

Sonja Krekilä

**QUALITY CONTROL GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING YOUNG EMPLOYEES
IN TOURISM**

Case: S2S Travel Network

Thesis
Kajaani University of Applied Sciences
School of Tourism
Degree Programme in Tourism
Spring 2013



School School of Tourism	Degree Programme Degree Programme in Tourism
Author Sonja Krekilä	
Title QUALITY CONTROL GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING YOUNG EMPLOYEES IN TOURISM Case: S2S Travel Network	
Optional Professional Studies -	Supervisor(s) Mikko Keränen
	Commissioned by Kajaani University of Applied Sciences
Date Spring 2013	Total Number of Pages and Appendices 79
Abstract <p>In the evermore competitive and globalized service market quality has proven to be the factor, which can provide the company with a significant competitive advantage. Therefore, excelling in quality management can be the key to success for the company.</p> <p>The objective of this thesis was to create quality control guidelines for the organization idea and the travel packages offered by it, which were developed in Tourism Product Development course in Kajaani University of Applied Sciences in 2012.</p> <p>The theoretical background consists of two main approaches, quality and human resource management. Both of the concepts introduce the definition and how the concepts are related to tourism as well as their different phases.</p> <p>The research problem concerned the human resource management side of quality management: How do we keep quality continuous in the case of young and inexperienced volunteer-based service providers? The research addresses e.g. issues of motivation.</p> <p>The research itself was a qualitative research. The chosen method was a focused interview with themes related to the theoretical background as well as the case. The results were transcribed and analysed with coding and conceptualizing.</p> <p>The output of the thesis was quality control guidelines for managing S2S Travel Network and its services. The guidelines contain five parts related to practicalities of quality management and how the case is to be implemented. The ready guidelines can be seen from the appendices.</p>	
Language of Thesis	English
Keywords	Quality, total quality management, human resource management
Deposited at	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronic library Theseus <input type="checkbox"/> Kajaani University of Applied Sciences Library

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	3
2.1 Quality	3
2.1.1 Definition of quality	3
2.1.2 Quality management	5
2.1.3 Total quality management (TQM)	13
2.2 Human resource management (HRM)	18
2.2.1 Definition of HRM	18
2.2.2 Different stages of HRM process	19
3 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	29
3.1 Case introduction	29
3.2 Research problem	32
3.3 Research methods	33
3.3.1 Qualitative method	33
3.3.2 Data collection	35
3.3.3 Data analysis	37
4 RESULTS	39
4.1 Profiles	39
4.2 Issues of quality	39
4.3 Issues of HRM	43
4.4 S2S Travel Network	48
4.5 Validity	50
5 CONCLUSIONS	52
5.1 Main findings	52
5.2 Guidelines	53
5.3 Future visions and recommendations	53
SOURCES	55
APPENDICES	

1 INTRODUCTION

In the present day, quality has proven to be increasingly important for all customers in the tourism industry. People are no longer satisfied with only cheap trips abroad or domestically, but they seek service where quality responds to their expectations, and in the best case, exceeds them. In addition, people's expectations of quality have increased (D'Annunzio-Green et al. 2005, 16). Therefore, it is important for the tourism service provider to have clear procedures in managing their quality. But what is "good quality"? How can we enhance the quality of our services?

Managing quality in the service industry includes many aspects; not only does it concern the technical and functional quality, but also the communicational quality, which is defined by the communication between the staff and the customers (Verhelä & Lackman 2003, 41). However, there are several difficulties, when the service providers are not paid fulltime workers, but volunteer-based employees participating only occasionally and often with less commitment to the work compared to salaried employees. This raises the following question: How can we keep quality on a continuously high level in the case of volunteer service providers? What about if the volunteers are young and inexperienced both professionally and socially?

This thesis is based on a product which was developed by Mari Partanen, Susanne Overbeck and the writer of this paper at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS). We developed an idea of school-related organization called Student to Student Travel Network (S2S Travel Network) that would offer a week-long travel packages (summer and winter packages) to Kajaani, and was to be marketed to the students of the co-operative universities. The travel package was to be integrated to the different courses and therefore to be operated by the students of KUAS. This would provide the students valuable real-life experience of various tourism operations such as handling reservations, leading groups, and social networking.

This thesis concentrates on the issue of quality control when the service providers, in this case the students of KUAS, keep on changing frequently, are financially unpaid and have their professional limitations. The thesis had two objectives. The first one was to develop a

quality control framework with guidelines for the students to keep the quality continuous time after time. The aim was to develop guidelines that are profound enough to offer practical assistance but general enough to allow course-specific modifications. These guidelines are a foundation for further development in implementing the products of S2S Travel Network. The second objective was to modify the activities of S2S Travel Network so that each of the activities can be separated and used to provide activities for the international visitors of KUAS.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The following chapter introduces the concepts of quality and human resource management with emphases on quality management and more precisely on training and motivating of new employees.

2.1 Quality

Quality is a word people like to use frequently in everyday context not only when referring to tangible products, but also when talking about services. When asked what quality really is, one often hears answers such as “good customer service” or “well-managed program”. However, in reality quality is difficult to define and hard to measure (Parasuman et al. 1985, 41).

2.1.1 Definition of quality

People have different criteria in valuating quality, which results into equally many different views of quality (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 4; Evans & Lindsay 2008, 12). One famous quality expert, Kaoru Ishikawa states that satisfied customers equal to quality (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 5). When the product meets the expectations of the customer, the customer considers the product to be of good quality. Excellent quality, however, comes only after exceeding those expectations. Similarly, Mitra (2008, 7) defines quality as follows:

“The quality of a product or service is the fitness of that product or service for meeting or exceeding its intended use as required by the customer.”

Although definitions of quality are numerous, the overall idea about meeting or exceeding customer’s expectations, applies to not only products and services, but also people, processes and environment. It is also recognized that quality is an ever-changing concept with different values in different times. (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 5) Services that satisfy the customer today might not be enough to keep the customer coming also tomorrow.

One model about service quality was created by Grönroos (1984). The model describes the correlation of expected quality and the experienced quality (Figure 2.1). According to Grönroos expected quality consists of market communication, image, word of mouth and customer needs and all in all represents the image the customer has about a service *before* experiencing it. Respectively, experienced quality consists of two components; technical quality and functional quality, and the image they create of the service product. Technical quality corresponds to the question: *What is served?* This includes the technical features such as security of the product and the equipment used when consuming the product. Functional quality tells *how* the product is served. This includes the way the customers find the service behaviour of the service providers and the overall perception of the service process. Finally, the total perceived quality implies to how the customer views the experienced quality in comparison to the expected quality. Generally speaking, the quality can be considered as good, if the experienced quality meets or even exceeds the expected quality.

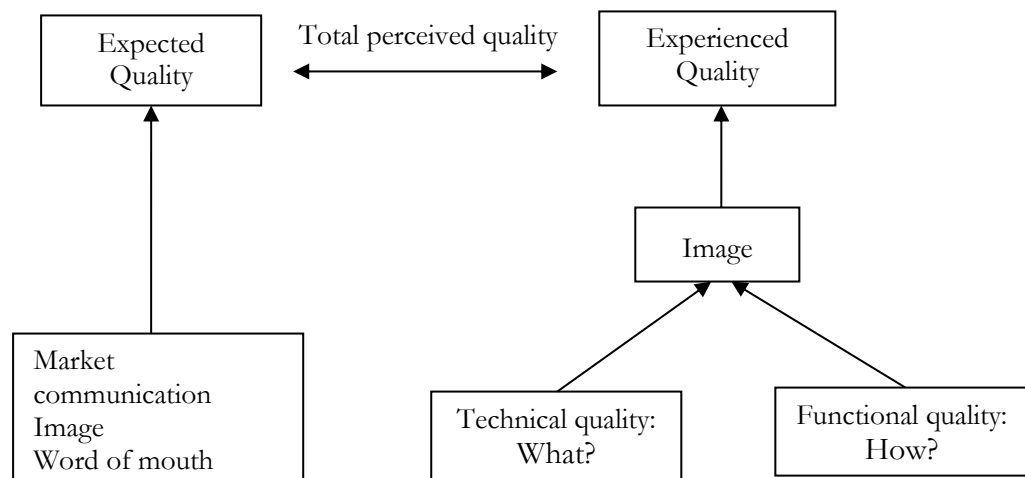


Figure 1: Perceived service quality model (Grönroos 1984, 40)

As quality continues to be ever more important to customers in tourism industry, it creates competitive advantage to the companies which manage to apply quality thinking in their operations (Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 15). The tourism market changed greatly after the Second World War. Although mass tourism has its roots already in the 19th century, most of

the development and trends date to the post-war period. The post-war time was a real start for tour operator businesses, which mainly meant package trips from western and northern European countries to the Mediterranean countries. Air transportation flourished with new technology and package tours brought foreign destinations within the reach of common people. This was the real start of global competition in tourism. (Sezgin & Yolal 2012, 82; Lane & Dupré 1997, 23)

As Goetsch and Davis (2010, 28) state in their book, poor quality and the costs deriving from it are one of the main reasons in failing to compete in the global marketplace. The costs can be quite tremendous. Several authors have supported the claim already years ago (Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 265). One example mentioned were the costs caused by lost luggage for the airline company SAS (Scandinavian Airline System) in 1989. The expenses from looking or compensating for the luggage accounted for SEK 100 million (about EUR 12 million). Contrariwise, improving the luggage handling procedures, and therefore quality, allows using the money saved to help the company grow.

As mentioned earlier, sometimes merely meeting the customers' needs is not enough. Bergman and Klefsjö (1994) state that there are times when customers' expectations have to be exceeded in order to keep their loyalty. Exceeding the expectations is an important factor in differentiating in the tourism business. According to Bergman and Klefsjö, it is essential to understand that excelling in service industry (as well as other industries), takes more than just fulfilling and exceeding the expectations of external customers. Internal customers', the employees, needs are also crucial to be recognized. Happy employees are naturally more motivated in their work, which eventually shows to the customers as better service. Employee motivation will be further discussed in this paper.

2.1.2 Quality management

Customers have certain needs that they want products to satisfy. However, often those products lack that something; they might not function properly, they might have some unwanted features or be short of the feature the end-user wanted. They might also simply not sell for any apparent reason. The reasons why a product does not survive in the market are plenty. Quality management is a term used for the structured process of developing a

product that ensures the final product, be it a service or a tangible product, meet the customer needs and requirements (Early & Colletti 1998, 3.2).

Quality management is the part of management that deals with aspects and processes affecting quality of the company's products and services. It has three basic managerial processes: quality planning, quality control and quality improvement (Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.2). These three processes are also known as The Juran Trilogy, which is a registered trademark of Juran Industries, Inc. (Goetsch & Davis, 182).

Quality planning

In order to understand the quality planning process, one must first understand the gap between the customer expectations and the customer perception of the actual product delivered. To demonstrate this gap Grönroos (1984, 40) developed the "perceived service quality model" that was introduced earlier in this paper. The model demonstrates what customer's perception of total quality consists of, but does not answer to the question of why the product either succeeds or fails in meeting or exceeding the prior expectations the customer had for the product. Parasuman et al. (1985, 41-50) examines the matter further by developing their own service quality model (Figure 2). The model shows five gaps between the customer and the company as well as within the company, which potentially lead to a product that does not fit the customer needs and expectations.

The first gap is between the customer's expectations and how management perceives those expectations. The second gap comes from the difficulty to develop suitable instructions for the service producers to match those expectations, even if they are well understood. The third gap, possible failure to put the guidelines and instructions to practise, often results from incompetent workers, perhaps due to lack of training to their respective jobs. The fourth gap is balancing between making the product look appealing and creating false expectations for the customer. The final gap is the same as in Grönroos' model; how the customer perceives the actual product in comparison to what they had originally expected from it. (Parasuman et al. 1985, 44-46)

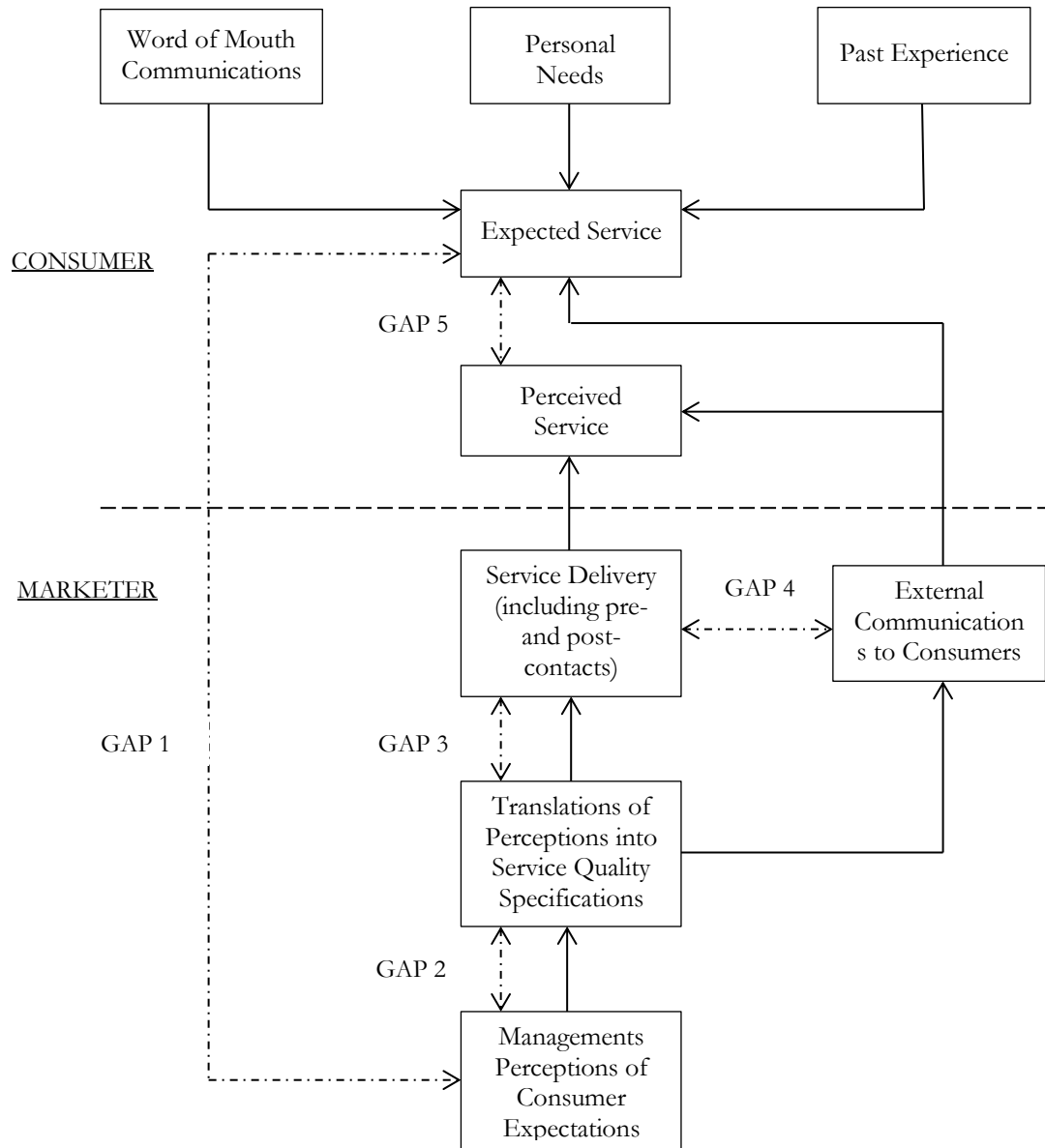


Figure 2: Service quality model (Parasuman et al. 1998, 44)

Early and Coletti (1998, 3.3) define six steps as a counter measure to the gap of customer expectations and customer perception of the product and the four other gaps in between. Together these steps form the quality planning process. The steps include establishing the project, identifying the customers, discovering customer needs, developing a product, developing a process and developing process controls as well as transfer to operations.

Step 1: Establish the project. Early and Coletti (1998, 3.3) define quality planning project as the organized work needed to prepare the company to deliver a new or revised product.

Planning of every product begins with identifying the projects that need to be done in order to transfer the product idea into reality. Step 1 also involves setting quality goals, selecting teams and overall planning of the project.

Step 2: Identifying the customers. Every company and every employee have two different customer groups; external customers and internal customers (Early & Colletti 1998, 3.10; Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 24). The external customers are the ones outside the organization, such as buyers, end-users or even travel agencies who sell products of activity providers. External customers are also those who live in an environment that might change due to for example pollution caused by an airport (Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 280). The internal customers respectively equal to customers within the organization, such as individual employees, or different departments. Step 2 is to define who the most important customer to the company is.

Step 3: Discover customer needs. In order to plan a product which responds to the needs of customers, we need to collect a list of those needs. However, often the customers themselves do not even realise what their needs are. According to Early and Colletti, customers tend to state their needs in terms of products they want to buy, whereas the real needs are the benefits they believe they will receive by consuming those products. Step 3 includes planning of how to collect the needs, analysing and prioritizing them as well as establishing units of measurements and sensor for the needs. (Early & Colletti 1998, 3.13-3.22)

Step 4: Develop product. After realising and understanding the customer needs, the product itself can be designed. Early and Coletti (1998, 3.24) designate two overall quality objectives to the step 4:

1. Determine which product features and goals will provide the optimal benefit for the customer.
2. Identify what is needed so that the designs can be delivered without deficiencies.

Step 4 determines some of the activities that companies can use to enhance quality in their own product development. These include activities such as grouping together customer needs and therefore saving time by prioritizing the most important needs of the customers, deciding on methods for identifying product features, selecting high-level product features

and goals, developing detailed product features and goals and optimizing them. Finally follows setting and publishing the final product design. (Early & Colletti 1998, 3.24-3.26)

Step 5: Develop process. Newly created or modified products need clearly defined plans on how they are delivered on continual basis. Step 5 introduces the phases for successful process design, ranging from identifying the operating conditions and collecting information on alternative processes to creating a plan for critical factors and human errors and establishing process capability. (Early & Colletti 1998, 3.35-3.36)

Step 6: Develop process control/transfer to operations. The last step is to plan what controls are needed for the process and execute the complete process plan. Developing process controls require evaluating the actual performance, comparing it with the goals set in the plan and acting on the difference. There also needs to be plans for receiving and reacting to feedback as well as establishing self-control and self-inspection. After these steps are done, the product is finally ready for implementation. (Early & Colletti 1998, 3.46-3.47)

Quality control

Quality control is a managerial process, which aims to provide stability for the quality of products produced by an organization. It has three main parts:

1. Assessing actual performance
2. Comparing the performance with goals
3. Acting on differences between the performance and the goals (Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.2)

In other words, quality control aims for the standardization of the processes needed to produce the products. One example of relatively early adaptations of quality control as we know it today was by a combination of leisure centre and a resort hotel called Joban Hawaiian Centre (JHC) in 1983. Through quality standardization of quality control JHC hoped to achieve, among other goals, more efficient operation of jobs, accumulation and utilization of intrinsic technology, stronger cooperation between planning/development departments and service department, and assurance of quality through job clarification. It took active promotion from management to get developing procedure manuals started.

However, it was worth the effort. Little by little, the employees learned to issue, revise and abolish procedures and manuals. Job clarification due to manuals resulted to increased commitment among workers, and so it became a custom to review all procedures and manuals once a year. (Kano 1996, 3-5)

Quality control process is done through feedback loop. Feedback loop is universal and “applies to all types of operations, whether in service industries or manufacturing industries, whether for profit or not” (Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.5). Same applies to different hierarchy levels. The feedback loop is presented in the figure of quality control process (Figure 3; Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.5).

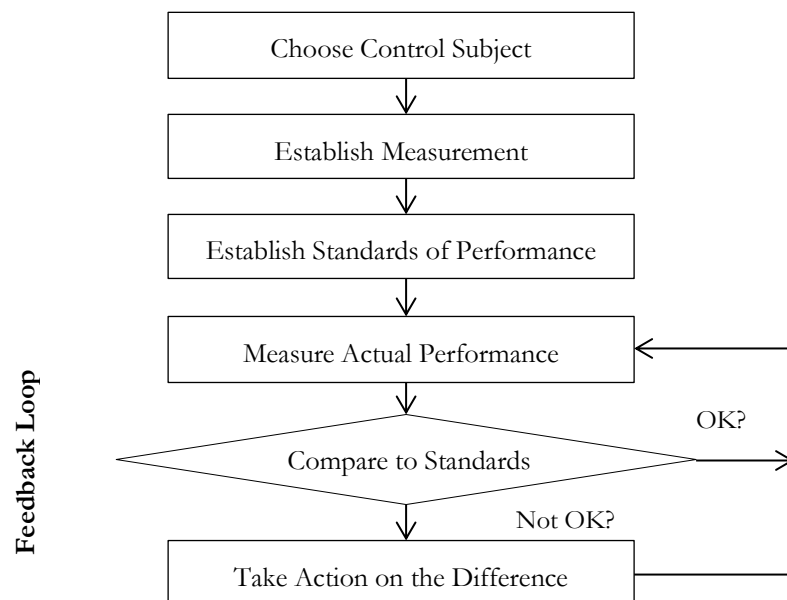


Figure 3: The quality control process (Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.5)

After deciding on a control subject (a product or service feature or a process), measurement (e.g. service quality) and goals to which the performance will be aimed at, starts the actual feedback loop (Kandampully et al. 2001, 143; Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.5-4.6). The performance is measured with the chosen measurement (e.g. customer service quality) and sensor (e.g. questionnaire). The results are transferred to information which can then be compared against the performance goals (satisfied customers) (Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.4.7;

Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 28). If there is no conflict between the two, the loop returns back to the measurement point, where it can be exerted when needed. On the other hand, if the resulting data does not coincide, it implies that there is need for improvement and action is to be taken accordingly.

One important tool in quality control is flow diagram (also known as flow chart and blueprinting in designing of services). It helps to create an overall picture of a process, identify the needed steps in order to establish stability, and to detect the process steps that might cause troubles. (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 382; Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.11; Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 274) The flow diagram as a tool in service design will be introduced in Total quality management, TQM tool chapter.

Also a proper reward system can help to control quality (Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.26). The rewarding will be further discussed in Human resource management, Rewarding and discipline chapter.

Quality improvement

As customers keep demanding higher quality, constant improvement of goods and services is necessary for the company to survive and to achieve a competitive advantage (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 481; Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 29). The answer lies in quality improvement process. It is the last of the three basic managerial processes of quality management. It differs from quality control because it takes quality to unprecedented level, whereas quality control takes corrective actions due to sporadic failures (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 482; Juran 1998, 5.8). Quality improvements cannot be done on a general level, but all improvements are done process by process. According to Juran (1998, 5.8), “improvement project” meant “chronic problem scheduled for solution”. This also implies that the problem is not just temporary reduction in quality, but a problem that needs a bigger and more permanent solution. In addition, like quality control, quality improvement is a universal process applicable to both services and manufacturing. It is also worthwhile to invest on it, since the return on investment of quality improvement is one of the highest in business operations. (Juran 1998, 5.9)

Despite the obvious benefits of quality improvement, majority of companies fail to implement it. There can be several reasons for this, but Juran (1998, 5.11-5.12) identifies

four most common reasons aside from failure to understand how quality improvement is implemented. The first reason is that media has drawn its conclusions that quality improvement initiatives all lead to failure. This conclusion arises from the lack of proof of success in most of companies, which creates an illusion of failure. The second reason is the assumption that higher quality generates extra cost for the company. Juran as well as Bergman and Kelfsjö (1994, 30) claim otherwise. Usually quality improvements require improved product features, which might stipulate extra capital. However, quality improvement itself reduces waste in material or service time and increases sales if successfully implemented, and therefore returns the money back evidently. The third reason is the illusion of delegation. This issue has been recognized by a variety of authors (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 482; Pesonen et al. 1999, 82; Juran 1998, 5.11; Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 32). The management fails to understand how important it is for them to put effort in as well, and actively be part of quality planning, providing moral and physical support, and so forth. It is important to understand that quality improvement cannot take place without active effort of all levels of authority, especially higher management which acts as a leading example of commitment. The fourth reason is employee apprehension. Employees might shun the idea of extra work and responsibilities brought by quality improvement. Even worse so, they might be afraid of their job becoming unnecessary in the process of improvement. To confront this issue, Juran (1998, 5.66) provides a list of actions the company can take. These activities include, among others, including the people directly affected by the change in the improvement process, keeping the proposals of change simple and free of information not closely to getting the results, and dealing directly with resistance for example by offering something in return (a possibility to continue working on a different department, etc.).

According to The Juran Trilogy, there are four different stages to quality improvement (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 19):

Stage 1: Development of necessary infrastructure to make annual quality improvements. The first stage includes establishing a quality council responsible for the overall continual improvement. It is vital to include also executive-level decision makers into this council. Other parts of the infrastructure include the subcommittees of the council, project improvement teams, quality training programme, and a structural improvement process. (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 484-485)

Stage 2: Identifying specific areas in need of improvement and implementation of improvement projects. Service processes in travel sector can usually be separated into smaller sub processes which helps to identify the improvement needs (Pesonen et al. 1999, 87). The company might also use external consulting services in the identification process (Pesonen et al. 1999, 82-83).

Stage 3: Establishing a project team with responsibility for implementing each improvement project. These teams implement the plans developed in the first and second stage.

Stage 4: Providing teams with the materials, information and funding needed in determining the causes for the need of improvement, developing solutions, and in order to maintain the benefits gained from the improvement process. It is up to the company to decide what kind of results it wants and on how much they are prepared to invest in order to achieve them.

2.1.3 Total quality management (TQM)

Total quality management means applying quality thinking in the people, processes, products and services as well as the environment of a company and it aims to maximize the company's competitive power. In TQM, quality is not simply a method to be used momentarily in order to fix a problem or improve a single service, but it is part of company culture and requires long-term commitment both from management as well as employees. Planning has to be done strategically, the decisions have to be based on facts, and improvement needs to be continuous. Same applies to problem solving. (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 7 & 481)

The company workers need to be "obsessed" with quality and have a constant customer focus in their work. This does not work unless there is teamwork and a common goal that everybody strives to achieve. However, there needs to be also training and education in order to have the management and employees understand the importance of TQM as well as the usage of its techniques. The employees are experts in their respective field, and they often know some practical pointers to make their work run smoother. The management should recognize this and let the workers improve the work by setting the limits in within the employees can make decisions without consulting the management. In TQM terms this is called freedom through control. Perhaps even more widely it is known as employee

empowerment (Nickson 2007, 14). The employees are given the chance to be involved in improvements by giving ideas that are also taken into consideration not because of good appearance but because employee involvement is encouraged, and by being given the freedom to make changes on their own. (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 7)

At its best TQM can help the company to continuously improve the quality of their services, earn and retain loyal customers. It can be used to maximize competitiveness and therefore profit. However, according to many authors most of the companies wanting to apply total quality in their work, have failed in doing so (Yeh & Lin 2010, 1096). According to Yeh and Lin, “an inadequate understanding of the techniques and suitable objectives of the TQM implementation not only causes problems or sub-par performance but also drives excess cost for businesses.

TQM tools

TQM has many tools considered to be vital for organizations wishing to apply total quality in their operations. Some of them were introduced by Kaoru Ishikawa (1976). These tools, “indispensable seven” as he put it, are used by everyone from company president to line worker, and apply various departments from manufacturing to marketing. These tools include Pareto charts, cause-and-effect diagrams, check sheets, histograms, run and control charts, and stratification (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 351). Most of these tools, however, require advanced knowledge and experience of statistics; they suit better big manufacturing organizations than small service-related organizations, and are by no means the only tools available. Therefore, taking into consideration the nature of the case presented in this thesis, it is more feasible to concentrate on something simpler that can be used also by students who are less informed of the use of statistical methods.

The chosen tool for presentation has multiple names: flowchart, flow diagram and sometimes in service design, blueprinting (Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 274). Goetsch and Davis (2010, 382) define it as follows:

“A flowchart is a graphic representation of a process. (...) It has been in use for many years and in many ways. The application we have in mind here is for flowcharting the inputs, steps, functions, and outflows of a process to more fully understand how the process works, who or what has input to and influence on the process, what its inputs and outputs are, and even what its timing is.”

They, together with many other authors (Juran & Godfrey 1998, 4.11; Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 274), talk for the benefits of flowcharts in meeting customer needs and improving products. One reason being that it can be used by anyone in the organization, much like the seven basic tools mentioned before. The idea is to have everyone related to the process to flowchart it individually, and then to compare the charts. The first problem might already be seen at this stage. If the flowcharts differ from each other, it implies that the people do not share a common understanding of the process. After there is a commonly agreed chart of how the process actually works, not how it should work, we can distinguish the steps which are problematic. The flowchart can be rather general, containing only the main steps, but it can also be done in great detail (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 384; Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, 320). The following figures show the internationally accepted symbols used in flowcharts (Figure 4) and an example of the use of flowchart in airline ticketing process (Figure 5).

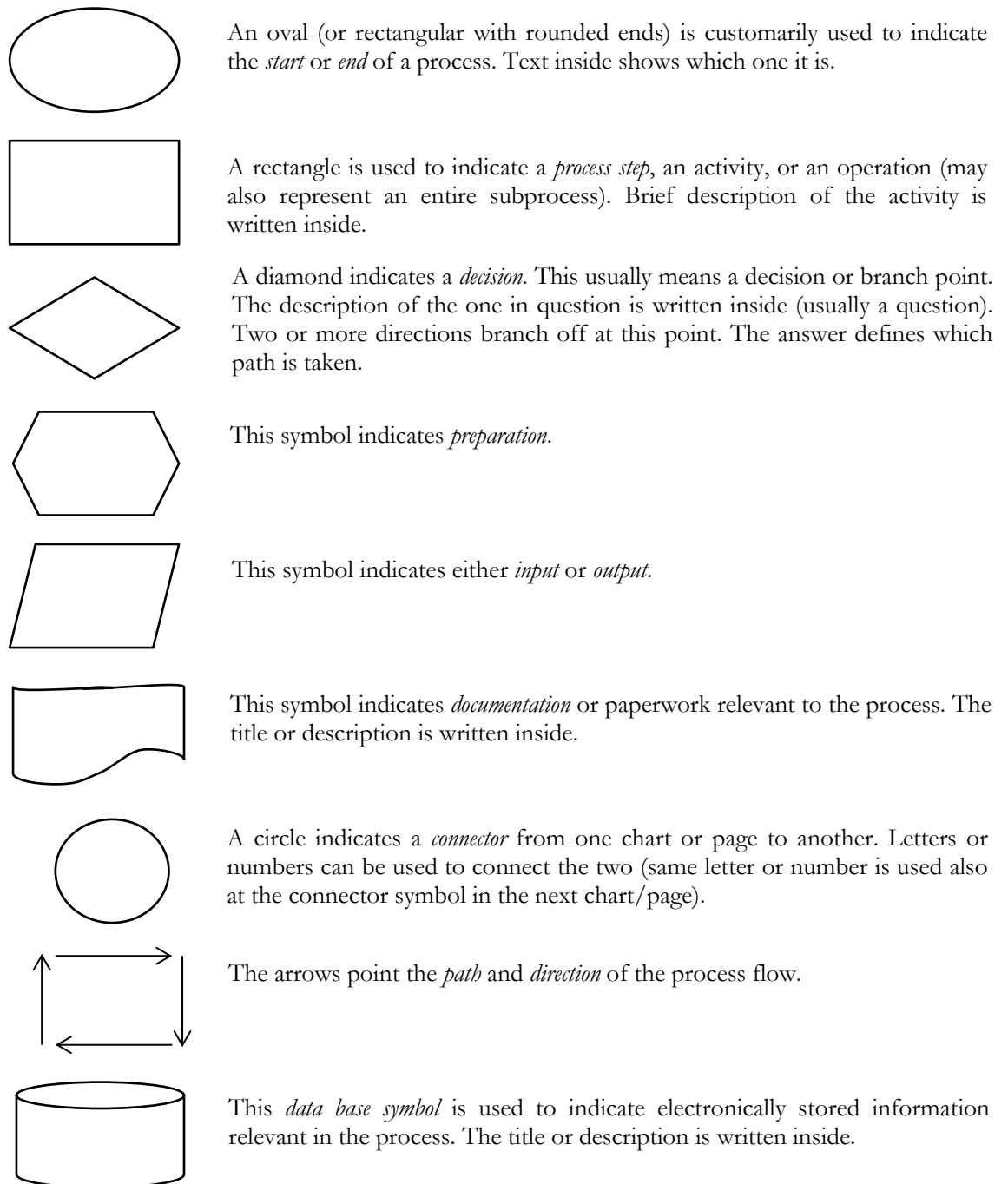


Figure 4: Standard Symbols for Flowcharts (Goetsch & Davis 2010, 383; Juran & Godfrey 1998, AV.3)

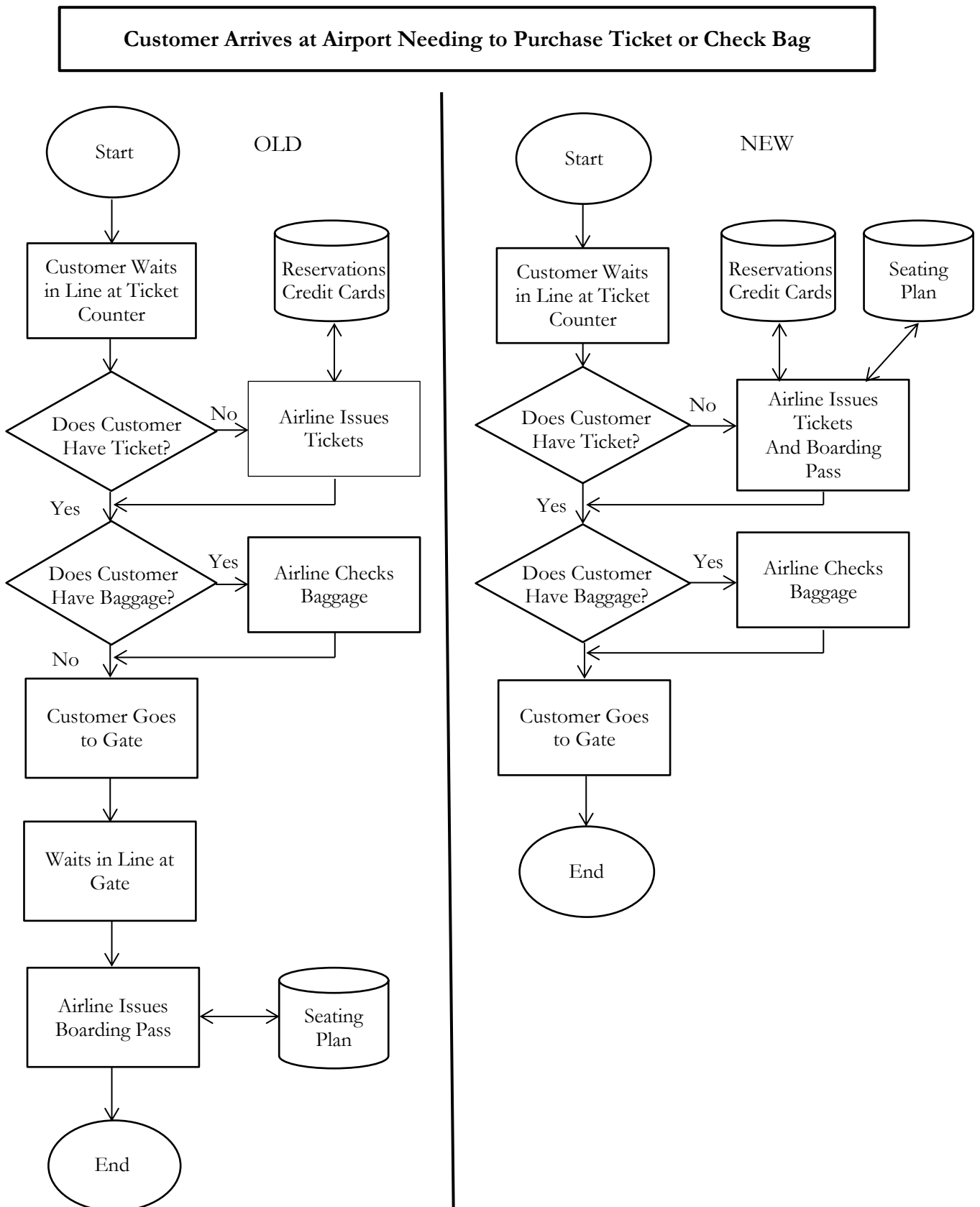


Figure 5: Before and after flowcharts of an airline ticketing process (Juran & Godfrey 1998, AV.4)

2.2 Human resource management (HRM)

One of the most distinguished characters of tourism industry is that the products offered are often inseparable from their providers. Like any service industry, this makes tourism a labour-intensive industry (Lane & Dupré 1997, 256). For example guided hiking cannot function without the guide being present during the consumption of the service. The result of this is that the employees have a significant role in maintaining the quality of the tourism product. Therefore, we can expect to control the quality by managing our employees.

Naturally, all rules have exception. For example, Omenahotels do not have any reception, but the customers book their room via Internet. The customers are e-mailed a key code with which they can enter the hotel. In problem cases the customers can contact the staff via 24-hour self-service Help Desk. (Omenahotels 2012 a) There has been some argument about the safety of the no-staff concept after few incidents of key codes being stolen and used for breaking in in rooms and several cases of rooms being used for prostitution (Ala-Korpela 2012, Turun Sanomat 2011). However, the hotel chain has enhanced its security by installing security cameras around the hotels and security guards are promised to take care of problem situation such as customers disturbing other guests (Ylimommo 2012, Omenahotels 2012 b).

2.2.1 Definition of HRM

It is said that there is no absolute, commonly accepted definition for HRM (Nickson 2007, 7). It is widely considered as far too wide and complex of a concept to be defined from a single perspective. However, Evans and Lindsay (2008, 270) manage to provide a reduced explanation over the subject:

“Human resource management (HRM) consists of those activities designed to provide for and coordinate the people of an organization.”

In practise, this would mean that HRM includes all human-related activities such as recruitment of employees, selecting, management, compensation, and performance appraisal, employee motivation and rewarding, communication, administration, training and development (Nickson 2007, 14; Evans & Lindsay 2008, 270). As broad concept as HRM is

and without a proper and satisfying definition, it is still reasonable to expect that excelling in HRM has a major positive effect on work satisfaction among employees and thus results in better quality of work. This eventually contributes positively also in customer satisfaction, which leads us back to what was discussed already at the previous chapter about customer satisfaction being same as good quality in our services.

2.2.2 Different stages of HRM process

Human resource management process involves four main stages starting from recruitment and followed by training and development, performance management and performance appraisal, as well as rewarding and discipline.

Recruitment

As a need for additional workforce or employees with specialized skills rises within an organization, the management may decide to open a job position. This is the usual start for the recruitment of new employees. Recruitment phase frequently concerns several states, and according to Nickson (2007, 88) the cost of poor recruitment can later be seen negatively in aspects such as:

- expensive use of management time;
- retraining performers;
- recruiting replacements for individuals who leave very quickly;
- high-labour turnover;
- absenteeism;
- low morale;
- ineffective management and supervision;
- disciplinary problems;

- dismissals.

Before opening the job position, there are a few phases that help to ensure attracting suitable applicants and successful selection. Doing a job analysis can help to determine what skills are needed for the job. Job analysis generates the needed information for a job description and person specification, which both work as guide to applicants as to what sort of employee is being looked for. Job description may also work as legal evidence in case of a disagreement between employer and employee (Grainger-Jones 1999, 112). The purpose of recruitment is to find an employee fit for the organization in terms of their attributes, such as flexibility, work-related skills and even personality (Nickson 2007, 89; Lane & Dupré 1997, 257).

There are several different recruitment methods for various jobs and naturally sometimes the recruiters have to be selective. However, the methods should not be discriminative in respect of race, sex or disability but offer an equal opportunity, if the applicants fulfil the minimum requirements for the job. (Nickson 200, 90 & 124) The recruitment quite usually happens by interviewing the candidate, but especially larger companies might gather additional information of the applicant through testing. Different forms of recruitment tests include tests of IQ, verbal ability, personality traits through psychometric tests and various others concerning different skills and abilities that help to decide whether the applicant is suitable for the job. (Grainger-Jones 1999, 113)

Training and development

Training is important in the beginning of a job in any industry, but ever more so in tourism due to the close contact with customers most of the employees have. In tourism, like in other service industries, attitude and competence of human interaction are the factors to define whether the service is successful or not (Lane & Dupré 1997, 256). Training helps the employee through a period know as induction (Nickson 2007, 161). Induction means the period of time for a new employee to get used to their working environment. Term 'induction crisis' can be used when the environment is confusing and even feel threatening to the new employee. When not handled appropriately, induction crisis might raise the turnover rate as the employees leave the organization. A well-planned induction programme can aid in this matter to some extent. In addition, a good training programme is said to give

confidence (Phillips et al. 2002, 3), and this confidence reflects on customers especially in activity services, where customers need to feel safe. An appropriate level of confidence in worker comes across as professional image to the customer, which in turn results to sense of better quality. Training programmes nowadays strive to improve especially adaptability, flexibility and continuous development in order to survive and have a competitive advantage on the market. As the business environment changes quickly, the ability to adapt to new circumstances has proven to be crucial. The result is that individuals have to engage in lifelong learning in order to survive. (Nickson 2007, 147)

The need to continue personal development through a lifetime can be a big intrinsic motivator, but not the only one. Motivation may come for example from interest towards the task or the organization itself (Holmes & Smith 2009, 125). Also, it many times derives from people's basic nature, some simply like to please and some have the internal drive to aim for perfection (Grainger-Jones 1999, 103). These kinds of motives can be hard to ascertain. They may be considered as inappropriate by fellow employees when crossing a certain level. On the other hand, often the motivator is extrinsic, like salary. Salary represents purchasing power to employees, and it defines their standards of living, and therefore makes a powerful motive (Nickson 2007, 189). Salary and other rewards will be discussed later in this paper.

There are several different approaches to training. One of the most common training methods is to have a new employee watch the work of someone more experienced in the organization (Holmes & Smith 2009, 181; Nickson 2007, 160; Exemplo 2006, 1). This method is known as "sitting next to Nellie". The advantages of the method are that the new worker can practice and gets feedback immediately, can pick up some useful hints that might not be included in any original training manuals, and it can help them to integrate into the team easier. Downside is that the newcomer might learn, instead of useful hints, wrong methods and bad habits. Another, similar method of on-the-job training is mentoring, where an experienced worker works together with a novice (Holmes & Smith 2009, 117; Nickson 2007, 160; Lane & Dupré 1997, 257). Other types of training can be so called regular briefing, where the basic information about the company and what the job includes are told, more lengthy introductory training courses and workshops on specialized topics (Holmes & Smith 2009, 117; Phillips et al. 2002, 3).

Naturally, there are multiple different versions of training programmes with different steps to follow. Some are more reduced and some more thorough in their approach. However, the training programmes have similar core ideas. One training approach, nine-step approach, was introduced by Go et al. (1996):

Step 1: Assessing training needs

The first step is to identify the needed skills and to ensure the individual training needs go well together with the company's overall objectives and training needs. Combining the needs and objectives ensures greater motivation of the trainee and that the learning is beneficial for the company as well (Exemplo 2006, 6). Job description, job analysis, person specifications and whether or not performance objectives agreed at appraisal have been met can be used to help to develop a training needs analysis.

Step 2: Preparing the training plan

The second step is to outline what needs to be done. This phase is for making initial plans on which method is to be used, when and where the training is supposed to take place.

Step 3: Specify the training objectives

The third step is to define what the training objectives are. It is essential to set clear expectations, so that the trainees can understand already from the beginning what they need to know when the training has ended (Phillips et al. 2002, 5).

Step 4: Designing the training programme

Fourth step is the actual planning of the programme, which includes several matters to be considered. These matter are for example duration of the programme, structure, instructional methods, what kind of facilities and materials are needed, location or environment, instructor and their experience, criteria and methods for evaluation of both trainees and the programme itself.

Step 5: Selecting the instruction methods

Fifth step is to decide the methods that are used to train the employees. These methods vary from in-company, on-the-job methods like mentoring and "sitting next to Nellie" which were mentioned earlier, to in-company, off-the-job methods which take place outside the

trainees normal place of work for example some lectures, and to external, off-the-job methods such as a separate degree to complement their professional experience (Nickson 2007, 160-163).

Step 6: Completing the training plan

After designing the overall features and methods of the plan, the sixth step involves adding the final touches. Go et al. suggests the complete plan should have in addition details about the target training group, which topics are to be covered in the training and if there are going to be role plays or other methods.

Step 7: Conducting the training

According to Go et al. the training should proceed rather smoothly after all the previous steps have been executed properly. However, Lane and Dupré (1997, 258) are in favour of four-step training programme. They adduce that training should begin by telling the trainee why they need to be trained in the matter and why exactly with the chosen method and naturally the topic itself. The beginning is essential in creating confidence and interest in learning for the trainee, since both confidence and motivation play an important role in person's ability to learn (Exemplo 2006, 31). Followed by telling is showing how the things are supposed to be done and explaining at the same time. When the trainee is ready to try, they should be allowed to slowly perform each aspect and they should be asked questions for the purpose of judging if the trainee is able to perform the given task unassisted by the trainer. Being encouraging and giving feedback is more likely to generate a positive respond from the trainee (Exemplo 29006, 31). Lastly, there should be follow-ups until the trainer is satisfied with the performance.

Step 8: Evaluating the training

Not only the trainees need feedback, but also the trainers should continuously improve their methods. This can be done through questionnaires, test that show the progress of the trainees, observations by the staff responsible of planning training programmes, and through various other ways.

Step 9: Planning further training

Since development is supposed to be continuous, the ninth and last step begins the circle again from the start.

One aspect of working life which often needs further management and development is team working. Teamwork helps to develop social competencies as people learn them through interaction (Louw et al. 2012, 7). However, not only does interaction effect on future social behaviour but certainly it has a significant influence on the results of the current teamwork itself. According to Talukder (2012, 436) communication is the key to productiveness of employees in service industry. He states that the ability to communicate in a way that creates trust, openness and support is essential in good interpersonal relationships. In turn, good interpersonal relationships enhance positive emotions, learning abilities, creativity and innovation in addition to the ability of the system to adapt to change, and effect positively on collaboration. Pesonen et al. (1999, 109) list some ways to foster good relationships and improve. These ways include giving positive attention to the other person, showing respect and appreciation towards the work of another, being energetic since one can spread that energy around them, reducing other's fears by one's own behaviour (body language, smile, etc.), and simply by showing some effort towards the other person.

Regardless of the training method or approach the organization decides to adopt, there should always be support of some extent. The support may come from the organizational structure by having someone available to answer possible questions and to provide more information for those who need it (Phillips et al. 2002, 2). Employees will easily feel confused and insecure if left alone. It can be debated that learning by being 'thrown' in the middle of a job is one of most effective ways of learning, but inadequate induction or training programmes especially of project teams often results into poorly prepared works, bad communication and, eventually, conflicts with customers (Atkins & Gilbert 2003, 48). Therefore, it can be concluded that a well-planned training programme supports employees and can even help to lower the turnover rate in the company.

Performance management and performance appraisal

One important factor in sustaining a certain quality level is performance management. Plainly, performance management is an all-encompassing process, which includes aspects such as performance appraisal (Nickson 2007, 169). Performance management aims to

strategically improve level of performance in an organization, whereas performance appraisal is more operationally focused with concentration on short- and medium-term performance and development of individual employee (Nickson 2007, 169; CIPD 2005a). Grote (2011, 9-10) defines performance appraisal as 'a formal record of a manager's opinion of the quality of an employee's work'. He emphasizes the word 'opinion' to express that it, therefore, cannot be tested or proven in practice. However, as long the appraisal is not based on the manager's personal prejudices and biases, the opinion weights more even if the employee being appraised disagrees with it.

To some extent, both performance management and performance appraisal are related to concepts of 'hard' and 'soft' human resource management. Hard side of HRM would account to management's need to control their employees, while soft side focuses on the organization's opportunity to use performance management systems to achieve greater commitment from employees and teams as well as to develop careers. Regular feedback from performance appraisal can also serve as a significant motivator for a number of employees. (Nickson 2007, 169; Mayhew 2013)

There are several reasons both for and against appraising performance. Appraisal can help the manager to better understand their employees' abilities, stimulate employees and, eventually, improve job performance. By understanding the abilities of the employees, management can identify potential and further develop it through training. On the other hand, also weak areas, in which the employee needs training and development, can be recognized. Moreover, people have the tendency to seek approval and confirmation to what they do. Feedback from performance appraisal can therefore give employees satisfaction and further encourage them for better performance and greater commitment. For this reason, it is important for a manager to make their expectations clear to employees already at the beginning of the work period being appraised. (Nickson 2007, 172-173; Grote 2011, 11)

Regardless of the positive effects of performance appraisal, a great number of people both in high and low positions consider performance appraisal useless and waste of time. The appraisal might not have any obvious connection with rewards or sanctions and the appraisals lack consistency both from one appraisal to another and from one appraised worker to the next (Grainger-Jones 1999, 114). Behind the problem of inconsistency often lie issues such as subjectivity of the appraiser due to their personal relationships with the person being appraised and prejudice like discrimination. In addition, the appraiser might

not know enough of the job of the employee, if the appraiser position is based solely on hierarchy. Furthermore, outcomes might be ignored and the focus turns to obvious issues such as timekeeping. The appraisals might also be too formal and result to uncomfortable experience for both appraiser and the employee being appraised. (Nickson 2007, 175-176)

However the outcome of appraisal comes to be, performance appraisal is a permanent part of most companies' management practices (Grote 2011, 12). The management is likely to appraise factors such as employee's knowledge, abilities and skills. In addition factors including attitude to work, which is often expressed as enthusiasm, commitment and motivation towards the tasks given; consistency of the quality of the work and attention to detail; volume of productive output such as sales; and interaction with others in the team and organization are been appraised. (Nickson 2007, 181)

There are plenty of different approaches to performance appraisal, but it is not merely a single annual meeting where the superior provides general feedback over the performance (Nickson 2007, 171; Grote 2011, 5). Top-down appraisal is undeniably one of the most common approaches to appraisal, but for example self-appraisal can prove to be even more critical. In self-appraisal the employee themselves decides on goals for their performance and are expected to lead the appraisal discussion. Also the other team members might take part in the evaluation. This approach is called peer appraisal. Nevertheless, in service sector where customers are constantly in contact with the base line workers, customer appraisal has come to be increasingly important. Customer appraisal is linked together with TQM with its focus on customers and customer care programmes. Various means, such as customer surveys, different surveillance techniques and even 'mystery' shoppers can be used to gather information which can be used in appraisals. (Nickson 2007, 182-183)

In conclusion, a good appraisal is where the employees do most of the critics and the appraiser actively listens. The performance should be analysed, not the personality of the worker. Appraisal should not be blaming (Pesonen et al. 1999, 110). Performance itself consists of behaviours, which show how employee does the job, and results, which show what the employee has accomplished (Grote 2011, 13). Moreover, the whole period is evaluated, not just random or recent events. Achievements are recognized and the appraisal does not emphasize merely failures. Failures should still not be belittled, because performance appraisal is the best chance to confront poor performance (Knight 2011). The appraiser should, therefore, be genuine, honest and also logical (Pesonen et al. 1999, 110).

Finally, an ideal appraisal meeting would end positively with agreed action plans. (Nickson 2007, 184-185)

Rewarding and discipline

The first and foremost rewards people get for their contribution at work is a salary (Grainger-Jones 1999, 114). Correctly applied, payment can be used to motivate people for better performance (Nickson 2007, 193). Other financial rewards can include for example commissions, bonuses and gain shares. However, it is being argued that monetary rewards have only a short-term influence on work performance. (Grainger-Jones 1999, 114-115) In addition, there are jobs where people do not get paid with money, which is why it is good to look into some of alternative rewards. Even for volunteers rewards are an important motivating factor. Recruiting and training new volunteer workers can cost the organization a great deal of time and money, which is why it is so important to keep them satisfied and retain their services. An appropriate rewards system can also encourage seasonal and episodic volunteers to re-engage. (Holmes & Smith 2009, 121)

Rather than material rewards, people working on a volunteer job seem to value non-financial, non-material rewards (Holmes & Smith 2009, 122). Intangible rewards can include a lot of different kinds of rewards such as special events like end-of-season celebrations, certificate of service, showcasing of volunteer contributions, or even a simple 'thank you' at the end of the working day is enough for most (Holmes & Smith 2009, 121; Phillips et al. 2002, 3). Much like in performance appraisal, rewards can be used to show people their contributions are being recognized and respected. It often does not even require a lot of money but a compliment on good performance from time to time (Phillips et al. 2002, 3). Recognition from the management and others enhances worker's self-esteem, regardless if the worker is paid employee or a volunteer. Talukder (2012, 437) state the following:

"When you recognize people effectively, you reinforce, with your chosen means of recognition, the actions and behaviours you want them to repeat. (...) Research findings show that formal, informal and day-to-day recognition programmes, when linked to the organizations values and goals, can create a culture of recognition that enhances employee engagement, performance and retention."

Therefore it can be safely concluded that at their best, rewards can motivate people to better performance, create loyalty and overall satisfaction among employees and the organization.

On the other hand, discipline is more complicated issue in HRM. Certainly, there are times in working life where managers need to consider proper procedures with unreliable workers, who either perform badly or act in a way which harms the company image. The same goes for both paid employees and volunteers. As Kendrick (2009) puts it, there are some people who have good intentions, but nevertheless end up complicating original plans by forgetting their tasks or pulling out the last minute. Dealing with these situations can be challenging as people react rather unpredictably. The manager can give the worker a 'verbal warning' which is one of the least serious sanctions. Retraining, reassigning, re-supervising that the worker has understood the rules they need to follow, and other resources should be considered before taking any serious acts of discipline. Dismissal should be the last mean of discipline and even then only after a serious misconduct. Whatever the sanction may be, it should be applied fairly and with great consideration. It has also been found that rewards tend to work better due to their reinforcement of positive behaviour patterns. (Grainger-Jones 1999, 115-116; McCurley 1993)

3 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This chapter focuses on the development process of the research. Chapter begins by an introduction of internationality in KUAS and the case. After the introduction, research problem accompanied by research approach and methods will be further discussed.

3.1 Case introduction

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences has educated international degree students since 1998, when the first English-taught programme, Degree Programme in International Business, was launched. Eight years later, in 2006, the Degree Programme in Tourism started followed three years after by the Degree Programme in Sports and Leisure Management. (KUAS 2013 a) There is also a possibility to complete a double degree either in Heilbron in Germany or in Rzeszów in Poland. The double degree can be included in both English-taught and Finnish-taught tourism and business degrees. (KUAS 2013 b)

Aside from international degree programmes, KUAS has active student and teacher exchange and practical training programmes abroad. The student exchange (including practical training periods abroad) has increased from 60 students leaving KUAS and 40 students arriving KUAS in 2001 to 159 students leaving KUAS and 89 students arriving KUAS in 2012 (KUAS 2013 c). Table 1 shows the breakdown of short (less than three months) and long (over three months) exchange in 2001-2012. Also the staff movement to and from KUAS has shown similar progress, ranging from altogether seven teacher exchange in 2001 to 91 teacher exchange in 2012 (exchange of minimum of five days). The figures are shown in table 2.

Aside from study degrees and exchange programmes, KUAS offers other possibilities for international activities for both Finnish and foreign students. These activities include friend family programme, international tutoring and studies in foreign languages. The purpose of friend family programme and tutoring is to allow foreign students to familiarize themselves with Finnish culture and to adapt to new surroundings by connecting with a Finnish family or a senior student participating in the programme. (KUAS 2013 d & e)

Table 1: International exchange of foreign and degree students (KUAS 2013 c)

Year	Students leaving (>3 months)	Students leaving (<3 months)	Students arriving (>3 months)	Students arriving (<3 months)
2001	58	2	38	2
2002	41	1	24	9
2003	40	12	48	2
2004	51	74	45	25
2005	43	74	53	37
2006	49	93	54	19
2007	33	122	70	16
2008	43	134	71	1
2009	77	129	66	3
2010	63	78	59	2
2011	78	107	74	3
2012	96	63	83	6

Table 2: International exchange of staff (KUAS 2013 c)

Year	Staff leaving (≥5 days)	Staff arriving (≥5 days)	Altogether
2001	3	4	7
2002	4	1	5
2003	10	4	14
2004	48	12	60
2005	33	8	41
2006	80	11	91
2007	55	13	68
2008	58	9	67
2009	67	27	94
2010	56	23	79
2011	73	26	99
2012	54	37	91

The case itself is based on the product which was developed by Mari Partanen, Susanne Overbeck, and the writer herself at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS). The

idea was to create a week-long travel package for both summer and winter seasons. The students of KUAS were to be the service providers, to plan the activities (excluding the bought activity services) as well as selling and implementing the packages. The target customer group was the students of the European co-operative universities of KUAS.

Each of the packages was to include five days of activities (departure on the sixth), accommodation, breakfast and lunch as well as transportation within destination. The full product description can be seen from appendices (Appendix 1). The activities were designed in a way in which they would not be tied to any specific days or time of the day, but could be implemented also separately. This was for the purpose of providing the International Office of KUAS activity ideas for planning the schedules for the international visitors. Some of the activities as well as the price have been further modified since the original product description. The changes made will be further discussed together with the findings from the research.

In order to integrate the idea of students offering travel services to external customers to the school system, we created a concept of S2S Travel Network (abbreviation from Student to Student Travel Network). S2S Travel Network was to be operated under KUAS's supervision by the students of KUAS. The concept is not unfamiliar to KUAS. The School of Health and Sports has developed a similar concept of students providing services to external customers. The concept of Myötätuuli Learning Clinic was introduced to nurse and sport student in order to provide them with practical learning environment for the skills they learned during their studies. The students practising at Myötätuuli are under the supervision of the staff of Myötätuuli. The staff consists of a nurse, a sport instructor and teachers. (KUAS 2013 f)

The purpose of S2S Travel Network and these holiday packages to Kajaani and its surrounding municipalities is first and foremost to provide students of KUAS practical experience gravely needed in the job market. This would be an opportunity for the students to try many different aspects of tour operation and activity tourism, which would in turn help them to decide how they want to specialize in tourism sector. I believe this to be vital since specialization starts already from practical training. It is always harder to get a job that one has no experience in. Even a small amount of experience gives at least a hint of whether the job is interesting and worth to spend one's valuable time at. Naturally, there is also the employer's side to the matter. Also they want, for a good reason, an employee who they do

not need to train from scratch. Therefore, what place could possibly be more ideal to try things at than the school we receive our education at?

Another important reason for developing the idea is to provide visibility to Kajaani and Kainuu region. It is a well-known fact that Kainuu region is far from being the leading region in Finland tourism-wise. For instance, despite the growth in overnights in the year 2012, Kainuu ranked sixth in the number of overnights in Finland in the statistics from February 2013 (Kainuun Etu 2013, 1). Taking into consideration the countless possibilities in activity tourism in Kainuu, I believe there is a chance of improving the ranking. For that to become reality, every chance of positive visibility needs to be exploited. Although student travel is nothing new, the idea of student-run service providing is still rather little exerted and, in the case of success, could be used as that 'special something' to differentiate Kainuu from rest of Finland and even wider.

3.2 Research problem

This thesis was developed to find out whether or not it is possible to create guidelines for quality control in a case where the employees change frequently, lack experience and work on voluntary basis. The main issue was that the development had to happen purely in theory, as the project itself is yet to be launched.

The focus of the theoretical background in this thesis was put on the correlation between quality management and human resource management. The idea was to create a solid theoretical ground on which it would be easier to start the research process and build the guidelines. The quality chapter provides an overall understanding of which issues quality management deals with, whereas the human resource management chapter focuses closer to how quality can be influenced proper HRM practices. Especially issues with motivation were the main focus of each stage of HRM practices introduced.

The main questions to be answered in the research are:

1. Is it possible to create standard guidelines for managing an ad hoc group consisting of students?

2. How can students and staff be motivated to do extracurricular work, and to what extent should the project leaders be managing/controlling the students working on the project?
3. How do the interviewees perceive the idea of S2S Travel Network, and how can the activities be best integrated to school courses?

3.3 Research methods

The research was done by using information literature review and qualitative research approach. The qualitative method chosen was a focused (also known as semi-structured) interview, in which the target group consisted of degree students, exchange students and staff of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. Transcription method was used to analyse the interviews. The objective of the interview was to find out target group's perceptions of issues of quality, HRM and the case itself.

3.3.1 Qualitative method

Qualitative research is used when researchers aim to understand the nature of their research subject by concentrating on a process rather than just the difference between the beginning and end results. Aside the concentration on a process, there are a few other common features to qualitative research, regardless of the method chosen. Firstly, there is a focus on natural setting. This means that researchers do not set any artificial experiments, but can include in their research events that occur naturally but are out of normal course of life. Situations are seen as important because they affect behaviour. Researchers try to make as few assumptions of their subject as possible, because qualitative research aims to generate the theory from the data, not to test a pre-developed theory. This results that the theory is "grounded" in the data, which is the second feature, a concern with inductive analysis and grounded theory. Lastly, there is an interest in meanings, perspectives and understanding, and the factuality of the data is irrelevant. This is opposite of quantitative research, which puts a great emphasis on factuality and leaves little room for perspectives differing from the ones chosen by the researchers. (Statistics Finland 2013 a; Woods 2006 a)

The most common methods of qualitative research include observations, where the researchers try not to disturb the situation but to gather information merely by observing how the research subject behaves. Other methods are documentary analyses and interviews. Qualitative interviews are divided into unstructured, semi-structured (or focused) and group interviews. Qualitative interviews differ from quantitative in the way the interviewees are chosen and how the questions are designed. In quantitative interview the interviewees are usually a random sample, whereas in qualitative interview they are carefully chosen individuals. Quantitative questions, on the other hand, are carefully structured, but qualitative questions are based on an open question or a theme. In the interview, the researcher should aim to win the interviewees' confidence, and be careful not to influence the answers in order to get as genuine opinions and perspectives as possible. (Statistics Finland 2013 a; Woods 2006 b)

This research was based on a focused interview. Focused interview can also be called semi-structured interview, but since Finnish makes a differentiation between the two (Statistics Finland b & c), the term "focused interview" will be used in this paper. One important feature of focused interview is the theme chosen for the questions. The theme determines the direction of the interview. Therefore, a focused interview is slightly more structured compared to unstructured interview, despite it having rather open questions. Focused interviews are conversations with predefined goals (Statistics Finland 2013 b). Therefore, it is important for the interviewer to keep control over the flow of the interview.

The benefits of focused interview are mainly related to the possibility to receive very profound information on human behaviour and the causes for some of the results gained with quantitative method. It allows paying attention to details and enables the analysis of both verbal and non-verbal behaviour. A focused interview helps to understand different phenomena in a deeper level, revealing subtle and complex information compared to quantitative methods. In focused interviews, the answers result genuinely from the experiences of the interviewee, which is why the answers that the researcher has predicted or "knows" to be right do not limit the data. (Statistics Finland 2013 b; Woods 2006 b)

However, some disadvantages exist as well. First of all, due to the small amount of individuals that are usually chosen, it is hard to make any generalization of the whole population. Usually there needs to be a bigger sample like in quantitative research. Even then making assumptions of the general population is questionable. On the other hand,

qualitative research does not aim to reach such kind of generalization in the first place. Generalization in qualitative research is weighing if the theory is rich enough in detail, perceptive, and analytical enough to be applied more widely (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2007). Secondly, there is the possibility that the researcher inadvertently affects the answers of the interviewee. There are multiple ways in which the interviewer can affect a person's answer; the way the question is structured, the choice of words, use of tone, expression, etc. These, on the other hand, are part of active listening, which is one of the key features of qualitative interviews, and cannot nor should not be avoided completely. There is also the danger of the interviewee talking off the topic, vaguely, or not consequentially enough. The person's story might shape the interview so that the other interviews are no longer similar enough theme-wise for the researcher to make comparisons. Sometimes the interview simply takes too long time, which makes it hard for the researcher to analyse the massive amount of information. In these cases there are various ways the interviewer can use to avoid these issues. The interviewer can ask for clarification or more information, pursue the logic of an argumentation done by the interviewee, or summarize occasionally among other things. (Statistics Finland 2013 b; Woods 2006 b)

In this research, the interview had three themes based on the theoretical background; quality, HRM and the case presented in this paper. Focused interview was chosen due to the rawness of the product idea. The research was aimed to generate ideas and a theory for refining the product and developing the guidelines. Since one of the key issues of HRM in a non-financially rewarded project is motivation, people's genuine opinions and perceptions played an essential role in the research. This made qualitative research approach an obvious choice. Interview also worked as a marketing channel to broaden the awareness of S2S Project existing, and hence aim to proceed with the process of realizing it. Due to the research having distinguished themes and specific goals, focused interview was viewed as a more beneficial option compared to unstructured interview.

3.3.2 Data collection

The process of developing the interview started at the end of February 2013. The questions were designed and sent to the thesis supervisor Mikko Keränen. The questions were first approved 1.3.2013, but were in need of some reviewing and refining. The final approval was

received 8.3.2013. However, before the actual interview process could be started, the questions and the research needed to be approved by the head master of KUAS. The request for permission to interview the staff and the degree students and exchange students was approved via email 13.3.2013. The official approval document arrived afterwards 4.4.2013.

The group of selected interviewees consisted of the six staff members dealing with internationality in KUAS, four degree students from Tourism as well as Sports and Leisure Management, and European exchange students. The staff group included international affairs planning co-ordinators and international co-ordinators. The international affairs planners deal with international degree programmes as well as staff and student exchange. They were chosen because S2S Travel Network is meant to be integrated to the degree programmes, and they could give suggestions and information about the practicalities related to it. In addition, since the second objective was to design these activities so that they could also be used to plan activities for the international staff and student visitors, international co-ordinators were self-explanatory choices for interviewees.

The degree students were chosen to represent potential service providers in the case. The project was aimed mainly for tourism and sport students, but additional suggestions will be discussed in future visions and recommendations in the conclusion chapter. They were expected to provide some valuable information on how students could be motivated and how important students view working experience as. The European exchange students were the closest available group to represent the target customer group. Their opinions were especially valuable in evaluating attractiveness of the existing activities and designing of possible alterations.

The interviews were begun around the middle of April, 18.3.2013. The interviewing took place at the campus of KUAS. Since the actual thesis process happened at a different region in Finland, the interview trip to Kajaani had a time limit of five days. The interviews started with a short presentation of the product idea and explanation of the thesis idea after which the actual interview questions started. The interviews were carried out mainly one-on-one and the interviews were voice recorded with the permission of the interviewees. The recording was done by a phone and a recorder. The benefits of this method were that the answers were genuine and undisturbed by the opinions of others. The interviewees could take their time to think their opinion and come up with suggestions without having to

consider what others would say. However, due to the time-constraint, two of the interviews were conducted as group interview of each consisting of two students. Certainly, there was the danger of the two influencing each other's answers and creating a pressure to answer quickly in order not to be the one to prolong the interview. On the other hand, this method provoked some discussion and observations that would not have come up in a one-on-one interview. Finally, one of the interviews had to be conducted as a phone interview. This last interview was decided at the final day of the interview process and therefore could not be fit into the timeframe. The phone call could not be recorded, which caused some difficulties in analysis as discussed later.

3.3.3 Data analysis

Qualitative analysis has two proceeding methods. The first one is to strictly stick to the material in the analysis. This is usually used when analysing a text, story, or a discussion. The other one is to use the data as a base for the interpretations and theories of the researcher, rather than the material analysis being the main focus of the research. In this approach the data and the analysis are in a position of a tool. (Statistics Finland 2013 b) Since the opinions, not the way they were told, were the main concern in this research, the latter was chosen for this purpose.

The first part of the interview contained questions of quality. The interviewees were asked for their opinions of quality in services from customer point of view. The emphasis was on activity tourism services. The analysis concentrated on the aspects on which customers pay attention to when in service process and what they consider as essential in terms of good quality. The second part consisted of human resource management related questions. The emphases lied on how important work experience was for the interviewees and how they imagined it to impact person's chances of getting employed. Another major concentration was motivation for voluntary-based jobs. In addition, students were asked for their opinions of teamwork/group work since S2S Travel Network and its activities are based on the method of working in teams.

The analysis began with transcribing the interviews. When analysing interviews, transcribing means copy typing the recorded material from the interviews. The recording can be done by either video recorder or some type of voice recorder. The researcher decides up to what

detail they want to transcribe their material. Usually, in the case of behavioural research, the transcribing is done based on a video record, and can be especially detailed, containing all verbal and non-verbal information of both the interviewer and the interviewee. This helps to analyse the interaction and how the other person affects the answers and behaviour of the other. (Bailey 2008, 128; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006) In this research transcribing was used as a tool to ease coding process and further analysis. Since the content overrode the non-verbal information in importance, the transcribing was done as simply as possible to help prioritizing in the actual analysing process.

There were some difficulties in transcribing the interviews. Due to the group interviews and the poor quality of the recording, it was difficult to ascertain who exactly was the one talking at each time. In addition, since the quality of the voice was less than ideal, some parts were lacking in information. The parts which could not be heard properly were marked in the transcription. In addition, one of the interviews was done via phone call, and therefore could not be recorded at all. The transcription was impossible even though the notes taken during the interview were quite complete. It should be taken into account that some information might have been left out, and though not vital, could have proved a difference of the results of some extent. In addition, since the interview was not transcribed, no quotations can be done of it.

After the transcription, the data was coded. Coding is noticing from data the matters which then can be conceptualized. In other words, the matters are given names which express them in a more general level. If a similar matter emerges again in different expression, it can be placed in the same category as the first one. (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2007) The coding helped to conceptualize, prioritize, and illustrate the data gained from the interviews. Based on the coding, a model was made of both quality and HRM sections of the interview. The method was deemed as unsuitable for the last part concerning S2S Travel Network, which was handled with mind maps and different kind of notes. The models were then analysed together with the theoretical background and used together with the notes and mind maps of the case to form quality control guidelines.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Profiles

The interviewees were categorized into two groups according to their age, status and experience. The groups were divided into staff and students. The average age of the students interviewed was 22 years. The nationalities of students were divided as follows: three Russians, two Finns, one Hungarian, one Italian, and one Tanzanian. No distinct differences were identified between students of different nationalities or ages.

There were slight professionalism differences between the staff and students from sport and tourism versus the staff and students not having sport or tourism background. Rather expectedly, those with professional background in services, gained either through work experience or education, were able to express themselves in slightly more professional terms, whereas, though very observant and analytical, those with no background used more everyday expressions in telling their opinions and ideas. Therefore, the possibility of tourism and sport oriented interviewees' answers being affected by their professional point of view, rather than purely their opinions as customers, needs to be taken into account.

4.2 Issues of quality

The first part of the interview focused on the interviewees' perceptions of quality in quality with a focus on activity tourism services. The interviewees were asked to discuss the matter from their perspectives as customer consuming an activity product. Figure 6 shows a model based on the results. The two overall characteristics of service quality were the totality and sustainability of it. Much like how the theoretical part of quality started, quality was defined to be something that fulfils and preferably exceeds their expectations for the service. Most of the interviewees stated that the service should be well-organized and function as a package. The product should fit the marketing description, and the price should be in balance with the experienced quality. It was also mentioned that quality should be the same for everyone, and the flow of service should be undisturbed. A few of the interviewees, both staff and students, suggested planning and different kinds of guidelines to help sustaining

the quality. The answers supported the perceived service quality model developed by Grönroos. The model will be further discussed together with inner rims of the model based on the interview data.



Figure 6: Perceptions of quality in activity tourism services

Price played an important role in the interviewees' views of quality. Interestingly, although many of the staff members (representing an older generation) estimated the prices of S2S Travel Network packages to be too expensive for students although cheap for working adults, majority of the students interviewed thought low price as suspicious and were ready

to pay extra to get higher quality. This is what one of the students answered when asked if price affects her view of quality:

“Well, yes, it does. If you pay more, you expect more in return. And if the price is low, you might start thinking and suspecting why it is so low.”

Nevertheless, according to most interviewees brand image and having something to compare the service characteristics and price into overcame the expectations set by the price alone. In order to get lower price for the service, some interviewees were prepared to give in in tangible products such as the quality of equipment or some minor tangible matters in the service. Also some were prepared to give up some of the easiness in arrangements and to have more self-service. However, there were some absolute minimum criteria below which the service should not go, no matter how low price. Two things were in common; the promised services and safety. Safety was viewed as priority above everything else. This shows in the model as the central concept around which everything else is built.

Safety emerged for instance in the form of professional services. Professionalism was related to experience of the service provider, which in turn would make the service provider more confident in their work. Although professionalism of the service providers was one of the key characteristics throughout every interview, this seemed to be especially important for some of the students. Half of the students were very particular that the guide/instructor had to know what they were doing. Right kind of confidence was said to evoke trust in customers, which was considered as an important factor.

The other factors leading to total quality were built around safety. External factors had many levels of effects in the interviews. Friends presented a reason for many students to leave for a trip in the first place. This is actually a very typical travel motivation for the current generation in the middle of their studies. Network of friends, often manifested through via social media, is increasingly important for this interactive and highly networked generation. Therefore, friends are not only important travel companions, but they have a great influence over the choice of destination. (Benckerdorff et al. 2010, 6)

The matter of marketing came apparent in various contexts. There were examples of misdirected marketing, where the service was aimed for a completely different customer group than was stated in the advertisement. Most talked about the importance of the

promises made, and stated that if those are kept, the quality is fine even if their own image might slightly differ.

For all the interviewees, the service providers and the company's sensitivity to customer needs was important. The importance of personalization has been widely recognized in tourism sector already for some years (Zongqing 2004, 196). The emphasis varied from knowing the customer group and designing the activities and use of equipment to personal touch and small extras reserved just for them. Some gave extra value to the effortless of the pre-arrangements of the trip. Many, from both staff and students, felt they wanted the service to be as comfortable and ready as possible. As one interviewee said:

"Customer should just enjoy and not have to think about the arrangements."

Different personality features and personal skills were highly appreciated. In fact, they dominated most of the conversations regarding quality of activity tourism services not relating to safety. Personality-wise attitude of the service provider and the initial contact with the customer were said to be the first aspects the interviewees paid attention to. Majority appreciated especially friendliness of the service provider. The authenticity of the friendliness was also brought up during the interview process. Customer wants to feel as they are part of the service process and non-genuine courtesy was not welcomed. The overall interaction and service provider's service-orientation were remarked as well.

Regarding skills of activity service providers, naturally skills related to guidance and giving instructions were deemed pivotal. The experience of the instructor in the activity was related straight to safety. As mentioned before, experience usually resulted to more confident service provider, which in turn generated trust in customers. In the same skill category with experience were the ability to give clear instructions to customers and to guide people from place A to place B, presence of the guide, and the ability to quickly respond to spontaneous situations with correct countermeasures. Spontaneous situations that were appropriately consummated were said to be the possible something to differentiate the service from others. Also the language skills and the use of voice among other things were considered central to instructions and guidance. In addition to these skills, the ability to entertain the customers was highly appreciated. The interviewees mentioned things like telling casual information related to the environment or culture related to the activity, or the activity itself.

Small things like this are an inexpensive way to create extra value to the customers. This was a feature that was hoped to be more common in activity tourism services.

All these personality features and skills, together with the matters related to safety and customer focus, fall under the title of experienced quality in Grönroos' model. This shows that regardless whether they are young adults or in the middle of their adulthood, customers have a really high sense of quality. Based on the answers given, most of evaluation of the service is unconscious with customers not conceptualizing the aspects of the service. However, there exists awareness to some extent. If even just a minor part of the service fails to meet their expectations, unless responded with appropriate countermeasures, the perceived total quality declines. In addition, of positive experiences, only the ones that exceeded the expectations were remembered clearly, whereas interviewees seemed to remember quite vividly the experiences that did not quite reach the limit of their satisfaction.

These aspects combined the interviewees' perceptions of quality especially when focusing on activity tourism services. The results were surprisingly similar between the staff and the students. However, one of the most interesting differences was the image staff had of students' wealth compared to the students' visions of prices and quality. It raises the question of whether the current generation living their young adulthood is wealthier than before and therefore can afford to be more demanding regarding quality. According to Benckendoff et al. (2009, 11), at least the amount of money spent on travelling seems to follow the pattern.

4.3 Issues of HRM

The second part of the interview dealt with issues of human resource management such as the importance of experience and employee motivation. Interviewees were unanimous about the importance of work experience in getting work in general, but some assumed the personality and attitude to surpass work experience in terms of importance depending on the job applied. Figure 7 exhibits the results from the interviews and how experience is built and which aspects affect it. The outer rim with "experience" on it presents the main benefits of experience which the interviewees mentioned and the different levels in receiving those experiences. The inner rims are the aspects effecting experience. These are divided into four parts: motivation to get the experience (focus on voluntary jobs), personal attributes

Like in the model of quality perceptions introduced earlier, the model of work experience has a central concept around which other components are built. Good communication was related to basically everything related to personal development, training, teamwork, and even to motivation. Communication was seen as supporting element in need of help, and the colleagues were the most common source of support according to the experiences of the interviewees. Also the basic interaction and relationships with the colleagues, and the information flow within the organization or the team they were in were seen to effect the motivation, personal development and the way the team or the organization functioned. As might be expected, respectful, open and friendly interaction improved the relationships between employees, and together with flawless information flow inside the organization it contributed positively to people's sense of satisfaction at their work. Feedback was related to development of personal skills.

When the interviewees were asked what would be a good motivator to attract people to get work experience even if the job is unpaid. S2S Travel network was used as an example. The motivation segment presents a collection of answers from both the staff and the students. The usual motivators mentioned for students were study credits and the possibility to integrate the experience to practical training (abbreviation PT used in the model). Both the students and the staff found the future aspects important. The future aspects were related to concrete proofs of employment such as reference and recommendation letter. Some of the answers included getting responsibility and freedom to design and organize the work more freely. This is in HRM literature better known as employee empowerment. Surprisingly, only one member of staff mentioned internationalization although the core idea of S2S Travel Network is very international. Supposedly, this is because all the interviewees either worked or studied together with other nationalities and they might have thought of it as something natural and self-evident. On the other hand, there exists also Finnish-taught tourism and sport degrees, which provide potential students to work on this project as well. For those students, internationalization could prove to be a key motivator to join in.

As for the motivators for the staff to help by providing guidance and supervision for the students outside their regular work schedule, the main issue mentioned was their time resources. All members of staff were quite willing to help and already do similar kind of guidance and supervision. However, they could help only as much as they could within their limited time resources and considering their workload and the balance of work and family-

life. Giving the hours used to help in the project off from some other day and time, was assumed to motivate staff at least to some extent.

Aside from work experience, some personal attributes were considered to affect the chances of employment considerably. These included personal skills, attitude, willingness to learn, and flexibility. Personal skills were related to skills gained through hobbies or other means aside from work experience. From both interviewee groups, people believed employers to appreciate experiences gained through, for example, long-term hobbies. Attitude had equal importance with personal skills. With the right attitude and being willing to learn, especially older interviewees believed a person to get employed even with smaller amount of experience. Of course this was compared to the position applied. The higher the position, the more the person would need actual work experience related to that position. It was also presumed that students would need to be rather flexible in terms of their first jobs and to be ready to even move to a different city to get a job at the beginning of their working life.

The importance of training is ever more evident when entering a new job especially when the job is one of the first ones the person has had. The interviewees were asked for their personal experiences of training and induction in their jobs. Again the interviewees were unanimous in one aspect. All had had at least one job where they learned by doing rather than having anyone to show what to do and to train them. They said it was more like trying and failing and learning from those failures. Depending of the difficulty of the work, this method was received in various ways. Some said they had felt themselves confused and lost, whereas some believed learning from failures was the most effective way. Some of the interviewees had had a proper induction period during which they had been first shown what to do and then they had been let to try themselves under the supervision of the trainer. The trainer would then simply be present in case of problems for couple of more days until the new worker had learned their job. These induction periods lasted from one week to couple of weeks. However, usually the induction for the interviewees was a basic briefing of the organization, the job and the tasks under it. Much assistance was received from colleagues when asked for help.

Some received more formal education from their employer. The types of education included hardware training for example for the machines used, software training for different computer programs, and for one even a complete degree. The trainer's motivation towards the training had also an effect. The ideal training was described as in different ways. One

way was to have a detailed enough job description so the worker would know where the limits of their task go. The job description was mentioned also at the HRM literature, and said to provide legal protection to both employer and the employee in the case of disagreement. It was said the introduction should only include the main points in order not to overwhelm the new employee. The possibility to learn by doing was much supported, and it was thought that simply showing would not be sufficient for the employee to learn the necessary skills.

Since S2S Travel Network is based on the idea of working in teams, teamwork and meetings were also one category in the interviews. This section was only for students due to the perception differences resulting from the differences in age and amount of teamwork experience. The interviewees were asked for their experiences and opinions about working in teams, either in school or work environment. There were both good and bad experiences. Good experiences included sharing of information with others in the group and having multiple perspectives which helped to create more innovative ideas. Teams were felt to give support. Problems emerged when there was lack of motivation and lack of participation due to it. Interviewees felt it was troublesome to work with people they had to all the time ask for contribution. Some of these difficulties were felt to be result from different backgrounds of the team members, and different ways of proceeding things due to it. Often there were also troubles with unclear roles and flaws in information flow. The people did not know what others had done or even what themselves were supposed to do. These experiences were mainly from school context. Sometimes the interviewees felt there was not enough support from the school, or getting answers from external partners in the projects was difficult. Similar difficulties were faces with meetings. The group members handled feedback with confrontation or the meetings simply lacked structure.

The interviewees were asked for their ideal teamwork and meeting. The common feature mentioned was a good structure of the group. There should be one person responsible of information distribution and contacting teachers and others outside the group. This person would work as the leader of the group, being responsible for the deadlines and cooling down possible conflicts between the members. The tasks should be clearly defined in order to provide everyone with the understanding of what is expected of them. Lastly, everyone should share a common goal. Only then could the group be called a real team.

4.4 S2S Travel Network

The last part of the interview dealt with the case itself. The interviewees were asked for their opinion, thoughts, and suggestions related to the case which had been introduced at the beginning of the interview session. The results were divided into five parts; general idea, price, activities, dining, and accommodation.

When asked what people thought about the general idea of S2S Travel Network; its integration to courses and students being service providers, the idea was generally received well. People thought it fit KUAS' vision to be the most proactive university in Finland. It was thought that the travel packages would bring visibility also for the region itself. The idea of students getting to practice in real-life situations was very attractive to majority of the interviewees. S2S Travel Network and its travel packages were seen to answer perfectly the assumed challenges and tasks of working life. In addition, since the target customers are also students, there is intrinsic information of the target group and their needs and likes. Connection between the service providers and the customers would then be only natural. Some also thought students to have fresh ideas compared to people who have worked on the business already for years and possibly have more distinct routine in their way of thinking. People gave also future visions of which one coincided with the original future visions by the initial planning group of S2S Travel Network. The idea can, as a matter of fact, be detected also from the name given to this concept of a tourism organization working under the university's surveillance. The vision is that if S2S Travel Network and its travel packages are successfully implemented in KUAS, the concept would be free to use by the cooperative universities and designed to fit their special features and activities. In time this would create a network of student-run tour operators, and students could make a tour around Europe in their chosen countries. The same idea was suggested in a smaller scale involving other universities of applied sciences in Finland.

There was some scepticism as well. The professionalism of students was doubted and said to evoke insecurity. However, the people questioning the students' skills did mention that the confidence of the student could calm some of those fears, and that some students are just naturally fit for this kind of projects. The participation should be voluntary and well explained in order to attract the right kind of students to take part in implementing S2S Travel Network. In addition, the seasons of implementing the travel packages are very

limited due to the summer and winter holidays coinciding with the holidays in most European countries. It was suspected that there would not be enough people to arrange the travel packages during the ideal seasons. Some improvement suggestions or alternative implementation plans are proposed later on at the conclusion chapter. The question of licences was also brought up. This is an aspect that needs to be further analysed before S2S Travel Network can be implemented in practise. The need for supervision in most of the activities is recognized in the guidelines. Due to the focus of this thesis, the law issues and practicalities related to it are not further addressed.

The price was according to the pattern discussed earlier in the results of quality part of the interview. Some staff members thought it was rather high for students, whereas most of the students thought it was reasonable. However, around half of the students believed the affordability depended on the origin of the customer. Also the ticket price of transportation to Kajaani was believed to affect the decision to purchase significantly by most of the interviewees. The original prices were revised and altered due to the changes in activities and VAT. The original price of winter package was 240 euros, and the price of summer package was 200 euros. The new price for winter package is 225 euros and the new price for summer package is 273 euros. Whether the price should include VAT or if it should be removed depends on if the accounting is done via the university's accounting or separately and if the sales exceed the set limit of taxation. The price declines to some extent if VAT is excluded.

Activities were considered as variable and not too similar to each other even though a clear connection existed. Kajaani was seen as rich in nature and still an unexplored destination. The exchange students representing the target customer group thought the activities fit the image they had of Finland, and had a good amount of activities. Some alterations and additional suggestions were made. For example some wanted snow mobiles to be included at least as additional activities, whereas others wished for some culture-related activities, such as visiting Kalevala Village. One important aspect of Finnish culture, the sauna culture together with ice-swimming in wintertime, was mentioned so many times with an emphasis which caused it to be added into the selection of additional services the customers could purchase for an extra price. The exchange students said that if they purchase a package that is marketed to present Finnish culture, they would want to experience as much as possible.

The dining arrangements divided opinions. The package prices include breakfast and lunch. Whereas some staff members imagined the students to be content with the minimum

arrangements, some of the students countered those assumptions by stating the lunch should be a proper and healthy meal since it was the only meal aside from breakfast arranged by the service providers. This yet again suggests a significant difference in the perceptions of students and the image of those perceptions the staff had. The buffet breakfast at the accommodation was considered to be sufficient in terms of providing stamina.

The accommodation, which has been planned to be in 4-person rooms at Hotel Kainuunportti 3.5 kilometres from the city centre, was considered to quite far away. Although there are a grocery store, café-restaurant, Scanburger and a bar at the same property as the accommodation, transportation to the city centre was considered important. Some were concerned with the activity possibilities around the accommodation. They suggested considering also the time the customers would spend after the scheduled activities before bedtime. There is always the chance that the customers have many hours of free-time with nothing to do, which would in turn lower their perception of the quality of the trip. It was suggested that there could be some gatherings together with the students of KUAS outside the regular service hours in an informal context.

On the other hand, the accommodation arrangements were believed to fit the idea of backpacking, low-budget trip as the profile of the travel packages offered by S2S Travel Network. In addition, since the accommodation had some distance to the city centre and people were to be accommodated into 4-person rooms, they were thought to provide a change for the participants to get to know each other better if they did not know each other beforehand.

4.5 Validity

First of all, since the research approach was qualitative and the method was focused interview, there are no right or wrong answers. The answers are simply opinions and interviewees views of the reality. The initial assumption is that the interviewees stated their opinions and views truthfully, and they are the only ones who can evaluate the credibility of the results (Trochim 2006). Since the results from the interviews and the conclusions made upon them corresponded to the theoretical background to large extent, it can be said the findings are transferable to the same extent as they correspondence with the theoretical

background. However, since the findings cannot be measured and verified true in statistical sense, they are vulnerable to errors and may be proven wrong in further research.

There might be some difficulties in evaluating the HRM related findings because most of the students answering had already completed more than half of their studies, and may have regarded their future work life more seriously compared to first and second year students. Therefore, the first and second year students would have been the ideal target group for the interview. However, based on the answers of the few younger interviewees, it can be concluded that the difference would not have been significantly different. This means that although because of the difference in target group, there is the possibility of distortion in the answers compared to reality; the results are close enough to the ideal.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Main findings

Quality is without a doubt one of the key features effecting customer loyalty in any kind of business; whether manufacturing or services. Succeeding in managing quality can bring the company a great advantage over its competitors in the ever more globalized and competitive market. However, most of the quality guides and sets of standards deal with quality in manufacturing processes. This has created an illusion that quality control is not applicable to the service industry. These days organizations have started to notice how wrong this assumption is. Therefore, the objective of this thesis was to create guidelines for managing the presented case project. The initial question when starting the thesis process was: Why should students not learn to focus on quality from the beginning? Everyone knows from personal experience how difficult it can be to learn out of some habit, but it is much easier, if we learn to take into consideration the most essential issues before the habits are created. The purpose of the guidelines was to teach students into quality-oriented thinking from the very beginning of their professional experiences.

In order to create quality guidelines, the quality needed to be defined and its effects known. For this purpose the first part of the interview concentrated on quality issues. It was concluded that safety is the central feature of quality in an activity tourism service, and that everything else is enfolded around it. It was also noticed that students are very quality conscious and prepared to pay for better quality. This seems to be a rather recent feature, and as supported by Beckendorff et al. (2010, 11) the current generation living young adulthood are indeed spending more on travel than ever before. This gives room for the assumption that the organizations targeting this customer segment cannot afford to only rely on their cheap prices. These young people know what they want and are very keen on also receiving it.

The second part of the interview addressed issues of human resource management. After all, creating quality guidelines in tourism naturally involves managing the human capital which plays a pivotal role in it. Communication was seen as the central aspect in terms of establishing experience. In addition to information flow, practical training methods, and

clear structure of teams were seen to contribute to building the experience which would then in turn play significant role in one's employment.

5.2 Guidelines

The third part of the interview was related to the case itself. Generally speaking, the case was received positively with some of the product features were changed due to the answers. The guidelines, however, were more based on the answers from quality and HRM parts and the related background literature. The guidelines were designed to be as simple and short as possible without leaving any important parts out. This was because the guidelines are targeted to students who are not yet professionals or aware of the terminology related to quality management and human resource management. The guidelines can be seen from the appendices.

5.3 Future visions and recommendations

From the interviews and the research process in general, a series of future visions, suggestions for improvements and alternative approaches emerged. Here are some of them.

Firstly, S2S Travel Network should not be limited to only English-taught degree programmes, but it could potentially offer learning experience to multiple degree programmes including business (for example in accounting) and even students from the game sector (for example for creating webpages). Also, if school could arrange guest trainers from real companies to train the students in charge of the activities, the students could adopt practical skills they might not be able to gain otherwise.

Secondly, the activities could be tested with the first year English-taught business degree students. In the interviews, the issue of social exclusion of some business students was sided. Those students were often the ones moving away from home for the first time. They might not have been abroad before either, and the foreign culture might seem even intimidating for them. Giving the possibility for those students to participate to the activities of S2S travel Network for a slightly cheaper price could help them in adapting to the new environment and to get new friends.

There were also suggestions for other alternative target customer groups. Exchange students were brought up multiple times when considering different marketing approaches. One person said the package could be marketed as self-financed orientation camp for the new exchange students. Another mentioned that this would provide activities good activities for the current exchange students, whereas third one suggested marketing the packages as reunion packages to the former exchange students. In addition, it was suggested to market the trips as study trip.

Whatever the approach may be, and even if the actual implementation does not happen in the form of S2S Travel Network, the idea of tourism students gaining experience through practical projects and real customers is worth investing upon. If the quality orientation can be included into it, it is even better.

SOURCES

- Aswathappa, K. 2007. Human Resource and Personnel Management. 6th reprint. Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited. New Delhi.
- Atkins, S. & Gilbert, G. 2003. The Role of Induction and Training in Team Effectiveness. *Project Management Journal* 34 (2), 48-52.
- Bailey, J. 2008. First steps in qualitative data analysis: transcribing. *Family Practice*, 25 (2): 127-131. doi: 10.1093/fampra/cmn003
- Beckengorff, P., Moscardo, G. & Pendergast, D. 2010. *Tourism and Generation Y*. CABI Publishing. Oxon, UK.
- Bergman, B. & Klefsjö, B. 1994. *Quality – from Customer Needs to Customer Satisfaction*. Studentlitteratur Lund. Sweden.
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 2005a. Performance Appraisal Factsheet. In Nickson, D. 2007. *Human Resource Management for Hospitality and Tourism Industries*. Elsevier Ltd.. Burligton, USA.
- D’Annunzio-Green, N., Maxwell, G. & Watson, S. 2005. *Human Resource Management: International Perspectives in Hospitality and Tourism*. Reprinted by Thomson Learning (first published in 2002 by Continuum). Cornwall, UK.
- Early, J.F. & Colletti, O.J. 1998. The Quality Planning Process. In J.M. Juran & A.B. Godfrey (eds.) *Juran’s Quality Handbook*. USA: McGraw-Hill, 3.1-3.50.
- Evans, J.R. & Lindsay, W.M. 2008. *Managing for Quality and Performance Excellence*. 7th edition. Thompson South-Western, USA.

- Go, F., Monachello, M. & Baum, T. 1996. Human Resource Management for the Hospitality Industry. In D. Nickson (pub.) Human Resource Management for hospitality and Tourism Industries. Burlington USA: Elsevier Ltd., 158-165.
- Goetsch, D.L. & Davis, S.B. 2010. Quality Management for Organizational Excellence: Introduction to Total Quality. 6th edition. Pearson Education, Inc. New Jersey, USA.
- Grainger-Jones, B. 1999. Managing Leisure. Butterworth-Heinemann. Oxford, UK.
- Grote, D. 2011. How to Be Good at Performance Appraisals: Simple, Effective, Done Right. Harvard Business School Publishing, USA.
- Grönroos, C. 1984. A Service Quality Model and its Marketing Implications. European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 18.
- Holmes, K. & Smith K. 2009 Managing Volunteers in Tourism. Attractions, destinations and events. 1st edition. Elsevier Ltd.. Oxford, UK.
- Ishikawa, K. 1976. Guide to Quality Control. In D.L. Goetsch 2010. Quality Management for Organizational Excellence: Introduction to Total Quality. 6th edition. Pearson Education, Inc. New Jersey, USA.
- Islam, Z., Ahmed, S.M., Hasan, I. & Ahmed S.U. 2011. Organizational culture and knowledge sharing: Empirical evidence from service organizations. African Journal of Business Management, Vol. 5(14). Academic Journals.
- Juran, J.M. & Godfrey, A.B. (co-editors-in-chief) 1998. Juran's Quality Handbook. 5th edition. McGraw-Hill, USA.
- Juran, J.M 1998. The Quality Improvement Process. In Juran, J.M. & Godfrey, A.B. (co-editors-in-chief) 1998. Juran's Quality Handbook. 5th edition. USA: McGraw-Hill, 5.1-5.73.
- Kandampully, J., Mok, C. & Sparks, B.A. 2001. Service Management in Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure. NY, USA: The Haworth Press, Inc.

Lane, H.E. & Dupré, D. 1997. *Hospitality World! An Introduction*. Van Nostrand Reinhold, a division of International Thomsom Publishing, Inc., USA.

Louw, L., Pearse, N.J. & Dhaya, J. 2012. The role of experience in the development of social competencies. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrift vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 10(1), Art #376, 9 pages.

Mitra, A. 2008. *Fundamentals of Quality Control and Improvement*. 3rd edition. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Nickson, D. 2007. *Human Resource Management for Hospitality and Tourism Industries*. Elsevier Ltd.. Burligton, USA.

Parasuman, A., Zeithaml, V. & Berry, L. 1985. A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 49, 41-50.

Pesonen, I., Mönkkönen, T. & Hokkanen, T. 2000. *Menestyvä matkailuyritys*. Helsinki: Oy Edita Ab.

Phillips, S. Little, B. & Goodine, L. 2002. *Recruiting, Retaining, and Rewarding Volunteer: What Volunteer Have to Say*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.

Sezgin, E. & Yolal, M. 2012. Golden Age of Mass Tourism: Its History and Development. In *Visions for Global Tourism Industry – Creating and Sustaining Competitive Strategies*. Edited by Murat Kasimoglu. InTech, 73-90. DOI: 10.5772/37283.

Talukder, A.K.M.M.H. 2012. An Empirical Study of Supportive Communication Impacting Customer Satisfaction in Multinational Companys' Service Industry of Bangladesh. In *Ege Academic Review*, 12(4), 435-448.

Verhelä, P. & Lackman, P. 2003. *Matkailun ohjelmalvelut*. 1st edition. Porvoo: WSOY.

Williams, C. & Buswell, J. 2003. Service Quality in Leisure and Tourism. CABI Publishing, Cambridge, MA, USA.

Yeh, T.M. & Lin W.T. 2010. The Diagnosis and improvement of TQM implementation in semiconductor industries. African Journal of Business Management. Vol. 4(6), 1095-1106.

Zongqing, Z. 2004. E-commerce and Information Technology. Thompson Learning, Inc., Canada.

Web sources:

Ala-Korpela, A. 21.4.2012. Jo toinen tapaus! Nukkuvan naisen huoneeseen murtauduttiin Omenahotellissa. Aamulehti. Available at:
<http://www.aamulehti.fi/Kotimaa/1194739282230/artikkeli/jo+toinen+tapaus+nukkuvan+naisen+huoneeseen+murtauduttiin+omenahotellissa.html> (read 10.4.2013)

Exemplo 2006. The Exemplo Training Process: A Manual for promoting and assessing Training in Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). Web document. Available at:
http://www.exemplo.de/exemplo/presentation/DOCS/exemplo_training_manual.pdf (read 16.4.2013)

Kainuun Etu Oy 2013. Kainuun matkailutilastot – Helmikuu 2013. Available at:
<http://www.kainuunetu.fi/fi/81f289d8-b873-48f9-8997-864c9216f5dd/81f289d8-b873-48f9-8997-864c9216f5dd> (read 24.4.2013)

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) 2013 a. Kajaani University of Applied Sciences – Time Travel. Available at:
<http://kamk.fi/en/About-KUAS/Brief-History> (read 22.4.2013)

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) 2013 b. Kaksoistutkinto. Available at:
<http://kamk.fi/fi/Opiskelijalle/Kansainvalisyys/Kaksoistutkinto> (read 23.4.2013)

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) 2013 c. Kv-liikkuvuus ja ulkomaisten opiskelijoiden määrä. Written by M. Kaikkonen. Statistics received from KUAS, not available online.

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) 2013 d. Kotikansainvälistyminen. Available at:

<http://kamk.fi/fi/Opiskelijalle/Kansainvalisyys/Kotikansainvalistyminen-> (read 24.4.2013)

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) 2013 e. Get a Finnish Friend Family!

Available at:

<http://kamk.fi/en/Studying/Student-Activities/Friend-Family-Programme> (read 24.4.2013)

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) 2013 f. Myötätuuli Learning Clinic.

Available at:

<http://kamk.fi/en/Business-Services/Learning-Clinic>

Kendrick, S. 28.10.2009. Strategies for Dealing with Unreliable Volunteers. Available at:

<http://www.volunteerhub.com/blog/strategies-for-dealing-with-unreliable-volunteers/> (read 14.4.2013)

Knight, R. 2011. Delivering an Effective Performance Review. Harvard Business Review Blog Network. Available at:

<http://blogs.hbr.org/hmu/2011/11/delivering-an-effective-perfor.html> (read 8.4.2013)

Koskennurmi-Sivonen, R. 2007. Grounded Theory. Available at:

<http://www.helsinki.fi/~rkosken/gt> (read 29.4.2013)

Mayhew, R. 2013. Performance Appraisal System in Organizations. Demand Media.

Available at:

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/performance-appraisal-systems-organizations-1919.html> (read 8.4.2013)

McCurlley, S. 1993. How to Fire a Volunteer and Live to Tell About It. Reprint from Grapevine, Jan/Feb 93. Available at:

http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/b.5466409/k.E368/How_to_Fire_a_Volunteer_and_Live_to_Tell_About_It.htm (read 14.4.2013)

Omenahotels 2012 a. About Omena Hotels. Available at:

<http://www.omenahotels.com/about-omena/> (read 10.4.2013)

Omenahotels 2012 b. FAQ. Available at:

<http://www.omenahotels.com/faq/> (read 10.4.2013)

Omenahotelleja käytetty paritukseen ainakin kuutisen vuotta. 2011. Turun Sanomat, 26.10.2011. Available at:

<http://www.ts.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/270577/Omenahotelleja+kaytetty+paritukseen+ainakin+kuutisen+vuotta> (read 10.4.2013)

Saaranen-Kauppinen, A. & Puusniekka A. 2006. Litterointi. KvaliMOTV -

Menetelmäopetuksen tietovaranto (web publication). Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoarkisto. Available at:

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L7_2_1.html (read 29.4.2013)

Statistics Finland 2013 a. Laadullisen ja määrällisen tutkimuksen erot. Virsta – Virtual Statistics. Available at:

<http://tilastokeskus.fi/virsta/tkeruu/01/07/> (read 25.4.2013)

Statistics Finland 2013 b. Teemahaastattelu. Virsta – Virtual Statistics. Available at:

<http://tilastokeskus.fi/virsta/tkeruu/04/03/> (read 25.4.2013)

Statistics Finland 2013 c. Puolistrukturoitu haastattelu. Virsta – Virtual Statistics. Available at:

<http://tilastokeskus.fi/virsta/tkeruu/04/02/> (read 25.4.2013)

Trochim, W.M.K. 2006. Qualitative Validity. Research Methods Knowledge Base. Available at:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.php> (read 1.5.2013)

Woods, P. 2006 a. Qualitative Research, Features of Qualitative Research. Web component run by N. Pratt. Available at:

<http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/qualitative%20methods%202/qualrshm.htm#1.%20FEATURES%20OF%20QUALITATIVE%20RESEARCH> (read 25.4.2013)

Woods, P. 2006 a. Qualitative Research, Methods of Qualitative Research. Web component run by N. Pratt. Available at:

<http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/qualitative%20methods%202/qualrshm.htm#2.%20METHODS%20OF%20QUALITATIVE%20RESEARCH> (read 25.4.2013)

Ylimommo, H.P. 7.6.2012. Kamera valvoo Omenahotellissa. Kaleva. Available at:

<http://www.kaleva.fi/uutiset/oulu/kamera-valvoo-omenahotellissa/595776/> (read 10.4.2013)

LIST OF APPENDICES

Product Description and Product Motivation

Questions for the Semi-structured Interview

Quality Control Guidelines for S2S Travel Network

APPENDIX 1: Product Description and Product Motivation

Marketing text for brochure and other networking and promotion texts between universities:

White. Ice. Cold. Explorative.

Fast. Fluffy. Loud. Adventurous.

Light. Serene. Peaceful. Magical.

However you imagine Finland to be. We have something for everyone. Finland is colourful. Finland is diverse. Finland is unique.

Come and feel the authenticity of Finland's nature! Get to know the Finnish culture and explore some of the typical Finnish activities like snowshoeing, rowing or a Husky Safari. Maximize your adventure by hiking and climbing through the pristine nature.

We offer you a 6- day tour package to Kajaani. Located within the heart of Finland in the Kainuu Region this is the place to be when exploring the real Finland.

From Students to Students!

Our staff consists of students of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, and you will have the chance to spend your holiday in an international environment. As fellow students we have gathered an active holiday package at a low price. The package includes accommodation, transportation within Kainuu, breakfast & lunch as well as many activities depending whether you will book during the winter season or the summer season.

The basic package price:

Winter Season: 225 €

Summer Season: 273 €

Please contact us for more details of the program.

S2S Travel Network

Product Motivation:

The tourism product we are creating is called S2S Travel Network. This means Student to Student Travel Network which will focus on low cost package travel for students from Partner Universities of KUAS. In the future the network could be widened and other Universities could apply the same idea in order to create a travel network/ community.

One of the marketing strengths of our idea is that we are students ourselves. Thus we know how difficult it can be to have enough budgets to explore the world. Therefore it is our aim to create a package at an appropriate price level with as much added value possible.

Furthermore, our network will consist of local students that have special knowledge of the destination area and international students that will be helpful in terms of communication.

The implementation of the product looks as follows. This product creates a win-win situation for both guest students and staff students. Gaining a real life working experience can be difficult before entering the work life but S2S Travel Network makes it possible. This student-run organization will involve activities not only for tourism but also for sport students. The basic idea is to have a group of voluntary students that take over the organization for a certain period of time. Within this time, where students learn how to handle reservations as well as the implementation of the tour package, it will be possible to gain credits for certain courses as a reward. The credit assurance will be certified with tutor teachers (and courses like Guiding Skills, Management of Nature and Sport Activities etc.) and an official written agreement.

For supervisory aspects there will be tutor teachers available.

The tour package is divided into summer and winter packages which both have a different price level due to activities. All guests will be accommodated in the Hotel Kainuunportti, which is approximately 3 km from the University. There are buses running regularly and bikes will be made available for the guests for an additional price. The accommodation consists of rooms, with 4 sleeps each, a mini kitchen, breakfast and sauna.

As the price should be kept down to a minimum, the guests will be responsible for their own arrival (we will provide websites for cheap tickets for example and information how to travel low cost). We will be responsible for the transportation within the destination which

means, from pick-up (at the airport in Kajaani or the train station) until departure we will provide the necessary transportation. Therefore, there will be buses available from the University (3). Therefore, only fuel costs are required to be covered.

The summer package (season from April to October) will be available for 273 € and includes the following:

- Day 1: arrival, introduction meeting, games
- Day 2: town tour, team building activities
- Day 3: mountain biking/hiking + picnic
- Day 4: Vuokatti Action
- Day 5: rowing with a church boat (beach, etc.), party
- Day 6: departure

The winter package (season from November to April) will be available for 225 € and includes the following:

- Day 1: arrival, introduction meeting, games
- Day 2: town tour, team building activities, skating
- Day 3: snow shoeing + picnic
- Day 4: Vuokatti Husky (6 km safari)
- Day 5: climbing, abseiling, party
- Day 6: departure

The summer package is slightly more expensive due to its activities (Vuokatti Action and the rowing trip). Optional activities such as cooking a Finnish meal can be added for an additional price if enough customers want to participate.

Changes to the program can always vary due to the weather conditions that can differ in Finland from day to day. Therefore, our schedule is a pre-fixed program with flexible options. Some personal alterations can be done if requested.

All activities that are included into the program so far are pre-arranged with the according company or teacher from Kajaani UAS. The prices are based on the prices set by the companies providing the services. The prices include VAT.

The S2S Travel Network will be advertised through Kajaani University of Applied Sciences Website. There will be a link to S2S Travel Network Website and Facebook page. As our target group focuses students- we understand the recent trend to use social web for communication and information exchange. Furthermore, we will create brochures with information that can be sent and distributed in different partner universities.

Besides that, promotional tours where students from the KUAS are going to visit other partner universities will be planned. With this personal promotion can be ensured and students can ask questions and concerns directly to the responsible person.

As a side effect of this S2S Travel Network will be the promotion for Kajaani UAS as an exchange university. Students will hear more about the University and could even come for a short time in order to experience the life in Finland.

APPENDIX 2: Questions for the Semi-structured Interview

KUAS staff**Quality**

Please imagine one of the activities S2S Travel Network provides. Let us assume the activity is hiking in the forests of Kajaani. The hike includes a picnic for a lunch. The hike takes 2-3 hours and couple of students from KUAS operate as your guides. Use this image to answer the following questions about quality.

If you find it easier to use as an example one of your own experiences of tourism services, you may do so. However, the service needs to be a supervised activity service you participated in as a customer, not as an employee.

1. How would you define quality?
 - a. What does quality mean to you?
 - b. What kind of service is a quality service?
 - c. Does price affect your view of quality? (E.g. would you accept lower quality for lower price?)
2. In a service process we tend to pay attention either consciously or unconsciously to things that go wrong or are especially successful and make us pleased.
 - a. What are these things to you? Can you give some examples?

HRM

3. How important is work experience in getting employed in your opinion? How well do you think a newly graduated student can get work in tourism sector in your country?
 - a. Would you be prepared to do extra-curricular work if the students of KUAS asked your help for their project?
 - If not, what would make you motivated? (if the answer is money, ask for an option)
4. Have you ever experienced a good training programme?
 - b. If so, how was it like?

S2S Travel Network

5. How do you find this product?
 - a. The overall idea of students as service providers, etc.?

- b. Would you like to participate? (customer/employee perspective)
 - c. How do you find
 - the price
 - the activities
 - dining
 - accommodation
6. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

KUAS tourism and sport students

Profile

- Male/female
- Age
- Nationality

Quality

Please imagine one of the activities S2S Travel Network provides. Let us assume the activity is hiking in the forests of Kajaani. The hike includes a picnic for a lunch. The hike takes 2-3 hours and couple of students from KUAS operate as your guides. Use this image to answer the following questions about quality.

If you find it easier to use as an example one of your own experiences of tourism services, you may do so. However, the service needs to be a supervised activity service you participated in as a customer, not as an employee.

1. How would you define quality?
 - a. What does quality mean to you?
 - b. What kind of service is a quality service?
 - c. Does price affect your view of quality? (E.g. would you accept lower quality for lower price?)
2. In a service process we tend to pay attention either consciously or unconsciously to things that go wrong or are especially successful and make us pleased.
 - a. What are these things to you? Can you give some examples?

HRM

3. How important is work experience in getting employed in your opinion? How well do you think a newly graduated student can get work in tourism sector in your country? How confident are you of your own chances?
 - a. What would you be prepared to do in order to get work experience? Would you be prepared to do extra-curricular work?
 - If not, what would make you motivated? (if the answer is money, ask for an option)
4. Tell me something about your teamwork experiences.

- a. Have you any particularly successful experiences? Any bad? What about meetings?
- b. What is your general attitude towards teamwork?
5. Have you ever experienced a good training programme?
 - c. If so, how was it like?

S2S Travel Network

6. How do you find this product?
 - a. The overall idea of students as service providers, etc.?
 - b. Would you like to participate? (customer/employee perspective)
 - c. How do you find
 - the price
 - the activities
 - dining
 - accommodation
7. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Exchange students

Profile

- Male/female
- Age
- Nationality

Quality

Please imagine one of the activities S2S Travel Network provides. Let us assume the activity is hiking in the forests of Kajaani. The hike includes a picnic for a lunch. The hike takes 2-3 hours and couple of students from KUAS operate as your guides. Use this image to answer the following questions about quality.

If you find it easier to use as an example one of your own experiences of tourism services, you may do so. However, the service needs to be a supervised activity service you participated in as a customer, not as an employee.

1. How would you define quality?
 - a. What does quality mean to you?
 - b. What kind of service is a quality service?
 - c. Does price affect your view of quality? (E.g. would you accept lower quality for lower price?)
2. In a service process we tend to pay attention either consciously or unconsciously to things that go wrong or are especially successful and make us pleased.
 - a. What are these things to you? Can you give some examples?

HRM

3. How important is work experience in getting employed in your opinion? How well do you think a newly graduated student can get work in tourism sector in your country? How confident are you of your own chances?
 - a. What would you be prepared to do in order to get work experience? Would you be prepared to do extra-curricular work?
 - If not, what would make you motivated? (if the answer is money, ask for an option)
4. Tell me something about your teamwork experiences.

- a. Have you any particularly successful experiences? Any bad? What about meetings?
- b. What is your general attitude towards teamwork?
5. Have you ever experienced a good training programme?
 - a. If so, how was it like?

S2S Travel Network

6. What would you like to try while in Finland? Give me three examples of activities/experiences that you would be prepared to pay for.
7. How do you find this product?
 - a. The overall idea of students as service providers, etc.?
 - b. Would you like to participate? (customer/employee perspective)
 - c. How do you find
 - the price
 - the activities
 - dining
 - accommodation
8. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

APPENDIX 3: Quality Control Guidelines for S2S Travel Network

These are guidelines for managing quality in S2S Travel Network. The aim of these guidelines is to set the main procedures for practical implementation and securing continuous quality of the services provided by S2S Travel Network. The guidelines are divided into five parts as follows:

1. Organization chart
2. Recruitment
3. Documentation
4. Performance appraisal
5. Rewarding and discipline

These guidelines are targeted to the students responsible for managing the projects involving the travel packages of S2S Travel Network, and are open for modifications should the structure of the case alter. Any changes should be carefully analysed and consulted with the supervising teacher before altering the actual guidelines. The quality guidelines are a separate document from the quality handbook, which is produced in the process of implementing S2S Travel Network in practise.

1. Organization chart

At the beginning of the project the organization team needs establish a clear structure and responsibilities. The structure is presented in figure 8. At the top of the organization team is project manager who is responsible of the information flow in and out of the team. This student is the one that contacts teachers and firms when needed, and transfers the information for all the team members. The project manager is responsible of making sure everyone has all the timetables and needed documentations.

Under the general project manager are the person responsible of accounting and the person responsible of activities. The accountant works together with two other students, and handles accounting whereas the other two hold responsibility over receiving customers' bookings and arranging accommodation, dining and transportation. The

accountant is also responsible of informing the project manager of the progress of accounting department.

The activity coordinator is responsible for designing and implementing the activities provided by S2S travel Network. The number of people working together with the activity coordinator depends on the number of activities each person deals with. The recommended number of service providers during an activity is two people. These two guide and instruct the customers together. Extra attention needs to be paid on the way these two divide the responsibility over the instruction. Both of the service providers should be present by either instructing or helping the customers. Activities involving safety issues need to be managed by people with appropriate licences and supervised by a teacher. The activity coordinator is responsible of making sure the activities are implemented by people with correct licences. There also needs to be emergency phones of which the other one will be carried by the activity coordinator and the other one with one of the two people managing the activities in process. The activity coordinators phone needs to be with them also after the scheduled service hours in order to provide support for the customers if needed.

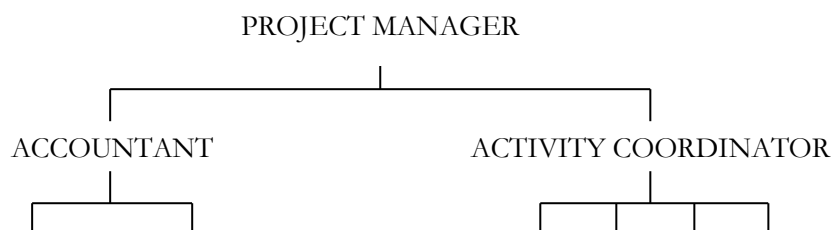


Figure 8: Organization chart of S2S Travel Network

2. Recruitment

Recruitment plays key role in attracting the suitable students and motivating them. Since word-of-mouth is a powerful marketing tool, the recruitment should also benefit from it. Personal stories from people who have participated in successful projects is much

likelier to stay in the minds of the students compared to ordinary marketing methods. The students should be informed of the benefits of joining the project; they receive work experience, get to try new roles and tasks more than in regular jobs, they develop their personal skills, and receive credits for their participation. Especially successful students could receive a recommendation letter if approved by the headmaster. The possibility to include the participation in the project to practical training period should also be investigated.

The students should be given a clear description of what they will be doing in the project and a set of expectations already at the beginning of the project. This way we avoid the possible confusion of one's role and tasks. Naturally these tasks and expectations will be determined together with the project management team.

3. Documentation

There are a few documentations essential for controlling quality of the services of S2S Travel Network. These documentations are blueprint, safety plan, control evaluation, and deviation report.

Blueprint (also known as flow chart) is a graphic description of the steps in of a service process. Blueprints can be used to chart every process needed. The people dealing with those processes should all have the same blueprint. It helps to avoid inconsistency by making sure everyone starts from the same line with the same image of the process flow.

Safety plans are extremely important precautions in planning of activities and required by law.

Control evaluation means in this context writing task done as a group. The evaluation contains information of what has been done, how it has been done, feedback and reflexion on it, as well as improvement suggestions.

Deviation report is a short, line of two, note in the case if something goes wrong or there was a situation out of ordinary. The deviation report includes the date when the error or the incident happened, short description of what happened, and what was done or should have been done about it. If there starts to be more notes of the same category, it is a clear message that something is done wrong or some process needs to be revised.

Together these documents form the complete quality handbook in operating S2S travel Network. The handbook should always be revised at the end of the project in case there are improvement needs and suggestions. These improvements should be discussed together with the whole team and the supervising teacher in order to evaluate if the suggestions truly improve the process or actually have the opposite effect.

4. Performance appraisal

Naturally the teachers responsible for the courses the activities are integrated into are responsible of evaluating the performance of the student by grades. In addition, the team members evaluate their fellow team members. Performance appraisal should concentrate on knowledge, skills, abilities, attitude to work, attention to detail, and interaction with others among other things. The person's behaviour should not be included in the evaluation. The evaluation is done on paper and only seen by the person in question and the supervising teacher. One should be careful of not getting on too personal level in their evaluation, although honesty is best way to help others learn from their weaknesses. It is important to remember to give also positive feedback. Self-appraisal is also needed.

5. Rewarding and discipline

After the project is done, the students are given proof of their participation. This proof is a reference signed by the authorities of KUAS. Students who have shown exceptional effort and skills during the project can be rewarded with a recommendation letter for similar tasks. These are real assets on the job market and differentiate also Kajaani University of Applied Sciences from other learning institutions as a university educating strong talents.

The students who lack effort or underperform should be talked with in order to together decide what should be done to change the situation. Dismissing a student from the project should be the absolute final resource, and even then it should be carried out only by the supervising teacher.