



Analysis of career competency of food and beverage managers in international tourist hotels in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to establish indicators of career competencies of food and beverage managers in international tourist hotels in Taiwan. Panel discussions and the Delphi technique were adopted. Two panel discussions were conducted with a total of 11 industry experts and seven academic experts. The framework of career competencies was established based on these experts' opinions. Delphi questionnaires were sent to 23 experts 13 in the hospitality industry and ten academic experts to collect data. By using such questionnaire twice, the 23 panelists reached a stable consensus. The results indicate career competencies include two categories: (1) career planning and development, and (2) core employability. The data demonstrated that the core employability competency was slightly more important for an individual's career development than the career development and planning competency.

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1. Introduction

The concept of the “protean career” is most applicable in the US (Finegold et al., 2000). Career mobility is not company-directed, steady progression within a company, but rather self-directed by individuals who wish to advance to higher positions and must frequently take charge of their own development. An individual may want not only to obtain higher positions but also to gain psychological satisfaction and success. Therefore, employees must think about which personal career development competencies they require to secure career satisfaction.

Managing personal career development in our changing world is important (Hall and Moss, 1998; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Organizations require employees with great adaptability, who can contribute mental capital to maintain organizational competitiveness. Employees in the service industry usually work under much pressure and have high job mobility. Employees' strength and stability can be improved by enhancing their ability to manage their own careers.

The hospitality industry is one of the most rapidly growing sectors globally. Most hospitality employers report difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced managers (Wang et al., 2011; Watson, 2008). To improve the personal and professional competencies of their managers, employers who own hotels provide effective career management activities, including training, men-

toring, performance appraisal, and development programs to their employees. These activities promote the development of career competencies (Kong et al., 2010). Kong et al. (2012) found that career competency mediates the effects of three dimensions of hotel career management (career appraisal, career development, and career training) on career satisfaction. Hence, developing a professional competency framework for different sectors or departmental managers in the hotel industry is very important.

Over the last two decades, Taiwan's government has made efforts to develop tourism and hospitality, and the demand for many high-quality hotel employees has become great. According to Testa and Sipe (in press), competency models have become useful tools for management development in hospitality and tourism organizations. Based on the above, this study aims to construct indicators of career development competencies of basic and middle level managers of restaurants in international tourist hotels, and to identify the competency that is the most important to their career development.

2. Literature review

A career is the pattern of work-related experiences over the course of one's life. Career development is the sequence of stages through which adults' progress during their work lives (Greenhaus et al., 2000). Contemporary views of career development share the idea that individuals must be flexible and adaptable to succeed in a highly changeable and uncertain environment. The concept of the “protean career” illustrates this concept (DeSimone and Harris, 1998). Individuals drive their careers, not organizations, and they reinvent their careers over time as required. As individuals go

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through life, they are searching for meaning and self-fulfillment; individuals not only want to move into higher positions but also enjoy psychological satisfaction and success.

Gangani and McLean (2006) argued for the existence of three types of competency – fundamental, functional, and personal. Fundamental competencies are the core competencies of a company. Functional competencies are job-specific competencies. Personal competencies are those that can help an individual reach a career goal. Accordingly, personal competencies are career development competencies.

Briscoe (2002) studied the career development needs of adult students of business, and identified six requirements for career development. These are obtaining information about various fields and employment possibilities, resources and strategies for making decisions about one's career, knowledge of self and how that knowledge affects career choice, balancing multiple life roles, and job hunting techniques.

Career development has gained a new meaning in the context of employability in a knowledge economy: increased mobility and a dynamic work environment, substantially increase the importance of the career development competencies of individuals. Career development competencies are those that an individual should possess to manage his or her career development to achieve ideal career progress or career satisfaction. Career competencies are defined as competencies that are valuable to all employees in the development of their own careers, regardless of their specific job (Kuijpers et al., 2006).

Career development competencies for adults are personal competencies that enable adults to make appropriate and satisfying career choices, enter their chosen career, transition between chosen careers, and plan for their future (Crites, 1976; Defillippi and Arthur, 1994; Kong et al., 2012; Valkeavaara, 1998). The Ohio Department of Education (1999) used a modified DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) job analysis process to develop the occupational competency profile for educating adults about careers. This competency profile consists of two parts. One is composed of core items that are required for all entry-level employment, and the other includes items that enable advancement to a specific job. The 12 core items are career development; decision making and problem solving; work ethics; job-seeking skills; job retention and career advancement skills; skill with technology in the workplace; lifelong learning; economic education; balancing work and family; citizenship in the workplace; leadership; entrepreneurship.

Lonam (1999) utilized the Delphi technique to collect the opinions of 13 hospitality experts regarding the knowledge and competencies required of students who were to graduate from undergraduate hospitality management programs in the year 2010. The competencies were: (a) societal and cultural issues, which affect hotel and restaurant management education, (b) industrial issues, which affect hotel and restaurant management education, (c) communication skills, (d) human relation skills, (e) negotiation skills, (f) fluency in a foreign language, (g) quantitative data skills, (h) computer and information technology skills, (i) conceptual ability, (j) specific job techniques, and (k) managerial skills.

Zinser (2003) investigated a new university course on teaching career and employability skills that was developed in the U.S. career and employability skills include managing resources, communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork and problem-solving, and acquiring and retaining a job.

Hornig et al. (2011) adopted the Fuzzy Delphi and Analytic Hierarchy Process methods to determine the competencies of top managers of Taiwanese hotels, and found that these competencies could be distinguished on generic and technical dimensions; grouped into 18 competency domains, and 107 competency indices. The top three most important competency domains are leadership, crisis management, and problem-solving.

According to a literature review (Barker and Satcher, 2000; Chung, 2000; Crites, 1982; Hornig et al., 2011; Lonam, 1999; Ohio Department of Education, 1999; Wang et al., 2011; Zekeri, 2004; Zinser, 2003), the career competencies that should be possessed by managers of restaurants in international tourist hotels are career development, decision-making and problem solving, work ethics, job-seeking skills, job-retention and career advancement skills, use of technology in the workplace, lifelong learning, balancing work and family, citizenship in the workplace/organizational adaptability, leadership, entrepreneurship, organizational management skills, and career transition skills.

3. Method

Panel discussions and Delphi survey were used to establish indicators of career competencies that are associated with the career development of managers of restaurants in international tourist hotels. The Delphi technique was adopted because the associated process yields agreement about a particular topic from individuals with relevant expertise (Gall et al., 2002).

The two panel discussions involved a total of 11 industry experts and seven academic experts. In the panel discussion, experts determined that entrepreneurship, leadership and organizational management skills are not career competencies, but, rather, they are job-specific competencies. Based on panel discussions, the career competencies were divided into two categories – career development and planning and core employability. The category of career development and planning contains – career recognition, career actions, and career attitude. The category of core employability contains – career control workplace attitude, and networking abilities. The modified framework of career competencies was shown in Fig. 1.

Based on the framework and review of the literature, and with reference to the opinions of the panel experts, a Delphi questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire covered a total of 143 behavior items or indicators, 33 concerning career development and planning, and 110 concerning core employability. A five-point Likert-type rating scale was used: 5 means that the indicators were very important, 1 means that the indicators were very unimportant. The questionnaire was sent to 23 experts to evaluate the importance of career competency indicators and to get consensus on evaluation. According to Gall et al. (2002), this study determined consensus with indices based on SD (less than 1.00), quartile deviation ($Q3-Q1$) (less than 0.5), and importance, with mean values (greater than 3.50) and modes (greater than 4.00) of individual estimates.

4. Results

4.1. Delphi panel

The Delphi panel comprised 23 experts, of whom 13 were senior managers in the hospitality industry (e.g. general manager, food and beverage directors, chefs, and senior managers; five females and eight males) and ten were academic professionals (e.g. seven females and three males). Geographically, the panelists were from northern (seven), southern (13) and middle (three) Taiwan. Their ages ranged from 33 to the mid-fifties.

4.2. Round one

The round-one questionnaire was mailed with a cover letter to the members of panel in March, 2008. All of the panelists returned the questionnaire within three weeks. Their responses to the round-one questionnaire were recorded using SPSS software

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