

# **New public business training concept for the Estonian hospitality employees**

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<p>The macro-economic and social environment in the hospitality industry has since 2020 entered into a phase of deep change. Changes have also influenced the circumstances where talent development takes place and how employees of the hospitality sector are being trained.</p> <p>Current study aims to develop a new public business training concept that considers the current needs of the Estonian hospitality sector in 2021.</p> <p>The public training phenomenon is supported by the social cognitive theory, which claims that human learning is strongly influenced by the social environment. Knowledge, skills and attitudes are gained by observing and sharing information with others. The fundamental framework of the research is based on the theory of 9 course design elements developed by Ralf St Clair. The study is in line with the principles of lifelong learning and adult learning in general.</p> <p>The research is conducted as qualitative research and utilizing the constructive research approach strategy. Empirical data is gathered by applying document analysis, focus group interview and survey as methods. Within the process of work, sample training model was designed and implemented to test the functionality of the developed concept. Timeframe felled into the period between January 2020 and April 2021.</p> <p>The key findings of the research are that engagement is the keyword supporting the adult learning process and thereby the development of problem-based and self-directed learning. The role of the context plays a significant role. Each context has elements that could be positively applied to serve the training goals. Hospitality sector is looking for interactive “study-bites” type of trainings where the online, classroom or hybrid format is selected depending on the knowledge being enquired. It was found out that online training is not only the inevitable alternative but also provide valuable competencies to adapt to the future trends that all the hospitality field stakeholders will be facing.</p> <p>The findings of the research indicates that Clair’s 9 design element theory must be developed forth. Context as a training design element should be elaborated further to serve better today’s adult learning and considering the digitalized learning opportunities available.</p> <p>The training concept developed during the research is relevant for the Estonian hospitality industry providing discussion and even feasible model how to train people in the new era when digital and online learning has settled to stay.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Adult learning, public trainings, Estonian hospitality, professional trainings, digitalization, lifelong learning	

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# 1 Introduction

The year 2019 was a record one for the hospitality sector. The only threat came from the booming sharing economy, gaining more and more market share from the traditional lodging industry. So far all the business models were able to find clients and the main problem for the hoteliers was not related to the occupancy but how to find employees who would like to start and continue their career in the hospitality industry. The lack of labour force has been illustrating the challenges of the hotel business for the last couple of years.

From a hospitality business training perspective in 2019 Estonia was not flourishing. The investment made into the staff was not paying back due to high staff turnover and the constant lack of workforce did not allow to send people to trainings as the missing person in the shift had to be replaced. Training funds were re-allocated to cover the rapidly rising salary demand. Despite the fact that hotel leaders talk about the need for professional hospitality related trainings the training business was slow causing many hospitality-oriented training companies to stop providing traditional training services.

As we know now, at the outset of the high season of 2021, summer of 2020 was the last breath for several hotel properties because the tourism industry has been hit hardest of all by the COVID crises. Estonian borders were closed in March 2020 and stayed closed for the next 4 months. In July 2020 when the borders were officially open again, still including restrictions and hesitation, the number of foreign visitors dropped catastrophically compared to 2019. We may say that the COVID-19 pandemic finally solved the problem of deficient labour force, but this solution caused enormous suffering, if not the end of the business for many hospitality operators.

The circumstances illustrated above provide the background to my research which among other issues aims to tackle the above-mentioned staff-related challenge. The focus of the study is partly related to stopping the unwelcome high labour turnover taking place in the hotels. Training provides self-development opportunity to the employee by increasing work satisfaction, motivation and loyalty, which in turn leads to a longer and more stable career path in the company.

The goal of the study is to develop a new public business training concept, which creates value for the customer. The customer in this context is not only a physical participant in the training but also a company purchasing the training to one's employee and therefore perceives it as an investment that should eventually pay off. Without deliberately avoiding the marketing aspects, the study primarily focuses on the content of the training as such.

Research questions aimed to answered by the study are:

- what do the Estonian hospitality companies value in public training?
- what do the participants value in public training?
- what would be the most suitable public training concept to meet the needs of to-days' Estonian hospitality sector?

The long term objective of the study is to serve the Estonian hospitality sector by developing a fundamental educational product that any of the hospitality educational institutions could provide to its customers.

A significant aspect accompanying the thesis is related to the enormous difference between the macro-economic circumstances impacting the hospitality industry in the beginning and during the finalizing stage of the study as the timeframe of the study falls into the most challenging and uncertain period within the last 30 years of hospitality in Estonia.

The thesis begins with the literature review on the adult learning theories in chapter 2. The definitions and other elements which are seen as important when conducting professional business training are discussed. In addition to that, the topic of public training as a form of educating employees in a company is elaborated. At the end of the chapter the training design theory which sets the fundamental framework for the study regarding the process of collecting and analysing the empirical data is introduced. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter an insight into the business training scenery in the Estonian hospitality sector is provided. In chapter 4 the execution of the research is presented describing the methodology and methods used for collecting and analysing the empirical data. The research is conducted by using *the constructive research* approach combining methods like *document analysis*, *focus group interviews* and *surveys* to gather empirical data. Also, the process of study is enfolded, presenting the different stages and tasks that must be completed to reach the final study goal. The results of the study are presented in chapter 5 and the final part of the study is dedicated to discussions and conclusions.

The study approach used for the project is new and there are no similar earlier researches done concerning building a new training concept. Successful implementation of the current study may encourage others to experiment with such an approach as well.

The inspiration for selecting the development of a new training concept comes from the fact that the Author has been professionally linked to adult learning topic for nearly 15 years - at first working in the hotels and continuing later on in the hospitality education sector. While developing hospitality related training concepts in Tallinn under the supervision of Haaga-Helia the public training concept called Hospitality Insiders Club (HIC) was

used among other methods and it became the most popular product in the portfolio of Haaga-Helia in Estonia. This concept had been created already years ago in Finland, however in Estonia the concept was developed further to turn it into a popular knowledge sharing pool attracting many young hospitality leaders in Estonia. Being one of the main organizing team members, the inspirational ambience of the gatherings encouraged the Author to start learning more about the essence of collaboration and knowledge sharing elements of a public training format. The Author experienced, that a successful learning process for the adults could contain inspirational self-development and lots of engagement but at the same time still provide practical outcome for the participant and one's employer. The Author became intrigued how to include the same kind of excitement into the serious traditional learning process.

The second reason for selecting the topic is related to the desire to capture the heritage created through the operations of Haaga-Helia Estonian branch in 2015 – 2019. In total Haaga-Helia organized in Estonia 24 open short courses, 9 tailor-made courses, 4 seminars, 2 online webinars, 1 consultation project and 15 Hospitality Insiders Club events. Under the label of Haaga-Helia Hospitality Competence Centre in Estonia many hospitality professionals and educators have significantly contributed to the Estonian hospitality education and training landscape, popularizing the hotelier's profession and Haaga-Helia brand in the local hospitality community.

## 2 Adult learning

In this chapter adult learning will be discussed more profoundly. First, important terminology is presented. Secondly, different learning theories are introduced, and lifelong learning is being described. After that public training format as such is elaborated. Finally, one of the theories of designing the course will be introduced which I have decided to take as the framework for my study

In the academic world, the term andragogy is widely used when discussing adult learning, in contrast to pedagogy which is a child-focused teaching approach. The concept was re-captured by US educators Eduard Lindeman and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy who used the concept of andragogy to explain their philosophy and teaching methods specific to adults (Educational Technology 2020). As I am using a constructive research approach that is more related to research-based development work I try to use less academic and more practical terminology throughout the study.

According to Rothwell (Rothwell 2020, preface) discussion on adult learning should start identifying what is an adult learner. He adds that usually, the term implies a person who engages in learning beyond the traditional age of school attendance. Certainly, the term gives more options for interpretation.

Merriam in his book "Adult learning. Linking theory and practices" (Merriam 2014, 11) states that more important than defining the "adult" is the question of how adult learning differs from children's' regarding the process. First, when for the children the school is a "full-time job" then adults have many other roles and responsibilities in life outside the training. They are parallelly caretaker, worker and citizen. Training is just part of their focus object. The second dimension to consider is that every adult participating in the training brings along a very different experience package. In one hand the different experience makes the learning transfer more challenging for the educator while coping with different thresholds. On the other hand, all these experiences together form a rich resource for learning that the professional educator could turn to one's advantage. The third aspect Merriam points out is related to the motivation of learning. As the learning is voluntary each person has their own motivation to participate. In principle, adults join to improve their situation in adult life whether it's related to work, personal (health, family issues) reasons or community-driven factors. (Merriam 2014, 13.)

At this point, it is reasonable to describe other terminology related to adult learning in companies. As Rothwell (Rothwell 2020, 1) claims there are three combined but still different concepts that can be easily mixed. The word *training* means doing something for others. The idea is to change individuals so that they can get better work results the sooner the better. Training is a rather short and individually oriented change strategy considered to improve an employee's work performance. *Talent development* is the activity on the organizational level to facilitate the learning process through creating an environment where people desire to learn by providing essential resources to assist in learning and by posing questions to encourage learners to search out their own answers. Finally, *learning* is something that individuals do on their own. Rothwell calls it a "pull" strategy as the learners pull knowledge, skills and attitudes from others so that they can be successful. Learning is the acquisition of many characteristics: knowledge, skills and attitudes including values, ethics, behaviours, preferences etc. Learning takes place across the lifespan. (Rothwell 2020, 1.)

As for centuries philosophers debated on the nature of knowledge and what it meant to know, it was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that learning was systematically investigated "scientifically" by psychologists (Merriam 2014, 25). Merriam introduces 5 traditional learning theories:

- **Behaviourism** – learning is a change in behaviour. Main assumption is that human behaviour is the result of the arrangements of particular stimuli in the environment. If this behaviour is reinforced or rewarded, it is likely to continue; if not it is likely to disappear (Merriam 2014, 26).
- **Humanism** – learning is about the development of the person. The founding assumption is that human beings have the potential for growth and development and that people are free to make choices and determine their behaviour, learning is about the development of a person (Merriam 2014, 29).
- **Cognitivism** - learning is a mental process. In addition to patterns of mind, the followers focus on insight (the moment when a solution to a problem becomes clear), information processing, problem solving, memory and the brain (Merriam 2014, 32).
- **Social cognitive theory** – learning is social and context bound. The main assumption is that since much human learning happens in a social environment people gain knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs and attitudes by observing others (Merriam 2014, 35).
- **Constructivism** – learning is creating meaning from experience. The founding assumption is that learning is how people make sense of their experience and learning is the construction of meaning from experience (Merriam 2014, 36).

Described theories can be summarized with the thoughts of Clair who claims that none of these philosophies is inherently better or worse than another, but they do establish a principal part of the worldview of an educator whose role is to facilitate the learning process (Clair 2015, 13).



## 2.1 Lifelong learning

It is not a surprise that that most of what we do in the work lie has something to do with learning. Rothwell states that in order to explore opportunities and solve problems in today's fact-paced, dynamic, knowledge-based business world where everything can change all at once, workers must use their heads and not (as in the agricultural or industrial age) their hands (Rothwell 2020, 1). Information age means that people are dedicating most of their time to acquiring, analysing and using the information in their everyday work. Mostly it means they must learn to solve practical work-related problems and the faster the better. Employers want them to be innovative and find quick and creative solutions to the challenges of the nowadays world. There is no sharp division anymore between the world of formal schooling and the world of work. Lifelong learning and therefore lifelong education have become a reality.

Talking about lifelong learning it's important to describe learning settings, where continuous knowledge acquiring takes place (Merriam 2014, 16). The European Union has developed a clear definition of the three different levels of formality in learning:

- **Formal learning** consists of learning happening in an organized and structured context (formal education, in-company training) and that is designed for learning. It leads to formal recognition as a diploma or certificate.
- **Non-formal learning** consists of learning which is embedded in planned activities that are not particularly designated as learning but contains important learning elements. Examples are a professional club or other voluntary and socially responsible types of gatherings.
- **Informal learning** is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities linked to work, family or leisure. It is often seen as experiential or accidental learning. It does not have a structure in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support.

(Clair 2015, 56-57.)

Based on the outcomes of the learning settings listed above every person builds their own *learning career*. Clair states that a learning career is something that emphasizes the continuity of learning activity through a person's life, rather than dividing it into initial education, work-based training and individual study. Everyone's learning career is different, and it impacts the way learner is capable to be engaged with. In the training context by giving a chance to recognize each individual's learning career through discussion, helps them to open up and bring their experiences and skills into the shared *knowledge reservoir*. That has a huge opportunity to affect positively group engagement. (Clair 2015, 35.)

**Self-directed learning** (SDL) is another feature heavily connected to learning career and supports the concept of adult learning. According to Merriam (2014, 62) the heart of the SDL is the conception that the learner takes responsibility for his or her own learning and

which means that the learner decides what, when and how to learn. The opportunity to be a self-directed learner has grown together with the overall digitalization trend. Especially after the covid pandemic outbreak the amount of online learning has grown (OECD.org 2020). Referencing the study conducted by the European Commission (Ala-Mutka 2010, 65) on understanding the computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies, can be stated that online trainings, networks and communities support strongly lifelong learning, including new skill development and personal growth.

## 2.2 Public training as a form of educating company's employees

As the study is focusing particularly on the public training concept then in this chapter I unfold the pros and cons related to this format. Companies usually develop their employees by using internal or external trainings. Internal or so-called in-house trainings are carried out by the employees within company, using internal recourses. External trainings are outsourced from training companies or freelance experts. Public trainings are classified as external trainings. (Proffitt 2018.)

Public training concept is a widely used concept of training adults. It is empowered by the social cognitive theory stating that learning is social and context bound. The main assumption is that since much human learning happens in a social environment people gain knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes by observing others (Merriam 2014, 35).

Public training traditionally refers to a classroom or online training that is held on a scheduled basis, where anyone from the public or any organisation interested can register. According to Clews (Clews 2015) participants must only meet the qualification requirements set by the training company and must pay the participation fee.

Based on Optimus learning blog there are several advantages of external public trainings over an in-house training for a company (Optimus learning 2013):

- **Less administration** - all the operational matters like training location, catering, trainer and training equipment is arranged by the training company.
- **External networking** – there are participants from different companies and it gives the opportunity to make new professional contacts, share the experiences, best practices and provide alternative approaches to participants own views. It gives an extra value for the learner apart from the knowledge gained directly from the trainer.
- **Lack of distraction** – pulling people out from their regular work location gives them a fresh perspective and remote angle to evaluate their everyday work processes. What happens physically at workplace cannot affect nor disturb them, which would not be the case otherwise.

(Optimus learning 2013.)

Clews adds one more beneficial aspect that is cost-efficiency. Public training may often focus on very specific knowledge, which does not require the whole team to participate. Sending just one person to the training makes sure that new information is engaged to the team through the one who participated in the training (Clews 2015).

As every solution has advantages public training format also includes disadvantages and following I bring out the most important of them:

- **Risk of cancellation** – public courses involve always the risk that if the critical number of participants is not reached, then training must be cancelled. Laying all the bet to that one training may eliminate the chance to gain the knowledge after all.
- **Generalized approach** – in public training participants are coming from different fields or at least from different companies. Their background knowledge and experiences may vary significantly and so does the starting point of learning. It challenges the trainer to teach the content in a style that would please all the participants. For some people, it's too easy and for some too complicated. (Optimus learning 2013.)

Clews adds one more challenging aspect related to the public training format which is high cost and lack of confidentiality. Due to the public nature of the training, participants find it difficult to share their company's very specific information and challenges. This way trainer cannot focus fully on solutions that participants came to obtain to the course. Secondly, if the whole team needs the training, then public training may turn out to be much more expensive than having internally tailor-made in-house training. (Clews 2015.)

To summarize the paragraph of advantages and disadvantages of public trainings then from the company's perspective it's worth to consider sending employees to the public training when:

- One or few people need to upgrade their knowledge in some specific areas.
- Team is small and bringing the trainer to in-house cost more than sending the whole team outside to participate in public training.
- Not the whole team can be in the classroom at the same time and its more cost-effective to train the partial team using different public trainings available.
- Company would like to benchmark or share the best practices of the other similar and competitive enterprises in the field.

### **2.3 Designing the training for an adult**

As the goal of the thesis is to develop a new public business training format, I need the theory to build the framework for the research. It should support me later in developing the final training concept model.

Ralf St Clair in his book “Creating Courses for Adults. Design for Learning“ presents the framework that supports the educator in designing any course no matter the subject. As he claims it’s the guideline to help trainers in the preparations to build up the training concept that meets eventually the need of a customer (Clair 2015, 188).

When talking about training design Clair makes the comparison with product design dynamics. Clair refers to Dieter Rams 10 product design concept, which he modifies to make it more suitable for educational needs (Clair 2015, 16). Clair summarizes that good design of an educational product must be: innovative; useful by having practical value; aesthetic; understandable; unobtrusive being straight to the point; sincere and avoiding overpromising; long-lasting; thorough down to the last detail; environmentally friendly; and finally having as little design as possible (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2011. In Clair 2015, 15-17).

Next, Clair presents the instrument that would support the process of reaching the above-mentioned characteristics of a good educational product. In the centre of his theory lays the framework that pictures the most important aspects of any sort of teaching design. It consists of 9 elements that form the backbone of the frame. The level of professionalism each element is handled by the educator also determines the success of the whole design object, which in this case is any sort of educative training or course. The borders of the elements are vague and as much as they are described separately, they also have strong links between each other. Only combining the elements in appropriate balance provides a successful result (Clair 2015, 184). Figure 1 pictures the framework of the 9 course design elements that Clair himself calls “Book in the box”.

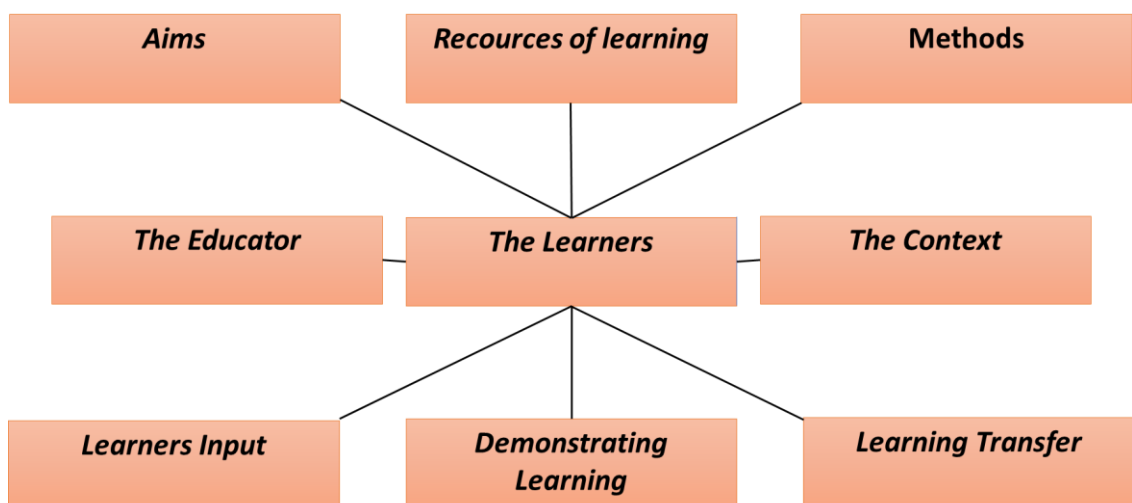


Figure 1. Clair’s 9 course design elements, modification of the original figure (Clair 2015, 13.)

Under each design element can be seen certain aspect that must be considered when starting to build a new course. Clair claims that the framework is applicable no matter if the educator is planning micro training, one-day training or many month-lasting course. These elements are relevant to any sort of learning.

Following the summarized introduction of each design element together with the descriptions of the characteristics they embed:

- **Educator** is focusing on the person facilitating the training considering the skills, attitude and expertise that is needed for implementing the course.
- **Learners** is focusing on the feelings and emotions that the participant experiences during the course including a feeling of being engaged in the learning process.
- **Context** focuses on the settings the training takes place including co-participants, quality of the training facility and overall features of the course environment.
- **Aims** is focusing on training topic related aspects to make sure that the course is providing the knowledge on subjects that the participants had expected when reading the training description before deciding to join.
- **Resources of Learning** concentrates on tangible and intangible means that are available to support the learning process of the training and that can be maintained within the preparations. In most cases, it's related to time and materials available to carry the course.
- **Methods** is focusing on means and technics which could be applied within the training process and that would support the overall learning experience.
- **Learners Input** concentrates on the learner's contribution to the process of course. Mostly connected to the evaluation process where learners can influence the advancement of the course.
- **Demonstrating Learning** is focusing on the aspects related to the assessment of participant's performance.
- **Learning Transfer** concentrates on improving the level of practicality and feasibility of the knowledge the participant gains during the course.

(Clair 2015, 184.)

All these design elements described above form the theoretical framework for my further research. The research process and results will be presented later in chapter 4 and 5.

### 3 Training hospitality sector in Estonia

The situation in hospitality 2019 and the beginning of 2021 is very different. It's the timeframe the study covers. Therefore, it is reasonable to give an overview on what has occurred in hospitality sector during this period.

Tourism played an important role in Estonia's overall economic development, as the tourism market is closely linked to other sectors of the economy. Together with indirect impact, the share of tourism in Estonia's GDP and employment was in 2018 about 8 per cent and tourism made a significant contribution to export earnings. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication 2019.)

2019 was a successful year for the tourism industry in Estonia. Overnights by foreign tourists reached a new record for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year with 4.38 million and overnights by domestic tourists for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year with 2,59 million. The overall growth was +5,1%. Of the foreign markets, the biggest increase was from Latvia, Ukraine, Germany, Lithuania and Russia. The biggest drop was related to Finnish tourism -1,8%. Decrease of Finnish tourists was the biggest risk that local tourism authorities saw but as the gap was replaced by tourist from other markets like Latvia and Germany there was not a big concern yet. (Visit Estonia 2020.)

2020 was a totally different year and is written to history as the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The year started according to the expectations. First 2 months of 2020, foreign overnights in Estonia reached a new record and the main markets Finland and Russia were showing new peaks. However, according to Visit Estonia, the drop in overnights stays in Estonia was 47% compared to the year 2019. The number of overnights of foreign tourists in Estonia was 1,4 million which was 68% down compared to the year 2019. The amount of overnights had been so low last time 1999 when there were 1,3 million overnights. In mid-March to mid-May there was almost total shutdown in international tourism and the only tourists at that time came from neighbouring countries Latvia, Lithuania and Finland but the amount of tourists was very small. In May and in June the recovery was very slow, demand picked up in July and August. But September 2020 due to the increased COVID-19 cases travel restrictions were gradually restored again, leading to the catastrophic numbers mentioned before (Visit Estonia 2020).

In March 2021, 81% of foreign tourists and 66% of their overnight stays were less than in March of the previous year. 93% fewer visitors came to Estonia from Russia, 92% from Finland and 71% from Latvia (Statistikaamet 2021).

### 3.1 Estonian hospitality sector from employability and training perspective

In the following chapter, I will discuss the hospitality sector from a training perspective based on the future workforce and skills forecasting programme named OSKA carried out by the Estonian Qualifications Authority that aims to better link learning to the needs of the labour market. The results of the analysis and forecasting of labour market needs will provide input to the qualification and career counselling system, curriculum development of educational institutions and various agencies that finance study activities. (OSKA 2018.)

In 2018 i.e. pre COVID period the OSKA forecast indicated that the sector's labour needs are strongly influenced by seasonality and regional differences. While the incomes increased, the demand for both domestic and foreign tourism in Estonia was increasing, and due to the increase in the number of overnight foreign tourists, there was an increase in export revenues. The tourism and tax policy that had a positive impact on the development of the sector, enabled to develop transport connections that increased the number of tourists, reduce seasonality and regional disparities. The high labour turnover in the sector was explained with the specifics of the sector, such as irregular working hours, more frequent short-term contracts (incl. job offers) and part-time work, seasonality of work, low wages, the high proportion of young people in employment. (Ibid)

Although Estonia is one of the top countries in Europe in terms of the level of education of the population, and the share of adults (25–64 years old) without special and vocational education has gradually decreased year by year, the number of people without professional education is still high. (Savisto 2020, 6.)

In many core professions of the tourism and hospitality sector, it is possible to work without any professional education, by just having appropriate attitudes, general skills and on top of that a willingness to serve and learn. Therefore, the field of hospitality is suitable for young people to enter the labour market, for the elderly, and some of the main occupations in the sub-sector of accommodation and catering are also suitable for people with special needs. For the employers, finding employees was the biggest problem in the pre-Covid period. The number of training offers exceeded the need for new labour, but employers still felt a great shortage of labour. Acute labour shortage was felt among the service workers, especially chefs, waiters and administrators and finding only unskilled workers especially e.g. catering workers. (OSKA 2018.)

The gap between the perceived labour shortage of employers and the numerical comparison of labour demand and training supply indicates a market failure i.e. a situation where

the recruitment difficulties of companies are not due to insufficient training provision but to the combined effect of the specifics of the field and the economic cycle. Due to this, graduates do not enter a professional job or stay there for a short time. As it was difficult to find workers for low-paid jobs within a context of low unemployment rates, the employers had to value, motivate and retain workers by providing them with suitable working conditions, training and career opportunities and other added value, and by recognizing skilled workers. (Ibid)

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked huge damage on the hospitality industry over the past year, with new strains of the virus creating additional threats at the turn of the decade. Where hotels have been able to stay open, they have had to adapt quickly to new regulations, redesigning spaces and enhancing cleaning to keep guests and staff safe, all the while trying to keep a revenue stream through different initiatives. (Brandler 2021, 40.)

The dramatic change situation in the Estonian hospitality sector will be discussed based on the OSKA 2020 workforce and skills report. Due to the virus wave and restrictions arising from lockdown, the turnover of companies decreased by 18% year-on-year in the second quarter and by 10% in the third quarter. (Rosenblad & al. 2020.)

Employment fell sharply in the second quarter of 2020 during the state of lockdown period, but compared to the decline in sales revenue, the decline remained more modest due to State support measures. In the second and third quarters, the annual comparison was 4%, i.e. 25,000 fewer people employed. Employment also decreased in winter. In comparison with the European Union, the Estonian labour market's response to the crisis in 2020 was one of the strongest. At the end of November 2020, the Unemployment Insurance Fund registered more than 50,000 unemployed.

The employment of young people suffered the most. As the activities in which young people are employed are also under the longer-term impact of the viral crisis, this may leave a mark on the beginning of the working life of the younger generation. (Ibid)

From the perspective of economic recovery and long-term development (up to 10 years), digital skills and automation (including machine learning and artificial intelligence), the green revolution, the growing share of teleworking, changing global supply chains and the importance of protecting workers' physical and mental health are most important. The viral crisis strongly accelerated these developments. Employment in various activities is also affected by restrictions on movement due to the viral crisis (which have a negative impact



on exports and the free movement of workers), distance requirements and growing wealth inequalities. (Rosenblad & al. 2020)

Adult retraining provides an opportunity to support digitization both at the sectoral and individual level. The COVID-19 crisis has led to an explosive increase in the training needs of employees. There was an increasing need for in-house training and on-the-job training. Participation in e-trainings and virtual seminars increased. There was no public trainings organized at that period of time.

From March till May 2020 the business training providers turnover decreased by about 70%. Contact learning was replaced by virtual learning, but it was not possible to implement e-learning on all topics, such as teamwork and management training. Currently, learning takes place in both contact and online learning, with hybrid training as a growing trend. The organization of hybrid training requires special technical preparation and an elaborated methodological approach. (Kaelep, Krunsell, Viia & Leoma 2020.)

### **3.2 Training options available for the hospitality sector in Estonia**

In this chapter, I will focus on accommodation, catering and tourism developments during the aforementioned period.

In 2018 the OSKA's survey (OSKA 2018) predicted that the number of employed in the main occupations of the hospitality field as a whole would not change significantly, modest growth was forecasted for service employees. At the end of 2020, the situation has changed (Rosenblad & al. 2020). It is difficult to predict what changes will take place in the field. The tourism sector is likely to recover more slowly from the crisis than other sectors. There will certainly be less travel in the coming years. Also, the target groups and customer expectations will change. For at least some time, the number of employees in the field is much smaller than before. More permanent changes can also be expected. Direct contact with service providers is likely to decrease and more technological solutions will be introduced, including self-service e.g. the need for administrators may decrease and the classic reception service will remain in large and high-quality accommodation establishments. The share of table service in catering may decrease as well. The risk area for the development of the sector is if, at the end of the crisis, it has not been possible to maintain competence in the field, which may lead to a situation where it is not possible to recover quickly enough to compete with other countries. This leads to a smaller number of employees in the long run. On the other hand, learning from the crisis and rapid adapta-

tion can be an opportunity for development in the field, supporting, for example, digitalisation, the green revolution and Estonia's image of a safe and clean e-state. (Rosenblad & al. 2020.)

Estonia's Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 already emphasized the need for more efficient and effective application of modern digital technologies in learning and teaching, to improve the digital skills of the entire population and ensure access to the new generation of digital infrastructure (Eesti elukestva õppe strateegia 2020, 5). Education strategy for the period 2021 - 2035 emphasizes the importance of smart teaching materials and methodologies to help to learn and teach in an engaging and effective way, and to give and receive immediate substantive feedback. (Haridusvaldkonna arengukava 2021- 2035 2020, 16.)

The remaining employees in the hospitality sector often perform various tasks, which requires the employee to be multifunctional and have a wide range of knowledge and skills. Hygiene is a very important and natural part of the service which must be further and clearly communicated to the customer. Awareness of the expectations of different target groups, the ability to develop a customer-centric service and to develop and offer digital solutions and products are becoming increasingly important. Short-term restrictions currently have a direct impact on the development of the sector and are therefore at the forefront (Rosenblad & al. 2020). Looking at the total number of institutions (here the term institution is the general sense and includes a variety of forms of enterprise, company and employer) in Estonia, the highest remuneration was received for accommodation and in the catering sector, where almost half of the institutions received compensation (Eesti Töötukassa 2021, 4.). Summing up, due to that, the sector is waiting for the opening of borders, the resumption of international travel and the end of restrictions in the first place (Rosenblad & al. 2020).

In the long run, the development of the field needs to support digital development and the green revolution. In the hospitality sector, much attention has always been paid to health and hygiene in the field. Consumer expectations are closely linked to green and health issues. (Rosenblad & al. 2020.)

International travel, which has been essentially absent in the meantime, is likely to recover, but there may have been changes in attitudes, such as the strong replacement of business travel and conference tourism with web meetings, on top of that a decline in mass tourism (Rosenblad & al. 2020). The tourism sector needs to retain its know-how and a critical mass of skilled workers to recover from the crisis and to return to interna-

tional competition as soon as possible after the crisis (Rosenblad & al. 2020). Disregarding the development of technologies and innovations, customer-driven and service-oriented employees are required for high-quality service experiences (Grönroos 2016, 406.).

Concerning the training sector, the provision of services that meet new needs, including helping companies to make a wider and more systematic transition to digital services, plays an important role in the sector's recovery. Making digital learning commonplace, expands the market and export opportunities but increases inequalities. With the Green Turn, the need for engineering consultation is growing. (Arenguseire Keskus 2020, 28.)

Design thinking and service design have become important from both a customer and company-centric perspective, containing information on hygiene restrictions as a natural part of the service to the consumer and also to workers. There is no doubt that better knowledge and skills are needed for the substantive and technical organization of virtual events. Employers have pointed out that labour law needs to be modernized and given more flexibility to adapt to changing forms of work (Rosenblad & al. 2020). As an example of good practice, the Ministry of Social Affairs signed a goodwill agreement with the social partners to pilot the use of variable hour contracts in the retail sector on 7 April 2021. The variable-hour contracts should lead to a reduction in the conclusion of debt agreements in a sector that has so far been used to increase workers' working time flexibility (Ministry of Social Affairs 2021). The goodwill agreement is a pilot project to test the performance for using it also in other sectors.

Quick adaption for a change highlights the need for extra learning opportunities. In difficult conditions, it is very important to keep the motivation of the remaining employees. Management competencies and risk management, teamwork and cooperation are important. Trust and working towards a common goal are important. Adaption could be supported with short "study bites" type of learning opportunities (Rosenblad & al. 2020). The trainer's professional qualifications, practical experience as well as the awareness of how learning takes place, and the ability to support learning, play a key role in good training (Kumpas-Lenk & al 2020, 7).

## **4 Execution of the research**

In this chapter I describe the methodology and research process of the study. I first explain the process of choosing the methodology and then specify the actual research process. I will then discuss the data analysis, transparency, validity and reliability, and eventually the limitations of the study. The last part is dedicated to ethical discussions of the study.

The final goal of the study is to develop a new public business training concept, which creates value for the customer. A sustainably growing organization is characterized by competent and motivated employees combined with the environment providing opportunities for self-development (Joutsenkunnas & Heikurainen 1996, 81). As previously mentioned, the hospitality sector staff turnover in 2019 is very high and by providing continuous self-development opportunities to the employee would increase their willingness to stay in the company. The value of human capital in the organization grows. The amount may differ, but every budget includes the line dedicated to training the employees. Hospitality leaders are aware of the extreme need for good training and would be ready to invest the resources if they see practical benefit coming out of it.

There are three primary research questions in this study. First, I want to know what do the Estonian hospitality companies value in public training. Secondly, what do the participants value in public training? Third, what would be the best public training format to meet the needs of today's Estonian hospitality sector?

When I was planning the study I had Haaga-Helia in a commissioner role but as Haaga-Helia left the Estonian market in the end of 2019 and my contract with Haaga-Helia ended as well, then I decided not to have a direct commissioner in the project anymore. Instead, I have been involving the Estonian hospitality network led by Estonian Hotels and Restaurants Association (EHRA) authorities and members supporting the project implementation with their informational input. They have shown the interest in the outcome of the project hoping to use it in the future in their planning process.

### **4.1 Constructive research**

All studies can be divided into qualitative and quantitative ones. When quantitative researches includes the collection and analysis of numerical data then qualitative researches are more about information in forms of words, images and sounds (Veal 2011, 34). Studies can be also divided between scientific research and social science research.

Social science research differs from the physical or natural science in that it studies people and their social behaviour, and human beings are always less predictable than non-human phenomena (Veal 2011, 5). Thus, the study can be defined as a qualitative social science research.

As the research is often connected to development and research with a practical outcome is called development work, I consider the study as a form of research-based development work (RDW). It differs somewhat from the traditional scientific research model. RDW is mostly used for development works in organizations and is more directed to solve specific problems companies come across in their operation (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 17). This study is not linked firmly with one company, however the fundamental empirical data used for the development work is sourced from one company – Haaga-Helia Balti OÜ.

Any research-based development work (no matter the approach) is either problem-based or renewal-based (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 65.) The research-based development work includes solving problems, generating and carrying out new ideas, but also producing new practices or products (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 19). I classify my study as a renewal-based development work since the aim is related to search something new. However, in a way my study can be seen also from the problem-based perspective as the renewal initiative is driven by the occurring problem with high labour turnover and declining participation numbers of the trainings provided by Haaga-Helia at the time.

My ultimate development task is to create new public business training concept. After several discussions with my thesis supervisor I decided to use the *constructive research* as an approach for the thesis. Constructive research approach is used when the goal is to solve certain problem by creating a new practical construction, whether it's a product, a handbook, a model, a method, or a plan (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 66.).

Constructive research traditional process is described in detail in the book "Kehittämistyön menetelmat" and illustrated in the Figure 2 below.

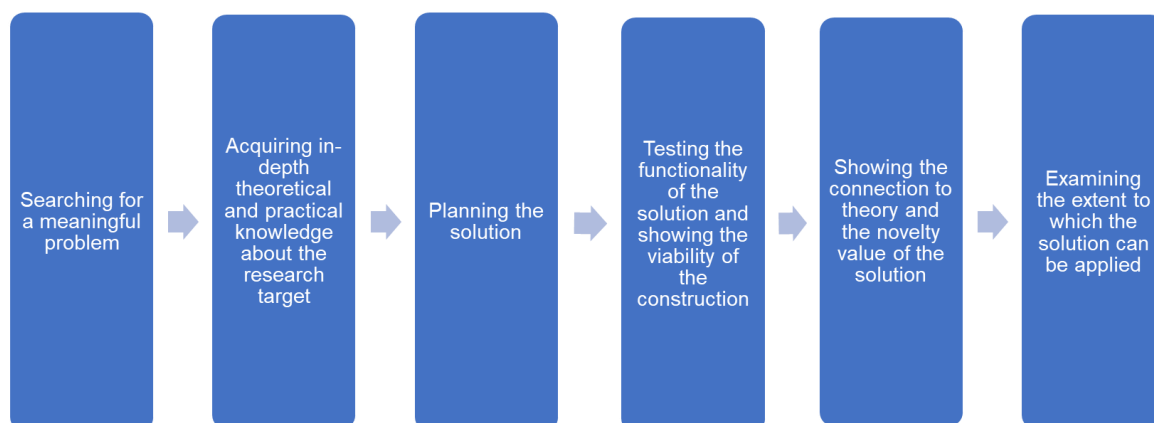


Figure 2. Constructive research process (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 67)

Three important aspects that the constructive research approach includes are:

- Direct linkage between the practical problem and its solution to theoretical knowledge.
- The solution proves functioning at its best also elsewhere than only in the target organization.
- Interaction and communication between those who benefit and those who conduct the research.

(Ojasalo & al. 2015, 67- 68.)

Additionally, should be emphasized the inclusion of a collaboration aspect in any constructive research projects (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 68.). The latter aspect is considered in my study by involving a professional trainer to the creation and implementation process of the new training format. I also made cooperation with representatives of the human resource experts and other hospitality industry leaders in Estonia.

One of the important aspect related to constructive research is the functionality of the developed solution. As Lukka states in his work that constructive research approach adds the notion of truth advocated by pragmatism fundamentally arguing “what works is true” (Lukka 2003, 92). There are three different level market tests that the developed model should pass in order to approve it’s functionality. The weakest market test is passed when the solution functions in the target organization. The medium level market test demands that several organizations find this solution feasible. Finally, the strong test demands already success comparison between the company who used the solution and corresponding company that have not implemented this solution. In practice the functionality of the solution can sometimes be evaluated later and is not included to the reports of the constructive research (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 68.).

From the methodological perspective there are 3 stages in the study:

- Feedback of the participants of Haaga-Helia short courses in year 2015 -2019 are analysed by using document analysis method.
- Group discussion with hospitality company HR leaders is conducted using focus group interview method.
- Survey conducted among the participants one day after the test training using the survey method.

Following I introduce the methods used. The methods used in qualitative research for collecting empirical data are observation, informal and semi-structured interviewing and text analysis (Veal 2011, 35). Toumi & Sarajärvi (2013, 71) add that these methods can be used alternatively, applying only some or all of these methods.

Constructive research approach does not restrict any methods. Contrary, it encourages to use multiple methods to enrich the final result of the study. The typical methods used in constructive research are observation, group discussions, interviews and surveys.

(Ojasalo & al. 2015, 68.) For this reason, I decided to include these methods for the research process. In my study I use document analysis, focus group interview and survey.

Document analysis method is used in the first methodological stage. Document analysis method is used when the goal is to draw conclusions in written formation from verbal, symbolic or communicative data: transcribed interviews, web pages, articles, annual reports, feedback forms, diaries, photographs, drawings, speeches, discussions, reports or any other written data. There are three stages in document analysis process: data collection and preparation; data analysing and reducing; data interpretation. (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 137.)

Data preparation process ensures that the data needed is concise and it's content is ready for the analysis (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 138.).

Data is analysed by using content analysis method. In qualitative research content analysis is used. The aim is to understand participants' categories and to see how these are used in specific communicative activities like telling stories, assembling files or describing some life situations, the idea is to look for the meanings people give to items and situations (Silverman 2004, 128). Content analysis can be either data-oriented or theory-oriented (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 139 -140). I decided to use theory-oriented content analysis which means that the previous fame work is set and classification of the analysis is based on already existing theory.

MS Excel is primarily used as a tool for the data preparation and analysis process. Additionally, I use a program called Voyant Tools. It's a free web-paged reading and analysis environment for digital text (Voyant Tool 2021).

In the second methodological stage interview is used. Interviews are known as one of the most frequently used data acquisition methods in research and development works. Interview is a good data acquisition method when the goal is to focus on the individual or group as the subject of the research. Interviews can be suitable methods also when the purpose is to clarify matters or gain deeper understanding about a phenomenon (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 107). Veal (2011, 240) claims that interviews tend to be used when the subjects of the research are relatively few in numbers, the information obtained is likely to vary or the topic explored is part of planning a larger study. Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2013, 74) write that interviews enable to research different sorts of phenomena. I used semi-structured type of interview, which means that the questions are formulated beforehand, but the planned order can be changed by the facilitator depending on the context and flow of the discussion. According to Veal (2011, 239 – 240) the nature of semi-structured interview is characterised by its length, depth and structure. I use focus group as a research method, which is seen as one sub-type of interview (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 111 - 113).

The third methodological stage was performed by using survey. Surveys are one of the most used data collection methods as it enables the researcher to ask a large number of people, noteworthy amount of questions with a small time expenditure, and yet collecting extensive amount of research data (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 114.) Data collected is usually in figures which allows them to proceed statistically. There is possibility to produce both quantitative and qualitative data by using surveys. However, as the strength of the survey is to cover large amount of targeted observation units it is mostly used for producing quantitative data. One characteristic the quantitative research relates to is sampling, which is prepared if the whole population cannot be reached, which is the case in most of the time when doing the quantitative research (Yin 2011, 88; Veal 2011, 356). There are many online survey tools available nowadays. Depending on the scale of the research, amount and sensitivity of collected data different tools are available in Internet (Techradar.pro 2021). I was using the free online survey tool Google Forms to collect data from the respondents. Data collected with the survey was analysed statistically using Google Forms own built-in application and extension to Google Sheets that is compatible with MS Excel application. According to Michael Graw (Techradar.pro 2020) Google Forms is the most suitable free online platform in the market for analysing the data as there is a direct linkage to Google Sheets where data analysis is supported with large variety of functional tools.



Now when the methods used for the study have been presented the process of the research will be introduced in the next sub-chapter.

## **4.2 Research process**

I classify this study a research-based development project. From this perspective I divide the project into 7 different stages, which all need to be completed in order reach the final goal. Project starts with literature review on adult learning theories and hospitality training scenery in Estonia. Study project ends with writing the study report (the thesis) and sharing it with the public. In appendix 3 I describe in detail all the stages including the goals related to each one of them and methods how the results were achieved:

Methodologically the study is divided to three stages. In the first methodological stage I analyse the feedback forms collected during the short courses carried out by Haaga-Helia Balti between 2015 and 2019. The goal is to find out what training elements participants of the short courses evaluated, commenting the characteristics ether positive or negative way. Document analysis is the most appropriate method for doing this.

There were in total 345 feedback forms filled with years 2015-2019 which covers 20 open public short courses. Feedback forms were presented to the participants in paper format in the ending part of each short course day. As majority of the short courses were lasting two days then feedback forms were filled in after both course days. Short course organizer digitalized and analysed the feedback forms after each course day. After inserting the answers to MS Excel, the summary of the results were shared with the trainer, to plan the improvements in future. Data had been stored in this way which also made the analysing process for the study easier for me. The layout of the feedback form was always same no matter the short course. The example of the feedback form can be seen in appendix 2.

There were 8 questions asked out of which 5 were rating scale (1-5) and 3 open questions. For the study I included only three open questions because first 5 rating scale questions are not holding value from the study perspective. Three open questions included to the research are:

- What was positive for you today?
- What parts of today's training did not meet your expectations/ what would you improve?
- Open comments and suggestions for the organizers.

Theory for the framework is taken from the book "Creating Courses for Adults. Design for Learning" written by Ralf St. Clair in 2015. Clair identifies 9 design elements that every educator should consider while designing the course or business training for adults. The theory of 9 design elements was introduced in more detail in chapter 2.3 (see p. 8-10).

First step is to prepare the data for the analysis. In my case it means the data in the feedback forms must be turned digital. This was done already prior to the study because as was mentioned before the filled feedback forms were reviewed and digitalized to Excel after each training day by the organizer. In order to make the analysing part easier I collected all the digitalized feedback forms located in different files and created one master file. This provides flexibility to process the data when doing analysis.

Second step is data analysing. It means that the answers of the open questions are reviewed and all the comments that can be considered as an evaluation and provide feedback on any aspects of the course are identified. I title these comments as entities. Sometimes positive feedback was provided in the question nr 2 where improvement ideas were asked. In turn, occasionally negative feedback was provided answering to the question nr 1 where positive indications were asked. Answers to the question nr 3 were including both positive and negative evaluations since the question has no positive/negative indication specified. All the comments were listed and presented as separate entities. Some answers included feedback for several different course elements and therefore produced more than one entity per answer. Altogether 586 feedback entities (comments) were identified during the analysis. Each of them is evaluating one design element of the course.

After identifying the feedback entities all these 586 entities were distributed between 9 course design element categories based on the theoretical framework. Next the entities were also arranged by considering their undertone, either positive or negative. From the categorization perspective it was not relevant at this point. Important was the design element itself the comment was referring to. But it was done assuming it would become relevant in the data interpretation stage of the analysis. Results of the document analysis will be presented later in chapter 5.

The second methodological stage includes the interview with the hospitality sector decision makers representing the management in one hand and the human relation expertise on the other hand. The interview has two goals. First to verify the results received from the document analysis. Secondly to learn more about the current training needs in the hospitality sector that would help me to develop and prepare the training concept to be tested.

The focus group interview takes place in the morning of February 4<sup>th</sup> 2021. It's important to consider the overall context in Estonia at this particular time regarding the COVID pandemic circumstances and challenges that it caused for the hospitality sector. Pandemic conditions had slightly worsen since the beginning of the November 2020 but the numbers of infected people had been stable for some weeks in the day the interview took place. Positive signals were connected with the vaccination process that had just started giving hope that the tourism season this year could start more or less the same time as usually. The hope remained that the borders will be open for the spring and tourist can return to Estonia. For that reason the ambience among the interviewees was rather positive and promising. The day of the interview nobody knew that two weeks after the healthcare situation would get worse and among other tourism related activities spas all over Estonia were going to close for unspecified time – until the situation gets better (Delfi 2021). Due to the already described context focus group interview was held remotely using Google Meet as the communication platform. It's a simply maintained tool that suits well for such conversations in a small group with no extra facilitation requirements. The meeting was recorded with the mobile device after asking the permission from the participants. 5 participants were selected based on their expertise in training and HR related topic. I see them as decision makers in the training purchase process for their employees in their companies. All the companies they are representing had been previously clients of Haaga-Helia Balti by sending their employees to the short courses or other educationally oriented events. They all have good reputation as experts in Estonian hospitality community. The companies they represent are among the leaders in their market segment. Figure 3 presents the title of the person and the company one is representing.

Nr	Name of the company	Position
1	Tallink Hotels	Training Manager
2	Hektor Container Hotel	General Manager
3	Hotel Palace	General Manager
4	RadissonBlu Hotel Olümpia	HR Manager
5	KalevSpa Hotel & Waterpark	HR Manager

Figure 3. Participants of the focus group interview on 4 February 2021

My interview lasts for 1 hour and 46 minutes. The initial plan was to fit the interview into 1,5 hour session. However, all the participants of the interview accepted my proposal to

expand the initial time frame for completing the interview. Focus group interview questions were planned beforehand and power point presentation was involved to support the communication process. At first, I introduced the goal and the process of the study project I am working on. I introduced them theoretical framework used for the analysis. The results of the feedback form analysis were presented to participants. After the presentation participants were asked to comment the outcome by either approving or disapproving the results. Additionally, participants were asked to comment and add aspects describing an outstanding training, which in their opinion were not mentioned in the feedback forms. Finally, participants were asked to give suggestion on the topic and logistical aspect needed for planning and implementing the test training.

Exact interview questions to the participants are presented in Figure 4:

Nr	Question
1	How do you comment the results of the analysis on feedback forms?
2	What are in your opinion the most important design elements of the training?
3	How would the public training look like in the future for the hospitality sector and what topics will be relevant?

Figure 4. Questions to the focus group interview participants on 4 February 2021

Interview was analysed by first listening the recording couple of times and writing down all the statements<sup>1</sup> of the interviewees. As I was interested only in the matters that were discussed I did not use the exact wording but instead wrote down the notes in literary language. Technical quality of the recording was good in most part. Only certain times some words got lost but it did not prevent understanding the whole meaning of the sentence.

After that written notes were analysed from the perspective of the interview questions. Regarding the first interview question, statements and comments were placed to the context of the theoretical framework that was used already in the first methodological stage when performing document analysis. Based on my observation and considering the personalities of the interview participants' I don't see any reason to doubt their sincerity and honesty in answers. The ambience in the interview was positive and all the participants were actively participating. Majority of the participants know each other already for years but due to the challenging circumstances they had not met for a long time. Active approach may have been caused also by the fact that topics under discussion are relevant from their work perspective. The focus group interview results will be presented in chapter 5.

The third methodological stage includes the survey conducted among the participants one day after the sample training test using the survey method. The goal in general is to find out what value the participants accredit to the sample training and how satisfied they are with implementation.

The survey starts with planning the questionnaire. Questions asked are driven by the goal of the survey. As my goal was to learn about the participants opinion on the different course design elements implemented to the training, the questions had to be formulized accordingly. As with many conducted surveys in nowadays (especially online) there is a threat that if the questionnaire is too long then respondents lose the interest at certain point and don't pay attention to their answers anymore or in worse case withdraws the responding. On the other hand, by having too small number of questions, the collected data remains deficient. My questionnaire has 27 questions in total asking to rate the compliance with the statement in a scale from 1 to 10. Each question had additionally field for an open comment. Based on the Ralf St. Clair's 9 course design element theory the questionnaire was divided into 9 different question groups. Theory was introduced in chapter 2.3. Each question group had between 1 to 5 statements each of them reflecting one characteristic of the 9 design elements. Please see the questionnaire form in appendix 3. All the 12 participants of the sample training filled in the survey. The result will be presented in chapter 5.

As the population of the target was small, 12 observation units, which is also forming the whole population of the survey I was not challenged by the weaknesses that the quantitative data collection method usually involves. One of aspect could be that the responding rate in surveys may be low as the researcher has a small control over the respondent's action. Second weakness is the possible superficiality related to the respondent's dedication filling the survey and understanding level that again the researcher has not much control over. (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 114.)

I tackled both of these challenges by trying to build the confidence with the participants and their agents (managers who encouraged them to participate) during the whole study project and especially during the training implementation period. Confidence is mainly built with the sincere, clear and repeated communication style towards the customers within the whole sample training implementation process.

Data collected with the survey was analysed statistically using Google Format's own built-in application. It summarizes the results of each question by showing anonymously how

respondents answered indicating which value and how many times (also percentage wise) it was given. On the other hand, analysing statistically the survey with only 12 respondent questions the validity when drawing conclusion. However, the fact it is not a sample but the whole population of the survey target mitigates the risk of being unjust while interpreting the results statistically. Results of the survey will be presented in the chapter 5.

### **4.3 Trustworthiness of the report**

This paragraph describes the transparency issues of the research. Also, validity and reliability will be elaborated. Finally, limitations and ethical considerations of the research are elaborated.

Transparency is one of the most important ways to gain credibility and trustworthiness of the research (Yin 2011, 19). It means that procedures used for the study should be transparent. In more detail, other readers must be able to inspect the work itself, evidences and data which are used to support the findings and conclusions (Yin 2011, 19). All the data for this study is saved and is available for the inspection if needed. Focus group interview and sample training held in Zoom are recorded and available for the review by the Haaga-Helia thesis assessment commission. In case other researches would like to have an access to this recorded material the permission must be asked from the other participants. I have done my best in the process of gathering data, presenting the findings and conclusions, to keep in mind the principles of transparency.

There are two different dimensions that must be recognized in the context of quality and credibility of the research: reliability and validity. Reliability of the research which assesses if the results are repeatable and not arbitrary ones. Results of the reliable research would be the same if somebody would repeat the research in the same way later with the different samples of the subjects (Veal 2011, 46). Yet, Veal admits that in social sciences any research findings are related only to subject included at the time and place the research was done (Veal 2011, 46-47). However, the reliability has been met, if the results from other researches builds significant consensus around the findings. Validity of the research evaluates the extent to which the information disclosed in the study reflects the phenomena that the researcher claims it reflects (Veal 2011, 46.). For example, during the interview if it seems that interviewee understood the question differently than the interviewer had meant the results could not be claimed being valid (Hirsijärvi & al. 2010, 231 – 232). Despite the fact that the reliability and reliability are primarily bonded to quantitative research it should be applied somehow also in qualitative researches (Hirsijärvi & al. 2010, 232). In this study, the research methods and process have been disclosed as clearly as

possible in order to increase the reliability. However, as Veal (2011, 46) claimed the study objects are humans and their responses can vary a lot depending on the time and environment they are placed. Timeframe of the last methodological stages fell into very unstable period caused by the COVID-19 related restrictions. Every day brought the news about changes a head. It may be reflecting also the answers as couple of weeks earlier or later the results of the interview and survey could have been little bit different. From the perspective of validity I have done my best to assure that interviewees and survey respondents would understand the questions as clearly as possible (Hirsijärvi & al. 2010, 233.). In situations when I felt participants hesitating with the answering I checked if they understood the question. As Hirsijärvi & al. (2010, 206) highlights it is always possible the interviewee in group interview could answer differently in the other situation being worried about “social control and acceptance” by others. I think the risk was mitigated by the fact that most of the participant knew each other including the interviewer from earlier periods cooperating in different projects related to hospitality industry education.

There are some limitations concerning this study. As was referred earlier the collection of data in qualitative research is always depending on the time and subject of the research (Veal 2011, 46 -47; Hirsijärvi & al. 2010, 206). The study should not be generalized out of the Estonian hospitality industry context as the subjects of the study are closely limited to the types of business and region. Eventually the companies that were participating in the research project are representing different types of establishments in hospitality sector. There are bigger multifunctional properties and smaller basic accommodation service providers. Regionally differences were also in somewhat presented by having one property from Tartu. I admit the variety among the sample training process could have been larger but due to the COVID-19 caused unstable circumstances in the hospitality industry the selection process was rather challenging. I appreciate every single individual who was willing to contribute to the research project in this very alarming period of time.

Certain ethical consideration must be also discussed related to the study. This research has been conducted following the principles that has been described by Hirsijärvi & al. (2010, 24): research has to be conducted and presented in honest, careful and accurate way. Additionally, dignity of every human being must be respected, all the respondents have been involved in voluntary bases and no one has been physically nor mentally harmed (Hirsijärvi & al. 2010, 25). Veal (2011, 103) adds to the previously mentioned aspects that the research must bring value for the society and that the researcher must be suitably qualified or then appropriately supervised to conduct the research. I consider this study being unique in the Estonian hospitality sector as it describes the whole development process of a certain training concept model, following a specific methodological

structure, and eventually provides a practical framework for any institution or organizations willing to be involved with training the local hospitality sector. Master level education and the assistance of the thesis supervisor provides me the researcher with the sufficient qualification to complete the research. The fact that the research does not have a particular commissioner, mitigates the risk of bias. All the materials related to the study are treated with confidentiality and respecting the participants anonymity (Veal 2011, 104) as much as possible.



## 5 Results

In this chapter I unfold and describe the results of the study. Each methodological stage will be presented separately.

### 5.1 Participants' expectations from a training

Following I am presenting the results of the first methodological stage where I analysed the feedback forms collected during the short courses carried out by Haaga-Helia Balti between 2015 and 2019. The goal was to find out what training elements participants of the short courses evaluated, commenting it either positive or negative way. The task was completed using document analysis method. Table 1 displays the results of the analysis process showing how many comments, either negative or positive one, each training design element category received.

Table 1. Results of the comments (feedback unites) identified during the feedback form analysis process

Design element category	Comments total	Comments positive	Comments negative
Educator	67	58	9
Learners	33	30	3
Context	68	46	22
Aims	98	90	8
Resources for Learning	132	57	75
Methods	112	81	31
Learner Input	3	2	1
Demonstrating Learning	1	1	0
Learning Transfer	72	56	16
	586	421	165

Following is the explanation how the linkage between each comment (feedback entity) and design element category was found.

- **Educator** includes feedback entities that evaluate educator's skills, attitude and expertise in providing the course (Clair 2015, 188).
- **Learners** includes feedback entities that evaluate the feelings and emotions that the participant experienced during the course including feeling of being engaged (Clair 2015, 188).
- **Context** includes feedback entities that evaluate the co-participants, quality of the training facility and overall features of the course environment (Clair 2015, 189).
- **Aims** includes feedback entities that evaluate the compatibility between the objectives of the course content compared to the expectations of the course focus by the participants. (Clair 2015, 189).
- **Resources of Learning** – includes feedback entities that evaluate the opinions on tangible and intangible means supporting the process of learning and can be prepared in advance. In most cases related to time and materials planned to carry the course. (Clair 2015, 189).

- **Methods** includes feedback entities that evaluate the selection of methods applied during the training process supporting the learning experience (Clair 2015, 190).
- **Learners Input** includes feedback entities that evaluate the opinions on if and how the learner can contribute into the process of the course. Mostly related to the evaluation process performed by the participants and initiated by the educator. (Clair 2015, 190.)
- **Demonstrating Learning** – includes feedback entities that evaluate the assessment of participants’ performance (Clair 2015, 190).
- **Learning transfer** – includes feedback entities that evaluate the level of practicality and feasibility of the knowledge the participant gains during the course (Clair 2015, 190-200).

Result of the document analysis shows that the highest amount of feedback entities was provided about the *Resources of Learning* category - 132 times in total. *Methods* were evaluated 112 times and *Aims* of the course design 98 times. Little less but in a similar range of times were the comments related to *Learning Transfer, Educator* and *Context* categories. The *Learner* category received already less feedback. Finally, *Leaner Input* and *Demonstrating Learning* category were only few times commented. Following the results of each course design element category will be unfolded in more detail, describing distinguishing key characteristics

**Resources of learning** was the element category where the most feedback entities were provided – 132 in total. Distinguishing characteristics, no matter if commented positively or negatively are related to: timing, examples, structure of the training and finally materials/handouts provided within trainings. Importance of timing related characteristics are brought out in particularly through the negative comments:

- “Too much material for such a small timeframe”
- “Lack of time creates rushing”
- “No tornado sessions please”
- “Time not efficiently used”
- “Tempo too fast that makes difficult to follow”

Positive comment evaluating timing:

- “Pace was good, since there was no rushing”

Commenting examples, the evaluations are describing the level of practicality and real-life reflection the examples in a training were including. Referring the positive feedback:

- “Practical examples”
- “Examples from the real life”

From the negative feedback:

- “Examples are not relevant to the field and topic”
- “Not enough of examples”

Structure of the training was evaluated from the perspective whether the course is logically and systematically built up. Whether the training was easy to follow by building up

the needed knowledge from more general to more detailed information. Positive references were:

- "Well explained information"
- "Systematic approach"
- "Topic was explained in a simple way"
- "Step by step easy to follow structure"

Negative feedback examples:

- "More to explain the subject – not understanding enough"
- "It was difficult to follow the training"

Materials and handouts were described from the perspective of learner's comfortability and possibility to support the learning process. Referring positive evaluations:

- "Workbook involved to the training"
- "Compact presentation"

Negative comments dominated when the materials and handouts were commented. For example:

- "Language and terminology too complicated"
- "Slides are too small to read"
- "Materials were not printed out for handouts"
- "Slides are too overcrowded with messages"

**Methods** were the second most evaluated of the course design element category with 112 comments in total. Most dominant characteristics standing out from the evaluation were related to open discussion, experience sharing with other participants and group works. Additionally, was once mentioned the missing reflection of homework which is also related to the facilitated open discussion with the participants. Referring the positive comments:

- "Lots of interaction by the coach"
- "Good overall atmosphere through discussion"
- "Sharing experiences and practices with other participants"
- "Group works and discussions"

References from negative comments:

- "Not enough group work and discussion"
- "Examples were not discussed through"
- "No reflection discussion in the end"

**Aims** is the third most evaluated course design element category with 98 comments in total. Positive comments were dominating over the negative ones.

Distinguishing key characteristics are related to new information perceived during the training and rediscovering the forgotten knowledge. Many comments were related to the extent the trainings were meeting the expectations of the auditory.

New information obtained during the course or rediscovering the forgotten knowledge are the key characteristics standing out in the comments about aim.

Examples from the positive comments:

- "New perspective"
- "New approach"
- "New tips and knowledge"
- "New ideas"
- "Re-learning and refreshing the forgotten knowledge"
- "Re-confirmed what I know"

Mentioned characteristics are connected with other characteristics of aims - expectations, which was mentioned many times. Examples from the positive comments:

- "Training was meeting the expectations"
- "Training was exceeding my expectations"
- "Topic under discussion as promised"

Some examples of the negative comments related expectations:

- "Not all interesting subjects were covered in this topic"
- "Part of the information was not given"
- "Target of the training was wrongly selected"
- "More information about trends"

**Learning transfer** is the fourth most evaluated course design element with 72 comments in total. The key characteristics found from the answers is the practicality that shows the extent how much perceived knowledge could be applied to the participants work environment. Examples of the positive comments mirroring the learning transfer:

- "New practical ideas"
- "Practical tips and tools"
- "New ideas to share with my colleagues"
- "Learned that my role is important in the organization"
- "New practical knowledge to imply in my company"
- "Motivation to implement new knowledge at the company"
- "Applicable information"
- "Good tools for analysing my hotels vs others"

Also, some examples about negative references:

- "Too academical and not practical"
- "Not practical to start implementing"
- "Difficult to draw connection between example and my work"

**Context** is the fifth most evaluated course design element having 68 comments in total. Most dominant characteristics standing out from the evaluations are related to networking, socially open environment, food selection and features of facility.

Relevance of networking is mentioned especially in positive comments:

- "Meeting new people"
- "Interesting co-audience"
- "Share the information with industry professionals"
- "Socializing with participants"

- "Participants with different background"

Negative references:

- "Not enough networking options"

Relevance of open environment appears in the comments like:

- "Open environment"
- "Positive energy in the classroom"
- "Friendly ambience"
- "Ambience inspiring new ideas"

No negative references identified about this characteristic.

Food provided during the training is evaluated many times by the participants. Mostly negative comments are related to food selection:

- "Food selection not corresponding personal preferences"
- "Food was not good and must be more healthy and lighter".
- "Longer lunch needed"

The characteristics mentioned in the last example may be related to context element too since lunches are often seen as opportunities to socialize and network with other participants.

Facility features were evaluated in the comments several times and negative comments were dominating:

- "Facility has no air"
- "Room has not enough lights"
- "Room set-up was bad and did not see to the screen"
- "Training room could be more inspiring and not a traditional hotel room"

Additionally, couple of times were brought out the evaluation about the organizers work:

- "Good communication by the organizers"
- "Good and caring organizer"
- "Well organized training"

**Educator** was the sixth most evaluated course design element category having 67 feedback entities in total. Distinguishing key characteristics where comments, no matter if they are positive or negative, are related to the attitude, professionalism and engagement skill of the trainers.

Regarding the attitude the positive comments are following:

- "Positive attitude of the trainer"
- "Teacher's passion"
- "Good and positive mood of the trainer"
- "Interactive trainer"
- "Personality of the teacher"
- "Trainer was nice and interesting person"
- "Smiling and energetic trainer"
- "Open approach of the trainer"
- "Trainer is dedicated"

Examples of the negative comment is:

- “Trainer with the low energy”
- “Trainer was nervous because we were not improving fast enough”

Concerning the professionalism following evaluations stand out from positive comments:

- “Coach was easy and interesting to be followed”
- “Expert trainer”
- “Self-expression of the trainer”
- “Language skill of the trainer”
- “Good and logical explanation by the trainer”
- “Trainer is a professional in her field”
- “Trainer is an expert in subject matter”

Comments on professionalism from the negative perspective are:

- “Trainer was stuck in the topic and had no relevant examples”
- “Trainer did not lead the topic further, we lost valuable time”
- “More personal experience from the trainer”
- “Trainer talks too fast”

Regarding the engagement skill of the educator, it was mentioned many times that trainer was engaging without describing the practices one was using to accomplish it. From that perspective there is a link between methods and learners design elements that describes the ways how engagement could be reached. Following some positive comments related to engagement skill of an educator:

- “Inspiring trainer”
- “Engaging trainer”
- “Energizing trainer”

How engagement was perceived by the participant is seen through the evaluations analysed in the next course design element Learners.

**Learners** was the seventh design element category with most feedback entities provided 33 in total. Comments are evaluating the engagement part interpreted through the emotions and feelings of the participants. Following the expressions on engagement through positive comments:

- “Training was active and engaging – not boring”
- “Very engaging providing new ideas”
- “Synergy”
- “Gained motivation”
- “Challenging”
- “Personally developing to reach my goals”
- “Lively and engaging”
- “Self-development feeling”
- “Jokes and fun”
- “Positive emotions”
- “Fun and educational”
- “Feeling that others are having similar challenges as I”
- “Feeling of self-develop and change”
- “Training is active and engaging”

Some examples on engagement through the negative comments:

- “No flow”
- “Engaging was missing to keep the group active”
- “More engagement needed to make people discussing”

**Learners input** design element describes the level of evaluation that learner is encouraged to provide. There were only 3 comments providing opinion on the evaluation process of the course. From the positive side:

- “Possible to give feedback proposals for the next session”
- “Option to give instant feedback”

From the negative side is mentioned:

- “Too much feedback instead of presenting the topic”

The analysis itself does not give an answer why this design element is so little commented. We can assume that it's related to the relatively short length of the trainings respondents participated and the amount of feedback would be more extensive when the course would have been longer.

**Demonstrating learning** was the least commented course design element having only one comment in total. This element is related to the assessment process of the training. This one evaluation is from the positive comments mentioning the testing part carried out during a course.

- “Testing”

The small evaluation rate can be explained with the irrelevance of the tests from the learner's perspective. Not many learners are aware of the usefulness of the testing from the learning perspective and even less are the ones who enjoy the testing process.

## 5.2 Employers' expectations from a training

After identifying the comments evaluating different key design elements of the course by analysing feedback forms the results are evaluated with the training experts. Focus group interview methods is used for that. The interview has two goals. First to verify the results received from the document analysis. Secondly to learn more about the current training needs in the hospitality sector that would help me to develop and prepare the sample training format for testing.

The experts approved the results of the feedback analysis, claiming that the analysis of the feedback forms point out the same aspects that they as the experts would highlight. Additional input the experts provided had a direct linkage to several different design elements of the thesis' framework. From the perspective of decision maker and paying client

it is understandable that their main interest was concentrated to *learning transfer* design element. However, other design elements received attention too. Especially *context* related aspects were brought into the conversation and discussed extensively.

In expert's view, they as a client representing the hospitality companies, above all would expect the practicality of the training. One of the interviewees summarized this thought perfectly: R4: "When I send my employee to the training I expect this as an investment meaning every 1 euro invested must bring back 10 euros as a return". The practicality was the keyword that formed the basis standpoint through which their opinions were derived.

The experts claimed that having the training held in Estonian increases the practicality and applicability of the outcome. R3: "Training held in Estonian is so much more attractive ". It was something that did not come out from the feedback analysis.

Second topic discussed was related to socialisation element. Experts were aware of participants need to socialize but they were surprised of the extent it was emphasized by the participants. R5: "I wouldn't expect that the socialization during the training is so strongly emphasized". However, the experts agreed that socializing and networking provides an opportunity for the participants to share their challenges, experiences, practices and emotions that they all come across in the work environment, and which tend to be similar. In additionally the expert claimed that especially nowadays young people learn more from peer to peer than are willing to follow the words of their managers. R2: "I see young people more and more learning from each other or from the peers they trust)".

When talking about the expectations towards the *educator/trainer* the experts emphasized the need for the excellent andragogical skill. It impacts the aspects of being flexible, keeping people engaged and following the timeframe. This would rule out the situation that some are feeling the rushing and others the advancement being too slow. R4 "Trainer needs to have andragogical skills to handle the group so that would not feel rushing for someone while the other people are bored the advancement being too slow. I can only imagine how flexible the trainer must be". Feedback analysis emphasized rather the participants expecting the trainer to be fun and inspiring. However, both experts and participants preferred the trainer being sufficiently expert in hospitality to bring into the training personal experience.

Concerning the *resources of learning* element experts agree with the participants opinion on importance of examples included and discussed during the training. The more the examples reflect the real cases the better. The experts suggested the trainers to have pre-



training interviews made with the participants to identify the biggest challenges and to collect real cases which could be debated anonymously during the training. R4: "When the number of participants is optimal and not too big, the educator should make an interview or send a questionnaire to the participants to ask what are the main challenges at work they are seeking answers for. Perhaps they are even ready to share cases that can be discussed during the training. Also, post-training check would be beneficial in my opinion"

Unlike the participants, the experts see the element *demonstrating learning* very important to ensure the successful learning outcome of the training. The experts find even small test being needed if the examination in the end of the training is not possible for timing reason. It's again aspect of practicality and *learning transfer* that derives this approach. R1: "Some kind of, even small test in the end of the training helps definitely to recall what was learned during the whole training day"

Second discussion point during the focus group interview was related with my goal to learn more about the current training need in the hospitality sector. It would help me to develop and prepare the training format for testing.

The experts commented that in nowadays world the hybrid learning which combines face-to-face classroom and online learning into one cohesive experience, is the most efficient way of training hospitality professionals. Simple, technical skills could be provided using online channel. Whereas knowledge like people's management, analysing and communication competence should be transferred rather through face-to-face classroom sessions. R2: "I don't know how are the trainings going to look like in the future. I think some sort of combo, simple skills could be learned individually online, but managing people and analysing behaviours this needs a human touch and obviously would require open discussion, better if in classroom" The experts emphasize the need for trainings where participants need to analyse the cases from the management or customer experience perspective. They emphasize the human aspect playing big role in hospitality industry and they think it's heavily needed to involve also to the education process. R3: "It would be good when employees are placed into situation when they have to feel how it is to walk on the shoes of customer or manager"

The experts see short but regularly happening training sessions so called "*training bites*" as the most efficient formats of the public trainings. It's convenient way to combine the studies with working life and, would turn the learning process consistent. They think it would keep up better the motivation level for the participant as well. Besides it would give

to the management better opportunity to monitor the study advancement and provide supportive practical learning environment at workplace. R2: "We talk more and more about the work bites, why not to talk about then also training bites? Quick and sharp knowledge that can be immediately put into practice"

Common opinion of the interviewees was that currently the most needed topics for the hospitality sector are management trainings for the middle management level. They claim that top management is seeking the options how to motivate team leaders to survive and keep the faith in current challenging circumstances caused by coronavirus pandemic. Team leaders are expected to motivate their employees in facing the summer season that they hope will be better than last year. However, the experts admit it will be still very challenging. Tourism and hospitality sector has suffered the most due to the pandemic and subsequent government restrictions. Hospitality industry is looking the outside expertise that would help them to kick off the summer season in a new, yet distracted circumstances. But the experts also admit that financial assets for training people are extremely limited and they try to manage first of all on their own internal resources to develop employees.

To sum-up, based on the input provided by the experts during the focus group interview i can now start designing the training format to be implemented and tested afterwards. The training topic will concentrate what was suggested by the experts during the interview. Goal of the training should be to support hospitality team leaders to motivate their teams to surpass the challenging times and to be ready to kick-off the upcoming summer season.

### **5.3 Results of the training model testing**

Before presenting the results of the survey I summarize the aspects related to sample training that took place 8 April 2021. The aim was to test a training model which was developed based on the combination of results from the two previous methodological stages: document analysis of the feedback forms and focus group interview with the experts.

Sample training preparation included several work sessions with the trainer and two technical rehearsal with my own friends and family members. Title of the training was "*How to inspire team to reach the goals*". For the trainer it took 13 hours of direct preparation and 5 hours for work sessions with me the concept developer. Training lasted 4 hours including breaks and was conducted using virtual meeting tool Zoom. Initial plan was to hold the classroom or hybrid type of training. However, due to the government restrictions caused

by corona pandemic the only possible option was to conduct the training through virtual channel. Other virtual tools used during the training were *Google Jamboard* and *Google Docs*. Training language was Estonian. The aim of the training is to teach the middle-management level employees to motivate their team in today's challenging circumstances. Appendix 4 includes the full description of the training prepared for the promotion process. Training had 12 participants, which represented 8 different companies, including one from Tartu. I had to turn down one person to avoid crossing the optimal size of the group. There was a fee for joining the training which allowed me to hire professional trainer to conduct the event. Prior to the training participants received an email containing video welcoming and questions to be answered that were used to prepare the training content. Couple of days before the training I contacted by phone each participant to go through the technical details of the training. I wanted to ensure people know how to use Zoom and how to prepare their devices for the training. Lunch bag with energizing snacks selected by the nutrition specialist were delivered to participants day before the training. Trainer was Riinu Rätsep, who had in the past facilitated couple of Haaga-Helia trainings in Estonia. Training was interactive by including discussion, groupworks in break out rooms and other collaborative tools to engage participants as much as possible. Before the very end of the training participants were asked to fill in the online feedback form, which included the same open questions as in the feedback forms analysed within the document analysis during the first methodological stage of the study:

- What was positive in the training?
- What should be improved for the future?
- Open comments.

Third methodological stage included the online survey conducted among the participants one day after the test training held in April 8<sup>th</sup>. Survey method was used. The goal was to find out what value the participant accredits to the sample training and how satisfied they are with implementation. There are 27 questions in total covering all 9 course design element categories and asking to rate the compliance with the statement in a scale from 1 - 10 points. 1 represented full disagreement and 10 fully agreement with the statement. Each question had additionally field for a voluntary open comment. Open comments were left out from the analysing part and they were only having the supportive role to interpret the survey results later. From the methodological perspective may be seen questionable to draw statistical conclusions from only 12 answers but as it was the whole population of the target and they are supported by the open commentaries I consider the method being justified. For the same reason I excluded the percentages when presenting the results. Additionally, supportive commentaries for interpretations come from the open fields of the survey. Also, from the online feedback forms every participant filled in the end of the test training and that was part of the sample training concept. The questions in these feedback

forms were the same as the open questions in the feedback forms 2015-2019 analysed in the first methodological stage. I am using feedback comments for explaining and illustrating the results of the survey.

I present the results in summarizing them by the design element category. Each design element category was reflected with group of questions between 1 to 5.

First question group was asking the evaluation about *aims*. Results show that training was meeting the participants expectations. 11 people out of 12 were confirmed that the topic chosen for the training was relevant and meeting the actual needs. Training was corresponding to the course description only one person ranking it less than nine points. 11 people assessed 9 or higher when was ask if they gained new ideas or reaffirmation of existing knowledge in the training. There were many positive comments supporting the high evaluation rate. For example, one person stated that considering the challenging moments in the society and in hospitality industry, the training was inspiring like “a sip of fresh air”. On the critical side one person mentioned that she would have expected the trainer to provide more concrete tools, instruments and activities that would help to motivate the team members. Second criticism was stating that she did not get the full answer to her request that she wrote down to the pre-training questionnaire. To sum-up, results show that the training topic “How to motivate your team to reach the goals” was an excellent selection and the training met the expectations of the participants.

Second question group was asking the evaluation about *resources for learning*. 7 people gave full points and rest little less on the question whether the pace of the training was appropriate and not rushing. 10 people were fully agreed that the structure of the training was clear and easy to follow. Every participant gave 9 or more points to the statement that the examples covered within a training were practical. On the critical side one commentary said that time for the group works could have been longer. On timing it was commented that second pause could have been longer at least 15 minutes. From the positive side one person commented that the structure of the training was very good and trainers behaviour supported this. Summing up may say that timing, the structure of the training and examples discussed were well prepared.

Third question group was asking the evaluation on the *methods*. 10 people out of 12 evaluated the training with 10 points regarding the training being interactive. The same score applies for the next statement whether the training methods provided opportunities to share the experiences with the rest or the participants. Same results were corresponding

the statement whether there was enough discussion and group work in the training. All respondents gave 9 or more points to the question if the examples included were systematically reflected and discussed. In one of the few critical open comments was mentioned that she would have expected to have after each group work the trainer to give theoretical explanations to describe the findings. And as well was mentioned that sharing the experiences would have been more productive in case the group works using break out rooms would have lasted longer. However, from the positive example it was mentioned that the training was very interactive, well balanced between theoretical instructions and group work discussions. Second example was commenting knowledge sharing, claiming that it was one of the best feature of the training. "During the very challenging and distant times to share experiences, joys, worries and solutions is very uplifting". Summing up can be said that methods used to conduct the training were suitable for the participants and were supporting the learning process.

Forth question group was asking the evaluation on the *educator*. One of the two statements in the whole survey that received highest score from all the participants was the question whether the trainer showed out positive and inspiring attitude, all gave 12 points. 11 people thought the trainer was competent on the main topic covered in the training. 9 people out of 12 rated the trainers andragogical skill with 10 points. 11 people fully agreed that the trainer had enough personal experience on the topic covered. There was no negative comments about the trainer. From the positive feedback it was claimed that the trainer was very encouraging and tolerant on building bridges between different opinions. Also was mentioned that the trainer was having significant personal experience on the covered topic which was inspiring. To sum up can be said that the trainer facilitating the training was well selected and professional. She was competent in the topic covered, was having excellent inspirational skill and, having enough personal experience on the subject according to the participants opinion.

Fifth question group was asking the evaluation on the element of *learner*. The idea was to learn how people felt themselves during the training and which emotions were prevailing. 11 people out of 12 felt very motivated by the end of the training and one was little less but still motivated. Same results can be drawn from the statement evaluating the feeling of being engaged: 9 participants gave 10 points and three other ones little less. 11 people evaluated the training bringing out the feeling of synergy between the group members. From the researcher's perspective we don't know how long was the period but it can be confirmed such feeling was involved. The only supportive comments to include are positive. For example, one person said that there was a strong synergy in the training despite the challenge to get people to talk in the beginning. To sum up can be said that the tested

training format was enriching the participants learning experience with synergy, motivational feelings, and feeling of being engaged.

Sixth question group was asking the evaluation on the element of *context*. All the participants agreed that the training context provided opportunity to socialize with the other participants. About socializing part one comment stated that it was a pleasure to meet the colleagues from the field in this very challenging situation and to see everybody still trying to remain positive. Considering that the training was fully taking place in ZOOM the socialization moments were very limited. Despite the fact that all participants are so called people's people and prefer face to face interaction many of them discovered some new positive aspect on virtual solution. For example, one person mentioned how she enjoyed learning the solutions that Zoom provides but that she had never used before and which give surprisingly efficient opportunities to turn the remote meeting engaging. One more feedback comment that break out rooms session could have been longer. That's where the socialization process was provided the in its best form. All the participants confirmed that there was a socially open ambience supporting the learning process. Only one person was hesitating in the answer whether the lunch bag provided during the course was an excellent idea. The explanation can be related to the open commentary stating that the person had a nuts allergy and it would be nice to know that beforehand. Lunch bag was including snacks that preserve their value longer and on the other hand support the brain in the learning process: nuts, dried fruits, smoothie drink and buckwheat biscuits. In the opposite there were quite many comments claiming the lunch bag being very positive surprise. As an example, "It was a wonderful surprise and 10 points for the idea and for showing the personal approach". Survey results showed that 11 people were satisfied with the length and density of the breaks. Final statement of the *context* element group was concerning the administrative and communicational support prior and during the training. It was the second statement out of two that was rated with maximum 10 points by all participants. One example "The organizing part of the training was very profound, have not experienced such personal approach before". To sum-up can be said that according to the participants opinion test training was well organized, having enough optimal breaks, providing energizing food, and had an open ambience that supports the socialization among the participants and the trainer.

Seventh question group was asking the evaluation on the element of *learners input*. 10 people were convinced that during the training it was possible to ask openly and express one's opinion. The idea behind this element is to give the participants chance to impact the course process with their input. As the sample training was short including only one

training day the opportunity to impact the course flow was very low. Second aspect to consider is that the training took place in Zoom which sets special rules for the communication compared to the traditional classroom. One of the commentary illustrates this situation "This is my personal position based on using Zoom - I don't want to interfere with others or drive in. Being in the same class room together makes body language easier to read and therefore cut in if needed".

Eights question group was asking the evaluation on the element of *learning transfer*. 9 people out of 12 gave maximum points to the statement that the training provided practical knowledge which they could start applying in one's workplace. Second question was answered following the same pattern. 11 people evaluated highly the motivation gained in the training they could apply to the workplace. One person took rather hesitating position. No deeper explanation was available in the survey. However, one comment that could explain is linked to one answer: "I would have focused a little more in detailed on such communication techniques. It came into conversation but then we moved on. At that point, I would have liked to hear more how the trainer had behave with such snappy team member". However, many positive comments supporting the high results were provided. The training was really great, refreshing and with very necessary topics at the very right time. I was Inspired and keep strength and courage to move forward in the current situation." "Training gave me many new ideas and I am absolutely sure that this motivating kick was needed at the moment so I could inspire my team at work". "Great job, that kind of short training would be practical to be held among the other team leaders in my hotel. It would encourage them to think ideas they could accomplish together with their teams". Finally comment to the question whether participants gained motivation during the training which could be applied at work place: "Absolutely, I cannot wait to return to work and spread that motivation gained with the others". Summing up the results I can claim that the sample training was providing practical knowledge and motivation that the participants could apply at real working life.

Ninth, the last question group was asking the evaluation on the element of *demonstrating learning*. 11 people out of 12 marked with 9 or higher score the statement that the test at the end of the training helped to retain what was learned. One person stayed in a neutral position grading it with 5. There were no other comments that would support deeper explanation of this question.

Based on the results of the survey we can claim the sample training passed the testing successfully. The additional fact supporting the positive testing result is connected with the agreement I had with the companies the participants were representing. The deal with

the representatives of the companies was that they can either pay 25 euros or 30 euros. The decision on the amount had to be based on the value the company perceived from the training. Must be considered that even this relatively small amount of money is challenging for the budget of every hospitality companies in these days. Allocating money for any external training may be complicated to be explained to the owners. As a researcher I am aware that this assessment method involved is not methodologically reliable and do not qualify as solid proof. I used this assessment form only as a supportive measure to illustrate the study. Eventually, 7 companies out of 8 decided to go for the higher amount. The one company who decided to go for the lower level fee, explained the decision as well. Explanations the company representative provided me were slightly reflecting also the results of the survey. There was one or in some cases two answers in each question that were slightly differentiating from the of majority of the answers. Shortly put the company claimed that their expectations to the training had been higher. Nevertheless, this does not decrease the value of the training considering the decision and feedback of all the other customers.

To summarize, I was presenting in this chapter the results of the 3 different methodological stages handled during the research process. The three stages were linearly linked with each other and forming eventually the meaningful knowledge base for drawing the final conclusions of the study.



## 6 Discussion

The aim of the study was to develop a new public business training concept for the hospitality sector. To support this, the following research questions were postulated:

- What do the Estonian hospitality companies value in public training?
- What do the participants value in public training?
- What would be the most suitable public training concept to meet the needs of today's Estonian hospitality sector?

Combining the results of the three research questions and using the theoretical framework would enable to conclude what elements the training concept under development should include. In the longer run the new concept should serve the Estonian hospitality sector and more specifically the concept should provide value for the participants and their employer companies.

Using once again the framework of 9 course design elements by Ralf St. Clair the features that should be included in the new training concept based on the results of the study (Clair 2015, 184) are described following the logic that Clair (Clair 2015, 188-189) was presenting when wrapping up his framework and describing how the course designing process in practice should look like in.

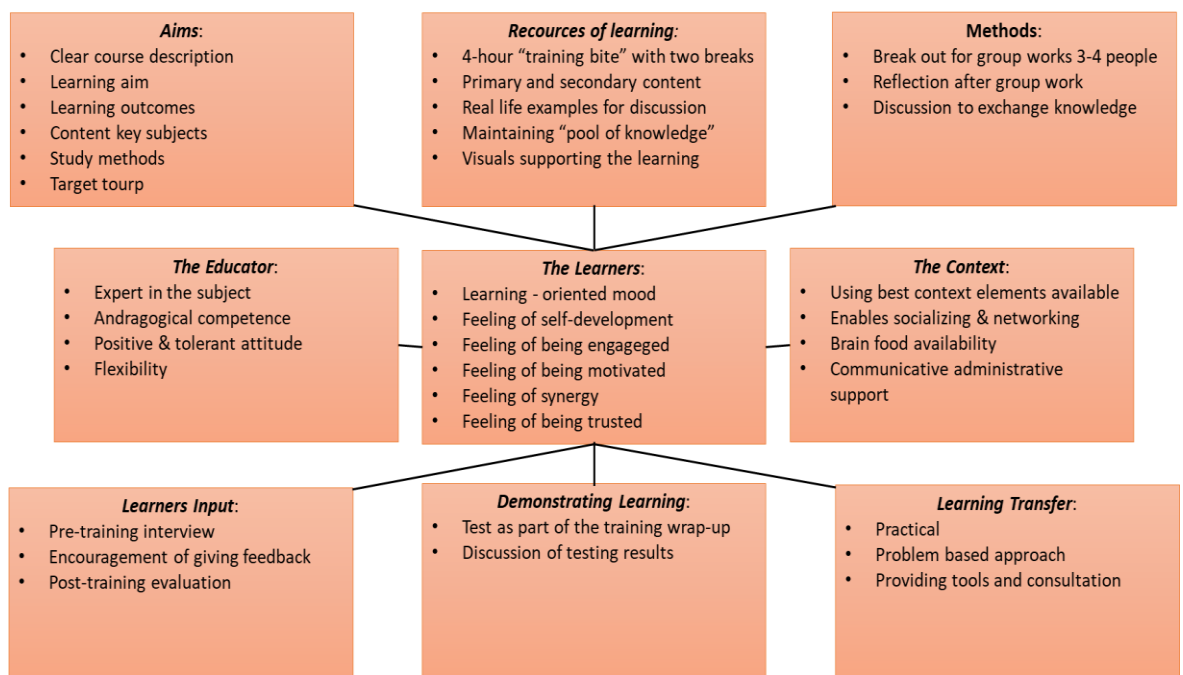


Figure 5. Characteristics of the new training concept based on Clair's 9 design element framework

Before starting to design the actual course format first and most important is to deal with the problem postulation, what exactly the course should be arranged for or what is the

problem the learner has and the participation in the course could solve? In this context the Author uses the word customer and the customer in the present context is a larger notion than just an actual participant as it is also the company that invests resources to educate its employee. For the sample training it was found out through the study that companies are struggling with motivating their mid-managers who in turn should inspire their team members and it was decided that the target of the training in question should be mid-management who was looking for help on how to inspire and motivate their teams. These two, the goal and the target unified, were forming the core of the subsequent training development and every other design element was developed in line with that aspect including also how to engage and open up the participants for the learning process.

The first element of the format includes finding the competent *educator* to consult and train that specific topic the participants need. In the sample training the person who had earlier proved to be qualified and competent to develop the new training was used. Based on the prior research the person was expected to be an expert in the subject and hold additionally andragogical skills as well (Kumpas-Lenk & al 2020, 7). The details of the introduction of the trainer is provided in the Appendix 4. While the trainer was selected the strengths that the person should have were considered based on what Clair (2015, 188) was also emphasizing. Also during the work sessions it was also discussed how to build the course around the strongest skills that the trainer had to offer. Training product is never ready to be used without considering the context and the people who participate and the educator must be ready to develop the product again and again.

Secondly, the *learner* must be held in the centre of the training design process embedded to the goal of the training. As Clair summarizes the key purpose here is to find what keeps the participant in a good learning-oriented mood and how to guide their feelings to keep them engaged. The survey results showed people experiencing feelings of motivation and synergy caused by the trainer's systematic approach as the priority was to connect people and open them up to build good relations among the participants including the teacher. The trainer succeeded well in creating the overall feeling of trust and sustaining it until the in agreement with Clair: "We really are all in this together" (Clair 2015, 31).

The third element of the training format considers *context* where and under which circumstances the training must be held. In the sample training the overall healthcare situation in the country was considered along with the impact it had on the hospitality sector. The initial plan was to carry out the sample training in a traditional or hybrid format. After discussing with the hospitality companies involved, the only option was to conduct the fully online training using the virtual channel Zoom. It forced the Author and the trainer to familiarize

oneselves with many technical aspects of virtual training not experienced much before. Considering the opinions received from HR experts during the study the hybrid training concepts including online ones are here to stay. Eventually using Zoom brought special value to the participants helping them to adapt to the new situation. As the study showed that participants expect socialization opportunities with colleagues in the field, the virtual environment made the situation more challenging for the organizers. However, based on the survey results can be said that the issue was tackled by using different technical solutions available in Zoom. In the future when the group trainings are allowed again training sessions of this kind and nature should be held in a classroom.

The role of the food should not be underestimated during the training as well and it should be planned considering the circumstances. In a sample training the idea of preparing the lunch bags and delivering them to the participants before the training popped up. The food was selected by the nutrition specialist and the main idea was to provide the energy and boost the brain to keep up the learning process until the end of the training day.

The comfortable context for the learner was not created only with the walls and food but also the overall administrative support. In the sample training, the engagement started already with pre-training activities including contacting the learner and asking for the input for the training. The Author is convinced that the pre-training communication prepared the learners to conform to the actual training environment as the results of the survey were approving it. The key point to conclude based on the research, and supported by Clair (2015, 189) is that every context eventually has the elements that could be positively applied to serve the training goal. They just need to be discovered and then developed into the proper form.

The fourth element to consider in the training concept designing is related to *aims*. In the sample training, the topic was developed using the requests from the sector. The problem was postulated, but since the topic “motivating people” is wide in order to meet the learners’ expectations at first the concept had to be well presented in the training description. The concise description stated the main features: the aim, learning outcome, content key subjects, study methods and target group (appendix 4). Summarizing according to Clair (2015, 189) - finding out what people are to learn involves communicating with the learners. As an example within the training development process the Author contacted each participant registered and ask about their expectation of the training: “What would be the main challenge they are currently facing that they hope to find the answer through the training?” The trainer took into account all these requests and combined the answers with

the topics planned and the characteristics participants hoped for - new information and re-discovering the forgotten knowledge - were applied in the sample training as the survey results presented and this way the expectations to the training were met.

The fifth element in designing the outstanding training concept is linked to *resources for learning*. The four main characteristic groups here are the timing, examples, structure of the training and materials. Based on the research customer is preferring half a day “training bites” which are cost- and time-efficient (Kumpas-Lenk & al. 2020, 7). Considering virtual context which exhausts participants more, 4 hours with two 15 minutes breaks was optimal training time. The timing tends to be the challenge for every educator because it is always tempting to provide more content than the timeframe would allow. As per Clair, the content building of the training must start with estimating the time available. He states the thumb rule that after working out what can be covered in this time span half of it should be taken out (Clair 2015, 189). Referring to the sample training, the reduction of content started from the moment when the trainer described the first concept and it continued until the last working session. In addition to that during the sample training the time lag of the training plan was discovered. The keyword was flexibility as the trainer had prepared the so-called primary and secondary content (Clair 2015, 109.) giving the flexibility to drop certain parts of the plan without damaging the whole training concept. It was due to the professionalism of the trainer that it went smoothly and did not cause the negative reflection of the participants as per survey results. Based on the research the quantity and the quality of the examples brought to the discussion are relevant both for the participants and the experts. Examples can be prepared with the cost of extra time. For the sample training the participants were asked before the training individually and during the training as part of the discussion for the cases that could be reflected together using the pool of knowledge the group was having. The study affirmed that the key factor is to use the competence and experience that the participants hold.

Concerning the structure of the training the keyword was simplicity. In a sample training, the four hours covered 3 main topics that were similarly built up and linked to each other by the trainer building constantly bridges between new and discussed content. Finally, the handouts and presentation related matters must be commented on as being placed in a new perspective while using fully online training. Research showed that the challenges related to presentations in the classroom training are the slides being overcrowded or text being unreadable. In online training, as the sample one was, those challenges are alleviated by the fact that presentation and handouts are much more under the control of the learner one oneself. Eventually less presenting and more discussing makes the actual training process better for the learner. The core idea of public training is to

share the experiences and practises as was described in sub-chapter 2.2 (see p. 8). Slides and materials should remain supportive elements in the training process and serve the function of repetition and further learning.

The sixth element to consider in designing the training format is related to *methods as the methods* should always serve the objectives set for the course. According to Clair (2015, 115), small group works are the most used method in adult training but there must be always a reason and clear task stated before sending participants to discuss in the group so it would not turn out to be just an amusing time filler. As was mentioned in the theory part (see p. 7) one of the strengths of public training is the networking opportunity, which means sharing professional practice and experiences. Relying on the practice of sample training, the small group of 3-4 participants opened up the increase of the knowledge pool, that with the help of the facilitator was constantly used to enhance the learning process. Principally, the whole training was most of all built on the creative solutions generated during the group works which at the same time served the knowledge sharing process and building reliable relations among the group. Individual growth as the ultimate goal was reached through individual and group reflections after every group work. Despite the fact the training was held virtually it was possible to organize group works by using technical solutions Zoom provides. Participants adapt fast if clear guidance on how to use these options is given, and by the end of the course, participants were capable to manage discussion related tasks similarly to classroom trainings. Referring to discussion with experts (see p. 38) they expect in the future the specific skills being studied individually using online channels. The learning of competencies that need analysing, ideating and critical reflection should be held in a group format and based primarily on collaborative group works. To conclude, the research shows that an outstanding public training concept involves group works where discussion is encouraged and the discussion must be guided by a clear task and followed up by deep systematically maintained reflection.

The seventh element of designing the perfect training concept is linked to *learners input*. Clair (2015, 137) stated, that the idea for the evaluation is to get feedback on concrete aspects of the learning process, but also to measure the motivation and engagement level of the training. The evaluation is especially relevant when the training is lasting more than one day, and the educator wants feedback to improve the training flow according to the needs of the participants. The 4-hour sample training was rather classified as micro training and therefore the learners input remained modest. However, it was not deliberately avoided but rather encouraged by the trainer to raise the engagement level which is the core driver in the learning process. Digital platform Zoom was supporting the evaluation

process providing communication parallelly in the chatbox. Some individual technical issues that participants faced during the training were disclosed in chat and fixed by the Author acting as the technical support without disturbing the other group members. The post-training survey results verified that participants had the feeling they could interfere with and have influence on the training process. Since the training was short and very intensive the participants' interference level remained low. However it is important to make sure all participants have this opportunity. Regarding the *learner input* through feedback, research shows that asking for the pre- and post-training input from the participants provides valuable information for the designing process of the course. The post-training feedback collected from the participants provides fruitful information that could be used to improve the same training or develop new recurring in-depth training on the same topic.

The eighth element to mention is *demonstrating learning*. The study showed that for the participants of the short business training the assessment part is an irrelevant aspect. Unlike the formal education where students go for the degree the idea of business training is to provide to the learners practical solutions that they are facing in everyday work. Rothwell (see p. 6) claims that adult learning is heavily characterized by a problem-based approach. The certificate for them is more of a ceremonial instrument that does not impact their professional career as much as the real knowledge gained from the training. However, in the sample training, the test was done in the end as part of the wrap-up process and the test was followed by the group reflection and no grades were given in the end as the purpose was to retain the knowledge gained during the training day. As the survey results confirmed, participants found it very useful.

Experts and employers on the other hand value the assessment part of the training much higher. For them it is linked with the *learning transfer* which based on the study can be concluded as the ultimate aspect in measuring the outcome value of the training. Hence, last but not the least - the *learning transfer* element turned out to be the most important component of any business training both for the experts and employers. One of the key aspects Estonian hospitality companies expect is that the training is held in Estonian. There could be supportive materials in other languages, but the main process is preferably in Estonian to make sure the information is perceived efficiently. Customers expect the training to provide solutions to their real work-related problems therefore the training concept should be designed to support that aspect. Based on the sample training, the pre-training questionnaire provided the answers to each participants' challenges which they would like to tackle by using the knowledge gained at the training. The study showed that the level of training practicality can be raised when participants receive the follow-up call by the training company which would motivate participants to develop the knowledge

gained during the course. In addition to that, the call would provide educative assistance to the participant who after the training wants to continue expanding the gained knowledge individually, to serve their employer and continue their self-development. In the sample training, the follow-up call was not performed due to the short timespan due to completing the final report. However, it was included in the developed training concept and would be beneficial to put into practice. Summarized by Clair (Clair 2015, 169) there are both technical and affective aspects involved in effective transfer of learning but the key considerations as in other aspects of adult educations are again motivation and engagement of the learners.

Regarding the learning transfer and practicality, one could state that having training held in Zoom would not help the hospitality sector people because they have to communicate with their customers and colleagues in real life situations. The study proves that digitalization has more and more reached also hospitality sector traditionally oriented primarily on the face-to-face communication. Referring to Brandler (see p. 13), due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hotels had to adapt quickly to new regulations and operational models in order to survive. Digitalization was the leading dimensional side effect in the change process. As was previously mentioned (Rosenblad & al. 2020.), due to COVID-19 the need for in-house and on-the-job training increased. The need for public traditional training was high as well, but were not allowed to take place. New circumstances demanded new competence.

Permanent changes in the hospitality sector are expected (see p. 16). New technical solutions will start replacing the direct contact with service providers including self-service. Traditional receptionists in the reception will be probably only available in a high-quality accommodation establishment. Also, the proportion of table service in catering is expected to decrease in the future. From the training perspective, as mentioned by the Estonian Qualifications Authority (EQA) (see p. 14), certain topics as teamwork and management are challenging to be implemented only through e-learning training. It's where the experience sharing and peer to peer exchange of practice should be involved and what public training as format supports well.

The new term hybrid learning has become widely used during the present crisis and this is what the experts also brought out in focus group interview. Again, referring to the EQA, the proportion of traditional training format increases again in parallel with the alleviation process of COVID restrictions. Eventually, it will be combined with online trainings which together form the new hybrid training concept (see p. 14).

To sum-up, the need for quality communication in the hospitality business remains important but providing it will be practised more and more by using virtual channels. From the educator's perspective, preparing training in a hybrid format requires special technical skills and methodological competence. This justifies that conducting the sample training through a virtual channel is not only an inevitable alternative but also provides valuable competencies to adapt with the future trends that all the hospitality stakeholders will be facing.

Considering the findings of the discussion the Author sees the need to develop Clair's 9 design element theory further. Most of the design element characteristics presented by Clair are considering the aspects that are needed in the process of developing outstanding training. Based on the study it can be argued that *context* as a design element would need further elaboration to serve better today's adult learning opportunities. Referring to a report by OSKA (Rosenblad & al. 2020), in a long run, the development of the hospitality sector needs to support digital development and the green turn. Encouraging the adults to transfer more learning experiences to virtual channels would support both of the mentioned trends, but this would need special approach in order to ensure the quality and outcome are as successful as it would be in traditional classroom training context. While introducing the training design elements Clair did not particularly emphasize the difference between a classroom and online training but only said that building engagement is as important in online training as in a traditional one (Clair 2015, 60). The study was indicating that to reach the same quality, the context must be designed also differently considering certain nuances.

For example, based on the sample training, one of the challenges was related to the socialization level which was tackled through intensified and more frequent interactivity applied by the trainer. This, on the other hand, influenced timing which means that not as much training content can be shared with the participants. Hence, the trainer be extremely flexible to keep advancing towards the training goals while at the same time keeping up the motivational flow of the training.

To visualize the developmental needs of Clair's model The Author indicated the developmental needs based on the same Figure 5 as initially was used at the beginning of the current discussion chapter. The areas to develop are shown in green colour.



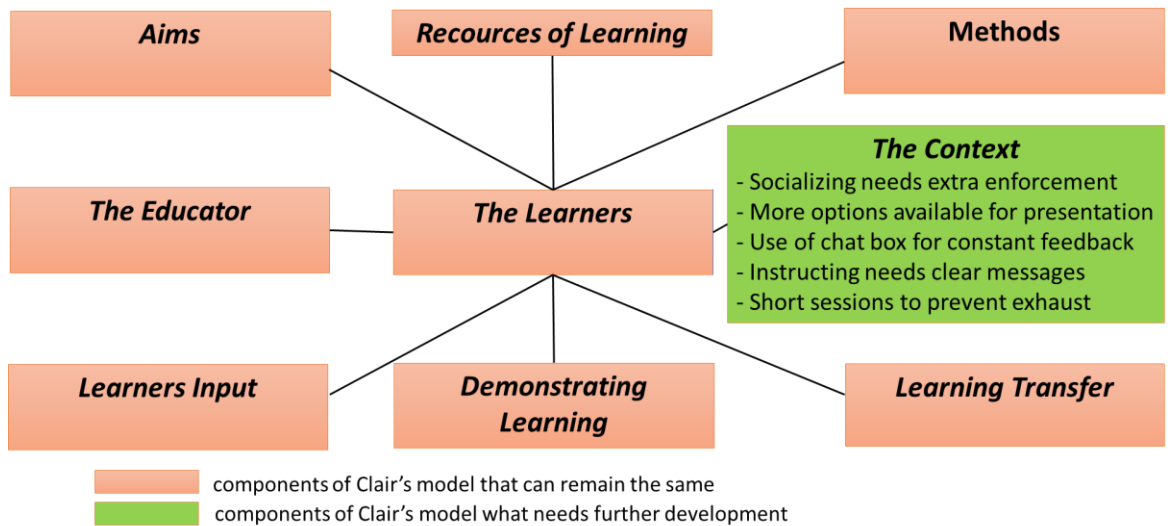


Figure 6. Modification of Clair's 9 design element theory including improvement suggestions

The sample training brought out also beneficial context-related opportunities that online training implied. First, the training presentation was more under the control of the participant. If the text was too small, it could be sized up on the screen based on individual preferences. Secondly, online learning channels include chatbox option that during the sample training enabled students to give instant feedback to the trainer or tech support. This way a certain individual request was handled quickly and without disturbing the training. In a traditional learning environment, it would have been much more limited. These are just a few examples identified which should be elaborated and developed further.

Development areas could be already the topic of the new research as the current study was only identifying and bringing out these aspects. The Author would be happy to support with the gained knowledge and empirical data the implementation of such extended research.

Based on the previous discussion points presented the Author closes the present chapter with the sample training concept model which can be seen in appendix 5, which takes into account the findings of the research. The model emphasizes the training design aspects related to the *context* which was highlighted in this study as one of the key design elements to be elaborated in future training concepts targeted at the Estonian hospitality sector. The Clair's 9 training design element model used is dated 2015 and can be generally classified as a rather new theory. Among the other disclosures, the Author's findings illustrate how much the world and training needs have been changed within the last 5 years - especially during the COVID-19 crisis.

## 7 Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to develop a new public business training concept, which would create value for the customer. In the longer run, the objective of the research is to serve the Estonian hospitality sector by developing a practical educational basic product that any of the hospitality-related educational institutions could use to train its customers. To reach the study goal the topic of adult learning was studied seeking understanding in lifelong learning, public training phenomenon, and gaining insight how outstanding trainings are designed in order to provide best learning experience for the participants. Secondly, an overview of Estonian hospitality training scenery was formed to understand the needs and future trends.

Then research methodology was studied and a constructive research approach has been used to carry out the present study. In the research part the feedback forms of the short courses held in Estonia in 2015-2019 by Haaga – Helia were studied by using document analysis as a method.

A focus group interview with the hospitality training experts followed to confirm the results of the desk study. The aim was to find out the aspects that the participants and their employers value in public trainings.

Using these findings, a sample training concept was developed and implemented on 8 April 2021. Based on the survey conducted with participants the final training concept described in the discussion part was developed. The research questions have found answers based on the results of this study and the personal learning goals of the Author have been reached as well.

The study found out that considering the challenging circumstances in the hospitality sector the public trainings are expected to be short and interactive “study bites”. In addition to traditional classroom and online format, the new hybrid combination is preferred by hospitality professionals. Selection depends on the competences that people want to learn and the training circumstances available. Most important is the engagement and socialization that encourage participants to share practices and create problem-based solutions which are applicable later in their work environment. All the training design elements should support the growth of a self-directed learning approach that helps the participant to build their own learning career and this way follow the principles of life-long learning.

Despite the fact that the study cannot be directly transferred from the hospitality sector to other industries the new training concept could after relevant study-based modifications suit as the basic model for other industries as well.

Online courses have shown their strength by being easily accessible individually for anyone interested in developing themselves. Companies will continue seeking practicality in business training. Some of them have shown out hesitations toward the public training format, no matter if it is conducted traditionally or online. Successful implementation of the sample public business training related to this study has hopefully mitigated the hesitations among the hospitality managers concerning the value of the public training format.

Research value for the hospitality sector could be assessed using the criteria provided by the methodology used for the study. The constructive research approach model that the Author was applying for developing the new training concept ended with the so-called “market test” (see p. 19) which aimed to evaluate the functionality of the solution in practice. After successful implementation of the sample training on 8 April 2021, Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association (EHRA) has decided to organize the training for its members using the public training concept developed within this research. This means that the solution developed within the research has now passed the medium-level test.

The developed new training concept is relevant for the Estonian hospitality industry because it provides a feasible model of how to train people in a new era when the digital and online learning has arrived to stay. Even when the health crisis in Estonia and the world becomes normal again we cannot return to certain behavioural models already settled in society. Estonia’s Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (see p. 15) emphasizes the need for a more efficient application of modern digital technologies in the teaching and training process. Additionally, it highlights the importance of creating smart teaching materials and methodologies to enhance the learning process in an engaging and efficient direction. The developed training concept is following the ambitions of the mentioned strategy.

For the future the Author would like to suggest studying the ways how to digitalize the operational service process in hospitality, which on one hand makes the service environment more efficient and safer but at the same time captures the serious risk of losing the sincere and authentic human touch. Also, as an extension to the current study, the Author would suggest investigating how digital opportunities could be applied to encourage, motivate and enhance the self-development process of each person working in today’s hospitality sector.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Stages of the study project

Nr	Stage	The Goal	How?
1	Literature review on adult learning theories and hospitality training scenery in Estonia.	To familiarize myself with the overall circumstances in the background that must be considered in the study and which implement my decisions made during the research process.	Browsing information available from the public sources.
2	Study of feedback forms created by the participants of Haaga-Helia short courses 2015-2019.	The goal is to find out what training elements participants of the short courses evaluated, perceiving it either positive or negative way.	Using document analysis method.
3	Discussion with the hospitality leaders and decision makers.	1. To verify the results received from stage 2 with the hospitality sector decision makers representing the management in one hand and the human relation expertise on the other hand. 2. To learn more about the current training needs in the hospitality sector helping the development process for the training model testing.	Using focus group interview method.
4	Developing training model for testing.	To combine the results of the document analysis in stage 2 and expert interview in stage 3 to develop a feasible training plan.	Working together with the training experts and collecting previous practices.
5	Implementation of the test training (including pre- and post-training activities)	To test the developed training format model in real life with the real participants.	Using the Zoom platform and professional trainer being myself technical producer and supervisor.
6	Collecting feedback of the test training from the participants and their company representatives.	To find out what value the customers accord to the test training. It concerns the opinion of the direct participant and the representative of the participants' company who is covering their training expense.	2. Conducting online survey 1 day after the test training. 3. Collecting the feedback by email from the participant's' company representatives who is covering their training expense. Supporting it with theory.
7	Writing the study report and sharing it with the public.	The goal is to finalize the research by presenting the new business training concept for the commissioner and for the hospitality sector in Estonia.	Summarizing the study results into the new training concept model to be shared in public.



Appendix 2. Feedback form of Haaga-Helia short course trainings 2015 -2019

Give us Your feedback  
Experience Event Design and Management  
including study tour to phenomenal event  
hotel "Huone" in Helsinki



17.04.2018

Happy with the facility:	☺	5	4	3	2	1	☹
Happy with the coach today:	☺	5	4	3	2	1	☹
Happy with the time frame:	☺	5	4	3	2	1	☹
Happy with the food served:	☺	5	4	3	2	1	☹
Happy with the study materials:	☺	5	4	3	2	1	☹
What was POSITIVE for You today...							

What parts of today's training/tour did not meet your expectations / what would you improve...

Open comments / suggestions to the organizers...

Thank You!!

### Appendix 3. Questionnaire for the survey after the test training

#### Post-training survey "How to inspire a team to achieve goals".

Please would you mind filling in the questionnaire in connection with the training that took place on 8.04.21. I need this to provide the necessary input for my master's thesis. Rating scale is from one to ten. Grade 1 represents disagreement with the statement and grade 10 represents fully agreement with the statement. I am also extremely grateful for any additional comments. When answering the questions, please use only your own opinion and experience.

1.1 The training met my expectations.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

1.2 The topic of the training was relevant.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

1.3 The description of the training corresponded to the content of the training.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

1.4 I received new ideas from the training or reaffirmation of existing knowledge.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

1.5 The training met my expectations.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

2.1 The pace of the training was appropriate and not rushing

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

2.2 The structure of the training was clear and easy to follow.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

2.3 The examples covered in the training were practical.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

3.1 The training was interactive

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

3.2 The training met my expectations.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

3.3 The training had enough discussion and group work for me.

No, I disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

3.4 The examples included to the training were reflected and discussed  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

4.1 The trainer showed out a positive and inspiring attitude  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

4.2 The trainer was competent on the main topic covered in the training  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

4.3 The trainer had an andragogical competence.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

4.4 The trainer was having personal experience on the topic covered.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

5.1 I was feeling motivated during the training.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

5.2 I was feeling engaged during the training.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

5.3 I felt the synergy among the participants during the training.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

6.1 The training offered an opportunity to socialize with a people from my professional field.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

6.2 The training had a socially open ambience supporting the creation of new ideas and knowledges.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

6.3 The food provided during the training supported the learning process  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

6.4 The length and the density of breaks during the training was appropriate.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

6.5 The administrating and communicational support prior and during the training was professional.  
No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree  
Open comments: ...

7.1 During the training, it was possible to ask openly and express my opinion.

No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

8.1 The training provided practical knowledge that I can start applying at my workplace.

No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

8.2 The training provided motivation that I could apply at my workplace.

No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

9.1 The quiz at the end of the training helped to retain the knowledge that was learned in the training.

No, I disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Yes, I fully agree

Open comments: ...

## Appendix 4. Description of the sample training held 8 April 2021

How to inspire team to reach the goals?

08.04.21  
09:00 – 13:00  
Zoom

Trainer: Riinu Rätsep

The company has a vision, mission, core values and goals. In addition, a strategy on how to implement all of the above. All this both in times of prosperity and in times of crisis. What to focus on as a middle manager to make the team feel safe, motivated and willing to make the best contribution to achieving the goals? The aim of the online training is to introduce the participants to the power to achieve goals, the impact of the team's life cycle balance, the power of personal trust and the methods of coping with setbacks.

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### Aim of the training:

- By the end of the training participant knows which methods to use in order to motivate the team

### Learning outcomes:

- By the end of the training participant:
  - Knows how to set both personal and team goals in one's department.
  - Knows how to maintain the motivation of the team.
  - Knows how to prepare one self and the team for the setbacks.

### Content:

- Topics discussed in the training:
  - Me as a leader of the team Kas tunnen oma tiimiliikmeid?
  - Do I know my team members?
  - Strength-based leadership.
  - 1 on 1 meeting with the team members.
  - "Wheel of life" of the team.
  - When things don't go as planned.

### Study methods:

- Instructing, group works, group discussion and individual work

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### Riinu Rätsep

Riinu has worked in the hospitality business for over 25 years, starting from the kitchen on Tallink's ships, working as a Chef and Restaurant Manager in the restaurant Paat (AG Toitlustuse AS) and as a Catering Service Manager at Radisson Blu Hotell Olümpia. Riinu has helped to launch restaurants such as Café Jardin, Café Järve, Restaurant Paat and the street food restaurant Foody Allen.

Riinu moved into the field of training at the beginning of 2005, when she started conducting cooking trainings. While working as a Training Manager at the Radisson Blu Hotel Olympia, She was passing on her practical knowledge in the field of service and management. Riinu has conducted several public and tailor-made hospitality related trainings under Haaga-Helia UAS brand. Her customers for example, have been Hotel L'Ermitage in Tallinn and café Fellin in Viljandi. Riinu works as a freelance consultant, trainer, nutrition consultant and has experience in the field of international sales. Currently she has a greater interest in psychology by focusing on self-development and online trainings.

More information about Riinu from [LinkedIn](#)



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See you in the training!

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## Appendix 5. Public training concept for Estonian hospitality employees

Public training concept for Estonian hospitality employees

Length: 4 hours (240 minutes)

Context: online training in Zoom

Training stage	Nr	Activity
Pre-training	1	Identifying the training need by discussing with hospitality leaders and decision makers
	2	Finding competent expert to facilitate the training
	2	Deciding the training topic and developing the training goal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target group</li> <li>• Learning outcomes</li> <li>• Content key subjects</li> <li>• Study methods</li> </ul>
	3	Selecting the training context (online learning platform Zoom)
	4	Conducting the pre-training survey to identify the participants expectations on what are their operational challenges they would like to find solutions for.
	5	Video greeting to the participants by the trainer or training organizer
	6	Pre-training call to each participant to ensure they are technically ready to join the online training
Training	7	Technical (audio and camera) check 15 minutes before the training starts
	8	Instructing how to navigate in virtual environment and how to ask assistance.
	9	Playful introduction round of the participants including the trainer
	10	Poll question presented to open the first topic
	11	Group works organized in break-out rooms for creating solutions
	12	Whole group reflection of the first topic
	13	Break for 10 minutes
	14	Poll questions presented to open the second topic
	15	Group works organized in break-out rooms for creating solutions
	16	Whole group reflection of the second topic
	17	Poll question presented to open the third topic
	18	Group works organized in break-out rooms for creating solutions
	19	Whole group reflection of the third topic
	20	Individual reflection on the third topic
	21	Break for 15 minutes to consume the brain food snack delivered to the participants before the training
	22	Content recall activity on earlier covered topic through whole-group discussion
23	Brainstorming group activity in break-out rooms based on the topics covered earlier	

	24	Whole group reflection
	25	Individual exercise to create personal activity plan for the next 2 weeks
	26	Playful quiz in whole group format to test the knowledge gained on the topics covered during the training day
	27	Whole group discussion to wrap up the training day
	28	Participants fill in the evaluation feedback forms
Post - training	29	Certificate verifying the participation sent to the participants
	30	Follow-up call or virtual meeting with the participant 1 week after the training by the trainer to encourage the participant to proceed with the personal activity plan. (Not applied in the sample training)