

การประเมินความจำเป็นในการจัดกิจกรรม การพัฒนาศักยภาพคน เพื่อพัฒนาบริการที่เป็นเลิศในโรงแรม 5 ดาว ในกรุงเทพมหานคร¹

บทคัดย่อ

อุตสาหกรรมท่องเที่ยวถือเป็นแหล่งสร้างรายได้ที่สำคัญของประเทศไทย ซึ่งธุรกิจโรงแรมและธุรกิจอื่นๆ ภายใต้อุตสาหกรรมนี้อาศัยทักษะของบุคลากรในการต้อนรับและสร้างประสบการณ์การท่องเที่ยวแก่นักท่องเที่ยวทั้งชาวไทยและต่างประเทศ อย่างไรก็ตามภาพการบริการที่เป็นเลิศอาจไม่สามารถเกิดขึ้นได้หากผู้ประกอบการโรงแรมขาดองค์ความรู้ในการวางแผนพัฒนาบุคลากรเชิงกลยุทธ์ การศึกษานี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพใช้ยุทธศาสตร์การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลแบบสร้างทฤษฎี มีวัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษาดังนี้ 1) เพื่อสำรวจแหล่งข้อมูลที่ใช้เพื่อประเมินความต้องการในการจัดกิจกรรมการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของโรงแรม 5 ดาว 2) เพื่อศึกษาขั้นตอนการประเมินความต้องการในการจัดกิจกรรมการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของโรงแรม 5 ดาว และ 3) เพื่อพัฒนาแบบจำลองการประเมินความจำเป็นในการจัดกิจกรรมการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของโรงแรม 5 ดาว ผู้วิจัยเก็บข้อมูลด้วยวิธีสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกผู้บริหารด้านการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของโรงแรม 5 ดาวในกรุงเทพมหานคร จำนวน 21 แห่ง และศึกษาเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องของทางโรงแรม ใช้วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลแบบสร้างทฤษฎีตามแนวทางของ Braun และ Clarke (2013) ผลการศึกษาพบว่าผู้บริหารส่วนใหญ่พิจารณาแหล่งข้อมูลสำคัญอย่างน้อย 10 แหล่ง และมีขั้นตอนดำเนินการ 5 ขั้นตอน ดังนี้ 1) เก็บข้อมูลและพิจารณาความจำเป็นในการจัดกิจกรรมการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ 2) มอบผู้เกี่ยวข้องวิเคราะห์แผน 3) ตรวจสอบและให้ข้อเสนอแนะร่างแผน 4) นำเสนอผู้บริหารพิจารณา 5) จัดลำดับความสำคัญและประชาสัมพันธ์แผน ผู้วิจัยได้เสนอแบบจำลองการประเมินความจำเป็นในการจัดกิจกรรมการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ดังกล่าวเพื่อให้เกิดประโยชน์ต่อภาคธุรกิจโรงแรมของประเทศไทย

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Developing Service Excellence in Five-Star Hotels in Bangkok through HRD Needs Assessment

Abstract

Tourism is a significant income source for Thailand. This growing industry is supported by other related businesses to provide services and welcome Thai and foreign tourists. Most hospitality services, including hotels, rely on the welcoming skills of their human resources. Undoubtedly, service excellence by hotel staff could deliver memorable experiences to guests. Notwithstanding, the promised excellent services would not happen if hotels did not possess the knowledge to train and develop their human resources. This qualitative study, applying the Grounded Theory strategy, had three objectives:

1) to examine sources of information five-star hotels in Bangkok utilised when conducting HRD needs assessment, 2) to study the steps in developing HRD needs assessment for five-star Hotels in Bangkok, and 3) to develop an HRD Needs Assessment model for five-star hotels in Bangkok. Two data collection techniques were a semi-structured interview with senior HR people in 21 five-star hotels in Bangkok. Also some of their operating documents were reviewed to gain deeper understanding. The 'Steps of Grounded Theory Data Analysis' guided by Braun and Clarke (2013) were used to analyze data in this study.

This study reports 10 significant data sources required in the HRD needs assessment process. Most five star hotels in this study practice 5 HRD needs assessment steps: 1) gaining the HRD needs data and identifying whether HRD programs are necessary; 2) requesting involved parties to produce relevant HRD plans; 3) verifying the effectiveness of the HRD proposals, and providing suggestions; 4) getting final approval from GMs; and 5) prioritizing the approved HRD plan and announcing the annual HRD plans. The study finally presented the HRD needs assessment model showing steps, data sources and assessment criteria to benefit HR Managers in the hotel businesses.

Keywords : Human Resource Development, Needs Assessment, Five-star hotels, Thailand

Introduction

Background of the Study

Thailand is going through a critical development phase. As it transforms its political make-up, the country is also entering the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), a vibrant common area of business opportunities in which not only ASEAN citizens but also international tourists will have freedom of movement (Swinfen, 2014). However, a period of political instability has led to the present military government (Shawn, 2016). This may cause slow growth in foreign investments, particularly in production industries. This can be seen when Crispin (2016) reviewed the Thai economy under the military government reporting on the Diplomat online newspaper (11 March 2016) that while Thailand is still attracting some new FDI, it is less likely to come from Japan who now rank it in the bottom 5 countries they wish to invest in. Despite this economic crisis, tourism is now one of the significant revenue producers in the Thai Economy (Asian Development Bank, 2015; Thansettakij, 2016). Not only does the tourism industry offer tourists choices such as accommodation, restaurants, souvenir shops, and many tourist activities, other related industries also benefit. According to Izaskun and Walkenhorst (2006), Tourism also contributes to growth in food and beverage, construction, transportation, furniture, and many other sectors. There is some evidence that this adds an extra 60-70% above the direct tourism contribution. In Thailand many tourists come and spend large amounts of money during their visit, in fact Bangkok is the most visited City in the World.

A summary report of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2011) highlights that tourism is an important

contributor to the Thai economy with 13.5 million visitors in 2009 providing 6.5% of the nation's gross domestic product. Moreover, Thailand was the 2014 most visited destination for tourists according to The Telegraph online newspaper (12 August 2014). Millington (2016) also wrote on the World Economic Forum website predicting 'Bangkok' as the number one most visited cities in the world in 2016 on their Global Destination Cities Index. To satisfy these visitors, all tourism sectors have endeavored to deliver impressive traveling experiences to their guests. Whilst Ashley, Brine, Lehr, Wilde (2007) highlighted that hotels and restaurants are part of this tourism industry contributing a great deal to the economy of the country, Thailand GDP Annual Growth rate as reported by Husna (2016) on the Trading Economic website showed the hotel and restaurant sectors represented about 5% of the Kingdom's GDP in the third quarter of 2016. This sector actually grew +15.9 percent from +12.7 percent the previous year.

As Tourism has always formed an essential element in the Thai Economy, it is essential to maximize revenue from the tourism and hospitality industries to offset losses in other fields.

While much new infrastructure has been built in Bangkok to offer comfort to visitors (Siring and Webb, 2016), Boon-itt (2010) found that service quality did not match expectations, being considered moderately low. It is accepted that while most high-ranked-star hotels in Bangkok have certain strategies to develop and maintain high service quality by their staff to ensure guests satisfaction, not all hotels have the same capability. Bohlander and Snell (2013: p.274), pointed out that "according to research, profits increase

whenever staff are well trained, but some hotels still do not provide enough effective HRD programs and still do not recognize the best service quality training programs". Additionally, according to Poulston (2008), poor staff performance and skills embarrasses staff who get blamed and punished even though the cause is lack of training. Bohlander and Snell (2013) added that some organizations fail to realize the importance of such strategic management as HRD needs assessment which is the most crucial part of the HRD process. In efficient organizations, Human Resource Departments take responsibility for ensuring all their working plans, and training and development duties, match the organizational goals, to improve the quality standard of hotel staff in Thailand. However less experienced Human Resource people in hotels must be guided how to investigate, design, implement and evaluate their current and future HRD activities correctly (Swanson and Holton III, 2001; Werner and DeSimone, 2009). This study promotes the magnificent contributions of senior HRD executives of five-star hotels in Bangkok sharing how HRD needs assessment should be strategically conducted. The findings could provide an opportunity for numerous hotels and other hospitality businesses to develop strategic HRD plans and activities addressing the actual needs of organizations, guests, and staff. Other benefits include allowing staff to be proud of delivering great traveling experiences to their guests, eliminating needless training expenses, lifting service qualities of the country, and improving hotels' HR policies leading to the growth and sustainable development of the Thai tourism and hospitality industry.

Research Objectives

1. To examine sources of information five-star hotels in Bangkok utilised when conducting HRD needs assessment to ensure their customer's high satisfaction.
2. To study the steps in developing HRD needs assessment of five-star Hotels in Bangkok.
3. To develop an HRD Needs Assessment model for five-star hotels in Bangkok.

Theories, and Reviews of Literature

■ Human Resource Development

HRD activities allow employees to possess greater competences. Cascio (2016, P.284), viewed that "training is an important aspect of HR strategy, and a key objective of any training program must be tied to the strategy of business" (2016, P.284). This is because not only do organizations need to be prompt and competitive in their business environments, but also be ready to adapt to changes. Byars and Rue (2008), for example, mentioned some changes and forces explaining why HRD activities need to become part of business strategy. He revealed four major changes that administrations must embrace and deal with: 1) Economic, social, technological and government changes can make the skills learned today obsolete in the future. 2) Planned organizational changes can make it necessary for employees to update their skills or acquire new ones. 3) Performance problems within an organization such as low productivity or high wastage can be reduced by training. 4) Regulatory, contractual, professional, or certification issues can require an employer to provide training for its employees.

Bohlander and Snell (2013: p.274) added that “the top 100 companies in the US that staff want to work in provide high levels of training and a particular hotel chain — Ritz Carlton - provides as much as 300 hours of training during new employee induction”. Human resource departments these days, therefore, take the vital role of business partners. He further explained the necessity of certain HRD strategies being adopted along the following lines: 1) needs assessment based on the firm’s competitive objectives, 2) program design, 3) implementation and 4) evaluation. This was similar to Byars and Rue (2008) presenting 5 steps to a successful training program which were 1) Perform job analysis, 2) perform needs assessment 3) establish training objectives, 4) conduct training program, 5) evaluate training outcomes. Similar steps were also agreed and presented in an HRD book written by Werner and DeSimone (2009). Staff development has therefore become an important organizational development strategy where HR departments ensure the competence of their human resources to gain competitive advantages over their rivals in today’s dynamic business environment. Since this study was all about the excellent HRD needs assessment steps exercised by five-star hotels in Bangkok, some concepts concerning HRD needs assessment were also outlined below:

- **HRD needs assessment :**

Delahaye (2005) claimed that this active analysis could commonly be called ‘HRD needs assessment’, ‘HRD needs analysis’ or ‘HRD needs investigation’. She further defined HRD needs assessment as “a process that identifies the gap between what is currently happening

and what should be occurring” (p.120). Additionally, Blan and Thacker (2007) described HRD needs assessment and reasons for investigating HRD needs as “needs analysis is a systematic method for determining what caused performance to be less than expected or required. The ‘trigger’ for doing a needs analysis occurs when actual organizational performance (AOP) is less than expected organizational performance (OPG)” (p.101). Lawson (2016), furthermore, described the process as “the process of determining the cause, extent, and appropriate cure for organizational ills. The process addresses the organizational context and combines organizational analysis, data gathering, and interviewing techniques to identify and shrink the gap between desired and actual knowledge, skills, and abilities of the job incumbents” (p.4).

- **Types of needs in HRD**

Brinkerhoff (1986) described 4 different types of needs to be considered as 1) a performance deficiency focuses on a gap between expected performance and employees’ actual performance, 2) a diagnostic audit refers to how jobs could be performed better to prevent possible problems happening in the future, 3) a democratic preference occurs when staff considered their own developmental needs concerning their own career development, and 4) a pro-active analysis aims to project or foresee future challenges, and ensures necessary competences staff should develop to handle the future challenges. Werner and DeSimone (2009) used different names 1) Performance, 2) Diagnostic (Factors that can prevent problems from occurring), 3) Analytic (Identify new or better ways to do things), 4) Compliance (Mandated by law or regulation). It can

be assumed that HRD needs assessment is an active systematic process to determine the gap between staff expected performance and their real performance, or the causes of problems occurring in an organization.

■ Benefits of conducting HRD needs assessment and myths about its benefits

The benefits of conducting HRD needs assessment can be seen when Blan and Thacker (2007) highlighted the fact that while there is an increased concern about costs, organizations and departments must consider spending money wisely. This includes the Human Resource Department to ensure that they are not spending lots of training budget organizing training programs which no one needs. Moreover, Lawson (2016) raised the same point saying that failing to offer programs meeting the needs of businesses or developing required KSAs of staff, companies could waste thousands and thousands of dollars. Needs assessment is therefore the core process to conduct before organizing any training program. The assessment not only provides necessary information to the business to guide how HRD activities could be designed, but also suggests criteria for measuring the success of the arranged HRD programs. Khanfar (2014) found that many hotels failed to arrange effective HRD programs. Some failed to address the real needs of the organization, resulting in money being wasted with limited improvement and needed knowledge and skills remaining untrained. Byars and Rue (2008) reminded that resources must concentrate on training which is aimed at helping organizations achieve their goals. This was also supported by Ellis (2003) noticing that training is an expensive activity which should concentrate on areas which assist organizations

accomplish improvement in staff skills and performance and must not cost more than the resulting increased performance and productivity.

While training seems to be the main HRD activity, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2016, P.203) advised that “the work of HRD Departments isn’t solely involved with training because certain problems involve adopting alternative strategies to training”. Delahaye (2005) agreed with this claiming that many people believe that if problems occur in an organization, HRD activities will solve them. She further explained that in fact this process starts with analyzing general needs, then identifying whether solutions could be achieved by staff development. Lawson (2016) supported this adding that poor performance by employees derives from ineffective management practices, organizational obstacles, insufficient systems or equipment, poor incentives, lack of motivation, work environment, KSAs shortages or problems with employee confidence. Werner and Desimone (2009) emphasized that Needs Assessment must be the first step since the outcome of this process could assist design, implementation, and evaluating the success of HRD programs. Whilst the above highlights benefits of needs assessment as a way to 1) identify organizational needs, 2) distinguish whether staff development could be the answer, 3) needs analysis will assist other steps in the HRD process, myths about HRD needs assessment are that the HRD process will solve everything.

■ Steps in conducting HRD needs assessment

To introduce steps to analyze HRD needs, some frameworks are presented as examples below :

Delahaye (2005) claimed that HRD Needs Investigations had 2 stages. 'Surveillance stage' is a monitoring process to identify HRD requirements by constantly surveying all aspects. 'Investigation stage' follows to signify HRD requirements. Two processes will facilitate this stage — 1) gathering data from records, observation, assessment centres and reliable data collection techniques; 2) fair analysis of the data. This process could discover learning objectives, competency, or necessary learning outcomes to accomplish. The results of these 2 stages could become considerations in the later design, implementation and evaluation stages. Blan and Thacker (2007) devised a needs analysis model starting by explaining it was triggered when actual performance was below expected performance. When the needs are triggered, the analysis phase consisting of input, process, and then output can begin. Input is the first analysis phase using data from three different levels -- organizational analysis, operational analysis and person analysis. Process then follows aiming to identify the discrepancy between expected performance stated in the operational analysis and staff' actual performance in the Person Analysis. Output is the final analysis phase reporting whether HRD activities could minimize the gap or a non-training solution is required. Lawson (2016) outlined five steps in conducting a needs assessment process: Step 1) Identifying Problem or Need; Step 2) Determine Needs-Assessment Design; Step 3) Collect Data; Step 4) Analyze Data; and Step 5) Provide Feedback. He introduced some examples of methods for conducting a needs assessment. These are interviews, questionnaires, attitude surveys, observation, tests of proficiency, organizational statements and

plans, turn-over records, performance appraisals, procedures, handbooks, audits, training evaluations, exit interviews, samples of work, job descriptions, complaints, error rates, rejects, call reports, incident reports, trade, government, and business publications and grievances. To prioritize and finalize the process, he suggested the assessors make a recommendation based on the needs of the business, make a report and present the information in a positive light as well as thinking about what should be shared, to whom the information should be shared, and how it could be shared.

■ **Five-star hotels in Thailand:**

In order to be qualified as five-star hotels, certain criteria and standards are examined. According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2011), "specifies maintenance is an important criterion when granting a star rating, together with employees receiving regular training and evaluation along with Management being deemed efficient. Each Hotels resources are also a major consideration. The Foundation has stayed abreast with modern thinking placing high emphasis on the environment and sustainable growth" (p.17). In 2014, Thai Hotels Association by Thailand Hotel Standard Foundation (2014) announced a set of weighted index to classify the standard of Five-star hotels in Thailand called "Checklist for Thailand Hotels Standard". By inspecting 12 major areas with numerous criteria and indicators, hotels could determine whether they can be graded 5 star standard. Among these high standard areas, staff and service are highlighted in Area 8 emphasizing on how staff in all functions could perform and display their excellent services against 7 main criteria with 68 indicators. At the time

this study was conducted, about 23 hotels in Bangkok were qualified as five-star hotels and had their names published on Division of tourism services, Department of Tourism website. These included 1) Amari Watergate Bangkok Hotel, 2) Anantara Bangkok Riverside Resort & SPA, 3) Banyan Tree Bangkok Hotel, 4) Centara Grand and Bangkok Convention Centre at Central World, 5) Dusit Thani Bangkok, 6) Intercontinental Bangkok, 7) JW Marriott Bangkok, 8) Le Meridien Bangkok, 9) Mandarin Oriental Bangkok, 10) Pathumwan Princess Hotel, 11) Pullman Bangkok King Power, 12) Pullman Bangkok, 13) Ramada Plaza Menam Riverside, 14) Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel & Towers, 15) Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok, 16) Sheraton Grand Sukhumvit, 17) Sofitel Centara Grand Bangkok, 18) The Conrad Hotel, 19) The Imperial Queen's Park Hotel, 20) The Metropolitan Bangkok, 21) The Sukhothai Bangkok, 22) The Westin Grande Sukhumvit Bangkok, 23) Vie Hotel Bangkok. This study, therefore, had all the 23 hotels as its sampling frame.

■ Review Related Literature

To determine what is already known about HRD Needs Assessment in the hotel industry, and how widely this topic has already been studied, some literature reviews were studied and concluded:

Nandakumar and Nitesh (2013) found that conducting HRD needs analysis of five-star Hotels in Kerala required guest feedback, operation review, compliant log book, incident reports, employee opinion survey, employee appraisal report, brand standard audit, head of department observation, and one on one discussion between supervisor or trainers and employees. Also, changes expected in service, policies and procedures, customer needs, company vision and

mission, career development needs and company strategies and objectives could determine the desired outcome and assist the hotels to identify competencies to conduct 1) training module, 2) calendar, 3) actual training and 4) evaluation.

Rathore and Maheshwari (2013) surveyed 49 hotels ranging from 1 to 5 star hotels in Rajasthan. Despite finding that training had a direct influence on guests' services, only a few hotels conducted training programs. Most HR departments viewed that 1) training costs were expensive, 2) staff would leave hotels after getting training; 3) well-trained staff will be encouraged to leave by employers of other hotels.

Khasawneh, AL-Rahimy and AL-Serhan (2015) assessed the training process exercised in 23 Five-Star Jordanian hotels. They found that the top 3 considerations when planning the training process from the perspective of their employees were developing a training plan based on employees' needs; training material related to the objectives of the program, and departments aware of the training plan for its employees.

Plangpramool (2013) investigated the key concepts of training needs analysis viewed by 5 Star hotels in Bangkok and Pattaya. She found the HRD needs assessment had been widely recognized among hotel staff as the key HRD strategy in assisting employees in their career development. The staff reported that training needs analysis allowed them to get assistance in improving necessary job skills.

Breiter and Woods (1997) found that it was highly important for hotel staff working in mid-sized hotels in the United States to receive participative designed

training so that they could work well in teams and the hotels could ensure the existence of a learning organization. However not having sufficient training budgets, the needs assessment in these mid-sized hotels seemed to be poorly conducted.

Khanfar (2014) evaluated how training could upgrade the performance of hotel staff in 5 star hotels in Jordan. It was found that the poor HRD analysis and process could 1) identify poor training objectives which did not relate to work; 2) lead to poor training techniques which could not deliver training to desired goals; 3) fail to select specialists to train for management and skilled job tasks.

Bayoud (2013) conducted a mixed method research exploring the training policies, plans and practices of training in Libyan hotels mostly owned by Sector Social Security Fund Investments company. This study highlighted problems in training such as insufficient training needs analysis, failing to review suitable training courses needed for hotel staff, and lacking post-course training incentives.

Jhongkonnee (2010) conducted a survey research summarizing guidelines to provide training for hotel staff of 3 star hotels in Phetchaburi Province and Prachuabkhirikhan Province in Thailand. This study found that training needs assessment was the HRD process least conducted. HR staff also need to be trained how to 1) conduct HRD/Training needs assessment, 2) write training objectives, 3) develop training plans and courses, 4) implement the training courses, and 5) evaluate completed courses.

Reviewing related studies conducted in both Thai and overseas contexts found that most studies

highlighted the results of HRD needs assessment of hoteliers in different grade hotels.

These studies were conducted using various approaches -- qualitative, quantitative and mixed method. Most data collection techniques were either semi-structured interview or questionnaires. It was mostly collected from HR managers, training managers and hotel staff. Some studies showed that training had a positive effect on the improvement of service quality of hotel staff. However, some discovered concerns including 1) failing to conduct proper training/HRD needs assessment, 2) designing or implementing ineffective training techniques, 3) lacking experts to train skilled jobs, and 4) viewing training as costly to hotels. HRD needs analysis models or steps of HRD needs assessment in hotels have not yet been found.

Research Questions

To ensure the highest level of service quality, the following research questions were asked

1. What are the sources of information five-star hotels utilise when conducting their HRD needs assessment?
2. What are the steps five-star hotels in Bangkok follow when conducting their HRD needs assessment?
3. How may the HRD needs assessment model of five-star hotels in Bangkok be presented?

Research Methodology

1. Population and co-researchers (participants)

The sampling frame in this study were HR/Training executives developing HRD strategic plans in five-star hotels in Bangkok. To identify the co-researchers in

this study, the combinations of three non-probabilistic sampling techniques were constructively employed: 1) Purposive sampling was used to determine characteristics of co-researchers who could share rich information to the researcher (Johnson and Christensen, 2004); 2) Snowball sampling guided the researcher how to link from one co-researcher to another (Flick, 2007); 3) Theoretical sampling was used to remind the researcher when his data was already saturated (Seale, 1999). Whilst Creswell (1998) explained that “Grounded theory strategy could interview with 20 to 30 to ‘saturate’ categories and detail a theory”, 21 senior HR/Training executives were identified as ‘co-researchers’ as data was saturated in this study.

Figure 1 presents background information of co-researchers in this study

Hotel	Gender	Years of Work Experience in hotels	Hotel	Gender	Years of Work Experience in hotels.
1	Female	8 to 10 years	12	Female	More than 10 years
2	Male	5 to 7 years	13	Male	More than 10 years
3	Male	More than 10 years	14	Female	8 to 10 years
4	Female	More than 10 years	15	Female	8 to 10 years
5	Female	More than 10 years	16	Female	Less than 5 years
6	Female	More than 10 years	17	Male	Less than 5 years
7	Female	More than 10 years	18	Female	8 to 10 years
8	Female	5 to 7 years	19	Male	5 to 7 years
9	Female	5 to 7 years	20	Female	8 to 10 years
10	Male	8 to 10 years	21	Female	5 to 7 years
11	Female	More than 10 years			

2. Data Collection Instruments and methods

Data collection methods in this study consisted of 1) an interview schedule, and 2) some operational documents received from some hotels. About 6 types of interview questions were developed based on suggestions proposed by Patton (1990) and most of them were asked in past, present, and future as guided by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). In addition, this study followed advice given by Berg (1998) that the interview questions were not double-barreled questions, complex questions, questions starting with complex and sensitive questions or which used unequivocal language. They were also reviewed by two experts teaching HRM and HRD at one University. After receiving feedback, the questions were edited and tried out with 2 HR executives sharing similar characteristics to the co-researchers in this study. Some improvements were made after the instrument was tried out.

3. Data collection methods in this study

The researcher began by listing all five-star hotels in Bangkok, establishing criteria for selecting co-researchers, introducing the research project and asking to visit them for a semi-structured interview by phone, sending a formal letter explaining the research objectives and the data collection methods to both selected co-researchers and their gatekeepers. After acceptance, the researcher went to interview them in Thai in a quiet room at their hotels. Before starting the interview, permission to record the conversation was requested. During the interview, the researcher used the interview protocol and memo techniques to remind himself of some interesting points to memorize or additional questions to ask. Each interview took place for 45 to 60 minutes. Before ending the interview, the researcher thanked the co-researcher, requested to come back if more data was required and asked for their kind recommendations to identify some potential co-researchers. Finally, the recorded conversation was transcribed into a text file so that all information was kept in a standard format, the pictures and understanding about the interview could remain fresh and easily recalled, additional questions could be noted for the next co-researcher interview, and data could be verified to determine its saturation. The researcher kept 1) audio files, 2) transcribed text files, 3) note-taking files in an encrypted format in his own email, online storage, and USB drive.

4. Data Analysis

To address the research questions proposed in this study, this study followed the 4 steps of Grounded Theory Data Analysis summarized by Braun and Clarke

(2013). These include step 1) Transcription; step 2) Initial (open) coding (semi-complete); step 3) Writing initial memos; and step 4) Intermediate (Focused) coding, including Memo writing, Refining the coding system, Linking codes to other codes, Identifying categories, Defining categories, Production of a diagrammatic representation of analysis — showing categories and relationships between them. Moreover, in this study Atlas. Ti version 6.2, software for qualitative analysis, was used to assist data analysis beginning with coding the data to devising the model and presenting HRD needs assessment steps.

5. Trustworthiness and dependability

To ensure good practices abide by quality standards in qualitative research, the research design in this study employed four major qualitative trustworthiness criteria namely 'Credibility', 'Applicability', 'Dependability', and 'Confirmability'. The trustworthiness strategies included 1) Collecting data from different sites, 2) Using different types of data collection methods, 3) Ensuring participants willingness to take part in the project and acknowledging their right to withdraw from the study, 4) Getting participants to verify the correctness of the information they gave, 5) Using theoretical sampling techniques to obtain sufficient data, 6) Providing detailed information explaining how the study was conducted, 7) Presenting findings revealing similar outcomes shown in previous related studies, 8) Using different types of interview question to assure the correctness of answers given by participants, 9) Using Code-recode techniques to code the same data in different time periods, 10) Getting external auditors to review the accuracy of the process and

product, 11) Including verbatim to present the voices of participants, 12) Clarifying potential researcher's bias, background, preposition, and related experiences.

Research Findings

■ To address research question one "What are the sources of information five-star hotels utilize when conducting their HRD needs assessment?", This study found 10 essential sources as follows :

■ There are two main outside sources —

1. Parent companies (mentioned by 21 coresearchers) : Most five-star hotels in Bangkok are chain hotels supervised by parent companies. The parent companies conduct business strategy analysis leading their hotels to supply a list of development areas. They also scrutinize their service quality using auditors, private agents or mystery shoppers.
2. Hotel and Business Trends (mentioned by 16 coresearchers): Conducting the HRD needs analysis requires information regarding:
 - 1) Customer trends: Guests' nationalities, demographic data, or cultures could affect expected competency training of staff because different groups of customers may need to be treated differently.
 - 2) Innovation: new modern devices or equipment to ensure guests' comfort, require training staff in their use to enable them to assist guests.
 - 3) Hotel business trends: New trends and information for HRD needs analysis can come from the HR departments becoming members of hotel business related associations and some social network groups.

■ Most sources are found inside the hotels —

3. Observation and comments from management team (mentioned by 19 coresearchers):
 - 1) GM: The GMs often walk around to observe how services

are provided to guests and will immediately inform departments of failings and will expect results to rectify the situation.

- 2) Heads of Department: HRD needs analysis is conducted based on opinions or observations from department heads dealing with staff failings and rectifying them within the department.
- 3) Executives on Duty: All management staff must keep their eyes on staff working to ensure staff are performing to the necessary standards to impress their customers. Additionally, at weekend's some senior management stay in the hotels to observe and report on staff performance whilst also ensuring the hotel runs smoothly and pays attention to the needs of all guests. Their corresponding reports to the next management meeting often result in some HRD activities or retraining programs.
- 4) HR department people: All HR staff involved in training walk around to observe how staff are performing and often recommend HRD activities to improve poor performance.
4. Hotel management meetings : (mentioned by 17 coresearchers): Senior management hold regular meetings and often they discuss training and development to improve staff ability to perform at their best to meet the standards guests expect from the hotels.
5. Organization strategies (mentioned by 17 coresearchers): HR departments need to review organizational strategies such as hotels' vision, missions, core values and organizational goals. This is to ensure staff are always aware of how they should perform to meet these goals and satisfy guests.
6. Competency development plans (mentioned by 9 coresearchers): All HR departments in five-star hotels have an HRD activity checklist conducted according to their brand standard. New staff will be made fully compliant with this and

existing staff are developed ready for promotion. 7. Task changes (mentioned by 10 coresearchers): Standard Operating Procedures staff follow are constantly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement within the Hotel. The Parent company may also introduce new concepts to their hotels for performing certain tasks. 8. Staff' performance appraisals (mentioned by 21 coresearchers): Supervisors are expected to evaluate staff work performance based on criteria set in the evaluation form and compare staff performance with the required job standards. This provides evidence of staff' development needs. Consultation between both sides will ensure all staff have an individual development plan. 9. Needs of staff (mentioned by 19 coresearchers): Hotel staff are best at knowing their own training and development needs and most hotels assist staff to share their opinions and value them, encouraging staff advancement. The HR department must consider data from online employee surveys, observations from managers, recommendations of supervisors, as well as training satisfaction surveys.

■ Data from both inside and outside the Hotel is 10. Customer satisfaction (mentioned by 21 coresearchers): High customer satisfaction is both the ultimate goal of the hotels and an organizational strategy to gain competitive advantage over competitors. To gather customers' feedback, most Five-star hotels agree on the following 4 effective data collection techniques. 1) Using a paper-based survey questionnaire. This method permits five-star hotels to receive customers' experiences from guests staying in the hotels and those using its services. 2) Sending electronic surveys to customers' emails during and after their stay. Set up by parent companies this

system enables a review of customers' experiences and monitoring of the service standard of hotels within the chain. The data provided enables HRD needs analysis and reviews by most hotel executives, HR directors, and training managers. 3) Monitoring customers' experiences posted on Trip Advisor website and social networking sites. HR and Training departments have teams to monitor and search for comments from guests' experiences, others use agencies. They use this data when conducting HRD needs analysis to improve and fulfill customers' wishes, and to learn lessons from cases occurring in other hotels. 4) Seeking feedback directly from customers and agents regarding the perception customers have about the hotel and its standards. Most hotels continuously ask their guests about their experiences to maintain their service quality and some arrange a small party for guests to meet and talk with the management team. Agent's feedback is also a valuable source as agents are both customers and vital hotel business partners who can recommend customers to use services.

The following direct quotations are examples of sources of information shared by the coresearchers in this study :

(1) **Parent companies** : //We have KPI for training. There is a list of training areas assigned by our company headquarters. In our property, we need to design HRD programs covering everything from the given list...H1//

(2) **Hotel and Business Trends** : //Since we check from last year that this year we are having many Chinese guests staying in our hotel. We open courses for our staff to learn and understand Chinese Guest Characteristics...H15//

(3) *Observation and comments from management team* : //Each department head will consider how some problems could occur at their work-station, and if this involves shortage of knowledge, skills or attitudes of their people, they will propose areas where training or HRD programs are needed...H12//

(4) *Hotel management meetings* : //We have a meeting that GM, all managers, and all department Heads have to attend. In this meeting, the Training and Development area is one of our meeting agendas which anyone can discuss. We together make a decision about the need for HRD activities. If it becomes the resolution of the meeting, we put them in our HRD plan...H10//

(5) *Organization strategies* : //HRD programs should be based on what is the mission and the vision of our property. We need to help our staff to realize the company's vision and mission. That is what we consider when planning our HRD program...H11//

(6) *Competency development plans* : //Before promoting someone to work in their higher position, we need to make sure that they have been trained with enough knowledge and skills which they need to use for the new position. Department Heads together with the HR department observes high potential staff and makes sure that they can get support for their career development....H8//

(7) *Task change* : //There are some cases in which steps for doing a job need changing according to comments received from our guests' feedback. For example, we found that the process of summarizing the bill and handing it to our customers took too long, the supervisor or the manager of F&B could change it

or develop a new way. This could become a need for their staff to learn a more effective way of pleasing customers. The department will inform our Training department and we include this as part of sources of information our hotels use to conduct HRD needs analysis too...H14//

(8) *Staff' performance appraisal* : //Training needs analysis can be identified according to the comments of the supervisor written in their subordinates' evaluation forms...H7//

(9) *Needs of staff* : //We have a tool called "Employee Survey." We implement this once a year to see what potential areas our staff need to develop... H14//

(10) *Customer satisfaction* : //Guest feedback is always recorded and if we keep receiving the same complaints about something, we consider it as "the ad-hoc" which could become the training needs in our next monthly plan...H16//

- To address research question 2 "How do five-star hotels in Bangkok conduct their HRD needs assessment.", this study found that there were five common HRD needs assessment steps which are shown below.

Step 1) *Gaining the HRD needs information and identifying whether HRD programs are really necessary (mentioned by 19 coresearchers)* : The required information was obtained from at least the 10 sources and identified whether it required the improvement of staff competences. This is because not all needs could be satisfied through the HRD processes, so assessing necessity was also part of Step 1.

Step 2) Requesting the involved parties to produce relevant HRD plans (*mentioned by 14 coresearchers*): HRD needs analysis could be responded to by at least 4 parties including 1) the involved department heads and teams, 2) the heads of HR departments and teams, 3) the involved members at several meetings, and 4) GMs. While the first 3 groups will investigate root causes of the obtained information, consider ways to address them, determine the best solution and draw up development plans, GMs approve the plans.

Step 3) Reviewing proposals for their programs' content, and the ease of arranging them (*mentioned by 21 coresearchers*): Discussions with all involved parties is a valuable part of this step, assessing certain criteria: 3.1) Training budgets: Training budgets must be considered when HRD proposals are sent for review to ensure value and results. 3.2) Enhancing service quality: Since comments and feedback from guests are important and determine hotels' service quality, the review team considers if HRD proposals will minimize problems and enhance service quality. 3.3) Grouping similar courses together: the HRD activities can be easily approved when it is possible to group similar programs together and satisfy all departments. 3.4) Obtaining heads of departments' opinions: most HRD needs proposals tend to be approved when the reviewing team discusses proposals with those most involved who understand best.

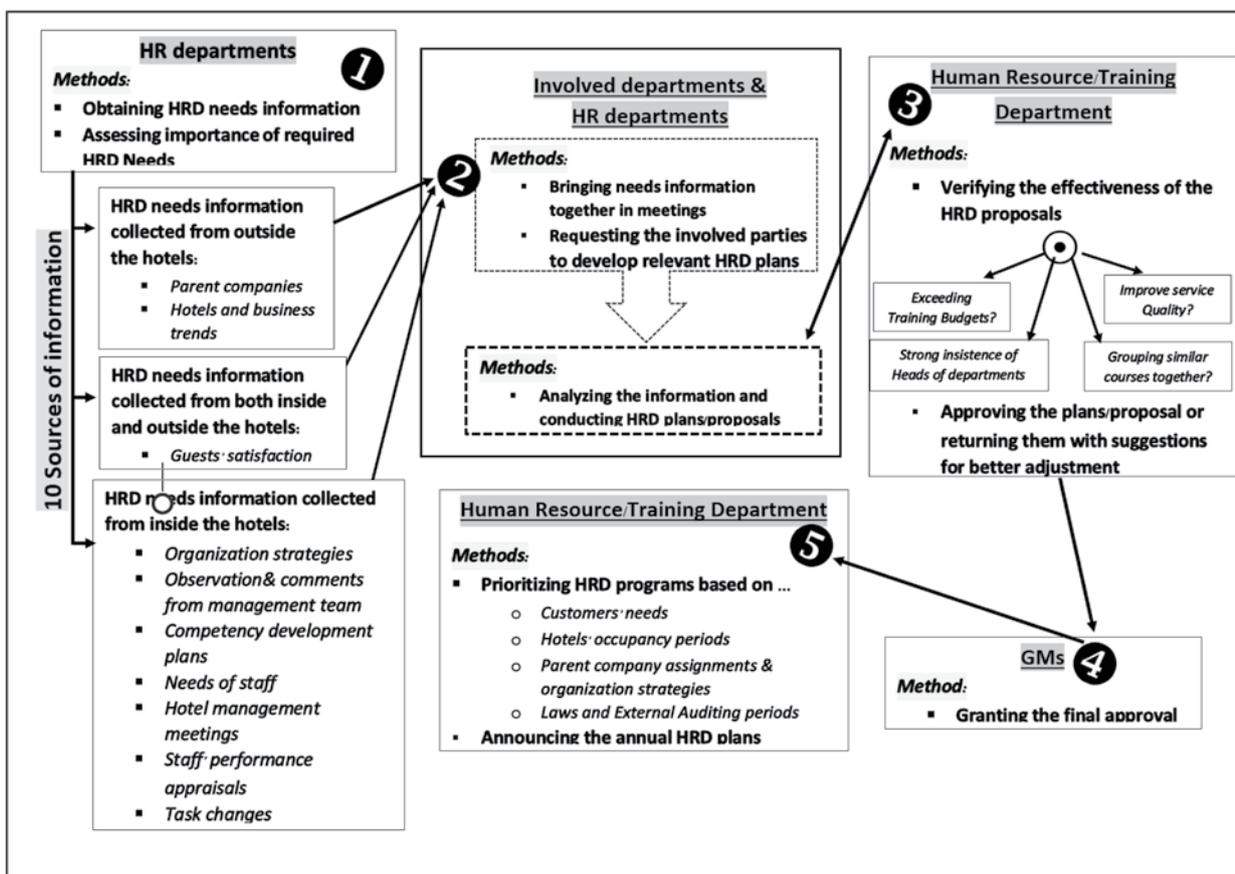
Step 4) Including all the approved HRD plans into a list of HRD needs plans and getting the final approval of the GMs (*mentioned by 18 coresearchers*): The GMs will have a thorough look and generally

approve them as the final approval step, if there is any doubt, consultations with HR and financial departments are made.

Step 5) Prioritizing the approved HRD plan and announcing the annual HRD plans (*mentioned by 20 coresearchers*): After approval by GM, the annual HRD plans or training roadmap will be prioritized by the training team and distributed to all department heads. The programs could be scheduled based on the following criteria: 5.1) Customers' needs: The hotels are likely to arrange planned HRD programs if the courses lead to the improvement of services which are often mentioned by guests. 5.2) Avoiding high occupancy periods: To get the optimum number of trainees for the courses, the training team usually consults about occupancy to avoid running courses during high occupancy periods. 5.3) Parent Company assignments and Organization strategies: Some courses assigned by the parent companies or derived from our organization strategies get priority. This is because they are significantly related to brand strategies and organizational strategies and help achieve operational goals. 5.4) Laws and external auditing periods: There are a number of legal laws and standards most five-star hotels are following. To maintain these standards, training is essential before auditing periods of these laws and standards to avoid major problems. Although the annual HRD plans are typically developed annually, they and some immediate HRD activities could be organized at any time. Some urgent HRD activities for solving certain 'ad hoc' problems could be arranged just a month after the urgent HRD needs plans are approved. This depends when the needs are discovered and the

complexity of the required training. The HR departments finally publish a final training roadmap detailing courses and timetable to people who are involved.

■ The last research question “How may the HRD needs assessment model of five-star hotels in Bangkok be presented?” actually aims to develop an HRD Needs Assessment model emerging from obtained data in this study. To achieve this, the researcher conceptualized the research findings of the two previous research questions and constructed the following HRD needs assessment model. The model on the next page consists of 5 main stages. The first step is the data collection step contain 2 sub-steps which are 1) Obtaining HRD needs assessment from 10 HRD needs assessment data sources, and 2) Assessing Importance of Required HRD Needs. Once HRD programs are possibly identified to address the needs from data sources, information will be sent to people whom it may concern in step 2. The second step requests the involved parties to consider root cause and draw up HRD plan/proposals addressing the issues to submit to the HRD department. The third step is verifying the effectiveness of HRD proposals. After the proposals are read and discussed among the team of training staff concerning their feasibility based on the list of set criteria, some consultations and feedback could be returned to involved parties for further improvement. The fourth step is the work between HR department and GMs to get final approval for all pre-examined proposals. The final step contains 2 sub-steps which are 1) prioritizing HRD programs based on sets of criteria and 2) announcing the prioritized annual HRD plans and schedule to all involved parties.



Conclusions

This study reports 10 sources of information, 5 major steps and the model of HRD needs assessment for five-star hotels in Bangkok based on conversations from the interviews with senior HRD/Training people from 21 five-star hotels in Bangkok. It is acknowledged that while there have been some studies mentioning the benefits of conducting needs assessment in organizations, not many suggested steps or developed models for conducting an effective HRD needs assessment in the tourism industry and none has been found in five-star hotels or even in hotel businesses. By reviewing the sources of information required when conducting HRD needs assessment in five-star hotels, it has been found that high-grade hotels collect information from different groups of stakeholders and sources and they use multiple data collection methods such as observation, questionnaire survey and interviews with their staff, survey their customers' satisfaction using 4 different techniques, obtain data from management meetings' resolutions, assignments and feedback given by their parent companies, reviewing staff competency development plans and their actual performance appraisal, business and tourist trends as well as organizational strategies written on vision and missions statements. Some of these sources are found reported in some previous studies as follows:

1) **Customers' satisfaction** : Ardahaey (2012); Nandakumar and Nitesh (2013) found that hotels must survey guests' satisfaction to arrange appropriate training programs to meet their expectations;

2) **Parent companies** : Rae (2000) highlighted that HRD programs in most chain hotels were assigned

by their parent company to maintain their brand standard and ensure their business success worldwide;

3) **Needs of staff** : Nandakumar and Nitesh (2013); and Khasawneh, AL-Rahimy and AL-Serhan (2015) emphasized the importance of discussing training needs with employees or they may not enjoy working in hotels if they did not receive an opportunity for learning and advancement. This is also agreed by Ardahaey (2012) explaining that when staff are good at doing their job and they look after their guests well, they tend to be more relaxed and happy in their workplace ;

4) **Hotels and business trends** : Chartrungruang, Turner, King, and Waryszak (2006) found in their study that hotel hospitality managers should consider cross-cultural settings as a part of training strategies to ensure best service quality to foreign guests. This is also in line with Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank and Ulrich (2012) suggesting HR departments should have the outside-in perspective investigating social, political, technological, economic, environmental, demographic trends and knowledge specific expectations of customers;

5) **Competency development plan** : Chartrungruang, Turner, King, and Waryszak (2006); and Nandakumar and Nitesh (2013) found that both Western and Thai Hotels should consider staff' long term development plans when conducting training needs analysis. If staff are involved in providing details about their development needs, it could help increase a positive viewpoint toward training and minimize their resistance about training design and results;

6) **Observation and Comments from management team** : Ardahaey (2012) ; and Nandakumar and Nitesh (2013) found that by monitoring hotel staff, experienced managers

could acknowledge and improve any knowledge and skills shortage in their subordinates leading to improved service quality ; 7) **Staff performance** 8) **Task changes** and 9) **Organizational strategies** were basically found as the three most important sources of HRD needs assessment highlighted in all HRD and training books such as by Lawson (2016), Thacker and Blah (2007), Delahaye (2005), Werner and DeSimone (2009). The management meeting, which was found as one source of HRD needs information in this study, has not been found reported in any other study. This might be because it was regarded more as a general step in conducting HRD needs assessment requiring stakeholder discussions. However, in hotel businesses, some executive and training meetings are particularly arranged to share information and are used to conduct HRD needs assessment to ensure staff are performing to standard and addressing complaints.

When discussing steps and the model in conducting HRD needs assessment in five-star hotels in Bangkok, this study found at least 5 specific steps. There are some similar HRD needs assessment steps reported in this study compared to those found in previous related literature. These are 1) obtaining data from sources, 2) analyzing the data by comparing expected performance with actual performance, 3) prioritizing needs and 4) providing feedback to all involved (Werner and DeSimone, 2009; Blan and Thacker, 2007; Lawson 2016). This study, however, adds extra steps which are 1) Assessing importance of required HRD needs, 2) Requesting the involved parties to develop relevant HRD plans, 3) Verifying the effectiveness of the HRD proposals and having communication between the

Training departments and involved parties to ensure HRD needs proposals are fully effective, 4) Getting final approval from the top. The differences between HRD needs assessment steps and models in the related literature and findings in this study might be because this study presented findings based on practical steps in high standard hotels within the hospitality and tourism industry, while steps and models reviewed in the literature were mostly general outlines for any types of industry. To use those models effectively, human resource developers or needs assessors have to adapt these general processes to fit their organizational styles, cultures and specific business environments, themselves.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the researcher makes suggestions to non-five-star graded hotels as follows:

1. All service points should take steps to examine guests' experiences. Also some inexpensive or less complicated data collection techniques such as paper satisfaction questionnaires or electronic surveys should be designed to obtain guests' opinions.

2. Training and development should always be on the agenda in management meetings to raise awareness of all senior members to help observe staff and assist the process of HRD needs assessment.

3. Training departments should continuously survey employees HRD needs, so that HRD programs can be organized based on their real performance needs. This allows them to deliver professional services to their guests, be the master of their job, feel good about themselves and reduce the chance of staff turnover.

4. Having a Training budget, improving service quality, or being able to group HRD programs together should be included in the list of approval criteria.

5. HRD programs should be prioritized based on customers' needs, hotels' occupancy periods, parent company assignments or organization strategies and laws or external auditing periods.

6. HRD needs assessment data sources, steps and the model presented in this study could be used as a guideline for an effective starting point for hotels or other service providers to investigate their HRD needs requirements before arranging courses which may be un-necessary.

7. Hotels should introduce some employee engagement programs to maximize staff's job satisfaction and their acknowledgement of Head Offices' goals and constraints. 

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