

Journey toward the success of hospitality professional's on-the-job training lived experiences: A phenomenology

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ABSTRACT

On-the-Job training abroad allows acquiring practical knowledge and skills in a recognized foreign host establishment. It promotes the global competitiveness of students through exposure and acculturation in a foreign country. This study aimed to know the experiences and sacrifices of hospitality professionals, their view towards the On-the-Job-Training program, the impact on their present career, and how the training helps them become successful hospitality professionals and determine the effect and significant mark in their current profession. After a one-on-one thorough interview and analysis of a transcribed audio recording of participants, it was observed that there was a common experience during their On-the-Job Training. Eight themes emerged from the study; these are Sacrifice, Independent Individual, experiential learning, cultural adaptation and appreciation, career opportunity, good communication and leadership skills, self-confidence, and motivated to work because of family. Each theme was quoted by the participants and was carefully discussed and interpreted by the researchers. Likewise, this study will give better insights, understanding, and motivation to the different fields of specializations, school administrators, and curriculum planners on the importance of on-the-job training in the program and curriculum, especially for those planning to pursue hospitality studies.

Keywords: Hotel and Restaurant Management, hospitality professional, on-the-job training, phenomenology, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry is the leading and stable fast developing industry in the world [1]. It is a multidimensional industry that has a big effect on the economic development of any country such as in a hotel accommodation, food, beverage, recreation and

entertainment [2]. The job opportunities are increasing both locally and internationally to hospitality profession and other different sectors of tourism. The work in the hospitality industry is different from the other businesses especially in the delivery of services. It produce satisfaction which is very challenging to get the good impression of guest in services that we

provide, whether you are working in the direct contact of the guest or behind the scene. The extra exceptional facet of hospitality industry is the perishability of the product [1]. The progress of hospitality and tourism industry is the increase of development of the country [3].

Various educational institutions across the globe are offering the hospitality and tourism curriculum to answer the demand of the local and international hospitality industry. Many hospitality management programs integrate initiatives that will focus on inviting students who will stay in the program and to graduate [4]. The significance of hospitality education has been recognized all over the world for many years [5]. Proper education plays a vital role in the delivery of trained and knowledgeable human resources.

Education is a never ending process and is an important tool towards country's development and progress. Training people contributes to an increase of economic stability and productivity which leads to a successful and highly urbanized country. Human resources is one of the vital role in building a globally competent nation and to achieve this, quality education and rigid training should be a must in order to produce a skilled and productive workers when they become part of the labour force. Education creates options for student's to choose their interests, standards of living and career for future goals [6].

The "on-the-job" (OJT) training program is an application of the principles learned in school. It takes place in the actual workplace, using actual state of the art facilities, tools and equipment.

Through this program, students gain more knowledge on the operation and developmental skills which they may apply in the future. It helps in order to become effective, efficient, productive and competent worker at their work place. Mutual understanding and binding agreement must be developed by both parties in the form of Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the welfare and protection of the student. On the Job Training is extensively used nowadays. This method is commonly used in the training to let the students responsible and expose the real field of work, to know how to do the task and the tools to be used of the person that very useful in the job. The students attending OJT usually observes, performs, learns by trial and error, and sometimes given a direct instruction on the task [7]. It may not be the most effective or the most efficient method at times, but it is normally the easiest way to arrange and manage. Because the training takes place on the job, it can be highly realistic and no transfer of learning is required. It is often inexpensive because no special equipment is needed other than what is normally used at the workplace. A large majority of employee knowledge in the industry is accomplished through on-the-job training.

Success in the chosen profession is usually a transfer of knowledge of what you have learned and practice during your OJT times because this is the most effective and efficient methods of strategies to be used in order the person to learn. Most of the hospitality professionals are now successful in their field.

This is the reason why the researchers intend to conduct a study about the lived experiences of

the hospitality professionals during their OJT times from sacrifices to success of chosen profession. The researchers aim to look into the OJT experiences and sacrifices in the hospitality industry of the ten participants, the contribution of their OJT to their present career. At present, no study has been conducted about sacrifices and successes of hospitality professionals. Hence, the researcher posits that a study must be conducted to know the sacrifices behind the successes of hospitality professionals. This study follows a phenomenological model in the qualitative research design.

For social relevance, this study will be very helpful in the field of Hospitality Profession more specifically for the Hospitality educator, Industry practitioner, OJT's and students that are in the hospitality profession. Likewise, the stories described in this paper will help the students to be more motivated and work in the hospitality industry. Finally, this will also encourage those who have a plan to pursue hospitality studies.

The study will focus on the journal towards the Success of hospitality professional during their On-the-Job-Training. The input is the hospitality professionals. The process of the study includes the interview questions and the output will be the result of lived experiences of hospitality professionals. The result of the study would provide information as the basis to encourage those who have planned to pursue hospitality studies. The data may provide researchers insights into future studies.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1. Research Design

The study was conducted at Tacloban City, Philippines. An institution of higher learning with hospitality management program was selected for the study. The descriptive phenomenology method was opted for the study and data was analysed accordingly [8].

2.2. Sampling

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants who were deemed able to provide the best information and contribute to understanding the research problem [8]. Ten hospitality professionals were purposefully selected for this study. The participants were purposely identified because they are working in the industry and had experiences in the on-the-job-training.

2.3. Research Participants

There will be ten participants who participated in this research study and labelled as P1 to P10. Each participant will be adult who had OJT experience local and international.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

The researchers made initial contact with the key persons in identifying the participants, all of the ten participants have graduated hospitality program in Tacloban City. The interview was conducted at their respected workstations. Each participant was asked to focus on their past OJT experience.

2.5. Data Analysis Procedure

In the phenomenological study, each transcript was read multiple times in order to note the

themes [9]. A master document was generated containing categories, themes, and text from each transcript. Afterward, the entire transcripts were read and scrutinized, new documents were created for each theme. The data was organized into the following theme: Sacrifice; independent Individual; experiential learning; cultural adaptation and appreciation; career opportunity; good communication and leadership skills; self-confidence; and motivated to work because of family. The data was also presented in a depiction of all of the participants experiences. On the discussion, a creative narrative was made from the perspective of the ten participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of results and discussion follow the linear structure such as the research question, theme, meaning and evidence [10]. The objectives are foregrounded in the presentation: the first statement of the problem was what are the hospitality professional experiences in their on-the-job-training (OJT) and what are the coping strategies employed in the challenges encountered during their on-the-job training.

The themes are presented, and the quotes from participants were utilized to emphasize the experience of the participants on the particular theme. While the theme is presented, experiences among the participants were transpired.

3.1. *The experiences of hospitality professionals during their on the job training*

Theme 1: Sacrifice

P1 said *"It is difficult to work during On-the-Job-Training because there is a feeling of winning and downcast, you have no control over your guest, some of them are decent and others are disrespectful. All you have to do is to keep quiet and do not make any argument, you just go with the flow so it will not create big waves"*

The participants confirmed that they sacrificed their normal behaviors and controlled their emotion in front of rude and uncultured customers. This sometimes rewards with appreciate the work and behavior which ultimately matters.

Similarly, P2 sacrifices a lot he lives with his relative he adjusted a lot because of their differences and was not treated like a family member. While he was studying he worked as student at in order to fulfill his daily needs. He states, *"I'm living with my auntie and cousin, and this makes the situation difficult as I'm just living with other family, I have to sacrifice lot of things. During my OJT I was working and that made me realize that things might be hard but I have to make things possible and just be successful in life"*.

Theme 2: Independent Individual

P6 experienced being an independent during his On-the-Job-Training and he learned how to manage his time and resources:

"Since it was my first time to travel abroad I learned how to be more independent and I learned how to manage my time and resources that I'm acquiring by my own. Through that, I can really say that it really made an impact today since I am working right now. My life as an on-the-job-training was the same I could say just the

same when I was studying because I was also far from my family. I was also renting house so I'm doing everyday life by my own since my OJT times".

P9 on the other hand, experienced differently as compared to other participants because for him he is delighted being far away from their parents. P9 states that *"In my part it is a mixed emotion I enjoyed because I'm far away from my parents and quit independent. You will realize the difference between principles and actual in life."* P7 also wishes same, he stated *"I choose to have my on-the-job-training in Manila or outside Tacloban to experience far away with my family and being independent"*.

Theme 3: Experiential Learning

P3 mention that she has so many complaints while she was on OJT due to multiple tasks given to her. But at the end of the day she realizes and appreciated the work she learnt during her duties and responsibilities. *"I have so many complaints because I have plenty of work but at the end of the day... at the end of the semester when you graduate you can say that you learned a lot from on-the-job-training."*

P9 shared *"At first, I feel uncomfortable because I am not only having my duty as on-the-job-training but at the same time I also work on my feasibility study. As during that time I was also enrolled in my academics taking up 4 subjects. I was always in a graveyard shift for 3 months so it's very challenging but you will learn a lot of lessons."*

Similarly to P1 that her OJT experience is an opportunity to learn what is the actual work in

the industry that you can apply in the real field of work. *"I learned a lot of things that I apply in my work, studying and on-the-job-training is different, so it helps me a lot, at least I am guided about what to do and the task became easy for me."*

As well as P8 mention that he has a lot of things to learn *"I had my on-the-job-training in Leyte Park Hotel, my experience there was very nice a lot of learning in hotel procedure that was taught in school, so my on-the-job-training there, I applied all that was being taught in the school"*.

P6 stated that a lot of learning was done in his on the job training. *"I had my experience in Malaysia way back 2014 and my experience was very exciting because I was able to travel. I first time travelled to another country and during my on-the-job-training just experience how to be an employee at the same time because we are treated as a normal employee. I mean the things that were doing the regular employee are the things that we also practice so the kind of on-the-job-training was able to really gain the skills or the knowledge that we should gain and acquire"*.

P10 also mentioned that it was fun and learning during OJT, *"Fun, enjoyable, learning, fun and learning that stage you will become mature. Because of OJT, I learned a lot that I applied in my present career."*

Theme 4: Cultural Adaptation and Appreciation

P6 said that his OJT experience was different because he encountered different nationalities and was able to adjust as well work with them without any problem. *"My on-the-job-training was in Malaysia. I also doing the same work,*

however, there were differences amongst the type of people and the people that we are encountering because we are encountering a lot of nationalities. The experience was just like a typical on-the-job-training however it's different in perspective since it is in a different country with different culture, so you have to adjust with them."

Likewise, P1 experienced to adjust working with her colleagues, although it is difficult for her. "Initially it is difficult, I cried because I was not familiar with my co-worker, they came from the different country, I have to adjust for 2 months in order to know them better."

Theme 5: Career Opportunity

According to P4 his OJT in the United Marine Training Center give him an opportunity to work in their company as kitchen crew. "My OJT contributed so much, it is a big help for me that they accept me as part of their staff, if there was no United Marine Training Center (UMTC) where I render my on-the-job-training, I don't know where I would have landed, because United Marine Training Center (UMTC) is my gateway to work in this kind of profession, in the cruise line."

P1 also experiences being absorbed on the establishment where she rendered OJT. "It is a big help that I found while working in Philippines. I had my on-the-job-training also in Tacloban at Leyte Park Hotel in the housekeeping area, then they transfer me in the front office as on-the-job-training the housekeeping supervisor. That is why they give me the chance to have my on-the-job-training in the front desk, after my on-the-job-training they absorb and offer me to work as food attendant."

Similarly, P8 experience, "My OJT has a big impact, I was hired at Leyte Park Hotel after my on-the-job-training. It was a big impact because this is my stepping stone."

Theme 6: Good Communication and Leadership Skills

P2 learned a lot of things in his OJT because he was able to manage his team when he was assigned as resident manager. "I've learned a lot of things like catering services, room make-up, answering phone calls and room reservations; and those experiences of mine was so very hard for me to handle because as a general manager you must know how to manage your team and to make or to be a good leader".

P9 also learned to develop his communication skills because he meets every day different type of person with different attitude. "My communication skills are very important, because of the different persons that I encounter every day. Besides, the different persons with a dissimilar way of communication help in adjusting with their attitude."

Theme 7: Self Confidence

P1 mentions that it is good to have an on the job training because this is the only way to boost your confidence. "It is good that we have on-the-job-training, because before, I was a shy person but since my on-the-job-training especially in Singapore I'm no longer a shy type person. I have the self-confidence and just because of my profession I need to have a self-confidence because you have handle some customers that are rude, so it is important to adjust with their attitude. I'm no longer shy I know how to mingle

with other guests and I know already how to adjust the attitude of our customer. My on-the-job-training is a big help especially to boost my self-confidence."

Likewise, P5 mention that while he was having training he developed self-confidence. *"You know, while I was doing the on-the-job training I developed self-confidence, teamwork and focus."*

3.2. Coping strategies employed in addressing the challenges encountered

Theme 1: Motivated to Work Because of Family

P5 mention that the training that he had was very difficult that is why he felt homesick. But he needs to sacrifice the feeling to finish the training and he believed that after the training it will become very useful to him. *"My life during on-the-job-training was very difficult in Cebu. I felt homesick while having my OJT, but I need to work because of my family. That is the life of on-the-job-training it is not easy but it's good because I adopt everything that I learned in the industry until now."*

Equally, P4 says that since he is the bread bearer of the family he has to sacrifice in order to support them. *"The OJT has a big impact since I am a breadwinner in the family. I was given the chance and ability to work in this career profession from my on-the-job-training to my current career; they gave me the chance to work in the cruise line."*

Similarly to P1 she feels cheerful and sometimes tough but at the end, it is worth it because she can help her family. *"I feel happy and sometimes difficult but worth it because it is a big help to my family that we have the salary."*

On the other hand, P2 mentions that after he finish his studies he will be able to help his family. *"Actually, I am contented for what I have right now because I have already fulfilled my dreams to finish my studies and able to help my family for my future. It will depend on how I will handle my career but for this thing."*

The previous studies showed that the experiences attained during On-the-Job trainees are their first deployment and the manifestation of mutual respect with positive regard for others [8]. This leads great impact on the students' self-confidence levels.

Furthermore, Flynn, (2009) claimed that the lived experiences change in one's self-concept results in increased self-confidence [11]. Some participants related how they learned important skills like how to work well with others, general communication, research skills, time management, better writing skills and management skills

According to Un, L. B. (2014) business students from the College of Business Administration and Accountancy began interning abroad, specifically in Singapore [12]. The excellent feedback from the students and the agency were received. They were pushed by the institution and the college dean to seek out additional international connections. As a result, the university was able to form a partnership with First Place, Inc., a Philippine-based career and education counselling organization that assists students and young professionals in participating in training and internships, cultural exchanges, travels, and studies in the

United States, Europe, Australia, and other countries.

Some studies revealed that the job training programs have positive impact on employee performance and organization itself [13]. On the job training is the most used and accepted method of training. It is a time for imparting knowledge and skills which can be learned in short period of time. On-the-Job training is not the sole factor that leads to excellent performance. But it is a combination of peaceful working environment, employee skills and knowledge, motivation and rewards, communication flow and organizational management. All these factors may directly or indirectly contribute to performance. However, the importance of effectiveness on the job training programs performance should not be neglected.

4. CONCLUSION

On the bases of the findings and results obtained in this study, the following conclusions are advanced.

- The on-the-job training program is a sacrifice because trainees are exposed to various unfamiliar tools and equipment used in the industry upon deployment. Likewise, they perform the same task as the regular employees are performing, leading to a lot of hesitations and fear towards work. OJT is where one gain total independence, learning of actual operation and enhancement of skills. A cultural adaptation and adjustment to different

personalities encountered and a training ground for a promising career opportunity.

- The trainees encounter various experiences. Those assigned far away experienced homesickness, but it was compensated because of the allowance given by the establishment, especially when they perform excellently. So the trainees are motivated to work not only for themselves but for their families. Trainees were rotated to the different departments, which tend to develop their communication and leadership skills. There were many adjustments, especially when handling rude guests and plenty of tasks, but they were treated as regular employees of the establishment. For the trainee, On-the-Job training is a very challenging and tiring an enjoyable experience yet.
- The on-the-job training brought a significant impact to the present career of the trainee. Through On-the-Job training, they learned how to manage their time and resources acquired by rendering On-the-job training. Technology transfer encountered while having their on-the-job training is applied in their work today. So it's no longer an adjustment for them to be employed in the same industry, which boosts self-confidence. Likewise, they were hired by the establishment where they excellently rendered service as a trainee. Above all, they can do multitasking, which is an essential aspect to consider, especially if you are working in a customer service-oriented establishment.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result and conclusions in this study, the following recommendations are hereby offered;

- Industry partners must have a training agreement between the student and the industry partner stating therein the orientation of the establishment's background and its operation before the start and deployment of the trainee to the different department for the trainee to be familiar with the operational guidelines to follow and the establishment policies as well. The trainee must undergo briefing and supervision in the first few months before allowing them to perform the actual work to be independent in rendering service to the customer. Supervisors should expose the trainee to guests so that they will encounter guests with different personalities, which will be a basis for them to handle various situations.
- To ease the feeling of homesickness, especially those assigned in faraway places, the school OJT coordinator must conduct a monthly visit to the industry partner and gather the trainees to discuss their situation trainee. A seminar on proper customer service must be conducted to guide how to manage a rude guest.
- Strict implementation on the trainee schedule must be followed, and a sanction must be applied whenever possible to discipline the trainee. The industry partner must not prohibit the trainee from using state-of-the-art facilities, machinery, and equipment, instead of giving them a chance to operate it to have an idea and help the establishment in rendering quality service.

Likewise, they must be taught how to do multitasking to expedite work.

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7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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