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Developing The Ladder To Professionalism


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Developing The Ladder To Professionalism

Abstract

Developing The Ladder To Professionalism by Tom Baum, Manager, Curricula Development Unit and Patricia Reid, Training Advisor, Curricula Development Unit at the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training, State Agency for Hotels, Catering and Tourism in Dublin, Ireland: “Developments are currently in hand to promote increased professionalism in management within the hotel and catering industry in Ireland. The authors discuss the particular responsibility of educational agencies. Recent initiatives to provide a comprehensive and flexible career ladder encompassing craft training, in-service and “second-chance” education, as well as more conventional college-based initial management are reviewed, as are attempts by various industry associations to enhance the professionalism of members.”

In this discussion, the authors have primarily devoted their attention to degree gaps in professionalism in the hospitality industry, and the measures that can be taken to mitigate these circumstances.

“The hotel, catering, and tourism industry, in common with others involved in the service function, has been relatively slow to adopt modern approaches to management and technology at all levels,” Baum and Reid want you to know.

The authors hail from Ireland and point to steps that the industry, in Ireland, is taking to address service problems. “Developments are taking place in Ireland toward professionalism in management in the context of the Irish hotel and catering industry; education and educationally related institutions have taken a role in contributing to the professionalization of work in this area,” say the authors.

Baum and Reid point to CERT’s - The State Training Agency for Hotels, Catering and Tourism - involvement in promoting professionalism in the Irish hospitality industry, and provide a comprehensive graph to illustrate CERT’s paths to successful management.

Worthy of note is, proprietor management is more common on that side of the Atlantic’, with most properties tending to be smaller than U.S. chain operations. That fact, by no means suggests that management style is indeed complete in the U.K, but it can be said that maybe such style is more congenial.

“However, finding the balance between operationalism and the management and development functions seems to underpin perhaps the cardinal problems of professionalism in hotel and catering management in Ireland,” say the authors. “The dichotomy, clearly represented in the management of the industry, is equally evident within the educational and training system and also in the limited influence of associations...” Baum and Reid expand on that issue.

The authors do concede that it is difficult to quantify what exactly constitutes good professionalism in the hospitality industry; it is, after all, a fairly subjective concept. They continue by describing some of the degree and sub-degree programs being offered in Ireland.

Keywords

Tom Baum, Patricia Reid, Developing the Ladder to Professionalism, Hospitality, Education, Management, Walking about, Ireland, Professional associations, CERT

Developing The Ladder To Professionalism

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Developments are currently in hand to promote increased professionalism in management within the hotel and catering industry in Ireland. The authors discuss the particular responsibility of educational agencies. Recent initiatives to provide a comprehensive and flexible career ladder encompassing craft training, in-service and "second-chance" education, as well as more conventional college-based initial management, are reviewed as are attempts by various industry associations to enhance the professionalism of members.

The hotel, catering, and tourism industry, in common with others involved in the service function, has been relatively slow to adopt modern approaches to management and technology at all levels. This is true in Ireland, as it is elsewhere. The American hotelier Statler¹ ascribed the success of operations to three important factors, "Location, location and location." This underlying philosophy that the management and method of operation of a hotel appear largely peripheral to its success was widely in evidence on both sides of the Atlantic until comparatively recently, with a consequent and dominating influence on perceptions of professionalism held by those involved in hotel and catering management. This, in turn, was crucial in influencing models and practices of management education, both college and in-company based.

Developments are taking place in Ireland toward professionalism in management in the context of the Irish hotel and catering industry; education and educationally-related institutions have taken a role in contributing to the professionalization of work in this area. The extent to which this achievement is a reality and the range of continuing developments, both in colleges and in industry, will be considered and a model outlined which attempts to link the fairly disparate traditions of management development which have evolved, side by side, in Ireland.

The critical importance of successful management in the hotel, catering, and tourism industry, whether imbued by professionalism or not, is clearly indicated by the importance of tourism to the Irish national economy. In 1984, foreign and domestic tourism spending of 675 million Irish pounds accounted for almost 7 percent of the GNP. Approximately

2.5 million foreign visitors alone spent 424 million Irish pounds; these figures do not include non-tourist related expenditures in a growing catering industry.² Tourism in Ireland accounts for almost half of all invisible exports and has a significant effect on the demand for output on other sectors of the economy. The contribution to the state, via the Exchequer, is likewise high, estimated to be as much as 68 pence in the pound from tourist expenditure.³ The future for tourism in Ireland, despite some decline in traditional markets, looks favorable with benefits accruing from a worldwide growth in international tourism after a period of decline and subsequent consolidation. In total, the industry employs approximately 50,000 people in hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, industrial and institutional catering, travel, and tourism information services. Licensed premises are not included in this figure.

Hotel and catering operations in Ireland, in common with the United Kingdom, tend to be small. Over 80 percent of hotels, for example, have under 40 bedrooms. These and other catering businesses fall within the Irish Industrial Development Authority's definition of small businesses, with less than 100 employees, and are characterized by fragmented operation and management systems. However, employment opportunities in the industry are of considerable significance at all levels and are located throughout the country in remote and rural areas as well as in the larger urban districts. Recent research information projects an estimated 2 percent growth in employment in the industry between 1984 and 1985.⁵

Management in the Irish hotel and catering industry has a strong tradition of operationalism. Both the size of establishments and the preponderance of proprietor management constituting about half of all managers has, inevitably, resulted in close, day-to-day involvement by those in positions of responsibility in all departments of operations. The transition from traditions based on the genial "mine host" management of hotel and catering operations to the use of modern business approaches and new technology is, by no means, complete. Indeed, the two approaches may not be so totally compatible as claimed by some. Effective use of technology, for example, may allow for greater customer contact. As Peters and Waterman⁶ point out, however, operational management is not necessarily purely negative. Management by walking about, to use their term, does have validity if it is purposeful; in many hotels it does not meet this criterion.

However, finding the balance between operationalism and the management and development functions seems to underpin perhaps the cardinal problems of professionalism in hotel and catering management in Ireland. The dichotomy, clearly represented in the management of the industry, is equally evident within the educational and training system and also in the limited influence of associations dedicated to increasing professionalism in the industry. This issue is, by no means, unique to Ireland. In the United Kingdom, the HCIMA, in researching the corpus of professional knowledge needed in hotel, catering, and institutional services,⁷ noted that the priority skills required are, on the one hand, financial and personnel matters and, on the other, technical matters, customer handling, materials, and equipment. The implicit definition of profes-

sionalism in the hotel and catering industry, according to this study, therefore, is a blend of operationalism with broader management functions. No equivalent attempt at a definition is available in relation to the Irish industry. Particularly in the Irish hotels sector, management is frequently transitory, with much job mobility, and the consequence is that managers must learn new systems and approaches frequently. This has an inevitable negative effect on the professionalism of an operation's management.

Perceptions of Professionalism Vary

However, varying perceptions of professionalism, representative of those held in the industry as a whole, are evident within the approaches adopted to prepare new entrants for hotel and catering management. Unlike other occupations where the boundaries of professionalism are clearly defined and delineated and, indeed, preserved, access to management within the hotel and catering industry in Ireland is completely open and, in no way, is it formally associated with requisite qualifications or experience. The benefits of this system are evidenced in the examples of highly successful hoteliers and caterers who have moved into this area of operation without any formal training or apprenticeship in the industry. This is particularly true in the context of proprietor management, which accounts for maybe half of the country's 1,600 managers in the hotel sector, where upwards of 80 percent of owner-managers in specific industry sectors (restaurants, small hotels) have no formal, college-based education or training;⁸ however, the less beneficial consequences of this situation in ensuring standards of professional practice in the industry are also evident and no professional sanctions are available to ensure standards or uniformity.

The industry's professional associations, for example, the Irish Hotel and Catering Institute, have a consequent small membership and make only a limited contribution to the maintenance of professionalism in the industry. Within specific sectors, however, this negative assessment does not necessarily apply. The Association of Irish Contract Caterers, representing all bona fide industrial and institutional caterers in the country, operates and enforces a very tight professional code of practice. It is a subject of some debate whether this problem of open access is an issue of critical importance in an industry where effects on customers are of what might be called a secondary nature, rather than the primary influence of professional areas such as medicine, law, and accounting. In view of the economic significance of the hotel and catering industry to the country, this argument seems difficult to sustain.

Preparation for hotel and catering management is clearly reflective of the prevailing open access to the profession and covers a wide spectrum from industry-based development to university equivalent degree courses. That this wide range of opportunities does continue to exist is a reflection of the diversity of the industry. Fuller⁹ described the establishment of university courses in hotel and catering studies as indicative of the industry's educational "coming of age" and pointed to Cornell in the 1920s and Surrey and Strathclyde in the 1960s as indicators of this elsewhere. By these criteria, part of the Irish industry has cer-

tainly "come of age," and the Republic of Ireland now supports two degree programs in hotel and catering studies, with another similar course located in Northern Ireland.

Initiatives toward the establishment of degree level education in this area began with the foundation of Shannon School of Hotel Management in 1947; a four-year diploma course is now featured in this internationally-recognized college, which concentrates its activities to an operationally-oriented education of graduates for management within the hotel sector. In other colleges where involvement in management education is rather more recent, these developments have evolved from a longer-standing tradition in craft and technical training, institutional management, and domestic science teacher training.

The degree programs in the Dublin College of Catering and Galway Regional Technical College continue to be complemented by a number of diploma and certificate courses of shorter duration preparing graduates for management and supervisory positions, either in smaller or specific sector establishments. Both these colleges, as well as five others throughout the country, undertake craft training for the industry, courses which are being developed and are fully funded by the state training body for the hotel, catering, and tourism industry, CERT.

A new addition to the post-craft area of hotel and catering education has been Athlone Regional Technical College, which provides a two-year, sub-degree program designed for supervisory rather than full management preparation. This course is closely modeled on the Swiss approach to management education, notably in the Lausanne hotel school.

The two sandwich degree courses are designed, primarily, to prepare students for a management career in large hotel, catering, and tourism enterprises. Entry to these courses has been criticized on the basis that insufficient credence is given to personal as opposed to academic criteria. However, these courses would seem to compare favorably with equivalent programs in the United Kingdom and elsewhere and, indeed, many course graduates obtain employment outside the country. The tendency toward an academic emphasis in these courses also allows for some mobility into other areas of management outside hotel and catering. However, a criticism of these courses insofar as students are concerned is in relation to their generality and their inability to apply theoretical management systems and models to small establishments in Ireland.

Primarily courses in professional management, the degree programs are of too recent origin to determine whether graduates will, in the long term, seek to apply their skills within the Irish industry and whether they will influence the perceptions and practice of professionalism which currently prevail. There is a view held that these graduates, indeed, are receiving a level of professional management education which has only limited application at this time within the home industry. However, in the longer term, their potential contribution to a rapidly-changing industrial and social environment may be considerable, particularly in the areas of finance, planning, development, and new technology. A possible problem with the college approach could be that their functional approach to

management is somewhat incompatible with an entrepreneurial, strategic agency approach to be found, more frequently, in industry.

Other Programs Stress Craft Skills

Sub-degree courses in colleges in Ireland tend to place greater emphasis on operational and craft skills than is the case with degree programs. These diplomas and certificates build supervisory and management education around an initial and fairly extensive grounding in craft skills such as cookery, food and beverage service, bartending, accommodation services, and reception, both in college as well as through industrial experience. On graduation, students from these courses are intended for junior and first-line management and supervisory positions in hotel and catering establishments, both commercial and institutional, in Ireland.

The emphasis of these programs is, in their operational elements, similar to the hotel-based management training programs which are well established in a number of group and independent hotels. Of the approximately 800 salaried hotel managers in Ireland, about half are college trained; this proportion is likely to increase. However, at present, the other half have graduated either through hotel-based management trainee systems or without any structured training programs; there are approximately 150 trainees in training at any time.¹⁰

Such hotel-based management training is carried out independent of external validation and on a relatively ad hoc basis in most establishments. Traineeships have no formal entrance requirements and do not offer any externally recognized qualification. Opportunities for off-the-job study are unusual. The main objective of these programs is to give trainees a thorough operational grounding in all hotel departments and, through this experience, to enable them to graduate to supervisory and junior management positions. However, it is inevitable that their perceptions of role and their concepts of management and associated professionalism are limited by the nature of the training received and the lack of exposure beyond the training hotel. Some of the better management trainee schemes do allow for some college release and have in-house lecture programs. However, with no minimum conditions of employment and the payment of high fees for the opportunity, some trainees are in danger of exploitation under this type of operational training scheme.

To date, attempts to provide a broader educational base for hotel-based management training have not proved successful. The experience in the hotel and catering industry is very similar to that which characterizes management training in Ireland generally, that which has a primarily "on-the-job" emphasis.¹¹ A proposal for co-operation between CERT, the Irish Hotels Federation and the Irish Hotel and Catering Institute, resulting in graduate membership in the institute for successful trainees, has not progressed beyond discussion stages. Opportunities for management education through specially designed sandwich and block-release courses, with financial and curricula support from CERT, are offered in Galway Regional Technical College. The block-release course, in particular, is designed to meet the needs of trainee managers in the industry. These alternative paths to a professional management qualification,

while innovative and in considerable demand, have not succeeded in supplanting the hotel-based trainee system, which continues to flourish.

CERT Works To Increase Professionalism

CERT's role in the development of professional management and supervisory education for the hotel and catering industry seeks to provide a broad range of opportunities to link and consolidate existing programs in college and industry and thus to increase the overall level of professionalism within the industry. CERT's role is to act, on behalf of the state, to provide and coordinate

- education, training, recruitment, and industry placement of young school leaders and unemployed people
- career development opportunities for industry personnel
- advisory, support, and information services for the industry¹²

These roles allow for the identification of a comprehensive professional management development model which links CERT's traditional commitment to craft education with close involvement in college and in-service management education (See Figure 1). In-service opportunities are offered through a formally certified supervisory development program for those holding positions of responsibility in craft departments, and also through a range of external and in-company courses and advisory services in areas such as business planning, marketing and sales, product development and quality control, financial management, physical resources, and new technology. These programs are designed to provide up-dating and new opportunities for industry personnel with or without college training who hold supervisory and management positions in the industry.

Complementary to these opportunities is a new structure for craft education which is intended to provide longer-term career links into management and development programs. Craft education in hotel and catering studies in Ireland has, traditionally, resulted in qualification through the City and Guilds of London Institute. In 1982, CERT and the Department of Education established the National Craft Curricula and Certification Board to initiate the development of alternative, indigenous programs and to certify the course graduates. This has allowed for the development of courses relevant and responsive to the needs of the Irish industry. Each course is developed after extensive research to determine existing and projected demands of the industry, both in terms of manpower numbers and of the nature of skills and knowledge required. The new structure has also allowed for the preparation of a course blueprint which maps out a number of levels of courses to meet the developing career needs of industry personnel from initial core craft skills through advanced technical areas and supervisory development to link in to existing and proposed general or more specific sector management programs. It is intended to offer these programs through college,

in-service, and distance modes of study on full and part-time bases.

In 1985 pilot advanced Level II programs under the auspices of the National Craft Curricula and Certification Board in housekeeping, bar management, and food and beverage service were developed. These are currently being offered on a pilot block-release basis in colleges and are recruiting from craft operatives with three to four years industry experience following their initial training period. Opportunities also exist for those whose original training was within the industry. Level II programs are intended to meet the needs of young people aspiring to positions of responsibility in the industry and, as such, emphasize advanced technical, supervisory, financial management, and quality control skills. Longer term plans see these programs available to those in the industry through a variety of part-time, full-time, and distance learning modes, as well as through provision of further specialist modules.

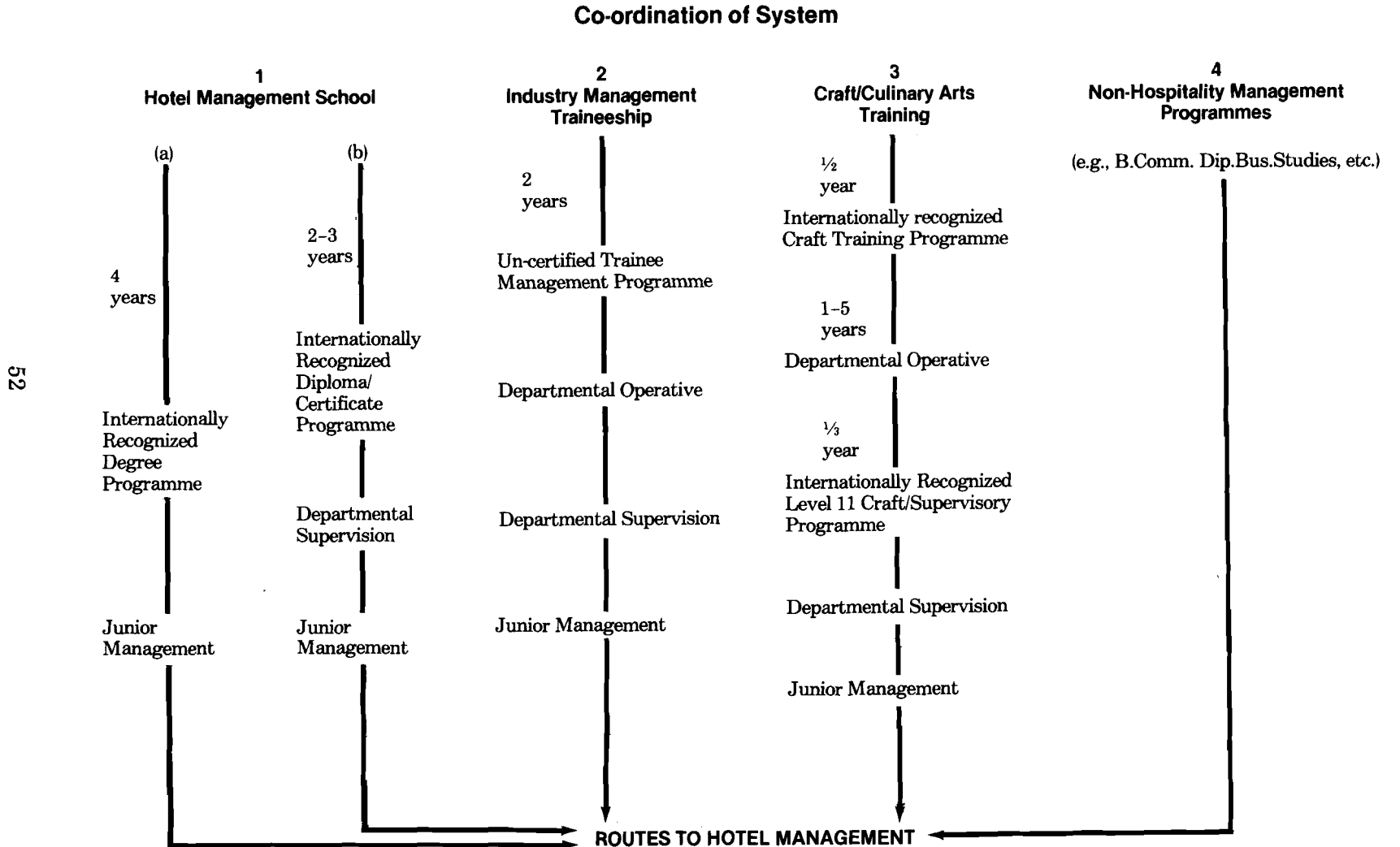
Long-Term Industry Commitment Is Sought

At all levels, the emphasis of national certificate courses is on developing a long-term commitment to the industry and a consequent career orientation heretofore lacking in craft trainees. This objective is facilitated by a significant change in the profile of entrants for training in hotel and catering crafts. Reflecting demographic and educational trends in Ireland, CERT's centralized recruitment of craft students has recorded an increase of applicants, with the university matriculation equivalent leaving certificate from 5 percent of applicants in 1979 to 60 percent in 1984.¹³ This seems likely to significantly influence the longer-term career aspirations and demands of craft personnel in the industry and ensure demand for courses beyond the initial craft level.

This career progression model is a pragmatic response to supervisory and management requirements in the hotel and catering industry in Ireland, as identified by manpower and curricula research. It is not exclusively the result of theoretical analysis of the needs of the industry from an academic or management perspective. Such analyses are not common working tools within this industry, which is characterized by operational, "back pocket" management. The model is designed to complement existing management development programs within the college system and to contribute to the improvement of those outside of educational bodies. The model is a response to predicted needs in the industry and to educational and demographic trends in Ireland. This limited base, however, represents a significant step forward from the rather unsophisticated criteria utilized by colleges and the industry in developing management development programs.

The implications for professionalism within the industry of the development of this career progression model may seem somewhat tenuous and long-term. However, in view of the seeming incompatibility of the philosophy of existing routes to management in the hotel and catering industry and their limited success to date in ensuring consistent professionalism in the management of the industry, this model could offer a long-term base for development in this area. Well-qualified and motivated craft operatives, working and aspiring to high professional craft stan-

Figure 1
CERT - The State Training Agency for Hotels, Catering and Tourism



52

dards and seeking career advancement in the industry, will ensure a level of professional commitment at supervisory and department management levels which has previously been somewhat lacking. This, combined with the increasing influence of college graduates on the industry, may well move hotel and catering management in Ireland toward a real professionalism in its operation, planning, and development:

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