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Perceptions towards the Influence of Instructional Resources on the Quality of Training in Hospitality Management; A Comparative study of University of Eldoret and Kenya Utalii College, Kenya

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Abstract

Every graduate is always hopeful of being employed after school. However, this has not been the case in the recent years. Employers are now keen on various factors before hiring employees. Studies have shown that there is a preference for hospitality graduates from Kenya Utalii College (KUC). There are more than 200 higher learning institutions offering hospitality programs in Kenya, out of which the KUC has more graduates working in the industry. Kenya Utalii graduates represent about 20% of the hotel employees in Kenya. This study aimed at establishing what makes employers to have a preference for graduates from Kenya Utalii College. The all-round educational quality and behavioral learning theories guided the study. This study is qualitative in nature and employed a narrative research design approach. The target population comprised of all hospitality lecturers and graduates from the University of Eldoret (UoE) and Kenya Utalii College in Nairobi. The target population comprised of 678 participants who were hospitality graduates and hospitality lectures from UoE and KUC. The study sample finally comprised of 18 participants; 5 graduates from each institution and 4 lecturers from each of the two institutions. The study utilized purposive and snowball sampling techniques to obtain the sample. The study utilized interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) for data collection. The graduates were engaged in interviews while the lecturers were involved in focused group discussions at their respective institutions. Data collected was coded and analyzed to generate themes. The study revealed that instructional resources influenced

the quality of education in hospitality management. The influence of this factor has resulted to employers having preferences of graduates from KUC. Hence, learning institutions should ensure that they have well functional practical facilities equipped with modern equipment to help the student acquire the practical knowledge that is required in the job market. These results will guide hospitality institutions in Kenya towards offering quality training thereby producing quality graduates who fit in the job market.

Keywords: Institutions, instructional resources, hospitality, graduates, training

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is growing fast globally (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013). This fact has resulted in the need for skilled staff. The growth of the industry has necessitated the need to have a quality curriculum which will offer students with required skills (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). According to Morrison and O` Mahoney, (2003), the current hospitality courses are incapable of producing the knowledge required in the fast-growing industry. There is a significant difference between employers and the learning institutions on qualities' someone must have upon completion of studies (Mortimer & Nachmias, 2014). Recently employers are considering the learning institution that one graduated from before hiring them. If one wants to succeed in the industry, they must be careful when choosing the institution, they wish to study at (Guardia & Maina, 2021).

This means that you have to choose an institution that has the highest reputation of the degree you want to undertake (Korir, 2012). A study done by Barrows and Powers (2008), showed that employers are assessing the legitimacy of learning institutions and other measurements. Guardia and Mancini (2021), showed that only 49% of graduates from Kenyan universities are skillful enough to work in the industry. The peaceful and stable economy in the country has influenced the rate at which the hospitality and tourism industry is growing in Kenya.

To give quality services to the tourists, the host country needs qualified staff. This reflects on universities and colleges training and the strategies the institutions adopt to

produce skilled graduates. Instructional resources are materials or objects used by lecturers to train learners (Abel & Kellehear, 2018). Laboratories are important, it is where the students put in place the knowledge acquired in the classroom. Fully equipped laboratory will provide adequate skills to students which will be helpful when working. Libraries are vital for students because they carry out their research and access other scholar's literatures. The researcher compared the learning resources of the two institutions to establish how they influenced the quality of training in hospitality management.

Methodology

This study was qualitative and adopted a narrative research design. Qualitative research utilizes data obtained by the researcher from first-hand observation, interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, recordings created in natural settings and the data is generally non-numerical.

Narrative research aims to fully understand human experience as represented in natural state. Researchers correct narratives of experiences by respondents who describe a life experience and explore its meaning. The researcher becomes the interpreter of the individual stories as opposed to a community. The objective of this approach is to come up with a description of the form of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Basically, interviews are conducted with a group of individuals who have clear knowledge of an event, situation or experience. The interview attempts to give answers to two major questions (Moustakas, 2001); what have you experienced in terms of the phenomena? What contexts or situations have typically influenced your experiences of the phenomena (Creswell, 2013)? The researcher wished to get the educational life history of the participant through interviews and focused group discussions. Narrative research design allows the researcher to get full information. Spoken narratives such as interviews and audio transcripts or videos are close to reality (Creswell, 2013).

The research was carried out at the UoE department of Hotel and Hospitality Management in Eldoret and the Kenya Utalii College departments of Front Office, Food and Beverage Production, Food and Beverage service, Housekeeping and Laundry and Hotel Management in Nairobi, Kenya. The researcher wished to investigate graduates and lecturers perceptions towards quality of training in hospitality management from UoE and KUC. The study targeted hospitality graduates and lecturers from UoE and KUC. Of importance both institutions teach hospitality management. The institutions are known in the regions for producing quality graduates who secure jobs in the industry. The target population consisted of 670 hospitality students and 8 hospitality lecturers and they shared the following characteristics:

a) The lecturers have taught hospitality management for over five years in the two institutions. This ensured that they are familiar with the curriculum they use, thereby competent in their provision of knowledge and skills.

b) The researcher considered a category of graduates who graduated within the period

of 2014 to 2020 at UoE. This is because these are the students who have graduated since from UoE. They are already out in the market looking for employment or already working.

c) Respondents from KUC comprised those who also graduated since 2014 to date. This is because they went through a bachelors curriculum similar to that undertaken by respondents from UoE. The reason for considering graduates of 2014 is because the collaboration between KUC and UoN started in 2010 implying that the first group under this collaboration between UoN and KUC graduated in 2014.

d) The graduates had attained at least a bachelor's degree from the two institutions of higher learning.

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilized in this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling where researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study (Battaglia, 2008). Snowball sampling is also a non- probability sampling technique in which the samples selected have traits that are rare to or they are difficult to locate (Cohen, 1995). The objective of purposive sampling is to focus on certain characteristics of a population that are of interest in a study.

Homogenous sampling is a purposive sampling technique that aims to achieve a homogenous sample; that is a sample which share the same or very similar characteristics or traits. The respondents' selection is based on their having similar characteristics which are of interest to the researcher. Snowball sampling or chain-referral sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the samples have traits that are rare to find. The samples in this technique provide referrals to recruit samples required for a research study.

The researcher utilized purposive sampling in selecting the lecturers who participated in the study. Researchers use purposive sampling when they want to access a particular subset of people (Alba & Dolores, 2007). The participants are selected because they fit a particular profile. In this study the hospitality lecturers fits the profile that the researcher wanted, therefore they were selected.

Snowball sampling was employed in selection of hospitality graduates. Snowball sampling is used when the potential participants are hard to find. Given that the graduates had already left the institutions they graduated from, it was difficult to get them. Snowball sampling was used to counter this problem. The researcher obtained one participant who referred another participant to the researcher until the required sample was attained.

The study was organized into three parts, which is the interview part, the focused group discussions, and the document analysis. After determining the sample, obtaining a research permit, the researcher visited

the respondents who were within reach and introduced himself and asked them when it would be appropriate to conduct an interview with them. It was however challenging to set a date for FGDs with the lecturers but it was finally decided that a FGD with UoE lecturers be scheduled during one of their regular departmental meetings. Thus, the date was given to the researcher for planning.

During the meetings, the researcher requested the participants to allow him record the interviews so that it would be easy to analyze the narrations. The researcher also looked for contacts of those respondents who were not within reach and the interview was conducted through the telephone. The interview took a duration ranging between 20-30 minutes.

Data obtained from interviews and FGD was cleaned and coded as an effort to organize its structure and give meaning. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), and Kothari (2004), explained that coding, organizing and structuring aids in the search for patterns, themes, narratives and relationships existing in raw data groups. The researcher started by transcribing all the data that was recorded during the interviews and the focused group discussions. The next step the researcher read the transcribed data several times to familiarize himself with what the data entailed. This process allowed the researcher to develop a comprehensive set of themes and subthemes from the interviews, focused group discussions and document analysis.

Results

How does lecturer's and graduates' perceptions towards instructional resources influence the quality of training in hospitality management?

Responses to this question were grouped into four thematic areas which are presented below;
a) Practical laboratories
b) Library and access to internet
c) Lecturers and support staff
d) Funding

Practical laboratories

Laboratory and other practical work are a necessary part of the learning experience of most students (Wray & Owens, 2020). It serves many purposes: it can develop essential transferrable skills. It can also develop an understanding of experimental methods and techniques and a knowledge of the limitations and accuracy of those methods.

This shows that doing practical and having a functioning laboratory helps students acquire hands on skills. When asked whether instructional facilities affect the quality of education an institution provide the respondents contributed as follows;

> *'I think teaching and learning resources are important and they determine the quality of the education and the graduates. Unfortunately, that is something we lacked in particularly laboratory which I think really pulled us down but now we have an active lab. We tried to fill the*

lack of a laboratory by attaching them at the restaurant in the institution to help us with the practical because we know they are vital' (participant E, UoE, FGD).

From the responses, the study found out that KUC had a functional practical laboratory at Utalii hotel where students conduct their practical. This was beneficial to the students because they acquired the practical skills and this gave them an advantage over graduates from UoE. The University of Eldoret had no functional practical laboratories and instead used a restaurant located in the university. At the time of research and the category of graduates under study, the restaurant did not have all the necessary equipment thus limited the knowledge acquired by students. However, this has changed and the department have now an operational laboratory. The availability of practical resources made graduates from Kenya Utalii College more skilled for the industry than those from UoE.

The lack of practical skills affects graduates who go to the field with good grades and they secure jobs in the industry. The problem comes when they are asked to perform a certain task. They do the task by pure guess work or they can choose to tell the supervisors that they have no idea. Either way this will not be good for the future of such a graduate because if the hotel finds another person who is well skilled they will go for him/her.

Another participant said;

'The instructional resources affect teaching very much. For example, in our department we have an annual budget of about 10 million. This money is used to purchase training materials, equipment because when we teach, we do the real activities following real processes and then we test our students. There is active cooking where a guest may come and tell the chef to surprise him/her by cooking something nice. If the students had good facilities when they were learning it becomes easy' (participant B, KUC, FGD).

Hospitality is all about service provision. Therefore, it is important that a worker possesses the required skills needed to ensure that you offer services to your guests in a professional way. Graduates who had adequate practical work in their institutions are very lucky. If they attend an interview where some practical questions are asked, they get the job easily. Participants from interviews said the following in relation to the practical;

'The institution I studied in has learning resources and that is why it surpasses other institutions. Everything is practical you are in class very few months the rest of the months you go to the model

hotel situated behind the school for practical's. After graduation the hotel takes the best graduates to work there for a two years contract period. We had a demonstration kitchen, food and beverage service area and areas where you practice front office skills and it is like an everyday activity' (participant 1, KUC, interview).
'Yes instructional resources affect quality, if the institution that I studied in, had resources such as a laboratory we would be very competitive in the job market. Imagine we did not have a functional laboratory by that time yet we have managed to secure jobs in the industry' (participant 6, UoE, interview)

Practical laboratories are an essential part of imparting students with practical skills and knowledge in the hospitality industry. Institution should invest towards the establishment of these facilities so that their students acquire adequate skills after training. This will in turn benefit the institution by having a good image to the members of the society and the industry. This will ensure that the institution becomes a first choice for students who complete their secondary education.

Library and access to internet

A library is a facility in a learning institution where students, staff, and often, parents of a public or private institution have access to variety of learning materials (Grigas & Mierzecka, 2018). The role of an institution library is to ensure that its members can access books and read information. Institutions` libraries are distinct from public libraries which support, extend and individualize the institution`s curriculum.

The two institutions have a library and internet connectivity within them, students can access internet through Wi-Fi and Faiba which are password restricted. The participants had the following to say in relation to access of library and internet;

'The library has adequate resources like books although I do not know how often students go to look for books' (participant F, UoE, interview)
'We cannot say we are optimum but we can do better. Right now, the challenge is technology. All our classes are fitted with LCD screens and all our lecturers have laptops so at least we have some resources' (participant C, KUC, and interview).

The library is vital because it is where the students go to conduct their research and gain more knowledge. This being the case the institutions should ensure that they have a well-stocked library in terms of books and other learning resources. The responses from graduates were the institution had a library. The only problem is that most of the graduates do not go to the library to get books and prefer

to research online rather than reading a book.

The library at UoE had updated reading materials helpful to those who went there and similar case was at the KUC.

Lecturers and support staff

The issue of having qualified lecturers and support staff is equally important. Students who are taught by qualified lecturers will automatically get quality training. Participants said the following regarding their lecturers;

> *'The lecturers were well prepared, they always attended classes and they were very friendly. They guided us through the course. Like me I was the class representative and the relation I had with my lecturers was as if they were my parents. The department had a secretary who was also very welcoming and very helpful when one went to the department with a problem'* (participant 9, UoE, interview)

Participants said that their lecturers took interest in them and they were very committed, they used teaching methods which helped the students to understand the content as intended. Participants in the FGD said the following about lecturers and support staff;

> *'Our institution could still add the number of lecturers. They should add committed lecturers who are hands on to the task; because when you look at the hospitality course it is a course requiring a lot of practical. Also provide adequate staff and support staff and they must be well skilled. The staff should be well motivated and this can be done by giving those allowances and good salaries. If we have enough lecturers, resources and support staff I think the graduates we produce will be of high quality although with the little we have we are still somewhere'* (participant F, UoE, FGD).

To add the number of qualified lecturers means that there will be no overworking of the lecturers. They will also have ample time to complete the curriculum because they have few courses to teach. The support staff will come in handy as they will be helping the lecturers to have a comfortable life by helping them with the things like printing, photocopying of the materials used in teaching and preparing for lessons.

A well-qualified lecturer is an integral part of the education system. Well qualified lecturers are able develop strategies which will reach the students easily and enhance their learning. This may include hands-on teaching allowing the students to interact with what they are learning or having them explain it back in their own words (Rai & Singh, 2021).

Institutions should therefore ensure that they recruit qualified personnel. They should set a certain qualification criterion

which every individual is willing to apply for a teaching position must meet. Having qualified lecturers is advantageous to the institution since they can teach multiple subjects if need be. They are also able to provide a variety of resources for student's mental and psychological support.

Funding

Every department in any institutions need funds to run its activities effectively. When the participants asked contributed to this issue by stating the following;

> *'Our institution should ensure that they provide the department with enough funds, because you can have a laboratory but without money you cannot buy ingredients to cook' (participant G, UoE, FGD).*
> *'The institution should ensure that it upgrades our laboratory. It is a fact that the ones we have are doing fine, but now with the way technology is advancing we should be able to purchase the modern equipment which are in the market. This will ensure that our students learn and gain skills to operate this current equipment that are trending' (participant A, KUC, FGD)*

To enable the departments to perform well, funds should be set aside to cater for all the activities that may be required. The institutions can also help the department in marketing when

they decide to go to secondary schools. They should provide a bus, and allowances and in return the institution will benefit from the popularity they get, allowing more students applying to join the institution.

Students also learn a lot during field trips but these are cut short by lack of funds. Sometimes the funds may take a long time before they get released there by limiting the duration that the students are supposed to go out and study. Funds should be released early enough to enable conclusive planning.

Further, adequate allocation of funds will enable the department to offer quality training that the students need. They will have training equipment; ingredients and they can also take students for field study where they can visit hotels and have a real-life experience.

Conclusion

Based on the responses gathered from both lecturers and graduates, it is evident that perceptions towards instructional resources significantly influence the quality of training in hospitality management. KUC's functioning practical laboratories strengthen students' practical abilities and enable hands-on learning. However, UoE's lack of such facilities can impair graduates' industrial readiness, affecting their employability and competency. Both schools have libraries and internet access, but students use them differently. While well-stocked libraries are key,

graduates prefer internet research. However, updated reading materials are essential for student learning. Additionally, experienced professors and supporting staff are essential to great education. Faculty commitment, readiness, and instructional strategies greatly affect students' learning. Staffing numbers also reduce lecturers' workload and improve learning. Finally, departments need appropriate cash to maintain instructional activities and resources. Budget constraints can limit field trips, contemporary equipment, and training quality.

Recommendations

1. Higher institutions of learning should ensure they fund their departments. This will help in the purchase of ingredients for use during practicals. They should also ensure that they establish modern structures like laboratories, libraries and other support resources. Further they should ensure they improve the working conditions for lecturer`s and the support staff to enhance efficiency.

2. Practical laboratory and attachments are other factors that are making graduates from KUC to be superior. Thus, UoE should ensure they have a full functioning laboratory for the students. The issue of KUC graduates going to Utalii hotel weekly to conduct practicals also gives them an advantage. The UoE department can seek such relationship with a hotel in Eldoret town where students can go to do some practicals in the hotel in a normal day's operation

3. Both KUC and UoE should embrace technology they should ensure that the education is conveyed in a digital way to get the current trends and have a global aspect of information in hospitality industry.

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