

The Role of Hospitality Certificates in the Relationship between Training and Education and Competency

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ABSTRACT The acquisition of certificates has been considered as the key in promoting self-competitiveness in modern society, where the hospitality industry and the banking industry appear to have the most requirements for relevant certificates. By reviewing the past literature studies on certificates, the definitions, functions and specialties for statutory demands, such as for doctors and teachers, were studied most, but there has been a lack for non-statutory demands, especially on hospitality. This study aims to discuss the trend of the public acquiring certificates so as to verify their effectiveness. The research findings show the effectiveness of some certificates. Nevertheless, the experiences and educational backgrounds should be emphasized, rather than only pay attention to the acquisition of certificates.

INTRODUCTION

Differing from enterprises selecting employees based on their educational backgrounds in the past, modern enterprises expect employees to present relevant professional certificates (Juuti et al. 2009). With universal education, educational background is no longer a favorable indicator. Instead, enterprises look for employees with similar work experiences or professional certificates in addition to their educational background (Manono et al. 2013).

The hospitality industry is a labor-intensive industry where manpower is often regarded as the key software and assets of an organization, as service efficiency and quality are the key factors in customer satisfaction (Chapman and Lovell 2006; Cloete and Venter 2013). Nevertheless, the turnover rate in the hospitality industry is higher than for other industries, particularly for the grass-root employees. Davidson et al. (2006) also found that more than half of the grass-root employees in hotels did not consider the necessity of training, while more than 70% of the administrators presented the opposite opinion. The awareness of competency between managers and grassroot employees exhibited differences. Martin et al. (2006) considered such differences as employees lacking commitment and work motivation and businesses not providing training and development opportunities. In this case, it is worth discussing that in the hospitality business, this tends to enhance the employees' per-

ception of competency with proper training and education.

More hospitality employees expect to enhance personal value with certificates in such an era of economic recession where most people believe that certificates could assist them in their place in a business. A lot of universities or certificate notifying bodies establish several relative courses, tending to guide employees to become familiar with occupational ecology. However, would these people who acquired professional certificates actually exhibit the working capabilities, or do they simply know enough to acquire the certificates? The past research on certificates merely focused on the banking and industrial industries, but not on the hospitality industry, and this study reveals the importance.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Competency

Kaslow (2004) defined competency as a favorable and qualified character or status. Çizel et al. (2007) considered that competency could provide a common language for analyzing individual performance, and individual behavioral characteristics were related to efficient and excellent work performance. In other words, such characteristics allowed the acquisition of efficient and excellent performance at work. Work performance includes a process of action-reflection on the part of the individuals in order for them to generate effective work strategies about

the activities they are carrying out (Ana et al. 2011).

From the aspect of teamwork, competency presented stable high-performance or highly-competent behaviors in complex environments for excellent teamwork performance. In addition to the relation of work performance, competency could be utilized for evaluations and improvement with training and education (Mayo and Thomas-Haysbert 2005; Jauhari 2006). It combines it with various elements such as judgment, value, motivation, characteristics, self-concept, comprehension, individual factors, and beliefs. Tisch et al. (2013) has pointed out a compelling consensus, "Developing employee's competence is a crucial prerequisite for a competitive, future-oriented production since it enables fast problem solving and continuous improvement in the whole production process." Competency could be applied to individual roles or the workplace of professional careers for successfully achieving objectives (Tas 1998; Birdir and Pearson 2000).

According to the opinions of the past researchers, the factors of knowledge, skills, and attitudes were concluded as the characteristics and behaviors for professional competency. Such factors could simultaneously interact with each other and could hardly be separated (Boyatzis 1982; Horng and Wang 2003; Kay and Moncarz 2007).

Training and Education

Nadia (2013) regarded education as a potential for cultivating the orientation of employees, the promotion of capabilities for future work, and a series of arrangements and learning. Nadia (2013) stated, "the subject's interaction with the complexity of real-world situations, in terms of an efficient task performance, sustains the necessity of transferable, context-free structures mentioned in literature as: key competencies, core skills, foundation skills, essential skills." Training tended to improve the present work performance of employees or enhance their work capabilities. Enterprises often have their employees learn the knowledge, skills, competency, and development related to their present work through training and education so as to improve work performance. Instruction and training should be enhanced with the changing society and design courses corresponding to the social

demands (Phillips et al. 2004; Chantia 2006). French (1994) divided training and education into training at work and training beyond work, where the former could be combined with work and education to save costs, while the latter could enhance the professional knowledge and skills of employees with more professional literacy. Schuler (1998) also agreed that training and education could promote the identity of employees to the organization and enhance the stability for improving organizational performance. Rouiller and Goldstein (1993) considered that work environments would obstruct or promote organizational members from applying their training to the workplaces. The research findings showed the better effects of supervisors receiving training and education. Based on the above opinions of education and training being able to enhance the work performance of employees and the required objectives for training and education aiming at individual capability and learned knowledge, skills, and competency (Boyatzis 1982; Aydin 2013), it is proposed that providing the employees in the hospitality industry with training courses suitable for the workplace could promote occupational competency, as depicted in H1.

H1: Training and education positively affect competency.

Certificates

Certificates are defined as the proof of competency where holding a certificate presents a symbol and evidence that the holder is aware of completing specific work and tasks and owns certain knowledge and skills by passing the certificates (Wiley 1995). Wiley (1995) classified certificates into certification, accreditation, and licensure. The first two were voluntary, showing that an individual would not be restricted with special regulations on the specialty even though the person did not hold the relevant certificates. For instance, a linguistic certificate was authorized by a special institute to prove their linguistic competency in achieving a certain extent. Licensure was compulsory, referring to an individual not being able to engage in a specific occupation and utilize the specialty without being licensed by a special institute, such as for doctors and nurses. Certification and licensure focused on the measurement of individual competency and the maintenance of the specialty,

while accreditation paid attention to educational and environmental issues in industries and organizations. The American Hotel and Lodging Association (AH&LA for short), initiated programs with the objective of creating standards for the integration of various systems within the hospitality environment. There are two major certificates of AH&LA, Certificate of Hospitality Supervision (CHS) and Certified Hospitality Department Trainer (CHDT), which are considered to be an important indicator in the hospitality industry in Taiwan.

According to the "Knowledge, Skill, Abilities" (KSA for short), proposed by Boyatiz (1982), employees could improve their basic and professional capabilities during the preparation for the examinations of certificates, when they received the tests of professional knowledge, professional skills, and professional attitudes and spirits, and further affected individual knowledge, skills, and competency. In other words, the process of acquiring certificates could promote the participants' competency. In this case, H2 is proposed in this study.

H2: Certificates positively affect competency.

Furthermore, more employees in the hospitality industry expect to enhance their personal value through the acquisition of certificates in such an economic recessionary market. Moreover, the requirements of professional skills have become strict in their employment market that a lot of people believe in certificates being able to assist them in obtaining a place in the businesses. As a result, it is regarded that job seekers with professional certificates would present better performance on Work Competency than the ones without certificates. H3 is then proposed in this study.

H3: Certificates moderate the relationships between training and education and competency.

RESEARCH METHODS

Sample and Sampling

Aiming to investigate the assistance of internal training and education in promoting work competency in the hospitality industry and the effects of Certificates on Work Competency, the staffs of the three chain hotels (Hyatt, Sheraton and Ambassador) were selected as the research subjects for the effectiveness of internal train-

ing and education and the effects of certificates on competency. A total of 357 valid questionnaires were retrieved. Most of the participants were females (67%) and aged between 26~35 (41.2%). Also, most of the participants were fresh graduates with no other work experience (60.2%), graduated from colleges (68.3%), majored in relevant subjects (80.7%), and had an average Service Tenure of 5.2 years.

Measures

(1) *Certificates*

For those surveyed, those without relevant certificates were indicated by a 0. Otherwise, a 1 was filled in for relevant certificates in the measurement of certificates, participants with certificates related to hospitality (such as Certified Software Quality Professional, Baking Certificate, Certified Hospitality Department Trainer, and Certificate of Hospitality Supervision).

(2) *Training and Education*

The measurement of training and education used Rouiller and Goldstein's (1993) items, which measured the application and effectiveness of employees after internal training and education. With Likert's five-point scale, the overall reliability reached 0.94.

(3) *Competency*

The past research on Competency displayed distinct requirements or orientations which made it hard to define. Boyatiz (1982) indicated that competency could be regarded as a KSA. This study therefore applied individual KSA as a variable of competency of hospitality employees. Moreover, in the hospitality industry, as a first line personnel would directly face consumers where interpersonal relationships were included in the measurement for response skills. With Likert's five-point scale, the overall reliability is revealed to be 0.92.

(4) *Control Variables*

To avoid possible conflicting results, education level, education specialty, work experience, and tenure were treated as control variables in this study.

Correlation Coefficient

From Table 1, all correlation coefficients showed a larger than or equal to 0.083, achieving a significance $p < .01$; and, the correlations coefficients appeared larger than or equal to 0.141, reaching a significance of $p < .001$. Both training and education and certificates achieved remarkably positive relations with competency that training and education provided by the hospitality businesses could enhance the employees' competency, and a certificate could benefit the provision of services for customers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effects of Certificates and Training and Education on Competency

The results of hierarchical regression indicated that the response of training and educa-

tion to professional knowledge ($\beta = .461, p < .001$), professional skills ($\beta = .388, p < .001$), professional capability ($\beta = .348, p < .001$), and interpersonal relationships ($\beta = .409, p < .001$) achieved notably positive relations. Table 2 shows that training and education provided by hospitality businesses could promote the employees' competency for customer demands. H1 was then agreed. From Table 3, the response of hospitality employees with a certificate of professional knowledge ($\beta = .215, p < .001$), professional skills ($\beta = .277, p < .001$), professional capability ($\beta = .152, p < .01$), and interpersonal relationship ($\beta = .232, p < .001$) revealed significantly positive relations that hospitality employees with Certificates could enhance their competency. H2 was therefore agreed.

In Table 4, certificate was regarded as the moderator between training and education and competency. According to the suggestions by Baron and Kenny (1986) on the analyses of moderating effects, regression analysis was applied. The findings showed that the response of the

Table 1: Correlation analyses

	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Work tenure	6.1	.49									
2. Education level	2.62	.62	-.083*								
3. Specialty	.81	.41	.035	.169**							
4. Tenure	5.21	7.24	.241**	-.456**	.128*						
5. Training and education	3.74	.69	.015	-.008	.141**	.117*					
6. Certificate	.61	.38	.074	.066	.138**	.275**	.248**				
7. Professional knowledge	3.74	.59	.158**	-.091	.068	.259**	.481**	.268**			
8. Professional skills	3.67	.68	.244**	-.008	.089	.153**	.401**	.303**	.654**		
9. Professional capability	3.95	.47	.034	.022	.145**	.077	.366**	.174**	.456**	.385**	
10. Interpersonal relationship	3.86	.57	.213**	-.105	.074	.121*	.414**	.229**	.567**	.605**	.535**

Note: N=357; * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Table 2: Regression analysis of training and education and competency

	<i>Dependent variable</i>							
	<i>Professional knowledge</i>		<i>Professional skills</i>		<i>Professional capability</i>		<i>Interpersonal relationships</i>	
	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>
<i>Control Variables</i>								
Work experience	-.101	-.108*	-.218***	-.224***	.057	.052	-.198***	-.204***
Education	.024	.014	.053	.045	.038	.031	-.093	-.102
Specialty	.030	-.027	.058	.01	.129*	.086	.081	.029
Tenure	.242***	.189*	.117*	.073	.091	.051	.02	-.027
<i>Predictors</i>								
Training and education		.461***		.388**		.348***		.409***
F	7.512	27.785***	7.224	20.023**	2.574	12.017***	5.631	20.05***
R ²	.079	.284	.076	.222	.028	.146	.06	.222
ΔR ²		.205		.146		.118		.162

Note: N=357; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3: Regression analysis of certificates and competency

	<i>Dependent variable</i>							
	<i>Professional knowledge</i>		<i>Professional skills</i>		<i>Professional capability</i>		<i>Interpersonal relationships</i>	
	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>
<i>Control Variables</i>								
Work experience	.101	-.100	.218***	.218***	.057	.058	.198***	.197***
Education	.024	-.025	.053	-.009	.038	.003	-.093	-.146**
Specialty	.030	.018	.058	.043	.129*	.121*	.081	.068
Tenure	.242***	.163*	.117*	.014	.091	.035	.02	-.066
<i>Predictors</i>								
Certificates		.215***		.277***		.152**		.232***
F	7.512	9.480***	7.224	11.73***	2.574	3.590**	5.631	8.451***
R ²	.079	.119	.076	.143	.028	.049	.06	.107
ΔR ²		.040		.067		.021		.047

Note: N=357; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 4: Moderating effects of certificates on training, education and competency

	<i>Dependent variable</i>											
	<i>Professional knowledge</i>			<i>Professional skills</i>			<i>Professional capability</i>			<i>Interpersonal relationships</i>		
	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>
<i>Control Variables</i>												
Work experience	.101	.107*	.107*	.218***	.223***	.223***	.057	.052	.053	.198***	.203***	.202***
Educational background	.024	-.012	-.009	.053	.001	.004	.038	.013	.018	-.093	-.134*	-.129*
Specialty	.03	-.063	-.039	.058	.004	-.0043	.129*	.084	.071	.08	.026	.012
Tenure	.242***	.149**	.148**	.117*	.004	.002	.097	.025	.022	.02	-.078	-.081
<i>Predictors</i>												
Training and education	.436***	.367***		.347***	.286*		.333***	.224**		.379***	.264***	
Certificate	.115**	-.372		.198**	-.239		.176**	-.694**		.146**	-.668**	
Training & education* certificate		.518**			.464*			.818***			.865***	
F	7.51	24.37	21.57	7.22	19.94	17.58	2.57	10.38	10.16	5.63	18.42	17.55
R ²	.079	.295	.359	.076	.255	.316	.028	.151	.209	.049	.227	.269
ΔR ²		.216***	.064**		.179***	.051*		.123***	.058**		.18***	.042**

Note: N=357; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

interaction between training and education and certificates to professional knowledge ($\beta = .518, p < .01$), professional skills ($\beta = .464, p < .05$), professional capability ($\beta = .818, p < .001$), and interpersonal relationships ($\beta = .865, p < .001$) yielded statistical significance of moderating effects, indicating that a business could provide internal training and education, despite the fact that employees held relevant certificates to promote the employees' competency.

CONCLUSION

According to the research results, training and education and certificates appear as posi-

tive effects on the competency of employees in the hospitality industry, implying that proper training and education could enhance the individual competency of the employees. Moreover, employees in the hospitality industry are first-line personnel and their competency performance represents the enterprise where training and education cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the research outcomes prove to not only assist the training and education in the employees' professional knowledge, skills, and capabilities, but it also has positive effects on interpersonal relationships, presenting proof that training and education could enhance professional compe-

tency of the employees and their interpersonal network in daily life so as to assist them in providing professional services for customers.

Employees with certificates in the hospitality industry could promote individual competency, proving the advantages of certificates in individual competency and responding to the opinion of prior researcher that the acquisition of certificates from special institutes represents ownership of specific knowledge and skills. With the competency in enterprise applications as the evaluation indicator who considered that competency could effectively enhance company performance. Research also indicated that certificates could promote employees' competency and it could be included as a key evaluator.

Finally, regarding the moderating effect analyses of certificates on training and education and competency, employees with certificates in the hospitality industry would enhance their relations between training and education and competency. Since hospitality is an emergent industry, the demands on employees are increasing. Moreover, the employees are the first-line personnel in an industry where professional competency is essential. Consequently, training and education is necessary for maintaining professional competency. To ensure that the employees present professional competency in their careers, certificates notified by professional institutes are of primary importance. The research findings show that employees with certificates in the hospitality industry can rapidly become accustomed to training and education provided by the enterprises and completely apply them to their daily actions for smooth operation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study verifies that the practice in the hospitality industry of utilizing certificates for recruiting employees is feasible under the prevalence of certificate acquisition. Some certificates could actually promote individual competency and further enhance their company performance. It is worth noting that the holding of certificates related to the industry could effectively enhance an individual's competency, in addition to training and education provided by enterprises. It is therefore suggested that training and education should not be ignored in the hospitality industry and the required certificates should be included in the recruitment. More-

over, the importance of employees' experiences is also noticed. Experiences not only could reinforce professional competency, but it could also substitute for interpersonal relationships, meaning that experienced employees could achieve certain competency even if they do not hold any relevant certificates. In this case, the hospitality industry should include work experience into their recruitment process and efficiently employ the employees permanently so as to cultivate their experiences. The overall effect of training and education is covered in the study, but the objects and the types of training and education for various positions and the focus on knowledge, skills, or competency are not taken into account. The future research could further examine these issues. In addition to the types and numbers of certificates, the difficulty in the acquisition of certificates could affect individual competency. In terms of certificates, uniqueness is regarded as a critical indicator. A difficult and internationally identified certificate would present the specialty of the holder. Additionally, easily acquired certificates would become the threshold for recruitment, rather than the strength of competitiveness, in the hospitality industry. Few difficult and international certificates are discussed in this study, as the holders are generally the executives or managers in the industry. Consequently, future studies may focus on the effectiveness of international certificates, aiming at the difficulty of chief executives in acquiring certificates and international certificates.

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