

Chapter 6

Stuck in the GeM Jam: An Action Research on How Practical Training Outcomes Are Related to Training Intentions

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the researchers present the results of the action research project. The GeM (Future General Manager) Program is a specifically-designed training program for outstanding students in the hospitality school to gain specific deep-grounded work experiences in several hotels in Klang Valley, Malaysia. This study used the action research approach to understand the quality of today's industrial training programs. Four final-year undergraduate students from the hospitality school reflected on their training experiences and provided feedback on how the GeM Program can be further developed to enhance the learning outcomes for future training participants. This chapter helps to understand how to develop, design, implement, and monitor a successfully structured training program for the future of the hospitality industry. With this, hotels can acquire the best student trainees who will further their career as employees with them.

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INTRODUCTION

Undergoing training simultaneously during their undergraduate academic years is a great opportunity for students to manifest their theoretically-learned knowledge in a practical environment. Research (Collins, 2002; Ko, 2008) has already proven that training helps students to close the gap between academically-acquired knowledge and hands-on experiences. This is why more and more university degree programs have begun to consider collaborating with several partner hotels to provide practical training opportunities for students to close this breach. The same can be said for Taylor's University School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts; who offers various training sessions, internships and niche hospitality programs as well.

One of their exceptional training program, which is known as the GeM (Future General Manager) Program, handpicks outstanding students and provides them a special platform by giving them practical education throughout their two-year training. The program is carried out in cooperation between the university and selected partner hotels; with the aim to train these future General Managers (GMs) from an early-on stage. Only students with remarkable potentials were selected to join the GeM Program and underwent these special training sessions to meet the key points of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). After these student trainees successfully finished all their trainings, they have the opportunity to join the hotels as junior managers and possibly become GMs in the near future (Taylor's University, 2015).

However, the reality of their training experiences is far from perfect. The guidelines are normally set in place in the initial stage but the execution of these guidelines and the promise of a brighter future is the primary question of this research paper. For this research, four GeM Program student trainees reflected on their experiences in their two-year training period. Their reflections are based on the concept of an action research, whereby these student trainees reflect on the the initial training guidelines they received and compare it with their real-life training experiences.

The action research approach was chosen because there seldom is an opportunity where research can be done on-the-spot (Bradbury-Huang, 2010; McTaggart, 1994; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). Normally, researchers go into the field, trying to find participants for interviews or questionnaires. After that, they collect the data and design a fictive outcome. On the other hand, in action research, data is collected on-the-spot from the researchers / participants through a reflection process; followed by an analysis to prepare them for the next action, which is amending the issues that they have highlighted (Bradbury-Huang, 2010).

In this research, four undergraduate hospitality student trainees underwent their GeM Program training sessions in several hotels in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. They reflected, analyzed and concluded their training experiences; comparing it with the training agreement between the university and their partner hotels.

Research Objectives

1. To understand the learning expectations and training structure of the GeM Program.
2. To analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the GeM Program.
3. To implement suggestions for improvement, for similar training programs in the future.

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