

A Management and Leadership Development Model for the Tourism Sector in Mauritius

N. Ramphul*, Yuvraj Sunecher**, H. Chitto***, T. Munkhbat****

Abstract *The tourism sector is a major sector in Mauritius and after the pandemic it is experiencing a substantial growth. Such growth has also led to an increase in the demand for management skills in the sector. These people play a key role in ensuring service quality and efficiency throughout the hotel sector. Effective Management and leadership Development programs and processes ensure that hotels have the right number and kinds of managers needed to compete and meet their goals, especially in a highly competitive and rapidly changing business environment. However, little research has been done to understand the actual process of management and leadership development in the Mauritian hotel sector from the perspective of participants in management development programs. The purpose of this research is to understand how the management development process works in the Mauritian hotel sector. A Grounded theoretical approach was used as a novel approach. 25 participants (Resort Managers, Reservation Managers, Finance Managers, Front Office Managers, Room Service Managers, F&B Managers) from Mauritian hotels were interviewed to obtain relevant information on the management development process. Data were analyzed with Nvivo software. This study allowed to develop a new conceptual framework for the management development process, based on the opinions of the participants. The conceptual framework helps to understand the actual process of management development as it occurs in the Mauritian context and helps to compare it with other models that exist in the hotel sector around the world.*

Keywords: *Grounded Theory Approach, Management Development, Mauritian Hotels, Perspectives of Participants*

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2023), the travel and tourism sector will contribute 11.6% of global GDP by 2033 and employ 430 million people worldwide. Despite the war between Russia and Ukraine and travel restrictions imposed by the Chinese government, the tourism sector was able to recover to 95% of the 2019 job level around the world. The tourism sector in Mauritius is one of the main pillars of the Mauritian economy and contributes significantly to the country's economic growth and development. The Mauritian tourism sector is required to diversify its market in order to sustain future growth and for this strategy to be successful, both operations staff and managers must develop new skills to better serve these new customers. On the other hand, the Mauritian government aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals in the future and this will lead to an increased

need for managers in hospitality. Hotels in Mauritius spend a lot of money on leadership development and have their own training academies for this purpose. In addition, many Mauritian hotel owners voiced out that there was a lack of manpower both at lower and management levels after the COVID-19 pandemics and this was negatively impacting on the growth of the sector. Ensuring that hotels have a proper management development process can help to alleviate the number of supervisory staff available in the hotels to provide an appropriate level of customer service.

Much research has been done in the international context in the field of management development, but very little research has been done in Mauritius. The main objective of this article is to provide researchers and practitioners with a better understanding of how managers are developed in the hospitality sector in Mauritius from the perspective of

* University of Technology Mauritius, Pointe-Aux-Sables. Email: nramphul@utm.ac.mu

** Senior Lecturer, Department of Accounting and Finance, School of Business, Management and Finance, University of Technology Mauritius, La Tour Koenig, Pointe-Aux-Sables, Republic of Mauritius. Email: ysunecher@utm.ac.mu

*** University of Technology Mauritius, Pointe-Aux-Sables, Republic of Mauritius. Email: hchitto@utm.ac.mu

**** National University of Mongolia, Mongolia. Email: neysid04@yahoo.com

participants in management development programs. The new conceptual framework is developed through interviews with participants from the hotel industry using the grounded theory approach.

DEFINITION OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2023), management development englobes all activities in an organisation that enhance the skills, competences and experience of managers. A review of the different definitions developed at different times helps to explain the different views on the subject and how the concept of management development has evolved or developed. This type of analysis was performed by Cullen and Turnbull (2005). General aspects of the various definitions are as follows:

- The definitions view managers as resources and the development of management under the guidance of functional performance logic, with an emphasis on improving efficiency, management and, therefore, the performance of the company;
- Definitions emphasize that management development is a deliberate and planned activity guided by the strategic direction of an organization;
- Most definitions (especially the older ones) consider management development to be motivated by the organization rather than by individual needs.

They also note that only five definitions, all proposed after 1985, refer to learning. This general omission implies that most definitions do not assert that managers learn through their management development experience. Instead, management development is “something done” for managers to improve their effectiveness. Modern authors recognize that management development is not just formal education and training, but also includes informal learning through mentoring, coaching, and work experience. The definitions also emphasize the continuous nature of management development because with organizations operating in dynamic environments, the skills of managers must be constantly updated. All definitions consider management development from an organizational point of view and ignore the fact that management development is important not only for organizations but also for industries and countries as a whole.

Definitions of management development should highlight the consequences not only for organizations but also for an industry, and, even an entire country. Recent definitions of management development believe that MD should enable the development of the manager as an individual and at the same time for the benefit of the organization (CIPD,

2023). Another trend that has been observed is that the term leadership has been added to management while defining the entire process (University of California, Berkeley, 2015). The new definitions also acknowledge the importance of informal learning in developing the skills, competencies and knowledge of managers.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

Management advancement is considered to be an outcome of management development and hence, it will influence the content of management development programs. Garavan et al. (2006) considered “investment in training and education, mentoring, networking, experience and competencies, and individual commitment to advancement as being important in enhancing careers.” Career mobility in addition to international experience and international qualifications are also important for acquiring general management positions in the hotel industry (Ladkin & Jawaheer, 2000).

Harper et al. (2005) found that there is a reduction in the emphasis on food and beverage knowledge that is required in order to get general management positions in the hotel industry. Managers having management qualifications, for example, achieve general management positions more quickly than those without such qualifications. On the other hand, the importance of food and drink knowledge, as well as knowledge in other technical areas, are still important for access to general managerial positions in hotels (Garavan et al., 2006; Ladkin & Jawaheer, 2000; Nhung & Nguyen, 2023). Many hotel graduates advance to frontline managerial or supervisory positions to gain the necessary knowledge and experience, and hope over-time to develop a career inside or outside the hotel (Ladkin, 2000). These questions feed into the design of leadership development programs because the right content, including general management aspects and technical aspects that reflect the local situation, can help motivate managers to participate. Management development programs can therefore be viewed as a means of achieving the career development goals of industry managers.

In hospitality, management development occurs early in a career in the industry and is generally disorganized and fragmented (Watson, 2008). In addition, management development practices are closely linked to business goals. Performance reviews and assessment centers are also commonly used to identify management development needs. The evaluation of management development practices mainly aims to show the benefits of the process for the individual (in terms of career advancement) and the organization (in terms of achieving business goals). However, it is difficult to assess the immediate impact of management development on the organization or the possible long-term benefits. There is a strong belief that

experiential learning is the best way to develop leaders and enable them to learn directly in their work environment. The focus is on learning by doing to encourage collaboration between educational institutions and hospitality and industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative method has been used in the study. The appropriateness of this method is due to its novelty and paucity of application in the Mauritian context, and, in its hotel industry. Another reason for using this methodology was the lack of hypotheses to test. Rather, the study aimed to identify relevant variables that might be important in a given situation and to generate new ideas and theories (Eisenhart, 1989). Therefore, this study can be used to formulate suitable hypotheses for future research. The research also aims to learn from informants' experiences in a given context, how they live and what importance they attach to the management development process, which also makes it more appropriate to use a qualitative approach (Morse & Morse, 2002). The qualitative approach includes many methods and in this case the theory-based approach was used to achieve the research goals.

The grounded theory approach was also more appropriate since the aim of the research is to find the meanings that groups of individuals ascribe to situations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to them, a theory based on field-collected data explains how the phenomenon actually occurs, rather than relying on other people's concepts or speculations about a specific situation. This allows, starting from the collected data, to build a conceptual model to understand the management development process from the point of view of the informants who experience the process from different points of view. The conceptual framework is based on data from interviews and secondary data from annual reports and government statistics.

There are three main versions of the grounded theory approach. The first is the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), the second is the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998), and the third is related to the work of Chamaz (2006). According to Glaser, a researcher using a grounded theory approach should not first review the literature because it impacts the theory-building process. According to him, the theory must be derived entirely from data collected on the ground. It is also not denied that there will be research questions beforehand in the research, since research questions and problems will be discovered when the data is encrypted. However, Strauss and Corbin (1998) disagree with Glaser's (1967) views as they believe that the researcher should have contact with the literature so that he can refer to it when

needed. Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe that the previous research questions should be further developed as they could delineate the research area.

Informants

First, middle and senior managers are potential participants in hotel management development programs. Executive Development Program participants included reception managers, reservation managers, food and beverage managers, and resident and entertainment managers, in addition to traditional functional management roles. The target groups of the management development programs were all managers in the hotel industry. The perspectives of the participants in the management development of hotels in Mauritius provided an understanding of different aspects related to the management development process.

Population

The population defines a set of characteristics from which a research sample is drawn (Eisenhardt, 1989). In addition, the population defines limits for the generalization of any findings. For the purposes of this research, the relevant population included the participants in management development programs in the different hotels in Mauritius.

Sample Size and Theoretical Sampling

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), when theories are sound, we choose cases for theoretical reasons, e.g., to make sure all of the characteristics in the population are represented in the sample. The aim, then, is to make sure all theoretical categories and polar types from the population are included in the sample (Eisenhardt, 1989). For example, theoretical sampling dictates that the researcher chooses participants who have directly experienced the phenomena under study. By proceeding in this way, the researcher includes relevant 'experts' who are able to provide the best data available (Corbin & Strauss, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The process of selecting participants is also an evolving process based on the evolving patterns, categories and dimensions that emerge as a result of gathering data. Specifically, researchers seek out participants who can provide deeper insights into the emerging patterns, categories and dimensions that become apparent in the sampling process. The same process was used in the context of this study and the data collected was analysed at the same time as the research progressed so that new themes, categories can be identified and verified with other people selected as the sample for the study. Although there is no definite sample size in the Grounded theory approach, 25 participants (i.e., first line/middle managers) in the hotel sector have been

interviewed after theoretical saturation was reached. This is so as no new categories or subcategories emerged after these 25 interviews were carried out.

Interview

The most important instrument for primary data collection was the in-depth interview. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the informants. An audio recording was necessary as it would be very difficult to take enough notes to record everything the whistleblowers say about their management development perspective. It also made it possible to maintain good eye contact with informants and to react appropriately in the event of difficulties. The audio recording also helped analyze the pre-recorded post-interview recording and ensured no vital data was lost. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour and most of the interviews were conducted at the hotels where the participants worked. The contents of the interviews were transcribed verbatim in order to subsequently identify the categories used by the informants to present their point of view. This is in line with the proposals of Glaser and Strauss (1967) who advocate the simultaneous collection, coding and analysis of data.

Data Analysis

In grounded theory research, the researcher collects and analyzes data simultaneously (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Such an ongoing process allows the researcher to continuously identify emerging issues and issues that need further investigation in future interviews, and to confirm or deny emerging issues. In addition, this process also determines when the theoretical saturation point is reached. According to the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), data analysis occurs through a continuous coding process and there are three main types of coding: open, axial and selective coding.

Open Coding

First, an open coding of the data is performed. At this stage, the data gathered from the field is analysed line by line in order to identify relevant themes and categories relevant to the management development process as it actually occurs in the Mauritian hotels. All the transcripts pertaining to different aspects of the management development process of the participants have been analysed line by line using the NVivo 8 software and appropriate codes were allocated to each relevant aspects of the interview transcripts. The codes identified represent concepts that subsequently become part of the theory.

Axial Coding

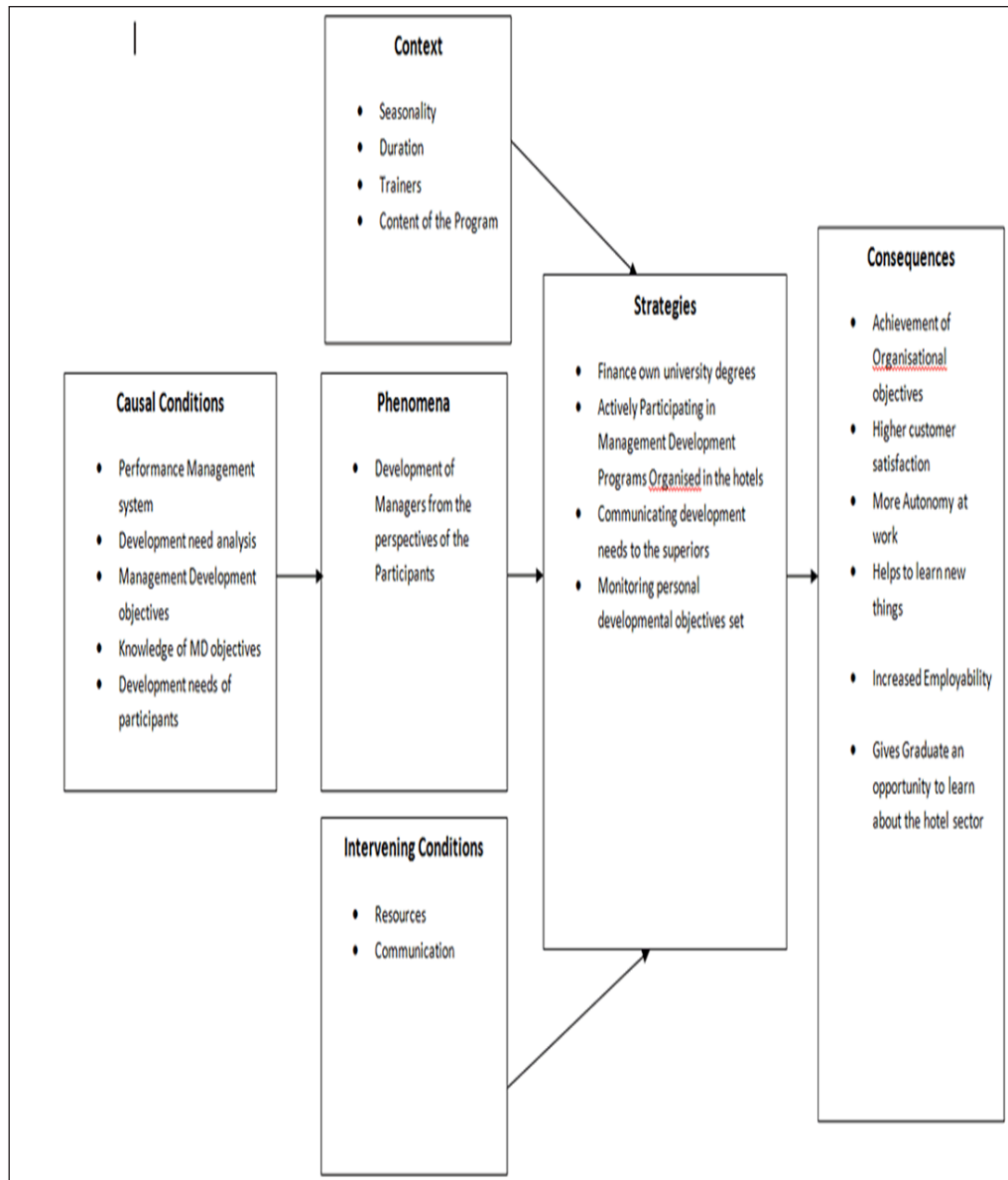
The second aspect of the analysis under the grounded theory approach is known as axial coding. In axial coding, the data is analysed to see the relationship and links between the different categories/themes that were developed after the open coding process. In this context, the links between the different types of categories and themes that appear in the management development process in the Mauritian hotel sector were analyzed.

Selective Coding

The coding process will continue with selective coding. The goal of selective coding is to identify the primary category around which the theory is built. The main category serves as a reference for all other identified categories and must be central as all other categories must be related to it and therefore must appear frequently in the data. Selective coding also tries to theoretically develop categories further, as they merely describe the data collected.

DISCUSSION

As a result of the open coding process, the connection between the various open codes was determined through interviews with the participants. It is recommended to use the model to analyze the relationships between different codes. The model covers the following aspects: causal conditions, phenomenon itself, context, intermediate conditions, action/interaction strategies and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Causal conditions explain the factors influencing and leading to the central phenomenon. This phenomenon tries to explain the question: What is happening here? And what are the incidents, activities and interactions surrounding this phenomenon? It also analyzes the people involved in the process and how they manage, influence and deal with the phenomenon. In context, let us try to take a look at the locations of the events and the places where the phenomenon takes place. It also considers the timing and phase in which the phenomenon can occur. Intermediate conditions, on the other hand, represent actions that people must take to strategize and facilitate. The strategies represent the way people deal with this phenomenon. You tend to be helpful and goal oriented. These are the strategies that will help you get results and achieve your goals. The last part of the model usually represents 'Consequences' and these represent the outcomes of the actions and interactions as well as the outcomes of the strategies used. The diagram below shows the model developed after the axial coding process for the Management Development Process in the Hotel Industry in Mauritius, from the perspective of the participants.



Causal Conditions

Causal conditions explain the various factors that determine the main phenomenon. In this case, 23 of the 25 respondents indicated that when designing hotel management development programs, planners will typically keep their pain points and future needs in mind. Their development plans will be discussed with supervisors and designers of hotel leadership development programs as part of performance management system-based performance reviews in hotels. This is consistent with the views of Byar and Rue (2006) who argue that performance management systems can help identify the development needs of managers in an organization. This generally results in the design and implementation of management development programs in most hotels in Mauritius. In addition, the opinions of the participants are considered when the

designers carry out a development needs analysis of hotels in Mauritius. Participants have the opportunity to present their development needs to the designers. Management development goals also affect the different ways in which managers are trained in hotels in Mauritius. On the other hand, management goals also influence the motivation of the participants in these programs. For example, if career advancement and improved performance bonuses are related goals of development programs, most participants will be highly motivated to participate in the programs. 10 out of 25 participants see management development as a means of personal development (Jansen & Mul, 2001). Participants should also be aware of the different development opportunities available at different hotels in Mauritius. This enables them to participate actively. In addition, leadership goals must be communicated to them in the communication process.

Main Phenomenon

The main phenomenon in this context is the different aspects related to the management development process from the point of view of the players of the Mauritius hotel sector. Participants have development needs and they can usually communicate it to the designers or their direct superiors in their respective hotels. Management development programs are organized so as to meet the development needs of both the participants and the organizations. In the Mauritian hotel sector, development needs are also identified through the feedback from customers and this will usually help to increase customer satisfaction and achieve organizational objectives. Different stakeholders are involved in the management development programs within the Mauritian hotel sector and they may include: top managers, designers, participants, evaluators (mystery shoppers, customers), mentors, coaches, development experts amongst others (Thomson et al., 2001). Participants may have different perspectives on the management development process itself. Some participants believe that continuous improvement in the workplace is always possible and that they need to keep expanding their knowledge and skills as the world of work is constantly changing. On the other hand, some participants are not motivated to participate in the leadership development program because they believe they have reached their full potential and are satisfied with their current situation. Managers who started their careers at a very low level and have become managers through internal hotel promotion generally hold such beliefs. They may see leadership development programs as an added burden to their jobs. Another differing opinion among the participants is that management development programs should be initiated by the organization, while others feel responsible for their own development and, therefore, will take individual initiative to ensure the proper development of their managerial skills and knowledge. According to Mabey (2005), participants are more likely to participate in leadership development programs when they see senior management involved in the process. For example, some participants may choose to pursue higher education to acquire additional knowledge and skills to enhance their managerial skills while enhancing their employability in the labor market.

Context

The context in which the leadership development process takes place is very specific and determines the entire process. For all participants, the seasonality of the tourism industry in Mauritius is a very important factor affecting the management development process. This is consistent with the views of Mabey and Thomson (2000) who argue that the industry in which an organization operates influences the overall management development process. Participants

generally prefer formal leadership development programs during off-peak times because they are less involved in hotel operations and can focus on leadership development programs. They expressed these concerns by analyzing various aspects they disliked about leadership development programs. They tend to prefer management development programs that are not too long, especially when management development programs have a strong theoretical component. They like management development programs that are more practical. Coaches also play an important role in making leadership development programs more effective. The selection of the trainers depends on the different types of participants. For example, experienced managers typically mentor or coach new managers or graduates to develop future managers for the Mauritian hospitality industry. Experienced managers who have been promoted to a lower level for good performance may lack certain managerial skills in broad areas of management, e.g. finance, human resources, team building, leadership, etc. and coaches must be assigned who can develop them further with these deficits.

Intervening Conditions

Intermediate conditions generally consist of prerequisites that must be met before a strategy is accepted. 13 out of 25 participants in leadership development programs believe that they can further develop their skills and know-how on their own initiative. Participants can take courses at the university to improve their future career prospects. However, one must obtain pre-funding for tuition fees. In almost most cases in Mauritius, to attend such courses, one must also obtain permission from the senior hotel management, as this may impact hotel operations. Therefore, resources are very important for participants before starting such initiatives. Another aspect that needs to be fulfilled before applying for any management development strategy is prior information about the importance and value of management development programs being carried out in hotels in Mauritius. The interview scenarios show that not all participants are motivated to participate in hotel management development programs as they feel they have reached their full potential and do not need further study. Communicating about hotel management development programs in Mauritius allows participants to learn more about the content and objectives of these programs. Participation in management development programs is mandatory in some hotels in Mauritius, as it is linked to the evaluation of management performance and these expectations must also be communicated to the participants of these hotels.

Strategies for Management Development

The strategies help us understand how participants ensure their growth in hotels in Mauritius. It was found that some

participants take their own development initiatives and may therefore choose to fund their own degrees, which may be important for promotion in the hotels themselves or for better job prospects in the external labor market. In some cases, a hotel in Mauritius can fund them for a university degree, however, the participant will need to make additional efforts to complete their university degree. These participants take responsibility for moving forward, rather than waiting for the organization to come up with leadership development plans. This joins the idea of Peter Drucker (1955) who believes that the individual should be responsible for his own development and not for the organization. 13 out of 25 participants believe that personal development and initiative should be the responsibility of development.

Many participants say that they will also take part in management development programs organized in their hotels. This participation helps them acquire additional skills and knowledge about their work. In addition, the exchange of ideas from other managers working in the same hotel chain is also encouraged. In addition, they can inform their managers or planners about their development needs, so that appropriate career-related development programs can be developed in the hotels concerned.

The participants also achieve the development goals that they have set for themselves. They monitor how well they are able to meet the set goals and what different actions they can take if they do not meet their goals. Participants must ensure they have the current skills, knowledge and experience required to perform their duties.

Impact of Management Development Programs

Participants believe that management development programs enable them to contribute to organizational goals through improved performance and effectiveness. On the other hand, their advanced skills allow them to increase customer satisfaction in the Mauritian hospitality industry. All interviewed participants were of the opinion that the development of management in the hotel industry will help to achieve organizational goals and improve customer satisfaction. These views are supported by the research of Tiستا and Sipe (2012), who proposed several skills to improve service leadership. Participants feel that after taking part in leadership development programs they gain greater independence at work because they have the knowledge to solve problems themselves and do not need to enlist the help of their managers. Executive development programs help managers learn new solutions in their respective fields of activity and learn about best practices in other hotels around the world. Participation in leadership development programs also helps to improve the employability of executives as they

have higher education, better skills and know-how that are valued in the external job market. Some participants also point out that management development programs offer graduates the opportunity to learn more about the hotel industry and develop practical industry-related skills. Recent graduates may have an academic understanding of the hospitality industry and only a management development program can give them practical industry experience. However, only one of the participants raised the issue in relation to the Hotel Management Development Goals, which will enable them to become leaders in the hotel industry in Mauritius. Both leaders benefit from leadership development programs on a personal and organizational level.

Selective Coding and Lessons Learnt

After the axial coding process, the main categories are identified and can explain all the theory behind the theory developed for management development from the perspective of the participants. The main category of participants is that their interest in medical programs is driven by personal goals rather than organizational goals. However, since they work in a hotel, they have to fulfill their obligations to the organization. Involvement of senior management in an organization's MD programs can signal to supervisors that their participation in MD programs is mandatory and that they must attend those programs for the benefit of the organization and personal development. However, participants will be more motivated to join the program when they see that leadership development programs help them to develop their skills and competencies in the real world and offer them even better advancement and career opportunities elsewhere. Some respondents also view leadership development programs as a way to improve their actual job performance by enabling the company to achieve its goals through greater customer satisfaction. At some hotels, participation in MD programs and training is part of the grading process for year-end performance awards. Check information in templates.

Verification of Information in the Models

Once the models were developed, they were shown to the five respondents to the study and others with extensive experience in the Mauritian hotel industry. The aim was to verify that it reflects the actual process of hotel management development in Mauritius. Most agreed that the model reflects the actual process. They emphasized that the model helps to understand the different perspectives of the MD process review at Hotel in Mauritius. They also pointed to the importance of the seasonal factor dominating the Mauritian hotel sector, with formal medical programs

required to be conducted off and off-peak. They also stressed the importance of experiential learning as another important part of the development process, which can be continuous.

CONCLUSION

This research helps to provide a conceptual framework for the management development process that takes place in the context of hotels in Mauritius, using a theory-based approach. The conceptual framework was prepared based on information provided by participants in management development programs organized at their hotels in Mauritius. However, like any other research methodology, the grounded theory approach has its limitations. One of the limitations of this research approach is that it depends a lot on the information provided by the participants of these management development programs and sometimes, the latter just provide information that the researcher wants to hear. The researcher may not capture the real practices as they occur in the real situations. This limitation can be overcome by looking for alternative sources of information on management development that may be available in hotel annual reports, executive development program developers and government reports. During the construction of the model, alternative sources of information were considered and the model was validated by others with prior experience in the hospitality management development process in Mauritius. The model can be used to develop hypotheses that can be tested using the quantitative research methodology and the study can be conducted on another small island where the hotel sector plays a very important role in the economy in order to better understand the development process in hospitality sector.

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