

teaching note

Internship as a Tool for Developing Competences in ESDAI Students, as the Key to Gaining Competitive Advantage for a Good Labor Positioning

Summary

This Case Study springs from the current importance given to competence-based education, and how these skills, applied during internships, are the suitable space for development in hospitality companies and institutions. Competence-based study programs reflect the synergy between institutions of higher education and the labor market.

In ESDAI's Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality Management (Universidad Panamericana), the contents of the study program, as well as the internship program, are designed so that students may develop and practice the competences required at the workplace. Thus, among the activities that the students have the opportunity to implement we may find the following: Troubleshooting and process analysis through the application of theoretical-methodological tools with an administrative, statistical and accounting approach.

Teaching Objectives

- To describe the characteristics of the environment in the hospitality industry.
- To recognize the management skills for Hospitality Management graduates required by the industry.
- To identify the professional profile of Hospitality Management graduates.
- To analyze the competitive advantages of a competence-based professional education.
- To point out the challenges faced by Hospitality Management program coordinators in developing the skills required by the labor market.
- To design strategies to develop competencies, according to the statistics proposed in the Case Study.
- To identify criteria to measure the impact of Hospitality Management graduates on the labor market.
- To analyze what should the relationship between higher education institutions and the hospitality industry be like.

Contextual Framework

In Mexico there are a great number of Hospitality Management programs, so nowadays the job market is more competitive, and higher-level positions are increasingly harder to achieve by both graduates and undergraduates. The programs have grown dramatically in the last years. In 2014, the number of bachelor programs in Hospitality or Tourism Management, and Gastronomy reached 976 nationwide. (CONAET, 2014).

Figure 1 shows the zone allocation of the diverse Hospitality Management programs. According to the study done by SECTUR, CESTUR and CONACYT (2012), Bachelor's programs based on competences, reached a national average of 72%. This study also found that zone 6 has the highest percentage, 80.3%, and zone 5 the lowest, 30%. ESDAI (Universidad Panamericana) is in zone 4 which has a 65.5% of bachelor's degrees based on competences; this gives its graduates a competitive advantage in this zone's labor market.

Teaching Plan and Analysis

This case has two different applications. First, it is useful for the coordinators in the Hospitality Management Program and the Internship Program to understand the competitive environment in the labor market in the hospitality industry, and to understand the importance of competencies and their development in education.

Second, it is useful for students to understand the importance of competencies in their professional development, and in their success in the labor market in the hospitality industry. The case is particularly useful for the Personnel Management course, where students analyze the desired profiles in job candidates, the desired competencies for management posts, and the skills that need to be strengthened.

The Case focuses on two fundamental aspects: first, on the competitive advantage of a competence-based study program, as well as

Fig. 1
Geographic location of competence based Bachelor's programs in Mexico



an internship program focused on developing leadership skills, necessary in the decision-making process within the companies. In second place, on the existing problems of undergraduate programs, whose graduates lack the competences required in the labor market, and is thus placed mostly in operative jobs.

As we can see in tables and graphs of the Study Case:

1. Of the universe of study, 80.19% of our graduates is currently employed. This percentage shows the success of the internship program in employability.
2. After their last internship period, of the 72% of graduates who took a job offering, 63% did so with a promotion. This high percentage reflects the adequate and solid formation of competencies that allow graduates to access better positions in shorter periods of time.
3. According to the information shown in table 4, 60.83% of graduates earns between 16000 and 26000 Mexican pesos. This figure corresponds to a high level salary in a highly competitive industry.

This is why undergraduate programs should promote the development of skills to create differentiation parameters as a competitive advantage in, both national and international labor markets.

According to research done by ESDAI (Universidad Panamericana) management positions in Hospitality Industry, characterized by personal interaction with clients in order to gain their satisfaction and loyalty, require the following competences:

1. Flexibility and ability to adapt to new situations; 2. Problem solving; 3. Teamwork; 4. Autonomy; 5. Ability to relate to others; 6. Project Design and development; 7. Ability to put knowledge into practice; 8. Congruence; 9. Leadership and Decision-making. 10. Time management. (ESDAI, Escuela de Administración de instituciones de la Universidad Panamericana., 2009).

These competences are sustained by a service spirit, which is the guiding principle of any hospitality related activity.

The definition of competences is the most important challenge faced by academic program coordinators and internship program coordinators.

Therefore we suggest the following activities as part of the case analysis:

1. Identifying the companies where graduates and undergraduates work, and the posts they occupy.
2. Creating a profile of the necessary skills for the relevant job positions.
3. Conceptualizing each competence in virtue of the job profile, the expected activities, and the degree of responsibility and autonomy required by the post.
4. Designing strategies aimed at developing such skills both in

the undergraduate and internship programs.

5. Designing assessment instruments for the relevant competences in the classroom and during internship practices.

An interesting analysis of hospitality recruiter's selection criteria is presented in Kwok, Adams & Feng (Kwok, Adams, & Feng, 2012), which could be useful for the definition of profile competences.

Analysis Questions

- What characteristics portray the environment in hospitality industry?
- What are the management skills for Hospitality Management graduates required by the Industry?
- What is the profile of higher-level Hospitality Management graduates?
- What are the challenges faced by coordinators with the curricula of Hospitality Management programs in relation to being able to develop skills demanded by the labor market?
- What strategies can be developed to improve competencies, according to the statistics proposed in the Case Study?
- How does one measure the impact of Hospitality Management graduates on the labor market?
- What should the relationship between higher education schools and the industry be like?

Final Considerations

- Competence based Curricula and internships at undergraduate level are the answer to the demands of the labor market in order to position graduates at an executive level.
- Coordinators of Business Administration and Hospitality management programs and coordinators of internship programs are faced by the challenge of developing strategies in order for their students to mainly acquire leadership, decision making and problem solving skills so they may become competitive and differentiating advantages for graduates at national and international levels.
- The study and monitoring of the positions held by graduates in the labor market, as well as their mobility, have become an indispensable tool for adapting curricula and internship programs in order to adjust to the changing and increasingly demanding needs of the labor market.