
Adult Education and Employee Training in the Hotel Industry in Nigeria

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Abstract

The hotel industry could be more lucrative and economy-boosting, if properly handled. Unfortunately, it is yet to take its pride of place in Nigeria. As a service industry, personnel's training is very important. The level of training in the hotel industry from the employees' perspective as well as training gains form the main focus of this study. It is a survey of the level and effect of personnel training in hotels in Lagos. 340 employees and employers responded to questionnaire and interviews. Findings reveal that the level of training received by hotel employees is lower than the expected and training was viewed differently by hotel employees. Several factors affect a sustained level of training in the hotel industry. It was suggested that more international quality assurance processes be adopted to improve the industry and ensure uniformity in hotel employees training.

Key words: *Employee training, Hotel industry, Method, Adult Education*

1. Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry is a vast and comprehensive service industry encompassing lodging, food and event planning, among others. It is a vital potential contributor to the Nigerian economy by way of encouraging investment, diversifying the economy and boosting global unity. It is also at the forefront of creating first impressions and promoting the culture and people of the nation. By inference, the personnel who operate in the industry serve as ambassadors for image projection. Employee training is therefore crucial to this dynamic and possibly under-rated industry and it is also appropriate and responsible practice.

Hotel, specifically, is an enterprise that provides accommodation, with or without ancillary services, according to the World Tourism Organization. Today, Nigeria boasts of thousands of hotels nation-wide of different classifications. Most of the earlier hotels were developed by the government and were mostly in the three largest and port cities – Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt, but today, all existing hotels are privately owned and run due to the government's privatization policy. The hotel industry is particularly relevant as it caters to basic human needs like shelter and food. Unfortunately, Nigeria is yet to fully explore the potential contribution of hotels to the economy, not only as a job creator but also as a means of economic power. Currently in Nigeria, the hotel industry contributes less than 1% to the GDP of the economy (Ward & Udabor, 2013).

“Training is the process that provides employees with the knowledge and the skills required to operate within the systems and standards set by management” (Sommerville, 2007:208). It is a method of helping employees obtain the needed skills to perform their given tasks and develop. Training should ultimately be a combination of having the appropriate academic qualification as well as learning specific tasks and other soft skills necessary for the job. Training is one of the key pillars of methods in adult education. This is because one of the essential attributes of the adult is that he is a worker - whether as an employee or employer of labour, and appropriate training and retraining helps him cope. There are several beneficial methods of training that are suitable for employees in the hotel business - like on-the-job training, Job-Shadowing and Online certification,

among others (Bakare, 2013). The national tourism policy of Nigeria (2005) supports training, especially of its employees and has agencies to initiate and monitor different types of training. It is however silent on the monitoring and regulating of training that goes on in individual establishments. Ofobruku (2012) raised concern over the training system in the hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria as a source of supply of skilled labour. Audu and Gungul (2014) also support the need for staff training in the hospitality industry as a means of improvement. Yang (2010) examined the importance of staff training in the hotel industry, studying one hotel in China. He wanted to help employees find out the importance of training and reported that they do not fully realize the importance of training. Ahammad (2013) did similar work in another hotel in Cyprus to assess the importance of training and recommended a more effective training system. This study is to establish the level of training that goes on in the hotel industry in Nigeria from the employees' perspective.

2. Problem of the study

Tourism is the more popular aspect of the hospitality industry and studies of hotels are few, and fewer still on the aspect of how training can be seen as a contributor to the economy. Most training organizations are at the level of private outfits in Nigeria and hotel management is not yet taken seriously at the university level as a course of study, neither does policy take a specific stand on ensuring training in hotels. As a potential contributor to the economy, if required levels of training are not strictly adhered to, standards will be lowered, the economy will be drastically affected and Nigeria will be selling herself short and stands to lose a lot. There is ultimately still a dearth of information on employee training in the hotel industry in Nigeria.

3. Purpose of the study

This paper focuses on the level of personnel training in the hotel industry in Nigeria. Specifically:

Examined the training situation - the perception of employees on training in the hotel industry in Nigeria;
Documented the level of academic and professional qualification of existing personnel in the hotel industry;
Assessed the effect of training method on training gains of participants, and
Suggested ways of enhancing sustainable training practices in hotels.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

1. a. Do employees receive training from the hotel?
b. if so, when?
c. and for how long?
2. How do employees view training?
3. What is the level of professional qualification or standard in the hotel industry in Nigeria?
4. How is training expectation of the respondents different from the actual training received?
5. How can sustainable training practices be enhanced?

5. Null Hypotheses

1. The training method adopted will not significantly affect the training outcome
2. Training method used will not significantly affect employee satisfaction

6. Methods

The study is survey in nature, using qualitative and quantitative approach. The study focused on the hospitality industry and personnel training, specifically in hotels. The population of the study consisted of all hotel employees and employers in hotels in Lagos State. Recognized and registered hotels, not motel, guest

house etc, were used in the study. The study examined hotels from 10 of the 20 Local Government Areas of Lagos State, first stratified into the Mainland and Island. To ensure fairness low end and high end hotels were fully represented. Sampling profile of hotel employees revealed 75.29% male with a modal age of between 26 – 35 years. 65% of the respondents had a university degree. Hotels were stratified into ‘High’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Low’ end by the researcher. Respondents were drawn from more than 50 hotels in Lagos with 2 to 7 respondents on the average from each hotel, depending on employee availability, but considering front and back line employees. In all, 340 respondents were randomly sampled. Hotels are usually rated internationally but this study stratified and adopted a classification of ‘high end’ – often branded and professionally managed’, ‘medium end’ – privately owned and independently managed’, and ‘low end – individually owned and self or employee managed’- usually with fewer rooms and minimal staff strength. The hotel classification was largely based on the criteria of number of rooms, management cadre, staff strength as well as location.

Questionnaire was the main tool used to collect data, tagged Questionnaire for Hotel Workers (QHW). This was supported with face-to-face oral interview sessions, dealing with experiences and challenges of management and level of training provided. Quantitative research was done by distributing questionnaires personally and with the aid of assistants to the employees of the various hotels and qualitative research was conducted through personal interviews of management level staff to corroborate employee’s opinion on their training. The questionnaire was in two parts, the biography section, followed by Likert-type questions containing 18 items. The questions were duly validated with the input of experts in the hospitality industry and reliability was established through test-retest spanning an interval of three weeks, with 20 subjects who did not form part of the main study. A reliability quotient of .76 was obtained, deeming the instrument suitable for the study. The research questions were analyzed using percentages and frequency counts while the hypotheses were subjected to the t-test, and the results presented in tables and a bar chart. The interview results were also presented.

7. Results

The following table summarizes the characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents

Description	Frequency	percentage
Sex		
Male	256	75.29
Female	84	24.71
Age		
18 – 25	44	13
26 – 35	168	49
36 – 45	112	33
46 – 55	16	5

Highest Educational qualification		
Primary School	8	2
Secondary School	88	26
Polytechnic/Technical	104	31
University	108	32
Post Graduate	32	9

To answer research question 1 which asked whether the respondents received any training, the majority claimed they were ‘trained’ when they started 221(65%) and it lasted between 1 – 3 days and up to less than a month. Some claimed they were not trained because they were already qualified. It is also noted that there are no specific policy statements on ensuring training in hotels.

In response to research question 2 on respondents’ opinion of what constituted training, Majority 93(27.35%) felt training was a combination of ‘being taught specific tasks, like laying a bed, or being put through the basics. 67(19.71%) selected formalized education resulting in certification. The next frequency 81(23.82%) were those who chose the option ‘all of the above’.

Research Question 3 asked for the purpose of the training given to employees. The next table shows the responses.

Table 2: Table of percentage and frequency count of responses on the purpose of training according to employees

Description	Frequency	percentage
General introduction to the hotel space/co-workers	59	17.35
To teach customer service	52	15.30
To help me perform my task better	80	23.53
Computer usage	43	12.62
All of the above	66	19.41
No training	40	11.76

On the respondents’ general view on the purpose of training (research question 5), the purpose of most of the trainings were enumerated as to introduce the new employee to the hotel operations generally and to other co-workers, especially in their specific Department. Majority 80(23.53%) felt that training was to make them perform their allotted tasks better only, while 66(19.41%) felt it was a combination of all of the options. 40(11.76%) said that no training took place.

The 4th research question was to document employees’ academic and other professional qualifications. Results show up to 63% possessed tertiary education certificate. However, few of the respondents had additional professional qualifications appropriate to the hotel industry.

Research question 5 states that training expectations of the employee will not significantly differ from the actual training received. The table below presents the responses:

Table 3: Respondents’ perspective of training

Training	Expectation	Reality	Total
1 Being put through the basics	73	92	165
2 Being introduced to people in the Dept.	12	21	33
3 Being taught specific tasks	96	60	156
4 Having the appropriate certificate	69	63	132
5 All of the above	86	65	151
6 None of the above	4	39	43
total	340	340	680

The difference is reflected in the chart below:

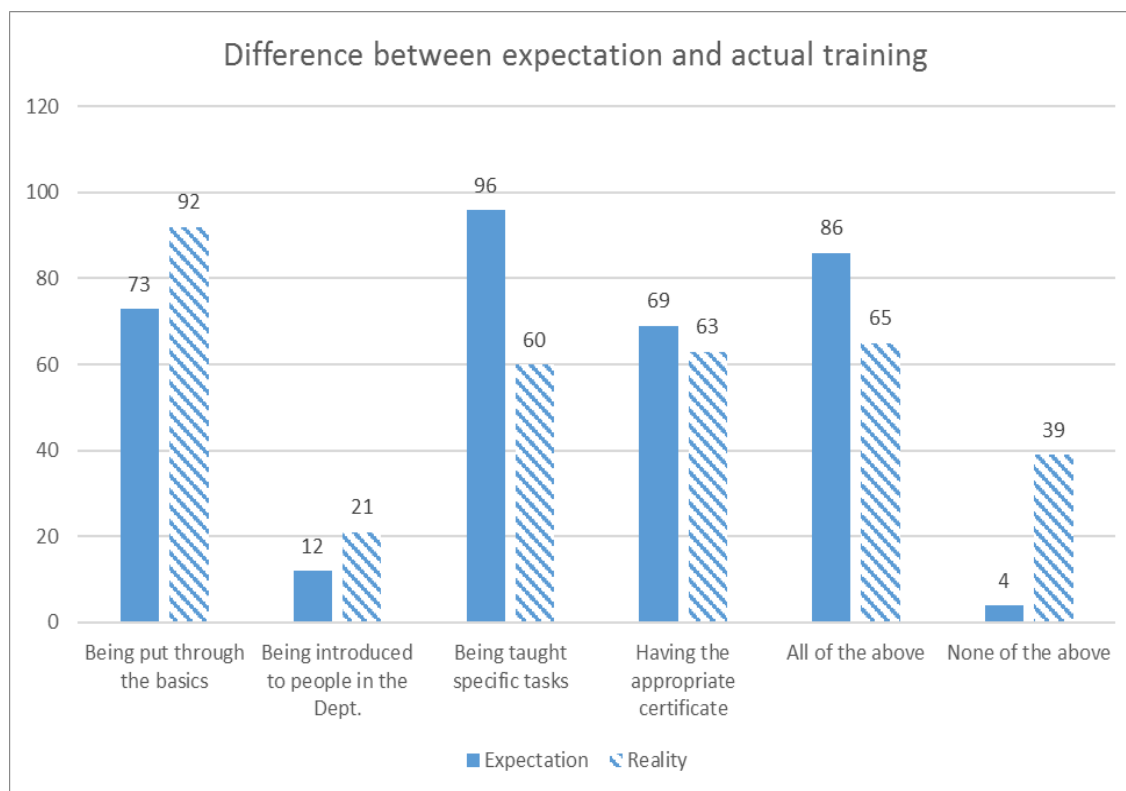


Fig. 1: Training expectation and actual training

A first glance at the chart above reveals in general that the level of training given to the respondents is lower than what is expected. This supports the notion that probably enough employee training is not occurring in the hotel industry, and agrees with Yang (2010), who goes further to suggest that employees do not fully realize the importance of training.

The first null hypothesis measured teaching method adopted against employee’s level of satisfaction with the training. The results reveal:

Table 4: Employees' level of satisfaction with training

Teaching method	Employee satisfaction				X ² calc	X ² crit	df	Decision
	Very satisfied	Averagely satisfied	Not satisfied	total				
Workshop/Seminar/Conf	16 (33)	22 (46)	10 (21)	48 (100)	10.95	14.45	6	Accept
Lecture	53 (33)	74 (45)	35 (22)	162 (100)				
Job shadowing	23 (39)	27 (46)	9 (15)	59 (100)				
Demonstration/practice	37 (52)	19 (27)	15 (21)	71 (100)				
Total	129	142	69	340				

Note figures in parentheses are percentages of the cell value

Table 4 shows that the X² calculated (10.95) is lower than the X² critical value at 14.45, degree of freedom 6 and 0.05 level of confidence. The hypothesis was thus accepted. This suggests that the respondents were satisfied with the method of teaching.

Hypothesis 2 revealed that the training method used will not significantly influence training outcome. The Chi square test shows:

Table 5: Effect of teaching method on training outcome

Teaching method	Training outcome				X ² calc	X ² crit	df	Decision
	Able to work better	Little difference	No difference	total				
Workshop/Seminar/Conf.	19 (46)	16 (31)	6 (15)	41 (100)	12.61	14.45	6	Accept
Lecture	91 (48)	87 (46)	11 (6)	189 (100)				
Job shadowing	23 (55)	14 (33)	5 (12)	42 (100)				
Demonstration/practice	26 (68)	8 (21)	4 (11)	38 (100)				
Total	159	125	26	310				

Note figures in parentheses are percentages of the cell value

Hypothesis 2 assessed the effect of training method adopted on the training outcome of participants, and the hypothesis was accepted as the X² critical (14.45) was higher than the calculated value of 10.95 at 0.05 level of confidence and df 6. This suggests that how employees expected to be trained is similar to how they were trained, but also that the training method of choice affects the training outcome. Therefore, if appropriate methods are not adopted, the training will be ineffective and may not be taken seriously.

8 (a). Discussion of the Findings

The typical hotel in Lagos is privately owned by individuals or groups and independently managed. Others are professionally managed (sometimes by expatriates) and may be branded. The low presence of female employees in the hotel industry could be a reflection of the cultural fear and negative perception of the industry as being not a 'dignified' place to work. The female respondents were largely represented in Catering and Housekeeping with fewer presence in management positions. Although majority had tertiary education, relevant professional certification in the industry was scant. Few claimed to be professionally certified. However, out of these, some had adjunct certification, mostly in Catering, Management and Accounting etc.

The hotel industry in Nigeria does not seem to conform to the global nomenclature. There are rather low, medium or high end hotels instead of the regular 'stars' awarded for classification. Nigerian hotels have more of low to medium-end rather than the high-end, internationally branded ones run by professionals. The hotels in

the low-end are mostly owned by individuals, mostly as a business investment and may be self-run with minimal staff. This probably contributes to the lack of uniformity in the employee training in the hotels.

Typical induction process in hotels seems to be limited to that given to employees during the orientation period, often lasting for a few days. Some hotels do not offer training and some believe once the employee is suitably certified he does not need to be trained. Purpose of training is largely to put the employee through the basics. The general picture on training in the hotel industry in Nigeria suggests that there is an attempt to, at least, do some form of orientation or induction for new employees and that is the extent of what most regard as training. This involves taking the employee through standard operating procedure (SOP), the intensity of which varies according to the hotel classification. Only the high-end hotels seemed to practice staff training with seriousness. For example, the front desk in most of the establishments polled used a specialized global software package (OPERA) for check-in etc. Front desk employees must be trained to become familiar with it. Thus generally, the impression is that, although the hotel industry knows some form of training is necessary, there is no general gauge to determine what is 'best practice' standard on what should be the level of employee training across board in the field. This goes against the belief in adult education that training should be a continuous process. There is again probably an element of the traditional Nigerian hospitality mentality that is culturally promoted to assume that innate life skills like cooking and cleaning can be parlayed into, or substituted for professional training in the industry. Individual employers may therefore not value the need for professional certification or more professional training for their employees. There is apparently no standardized mode of training, thus the low-end hotels do it their own way.

Training was viewed by employees loosely as ranging from just 'putting them through the basics' (as in most of the low-end hotels) to those who underwent Job-shadowing, or through Workshop and other methods. The majority of the trainings were in-house and on-the-job, conducted by the immediate boss, supervisor or the training manager and Lecture was favoured. Most of the training did not entail teaching the new intakes the tasks, which supports the belief that training is not viewed with the importance necessary, largely in the low-end hotels which agrees with Yang (2010). The polarity in the results was partly attributable to the dichotomy between the hotels managed by international professionals and the local. Maybe the narrow perception of what training is about is partially responsible for the general lassitude towards training in the industry. This is further echoed in Sheriff (2006) submission that an average hospitality stakeholder in Nigeria does not value training that will make employees professionals. Another key emerging issue from the study is that there is scant provision by academic institutions dedicated to the study and award of certificates in Hotel Management in Nigeria. There is a handful dedicated to hospitality and tourism but not specifically to the hotel industry. There are equally many private or government run Vocational Centers, many of which are Catering Schools who teach basic skills like making snacks, etc. Spencerly and Rozga (2007) have also noted that scarcity of local trainers, lack of follow-up, low financing capability seem to plague training aspirations in the industry.

This research has shown a disparity in the level of training that goes on in the industry. Also, in employee perception of what constitutes training. This agrees with Yang (2010) that hotel employees do not fully realize the importance of training. Respondents' suggestions on how the training situation can be improved upon in Nigeria ranged from using more practical methods for training, training more often, ploughing feedbacks in for better performance as well as instituting better policies.

8 (b) Report on the interview sessions

10 management level employees, selected randomly, were asked to comment on training in the hotel industry during the short interview sessions. Though many claimed they gave training to their employees, they were more concerned about other general issues as being more pertinent and a force for immediate concern than training. They mentioned high energy costs (they may have to depend on generating their own alternative electricity supply and use water from self-constructed boreholes as well as taking responsibility for their own waste management, etc.). They also complained about high operating costs and taxation charges - often simultaneously from Federal, State and maybe Local Government, including VAT, License charges, among others; all of which cut into any budget to conduct meaningful training.

Training is important to improving the competencies of the employee. The study agrees with Yang (2010) and Ahammad (2013) who emphasize the importance of staff training as a function of Human Resource Management. However the low end hotels do not exhibit that they value training as such. The question of whether training is actually important or optional for the smooth running of the hotel business may be raised. The resounding answer is YES and it should be all the forms of training – Formal (for certification) and Non-Formal, and should be on-the-job. Since hospitality is basically about handling people, certain business etiquette, personal presence and courtesy are required, including grooming, composure, attitude, communication, presentation, politeness, customer engagement and tolerance, among others. All these can be better served by a properly trained staff to boost customer and employee satisfaction. It is believed that if quality assurance processes were more enforced by authorities, then there may be a more uniform standard operating procedure on employee training that must be adhered to by all in the industry, thereby elevating the status of the hotel industry.

9. Recommendations

There is need to establish proper training schools specifically for Hotel Management and certification which will be of international repute. There are presently few of these in Nigeria. There should be more qualified trainers and employees should be encouraged to get certified so that there can be more professionals in the field (this will impact on customer care and satisfaction and be a boon to the industry). Training must be viewed with more enthusiasm. If there is no consensus on what constitutes training, it will jeopardize the level of training that goes on, especially when policy does not spell out specifically what it should be and the level that is expected in the industry. The idea of a uniform standard operating procedure as guide could emphasize the need for employee training and better supervision in the industry. The international bodies should also get more invested in the process of quality assurance in the field to draw more people in and engender the viability of hospitality and tourism as a field of study. More awareness should also be drawn to the field as a potential career path through frequent campaigns.

10. Conclusion

In spite of the challenges, the hotel industry in Nigeria, if well managed, with an optimally trained personnel and excellent quality assurance practices, has a great potential for boosting the economy of the nation, giving her positive exposure and maximizing her potential. Training leads to improved performance, minimizing mistakes/accidents and this leads to employee, employer and customer satisfaction. Hotels in Nigeria must aspire to constantly meet global measures of standards. Not only should training be seen as important, but it must also be continuous - from **employment** to **retirement** in such a dynamic industry, and ultimately uniform standards. If there is no consensus on what constitutes training, it will jeopardize the level of training that goes on, especially when policy does not spell out specifically what it should be and the level that is expected in the industry. It is essential that training be sustained and recurrent, not limited to orientation only.

To attract and retain employees, there is a need for any establishment to be more committed to investing in employee training. Becoming more proficient in their job helps to foster loyalty, pride, and helps to lower attrition rate, improve staff/customer inter-personal relations, increase productivity and engender competitiveness, among other benefits. With these, the hotel industry in Nigeria can be helped to attain its optimum status.

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