

The Recognition of Hotel Staffs in Pursuit of the Imposed ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP)

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ABSTRACT: *The study on the recognition of hotel staff in pursuit of the imposed ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) aimed to broaden the perspective on the supporting of labor mobility in travel-related services, especially in hotel and service industries whose priority lay within the free labor market competition amongst the ASEAN members. The observation was done in 2015 for one year. This also included setting an approach to the development of tourism service labor which relatively increased as a result of the growth of the regional tourism market. The study was conducted for the purpose of 1) To studying the planning on human resources management in hotel business and service labor in Chiang Mai following the imposing of the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP). 2) To developing the preparations for hotel business and service labor in Chiang Mai following the imposing of the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP).*

KEYWORDS: *ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP), Hotel Staffs, Labor Mobility.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The idea of an ASEAN community had achieved the agreement in its economic collaboration known as ASEAN Economic Community or AEC following an agreement signing in 2012. The aim of ASEAN was to encourage the free flow of trades and investments especially labor mobility across the 10 included countries. The service industry had been growing rapidly in the region and service labor in tourism industry was an important part in supporting the economy system.

According to ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals or ACCSTP was created as an indicator of labor skills in tourism and hotel businesses. The labors are entitled to move across the member countries freely under the same provisions and standards that are applicable amongst the member states.

The ACCSTP states the basic requirement for skills needed in each profession. Any person certified by ACCSTP by their home country will be eligible to work in the member states (Tourism Knowledge Management Center, College of Innovation Thammasat University: CITU) (<http://www.tourismkm-asean.org>, 2016 : online)

The free labor market amongst ASEAN in 2015 lasted for one year. From the guidelines for labor development in future tourism service expected to expand along with the regional tourism market, the author has an interest in this issue the purposes including:

1. Studying the planning on human resources management in hotel business and service labor in Chiang Mai following the imposing of the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) in 2015.
2. Developing the preparations for hotel business and service labor in Chiang Mai following the imposing of the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) in 2015.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Tourism liberalization in ASEAN

Service is distinct from goods production and sales as it is intangible; the service cannot be physically experienced before purchase. Service is also inseparable in its process of providing and receiving that occurs simultaneously. The characteristics of service also include perishability as it cannot be physically retained; non-ownership; heterogeneity as the form of service is dependent on service providers; differentiation as it caters the needs to different people. (Final Report “Tourism Liberalization Development and Service Master Plan Project”, 2013)

Service industry has the biggest proportion in Thailand’s economy since 1960 – 2003. To be exact, service industry contributed to Thailand’s economy for 47.72 percent of GDP, and increased by 55.11 of GDP

in 2003 while the agricultural industry shared 39.79 percent, and decreased by 9.7 of GDP. The service industry had grown consistently and out ran the agricultural industry.

In order to determine a precise scope for the convenience in WTO negotiation, service industry is considered to cover main tourism service activities cited from UN Provision Central Product Classification (CPC) which states that the service industry includes hotel and restaurant, travel agencies and tour operators, tourist guides services and others. However, other activities may vary according to a state member. Each variation should be clearly explained.

2. ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)

The ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreement quests for the common ground on service provider qualifications for certain professions such as physicians, engineers, architects, accountants and so on. The issues discussed in the negotiation covered education, work experience; all of which dictate the condition and permit in working in a member state. The aim of MRA is to support of labor mobility between member states by which each professional is able to obtain a work permit easier without checking qualifications required by the country each professional is moving to. (etatjournal : online, 2018)

The ASEAM MRA details about the consideration of professional performances through qualification, education, training and/or work experience; all of which are basic requirement for tourism professionals in ASEAN. The Transportation Professional Certification Board or any organization with equal authority will determine whether a person qualification meets its performance standards of ASEAN tourism or not. A person whose qualification is certified is eligible to move freely within the member states. However any professional is required to follow rules and regulation in that particular country he or she is working.

The purposes of MRA are to

1. Facilitate tourism personnel mobility within ASEAN through setting out tourism qualifications and performances.
2. Exchange knowledge about educational excellence and training for tourism staff to be internationally accepted.
3. Provide opportunity for cooperation and potential within ASEAN member states.

In order to increase opportunity for those working in tourism industry across ASEAN countries, academics from both government and private sectors developed tourism competency standard curriculum to be internationally accepted for Thai labor who seek to work in the tourism industry such as tour service, food and beverage, tour guide service, reception and tourism investments in the region.

3. ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP)

The ASEAN Common Competency Standard for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) set out competencies required for those who work in the tourism industry. The competencies are categorized into 2 fields comprising 6 groups and 32 positions.

1. Hotel and Accommodation Service
 - 1.1 Front office department consists of the positions as follows; front office managers, front office supervisors, receptionists, telephone operators and bell boys.
 - 1.2 Housekeeping department consists of the positions as follows; a executive housekeeper, a laundry manager, floor supervisors, laundry attendants, room attendants and public area cleaners.
 - 1.3 Food production department consists of the positions as follows; executive chef, demi chef, commis chef, chef de partie, commis pastry, baker and butcher
 - 1.4 Food and Beverage department consists of the positions as follows; food and beverage director, food and beverage manager, head waiter, bartender and waiter.
2. Travel Services
 - 2.1 Travel agencies consists of the positions as follows; general manager, assistant general manager, senior travel consultant and travel consultant.
 - 2.2 Tour operation consists of the positions as follows; product manager, sales and marketing manager, credit manager, ticketing manager and tour manager.

Yuwadee Sattayapanich (2018) stated the issue on the adaptation of Thailand to prepare for labor mobility in areas such as Pattaya on effects that may be posed. As a tourist attraction, it should adapt itself towards labor movement. Entrepreneurs should study guidelines to develop their businesses and prepare for changes and competition. Staff training within an organization should be encouraged to improve workers' competency. ASEAN allows all member states to free trade and compete equally, and reduce the dependency on the third country trading. It also increases the livelihood of consumers. However, the capacity improvement and logistics competition should still be promoted.

Apinya Luenchawee (2017) conducted a study on ASEAN labor liberalization, effects that pose on Thailand and the direction of labor in the future. The study suggested that free trade had positive effects on the expansion of the production and labor sectors which led to the higher demand on unskilled workers and semi-skilled workers in the industrial sectors such as rubber, textiles, and jewelry industries. The demand caused higher wages and better working standards, career path and quality of workers' life. This also applied for skilled workers. Free trade also promotes better working environment and workers' welfares in medium and large businesses; for instance, textiles and jewelry industries, and service businesses.

Nevertheless, free trade might not offer only good benefits, it could also cause uncertainty for unskilled workers' career, and income and welfare discrepancy. This could happen to workers with different levels of skills and those who work in different types of industries. Workers tend to have problems adapting themselves are those above 40 years of age, unskilled and poorly educated workers.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research aims to analyze information and human resources management schemes which includes current and future labor in pursuit of the imposed ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP). Mixing methodologies were applied using documentary research to study about the data obtained from area where the research was conducted. Then, a survey studies method was used by collecting data in the actual field. All data were gathered using both qualitative and quantitative method together with in-depth interviews.

1. Population and Samples

Hotel businesses in Chiang Mai, according to Trip Advisor, adopted online network to operate their information giving, reservations and other services. The platform had become the most popular access for tourists around the world. According to the report in the first quarter of 2016 during January to March, the number of visits to the websites reached 280 million times. The number of comments on the page was up to 170 million.

2. Data Collection and Research Tool

The author had set questions of different topics for in-depth interviews which were carried out in the form of structured interview. Questionnaires on ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) were handed to different departments including front office, housekeeping, food and beverage and kitchen.

3. Data Analysis

1. Descriptive statistics was adopted to analyze quantitative data which included frequency, percentage, mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviations. Data was analyzed as the following:
 - 1.1 Personal features
 - 1.2 General information
2. For qualitative data, the author had organized data from different categories together with interviews with directors of human resources department and staff from hotel-related businesses. Brainstorming was applied to connect data respectively by analyzing content for clearer results. The data were then synthesized and connected logically in order to render descriptive data that fulfill the purposes of the research.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was found as follows; for the part of data obtained from human resources departments in Chiang Mai hotel businesses following the imposing of ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP), most of the samples were female aged between 51 – 37 with bachelor degrees holding executive position in hotel businesses, earning more than 30,000 Baht of salary with more than 11 years of experience in the industry mostly 4 – star hotels operated under the owner-operated systems.

It can be concluded that from the analysis that executives or those involved in the human resources planning management in hotel business and service in Chiang Mai following the imposing of ACCSTP, recognized ACCSTP at the highest level with the mean of 4.67

The human resources management planning in hotel and service business in Chiang Mai following the imposing of ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals was carried out by those involved in the planning with the recognition of ACCSTP at the moderate level with the mean of 2.81 and standard deviation at 44.17

The executives involved in the human resources management planning in hotel and service business in Chiang Mai recognized the ACCSTP at the highest level with the mean of 4.66

From the 3 findings presented above, it can be concluded that the executives involved in the human resources management planning in hotel business and service labor in Chiang Mai recognized the ACCSTP at

the highest level. However, the human resources management planning in hotel and service business in Chiang Mai following the imposing of ACCSTP was carried out with the recognition of ACCSTP at the moderate level.

The researcher conducted this study on the recognition of ACCSTP in order to apply in the adaptation of service business in Chiang Mai. As can be seen, the executives in hotel business in Chiang Mai had recognized the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals that was accepted amongst the member states. The labor mobility of tourism professionals was in accordance with regulations and provisions of ACCSTP which was the collaboration between the member states. The competency of hotel entrepreneurs and travels was regulated to improve the standards in accordance with ACCSTP with the means from 4.94 to 4.91.

Amongst those who recognized the ACCSTP at the low level were those in the operational level of front office department including receptionists, telephone operators and bell boys, food and beverage service including bartenders, waiters. The 2 main fields of ACCSTP included accommodations and travels. The ACCSTP brought about excellent exchange of information in professional and staff training which rated with the means between 4.66 – 4.30

On the part of human resources management planning, the executives in hotel and labor service in Chiang Mai operated their planning in accordance with the ACCSTP at the highest level by having provisions and regulations in interviews and investigations in the qualifications of tourism professionals and providing orientations and information on ACCSTP to staff and recruiting new staff according to ACCSTP. Their management was rated with the means between 4.39 – 4.08.

The lowest part on human resources management planning in hotel and service labor in Chiang Mai was investigating people in reference from the database of ACCSTP; the recognition of the operation planning among the member states; policy descriptions about work protocols, welfares, vacation leaves; the interpretation of labor laws amongst countries using ACCSTP; the discussion with the trade union on hotel delegates and contract interpretation relating to trade union. All of which was rated with the means between 1.93 – 1.57.

The executives in hotel and service business recognized the ACCSTP at the highest level because they were able to make sure each positions follow the protocols. For instance; the head waiter can perform basic first-aid procedures; the public area cleaner can provide a lost and found service in the facility; the executive chef can work in a socially diverse environment; the receptionist can maintain guests' financial records; the front office manager can monitor and manage workplace relations and diversity. All of which was rated with the means between 4.99 – 4.72.

Others included the following: the executive housekeeper can perform knowledge management and learning organization; the telephone operator can operate a (PABX) switchboard; the food and beverage director can maintain quality customers and guest service; the baker can keep kitchen equipment and utensils clean; the laundry manager can monitor, control and order new stock. All of which was rated with the means between 4.66 – 4.36.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The human resources management planning in hotel business and service labor in Chiang Mai following the imposing of ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals in 2015 had set out clear policies on human resources management conforming to the protocols on human resources management which was considered as the core of man power operation and management of the hotel as following issues including

1. Recruitment
2. Interview and checking
3. Selection
4. Reference investigation
5. Sending applicants to head of department for the final procedure
6. Explanation of policies on work regulations, welfares and vacation leaves.
7. Orientations for new staff
8. Training sessions
9. Safety precautions program
10. Welfare and incentive program
11. Negotiation with the trade union on sending delegates in any agreement and interpretation of any contract with the trade union
12. Interpretation on labor laws and ensuring whether the work conforms to the protocols

According to the findings, the human resources management planning in Chiang Mai following the imposing of ACCSTP was effective and coherent with the study conducted by ApinyaLuenchawee (2018) stating that free trade had positive effects on the expansion of labor and production which led to the higher demand in unskilled and semi-skilled workers in relative industries. It also brought about the imposing of policies concerning the trade union and problems that may cause from labor, and the discussions for better

understandings between executives and staff.

The internal communication is vitally important in hotel organizations as it relies upon the cooperation between workers in ordering, opinion sharing, recordings and mail communication channel, the prevention of severe conflicts and problems curbing in order to not disturb guest service, penalties on staff by deducting their salary, profits and reducing the scope of their duties. Human resources department is dependent on the main policies of hotel including ownership, budget and number of rooms, for instance.

The findings suggested that the human resources management following the ACCSTP played a crucial part in future planning and adaptation of man power. The relative job of human resources management ranged from recruitment, selection, orientation, training and development, working skills improvement, assessment on work performance and staff benefits.

Hotel business in Chiang Mai should adapt itself for the future trend about labor market in order to be fully prepared for working under ACCSTP. There some issues that need more attention in preparation for ACCSTP including the following: reference investigation from the database of ACCSTP, recognition in operation planning among countries using ACCSTP, explanation of policies about work regulations, benefits and vacation leaves, interpretation of labor laws, ensuring whether the work conforms to the protocols and the ACCSTP, negotiation with the trade union, negotiation with the trade union on sending delegates in any agreement and interpretation of any contract with the trade union. That being said, it is to prevent Thai labor from moving to member states offering higher pay and attracting labor from the member states to work in Thailand as offering a better pay.

The planning of hiring following the imposing of ACCSTP was not aimed at hiring new positions only but rather replacing positions based on the needs and importance required by the board of committee. This also included determining the number of foreign workers to be restricted. The acceptance of student trainees both from Thailand and other ASEAN countries after the imposing of MRA on TP can be done by considering the revenue forecast and working with relative departments involved in future revenue and occupancy forecast monthly or weekly.

New staff orientation, training and development in the future will be done considering the needs of new staff at a personal level with the aim to improve their work performance mainly.

VI. Acknowledgements

This study only focuses on hotel staffs who Pursuit of the Imposed ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP). The study adopted a research and development model using questionnaires asking staff in hotel business about the performance standards in other departments including front office, housekeeping, food and beverage, kitchen. The questions were also given to students from universities to score as in scale. The samples included 181 hotels staff. The findings suggested that hotel business had recognized the Mutual Recognition Agreement on professional qualifications. Executives were positions involved in planning for human resources management in Chiang Mai hotel and service industries. Future study can include hotels staff in othercountry of ASEAN member.

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