

## **Human Resources, the Dilemmas of Education and Training, Strategies and Practice with Focus on the Pacific.**

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### **Abstract**

This research explores human resource issues in the tourism industry within the context of the Pacific with focus on New Zealand and Samoa, analysing the effectiveness of education and training. This is referenced to human resources in both developed and developing countries. The research also investigates the current relationship between industry, government agencies and education and training providers in New Zealand and Samoa and assesses the relevance and currency of education and training provided both off the job and on the job.

Thirty-two interviews were conducted in the field in Samoa and New Zealand with a range of stakeholders relating to tourism and hospitality human resources. Individual, indepth unstructured interviews allowed for the collection of rich data. Interviews have been chosen to accomplish the aim of gathering qualitative experiential data.

There are a number of common themes in both contexts. There is a poor perception and low status of tourism and hospitality as a career, entry to the industry is easy, many staff have a low basic education. There is poor pay, poor staff retention and transience in and out of the industry. Some employers in both contexts fear that if people are trained they will have expectations of higher pay. Employers believe they cannot afford to pay more so do not invest in training. Skills shortages are also a key feature. In Samoa it is a shortage of people with the right skill set. In New Zealand it is a lack of ability to attract people to the industry.

Both contexts show a lack of trained and experienced supervisors and managers with a lack of clear career paths. This is principally to do with the quality of people entering the industry. In both countries this links with service and product quality and poor management and planning information about human resource matters. Policy and government response is reactive. Developments generally had been ad hoc, uncoordinated and fragmented.

In terms of education and training, ideally there would be a mix of both pre employment and on job training with for employees in tourism businesses matched to individual business needs. There is a tension between training for job roles versus providing an education that prepares people for careers. Currently education and training is focused on skills and knowledge required to do jobs rather than being focused on developing individuals holistically within a career structure.

There is a striking similarity in both countries in the inherent lack of respect for teachers and educators by the industry. This has a flow on effect to the way in which off the job training is valued in general. Communication between industry and training providers has become distant or dysfunctional, however it is also understood that it is important to build belief and stronger relationships. There needs to be a more strategic examination of human resources, qualifications reviewed, organisations rationalized, funding mechanisms examined and all parties working more collaboratively to progress human resources for tourism and hospitality.