

Student Learning Log for Food and Beverage Department

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Introduction: Overview of the Food and Beverage Operation

The Food and Beverage (F&B) department at Holiday Inn Express Cardiff Bay, a 3-star hotel provides a range of dining services to guests, including breakfast buffets, snack bars, and beverage services. The department plays a critical role in ensuring guest satisfaction by maintaining high standards in food quality, cleanliness, and customer service.

Learning Objectives:

- Gain insights into the supervisory role and responsibilities within the F&B department.
- Develop work-based skills such as communication, teamwork, and task management.
- Enhance technical knowledge in areas such as food hygiene, inventory management, and guest service.
- Reflect on personal and vocational development to identify areas for growth in the hospitality industry.

Section 1: Reflection on Experience and Personal Development

I served at the Food and Beverage department for 10 weeks and in my placement, did the work of a supervisor; overseeing the day's activities, directing operations during busy schedule, and handling guest complaints. I also supervised the kitchen staff and was in charge of the stocks and supplies.

First of all I experienced a lot of stress when working in kitchen because of pressure from serving large number of guests during breakfast rush. There was lack of confidence I had in handling tasks or responding to the complaints from the guests, but as I got closer to each member of the team and the activities of the company, I built more confidence in me to tackle all that was needed from me.

A strength was that good communication skills were gained from institutions of the college especially concerning the kitchen and the time taken to serve the meals (Ferrerias-Garcia et al., 2020). Nonetheless, I experienced difficulty particular periods in coordinating staff and therefore, there might be a time when it will be under staffed and slow with serving customers.

When I processed the activity with reference to Gibbs, (2015) reflective cycle, I notice that arising incidents can be prevented if proactivity in planning and ensuing communication is observed. Staff

availability and kitchen preparation readiness in relation to the guests were major priorities in order to provide high quality service (Juliet, 2020).

There are areas that I could have optimised; staff scheduling and tasks allocation to enable them address areas of higher traffic. Coordinating staffing during peak times would have helped the delays hence better service.

In the future I would adopt a better and proper approach to staffing by using some forecasting tools for the most demanding time. Also, I will pay much attention to the improvement of the ability to manage tasks to address several assignments.

All these aspects of the my working experience played a part in my learning of the work-place skills for example to-do lists, interpersonal communication, conflict-solving techniques among others (Gibbs, 2015). By so doing, I was able to have better insight into some of the key operations management in the F&B industry.

Section 2: Critical Analysis of Work-Based Skills and Technical Knowledge

Skills that are relevant in F&B department include; communication, teamwork, and task management within the workplace since these go along way in ensuring special smooth operations and high standards of guest services. According to Borràs et al., (2015), there is further stress on the practice an acquirement of employability skills during the period of work placement and such practices were effectively in my case as a supervisor.

I can also highlight the importance of interpersonal skills and the ability to negotiate with both the kitchen and the other staff members of the restaurant. For instance, during a very busy breakfast service, there was a problem in the kitchen because of lack of enough workers (Raha and Ariffin, 2017). Being able to answer the questions of the guests and keep their expectation in check minimised frustration while maximising satisfaction.

Team work also had a big role to play when it came to, maintaining the service standards of the restaurant. The F&B department is a function that needs cooperation between the kitchen and service staff. Even though I gained much experience, I realised the significance of informing the members of the group their tasks in relation to the accomplishment of tasks and workload during busy times (Klenert, 2021).

In addition to work-based skills, technical knowledge is equally important in maintaining guest service standards. For example, I was able to master a concept such as inventory; that is, learning that it is correct to check that there is enough food for services that had been booked in advance. One time, I realised that some breakfast products were almost depleted during a weekend rush.

Another of the technical requirements designated was food hygiene and safety regulations. It is especially important for F&B department to follow those regulations as failure to do so can put guest's lives at risk and it also violates legal requirements (Gibbs and Slevitch, 2019). I learnt various things such as cleaning and hygiene standards, how to check temperatures, and how to enforce germs control to all the employees.

Floritic, (2020) has emphasised the role of developing critical reflexivity in the hospitality education, which assisted me in developing reflexivity about how technical knowledge in areas including inventory control and food hygiene, benefits guest and the operations of the business.

Section 3: Reflection on Organisational Issues

I noted one major organisational problem that I faced and this was lack of adequate staff during busy service times especially in the morning on weekends. The shortage of staff was not only a problem of efficiency, as it slowed down service, it also negatively affected employee's morale and by extension the guests (Lashley, 2018). For instance, in one weekend, business breakfast, the team lacked servers because some of them called in sick. This was because instead of taking two minutes tops as it used to, it took a good five minutes before the staff's attention was gained forcing the guests to look annoyed. The number of orders proved to be tough for the kitchen staff to handle hence meal delivery was slow.

This issue had a major influence on the evaluation of the department as it disturbed the rate and efficiency of service. Many guests who wanted to grab a quick meal before checking out lost their patience and complained that the buffet service was slow. The lack of proper staff also impacted the considered team's capability to provide proper sanitation of the dining space, which also contributed to a decrease in guest comfort.

Thus, it is necessary to implement the more flexible shift that takes into consideration periods when it is necessary to have extra staff. This could involve taking for instance employees from other department like housekeeping to help during peak hours in F& B department. In addition, a

new real time scheduling with special attention to time intervals, based on the occupancy rates and bookings, could be used to resolve the problem of inadequate staffing during the busiest times.

Although, Klenert, (2021) has stressed the importance of the reflective practice in defining the organisational problems and their solutions, which has helped me to develop the approach to the management of the similar problems in the future.

Conclusion and Action Plan

When considering the 10 weeks spent within the F&B department of the Holiday Inn Express Cardiff Bay, I was successfully able to appreciate the virtues of the vocational coping skills that include cooperation, speaking and writing skills as well as organisational skills in control of stocks amongst others. These skills are important to ensure maximum compliance with demand of quality guest service in a fast growing hospitality industry.

I also learned that there are organisational factors that need to be addressed like the staff scheduling and staffing problems. Through the implementation of such recommendations as the flexible schedule and real-time staffing, I gained a better understanding of the working processes of the F&B department.

For the development to be self-accomplished, hence in my future work plan I aim to further polish staff management communication and task prioritisation skills to improve my F&B operation management capabilities. Moreover, I will always make sure I am familiar with the new hi-tech tools assisting hotels and what other hotels doing regarding serving guests.

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