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Efficiency of Hotel Management. Training of Specialists in Hotel Industry Field

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Abstract:

The article deals with the main issues recently faced by the hospitality industry, as well as suggestions for their elimination and minimization. The study has shown that the main issues include the large gap between the practical and theoretical aspects of the training process, in addition to the insufficient amount of practice during the whole course of studying in the field of "Hotel industry", which makes it impossible to adequately prepare graduates for competition on the labor market in the area of hotel service. Other issues include the lack of language teaching in higher education institutions that specialize in training hospitality business professionals, which undermines the entire education system aimed at communication with foreign guests. In the article, the authors analyze the problems of Russian higher education related to training professionals for the hospitality industry. These problems lead to the loss of competitiveness on the European and global market of educational services. The authors identify the key elements in the training of specialists that require improvements to engage in competition. After the study in this field was conducted, the ways of solving the identified problems were proposed. The solutions involved the principles of creating a competitive school of hotel management in Russia as a factor in the development of the resource potential of hotels. As a result, the prestige of studying in such higher education institutions rises.

Keywords: hospitality industry; hotel management; training of specialists; market of educational services.

JEL Classification: L83; M59; I29.

Introduction

The hospitality industry is one of the most rapidly and dynamically developing fields of the economy. This is largely due to the measures taken by the leaders of Russia for achieving the strategic goal of turning the country into the largest business and tourist center of global significance. Currently, the Russian hospitality industry is

enjoying a period of quantitative and qualitative growth. The prospective increase in the number of hotels and the current hotel room capacity is directly and immediately connected to a significant rise in the need for specialists in the field of hotel businesses. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified specialists for the hospitality field, especially for the positions of lower-level hotel staff. The issue of the shortage of qualified staff is relevant for various fields but it might be the most important issue for the dynamically developing hospitality industry (Khetagurova *et al.* 2018). This issue is much more complex than a simple shortage of graduates. The quality of graduates' training, according to reviews from high-level management of hotel businesses, does not meet the demands of the dynamically developing field of hospitality and does not reflect the particularities of labor market preferences in the hotel sector. Moreover, the rapidly changing internal, as well as external, conditions of hotel business operation in the context of market competition have set new high requirements for the level of expertise of specialists and hotel staff, making them improve their professional knowledge and competences and obtain new skills (Arifulin and Morozova 2012). As practitioners note today, the professional level of young specialists is quite low. A graduate possesses a sound, one could even say fundamental, base of general theoretical and subject-related knowledge, however, employers confirm that there are significant issues with the specialty, practical experience, expertise in the field of modern technologies and insufficient language proficiency. Inadequate language training of graduates by the industry-specific educational institutions forces hotel businesses to give preference to graduates from the leading economic and linguistic institutions of higher education. This is particularly typical of hotels that belong to international hotel chains where fluency in at least one foreign language is part of a mandatory standard of high-quality service.

To correctly identify the main directions for the development of staffing within the hospitality industry, one must analyze, at least generally, the key issues in the current training of staff for the touristic and hospitality complex. Most of the directors of hotel businesses in Moscow estimate that currently, there is no diversified and balanced specialized professional education in the field of tourism and hospitality. There is no close integration of sectoral science and practice in the field of the touristic and hospitality complex, which affects the level of academic programs (Ushakov *et al.* 2014). There is no literature on career orientation for school students in the field of hospitality specialties. The training complex of the hospitality industry, that consists of higher and secondary education facilities, is somewhat disoriented as there is no industry-wide order that would provide target numbers for the current need for specialists of different training levels. This order would be based on the ongoing and systematic monitoring of specialties that are in high demand on the labor market (Ushakov 2015).

1. Methods

The purpose of the study is determined by the problems of Russian higher education in the field of establishment and development of education during the training of specialists in the field of the hotel industry, that lead to the decrease in competitiveness on the European and global market of educational services. As a result of the conducted research, we identified the key elements in the training of specialists that require improvements to engage in competition. After the study in this field was conducted, the ways of solving the identified problems were proposed. The solutions involved the principles of creating a competitive school of hotel management in Russia as a factor in the development of the resource potential of hotels.

The methodology was developed in accordance with the identified goals. One of the key methods was the comparative-analytical method that was based on the detailed examination of the foreign experience and Russian groundwork in the field of training specialists for the hospitality business. We also utilized the socio-retrospective method of research that was based on studying archive materials in order to recreate the historic-cultural process of the establishment of various models in the area of education during the training of specialists for hotel service. The study was based on such general scientific principles, methods and approaches as dialectical, systemic and civilizational.

2. Results

The issue of uncompetitiveness of Russian higher education institutions became more evident during the integration of Russia into the European and global educational environment. It can be confirmed by numerous ratings of higher education institutions in Russia and in the world, as well as the rating of educational institutions that train specialists for the hospitality industry. One could start by examining the rating of the best universities in the world (THE World University Rankings), a worldwide study, and the accompanying rating of the best universities of global significance. According to the British publication, Times Higher Education does not feature any Russian institutions of higher education in the list of the best 200 universities in the world (Center for

Humanitarian Technologies). California Institute of Technology, USA, is at the top of the list, Harvard University, USA, is in second place and the University of Oxford, Great Britain, is in third. After that, the list features higher education institutions from nearly every continent except South America (Osvita.ua).

As we focus on the field of hospitality, there is currently no national rating for higher education institutions in the field of tourism (when it comes to education, hotel business in Russia is part of tourism). However, there are plans to create and implement a rating system for Russian institutions of higher education in this field (Kryukova and Sokolova 2014). This issue was discussed by top representatives of higher education institutions specialized in tourism, as well as by foreign industry professionals. The discussion took place during the international research and practical conference “Modernization of tourist education in Russia based on the requirements of society, market and employers: new organizational and methodological approaches” that was held in Saint-Petersburg (All-Russian information portal Business Education in Russia).

At the same time, there is an international rating of top schools for hotel management and the largest global research and analytical organization Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) Travel & Tourism (Great Britain) conducted a broad overview of the hotel industry. The research data enabled them to make a list of the top ten schools for training in the field of hotel management (Table 1).

The purpose of the study was to relatively rank various international schools of hotel management that offer university-level programs and graduates that get hired at international 5-star hotels. During the study, the respondents were asked to choose ten best schools of hotel management that trained graduates whom they would be glad to hire. The respondents were given a list of 74 hotel management schools from all over the world that offer international education in the field of hospitality. In total, the researchers received over 180 questionnaires from representatives of the companies that own or manage five-star hotels all over the world: Hilton, Intercontinental, Marco Polo, Marriott, Radisson and others.

TNS PLC is one of the leading groups for market research and data, as well as the largest research and analysis provider in the world.

Table 1.- Title of table

Place	Educational institution	Country
1	Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne	Switzerland
2	Les Roches International School of Hotel Management Bluche	Switzerland
2	Glion Institute of Higher Education, Glion & Bulle	Switzerland
2	Cornell University	USA
5	Hotelschool The Hague	Netherlands
6	Les Roches International School of Hotel Management Marbella	Spain
7	Hotel School Vatel	France
8	Oxford Brookes University	Great Britain
9	César Ritz Colleges, Le Bouveret, Brig	Switzerland
10	Ecole Hôtelière de Genève	Switzerland

TNS operates in 70 countries, which makes it possible to provide high-quality and relevant analysis of information that is recognized internationally. TNS Travel & Tourism conducts a number of studies and consulting projects aimed at providing understanding and knowledge in the field of vacation, tourism, hospitality and traveling.

It is evident from the provided rating that Russian educational facilities do not rank among the top universities in the field of training specialists for the hospitality business. Moreover, their graduate diplomas do not always enable one to study in the educational institutions from the list above without specialized further training.

The first step to fixing the current situation is to learn from it and utilize one of the few tools for science and, in general, personal development, which is the experience of other people and countries. One could draw from the experience of Germany, where education is free even for foreign (including Russian) students who pay only for food, accommodation and textbooks. Ireland is notable for its combination of affordable education with guaranteed employment, which attracts Russian students who do not need a diploma, an official certificate to hang on their wall, but instead the knowledge and the job after graduation followed by career advancement. This is achieved through the established connections with Swiss and American higher education institutions. Prestigious education in the field of hotel management can be received in France, in the famous Vatel. However, one could gain the most experience in Swiss hotel management schools that offer the full range of education in this field and possess everything that is available in the countries mentioned above, naturally except the prices

for education. There are pollution-free places with countless natural landscapes and mountain air, where the academic buildings and campuses are located. Then there are hotel complexes (modern, as well as old and famous) where practical classes take place. There is also a training system that has stood the test of time, for which students often live in crowded conditions and get up at 6:30 a.m. nearly every day so as not to miss classes. There are also prospects of getting a well-paid job in the future, as well as the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of Switzerland and its lifestyle at present (and far away from one's parents).

As for Russian institutions of higher education, their graduate diplomas nearly always (and almost for every institution) fail to get verified abroad. To narrow one's search for an answer and deal with a more familiar industry, one should proceed to the hotel business. There are two factions of researchers in this case – optimists and pessimists. Optimists believe that education in the field of hotel business in Russia is growing, which is confirmed by the report of the Federal Agency for Tourism, which specifically mentions a decrease in the number and share of expatriates in the hotel industry (Ekizyan 2019). This idea can be confirmed by the fact that only the best foreign specialists remained at the Baltschug Kempinski Hotel in Moscow (according to human resources) – there are some directors headed by the general manager and the hotel's chef who needs to be the best in the world and is less linked to his nationality than others. Pessimists claim that recent graduates from specialized institutions of higher education perform significantly worse than the previous ones (just as in other fields) and the new training system (with bachelor's and master's programs) only contributes to that (Kryukova 2018). Another contributing factor is the new education system that starts in school and results in people losing their reference points. What is more, already at school one has to choose their subsequent path in life (including the future profession), so prospective students give in to that temptation and start choosing which subjects to study at the institute at their own discretion. Meanwhile, having not made the final decision on what they need and nevertheless attending a range of classes that they believe will be useless, they are wasting the most important thing in their lives – their time.

Optimists talk about an increase in the number of graduates of Western hotel schools who have a Russian passport, pessimists mention the huge difference in the conditions and cost of studying in Russia and abroad, which makes the gap between the significance of Russian and Western diplomas even greater. It is worth approaching this issue from the position of a realist and figuring out what Russian higher education lacks to be competitive and, above all, at the stage of searching for work in a hotel.

The first thing that one lacks is practice. A specialist with a diploma from a Western school has it in abundance and this is due to the very principle of formation and opening of Western hotel schools. For example, the famous SHMS occupies Caux Palace, a former five-star hotel in Switzerland, an actual palace, and the rather popular IHTTI in Neuchâtel is based in the operating hotel Eurotel. Consequently, students learn the details of hospitality in the conditions that are as realistic as possible. They are taught to make salads in a real kitchen and to serve drinks in an actual bar. Another famous school Hotel Institute Montreux has five months of practical training on the curriculum annually. In the Vatel Institute (France), the practical training is organized by the educational institution at the end of every semester and one could earn money there (300-350 euro per month) if the employer pays for the accommodation and food (Britvina *et al.* 2015).

The question is why the Russian training system is unable to provide its students with the appropriate "laboratories". The answer is obvious –higher education is not based on the industry-wide order (Kryukova *et al.* 2016). Graduates are not assigned to specific businesses. Moreover, most students are not going to work in the industry, and they make this decision during the course of higher education. The reason for this is the system of practical training organization and, in general, the interaction between universities that train specialists for the hotel business and potential employers. This interaction is not present, because such goals are not set. Although, paradoxically, with the emergence of specialized universities and with the accumulation of the number of graduates, the share of hotel employees with higher professional education also grows, including in low-level positions. However, this does not mean an improvement in the quality of education and, above all, its practical component (Makeeva *et al.* 2017).

In an effort to solve this problem and do it immediately, Russian educational institutions in the field of training specialists for hotels are not engaged in finding employer-partners to provide graduates with further work and, in general, to organize practical training. Instead, they are mainly preoccupied with the accumulation of documents confirming this activity and the organization of all kinds of declarative events intended to bring the university and the employer closer together. As a result, the situation is similar to the construction of roads – it seems that they are being built, repaired and there are all documents confirming this, but every year (despite the fact that service life of roads is longer) they must be surfaced again. This indicates that the system is not

working. Moreover, this may mean that this is the goal that is set since all efforts and initiatives lead to such a result in the field of training specialists in the hospitality industry, which is confirmed by numerous ratings and statistics.

The second thing to improve is proficiency in foreign languages. An employer in a four- or a five-star hotel in Moscow (in hotel chains, the category does not matter) begins by enquiring about the knowledge of English and the so-called “chain language” – for example, French for Accor or German for Kempinski. Going back to the training system of Western hotel management schools (for some reason, these are two separate specialties in Russia: “Management” and “Hotel Business”), in order to find well-paid practical training in Switzerland, one must speak German or French already at the training stage. The requirement to speak English fluently and possess a speaking level of another foreign language sounds surprising to a Russian student currently studying at a university with the specialization in the hotel business. When asked about the level of English for the employment at the aforementioned Baltschug, potential employees might say that it is average, considering that when a student chooses this profession, they have several years to prepare and bring their foreign language skills to the appropriate level, let alone the school education that lays the foundation for further development of this knowledge.

In addition to the foreign language requirement, one could note the formation of the prestigious status of a school, its uniqueness. For example, the school network Hotel Consult Cesar Ritz Colleges sets the same educational standards as the standards of service quality in the famous Ritz hotels where the education is carried out in English and French. Regarding prestige, the Hotel Institute Montreux offers the chance to obtain two diplomas: Swiss and American. Moreover, the graduates of the institute become members of the British Hotel Catering International Management Association (HCIMA) by default, without additional qualifying examinations. Finally, if one wishes to draw experience from countries other than Switzerland, one can look at France where the education in the Vatel Institute is carried out in English, however, to go through obligatory practical training one must also speak French, at least at a basic level (Kryukova and Sokolova 2014).

Russian universities that specialize in training staff for the hospitality industry can close this gap with the help of a set of measures consisting of three blocks: ensure practical training during education that would take the same amount of time as theoretical instruction; organize thorough training in the field of foreign languages; increase the prestige of the institution.

In previous works, we mentioned the transition to a patient strategy of university development (Ushakov 2014). The work on the assignment of graduates should only be carried out with the most prestigious hotels in the region where the higher education facility is located. Recently, it has been argued that it is possible to compete with Western universities only with the help of the aggressive strategy, that is, the enlargement of higher education institutions, their resources and capabilities. However, hotel managers are rare, unique representatives of the hotel environment and, as any chain would confirm, they can only be trained in a patient environment. This can be achieved with the help of the so-called longitudinal experiments (somewhat similar to corporate culture, with the only difference being that corporate culture is permeated with religious heritage and longitudinal experiments have a scientific basis associated with many experiments). The essence of this experiment is that during training, step by step, a person is persuaded that they are unique and capable of solving large problems, which expands their abilities and makes it possible to achieve what previously impossible in terms of the limitations created by the person themselves.

The next step is the practical training of students and here the role of employers is crucial. Without the provision of its facilities, as was done in Western hotel management schools, the hotel will not be confident in the quality of training (Mosalev *et al.* 2018). Thus, this is the training of a specialist for a certain position from the first year of study, even from the moment of admission. In this case, freedom of choice is removed after graduation, but the choice must be made before or at least during the learning process and not after when the time is lost. In this case, employers (including five-star hotels) are ready to provide their facilities for deeper involvement of students in the industry, from the very first training courses. Moreover, hotels are interested in permanently keeping and employing if not all, then the majority of those who have passed the practical training at the hotel, even during their university education.

After that, it is necessary to make teaching in English compulsory, which seems difficult for Russia. However, looking at the latest trends in Russian education, it seems that the first steps are already being taken. This refers to the fifth paragraph of the Bologna Declaration: “Promotion of mobility for students, teachers and administrative staff (ideally, each student should spend at least a semester at another university, preferably an international one)” (Committee on tourism and hotel industry of Moscow).

3. Discussion

The training of specialists for the hospitality industry in many countries is carried out by colleges and universities. Among them are specialized schools and educational institutions in Switzerland and Australia, the USA and Canada, Great Britain and Ireland, Spain, France, Finland and other countries. The key factor in career advancement is the choice of a profession and the choice of an educational institution in which this profession should be obtained. Both the profession and the educational institution can significantly affect the level of professionalism, the speed of career advancement and the level of career achievements. As a rule, top managers and heads of hotel complexes in Europe received education in leading Swiss and German educational institutions of the hotel business. Therefore, the choice of an educational institution determines not only the quality of acquired knowledge but also the future job, the circle of people with whom one will communicate (Radygina 2014).

Looking back at history, we should note that the first EHL hotel management school was opened in 1893 in Lausanne, Switzerland. Nowadays, this educational institution, the Lausanne School of Hotel Management, is known as the first hotel management school in the world. Initially, there was a professional school of high qualification, in which training for the hotel industry was conducted in French. In 1994, the Hotel Management School received the status of a higher education institution and since 1996, the training has been carried out in English. The following Swiss educational institutions are most famous: the Swiss Hotel Management School, Hotel Institute Montreux, Les Roches School of Hotel Management. In 1922, the first Cornell School of Hotel Administration was opened at Cornell University in the USA. Later, numerous educational institutions were established that trained specialists for the hospitality industry: the Vatel School of International Hotel Management, which ranks second in the European classification of the most famous schools, where teaching is conducted in English; Fachhochschule Muenchen and Fachhochschule Heilbronn in Germany, etc.

It is worth noting that currently there is competition on the market of educational services in the field of the hotel and tourism business (Zaikina 2018). International schools compete, offering more and more diverse programs every year, recruiting the best scientific staff and experienced hoteliers as teachers, organizing internships for their students at the most prestigious hotels. Unfortunately, Russian educational institutions hardly take part in this competition.

At present, there are two models of training in the field of training specialists in the tourism and hotel industry. These models are significantly different and are conventionally called the American model and the European model.

The American model. In the USA, people mostly prefer to study at a college or university; there are no so-called schools that offer higher education. Hotel management training is based on principles that are common to all specialties, taking into account the practical orientation of the classes (practical orientation of the method of training specialists). People there believe that hotel management is similar to managing any other existing business. For Americans, maintaining a hotel or restaurant is the same business as any other. Going through practical training is also included in the learning process and takes 40% of the training course, the remaining 60% is theory. In US schools, a thorough study of theory is considered basic. Therefore, in American schools, especially at the initial stage, the emphasis is on the course of the general theory of management. Although the training program also includes a discussion of practical situations from the hotel business operation (case-studies), a future manager in the American model does not need to thoroughly delve into the smallest details of the activities of the lower levels. That is why American specialists can quite easily obtain new qualifications if necessary, for example, to be managers of a different field. Specialized recruitment agencies have been created on the basis of educational institutions, that have a unified information system with businesses and that are engaged in regular monitoring of labor market needs, the employment of young professionals and the control of the admission of applicants for key professions. Consequently, this allows educational institutions to quickly respond to changes in market needs for workers that possess a certain level of education in a specific field. Another advantage is close collaboration with professional organizations.

The European model. In most cases, Swiss educational institutions are used as an example of the European model for teaching hotel and tourism business. Switzerland is a trendsetter in the global hospitality industry. In the European hospitality industry, a professional movement from the lowest level up is utilized, so even university graduates with a bachelor's degree in most cases start working in the lowest positions. It is considered mandatory to combine theoretical studies with real-time practical work on the basis of an existing hotel. Most hospitality schools in Switzerland operate on the basis of existing or former hotels, students live right there, which allows them to gain professional skills in an authentic environment (Khetagurova *et al.* 2015). Thus,

a hotel manager who received education at one of the European schools not only knows what each hotel service is doing but also can do everything that their employees do. Therefore, the European model does not offer division into specializations as in Russia (hotel service, organization of service at public catering enterprises, the technology of catering products). A European school graduate after graduation can work at any hotel service, including a restaurant, kitchen, with the exception of technical services. As a rule, the academic year is divided into two semesters: the first semester students spend in the classroom and the second they spend doing practical work, which amounts to the 50%-50% ratio of theory to practice. Such an organizational system gives students experience that is vital and valuable in the hospitality industry even before graduation.

Regardless of the location of a hotel school (Switzerland, Germany, France), hotel management education is implemented within the same programs. The students begin by learning all the detail of hotel operation: reception and accommodation of guests, room service, organizing the operation of the restaurant, the kitchen. After that, the program includes the basics of information technology, accounting, marketing. There are two semesters in the academic year: theory and practice, both taught in English. To go through training practice in prestigious hotels, one must know German and French on a professional level. The first stage in this business (a year) ends with the reception of a certificate that entitles one to get simple work (as a receptionist, maid, waiter). After completing another course, one can get a diploma and if one continues the studies, one can get a higher diploma (advanced diploma) that correlates to the Russian diploma of secondary special education, then get a Bachelor's, Master's degree, MBA. Upon successful completion of the course, one receives the appropriate diplomas.

A significant advantage of the European model of professional training for the hospitality industry is that:

- training takes place in a real environment, on the basis of large hotel complexes and operating hotels;
- most of the training time is devoted to the acquisition of practical skills acquired during practical classes, internships and practical training at hotel businesses;
- students go through all levels of professional training stage by stage, constantly improving their professional qualification;
- emphasis is placed on the development of the mindset of customer service among students;
- when the need for new specialists arises at the business, their training begins;
- curriculum is formed considering the needs of the customer-business and the capacity of the educational institution that will be implementing this plan.

We are currently studying the international experience in training specialists for the hotel industry, however, the data obtained allow us to draw preliminary conclusions and make a comparison with the Russian model of training specialists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, using Russian and international groundwork, we can draw the following conclusions. The rapid development of the hotel complex, its modernization, sets high requirements for the quality of service. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt the international experience of professional training to national practice in order to provide the hospitality industry with competent specialists, taking into account business requirements and international standards. The training of specialists for the hotel industry at the higher education level in Russia is inferior to Western counterparts. The main advantages of Western hotel management schools are a large share of practical work at hotels in the learning process, teaching in a foreign language (usually English and the language of the country where the school is situated), the location of schools in the building of the hotel itself or the availability of all the facilities and equipment necessary for obtaining practical skills, as well as close connection with hotel chains and Western universities, which ensures the prestige of the hotel management school and serves as a guarantee of high-quality education and employment in the best hotels around the world. It is worth noting that this is not always an argument in the competition for the student. In Russia, universities are now competing mainly for the Russian students (or students from the CIS) and not for students from Western European or Asian countries, where the market is huge. The main reason for developing the potential of a business in any field, including hospitality, is neither staff, nor funding, nor information support, although all this is important, but the organizational leverage, which is the will of the country's leadership, industry and the educational institution. Only a determined person who sees the future, while also possessing entrepreneurial abilities, could have the intention to produce a competitive product in the field of training specialists for the hotel industry.

As it is currently the only option for engaging in competition with Western hotel management schools both for a student and for a future partner-employer, one can examine the experience of the Russian State Social

University, where the practice of teaching a number of professional disciplines is introduced, including at the Department of Tourism and Hospitality (Khavanova and Kovalchuk 2011). Moreover, this institution of higher education is working in close contact with several hotel chains to secure opportunities for full-scale practical training of students (this is achieved through contractual relations with the hotel chain).

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