THE PRACTICAL REALITIES OF IMPLEMENTING CHANGE ON A NATIONWIDE BASIS: THE BAHAMAS HOTEL TRAINING COUNCIL - A CASE STUDY[1]

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With the ever widening gulf between equally reputable camps of social scientists, politicians, practitioners and lay people advocating Tourism as a tool for Economic Development, on the one hand, and the other, accusing Tourism of a Myriad of sins ranging from cultural-dependency, to Neo-colonialism to whorism, it is important to look at an institution that is attempting to make some sense out of these two positions and adapt them to the realities of every-day existence. The Bahamas Hotel Training Council (BHTC) is trying to meet that challenge in the Bahamian context. It is felt, however, that the BHTC concept has relevance in the wider community of developing nations, particularly in the areas of:

1. Post-Secondary Training and Development

2. Organizational and Departmental Effectiveness.

3. Positive Social and Cultural Interfacing of Tourism and The Host Population.

4. Maximising the Benefits of Tourism to Host Population, the Tourist and the Entrepreneur.

While the above four objectives have not yet been achieved to the satisfaction of the authors, there are sufficient positive reinforcers for one to begin to discern a faint ray of light at the end of the tunnel.

The Working Philosophy of BHTC

The working philosophy of BHTC is cyclical in that it continually seeks to monitor its results and build its findings into current and future activities. This philosophy can be broken down into five broad areas that are further subdivided in an effort to be specific and wherever possible to establish objectives that can be quantified to enable one to determine the extent to which one's intervention strategy is working. These five broad areas are:

1. Involvement of all interested parties in the decision making process.

2. Determine what is important for each of the interested parties and prioritize them.

3. Identify both commonality and divergence in areas of importance. Distinguish between "soft" and "hard" diver-

4. Develop appropriate strategy to implement changes desired

   i) First working with those easiest and quickest to obtain results to establish credibility.

   ii) It may be appropriate to implement changes on behalf of one or more of the groups first either because of tradition, the existing views of the different groups.

5. Evaluation of strategies. This feedback is fed into the next round of activities.

Conceptually one is working with what is moving along a continuum to what should be. These statements along with the appropriate change strategies are value ladened concepts. Through research, reviews of other findings in related areas, varied inputs it is hoped that common sense and emperical data will minimize failure.

Key Issues for the Bahamas and Caribbean Tourism

Governmental policies in the Bahamas, as well as in many other developing Caribbean nations, are designed to promote and facilitate continued expansion of the Tourism component of the economy. Many of these policies appear to be sound and well-intended. A crucial issue in Tourism development for the region is the translation of governmental programmes and policies into practical realities. These realities include social and economic changes on a national, community, family, and individual level. Serious consideration of a meaningful change strategy is necessary for implementation of policies necessary for development.

Changes needed for integrating Tourism with Caribbean nationalism include:

1. Establishing national priorities and planning to include the role that tourism will play in the society and its economy;

2. Restructuring appropriate public and private sector organizations to meet the needs of the present and future and not just tradition and custom;

3. Rethinking education and its general purpose in the enculturation and relevant training and retraining of societal members;

4. An assessment of the potential of social institutions such as churches, families, political parties, media, and labour unions for shaping opinions for or against national goals;

5. Development and nurturing of a positive nationalism that combines economic and social changes with an improvement in general welfare of all of the citizens; and

6. Creating a concern for ecological relationships and energy conservation to enhance long term man/land utilization.

These are inter-related aspects of policy and action which would comprise the development goals of the Bahamas and any other Caribbean nation choosing tourism as a prime mover of their economy.

The establishment of national priorities for tourism may depend on factors such as political stability, available human and physical resources, the economic organization, and historical influences. Priorities should include encouragement of appropriate support systems for tourism development such as industrial training programmes. National goals should include a realistic assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of tourism and appropriate structural changes to ensure that the advantages are realized and the disadvantages are minimized.

Businesses and public sector organizations must be designed to make maximum use of manpower by establishing personnel and training functions to help employees improve job performance. Structures of organizations which include features such as seniority systems of rewards, i.e., a pecking order for personnel processes, should be replaced with competency and performance based criteria for selection, training and promotion.

Traditional educational programmes, which are based on the colonial model, are inappropriate for the socialization and skills training needed to meet the demands of rapidly changing societies. The organization, curricula, and personnel of educational delivery systems should reflect an awareness of political, social, and economic issues relevant to the unique development needs of the nation.

Churches, families and other social institutions are powerful and vital forces in Caribbean societies and are capable of resisting or facilitating change. Religious organizations are often guilty of placing emphasis on life after death instead of existence. Family units are the primary sources of information for children about the world of work, occupational preferences, and attitudes in general and tourism in particular. Parents and children should both be educated to understand the alternatives available to them and the nation and then be given appropriate information and support for rational decision-making.

Positive nationalism should include the development and maintenance of national pride and individual self-esteem based on an understanding of the cultural and historical uniqueness of the society. Strong emphasis must be placed on the retention, refinement, and integration of the local culture is necessary for the development of a unique tourism product desirable to both host and guest.

A concern for ecological relationships and conservation practices is important for maintaining the natural scenic beauty typical of Caribbean lands. Clean land, air, and sea are desirable features of the environment for both host and guest. Long range planning is necessary for continuation of energy sources needed for development of transportation services, cooling of buildings, and maintaining adequate water supplies.

Tourism should be approached with an understanding of the overall effects and implications for the society in which it is being developed. Tourism does not have to be a negative force in Caribbean societies. It can and must reflect and satisfy the needs of the host nation and its people. However, it will not just happen. Conscious, informed planning and implementation of policy to ensure the maximum benefits of tourism must take place.

Some of the frequently stated pros and cons of Tourism are:

1. Earning foreign exchange to finance other development and growth.

2. Increasing the income of the resident population.

3. Increasing employment within the country.

4. Increasing government revenue without additional taxes.

5. Assisting in the regional development of the country.

6. International good-will and promoting peace.

7. Cultural exchange between countries.

8. Encouragement of local people to increase their skills.

9. Encouragement of the local population to work harder to achieve a higher level of prosperity as manifested by visitors.

10. The revenue from visitors enables the environment e.g. disadvantages of tourism are as follows:

1. The resources devoted to tourism might achieve the same economic objectives more efficiently if used in some other way (e.g. agriculture, manufacturing industry, etc.)

2. May create misunderstandings and antipathy between residents and visitors rather than international good-will.

3. Alienation of people from the land for higher wages, "better life" in the tourism areas (but this may happen with other forms of "modern" development, though not necessarily with agriculture. "Modern types of agriculture do employ fewer workers than "traditional" agriculture).

4. Too many tourists may create stress rather than stability.

5. The skills learned in tourism are very specific to the industry and are not readily transferable to other sectors for the majority of the jobs.

6. Tourism may alienate land from alternative uses and may lead to speculation in land prices, pricing it out of the range of the local population.

7. Tourism can create inflation in a small economy which may adversely affect the poorer members of the resident population.

8. Tourism may increase the availability of drugs and other vices such as prostitution etc.

9. Demonstration effect: local population copying life style and consumption patterns of tourists.

10. Destruction of the environment may result from uncontrolled tourism growth.

11. "Neo-colonialism", black serving white; white manager, black workers. Or foreign economic control and ownership.

An Institutional Response to the Key Issues

The Bahamas Hotel Training Council was formed by the Bahamas Government in 1973, as a possible model for future industrial training approaches and legislation. It is a tripartite body, consisting of: Government, Industry and Union representatives. Presently, it is made up of – at Government level – the Permanent Secretaries of Education and Culture, Tourism and Labour and Home Affairs; at Industry level – the Chairman of the Bahamas Hotel Association, Nassau/Paradise Island Promotion Board, and the Bahamas Hotel Employers' Association; at Union level – the President of the Bahamas Hotel Catering and Allied Workers' Union. The Council is the policy making body for the Bahamas Hotel Training College.

The Bahamas Hotel Training College seeks to combine academia with the world of work. This inter-relationship between these two frequently isolated sectors strengthen each other, resulting in greater knowledge and actual competence for both the full-time students as well as persons on-the-job. The students or future new entrant workers gain relevant

practical experience and the existing worker or supervisor gains exposure to new methodologies which would normally be reserved for those with high academic entrance criteria.

The initial objectives of the College as formulated by the Council were as follows:

1. To upgrade the technical skills of existing and new entrant workers.

2. To establish a recognized regional standard of qualification for middle management personnel.

3. To provide a training facility to enable students to transfer to institutions of higher education in the U.S.A., Canada, the U.K. and Europe.

4. To provide a training facility for personnel teaching in secondary technical schools or vocational colleges in the Region.

5. To maintain the teaching and training resource facility to assist with the development of other training activities.

These objectives have, to a large extent, been accomplished:

1. More than 5,000 persons have been exposed to some form of related training, the majority coming from employment for upgrading training.

2. More than 200 foreign students have attended courses from 30 different countries, including most of the Caribbean, some of the Latin American countries, such as Costa Rica and Chile, from Europe and India, and from Africa, including Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Ghana.

3. The College has obtained full accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools which allows for transferability into United States Universities and Colleges.

4. International Agencies such as the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) have recognised the Bahamas Hotel Training Council as a suitable organization to which grant and scholarship funds may be expended.

As a result of this initial concept, a number of campus based and on-job programmes were developed. The campus based courses, consist primarily of the Two Year Diploma Course, and the Apprenticeship Food Preparation Course, one year Apprenticeship Food Service course, five weeks intensive summer school programme, and the fifteen week Vocational Teachers Certificate course. On-job training programmes were initially aimed at upgrading the individual level of competence with emphasis being placed on skill training, primarily in the Food and Beverage area.

Lessons Learned

Perhaps the most important lesson learned is that it is not sufficient to be given a mandate to perform certain desired functions. One has to earn one's way by being relevant and practical in order to gain the respect, assistance, and co-operation of persons whom one has been charged to assist.

More specifically, it was discovered that the initial approach of concentrating on upgrading individual competence, while necessary, has little immediate impact on the effectiveness of a particular department. Additionally, it tended to perpetuate the belief, both within the Industry and in the broader society that college was a typical vocational school, training persons only at the lower levels.

Within organizations themselves many of the current practices of management have inadvertently contributed to poor organizational performance:

1. There is a considerable amount of supervisor and staff dissatisfaction sometimes bordering on alienation within the organizations.

2. There is a lack of clear-cut understandable organizational and departmental policy guidelines and objectives throughout the organization.

3. There is an absence of objective criteria for selection, placement, evaluation and promotions.

4. There is an absence of departmental performance standards and effective job descriptions.

5. The reward system frequently rewards the poor performer and the good performer at the same rate.

6. There are a number of organizational constraints to effective training, manpower planning and development programmes.

While these are harsh criticisms of the industry, it must be borne in mind that these kinds of deficiencies exists in other organizations both in the public and private sectors. It is to the credit of the hotel industry that they have participated in the establishment of an institution geared towards the resolution of the existing problems.

Shifting Emphasis of BHTC

In an effort to address the problems cited above, BHTC is shifting its emphasis in two broad areas. The first involves greater industry orientation aimed primarily at up-grading technical and social skills, and overall organizational effective-ness. Training activities are justified either on the basis of the impact it would have on the organization or its multiplier effect. Here attempts are made to actually monitor management and supervisory performance; review existing organizational policies and guidelines; establish objective decision making criteria; encourage greater innovativeness and creativity and at the same time cost conscious-ness; assist in the design of a reward system that fosters greater productivity, departmental effective-ness and a commitment to effective orientation, training and cross-training of staff. An important part of this is the strengthening of the personnel function and the training of supervisors to train others.

The second broad area of emphasis involves the concept of encouraging greater economic and social integration of tourism through the creation of a uniquely Bahamian tourism product. Tourism being the major industry and being regarded as the engine for future economic development and growth, has to be viewed very critically in economic and social terms. While the Bahamas has a successful form of tourism in terms of numbers of visitors, when one looks at the low rate of visitors

return and the high import content of tourism, it must be concluded that the Bahamas is not effectively maximizing the benefits of tourism nor satisfying the visitor to the extent that they would want to return in greater numbers. A direct spin-off of this lack of social and economic integration is that it contributes directly to unemployment, a lack of indigenous products and a weak national cultural identity. It must be emphasised that it is not the tourism sector alone that is to be blamed for this position, but rather the whole institutional framework of the country that fosters and per-petuates it.

Research in Progress

The BHTC is becoming active in stimulating research to develop data about the tourist industry. One such research effort is the "Management and Employee Attitude and Value Assessment" currently being conducted. It represents a small part of the overall development and change effort needed to make tourism and the Bahamian people compatible.

In May, 1979, preliminary planning was accomplished for a project designed to provide information about tourism development in the Bahamas. The project is a cooperative venture among the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism; the Bahamas Hotel Training College, Human Systems Resource Development, a consulting firm; and appropriate organizations in the hotel industry.

The research is conducted in two phases: a pilot study in December, 1979, and a comprehensive assessment of the industry in June and July, 1980. Employees of three hotels on New Providence Island were sampled in the pilot study. Data obtained was used for formulation of the research design for the comprehensive study which will sample employees from eighteen hotels on five additional islands.

Preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the pilot study results. These include observations indicating that:

1. Many line and supervisory personnel need basic literacy skills training:

2. Cultural and language differences among host and guests may influence both employee and guest satisfaction;

3. Present hotel organizational structures are not effective in design and operation;

4. Training in technical and social skills is greatly needed;

5. Hotel staff generally view the industry as compatible with national goals; and

6. Job satisfaction is often questionable.

A general impression given by the pilot study results is that much work is needed in the hotel industry to make the marriage of tourism and the Bahamian people a success.

Six variables are to be measured in the hotels studied.

These variables relate to employee/management views on:

1. The organization of the hotel;

2. Management style;

3. The view of tourism and national goals;

4. The attitude toward tourists;

5. Degree of job satisfaction;

6. Training needs and productivity.

In the more comprehensive industry-wide research the guest perception of the tourism product will also be assessed.

The goals of the project are to:

1. Develop an adequate and valid data base about the hotel industry;

2. Develop new, and enhance existing, networks of resource and information - sharing among organizations concerned with tourism;

3. Design training curricula relevant to the specific and unique needs of Bahamian tourism; and,

4. Test hypotheses about the relationships among the six variables.

These variables are to be compared to indicators of tourism product quality such as guest satisfaction to determine the strength of the association of each to product improvement.

The Broader Application Of The BHTC Model

While one cannot definitively say that the BHTC model is the answer to training for development, it does seem to offer some alternatives to the limitations of the current post-secondary educational institutions.

As stated earlier many of the areas cited as being deficiencies in the hotel industry are in fact more wide-spread and exist in other organizations both public and private. Persons involved in the daily running of organizations do not have the time or, frequently the inclination to seek out new methods or new approaches to solving organizational problems or seizing new opportunities. Additionally, decisions are frequently made on the basis of short term commercial criteria without consideration being given to its long term social impact or the developmental needs of the country. What is needed is an institution which has the profitable survival of the industries at heart in the framework of the changing aspirations of the citizens of the country.

As the Industrial Training Council's concept is still in the formative stages, consideration might be given to making it the umbrella organization with "training boards" for the various sectors of the economy. These boards would be made up along the lines of BHTC utilizing the tripartite concept, wherever feasible, along with joint funding between Government and the Industry. Each board would have an academic component and an on-job training component, with lecturers having responsibility for both classroom based courses and industry based activities. Additionally, there may very well be core course necessary for all persons, this might be conducted under the auspicies of the Industrial Training Council. The make-up of the boards may be created as follows:

Primary Industries	Agriculture and Fisheries Training Board.
Secondary Industries	Manufacturing Industries Training Board.
	Construction Industry Training Board.
	Handicraft & Souvenir Industry Training Board.
Tertiary Industries	Public Service Training Board.
	Hotel, Tourism and Allied Industries Training Board (presently BHTC)

Banking, Finance and
Insurance Training
    Board.

Transportation Training
    Board.

Music, Drama and Arts
Training Board (presently
National School of Dance)

These may appear to be somewhat radical
recommendations. It is our contention
that the society has changed drastically
as a result of three major activities and
is on the verge of undergoing a fourth. If
the violent upheavels that have occurred in
some of the nearby countries are to be
avoided, then an approach of systematic and
planned institutional change that seeks to
maintain the concept of profit and to
respond to governmental development strategy,
and the yearnings and aspirations of the
people must be created.

The three major changes referrred to are:

1. The political transition from
    minority to majority rule in
    1967.

2. The higher standard and broader
    base of education.

3. The impact of mass communications
    particularly T.V. and radio.

These three factors have brought about a
cultural transformation by changing the
attitudes towards authority. In the past,
people in positions of power were credited
with both the information and the inclination
necessary to act wisely; their authority was
a given. Today it is being systematically
challenged. The formation of unions, social
action groups, splinter political parties,
the increasing amount of youth crimes are
but a few examples of the increasing polari-
zation of various sectors of the society.
With the coming Social Revolution and the
officialsanctioning of the self criticism
could well cause a rurther eroding of
authority and even a cultural revolution
that might get out of hand as it did in
China, unless the necessary institutional
changes are made to accommodate it.

BHTC was meant to be a model for future
industrial training approaches. The
experiment has proven to be successful

and deemed to have wider application not only
in this society but in developing countries
as a whole.

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