

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILL IMPROVEMENT NEEDS OF HND GRADUATES IN FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT FOR ENHANCED PERFORMANCE IN HOTEL INDUSTRY IN ENUGU STATE.

Dimelu, I.N.

Department of Vocational Teacher Education
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Ajala E.O.

Department of Vocational Teacher Education
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

Polytechnic is one of the tertiary institutions established for training individuals for competence in many skill programmes for the supply of middle level manpower. It is expected that Higher National Diploma (HND) graduates of polytechnics should have acquired enough entrepreneurial skills that could enable them perform successfully in different occupations such as in contemporary hotel management as food service managers. But these graduates could not meet the management demands of these hotels in the field. Therefore, the study determined the entrepreneurial skill improvement needs of (HND) graduates in food service management in contemporary hotels in planning, supervising and public relation activities. Three research questions guided the study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The sample for the study was 69 respondents. A 34 item questionnaire was developed from the literature and used for data collection. Three experts validated the instrument. Cronbach alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument with a co-efficient of 0.85. The data was analyzed using the mean and improvement need index (INI) to determine the competence of the food service managers. It was found out that the food service managers needed improvement in 8 tasks in planning, 10 in supervising and 11 in public relations. It was recommended that food service managers be re-trained in the tasks where improvement is needed as found by this study

Introduction

Polytechnic is one of the tertiary institutions mandated to train for middle manpower supply in technology, in order to build human capacity in many areas and disciplines. This is to equip individuals with knowledge, skills and attitude for work in their chosen careers and occupations. National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Report (2003), posited polytechnic as a tertiary institution that equips students with knowledge, skills and attitude in various vocational courses and programmes for employment such that the graduates can become self reliant and employable in the world of work. Adeyinka (1998), explained that polytechnic education is a programme where students are admitted to obtain Ordinary National Diploma (OND) certificate after a duration of two years or (HND) Higher National Diploma after two years post Ordinary National Diploma (OND). Also, Marian (2002), noted that these programmes in polytechnics are made for specialized areas such as in engineering, quantity surveying, social sciences, hotel management which include food service management as a unit course.

Food service management in the view of Moren (2011), is day-to-day effective running of food activities in serving meals, beverages and snacks in bars, restaurants and rooms which involves planning, implementing, coordinating and controlling. Food services are handled by trained individuals in hotel management called food service managers. Busenitze and Barney (2002), advanced that a food service manager is an individual who had undergone training and acquired skills

in principles and techniques of supervision, planning and interpreting different menus for efficiency, serving quality meals, operating standard appliances and equipment and, in public relations. William (2008), stated the qualities a good service manager should possess to include the ability to; (a) meet deadlines within severe time constraints; (b) supervise effectively the food services in bars, restaurants and rooms; (c) coordinate the work of his staff to ensure that each worker carries out the daily or weekly activity as on the schedule of work; (d) train his staff on nutritional values of meals in menus as to assist customers make choice especially where the menu is therapeutic in nature; (e) exhibit good rapport within and outside his unit; and (f) make reports with suggestions for improvement. Maryland (2010), outlined the functions of a food service manager as follows: (a) prepare duty roaster which include; allocation of station where to work, laying of tables, cleaning the restaurants, bars, cutlery, crockery, setting trolleys and stocking the side boards with right equipment for the day's menu, (b) going through the days menu with his team to ensure that they can answer possible questions from customers; (c) maintain and operate wide varieties of standard cafeteria appliances (d) coordinate the activities of staff in various sub-sections of food services and (e) ensure that a good public relation is maintained by his team and being constantly in touch with guests to direct and assist them.

Good public relation of food service managers is very important in hotel industries because it creates friendly and pleasant atmosphere for customers. Public relation according to David and Paskins (2011), is a situation where one creates friendly and courteous relationship with others. Therefore, good public relation in a hotel in food service can reduce the incidence of dissatisfaction, unpleasant conflict and argument between customer and serving staff but give impression of efficiency which enhances sales and repeat visits of customers.

In the area of the study, it was observed that many hotels are failing in patronage in favour of canteens for feeding, though most of these hotels have food service departments. The experience of the researcher and discussion with some guests in the hotel, revealed that they prefer food services in some of the canteens in the town, where they receive satisfaction in service to reduce cost to those hotels with high bills and unsatisfactory services. Therefore, the food service managers are implicated in this unsatisfactory services provided by hotels in food service departments. For the management of food service in the hotels to improve, the food service managers require upgrading of their entrepreneurial skills.

Entrepreneurial skills according to Jibril (2012), are those abilities acquired through training and practices that could enable an individual become successful in performing their functions in an enterprise for profit. It is expected that HND graduates of polytechnics in food service management should possess the entrepreneurial skills in planning activities and serving quality meals and beverages, organizing human and material resources for efficiency to meet deadlines in meal services, supervising, for good public relations (social skills) as required in contemporary hotels. For these food service managers to meet the demands of contemporary hotels for profit, they need improvement.

Improvement in the view of Robenson (2000), is the development of circumstance in which something that is lacking is made better of standard and quality. In this study, the food service managers need to up grade their low quality assurance in food service to a level that is satisfactory to guests who patronize these hotels in Enugu State. In order to determine the level at which they meet this demand, they need assessment. This assessment will reveal the level of skills possessed in the managers and areas in which improvement is needed based on their performance gap. The standard

set usually is called Need gap. This can be achieved through some improvement on already acquired skilled practice. Need in the view of Dike (1999), is a process of determining the difference between the required standard and level of performance of an individual in an activity. The difference therefore constitutes a need gap. In this study need assessment will involve the determination, of the difference between standards in food service management activities and the level of performance possessed in food management activities by food service managers. The result obtained will constitute the need gap of the food service managers for improvement, in order to meet the needs of their customers.

The purpose of the study, therefore was to determine the entrepreneurial skill improvement needs of HND graduates in food service management for enhanced performance in hotel industries in Enugu State.

Specifically the study determined the improvement needs of food service managers in;

- i. Planning activities.
- ii. Supervising and
- iii. Public relation activities.

Methodology

Three research questions were formulated and answered by the study. The study adopted survey research design. Survey research design according to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007), is a method of collecting data using questionnaire or interview from a sample that has been selected to represent population to which the findings of the data analyzed can be generalized. This study made use of questionnaire on food service management from the respondents in order to determine the retraining needs of food service managers in hotels and other relevant organizations. The study was carried out in Enugu State made up of 17 Local Government Areas with 6 principal towns namely Enugu, Agbani, Awgu, Udi, Oji-river and Nsukka. Enugu was used for the study due to the presence of contemporary hotels. The population for the study was 69 comprising 49 food service managers from contemporary hotels and 20 lecturers in hospitality department from polytechnic(Institute of Management and Technology (IMT)). The sample for the study was 69 respondents which was the population. This means that there was no sampling because of the manageable size of the population. A 34 item structured questionnaire developed from the literature reviewed (NBTE course curriculum) and management functions of the hotel industry was used to collect data for the study. Each questionnaire item had two components of need and performance. The needed components had 4 response options of Highly Needed (HN), Averagely Needed (AN), Slightly Needed (SN), and Not Needed (NN) with assigned values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The performance component had 4 response options of High Performance (HP), Average Performance (AP), Little Performance (LP) and No Performance (NP) with assigned values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The hotel food managers and lecturers responded to the needed category of the questionnaire while only the food service managers responded to the performance category. The questionnaire items were face validated by three experts, one expert in Hospitality Department from Kaduna Polytechnic, one from the Department of Food Science and Nutrition and another one from Department of Vocational Teacher Education (Home Economics unit) both from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistence of the questionnaire items with an alpha co-efficient of 0.86, 0.79, and 0.89 respectively. The researcher administered 69 copies of the questionnaire on the

respondents through the help of three (3) research assistants as follows; 49 copies of the questionnaire to the food service managers, 20 copies to the lecturers of hospitality department in IMT Enugu.

Weighted mean and Improvement Need Index (INI) were used to answer three research questions. To determine whether an item was needed the real limit of numbers was used as follows;

3.5 – 4.00 – Highly Needed

2.5 – 3.49 – Averagely Needed

1.5 – 2.49 – Slightly Needed

1.00 – 1.49 – Not Needed

Any item with a weighted mean of 1.50 or above was regarded as needed while any item with a weighted mean of less than 1.50 was regarded as not needed.

In determining the improvement needed on any item, the following steps were taken;

(i) The weighted mean of the needed component of the item.

(\bar{X}_n) was calculated for each item.

(ii) The weighted mean of the performance component of the item.

(\bar{X}_p) was calculated for each item.

(iii) The need gap (NG) was calculated by subtracting the weighted mean of the performance (\bar{X}_p) from the weighted mean of the needed (\bar{X}_n) that is NG. When compared with the Improvement Need Index (INI) of 0, 1, 2, 3, where zero (0) means no improvement or little improvement; average or moderate improvement and high improvement needed.

- (i) When the need gap value (NG) is positive (+) that is greater than zero, there is need for improvement because the level at which the managers could perform the skill item is less than the level needed.
- (ii) When NG value is zero (0) improvement is not needed because the level at which the managers could perform the skills item is equal to the level at which the item is needed.
- (iii) When the NG value is negative (-) that is less than zero, there is no need for improvement because the level at which the managers could perform the skill item is higher than the level at which the item is needed.

Results

The results for the study were obtained from the research questions answered through data collected, analyzed and were presented in tables 1 – 3.

Research Question 1

What are the entrepreneurial skill improvement needs of food service managers in planning food service activities for enhanced performance in hotel industry?

The data for answering research question 1 were presented in table 1.

Table 1: Performance Gap Analysis (PG) of the Mean Ratings of the Responses of the Lecturers and Food Service Managers on Entrepreneurial Skill Improvement Needs of Food Service Managers in Planning Food Service Activities for Enhanced Performance in Hotel Industry.

N = 69					
S/N	Item statement	\bar{X}_n	\bar{X}_p	PG ($\bar{X}_n - \bar{X}_p$)	Remarks
Planning Activities					
1	Identify the purpose of the event e.g. banquet, cock tail.	3.78	3.11	0.67	IN
2	Determine the type of guest expected.	3.67	2.65	1.02	IN
3	Estimate the size of the guests expected.	3.84	3.19	0.65	IN
4	Determine the duration of the service daily, weekly etc.	3.58	2.95	0.63	IN
5	Prepare duty roaster to involve all activities expected to meet the needs of guests.	3.92	3.00	0.92	IN
6	Identify the resources available to meet the service need of the guests.	3.43	2.73	0.70	IN
7	List food, beverages and snacks required for the occasion such as tea breaks etc.	3.63	2.21	1.42	IN
8	Prepare time line for serving the meals to the guests.	3.46	3.46	0.00	NN
9	Decide on the administrative personnel to handle the different activities involved.	3.07	3.08	-0.01	NN
10	Arrange activities for the safety of the guest (hygienes)	3.98	3.77	0.21	IN

Key: \bar{X}_n - Needed Mean, \bar{X}_p - Performance mean, IN - Improvement Needed, NN - Needed No Improvement, PG - Performance Gap.

The data presented in table 1 revealed that performance gap values of 8 out of 10 items on entrepreneurial skills needed by food service managers in planning activities for food services ranged from 0.21 – 1.42 and were positive. This indicated that the food service managers needed improvement in these 8 skill items. However, two items (8 and 9) had their performance gap values as 0.00 and -0.01 and were neutral. This indicated that food service managers did not need improvement in these two skill items because for item 8 the level of performance of this skill item by food service managers was just the level of skill needed. Item 9 indicated that the food service managers could perform this skill item more than the level of performance needed.

Research Question 2

What are the entrepreneurial skill improvement needs of food service managers in supervising food service activities for enhanced performance in hotel industry?

The data for answering research question 2 are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Performance Gap Analysis of the Mean Ratings of the Responses of the Lecturers and Food Service Managers on Entrepreneurial Skill Improvement Needs of Food Service Managers in Supervising Food Service Activities for Enhanced Performance in Hotel Industry.

N = 69

S/N	Item statement	\bar{X}_n	\bar{X}_p	PG ($\bar{X}_n - \bar{X}_p$)	Remarks
Supervision Activities					
1	Assign duties to stewards in different areas of service.	3.61	2.73	0.87	IN
2	Check the table laid, whether it suits the type of the service.	3.01	3.36	-0.35	NNI
3	Check equipment stocked in the side board before service begins.	3.68	2.53	1.15	IN
4	Fix the trolleys ready for service.	2.40	3.71	-1.31	NNI
5	Make the workers to maintain good safety practices (hygiene).	3.05	2.22	0.83	IN
6	Supervise the decoration for suitability of the type of event.	3.60	2.69	0.91	IN
7	Coordinate the activities of the team for meeting the needs of the guest.	3.99	2.42	1.57	IN
8	Insist that the meals, beverages and snacks are served on time.	3.11	2.01	1.10	IN
9	Assist the guests on conflicting issues especially where the team cannot explain them.	3.90	2.10	1.80	NI
10	Keep in constant touch with the guest to make sure their demands are met.	2.83	2.14	0.19	NI
11	Make the workers obey the ethics of food service when they are with guest.	3.51	2.36	1.15	NI
12	Replace any worker that could not meet the ethics of food service.	2.21	2.64	0.43	NNI
13	Make adjustment where necessary for the smooth running of the work.	3.45	2.09	1.33	NI

Key: \bar{X}_n - Needed Mean, \bar{X}_p - Performance mean, IN - Improvement Needed, NN - Needed No Improvement, PG - Performance Gap.

Table 2, revealed that the performance gap values of 10 out of 13 items on entrepreneurial skills needed by food service managers in supervising food service activities ranged from 0.19 – 1.80 and were positive. This indicated that food service managers needed improvement in the 10 skill items. Three items 8, 9 and 11 had their performance gap values as -0.55, -0.31 and -0.43 respectively and were negative. This indicated that food service manager did not need improvement because the level at which these three skills were needed are much lower than the level at which the food serve managers could perform them.

Research Question 3

What are the entrepreneurial skill improvement needs of food service managers in public relation activities for an enhanced performance in hotel industries?

The data for answering research question 3 were presented in table 3.

Table 3: Performance Gap Analysis of the Mean Ratings of the Responses of the Lecturers and Food Service Managers on Public Relation Activities for an Enhanced Performance in hotel Industry.

N = 69

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}_n	\bar{X}_p	PG ($\bar{X}_n - \bar{X}_p$)	Remarks
Public Relation Activities					
1	Pay attention to customers request and respond positively.	2.96	2.74	0.22	IN
2	Demonstrate interest in customers service request.	3.84	2.43	1.44	IN
3	Reply to questions asked by customer politely.	3.66	2.02	1.64	IN
4	Encourage customers to give their views about their satisfaction of the service offered.	3.22	2.48	0.74	IN
5	Continually seek for problem solving of meal services with the management and workers.	3.78	2.98	0.80	IN
6	Obey aesthetic-ethics of food service.	3.54	2.28	1.26	IN
7	Endeavour to meet the time of service to avoid unsatisfactory service.	3.10	2.55	0.45	IN
7	Keep in constant touch with guest to meet their service request.	3.01	2.25	0.28	IN
8	Greet guests at their entry point.	3.50	2.22	1.28	IN
9	Provide means of indicating their suggestions for service improvement.	3.43	2.36	1.07	IN
10	Show appreciation through thanking them as they leave.	3.69	2.17	1.52	IN

Key: \bar{X}_n - Needed Mean, \bar{X}_p - Performance mean, IN - Improvement Needed, NN - Needed No Improvement, PG - Performance Gap.

The data presented in table 3 on entrepreneurial skills needed by food service managers for enhanced performance in public relation activities, showed that performance gap value of all the 11 skill items ranged from 0.22 – 1.64 and were positive. This indicated that the food service managers needed improvement in all the 11 skill items.

Discussion of the Results

It was found out that the food service managers in the area of the study needed improvement in 8 skill items in planning, 10 skill items in supervision and 11 in public relation for enhanced performance in food services in the contemporary hotels. These findings are inconsonance with the findings of Ukonze and Olaitan (2010), who in a study on quality assurance of teachers of agricultural

education programme in Nigerian universities found out that teachers of agricultural science needed improvement in 10 skills in planning, 10 skills in implementing and 9 skills in evaluating.

The result of this study are also in conformity with the findings of Olaitan, Eze and Ukonze (2010), who in their study, on capacity building needs of teachers in safety practices in farm workshops in college of Agriculture in South Eastern, Nigeria found out, that teachers needed improvement in 11 skills in safety practices in using cutting tools, 19 skills in digging and caring for farm products, 13 skills in the use of farm implement and equipment.

The findings of the study are in agreement with the findings of Miller, Bakare, and Ikatule (2011), who in their study on professional capacity building needs of teachers for effective teaching of basic technology curriculum to students in junior secondary schools in Lagos State, found out that teachers needed improvement in 6 skills in planning instruction in basic technology, 6 skills in evaluating instruction in basic technology and 6 skills in programme management in basic technology. The findings of the above authors helped to add credence to the reliability of the findings of this study.

Conclusion

Many contemporary hotels in the area of the study are failing in their food services for canteens and other eating houses due to unsatisfactory services received by the customers from the food service workers. Based on this, the study determined the entrepreneurial skill improvement needs of these managers that could help enhance their performance to satisfy their customer through improved services. From the results of the study, it was revealed that food service managers needed 10 skill items in planning, 13 in supervising and 11 skills in public relations.

It is therefore, recommended that the findings of the study on skill improvement needs of food service managers in satisfying their customers be utilized for retraining them for competence in their jobs through organized workshops and seminars.

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