiency for graduates. Language skill is one of the important skills most of hospitality and tourism businesses need to serve international guests effectively. However, Nguyen Van Phien, senior director at real estate firm Novaland said that most fresh graduates are incompetent in both communication skills and foreign language skills. There are almost 45 percent of tour guides and 85 percent of receptionists at hotels and restaurants who have low level English proficiency [Le, 11]. Tourism recruitment firms in Khánh Hòa Province also mentioned 92.3 percent of new employees fail to meet foreign language requirements [Ha, 18]. In addition, there is a diverse workforce in most of the five-star international hotels and restaurants. The staff not only have an ability to communicate effectively with guests but also with their colleagues who come from different countries in the world. Most of the textbooks used for teaching English is General English, not Tourism and Hospitality English. Students cannot learn vocabulary in their field or technical terms used daily in the real workplace. "From the students' perspectives, materials were thought to put more emphasis on general English communication rather than English for specific purposes" [Khuong, 19]. Most of universities use the same English textbooks to teach all majors.

The last difficulty lies on a limited number of lecturers and trainers with good language skills majoring in hospitality and tourism. So, they are not able to lecture in English, do academic research, prepare lesson plans or write research papers in English. Some universities and vocational schools do not have sufficient staff to teach hospitality and tourism students in English. As a result, these schools employ lecturers majoring in English language to lecture to hospitality and tourism classes. "A vast majority of the English lecturers (11/13) were said to lack knowledge of tourism, so they could not satisfy the students' enquiries about expressions in specific tourism contexts" [Khuong, 19].

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITIES IN VIET NAM

A. DEVELOPING A BETTER CURRICULUM

Curriculum should balance between theory and practice. According to Nguyễn Hữu Thọ, Chairman of the Vietnam Association of Tourism, "education and training of high-quality human resources in tourism and hospitality needs to offer 50-70 percent of practice time and remaining 30-50 percent of theory" [Vietnam, 20]. The training institutions should add more internships to the curriculum. This is considered a compulsory section where students are exposed to working life in an industry segment. The internships should be longer than three months and should be included in the training program for not only third-year students but also second-year and four-year students. Moreover, hospitality and tourism practice classes such as restaurant skills, housekeeping skills, bartender skills, tour guides skills, food and beverage management, event management should have more practice periods, more hands-on training experience. Students will understand and learn more through doing than reading the theory in the textbooks and listening to lectures in the classroom. It is correct to say "practice makes perfect". Besides, a joint training between domestic teaching institutions and reputable foreign training schools should be developed to create an international curriculum so students can have a chance to learn and practice in an international-class working environment. Students can

strengthen their interpersonal skills which are necessary to handle international customers. That is because students can understand cultural differences and international standards to provide excellent service quality for international travelers.

B. CLOSER CONNECTION AND MORE EFFECTIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN BUSINESSES AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS TO TRAIN GRADUATES TO MEET CURRENT RECRUITERS' DEMANDS

It is very necessary to boost the relationship between industry enterprises and training institutions. It is very important for hospitality and tourism businesses to provide information on the skills, knowledge, attitude and professional standards for industry schools to develop subject contents suitable to the current demands of businesses. Furthermore, training schools should organize more field trips to help students better understand about the real workplace. For example, training schools should establish good relationship with international hotel brands such as Sofitel Hotel, Hilton hotel, Sheraton, Nikko and other well-known five star international hotels to take students on field trips instead of taking a daily tour around the hotel. Learners should be allowed to spend more days observing and learning in real working place. In addition, more workshops should be organized for the industry leaders not only Vietnamese but also foreigner leaders to share their experiences, motivate and inspire students to learn and love their jobs. Hence, enterprises and schools must regularly communicate with each other to train graduates more productively.

C. CONSULTING WITH BUSINESSES AND INVESTING MORE ON FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURES BOTH IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY

Educational institutions should invest more in upgrading and expanding training facilities and infrastructure. More classrooms and practice rooms are needed to fit the suitable number of students to improve quality of training. Furthermore, practice rooms such as hotel rooms for housekeeping classes, reception areas for front office classes, restaurants for food and beverage classes and bar for bartender classes should be built based on the model of international enterprises. The facilities in these practice rooms should be added more so all students are able to learn a skill well enough to increase productivity and efficiency in specific industries. Moreover, training institutions should have facilities and equipment that are similar to those used in international brands. In addition, tourism and hospitality English textbooks should be used for students majoring in the field so that students can actually learn useful words and expressions to communicate more effectively and efficiently with international visitors. Training institutions should organize more training classes which invite both Vietnamese and foreigner experts in tourism and hospitality to provide lectures for those language staff, who lack knowledge in tourism and hospitality.

VI. CONCLUSION

Vietnam has eventually become one of the potential and attractive tourism places in the world. Tourism and hospitality would be a key sector of Vietnamese economy with a competitive market in the coming years. However, Vietnam suffers high percentage of well-trained staff and graduates who get excellent skills, knowledge and attitudes to serve customers. The unavailability of high quality staff leads to the unsustainable development of hospitality and tourism industry. The reasons for high number of unqualified human resources are theoretical curriculum in most training schools, ineffective cooperation between schools and businesses, as well as limited facilities and infrastructures for high quality training. So, it is a real need for training schools to update curriculum with a focus more on practice, to enhance cooperation and connection between hospitality enterprises and hospitality schools to create more efficient and motivated graduates, to make an investment on adding and improving classrooms, practice rooms as well as facilities and equipment to meet international standards to train qualified human resources for meeting both domestic and international market demands.

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