

AN ASSESSMENT OF ACQUIRED TRAVEL SERVICE COMPETENCIES IN NATIONAL STANDARD OF THE BS TOURISM PRACTICUM TRAINEES OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN METRO MANILA

Joreen T. Rocamora

The Graduate School, University of Santo Tomas, Espana Manila Philippines, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the assessment of the practicum trainee's acquired versus required travel service competencies as perceived by 255 practicum trainees of 3 universities in Manila pioneering BS Tourism with the highest student population offering 200-250 hrs of practicum in a travel management company during the 2nd year level (AY 2012-2013), and by 61 supervisors of travel management companies. The study utilized Anova, weighted mean and ranking method through purposive sampling. The assessment used the TRAVEL SERVICES NC II QUALIFICATION TESDA COMPETENCY STANDARDS. Results revealed that there is a significant difference between the perceived acquired travel service competencies from the trainees and supervisors in terms of "Booking travel-related reservation", "Issuing air, seas, land tickets & MPD", "Developing and updating industry knowledge", "Observing workplace hygiene procedure" and "Performing computer operations". The most extensively acquired competencies are "Providing effective customer service" and "Working in a team environment" as perceived by the trainees and supervisors respectively. Implications for future research and practicum program enhancement are discussed.

Key Words: *tourism, travel service, competency, practicum*

Introduction

There is a growing demand for trained skilled personnel in the hospitality and tourism industries which is why employers are looking for graduates that meet the competency requirements based from the positions that they are applying for. According to Stanciulescu and Bulina (2012), a growth in competency requirements is demanded because organizations do not hire people by merely considering only on their academic qualifications. However, cundergraduate programs may not be equipping students with the essential skills needed to gain and maintain employment (Cranmer, 2006) as seen from the inability of the graduates to perform tasks to meet the demands of the industry (Chileshe, 2007). The following are the reasons: (1) degree of mismatch between skills acquired in higher education versus those required for employment (Maso et al., 2003 & Wilton, 2008), (2) large discrepancies between

formal training and employer demands (Wood, 2003) as seen from the gap between the graduates and the reality of the market (Whitelaw, nd), (3) some skills of the graduates that are lacking which could be acquired and learned in school (Maumbe, 2011), and (4) challenges of providing training to students which include lack of well-structured training environment, poor training on the part of the managers, and the absence of well-defined work performance criteria (Johnstone, nd).

It is the trend now in educational institutions to have an outcome-based approach where competencies are highlighted in the courses handled. Educational inputs and educational process that have been the main focus of higher education in the past has been shifted to the competencies that graduates are expected to possess. Universities all over the world are geared towards a system in education where skills and competencies are the main focus (Chiru et al., 2012) because there is a need to look on the curriculum given the ever changing nature of the tourism and hospitality industry (Busby and Huang, 2012).

Emphasizing the need and importance of acquiring competencies in the hospitality and tourism industry, it is the purpose of this study to link the gap between the acquired versus required travel service competencies having the competency standards set by the government as the basis of assessment. The study aimed to serve as a guide in the enhancement of the practicum program of the BS Tourism Program.

This study aims to assess the perceived acquired travel service competencies of practicum trainees taking BS Tourism in selected universities in Manila pioneering the BS Tourism Program with the highest student population offering 200-250 hrs of practicum in a travel agency during the 2nd year level (AY 2012-2013). This study also answers the following specific questions:

1. What are the required travel service competencies of trainees based from NCII TRAVEL SERVICES QUALIFICATION (TESDA)?
2. To what extent are the travel service competencies acquired as perceived by the trainees themselves and supervisors?
3. Is there a significant difference between the required travel service competencies and perceived competencies acquired by the trainees on their practicum?
4. What are the most extensively acquired travel service competencies of the practicum trainees as perceived by the trainees and supervisors?

Literature Review

New trends in travel management

The internet is becoming one of the main sources of information nowadays. It has allowed the traveling public to access on available flight and rates, choice of destinations all over the world, book online and get confirmations directly. The traditional role of the travel agency in providing the travel services from different suppliers to the consumers is disappearing because of the advances in communications technology. According to Claraval (2006), the new way harnesses the links, expertise and professional service orientation of the travel

service organization and turns it into a vendor and principal selling travel services and solutions. The travel service organization is now referred to as the travel management company (TMC) which has the tours development department that gives solution to different travel needs of an individual through its network and travel proficiency.

An important thing to consider as well is the increasing demand and changing travel preferences of travelers in meeting travel requirements leading to a customized travel arrangement. When surfing in different travel websites over the net, travelers face different challenges. Because there are a lot of possible websites accessible for getting travel information, it makes it difficult and time consuming for the traveler surfing the net in order to meet his/her specific travel requirements. For this reason, the travel management company maximizes the information available in the internet through strengthened research combined with strong linkages while ensuring that the specific requirements of the travelers brought by his/her increasing expectations are met. Travel packages offered must be matched or best suited to the client's specific requirement with the use of marketing, technological and communication advances. The role of the travel management company then is to meet the specific requirements of the traveler. After having identified the traveler's request and expectations, its role now is to recommend the best possible and most suitable services tailored to the traveler's specific requirements. Through the Tours Department, it looks for supplier of transportation, accommodation and other recreational facilities based from strengthened research work combined with their travel experiences. Even in the advent of technology, this is the factor which makes the service of the travel management company need human element. Once the recommendations have been accepted by the traveler, the commercial transaction begins by way of processing arrangements through placing reservations, obtaining confirmations and issuing corresponding e-tickets or tour vouchers in behalf of the suppliers (Claraval, 2006).

TESDA

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is a government agency that develops Filipino workforce with world-class competence. The achievement of competency set standards as prescribed in the training rules and regulations is recognized by employers globally. It defines on-the-job training as "an approach in training designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of the trainee through actual experience in the workplace to acquire specific competencies prescribed in the training regulations." The specific travel competencies as prescribed in the training rules and regulations are as follows: Booking travel-related reservation; Issuing air, sea and land tickets; Administering billing and settlement plan; Participating in workplace communication; Working in a team environment; Practicing career professionalism; Practicing occupational health and safety procedures; Developing and updating industry knowledge; Observing workplace hygiene procedures; Performing computer operations; Performing workplace and safety practice; and Providing effective customer service. On the job training enables an individual to acquire competence by equipping the said individual with the knowledge and the skill under ideal circumstance. It is also a method in order for the individual to perform under existing circumstances.

CHED Memorandum Order No. 30 Series of 2006

Under the memorandum issued by CHED, the course line-up in the curricula must incorporate subjects based on international standards. This includes practices having job readiness as the focus of the BS Tourism curricula. Part of the said memo is based on competency standards that are required by the industry. The learning outcome must include the ability of the students to perform the functions of the position in the industry that they will soon occupy upon graduation. Under Section 8, it is stated that “Graduates of BSTM, BSHM, BSHRM, BSTRM and/or bachelor degree in other related fields shall possess the following competencies: resources, interpersonal, information, systems and technology.” Aside from that, there are also other skills and personal qualities that are included like problem solving, reasoning and character formation.

However, according to Ms. Milagros Mijares, the Unit Head of Technical Panel for Business Education, the framework for outcome based education is still on progress because CHED is still on the process of aligning the curriculum for Business Education and Management (BS Tourism included) with the standards of TESDA and ASEAN in line with K-12 Program.

CHED Memorandum Order 2007

Former President Gloria Arroyo issued Exec Order 358 on September 15, 2004 about the existing ladderized education. Part of the memo is the scope of technical-vocational and traditional education systems in which college courses include tech-voc subjects. The said tech-voc subjects are vital in enhancing the student’s competencies that are needed to perform the task required of the job. In June 2006, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued CMO Number 27 jointly recognizing with TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) about the country’s initial ladderized degree program, including BS Travel Management program, which is to be prioritized. Similarly, Memo Number 30 was issued by the Commission on Higher Education, stating that the curricula for BS Tourism must be based on the competency requirements of the industry focusing on the positions that the students will take.

On-the-job training

Everyone can strategize his or her own development when he or she assesses his strengths and weaknesses at the same time evaluate the feedback that he or she receives (Torrington et al., nd.). As an individual manages his own growth in skill attainment, he could become more independent and take responsibility for his or her own learning. However, knowledge and understanding are not enough to acquire learning because one has to nurture his or her values and attitudes (Becket & Brookes, 2012). In order to attain self-development, an individual must be open for learning. He must take advantage of the everyday experiences that he gains from the tasks he does in a workplace, as indicated by Ineson (2011) in her research that individual development may be realized in an actual working environment. Being open to learning requires trainability, which according to Werner and De Simone (2009), that it is the trainee’s readiness, ability and motivation to learn based from his or her discernment of the work environment. Training must be practical and must have educational content that would

enable the students to deal with the varying and changing needs, wants and demands of the consumer thereby allowing the students to acquire the essential competencies required by the industry and needed to perform the job (Maumbe & Wyk, 2011).

Sheldon (1990), from her research on 'Professionalism in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry', emphasized training and education as the factors in determining career professionalism in the tourism and hospitality industry. Professionalism is acquired by individuals through on the job training when skilled professionals are given instructions and hands-on experience (Bohlander, 2010) which makes it a valuable method for skill enhancement (Blanchard & Thacker, 2007). Aside from that, on-the-job training is a means of organization in order to deal with the shortage of highly skilled professionals who are expected to perform jobs (Werner & De Simone, 2009). Qualified and skilled professionals are the sources of competitive advantage for all organizations (Kunjiapua & Yasin, 2010) because they reveal the attributes that make them more effective members of the society (Cliff & Pownall, 2010).

It was mentioned by Shariff (2011) in his study on 'Reforming hospitality program of higher educational institutions' that on the job training balances theory and practice. The hands-on experience gained in practicum gives the students the avenue to apply theoretical knowledge in a real work situation (Chileshe, 2007). This makes it possible for students to acquire competency which is defined by Lee (2010) as assessable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors and other characteristics that differentiate high from average performance. When these competencies are acquired by the students, they will become more employable because there is a demand for skill requirement to work in the industry (Robinson, 2009). Moreover, having these competencies will make the students more confident given the advancement of communication technology (Cliff & Pownall, 2010).

On-the -job training provides a valid venue for trainees to acquire and develop skills, knowledge and changed behavior as a result of his or her interaction from his environment. According to Koyuncu et al. (2008), there is an important need to link students with work experiences in the tourism and hospitality industry that builds on and supports the objectives of the academic program. This could involve mentoring, coaching, shadowing of managers and supervisors by students, and real jobs rather than "make work" assignments. According to Werner and De Simone (2009), skills are defined as abilities with capacities that are recognized because of training and experience, while knowledge is defined as an understanding of factors or principles related to a particular subject or area. An individual with skills and knowledge performs tasks with comfort and accuracy. A study on the comparison of graduating seniors who receive job offers and those who do not are those who have had performed related tasks in the industry through internship (Kwoka, L. et al., 2012).

Research Methodology

The study employed purposive sampling design for University A, B and C Out of 250 enrolled students for the 1st practicum in University A, a total of 161 student respondents have had their training in travel agency. Out of 360 enrolled students for the 1st practicum in

University B, a total of 74 student respondents have had their training in travel agency. Out of 161, enrolled students for the 1st practicum in University C, 20 student respondents have had their training in travel agency. Table 1 shows the number of practicum trainee-respondents per University.

Table 1: No. of practicum trainee-respondents

UNIVERSITY	ENROLLED STUDENTS FOR PRACTICUM	PRACTICUM TRAINEE-RESPONDENTS
University A	250	161
University B	360	74
University C	161	20
TOTAL	771	255

The study also employed purposive sampling to the supervisors of the practicum trainees of the site establishments where the practicum trainees were assigned to undergo said training. A survey was administered to 42 supervisors from different travel agencies of practicum trainees from University A, 12 supervisors from different travel agencies of practicum trainees from University B, and 7 supervisors from different travel agencies of practicum trainees from University C. The supervisor assessed the practicum trainees that he/she is handling.

Table 2: No. of supervisor-respondents

UNIVERSITY	PRACTICUM TRAINEE-RESPONDENTS	SUPERVISOR-RESPONDENTS
University A	161	42
University B	74	12
University C	20	7
TOTAL	255	61

The study utilized survey questionnaire as research instrument. The questionnaire was based on TRAVEL SERVICES NC II QUALIFICATION TESDA COMPETENCY STANDARDS. The Training Regulations for Travel Services NC II consisting of the competencies that a person must attain to manage the traveler's request for before and after trips, served as the primary bases for the selection of the variables of the questionnaire.

The statistical tools used were mean, ANOVA and ranking method. Mean was used to get the sum of the deviations of all measurements on the level of extent of the acquired travel service competencies. Please see below range and verbal interpretation respectively:

RANGE	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
1.00 – 1.74	Not extensive
1.75 – 2.49	Extensive to some extent

2.50 – 3.24 Moderately extensive

3.25 – 4.00 Highly extensive

Anova was the method used to subdivide the total variation in the outcome quantities attributable to differences among the groups to determine the significant difference between the acquired competency of the trainees by the perception of the two groups: (1) students themselves and (2) respective supervisors. Lastly, ranking method was used to evaluate complex information according to the criteria on competencies. It indicated the relative importance of variables being the most extensively acquired competency in the study.

Responses to the different items in the questionnaire were collected, tallied, and presented in tabular form. The figures collated were entered into computer sheets and was computed and interpreted using SPSS.

Results and Discussion

The travel service competencies in the National Standard

The travel service competencies in the National standards are: Booking travel-related reservation; Issuing air, sea and land tickets; Administering billing and settlement plan; Participating in workplace communication; Working in a team environment; Practicing career professionalism; Practicing occupational health and safety procedures; Developing and updating industry knowledge; Observing workplace hygiene procedures; Performing computer operations; Performing workplace and safety practice; and Providing effective customer service.

Assessment of the acquired travel service competencies

Students' Perception

Table 3: Level of extent of the acquired travel service competencies by students

TRAVEL SERVICE COMPETENCIES	MEAN	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
Booking travel-related reservation	3.30	Highly extensive
Administering billing and settlement plan	2.24	Extensive to some extent
Issuing air seas land tickets & MPD	3.07	Moderately extensive
Participating in workplace communication	3.08	Moderately extensive
Working in a team environment	3.17	Moderately extensive
Practicing career professionalism	3.03	Moderately extensive
Practicing occupational health & safety procedure	2.80	Moderately extensive
Developing and updating industry knowledge	3.34	Highly extensive
Observing workplace hygiene procedure	3.43	Highly extensive
Performing computer operations	3.58	Highly extensive
Performing workplace and safety practice	3.20	Moderately extensive
Providing effective customer service	3.62	Highly extensive
OVER-ALL	3.16	Moderately Extensive

Table 3 presented the assessment of student-respondents of their acquired travel service competencies. The indicator, 'PROVIDING EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE', got a weighted mean score of 3.62 which was the highest. It was followed by the item, 'PERFORMING COMPUTER OPERATIONS', with weighted mean score of 3.58. The items 'OBSERVING WORKPLACE HYGIENE PROCEDURE', 'DEVELOPING & UPDATING INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE', 'BOOKING TRAVEL-RELATED RESERVATION' with the weighted mean scores of 3.43, 3.34 and 3.30 respectively also fall under 'highly extensive' descriptive interpretation. These were followed by the items, 'PERFORMING WORKPLACE & SAFETY PRACTICE', 'WORKING IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT', 'PARTICIPATING IN WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION', and 'ISSUING AIR SEAS LAND TICKETS & MPD', with weighted mean scores of 3.43, 3.34, 3.30, 3.20, 3.17, 3.08, and 3.07, respectively. These items fall under the "Moderately extensive" descriptive interpretation.

Also, under the "Moderately extensive" descriptive interpretation, the items, 'PRACTICING CAREER PROFESSIONALISM' and 'PRACTICE OCC. HEALTH & SAFETY PROC.', got weighted mean scores of 3.03 and 2.80, respectively. While the item, 'ADMINISTER BILLING & SETTLEMENT PLAN', got the lowest weighted mean score of 2.24 which falls under "Extensive to some extent" descriptive interpretation. Over-all, the competencies in travel services that are acquired by the practicum trainees as perceived by the students themselves in the selected universities in Manila has 3.16 weighted mean score. The acquired travel service competencies got a verbal interpretation of "Moderately extensive".

Among the travel service competencies, the skill in 'PROVIDING EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE' was the highest which validates the study of Thompson (2011) that effective team members who have the interpersonal skills and who demonstrate greater mastery of teamwork knowledge perform better in teams. However, the item "Administering Billing and Settlement Plan" got the lowest mean score as perceived by both respondents. One of the reasons why the trainees got a low mean score in this area could be coming from the misaligned course requirement for the BS Tourism Program.

Supervisors' Perception

Table 4 presented the assessment of supervisor-respondents of the practicum trainee's acquired travel service competencies. The indicator, 'WORKING IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT', got a weighted mean score of 3.30 which was the highest. It was followed by item, 'PROVIDING EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE', with weighted mean score of 3.29. This was followed by items 'PRACTICING CAREER PROFESSIONALISM', 'PERFORMING COMPUTER OPERATIONS', 'PARTICIPATING IN WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION', 'OBSERVING WORKPLACE HYGIENE PROCEDURES', 'BOOKING TRAVEL-RELATED RESERVATION', 'PERFORMING WORKPLACE AND SAFETY PRACTICES', 'DEVELOPING & UPDATING INDUSTRY KNOW' and 'ISSUING AIR SEA LAND TICKETS AND MP', with weighted mean scores of 3.14, 3.12, 3.09, 2.99, 2.86, 2.81 and

2.79, respectively. These items fall under the “Moderately extensive” descriptive interpretation.

Table 4: Level of extent of the acquired travel service competencies by supervisors

TRAVEL SERVICE COMPETENCIES	MEAN	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
Booking travel-related reservation	2.86	Moderately extensive
Administering billing and settlement plan	1.69	Not extensive
Issuing air seas land tickets & MPD	2.79	Moderately extensive
Participating in workplace communication	3.09	Moderately extensive
Working in a team environment	3.30	Moderately extensive
Practicing career professionalism	3.14	Moderately extensive
Practicing occupational health & safety procedure	2.75	Moderately extensive
Developing and updating industry knowledge	2.81	Moderately extensive
Observing workplace hygiene procedure	2.99	Moderately extensive
Performing computer operations	3.12	Moderately extensive
Performing workplace and safety practice	2.86	Moderately extensive
Providing effective customer service	3.20	Moderately extensive
OVER-ALL	2.89	Moderately Extensive

Also, under the “Moderately extensive” descriptive interpretation, the item ‘PRACTICING OCC. HEALTH & SAFETY PROCEDURE’, got a weighted mean score of 2.75. While the item, ‘ADMINISTER BILLING & SETTLEMENT PLAN’, got the lowest weighted mean score of 1.69 which fell under “Not extensive”. Over-all, the competencies in travel services that are acquired by the practicum trainees as perceived by the students themselves in the selected universities in Manila has 3.16 weighted mean score. The acquired travel service competencies got a verbal interpretation of “Moderately extensive”.

The level of extent of the acquired competencies validates the study of Blanchard et al. (2007) that on-the-job training is a useful method for knowledge enhancement, skill development and competence building. Likewise, the item “Administering Billing and Settlement Plan” got the lowest mean score as perceived by both respondents. After assessing the curriculum of the three universities, the subjects Business Statistics, Business Finance and Principles of Accounting for Non-accountants are currently offered to the students during their 3rd year level of the first semester. In this regard, the above mentioned subjects must be offered by the University in the College of Tourism prior the student’s deployment in their training in order to acquire the competency related to finance.

Significant difference on the acquired travel service competencies based from NCII TRAVEL SERVICES QUALIFICATION (TESDA)

Table 5: Difference in the perception of student trainees and supervisors

Travel Service Competencies	Computed Value	Tabular Value	Verbal Interpretation
Booking travel-related reservation	21.76	3.18	Significant
Administering billing and settlement plan	2.04	2.57	Not Significant
Issuing air seas land tickets & MPD	8.79	2.45	Significant
Participating in workplace communication	-.20	4.30	Not Significant
Working in a team environment	.22	4.30	Not Significant
Practicing career professionalism	2.66	4.30	Not Significant
Practicing occupational health & safety procedure	.86	2.57	Not Significant
Developing and updating industry knowledge	17.85	12.71	Significant
Observing workplace hygiene procedure	16.75	12.71	Significant
Performing computer operations	9.08	2.78	Significant
Performing workplace and safety practice	2.21	4.30	Not Significant
Providing effective customer service	9.97	2.78	Significant

Table 5 showed the significant difference of acquired travel service competencies as perceived by the trainees and supervisors. There is a significant difference on the perceived acquired competency of practicum trainees and supervisors in terms of “Booking travel-related reservation”, “Issuing air seas land tickets & MPD”, “Developing and updating industry knowledge”, “Observing workplace hygiene procedure” and “Performing computer operations”. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The significance difference on the perceptions of the practicum trainees and supervisors on the acquired vs required competencies validates the study of Wood (2003) that there are discrepancies between formal training and employer demands, and the study of Whitelaw et al. (2009) that there is a gap between graduates and the reality of the market. The result also confirmed the study of Maumbe & Wyk (2011) that there are some skills of the graduates that are lacking which could be acquired and learned in school. When the above mentioned travel service competencies are acquired in the classroom and workplace and when there is the application of techniques and concepts, the gap on the discrepancies of skills required vs acquired could be lessened.

Most acquired travel service competency in terms of:

Booking Travel Related Reservation

Table 6: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of booking travel related reservation

BOOKING TRAVEL -RELATED RESERVATION	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Identifying booking systems and procedures as appropriate to the specific industry sector	3.15	ME	2.87	ME
Knowing the principles of reservations and booking procedures	3.25	ME	3.03	ME
Maintaining good working relationship with the different sectors of the tourism industry in relation to reservations, bookings and supplier arrangements	3.29	ME	3.03	ME
Administering customer file and identify booking requirements	3.51	HE	2.50	ME
OVER-ALL	3.30	ME	2.86	ME

As perceived by the students themselves, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Administering customer file and identify booking requirements'. As perceived by the supervisors, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Maintaining good working relationship with the different sectors of the tourism industry in relation to reservations, bookings and supplier arrangements'.

Administering Billing and Settlement Plan

Table 7: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of administering billing and settlement plan

ADMINISTERING BILLING & SETTLEMENT PLAN	TRAINEE		SUPERVISOR	
	M	VI	M	VI
Explaining the role of International Air Transportation Authority (IATA) in the Billing Settlement Plan	1.54	E	0.95	NE
Knowing the IATA agency accreditation requirements	1.60	E	0.91	NE
Billing Settlement Plan Procedures	2.46	E	1.81	E
Billing Settlement Plan timeframes	2.36	E	1.81	E
Billing Settlement Plan documentation	2.46	E	1.99	E
Understanding of airfares and ticketing	3.00	ME	2.67	ME
OVER-ALL	2.24	E	1.69	E

The most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Understanding of airfares and ticketing', as perceived by both the trainees themselves and supervisors.

Issuing Air, Sea and Land Ticket and MPD

Table 8: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of issuing air, seas, land tickets and MPD

ISSUING AIR, SEAS, LAND TICKETS & MPD	STUDENTS		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Explaining in-flight services	3.03	ME	2.78	ME
Ticketing process and reservation	3.26	ME	2.98	ME
Identifying the different types of booking class/ services	3.20	ME	3.13	ME
Gathering the necessary information and other travel- related data	3.20	ME	3.11	ME
Performing sales and service tasks	2.97	ME	2.54	ME
Issuing tickets, multi Purpose Documents (MPD) and other travel- related documents	2.95	ME	2.29	E
Gathering (networking) for latest fare and tariff information	2.90	ME	2.73	ME
OVER-ALL	3.07	ME	2.79	ME

As perceived by the trainees themselves, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Ticketing process and reservation'. On the other hand, as perceived by the supervisors, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Identifying the different types of booking, class or service'.

Participating in Workplace Communication

Table 9: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of participating in workplace communication

PARTICIPATING IN WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Obtaining and conveying workplace information	3.12	ME	3.01	ME
Participating in workplace meetings and discussions	2.92	ME	3.07	ME
Completing relevant work related documents	3.20	ME	3.20	ME
OVER-ALL	3.08	ME	3.09	ME

As perceived by both the trainees themselves and the supervisors, it is 'Completing relevant work-related documents' that is the most extensively acquired travel service competency.

Working in a Team Environment

Table 10: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of working in a team environment

WORKING IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Describing team role and scope	2.99	ME	3.10	ME
Identifying own role and responsibility within team	3.22	ME	3.28	ME
Working as a team member	3.29	ME	3.52	HE
OVER-ALL	3.17	ME	3.30	HE

For both the trainees and supervisors, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Working as a team member'.

Practicing Career Professionalism

Table 11: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of practicing career professionalism

PRACTICING CAREER PROFESSIONALISM	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Integrating personal objectives with organizational goals	2.98	ME	3.19	ME
Setting and meeting work priorities	2.99	ME	3.16	ME
Maintaining professional growth and development	3.13	ME	3.06	ME
OVER-ALL	3.03	ME	3.14	ME

According to the trainees, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Maintaining professional growth and development'. In contrast, according to the supervisors, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Integrating personal objectives with organizational goals'.

Participating Occupational Health and Safety Procedure

Table 12: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of practicing occupational health and safety procedures

PRACTICING OCC. HEALTH & SAFETY PROC.	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Identifying hazards and risks	2.93	ME	2.86	ME
Evaluating hazards and risks	2.90	ME	2.87	ME
Controlling hazards and risks	2.92	ME	2.77	ME
Maintaining Occupational Health Safety (OHS) awareness	2.91	ME	2.74	ME
Knowing emergency-related drills and training	2.53	ME	2.53	ME
Knowing OHS personal records	2.58	ME	2.69	ME
OVER-ALL	2.80	ME	2.75	ME

As perceived by the trainees themselves, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Identifying hazards and risks'. However, as perceived by the supervisors, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Evaluating hazards and risks'.

Developing and Updating Industry Knowledge

Table 13: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of developing and updating industry knowledge

DEVELOPING & UPDATING INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Seeking information on the industry	3.34	HE	2.78	ME
Updating industry knowledge	3.34	HE	2.83	ME
OVER-ALL	3.34	HE	2.81	ME

The most extensively acquired travel service competencies according to students and supervisors are 'Seeking information on the industry' and 'Updating industry knowledge', respectively.

Observing Workplace Hygiene Procedure

Table 14: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of observing workplace hygiene procedure

OBSERVING WORKPLACE HYGIENE PROC.	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Following hygiene procedures	3.45	HE	2.96	ME
Identifying and preventing hygiene risks	3.40	HE	3.01	ME
OVER-ALL	3.43	HE	2.99	ME

It is 'Following hygiene procedures' that is the most extensively acquired travel service competency as perceived by the trainees themselves. Then it is 'Identifying and preventing hygiene risks' that is the most extensively acquired travel service competency as perceived by the supervisors.

Performing Computer Operations

Table 15: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of performing computer operations

PERFORMING COMPUTER OPERATIONS	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Planning and preparing for task to be undertaken	3.42	ME	3.06	ME
Inputting data into computer	3.65	HE	3.12	ME
Accessing information using computer	3.67	HE	3.15	ME
Producing output data using computer system	3.64	HE	3.14	ME
Maintaining computer equipment and systems	3.54	HE	3.14	ME
OVER-ALL	3.58	HE	3.12	ME

As perceived by both the trainees and supervisors, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Accessing information using computer'.

Performing Workplace and Safety Practices

Table 16: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms performing workplace and safety practices

PERFORMING WORKPLACE & SAFETY PRAC.	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Following workplace procedures for health, safety and security practices	3.53	HE	2.85	ME
Dealing with emergency situations	3.08	ME	2.81	ME
Maintaining safe personal presentation standards	2.98	ME	2.92	ME
OVER-ALL	3.20	ME	2.86	ME

The most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Following workplace procedures for health, safety and security practices' as perceived by the trainees themselves on one hand. On the other hand, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is 'Maintaining safe personal presentation standards' as perceived by the supervisors.

Providing Effective Customer Service

Table 17: Level of extent of the acquired competencies in terms of providing effective customer service

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE	TRAINEES		SUPERVISORS	
	M	VI	M	VI
Greeting customers	3.60	HE	3.34	HE
Identifying customer needs	3.73	HE	3.30	HE
Delivering service to customers	3.64	HE	3.34	HE
Handling queries through telephone, fax machine, internet and email	3.80	HE	3.32	HE
Handling complaints, evaluation and recommendations	3.35	ME	3.16	ME
OVER-ALL	3.62	HE	3.29	HE

As perceived by the trainees themselves, the most extensively acquired travel service competency is ‘Handling queries through telephone, fax machine, internet and email’. Meanwhile, as perceived by the supervisors, the most extensively acquired travel service competencies are ‘Greeting customers’ and ‘Delivering service to customers’.

Conclusions

There is a significant difference on the perceived acquired competency of practicum trainees and supervisors in terms of “Booking travel-related reservation”, “Issuing air seas land tickets & MPD”, “Developing and updating industry knowledge”, “Observing workplace hygiene procedure” and “Performing computer operations”. The significance difference on the perceptions of the practicum trainees and supervisors on the acquired vs required competencies validates the study of Wood (2003) that there are discrepancies between formal training and employer demands, and the study of Whitelaw et al. (2009) that there is a gap between graduates and the reality of the market. The result also confirmed the study of Maumbe & Wyk (2011) that there are some skills of the graduates that are lacking which could be acquired and learned in school. When the above mentioned travel service competencies are acquired in the classroom and workplace and when there is the application of techniques and concepts, the gap on the discrepancies of skills required vs acquired could be lessened.

The most extensively acquired competency by the trainee is “Providing effective customer service” as perceived by the trainees themselves, while the most extensively acquired competency by the trainee is ‘Working in a team environment’ as perceived by the supervisors. The level of extent of the acquired competencies validates the study of Blanchard et al. (2007) that on-the-job training is a useful method for knowledge enhancement, skill development and competence building. Moreover, the skill in ‘PROVIDING EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE’ and ‘WORKING IN TEAMS’ were the highest which validates the study of Thompson (2011) that effective team members who

have the interpersonal skills and who demonstrate greater mastery of teamwork knowledge perform better in teams.

Recommendations

For the University

1. Global Distribution System must be taken by the student prior the student's on-the-job training because acquiring the reservations skills/competency will make the student trainees more confident in the advancement in communications technology.
2. Partnership or tie up with the Travel Management Company that uses Global Distribution System in order to establish stronger connection between the institution and industry and develop a pool of human resources with essential skills.
3. The subjects Business Statistics, Business Finance and Principles of Accounting for Non-accountants must be taken by the student prior the on-the-job training to develop the student's critical thinking necessary for the accountability at stake that are related with finance and administration.
4. Knowledge acquisition on HACCP and skills development on responding to emergency situations in order to appropriately address the organization's safety and health performance among the staff and students.
5. To increase the number of hours of On the Job Training in Travel Management Companies.
6. Practicum coordinators to give continuous supervision and guidance

For the Travel Management Company

1. The practicum site must be an accredited Travel Management Company by the university. Part of the accreditation requirements for the TMC is the use of Global Distribution System.
2. There should be more time allocation on the direct supervision of the trainee's supervisor to the trainee's skill and learning acquisition.
3. There should be a proper scheduling/roster of training for practicum trainees. This could be done in a ways that every trainee is to be assigned in every department.
4. There should be orientation for the practicum trainee regarding workplace protocol, reporting line and restrictions before the trainee undertakes his/her on-the-job training.
5. Practicum trainees should be part of the fire and earthquake drill procedures, disaster preparedness and first aid seminars.

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