

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Competency Based Education and Training in the Hospitality and Tourism Discipline at Bulawayo Polytechnic

**Faith Kurete**

Lecturer, Bulawayo Polytechnic, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

### **Abstract:**

*Competency based training and assessment can be a successful training strategy of upgrading the human capital as a prerequisite for world class competitiveness, organisational excellence and labour productivity. This paper seeks to assess the effectiveness of competency based education and training in the hospitality and tourism discipline at Bulawayo Polytechnic. There has been a cry from the hospitality industry that colleges are churning out half-baked graduates. Colleges are passing on to the labour market workers who are not competent in their respective skills. The main objective is to find causes of student failure to acquire appropriate skills that meets the needs and demands of the hospitality industry. Competency based assessment and training, is training that is designed to allow a learner to demonstrate their ability to do something in a work place situation. Competency based training in vocational education places more focus on what a student can do in the work place after completing a program of study. Competency based education should move from what academics believe students need to know to what students need to do in varying and complex work situations. The knowledge and skills may have been learnt through study, self-tuition, work place or life experience. Hence, a competent professional has the attributes necessary for job performance to the appropriate standards. This paper seeks to identify the gap between training and work place expectations of the hospitality and tourism industry. Descriptive survey method was used and purposive random sampling was done from the lecturers and students and their respective attachment supervisors from industry and manpower training officers. The researchers used questionnaires, interviews and observations in data collection for triangulation purposes. Data was analyzed using descriptive analysis to give data meaning. It was noted that the majority of students do not have hands on competences. They lack vital skills in performance of their duties due to a high lecturer student ratio and constrained learning resources. To first year students if asked why they have chosen the hospitality and tourism industry, they are quick to say that they like and or enjoy travelling. This reversal of roles between them and their guest is quite alarming. There is lack of career guidance at high schools leading to students not understanding what is happening in the hospitality industry. There is a gap between training and industry needs. Students should have prior exposure to the hospitality and tourism industry before they are enrolled. Although this might have an impact on student numbers, it is recommended that students should familiarize with the industry before they are enrolled. This will lead to students to have full knowledge and passion of the industry they are joining. Training equipment must be upgraded for example reservation software. It is also recommended that classes must be manageable. Lecturers should be given industry exposure. That is, the lecturers themselves must be attached to hotels so that they are in sync with the changing trends in the industry.*

**Keywords:** *Competency based education, training, assessment*

### **1. Introduction**

The School of Hospitality and Tourism (Schoto) first opened its doors to students in 1963. The new site was commissioned in 1994. The major objective of the school was to serve the labour needs of the hospitality and tourism industry. The complex is located at the corner of Park Road and Twelfth Avenue at the Bulawayo Polytechnic Campus.

There has been dissatisfaction from some quarters of the of the hospitality industry alleging that colleges are producing half-baked graduates. Every job requires a specific set of knowledge and skills. This is the concern of industry that the Human Capital is poured onto the labour market without the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their current jobs. It is in this light that the researchers want to have a closer scrutiny on the assessment of the effectiveness of competency based education and training at schoto.

Competency based assessment cannot be divorced from competency based education or training. The paper will focus on whether the institutions are effectively using competency based training for its students. The issues of competency based training and assessment is not only a concern for industry but has far much reaching implications on the country's developmental goals and its desire to achieve its stated objectives on Zim Asset. A graduate with the necessary skills and knowledge in his/her job will be more productive and hence this will translate in increased output. That is an increase in the country's gross domestic product. The nation's consumption

and living standards would improve greatly and the country will be in a position to export the surplus and earn the much needed foreign currency.

### 1.1. Objectives

1. To find out if students have hands on competencies.
2. To find if students have passion for the industry
3. To identify the gap between training and workplace

### 1.2. Problem Statement

Industrialists claim that students are taught outdated information (Goodman & Sprague 1991, Kang, Wu & Gould 2005). Due to globalization, technology, workforce hospitality and tourism products and customers are changing. Therefore, competencies are changing. The study seeks to find out if training institutions are adhering to the changing needs of the hospitality and tourism industry.

### 1.3. Theoretical Framework

It was Katz (1955) who pioneered work on competency based assessment and training. Katz came up with three domains of an effective administrator, that is, technical, human and conceptual. This work was later developed by Sandwith (1993). He came up with five competency domains. Although the author was focusing on administrators and management training, his competency theories have been used and applied across disciplines.

The domain identified were as follows

- (i) Technical; which implies an understanding of and proficiency in a specific activity. This is the actual work by the student and all the steps and processes needed to complete a given task.
- (ii) Administrative; according to Sandwith, involves the management of personnel in areas such as equal opportunity in recruiting, orientation, training, evaluation, attendance, discipline and safety standards.
- (iii) Interpersonal; this domain focuses on the skills for effective interaction with supervisors, subordinates and customers. This is the ability to work effectively through effective communication and building team atmosphere and security.
- (iv) Leadership; is a strategic link between the conceptual and other domains. A student is required to comprehend the work situation and come up with ideas for action. This is where one's thoughts are turned into productive work.
- (v) Conceptual or creative domain according to Katz (1955) is the ability to see the organization as a whole enterprise and recognizing that various functions are interdependent and that a change to one functional area will affect the entire organisation.

These five domains are interrelated. This paper sought to measure these five independent variables.

Khumalo (1999) and van Zyl (1999) noted the need for skills training and upgrading of people as a necessity for world class competition, organizational excellence and labour productivity. Therefore, it is important to identify and develop competences that will enable students to cope with the fundamental internal and external changes in the training strategies and interventions.

The Department of Education (2002) & Bellis (1997) defines competencies as a bundle of skills, abilities and knowledge that can be used in a related work situation. Brophy & Kiely (2002), identifies attitude as a competency. Therefore, being trainable co-relates with the traits and characteristics of each individual, and can be very difficult as attitude can be difficult to measure.

Competency can be approached in a number of ways. Firstly, as a set of behaviour patterns, high performance competencies, interpretative approach to competencies, as a process of learning and lastly a time based approach to competencies.

Competencies can be viewed as a set of behavioural patterns. Boam and Sparrow (1992), Kemp (1998), note that competency as a set of behaviour patterns that an employee needs to have in order to perform tasks and functions and competencies that would make an employee valuable to the organization and ultimately valuable to the customers. Behaviours are made up of three components namely knowledge, skills and attitude; knowledge is what a person must know to perform a task competently. (Nellmapius 1996). Attitude, according to Vecchio (1995), is an idea charged with emotion that predisposes a set of actions to a specific group of stimuli consisting of three important components that is the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Therefore, individuals may develop different attitudes towards any task.

In Wood & Payne (1998), Richard Boyatzis, coined competencies as part of his perspective on individual differences at work. These are minimal skills needed to carry out a task in a given position and will act as benchmark to identify high performers (Goleman, 1998). The competencies can therefore be upgraded to suit the changing times.

Sandberg (2000) proposed to describe competencies as an interpretative approach using the phenomenography technique. Thus he argued that phenomenography descriptions assist in determining if employees really use the competencies and how they are applied to meet job demands.

Competencies are learned or transferrable. Cox and Beale (1997:2) define competency as a "process of learning that leads to an ability to effectively respond to challenges and opportunities, in a defined social system." What one has learnt should enable them to adjust and behave in a way that would assist them to perform their daily tasks and responsibilities.

Due to globalization, the nature and needs of customers in the hospitality and tourism discipline are changing. Boam and Sparrow (1992) noted that opinions of what constitute people and organizations move through different business environments, the relevance of any competency is bound to change.

#### 1.4. Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey, which enabled participants to give their opinion about the study. The descriptive survey enables the researchers to collect data within a short time. The researchers used questionnaires and interviews which were self-constructed.

#### 1.5. Population

The population comprised of Bulawayo Polytechnic which has about 4500 students.

#### 1.6. Target population

The target population was 202 students in the Hospitality and Tourism discipline. To meet the objectives of this research, the population of interest was made up of ND3, HND, and staff from manpower development, attachment supervisors and lecturers at Schoto.

#### 1.7. Sample

Purposive sampling was done picking up students who were from attachment ND3 and HND. This sampling method is purposive in nature because the researchers have approached the sampling problem with a specific plan in mind. The Research Methods Newsletter (2007) agrees that purposive or judgmental sampling can be very useful for situations where one needs to reach a target sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the primary concern. These would help identify the gap between the learning institution and industry.

#### 1.8. Instruments

The study used questionnaires which were distributed to ND3 and HND students who were from attachment. Interviews were done with lecturers, supervisors in industry and Industry Trade Testing Department personnel in the Hospitality and Tourism discipline. The researcher made appointment with the interviewees and sought permission which was granted. Observations were also done to determine how well students fared in the major tasks. The researchers sought permission to observe the students as they were carrying out their daily routines. Three types of instruments were used for the purposes of triangulation.

#### 1.9. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS programme. Tables were included so as to give data more meaning.

### 2. Response Rate

50 questionnaires were distributed to students and 49 were returned giving a response rate of 98%.

#### 2.1. Findings and Discussions

The following are the findings and discussions of the study on assessment of the effectiveness of competency based education and training in the hospitality and tourism discipline at Bulawayo Polytechnic.

The female respondents were 65, 3% and male respondents were 34, 7%. There are more female students than male's students in the targeted group.

The questionnaire respondents by age range. 49% were in age range of 21-25 years and age range 26-30 was represented by 36.7% and 31+ age range was represented by 14.3%. The respondents were mature enough to respond to questionnaire.

The questionnaire respondents according to their course level. ND3 was represented by 42.9% and HND 57.1%.

The chart below shows how respondents were treated by the organization. 40.8% said were treated as students, 40.8% were treated as part staff and 18.4% as relief. The manner in which students are treated on while on attachment may have a bearing on the attitude that they one might develop towards an industry. It can be positive or negative attitude.

The above chart shows respondents who were given uniforms and those who were not provided with the uniforms. 16.3% were presented with uniforms and 83.7% were not.

The item that sought students to identify the areas that the institution needs to improve on, the responses were as follows ,32% service, 23.3% front office,4.1% pastry, 6.1% larder,18.4% events, 6,1% foreign languages, 2% all departments and2% bar.

The item that sought to find out if students used information technology at the organization they were attached to, the following where the responses tabled in chat below.10.2% strongly disagreed,6.1% disagreed,14.3% were neutral,38.8% agreed and 26.5% strongly agreed to have used information and communication technologies at the organization. Therefore 30.6% of the students were not exposed to the information and technologies at the organization where they were attached.

The responses of students to the item that sought to find out if computer programmes they used at the institution re similar to the one they used on attachment. The responses were, 6.1% strongly agreed, 18.4 agreed

The respondents who were given uniforms and those who were not provided with the uniforms. 16.3% were presented with uniforms and 83.7% were not.

The item that sought students to identify the areas that the institution needs to improve on, the responses were as follows ,32% service, 23.3% front office,4.1% pastry, 6.1% larder,18.4% events, 6,1% foreign languages, 2% all departments and2% bar.

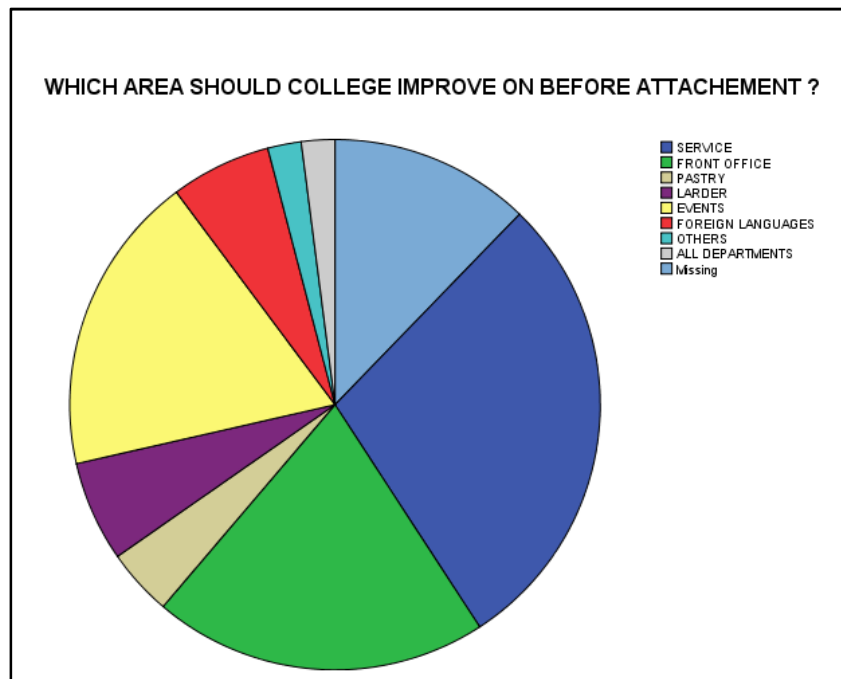


Figure 1

The item that sought to find out if students used information technology at the organization they were attached to, the following were the responses tabled in chart below.10.2% strongly disagreed,6.1% disagreed,14.3% were neutral,38.8% agreed and 26.5% strongly agreed to have used information and communication technologies at the organization.

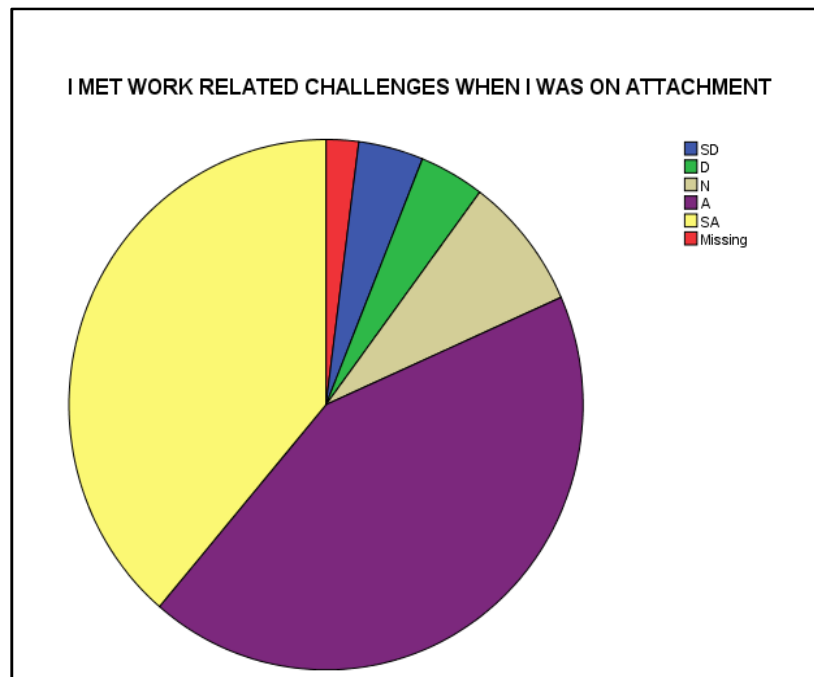


Figure 2

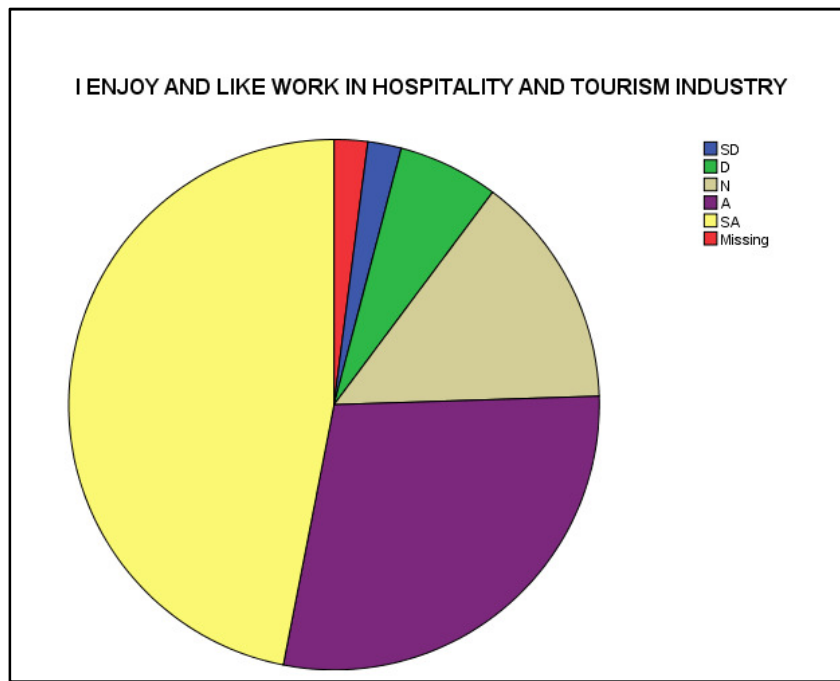


Figure 3

The graph above represents students who have used resource centres during attachment. 24.5% strongly disagreed, 10.2% disagreed, 16.3% were neutral, 22.4% agreed and 26.5% strongly agreed.

The above table shows how helpful attachment supervisors were.65.4 % agreed that supervisors were help while 12.2% disagreed and 18.4% were neutral.

The response to the item that sought to determine if it was their first time working in the hospitality and tourism discipline. 51% agreed to have had prior experience in the industry of their choice before training, this might contribute to a positive attitude towards the industry.4.1% were neutral while 42.9% did not have prior exposure to the industry before enrolling for the course. The item that sought to rate themselves on how they understood work procedures.

The responses were as follows, 4.1%strongly agreed, 4.1% disagreed, 14.3% neutral, 44.9% agreed and 32.7% strongly agreed.

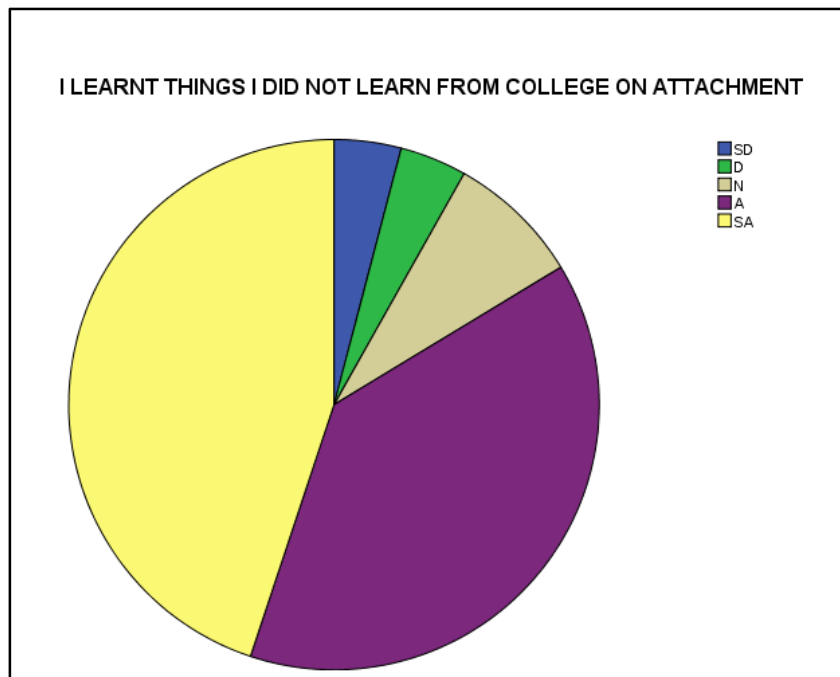


Figure 4

The students indicated that they learnt things on attachment which they did not learn at college. This is in line what industrialist said that as students join them for attachment they train them to suit the organization' vision and mission and for them to be able to cater for the nature of their customers.

The item that sought to find out if industry expects too much from the students on attachment. The responses are as follows. 4.1% strongly disagree, 2% disagreed, 16.3% neutral, 33.3% agreed and 42.9% strongly agreed. The training cannot meet the expectations of an ever changing industry and its customers.

The college is going its best in supporting students while on attached as illustrated on pie chart below expect for a few who said they did not get a support or the word support might have been interpreted differently.

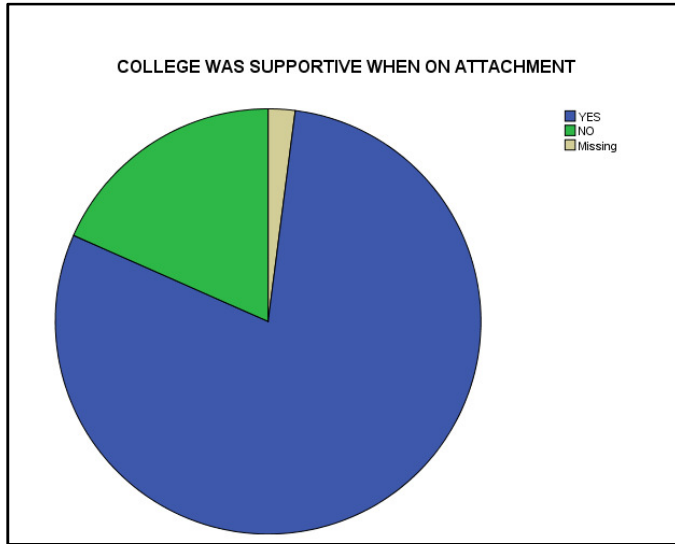


Figure 5

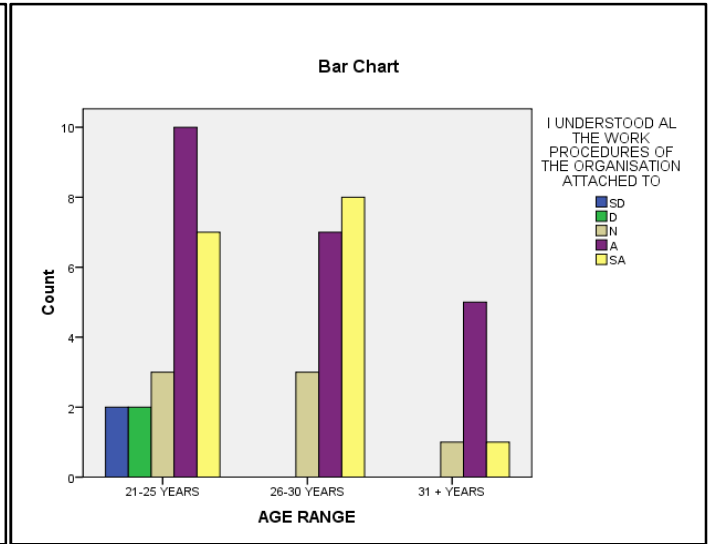


Figure 6

The graph how age contributes to understanding of work procedures. The results show that age does not play a major role helping one to understand work procedures though 21-25years had higher representation.

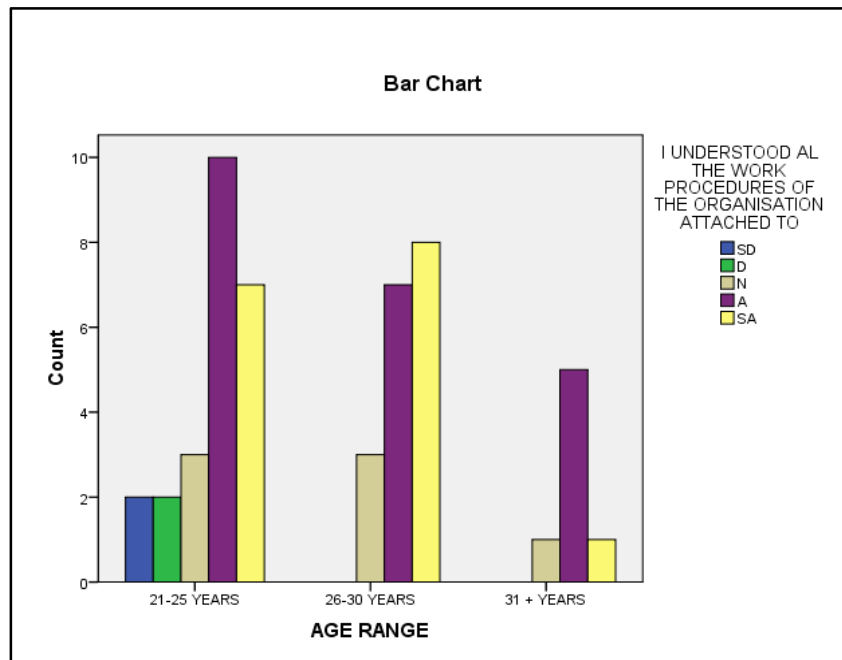


Figure 7

The graph shows age range in relation to understanding work procedures. The bar shows that age does not play a part in understanding procedures as long as one has got basic training.

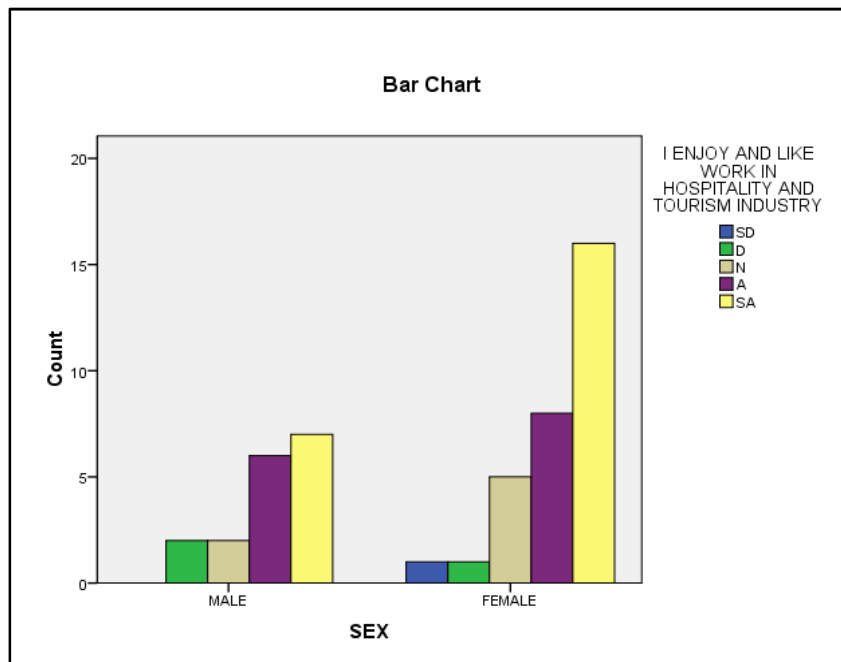


Figure 8

The table above shows if one’s gender does influence one to enjoy and like work in hospitality and tourism industry. Very few do not enjoy working in the hospitality and tourism industry.

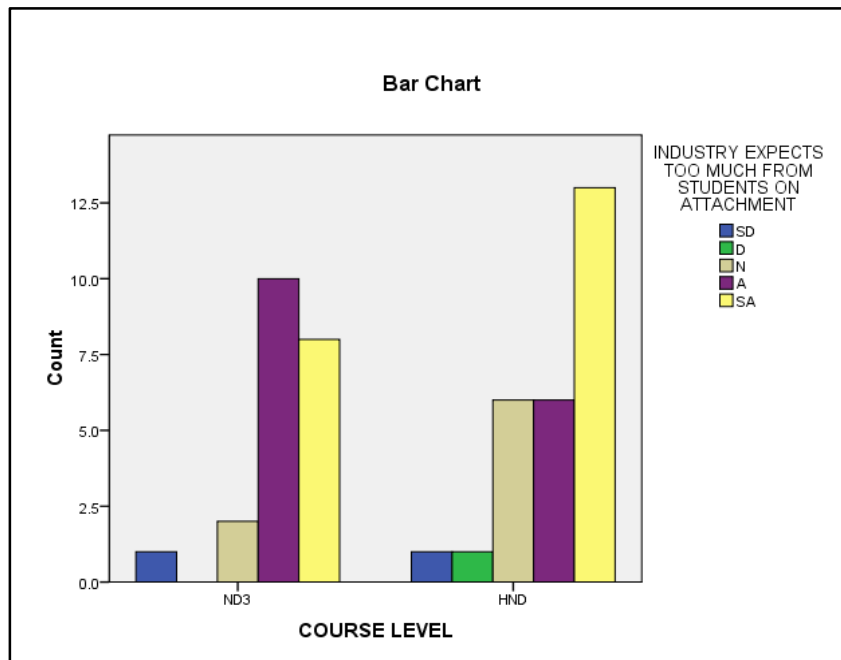


Figure 9

The bar above shows that the hospitality and tourism industry expects too much from students according to the perceptions of students in ND3 and HND level.

*2.2. Responses to the interviews with Staff from manpower development, Industry Attachment Supervisors and Lecturers in the Hospitality industry.*

Item 1.... interviewees were asked if there is any network among them. The responses were that industry is consulted when syllabuses are crafted but the syllabi are not changing at rate which the industry is changing.

Item 2.... Sought to find out what experience lecturers have beside academic qualification, the response was that the industry experience is the one that they got while they were on attachment as student’s years back.

Item 3..... sought to determine the challenges they face in meeting their respective expectations in student competency based training. They all agreed that some students are in the field for wrong reasons and are not prepared to work a shift of 7am to 8pm every day. Students have negative attitude towards some tasks which are part of the competency based education and training for the discipline.

Item 4..... sought to identify challenges students face an attachment. It emerged that students face an attachment. It emerged that students fail to put knowledge they have into practice.

Item 5.... sought the interviewees to rate students from Polytechnic in comparison with other institutions. The industrialist said that in a group of about seven students six (85.7%) of them will be hard workers and have a passion for their work.

Item 9..... sought interviewees to give ways of improving the hospitality industry, the following was given...

-There must be thorough selection of students on enrolment, so as to train people who have passion for the industry.

-More practicals to be done, lectures are agreed that they have reduced number of practicals they do due to lack of resources.

- The industrialist stated that the education that they get is giving them a basis for their in-house training.

The item that sought interviewees to give weaknesses in students, some students have attitudes towards housekeeping issues and other tasks that are fundamental to the industry. It was noted that some students enroll in the studies because they feel it will enable them to see people and network and also see the world, others tend to change but others don't change.

### 2.3. Conclusion

- Students have a lot of book knowledge
- Students have less practical lesson and most of it they face it an attachment.
- Lecturers are not aware of the changing trends in the industry.
- Students have not had prior exposure in the industry
- Machinery in institution is outdated.

### 2.4. Recommendations

- Lecturers go on attachment in industry during holidays.
- Upgrading of machinery to suit the one ones found in industry.
- Students should have prior exposure to the industry before being enrolled in the discipline.
- Industry and training institution should work in partnership with people from industry offering lectures in colleges.

### 3. References

- i. Biggs, J. 1996 Assessing learning quality: Reconciling institutional staff and educational demands; Assessment and evaluation in Higher Education; Mar 1996. Vol 21 Issue 1 pp5-pp11
- ii. Katz, R.L. (1955), January-February. Skills of an effective administrator. Harvard Business Review, 33-42.
- iii. Sandwith, P. (1993). A hierarchy of management training requirements: The competency domain model. Public Personnel Management, 22(1) 43-66.
- iv. Cox, T. Jr. & Beale, R. L. (1997). Developing competency to manage diversity readinds, cases and activities. San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Inc.
- v. Goleman, D. (1998). Working with emotional intelligence. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- vi. Sandberg, J. (2000). Understanding human competencies at work: an interpretative approach. Academy of Management Journal. 43(1), 9-25.
- vii. Ulrich, D. (1998). A new mandate for human resources. In D. Ulrich (Ed.). Delivering results. A new mandate for human resource professionals (pp. 31-32). Havard: Havard Business Review.
- viii. Wood, R. & Payne, T. (1998). Competence-based recruitment and selection. England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- ix. Goodman, R. & Sprague, L. (1991). The future of hospitality education. Meeting the industry's needs. The Cornell and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 32(2), 66-70
- x. Nelson, A. A & Dopson, L. (2001). Future of hotel education: Required skills & knowledge for graduates of US hospitality programs beyond the year 2000. Part-One Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education 13(5), 58-67.
- xi. Bellis, I. (1997). An interpretation of competency. People Dynamics. 15(1), 32-33.
- xii. Boam, R. & Sparrow, P. (1992). Designing and achieving competency. A competency-based approach to developing people and organisations. London: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- xiii. Khumalo, R. (1999). The management of human resources in successful companies an African context. Journal of Industrial Psychology. 25(1), 1-6.
- xiv. Kriek, H. (2000). Guidelines for best practice in occupational assessment in South Africa. SHL Group: Pretoria.
- xv. Nellmapius, E. P. (1996). Human resource development handbook. Incorporating competency-based training and a systems approach. Durban: Personel and Training Services cc. Philips (Ed). The national qualifications framework (NQF). 48-51. Johannesburg: NQF Network.
- xvi. Van Zyl, G. (1999). Human resource management in South Africa: a macro-economic audit. Journal of Industrial Psychology. 25(1), 7-11.
- xvii. Vecchio, R. P. (1995). Organisational Behaviour. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers.
- xviii. The Research Methods Newsletter (2007). Access date 21 February, 2015.  
[http://www.linguistics.byu.edu/faculty/henrichsen/Research Methods/RM-3-04.html](http://www.linguistics.byu.edu/faculty/henrichsen/Research%20Methods/RM-3-04.html).