

BI Norwegian Business School  
- Master Thesis -

**Seniority and Hierarchy in Thai Work Environment:**  
*An Additional Factor Influencing Transfer of Training  
of Management Trainees in  
a Leading International Hotel Chain in Thailand*

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## Table of Contents

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>3</b>
MANAGEMENT TRAINEE PROGRAM.....	3
TRANSFER OF TRAINING.....	4
WORK ENVIRONMENT.....	6
RESEARCH IN THAI CONTEXT .....	8
SENIORITY AND HIERARCHY.....	9
THAI VALUES.....	10
<i>Krengjai</i> .....	10
<i>Bun kun</i> .....	11
<i>Face saving</i> .....	11
<b>RESEARCH FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>12</b>
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	12
RESEARCH FRAMEWORK.....	13
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>14</b>
GENERIC QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS .....	14
SAMPLE.....	15
DATA ORGANIZATION AND ANALYSIS .....	15
<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATION .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>RESULTS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
PARTICIPANTS.....	16
DEGREE OF EXISTENCE OF SENIORITY AND HIERARCHY .....	18
THE EFFECTS OF SENIORITY AND HIERARCHY ON TRANSFER OF TRAINING .....	24
<i>Opportunity to perform</i> .....	24
<i>Social Support</i> .....	27
<i>Transfer climate</i> .....	29
THE CONSEQUENCES .....	30
JOB DISSATISFACTION.....	31
<i>Loss of motivation and determination</i> .....	31
<i>Barrier to learning, expression and success</i> .....	31

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<i>Resignation</i> .....	32
<i>Knowledge hiding</i> .....	34
JOB SATISFACTION.....	34
<i>Adaptability and success</i> .....	34
<i>Loyalty and work engagement</i> .....	35
<b>DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COMPANY</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>LIMITATION</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>FUTURE RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>REFERENCE</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>51</b>
APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	51
APPENDIX 2 – SUMMARIES OF TWENTY-TWO INTERVIEWS .....	56
APPENDIX 3 - PRELIMINARY THESIS REPORT .....	134

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**List of figures**

Figure 1 Transfer process model by Baldwin and Ford (1988) p. 65.....	5
Figure 2 Simplified model of transfer of training by Velada, et al. (2007) p.284 ...	6
Figure 3 Research framework model.....	13
Figure 4 Comprehensive research model of findings.....	46
Figure 5 Simplified model summarizing the results.....	46

**List of tables**

Table 1 The summary of participants.....	18
Table 2 Frequency of seniority and hierarchy rating by participants' roles.....	19
Table 3 Frequency of rating of seniority and hierarchy by hotel locations.....	22
Table 4 Management trainees' intention to resign and previous work experience.....	33

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**Abstract**

With attention to the amount of money and other resources that company invests in training and developing its people, only minimal attention is, however, given to ensure that learned skills, knowledge and attitudes are transferred properly into actual workplace. In Thailand, a leading international hotel chain offers a management trainee program to develop local young talents and provide accelerating career path. This program, therefore, attracts cream of the crops from top universities in Thailand and Thai graduates abroad to join an 18-month program. Although the number of the management trainees hired are increasing, the number of trainees graduated from this program is decreasing. Many quitted the program during or after the training. In fact, the program is well-structured so why did management trainees give up their commitments?

In spite of the internationalization and modernization of the company, work environment still features unique local culture. In this case, seniority and hierarchy are highly valued and practiced in professional setting. Junior leaders can hardly lead or drive change over senior colleagues. This research consequently explores how seniority and hierarchy in Thai work environment affect transfer of training of the management trainee program by employing generic qualitative analysis as the research method to collect and analyze data from twenty-two individual interviews. Of which number, fourteen are management trainees, four are human resources directors and four are general managers or coaches of the management trainees. Researcher investigates four main factors affecting work environment which are opportunity to perform, transfer climate, social support and follow-up.

The results ratify that seniority and hierarchy are strongly present in Thai work environment. Transfer of training of management trainee program and three additional work-environment factors namely opportunity to perform, social support and transfer climate are relatedly influenced. Whereupon, the consequences are job dissatisfaction and eventually, resignation from the program. On the bright side, job satisfaction and loyalty are enjoyed by those management trainees who successfully adapt to this work culture. With all findings considered, researcher constructively presents a discussion and suggestions for the company to improve the program and its effectiveness.

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## **Introduction**

The master thesis research will explore the integration of a dual field; organizational psychology and hospitality industry specifically in Thailand. According to Thailand Tourism Report (2015), travel and tourism industry contributed 20.2% to Thai National GDP in 2013 which implies that the country relies heavily on this industry. The hotel market in Thailand is competitively developed with many establishments from domestic and international hotel chains. Interestingly, the market still brings in more investment into this industry and expanding to remote and upcoming destinations ("Thailand Tourism Report," 2016). This means that there are considerably amount of employment opportunity for Thai people. Furthermore, the National Statistical Office of Thailand reported that there are 10,018 lodging properties in Thailand ("Statistic of Lodging Industry in Thailand," 2014). This number includes hotels, hostels, and guesthouses and they are owned or managed by local's or leading international hotel chains such as InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), Marriott International, Hilton, Hyatt, Accor, Kempinski, Shangri-La, Dusit International and Centara Hotels and Resorts ("Hotels'325 Rank," 2014). In contrast to the growth in the number of the properties, only 12.5% of the industry workforce with Thai nationality are in the managerial and management positions. The report also stated the lack of local's industry expert. It is often in need for international chains to search, recruit and develop local potentials to be in their talent management program to lead the hotels in their portfolios and pipelines. To handle such fast growth, companies have to be attentive to prepare workforce and talent management strategy in order to carry out future operations and to win the competitive market (Piansoongnern & Anurit, 2010).

The growing number of hotel properties also means the requirement of workforce. As explained earlier, the majority of workers in Thai hotel industry are in the working rank. The number of Thais who are in the managerial and management positions are minimal. Therefore, these international hotel chains recruit cream-of-the-crop graduates and groom them to become a middle management with career acceleration program, management trainee programs. After various trainings over eighteen months, the trainees will be promoted into their selected area of specialization. At this particular hotel, the program has started since 2011 with four management trainees. While the number of management trainees hired are growing year by year, the number of successful case is

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disproportionate. It is not the case the trainees are not learning sufficiently. They are learning but the setback is the transfer of training (Powell & Yalcin, 2010).

Research in the literature suggests firmly that transfer of training is influenced by three main factors which are trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment (Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, & Kavanagh, 2007). After the review by Baldwin and Ford (1988) which criticizes the lack of research in work-environment factor, the research on this construct has grown massively to discover its importance toward transfer of training (Clarke, 2002; Cromwell & Kolb, 2004; Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanagh, 1995). Unfortunately, research on training transfer in Thailand is scarcely limited as most of the research still focuses on training effectiveness. It is problematic when the practitioners can identify why training is not effective but they cannot answer why training is successful in terms of behavioral change and enhanced job performance, or how environmental factors can facilitate or impede the medium process occurring between training and real work performance (Tracey, et al., 1995).

With more complication when considering Thai context, literature proposes that Thai work setting is uniquely characterized by seniority and hierarchy to a high degree (Cardona, Morley, & Reiche, 2013). There has no research been done in the literature that incorporate these two dimensions into account when studying work environment and its effects on transfer of training (Yamhill & McLean, 2005). Therefore, this research process an opportunity to contribute into the literature in Thai setting. Devos, Dumay, Bonami, Bates, and Holton (2007) additionally suggest the cultural dimensions should be taken into account. In this case, the management trainees of this particular hotel firm are posited to be in Thai work setting thus the seniority and hierarchy can challenge or facilitate their training transfer. Therefore, this will unveil the core literature of this paper, transfer of training, as well as the situation of seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace.



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## Literature Review

### *Management trainee program*

In the recent years, management trainee program has been introduced by many leading international hotel-chains in Thailand. They recruit the cream of the crop, best performing students, from the top universities in Thailand and place them into 18 months of intensive training and development with a promising and accelerating future to become a middle management of a hotel. They are trained in different phases. First, they have to rotate to every department to learn and connect the dots. Then, they have to choose the department to specialize. They will be trained deeply and be assigned projects to develop required skills before they graduate. This program, hence, is very popular among young, fresh Thai graduates with the ambition of firm career path. This program is also beneficial to the offering firm as it helps the firm to achieve financial and workforce efficiency (Powell & Yalcin, 2010). Different hotel firms offer the programs under different forms and titles. For example, Hilton offers the program called “*Elevator*”, InterContinental Hotels Group offers the program called “*I-Grad Future Leader*”, Marriott International offers the same called “*Voyager*”. Year by year, the number of the candidates and the trainees has increased considerably. However, the number of the successful trainees that were promoted after completion of the programs is low. This small number is problematic for the hotel comparing to the financial and knowledge investment into the program from the firm.

From the discussion with the company, the reason of unsuccessful cases of management trainees could be the high level of hierarchy and seniority in Thai culture and generally in Southeast Asia. According Cardona, et al. (2013), the hierarchy and trust-relationship in Thailand is commonly found. There is a piece of findings complementing the research conducted by Sadri McCampbell, Jongpipitporn, Umar, and Ungaree (1999) emphasizing that there is high practice of seniority-based promotion in Thai working culture. This means that it is improbable for the young management trainees to be promoted if there is another colleague who is more senior regardless of performance. In addition, a research by (Powell & Yalcin, 2010) also suggests that the management trainees are actually learning intensively from the program however, they face difficulty and resistance in transferring the knowledge into real workplace.

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*Transfer of training*

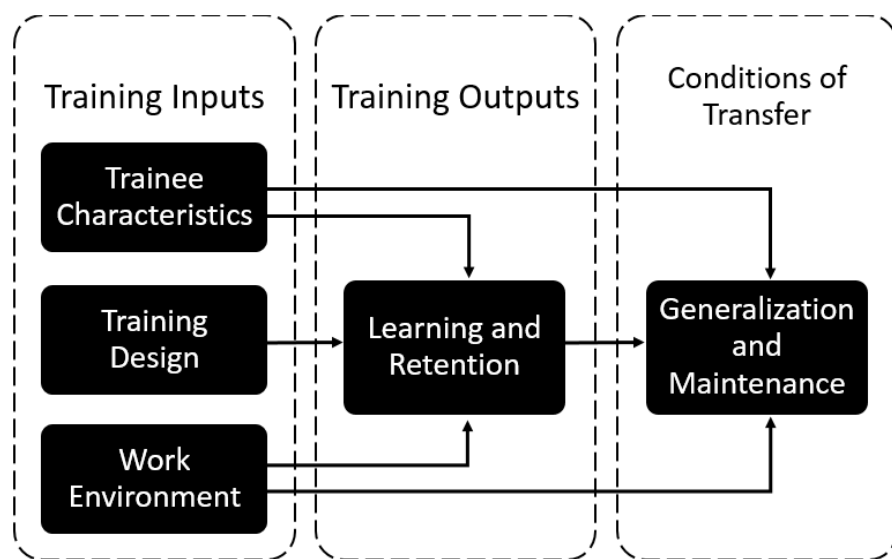
The organizations in the past set a focus, in terms of training and development, on how to maximize the learning of trainees' knowledge and skills in training by ensuring that learning occurred at the end of the training activities. After that, the effort to transfer what has been learned to the job was trainees' responsibility and determination (Broad, 1997). Today's organizations has invested tremendously in training and development of their employees in order to enhance knowledge, skills and abilities (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010). In return, improvement of knowledge, skills and abilities will strengthen organizational outcome and competitive advantages. American organizations has spent \$125 billion in 2007 in training and development activities (Blume, et al., 2010). With the dedication of this large amount of money, the effectiveness of training and development as well as the change in work performance of employees after returning to workplace has brought a great interest to researchers.

Unfortunately, it has been estimated that only 10% of the training influences behavioral change in trainees after the training (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In another research conducted by Saks (2002), the results show that 40% of trainees do not transfer what they learn right after completing the training. One year after completion of the training, the percentage rises to seventy percent of whom do not transfer. They also stated that only fifty percent of the investment in training by organizations contribute to the positive improvement in their people and organization itself (Saks, 2002). This problem of transfer of training consequently highlighted the interest from researchers and outpoured the stream of studies to minimize the gaps in transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Training transfer is jointly defined as *the effective and continuing application of knowledge, skills and attitudes learned in the training by the trainees into their jobs or normal day-to-day work context and maintain them posteriorly over a period of time* (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Broad, 1997; Cheng & Ho, 2001). By this definition, the research on training and development has taken a step forward to study transfer of training and maintenance as a continuous activity, not just the momentary learning at the end of the training.

Baldwin and Ford (1988) has initially proposed, in the first and most recognized review in transfer of training field, a framework to explore prerequisites

to understand transfer construct. As illustrated in Figure 1, this transfer process model consists of three factors which are training-input factors, training-outputs and conditions of transfer. Training-inputs factors includes trainee characteristics, training design and intervention, and work-environment characteristics. These three factors are the most commonly cited factors when researching about transfer of training. This paper will elaborate them in-depth below. For training-output factors, it explains the original learning from the training and its retention of those training materials before the transfer commences. Last is the transfer condition; it incorporates generalization of the original learning to the actual job context and its maintenance over a period of time. Among these three transfer processes, the



*Figure 1 Transfer process model by Baldwin and Ford (1988) p. 65*

training-inputs (trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment) have a direct effect on learning and retention of training-output factors, in which subsequently affects the condition of transfer directly. Furthermore, Trainee characteristics and work environment factors have direct effect toward the conditions of transfers despite the initial learning and retention in the original training material (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

All in all, literature in transfer of training is massive and it has been progressively developed and evolved over three decades. The model of transfer of training is then simplified and proposed that those aforementioned three factors namely trainee characteristics, training design and work environment, in training inputs affecting transfer of training directly, elucidated in Figure 2. This simplified

model will henceforth be adopted in this research and deepen the study to focus on solely work environment and its effects toward transfer of training. The addition of variables that is contextually sensitive for Thai work environment will be discussed below.

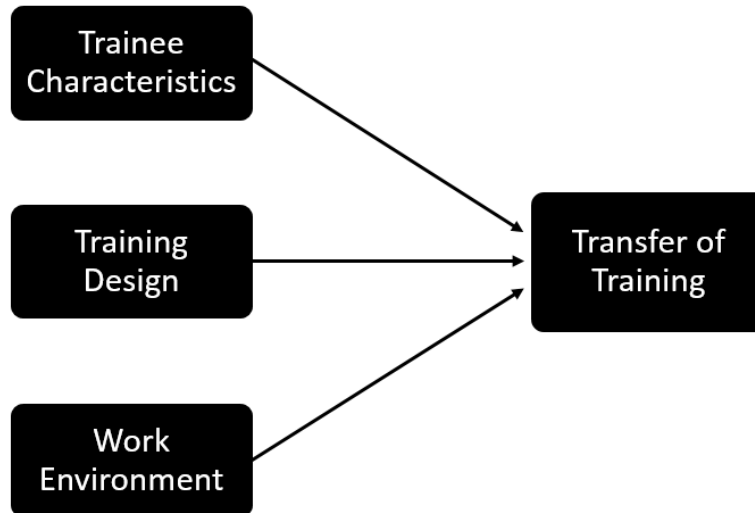


Figure 2 Simplified model of transfer of training by Velada, et al. (2007) p.284

### ***Work Environment***

Baldwin and Ford (1988) contend that “...*Positive transfer is highly contingent on factors in trainee’s work environment...*” (p.69). In their review, two factors were identified which are social support and opportunity to use. There are four types of support in work environment which are subordinate, peer, supervisor and top management (Cheng & Ho, 2001). However, majority of the research stresses mainly three types of support without mentioning subordinate which is more universal to all job-levels in the organization since some employees do not have any direct-reports. It also fits the research objective as well as the management trainees do not have subordinates yet. Research confirms that supportive work environment increases the positive effect of transfer and generalizability particularly. Social support and peer support highly predict positive transfer behaviors (Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Hawley & Barnard, 2005). Opportunity to perform makes sure that trainees are given many chances to apply what they have been trained, new skills and knowledge, into their work settings. The more the opportunity to perform, the greater the amount of trained material can be transferred (Cheng & Ho, 2001). Recent review by Burke and Hutchins (2007) incorporates other factors found in the literature explicitly transfer climate, strategic link and

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accountability. Transfer climate is the circumstances or results that obstruct or enable the transfer of contents learned in the training back in the job settings. This is found to have direct influence on transfer outcome (Lim & Morris, 2006). To emphasize, Blume, et al. (2010) discovered aligning results from their meta-analytic review that transfer climate has the highest correlation with transfer of training. The finding is identical with the research by Kontoghiorghes (2004) that positive transfer climate was the strongest predictor in transfer of training model in this study accounting for half of the total variance.

In the modern literature since the last two decades, work environment factor has received high attention from researchers. More variables and predictors under this factors are explored (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Making trainees accountable for applying training material can also increase likelihood of transfer. A research on managerial learning by Longenecker (2004), studying how to maximize transfer of learning and its retention by asking 278 experienced managers, shows that assurance of accountability held by trainees on applying training content into work place increases the transfer of training and retention. He further suggests for practical actions that trainees should be hold accountable in forms of giving presentation or report to either superiors or colleagues about training contents and then, they should also be given a review or discussion with superiors on the implementation of learned materials in order to make the trainees analyze strategies and concepts of transfer (Longenecker, 2004).

Similarly to the findings from above, Grossman and Salas (2011) observed the various factors and assert only the significant factors that determine the outcome of training transfer in their paper. Three out of those factors are relatively identical to those presented by Burke and Hutchins (2007) but incrementally, they present one more factor which is follow-up. Following-up is a holistic factor after the training is completed but it does not remark the ending of the learning. Trainee debriefing for further learning and application, post-training follow-ups, relapse prevention, self-management, self-talk training, and goal setting were advocated to help trainees positively achieve successful transfer of training. Intriguingly, by providing information aids, procedural aids, coaching aids and decision-making to trainee to use as a reference when applying trained skills in their workplace facilitates training transfer (Grossman & Salas, 2011).

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Recently, the research in work environment continues to expand. Not only intangible factors i.e. work climate, social support are proposed to be a significant predictor of transfer of training, tangible or physical environment in workplace is also revealed to be significant. Two great pieces of worth-mentioning research studying physical environment and workplace designs facilitate or impede the supervisory learning transfer and communication skills transfer. Workplace designs include airflow, sufficient lighting, offices location, personal workspace and work equipment, meeting rooms and furniture etc. Participants in these research, supervisors, perceived workplace design to be a very significant work environment factor that has an impact on their capability and transfer opportunity to utilize acquired communication skills with employees by face-to-face interaction in performance review in particular (Hillsman & Kupritz, 2010; Kupritz & Hillsman, 2011).

Hence, in this research there are four main factors derived from the literature which are *opportunity to perform, social support, transfer climate, and follow-up*. Because the literature shows that they are significantly influential as work environment factors that affect transfer of training. They will be illustrated in the research framework.

### ***Research in Thai Context***

After understanding the construct of transfer of training, localized research and study on transfer of training in Thailand is highly limited. The literature was looked up in both English and Thai language but the result reveals only a few. Research in Thai setting generally focuses on training effectiveness by Kirkpatrick's level one and two, reaction and learning, respectively. Therefore, factors or predictors that influence transfer of training has never been identified (Yamhill & McLean, 2005). Yamhill and McLean (2005) are the first and the only researchers introduced and applied transfer of training construct into Thai context. They translated the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) developed by Holton III, Bates, and Ruona (2000) and applied into Thai work setting. LTSI is an instrument to measure the influence of transfer system in organization. It consists of sixteen factors. Eleven of those are factors relate to the training program and the rest are general factors that are predicted to influence training transfer (Devos, et al., 2007). The research was conducted in 552 Thai organizations with 1,029

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participants randomly selected from different levels in the organization. The results found that the sixteen factors corresponded directly to the instrument from LTSI. However, this study did not take neither organizational culture nor national culture like seniority or hierarchy into account because the replication of research by Holton III, et al. (2000) was generic to various types of organizations. Therefore, Yamnill and McLean (2005) recommended qualitative research in the future which might unveil unique factors in Thailand that were not pinpointed in this study.

### ***Seniority and Hierarchy***

Thai business culture is distinguished by strong value respecting seniority and hierarchy (Cardona, et al., 2013). Furthermore, Thai is ranked as one of the Asian countries with considerable amount of power distance (Andrews & Siengthai, 2009; Yukongdi, 2010). Thais are taught since childhood how to behave or treat others according to the ranks. It is well observed that Thai organizations are structured with vertical power and hierarchy. Seniority and status in Thai culture are measured in relation to power, wealth, professional ranks, family name, occupation, age, job tenure, social connection and merit. When meeting a person, he or she will be positioned into the ranks so that they know how the person should be treated. Juniors will pay respect to seniors. Thais value hierarchy in relationship and it is important to respect seniors. This two cultural dimensions of Thai culture are highly important and influential in business context (Andrews & Siengthai, 2009).

Thai feudalism is the traditional system rooted from the seventeenth century when the rank of people in Thai society then was measured by quantified units called *Sakdina*. *Sakdi* means power and *na* means rice field (Kitiyadisai, 2005). This system ranked individuals by the units of allocated land owned. It was also a designed system for mobilization of slaves or manpower in which they are assigned to leaders or officials in a “client-patron relationship”. The more *Sakdina* you have means the more power, privilege, and thus rank. The supreme power was from the king. The power and ranking was assigned then downward (Mabry, 1979). Even though the slavery was abolished but Thai society and organizations still embrace this hierarchical structure and social ranks (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999).

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In Thai work setting, seniority-based promotion is widely practiced and confirmed by the research from Sadri McCampbell, et al. (1999). Their research compared Thai setting to American. Seniority-based promotion is a practice that relates the job promotion with the length of service or age in the company. This type of practice normally outweighs employees' achievements, qualifications and competencies. This research found that the majority of Thai organizations adopts seniority-based promotion. Its likelihood is positively related to the size of the company. 79.50% of respondents reported that the companies they are in promote employees based on seniority and they respect seniority in workplace. Out of the same data, only 35.30% of those respondents answered that this practice negatively affects the company's efficiency. However, they understand the negative effects of seniority-based promotion because 70.20% of participants said that it is unjust and it impedes performance of the organization (Sadri McCampbell, et al., 1999).

Pongsakornrungsilp (2011) explained deeper in his findings how Thais value seniority and hierarchy. Seniority or *Arwuso* is Thai culture in which younger people are expected to obey, comply and respect older people. *Pu yai* means seniors or superiors whom are the people with authority to decide. It is rude for juniors to create conflicts, disagree or influence their seniors in meeting or public places. Arguing, criticizing and complaining about older people are also disrespectful. Therefore, a younger person would not usually dare to correct, question or forewarn seniors which will be seen as distrustful or impolite. Thanasankit (2002) presents a different perspective of seniority and hierarchy in Thailand by explain Thai values.

### ***Thai Values***

#### ***Krengjai***

*Krengjai* is a prevalent value in Thai culture and workplace. There is no exact word to translate into English but the nearest one would be to be considerate. It encompasses diffidence, consideration, deference and sensitivity toward other people and reluctance to interrupt others, to negotiate, to assert comments or disagreement especially to superiors (Pornpitakpan, 2000; Thanasankit, 2002; Yukongdi, 2010). Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999) likewise explicate that Thais believe and value *Krengjai* and they define it as “*an extreme reluctance to impose on anyone or disturb another's personal equilibrium by refusing requests, accepting assistance, showing disagreement, giving direct*



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*criticism, challenging knowledge or authority, or confronting in a conflict situation”* (p. 384).

Therefore, a considerate mindset and being thoughtful to avoid conflicts and facilitate healthy relationship are the main quality of *Krengjai* (Kitiyadisai, 2005). So, it helps avoid unpleasant situations and facilitates interpersonal confrontation. Holmes, Tangtongtavy, and Tomisawa (2003) state that the expression of *Krengjai* can range from obeying others' requests to avoiding expression of one's opinion or needs in order to maintain a cooperative relationship. For juniors to show *Krengjai* towards seniors or higher-power person is considered as a respect and politeness (Thanasankit, 2002).

#### *Bun kun*

*Bun kun* is Thai grateful goodness from one person to another. It is a psychological contract from one person who offer help, kindness to another person who is in desperate need of help and this person owes to return such kindness back. Therefore, Thai subordinates will feel obligated to return Bun Kun to their superiors by respecting and working hard (Komin, 1990; Thanasankit, 2002). Research in Thai culture shows that *Bun kun* or creating grateful relationship with gratitude reciprocity is highly valued in daily activities (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999).

#### *Face saving*

Thanasankit (2002) provides a detailed explanation that face is sensitive in Thai culture as it equals to ego. Saving or preserving one's ego is a fundamental practice in social interaction in Thailand (Komin, 1990). Giving criticism and having conflict are generally avoided in order to save face of the other person. In an inferior-to-superior interaction, saving face is highly emphasized because losing face means being insulted and it can be worse if it is an elicitation from juniors. So juniors are expected to be more submissive in order to avoid making seniors losing face in public or else it will be a disrespect (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999).

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## **Research Framework**

### ***Research questions***

The literature reviewed above directs this research to three interesting exploratory research questions derived from the previous research comprehension. Andrews and Siengthai (2009) and Cardona, et al. (2013) present the characteristics of Thai business culture and illustrate that Thais respect seniority and hierarchy in business and work context. Furthermore, Sadri McCampbell, et al. (1999) demonstrated that seniority-based promotion is widely practiced hence it can be implied that seniority and hierarchy is precondition of this practice. This study will further explore the influence of work environment on transfer of training. This factor can facilitate or impede the outcome (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993; Tracey, et al., 1995; Velada, et al., 2007). This establishes three exploratory research questions.

Q<sub>1</sub>: What is the degree of existence of seniority and hierarchy in Thai work environment within this particular hotel firm?

Q<sub>2</sub>: How does the seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect transfer of training of management trainees within this particular hotel firm?

Q<sub>3</sub>: What are the potential consequences of the effects of seniority and hierarchy in Thai work environment on management trainees and this particular hotel firm?

Additionally, the research will also cultivate the additional suggestions from the participants in terms of areas for improvement in training, structure of the program, length, characteristics, networking and reason for unsuccessful cases and merge these results with the one from this research questions to be submitted for the company so that these holistic findings will be useful for the company in order to modify the management program which is momentarily suspended.

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**Research Framework**

The purpose of this research is to contribution to the literature within the transfer of training field. In particular, the aim is to understand how work environment namely opportunity to perform, transfer climate, social support, follow-up, seniority and hierarchy in Thai work context affect the transfer of training of a management trainee program that is offered by an international hotel firm in Thailand as demonstrated in Figure 3. For practical purposes, this research will provide the insights of Thai culture in order to adapt the management trainee program to be more suitable and localized as Thailand is their major base of business in Southeast Asia where there are numerous existing properties managed this firm and there are more in the pipeline so it is their significant growing market.

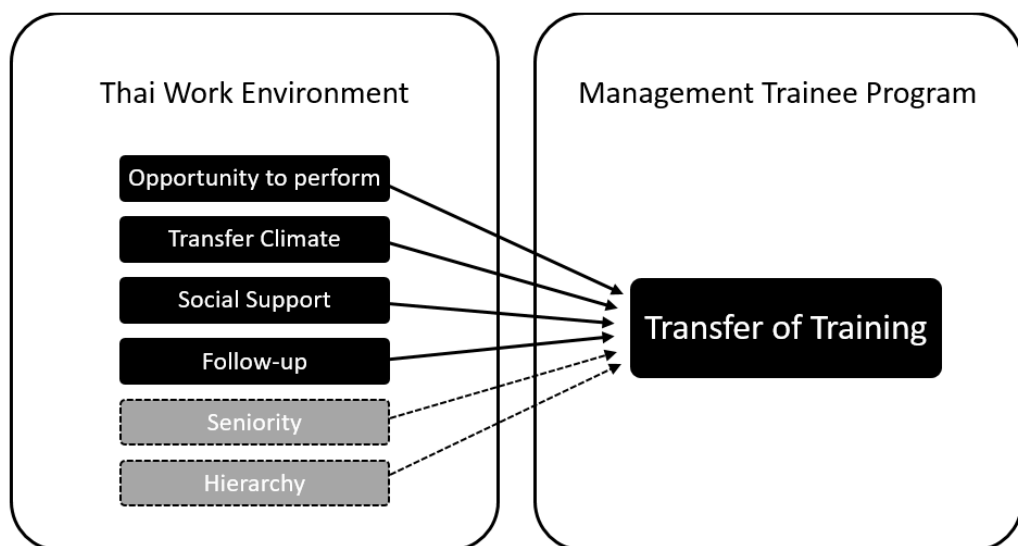


Figure 3 Research framework model

The framework of this research, summarized in Figure 3, is partially derived from a simplified transfer model, shown in Figure 2, proposed by Velada, et al. (2007) which is originated from the classic model of Baldwin and Ford (1988), shown in Figure 1. It explains three main factor that influence transfer of training construct (trainee characteristics, training design and work environment). This research will deepen the model by studying the work-environment factor solely because researcher aims to integrate the uniqueness of Thai work environment which is seniority and hierarchy and Thai values aforementioned and how they can influence training transfer. Four main factors are utilized from the literature which are opportunity to perform, transfer climate, social support and follow-up. In addition, seniority and hierarchy in Thai work environment is then added as another factor in the framework to test if they affect transfer of training of management

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trainee program in work setting, illustrated in Figure 3. The factor stems under work environment in this research are factors proposed by the existing literature and seniority and hierarchy which is the distinctive characteristics of Thai culture. This exploratory research will also investigate the potential consequences toward management trainees and the organization. Ultimately the participating hotel firm will be provided with suggestions, insights.

## **Methodology**

### ***Generic Qualitative Analysis***

As this research framework is very context-specific, it is conducted locally in Thailand in a world's leading international hotel chain that is widely present in Thai hotel industry. The study employs generic qualitative research methodology because of three reasons. First, the number of the management trainees to be potential participants are too minimal to conduct and generalize findings in quantitative method. Second, the research framework is cultural-based in Thailand specifically so qualitative method will extract more contextual and explanatory findings (Ritchie, 2014). Third, generic qualitative analysis effectively investigates how people report their personal opinions, reflections or attitudes about their experiences, in this research, of management trainee program and seniority and hierarchy in Thailand (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). In terms of data exploration, thematic analysis is used to digest and analyze the information. According to Percy, et al. (2015), it is employed when research has pre-determined themes during data collection according to the theory derived from the literature and research questions. Even though the pre-understanding exists, the possibilities of new emerging themes is still open. The data will later be analyzed individually organized into themes and patterns that illuminate results to the research questions.

For data collection, the management trainees and relevant associates in the company are interviewed. The interview is semi-structured and conducted in Thai to ensure that the interviewees can convey the true and meaningful message robustly without any language barriers. In case of expats, the interview questions are in English as they are initially formulated. The interview aims to acquire three main areas of data from the participants which are the basic background about the program (motivation, specialized training, organizational climate, work environment regarding transfer, the existence of seniority and hierarchy in the

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workplace), their effects on the transfer of training on management trainees and their consequences. The interviews are loosely structured with open-ended questions but they were related to the mentioned areas of research framework (Britten, 1995). The interviewer also uses the probing and prompts suggested by Ritchie (2014) to understand the answer and explore deeper by asking follow-up questions for clarification.

### ***Sample***

To test the existence of seniority and hierarchy in the workplace, the management trainees and relevant persons are interviewed and assessed. The sampling method used in this research is a mix of “*purposive sampling*” and “*convenience sampling*”. *Purposive sampling* is a criterion-based method that research chose particular sample units because they feature specific attributes that can facilitate the research objective (Ritchie, 2014). *Convenience sampling* is simply done based on whom is available because it was rather difficult to invite the general manager and human resources directors to participate due to their workload (Ritchie, 2014). Also researcher has a limitation of one month to collect data in Thailand physically. The total sample is tentatively planned to include twenty-five interviewees to enrich data; ten management trainees from three target groups (current, finished-and-promoted, and resigned trainees), five coaches (general managers or hotel manager), five human resources directors and five ordinary employees. However, the number varies because of the dependence on the data confidentiality regulations, coordination support from the company and the will to participate of the sample.

### ***Data organization and analysis***

The summaries of interview, literature, program materials retrieved from the company are stored using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called “*QSR NVivo*”. The software is utilized because of several advantages suggested by many scholars. It can save researcher from time-consuming clerical tasks on organization of the data effectively. All types of sources can be imported with convenient accessibility rather than physical accessing to the hard copies of the data and it allows researcher to track, manage, code, document, visualize, classify the data digitally within the database. It is well understood that the software does not analyze the data, the program helps tremendously to simplify

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the coding process according to the analysis used and it can be retraced and display automated data query according to desired filters. These advantages enhance the rigor, creditability and consistency of the research (Richards, 2015; Ritchie, 2014; Wickham & Woods, 2005).

### **Ethical consideration**

The contacts of the interviewees were retrieved from the company with valid consent and the interviewees were introduced to the research by the contact person in the company whom reviewed the questions and the research framework. The interviewees were sent with the invitation including the research framework and ethical statement informing that the participation is completely voluntary and free from coercion (Ritchie, 2014). Their participation, opinions, inputs will be absolutely anonymous. There will be no effect on their work nor performance review. In Thai culture, it is difficult to say “no” or to reject others so silence from the invitation indicated rejection. There were seven people that remain silent which was signaled that they feel “*Krengjai*” and were not willing to participate possibly due to their work load or unwillingness. Researcher recognized the silent rejection and did not urge them to participate further.

Furthermore, when the actual interviews were conducted, the interviewees were carefully notified again about their participation and they were asked for consent to record the interview in order to transcribe for research purpose. It was communicated clearly that only researcher has sole access to the interview records and the name of the hotels, the positions or the workplace will not be identifiable and trackable. The data set and records will be deleted once the research is successfully finished. Therefore, the participants could feel confident and sure that there will be no influence on them. They were more willing to share the experience to the third party and they were free to say both negative and positive stories. At the end, they were thanked for their inputs which will benefit the company in making improvement and for researcher’s learning.

## **Results**

### ***Participants***

In total, there are twenty-three interviewees for this research including one case whom is a foreign management trainee from China. She is employed by the

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hotel but she is not a formal participant in the management trainee program in question for this research. Therefore, her role, experience and expectation are different from the rest of the interviewees. Therefore, this case resulted in one invalid case which is excluded from the data. So the total number of participants is finalized to be twenty-two. They are classified into three groups by their roles which are the management trainees, human resources directors who implement the program in each property and the coach of the management trainees whom entitled as the general manager or the executive assistant manager of each respective property. Of the twenty-two interviewees, there are fourteen management trainees, four human resources directors and four coaches. There are also invited from different properties which are named as hotel A, B, C, D, and Southern. The hotels are randomly named and the Southern group implies the hotels which are located in the southern provinces of Thailand (the rest are located in Bangkok and nearby vicinity).

Among the management trainees group, as mentioned earlier in the methodology, there are classified into subgroup of successful, unsuccessful and ongoing. The successful group are those who successfully completed the program and are being employed with the company in accordance with the objective of the program. The unsuccessful subgroup includes those who have resigned during the program or those who reject the employment offer from the company which inhibit the objective of the program. Lastly, the ongoing are those who are currently on the program. There are seven successful management trainees who are being employed with the company. The unsuccessful subgroup of management trainees is comprised of four participants and the ongoing subgroup has three participants. In total, this research has fourteen management-trainee participants, summarized in Table 1.

In terms of demographics, the participants are mixed in gender. There are seven males and fifteen females. The age of the management trainees ranges from twenty-three until twenty-nine years old. They are educated in hotel management or business administration with high English proficiency level. The general managers' age varies from forty until fifty-six years old. They hold fifteen to thirty-one years of experience in hotel industry. Therefore, they are familiar with the industry. Similarly, the human resources directors' age ranges thirty-five to fifty-one years old with twelve to twenty years of experience in the field. Therefore, they well-experienced and familiarized with the hotel industry.

Locations	Management trainees			Total	HR Directors	Coaches/ GMs	Total
	Subgroups						
	Successful	Unsuccessful	Ongoing				
<b>Hotel A</b>	1	1	0	2	1	1	<b>4</b>
<b>Hotel B</b>	2	0	1	3	1	1	<b>5</b>
<b>Hotel C</b>	2	2	0	4	0	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Hotel D</b>	1	0	1	2	1	1	<b>4</b>
<b>Southern</b>	1	1	1	3	1	1	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	7	4	3	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>

*Table 1 The summary of participants. Numbers by hotel locations, roles and subgroups.*

### ***Degree of existence of seniority and hierarchy***

The finding of the first research question which is the degree of existence of seniority and hierarchy in workplace of hotel properties within this particular hotel chain is quite obvious. First of the all, every respondent reported that seniority and hierarchy does exist in their workplace. The degree of existence is perceived in various degree and roles of the respondents. The strongest response from all the respondents shows that the degree of existence of seniority and hierarchy is perceived to be high or very high. Respondents were asked to give a rating from one to ten of how they perceived the degree of existence. There are two strongest ratings which are seven and eight with the most frequency of five. Or in the eyes of statistics, mode is seven and a half. The second strongest group rated nine as the degree of existence with frequency of four (see Table 2). Beside the rating, the interpretation of the presence of seniority and hierarchy according to participants' experience will be reported below.



<b>Frequencies</b>				
<b>Degree of S&amp;H rating</b>	<b>Participant roles</b>			<b>Total</b>
	Management trainees	HR Directors	Coaches/ GMs	
<b>10</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>9</b>	3	0	1	<b>4</b>
<b>8</b>	4	1	0	<b>5</b>
<b>7</b>	2	0	3	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	3	0	0	3
<b>5</b>	2	1	0	3
<b>4</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	14	4	4	<b>22</b>

*Table 2 Frequency of seniority and hierarchy rating by participants' roles*

The majority of the respondents explained after rating that seniority and hierarchy is highly valued and they also reported that the degree is quite strong in their perception. For example, one human resources leader answered that “...seniority and hierarchy does exist. It is very important and highly valued in Thai society” (HR 4). The management trainee also confirmed the high degree of seniority and hierarchy in the hotel work environment that they faced. “...I think it is quite strong...I always have to be gentle and humble towards them” (MT 08). Another management trainee answered the point that “the level is extremely high. It is even reinforced from the management and the GM. The GM is very strict about the level of hierarchy and seniority. He is quite conservative when it comes to lead others” (MT 01). There are two foreigners participated in this research whom are the coach of the management trainees. GM 04 stated,

*“Seniority and hierarchy does exist. The positive part is that people are respectful and genuinely friendly. The negative part is that it holds people back sometimes. I cannot imagine that Thai workers would be brave enough to call someone out on something in the meeting...in Thailand, frontline workers will never approach the general manager to discuss about an issue. The complaints will come via the lines of commands which might or might not be heard by GM. So seniority and hierarchy definitely exist”.*

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It was emphasized that seniority and hierarchy is practiced in Thai workplace. It was compared to the person's home working culture. The power distance and hierarchy between colleagues in each rank is quite high. The staff in the lower rank will feel hesitated to raise up any issue directly with the management or the executive. It can be seen as rude or disrespectful to oversee the direct-line manager. Therefore, it will have to be cascaded to the supervisors or managers and then they will discuss with the director whom might or might not bring the issue up to the management meeting.

Another non-Thai respondent and other Thai respondents made a point that the seniority and hierarchy does exist in their workplace. However, the degree of existence used to be higher or it starts to decrease gradually.

GM 1 stated that *"it used to be higher because more senior people has retired. Younger people is coming in. It is also expecting to continue to decrease gradually"*.

GM 2 said that *"I even want to rate higher but I think the younger generation recently joining us lowered it (the degree of existence of seniority and hierarchy)"*.

HR 1 suggested that *"there is seniority and hierarchy but however it is gradually decreasing nowadays because we have younger generation joining the organization and they bring in new ways of working which overcome the long-practiced working climate"*.

MT 10 claimed that *"it used to be a lot higher when I joined this hotel but there are those who have worked here for a long time before the hotel was rebranded. Now there are some newcomers so the level drop slightly"*.

The examples above have shown that the participants verbalized that the seniority and hierarchy is there in Thai working environment. However, it is perceived that the level starts to drop due to the reason that the senior colleagues are retiring and being replaced by the younger generations and those who are in the mid-range are also adapting to modern way of working.

Researcher analyzed further by looking at the attributes of each management trainee. They are examined if they have prior working experience before join the program. Some possess work experience or required internship

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experience which is a prerequisite of graduation from a university and some do not have work experience at all. Researcher examined these attributes and compared with the rating of the degree of seniority and hierarchy by each participant. The finding is promising. The participants who have no work experience at all perceived higher seniority and hierarchy in the workplace. They rated only seven and above on the scale of one to ten. However, majority of those who have work experience or who have had internship experience before joining the management trainee program rated the degree of existence seven and below. They perceived seniority and hierarchy to be lower.

This emerges that prior work experience or at least internship is an important factor to how the management trainees perceive the seniority and hierarchy within workplace. HR 2 also endorsed that “*fresh graduate with no work experience are not strong enough to go through resistance*”. This aligned with the finding that those who have no work experience will never face seniority and hierarchy-related situation before so they will perceive it to be strong and they will find it surprisingly hard to tolerate it.

GM 4 suggested that “*the factor like years of establishment of each hotel is also important because the years of the service of staff might have a positive relationship with the degree of seniority and hierarchy as well as the average age of employees*”.

GM 3 also mentioned that “*the culture of workplace in the province and in Bangkok is quite different. People here are less competitive but more cooperative (in hotels outside of Bangkok)*”.

Researcher was suggested that the years of operation of each hotel can be a prediction of the degree of seniority and hierarchy. Also, the location of the hotel can give a different perspective on the existence of seniority and hierarchy because the culture and working environment are different. By examining the rating and the location of the hotels (workplace) of participants, it was found that the degree of seniority and hierarchy was rated as the highest in Hotel D which has been operated for the longest time among the five properties (twenty-six years). Furthermore, the hotel in the southern part of the country was rated the strongest in the existence with more frequency (three cases rated exactly at eight). These two findings also aligned

with what was suggested by our participants above (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Locations	Rating Degree of Seniority & Hierarchy							Total
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>Hotel A</b>	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	4
<b>Hotel B</b>	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
<b>Hotel C</b>	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
<b>Hotel D</b>	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	4
<b>Southern</b>	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>

*Table 3 Frequency of rating of seniority and hierarchy by hotel locations*

Besides the rating of the degree of seniority and hierarchy, the evidence and related behaviors were also collected from the interviewees to demonstrate the situations. The most common situation is the seniority-based promotion. It was reported that the career promotion was carried out regardless of employee's performance. The reasons were absolutely because the employees possess long service. Therefore, he or she deserves promotion as a recognition or gratitude for loyalty. HR 2 and HR 3 gave an example that,

*“In accounting and food and beverage department that an employee was proposed to be promoted because he or she has been working for a long time but not really qualified. It is partly Thai working culture and mindset of respecting senior and saving face of other. If there is a restaurant captain who works for longer period but if the hotel would like to promote a new staff to be a supervisor. It is seen not respectful to promote the new staff into a higher position. Therefore, I have to promote this person to be in the equal position as the restaurant captain. It is acceptable to promote the younger person to be in the same step but it is unacceptable to promote the newcomer to a position ahead of a senior” (HR 2).*

*“Seniority-based promotion strongly exists here as well. I was surprised when I faced this type of promotion and it was reasoned that these employees have been working for us for a long time and they have never been given promotion. So they should be promoted. There is no other reason or evidence to*

*rationalize the nomination such as a hardworking evidence, competency, recognition, or impressive leadership skills. When I first started to work here, ten kitchen staff and twelve engineers were promoted at the same time because they have never been promoted and they have been loyal with the hotel...” (HR 3).*

*“...I recently encountered the same issue just like last year. They want to promote six engineers because they have been working here for a long time. One person was recently promoted last year to be duty engineer and this year he is nominated to be promoted as a senior duty engineer...” (HR 3).*

*“...There was no other evidence of performance indication given. The nomination for promotion is also done according to the seniority. The staff that were promoted last year had a longer years of service. After being promoted, the nomination of the next group with the second longest year of service is done this year...” (HR 3).*

Moreover, seniority and hierarchy were exemplified by more participants which can be observed through communication within the organization like sending emails, feedback and salary increments and bonus.

*“Seniority and hierarchy does exist in almost everything that is carried out in this hotel. For example, when sending emails, the list of the recipients must be carefully and sequentially listed according to their rank of seniority and hierarchy. The name of the senior colleagues cannot be at the end of the list or the name of the higher rank cannot lie behind the lower ranks” (MT 2).*

*“Bonus and salary increment are being calculated and paid out according to the year of service. The longer you work, the more bonus and salary increment you will be granted regardless of how much you perform” (HR 3).*

*“I give comment for improvement about their department. I grew up within western culture so I tend to be straightforward but I was commented by another leader that I should not be so straightforward and I have to soften my personality to be more gentle and try not say everything that I have in mind” (MT 10).*

The evidence provided by the participants above illustrates clearly that seniority and hierarchy is highly practiced and valued. It is a challenge for the

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management trainees to persist such working culture especially those who do not have any work experience.

### ***The effects of seniority and hierarchy on transfer of training***

After discovering that the existence of seniority and hierarchy in workplace, researcher investigates further to find out the effects that they have on transfer of training of the management trainees in this particular hotel firm. As mentioned above in the research framework, the factors that are investigated under work environment construct are opportunity to perform, social support, transfer climate and follow-up.

GM 3 expressed that *“up to certain degrees, it does effect the transfer of training of the management trainees. As said earlier, one of most frequent challenges faced by the management trainees is about people. They are pressured by the senior workers. They felt that they are not being trained sufficiently and willingly”*. GM 3 stated further that *“if you are perceived as a learner or trainees, you will be respected as a competitor who will learn and eventually will take the position away”*.

During the training, they were trained not intensively and willingly by senior trainers or workers. They were also pressured by their senior colleagues. All of the management trainees are trained in each department so they are perceived as the learner which means the competitor. They will be trained profoundly in order to be promoted as a leader in the near future. This means that the position will be reserved for these young management trainees. Therefore, this will impact factors regarding work environment construct.

### ***Opportunity to perform***

Seniority and hierarchy has affected opportunity to perform of the management trainees. The main findings under this factor are having no challenge, and no opportunity to lead.

MT 11 reported that *“During my specialized learning, I was doing most of the routine work like generating a lot of reports regarding revenue. This routine tasks are very boring and anyone can do it if you know the system and have basic understanding of reservation. So after a while of report-generating tasks, I was really demotivated and I felt like I have no energy to work”*.

According to the requirement of the program, the management trainees should be doing intensive project to exercise their leadership and specialized skills in the third phase of the program. Researcher found that opportunity to perform was limited for them due the lack of trust from the senior workers or colleagues. The management trainees are perceived to be least experienced and it resulted in low trustworthiness in giving assignments.

MT 9 also stated that *“in front office department, I did not get a chance to have hand-on experience. I only had a chance to stand by and doing simple tasks... I assume that they are afraid that I will make mistakes when checking in the guests...I tried (to suggest new ways of working) but it was not accepted usually. I think it is because I have less credibility to them as I am still young and unexperienced”*.

MT 7 affirmed that *“the management trainees should have played more roles and be given more opportunity to learn even they are still young. In my experience, I did not believe that they trust management trainees enough to do anything so we could not really proof ourselves. We do not get opportunity to learn to lead either so how can we become a leader”*.

The management trainees are being trained with the commitment from the company that they will be fast-growing leaders in the future. However, nearly no opportunity for them to learn to lead others. Almost all of the management trainees reported that there were not given a chance to exercise their leadership. It was exclaimed that it is hard to the younger person to act as a supervisor to lead a team without having resistance. Therefore, many of the management trainees voiced that they did not get a chance to lead even a small team. They questioned how they can be a leader without leading opportunity.

MT 11 revealed that *“I did not get a chance to lead anyone. There is a small opportunity when I help food and beverage team serving breakfast in the morning and there are some students trainees that I advise them what to do but they were not really my team”*.

MT 9 suggested that *“it could have been better if we really have a chance to really lead even a small team because we are being groomed to be a leader but we were not given any chance to lead. However, it is hard in Thai culture*

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*for a younger person to lead older team members. You first have to proof yourself and then you can lead”.*

There are a few cases that they are promoted in their last phase of the program or after they finished the program. Even though they are promoted with the manager position or assistant manager, they have no direct-reports or team member to lead. MT 9 pointed out that *“I was appointed as a lobby manager after the program. However, there was no direct-reports that I have to lead”*. MT 12 reported the same situation that *“I was promoted as the guest experience manager...I did not have direct reports”*.

To test on the positive side if the management trainees were given opportunities to lead or to transfer, what the effects are. The researcher run the data analysis program using the specific-attribute query on successful cases of management trainees. The result shows that the successful management trainees were given positive opportunity to perform. Two management trainees who are successfully completed the program and currently hired in the management level of the company revealed that they were assigned to lead a small team when they were management trainees. This has been beneficial to their leadership skill as they admitted that they face resistance at the beginning of the assignment but it faded after they proofed themselves with qualified competencies.

MT 5 who is also a successful case said that *“I apply what I have learn from the training to improve the task and performance of the hotel. For example, I can apply it through creating new action plans”*.

MT 10 stated that *“I was given a chance to take leadership role in the department because after my first phase, almost all of the supervisor resigned, so I have to lead the team and solve guests’ problems”*.

Not only the results are drawn from the management trainees, this result is also substantiated by the coach of the management trainees who is familiar with the program. GM 2 informed with the researcher that,

*“One of the reason that the program does not work is that we hire management trainees but we do not give them a chance to lead others, to lead the projects...  
...The company has made a mistake by placing the graduated management trainees into a position where there is no subordinate. In some case, the*



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*management trainees were placed in a supervisory level according to the aim of the program but in reality, there is no subordinate for them to supervise”.*

As shown above, the effect seniority and hierarchy on opportunity to perform a task is quite significant. The management trainees are not given a chance to lead others, to lead projects. They are offered placement in a managerial position but they actually do not have any subordinates to lead.

### *Social Support*

Most of the findings under this factor are positive. Social support within their workplace was supportive. Also, majority of the management trainees were given direct coaching from their general managers. However, there are some cases that they were coached from the second top manager in the hotel such as executive assistance manager or hotel manager because the general managers were too occupied to commit a coaching session. The management trainees reported that their coaches were very supportive in their learning and always helped them leverage the difficulty. Staff are often friendly and welcoming when encountering management trainees.

HR 3 stated that *“most of the time they are happy with the job and rotation in each department. People are friendly to them”.*

MT 1 also answered in the interview that *“the coach is quite open for discussion and he is very supportive”.*

GM 4 ratified that *“all of the department heads in the hotel are supportive for their learning. management trainees are invited into operation meeting and strategic meeting... They are regarded as one of the active members of the management team and they are encouraged to be present in all hotel events. They can learn that they need to be visible by the employees”.*

MT 12 confirmed that *“I was assigned some follow-up tasks after and during the program. I was given autonomy and support to execute those tasks. I was even given budget to those small projects to accomplish after the presentation”.*

Nevertheless, the result also shows that seniority and hierarchy can also hinder the social support. There is one case that the management trainee was disturbed by another colleague in managerial position due to envious state of

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feeling that the management trainee is entitled to a better opportunity. MT 4 reported that the difficulty in an unhealthy social support from senior manager that,

*“I faced the difficulty of getting along with one person in the managerial position because she disliked the way I presented myself and requested for further possible opportunities to learn the tasks and to be promoted from my first GM. In my opinion, I think she envied the opportunity I got from the program. Hence, such manager created the rumor against me and some of her close colleagues believed her and tended to show the negative attitude towards me. This issue was not directly work-related so it did not negatively impact my work. But, it really disturbed me since the work environment among me, her and her fellows were quite stressful”*

Furthermore, feedback, which is part of social support, is found to be lacking in the management trainees program implementation and it is found to be influenced by the seniority and hierarchy in both ways; feedback from supervisors to management trainees and vice versa. First, the feedback from superior to the management trainees are given in a vague contexts and it is unclear. It is found that there is a lack of genuine feedback.

MT 1 expressed that *“I need to have a feedback of my performance that I have never received”*.

MT 13 similarly expressed that *“it is difficult to provide and receive honest feedback. Negative feedback is hardly given to another person in Thai working environment because of saving face. Your colleagues will still say that you did a great job even though you actually made a lot of mistakes”*.

MT 14 explained that *“the opinion and evaluation given are frequently vague because people try to avoid giving negative feedback and not hurting the feeling of others. It is unclear for further improvement”*.

Moreover, the bottom-up feedback from the management trainees to superiors is often avoided because of politeness. It can be considered rude if you criticize or give negative feedback to seniors.

MT 2 answered that *“being younger or junior, it is difficult to give negative feedback to seniors and it is even rude to criticize seniors in the meeting”*.

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Players in social support includes supervisor, subordinates and same-level colleagues. All of the management trainees reported that their colleagues in their workplace are virtually senior than them. There are a few who can be younger with shorter experience. Therefore, this will have influence on the next factor which is transfer climate.

### *Transfer climate*

Seniority and hierarchy play an important role in facilitating transfer climate factor because as mentioned earlier, trust is low in this contexts from senior colleagues toward the management trainees. In this factor, it is revealed that resistance is generated from seniority and hierarchy in workplace.

MT 10 expressed that “*senior colleagues often criticize me and do not take my inputs*”.

MT 11 mentioned that “*sometimes the leaders are not willing to cooperate or respect my suggestion because they think that I am junior. After I consult with my coach and after he discussed this with the leader, they cooperate smoothly*”.

MT 9 answered that “*I tried (to suggest a new way of working) but it was not accepted usually. I think it is because I have less credibility to them as I am still young and unexperienced*”.

MT 8 also answered that “*when I have to give opinion, I am afraid to propose suggestion because older colleagues know more than me. So I would rather suggest in terms of questions first*”.

It is suggested that it is even harder when the management trainees were perceived as trainees and they have to act as a leader in the later phases leading those trainers. They are often feel that their inputs are not taken and they are not credible.

HR 4 confirmed that “*it is a mistake when they are trained in the first phase as the rank-and-file staff by colleagues or supervisors in each department and in the second phase of the program, the management trainees will have to act as a supervisor leading those trainers. Consequently, they will face resistance because those trainers think that the management trainees are new and*

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*unexperienced. They are the trainers of the management trainees and how can they now be supervisors”*

MT 5 reported that *“usually people do not listen to me because I am new and young. However, I was told by my first coach when I voiced it with him that I was not trained during my rotation. He suggested me to bring this to be a challenge that I have to cope... For resistance, I did not feel the explicit aggression or resistance from colleagues but I think there is implicit resistance in questioning my ability”*.

MT 14 admitted that *“it is uncomfortable for me when I have been assigned in a project with senior workers because I have to be very careful when talking, commenting and interacting with them. I cannot finalize the decision, call for meeting or take any actions without informing and getting approve from them. This slow down the project because they are always busy”*.

Besides undesirable climate above, GM 1 stated that *“there are a lot of older staff so they are reluctant to change, stubborn and narrow-minded. However, they are experienced and warm”*. Seniority and hierarchy formed the flexible and compromising workplace. They can be a good source of information for younger people and it can form a family-like working environment.

As displayed above, seniority and hierarchy does have a strong impact on transfer of training in many aspects both negative and positively. It affects all of the factors stemming in work environment in these hotels. Even though these sampled hotels are managed and internationalized by a leading international chain, the management trainees still suffer from the localized cultures like seniority and hierarchy.

### ***The consequences***

After realizing the effects of seniority and hierarchy on transfer of training of management trainee program in Thai contexts, it is interesting to investigate the destructive and constructive consequences. The destructive ones include loss of motivation and determination, barrier to learning and success, and the most destructive ones as the sequential consequence, resignation. In addition, there is one response that signals to researcher that seniority and hierarchy can contribute to knowledge hiding from senior colleagues to younger ones. On the bright side,

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seniority and hierarchy can contribute to the adaptability of the management trainees if they manage to pass through it. In long run, this will progressively result in loyalty to the company and work engagement.

### ***Job Dissatisfaction***

#### *Loss of motivation and determination*

The management trainees are very determined to the program and learning. They have high expectation on the program derived from the highly competitive recruitment process. However, they struggle transferring knowledge from training into workplace because of seniority and hierarchy systems that are strongly present. They reported loss of motivation and commitment during the program. These findings were observed by both the coach and the interviews of management trainees themselves.

GM 3 told that *“they face a lot of resistance due to seniority and hierarchy in the organization causing them to lose motivation and commitment to the program and resign eventually”*.

MT 11 thought that *“when some senior colleagues are promoted because of seniority and hierarchy, it is disappointed for management trainee to see that they are not really qualified and they do not have such skills. It is not professional. So it is not inspiring to us instead of seeing them as a role model”*

They are inspired by the trainers and department head but after they experience the incompetence and the practice of seniority and hierarchy that slow down the work process, they lose motivation and commitment.

#### *Barrier to learning, expression and success*

Second consequence that is widely observed among the participants is that the management trainees are unable to learn and transfer as much as they can and are willing to. They cannot express their ideas, inputs and opinions and they are unable to perform as much as they can. They felt that their potentials are not being utilized by the company.

MT 1 said that *“it is like a wall or barriers against the learning and speaking up of the management trainees. It is difficult for us to express our ideas. We*

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*have creative ideas but we have to keep it quiet because it might create a new task for someone or it might hurt others in the workplace”.*

MT 2 expressed that *“if there is less seniority and hierarchy, I could have performed better because it is the barriers to speak up.... it also impacts how I express myself or give feedback. I cannot be direct and open. It is often said that fresh graduates are a new, energetic blood to lead changes in the organization. It is not true. As a younger worker, I cannot do so and expect to get acceptance from seniors”.*

MT 6 affirmed that *“to speak up for an idea to increase work performance to seniors might be regarded as disrespect”.*

MT 8 responded that *“seniority and hierarchy can extensively limit or impede the thinking or creative suggestions from management trainees. We have inputs to propose but we are influenced by the seniority and hierarchy so I do not think it is open to accept my thoughts”.*

*“Another example is that when there is something unethical or something that is not right being presented in the meeting, I cannot comment or say it publicly that it is not right. I have to play along with my boss and support it. However, I do not really support it because it is not right”.* (MT 11)

### *Resignation*

The most destructive consequence of the job dissatisfaction mentioned is found in this research is resignation from the program. The management trainees face and suffer from seniority and hierarchy in workplace. Some are strong enough and manage to adapt and pass through these two systems. However, some of them are fragile and impatient as suggested by GM 3. These whom account to be a majority have decided to exit the program or at least at one point have intention to quite the program. The attribute-specific analysis is conducted to generate the overview of how many participants have intention to resign. Table 4 shows that almost three-fourth (64 percent) of the total management-trainee participants had intention to resign while they are on the program. Nine out of fourteen of them reported “yes” at one point of the program mostly because of people-related issue.

<b>Frequencies</b>			
Intention to resign		Work experience	
Yes	9	Yes	6
No	3	No	4
Unavailable	2	Only internship	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

*Table 4 Management trainees' intention to resign and previous work experience*

The resignation is found to be destructive not only to the company for the loss of investment in training resources and loss of high-potential talents but it is also destructive for the management trainees as they lose eighteen months of their time to develop career path. Therefore, it is the worst case scenario for both parties.

MT 4 stated that *“in some properties in which these two systems are too strong or even stronger than the international corporate culture, it is a barrier which could discourage the trainees to be successful in the program, or even could stimulate the trainees to leave the program. This is not beneficial for the trainees themselves as they lose the opportunity to gain the advantages and experiences from this worthwhile program. For the properties themselves, they lose the potential future leaders from their companies and lose all resources which have already invested in the training process for such trainees”*.

MT 3 informed that *“many times that I want to resign because the company cultures, way of working might not be for me”*.

GM 3 explained that *“they are mostly impatient and fragile. They are not strong enough towards resistance. They tend to resign and look for a new job instead of persisting the hardship”*.

HR 3 said that *“The potentials and ability were not efficiently utilized by the hotel. Therefore, she resigned”*.

Some interviewees from management-trainees group also reported that they do not think they belong to this workplace, or this culture. The coach even answered that their management trainees did not think that hotel is not the industry for them after all.

### *Knowledge hiding*

Interestingly found as the additional consequences out of the research scope, seniority and hierarchy contributes to knowledge hiding within the organization as the senior workers feel unsecured about their positions and their work so they refuse to train the management trainees with limited skills and knowledge. They are afraid that their these younger and energetic potentials will take their positions and promotions. Senior colleague had an intention to secure the position and the management trainees were informed to first be a training coordinator which is the entry position and it is not the purposeful promotion according to the program.

MT 2 stated that *“when I first decided to learn deeper about training and talent development, my senior trainer whom I will have to succeed told me that I might have to initially work as training coordinator or training executive after completing the program... I was not trained intensively until it is confirmed that my trainer will retire”*.

Senior colleague had an intention to secure the position and the management trainees were informed to first be a training coordinator which is the entry position and it is not the purposeful promotion according to the program. The knowledge was also protected to maintain the position and the power between a junior management trainee and a senior trainer.

### ***Job Satisfaction***

#### *Adaptability and success*

On the bright side, some manage to pass through the challenge from seniority and hierarchy in workplace. While some fellow management trainees have already quitted the program, suffer from inability to speak, there are some of them turn it into challenge that they have to achieve and gain adaptability and excel.

GM 4 suggested that *“if the management trainees are patient enough to pass through this tough time of the program and learn as much as they can. Then*



*the future is bright”.*

MT 4 confirmed that *“if the trainees have already been trained to handle such aspects in the program, they could manage this kind of challenges in the future more easily”.*

MT 3 similar said that *“they have to be aware of this and being able to adapt. Or else, they will end up exiting the program”.*

MT 4 answered that *“they (seniority and hierarchy) could be perceived as challenges for the trainees to adjust themselves and to prove themselves that they are qualified enough to get promoted after the program completion. Such challenges could be beneficial for the trainees as working in the hotel industry, you may be rotated to different geographical locations with diverse degrees of seniority and hierarchy”.*

Seniority and hierarchy can also be seen as another form of assessment by itself screening those who have adaptability and strength to withstand the resistance and pressure. If they manage to prove this skill, they have successful future ahead of them.

#### *Loyalty and work engagement*

Even though the successful cases are minimal comparing to the number of management trainees hired, they are being highly valued by the company and they show the loyalty within the company and work engagement. The very first batch of management trainees, there were four management trainees and three of them are hired by the company with continuous career advancement. One is now holding a position of a director, another one is a department head and the last one is the executive assistant manager whom is a second-top management. These threes interestingly reported resistance of seniority and hierarchy and they faced such strong situation. However, they managed to pass through and grow within the company. They explained to researcher that they now plan to work for a company for a long continuous period as long as the company keeps developing them.

The findings above are the contextually sensitive as the data was collected from sampled hotels in different parts of Thailand and they are managed by a leading international hotel chain. Seniority and hierarchy were found to exist strongly. Even though these two systems form unity and collectivism in organization, they impede the ideas and expression of young potential leader in

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hotel industry. As shown that the transfer of training of the management trainee program from this particular hotel chain were affect and the consequences present was destructive. However, if the trainees are adaptive to seniority-hierarchy-related situations, the advancement of their career is ensured and the loyalty to this hotel chain is observed. Besides, the results will thereafter be discussed in the light of theory, Thai values and relevant explanation found from the literature.

### **Discussion**

The result of this research has answered three main research questions which are the degree of existence of the seniority and hierarchy in workplace, the effects of seniority and hierarchy on transfer of training and lastly, the consequences of those effects on the management trainee program. The findings to these three questions were context-sensitive discoveries. There are in the context of management trainee program within several Thai hotel properties managed by world's leading hotel chain. Therefore, these hotels in questions have been internationalized and there are well-introduced corporate values and corporates way of workings to guide employees. All of them have accepted at least one batch of management trainees. As well as the relevant person in this research are familiar with the program. The management trainees program is new in Thailand and they are even new to Thai human resources practitioners. Lehmann (2009) stated that in Thailand and in Southeast Asia, HR practitioners has faced "talent crisis" or talent war due to the high demand and shortage of talents because the economy has grown rapidly. Therefore, the management trainee program emerged and it is still new and challenging in Thailand. Therefore, the awareness and understanding of the program are challenging in terms of positioning, implementation and promotion.

The response from the participants on the degree of seniority and hierarchy in their workplace has confirmed that seniority and hierarchy definitely exist. The majority of them explained further that the degree is high or even extremely high. This can be explained by a very holistic view from Mabry (1979) in which explains the power and hierarchy of social system in Thailand. The hierarchical power, vertical ordering and social ranking systems are still preserved until nowadays even though *sakdina* system has been diminished. Yukongdi (2010) also similarly explains that Thailand scores high on unequal distribution of power, hierarchy and conservatism (social order). Sadri McCampbell, et al. (1999) present the consistent findings that seniority-based promotion is widely practiced in Thailand

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indicating how organization still values seniority over performance or equally.

Another piece of explanation derived from a rigorous article about Thai rituals. The paper explained that in Thailand, there are high and low things in which high items are valued and low items are less valued or important. Senior especially older people are considered higher than juniors. The younger one should not sit higher than a senior person (Davis, 1974). The management trainees then faced more seniority and hierarchy compared to their previous experience abroad or in westernized educational environment with less reinforcement of Thai values. Once they join the program, junior are expected to follow these values of Thai workplace to show respect. They have to follow courtesy that values seniority and hierarchy.

There are some cases shown above with low rating for degree of seniority and hierarchy such as four, and five. It possibly means the low degree of seniority and hierarchy but the person who rates four and five are the person who is already in the high-power rank such as HR directors who is well-respected in Thai workplace as the order keeper. As they have less contact with actual operational staff, they perceive low degree. and culture. Another reason can be the case that the management trainees have already had previous working experience before joining the program. So, confrontation with seniority and hierarchy is to be expected and he or she is familiarized on how to cope with such situation. Therefore, lower degree was perceived.

As it is shown that seniority and hierarchy is highly practiced in these particular workplaces, there are significant impacts on the management trainees. The model of transfer of training by Blume, et al. (2010) suggested that there are four main factors construing work environment construct that effects transfer of training. These fours factors are *opportunity to transfer*, *supervisor support*, *transfer climate* and *follow-up*. However, now it is obvious in this research that seniority and hierarchy also exists as an additional factor in sampled particular workplaces of the participants in which can facilitate or obstruct transfer of training like how the mentioned factors do (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999).

Seniority and hierarchy firstly affect opportunity to transfer or to perform. The management trainees were motivated in learning and transferring but they could not do so as the opportunity were not given to them because seniors do not have trust in the management trainees. The opportunity to lead were also not given

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to them because of the belief that juniors are lower in ranking than senior and they have to follow. Although some were promoted to supervisory or managerial position, they did not have direct reports or team to take care of. In practice, management trainees really need to have opportunity to perform in order to reinforce and transfer their learned skills in order to maintain (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Elangovan and Karakowsky (1999) agrees with this finding that although the management trainees completed the training but there is no opportunity for them to perform such learned skill, it will not be maintained and strengthened. Therefore, opportunity to perform or to transfer the leadership and learned materials were very limited and has an effect on the transfer.

Social support was also found to be affected because the feedback was abandoned or if not, it would be given in an ambiguous tone. Bottom-up feedback were not discouraged and it was perceived as disrespect. To understand this, the value of saving face in Thai working environment has to be emphasized. It can be argued that it should be acceptable if it is a constructive feedback for improvement. To debate, it might be tolerable in an inviting atmosphere like if the feedback were encouraged by the seniors but the feedback would be generally positive as the juniors are not familiar in criticizing their superiors. Holmes, et al. (2003) explain that providing feedback in Thai traditions has never been observed even the feedback is constructive. It is only acceptable from a very senior person to juniors. Also, Thais are also deficient in separating between ideas, or useful opinion and ego-self (Thanasankit, 2002).

Another obvious factor that was affected by seniority and hierarchy was transfer climate. Climate is defined earlier as *“the practices or the procedures used in the organization that connote or signal to the people what is important”* (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993, p. 379). Elangovan and Karakowsky (1999) suggest the work environment should emphasize on intellectual advancement, competency and development of new and better way of working in which will contribute considerably to transfer of training. This explains why transfer of training is inhibited. The management trainees reported that they tried at least to suggest new ways of performing and a better way of executing tasks. However, it was rejected silently or aggressively. It can also be accepted but they will return to their comfortable ways of working soon after. Therefore, such working environment that is passive and unenthusiastic about challenge and change weakens transfer of

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training (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999).

Follow-up was the only factor that was found that seniority and hierarchy did not have any impact on. This can be because the program is well-structured in order to guide the important stakeholders of the program such as general manager, human resources directors and management trainees themselves to follow up on the learning and transfer. The handbook of the program obliges trainers to sign once the training and debriefing are completed. The coaches have to meet with the management trainees once a month at least to discuss their learning. The management trainees were assigned small projects in addition to their learning while they are on job rotation. They reported that they had to deliver the report of learning and hold a presentation of their learning as well. Saks and Burke (2012) suggest that training evaluation hold responsible persons in the training accountable for learning, training and transfer. Therefore, the frequency of the follow-up, which was found in this research, facilitates transfer of training despite the presence of seniority and hierarchy.

Last but not least is the results from research question three which is the consequences of the effect of seniority and hierarchy on management trainee program. The most underlying consequences found in job dissatisfaction is resignation. The similar finding were found by Tansuvan (1993) that Thai values, and culture such as seniority and hierarchy can hinder the effective implantation of the program in the research that requires employees to make decision. They cannot make a decision as a junior, they have to inform and involve seniors in which hinder their autonomy. When there is dissatisfaction, Thai employees will accept and continue to stay silently or quit (Mabry, 1979). The management trainees had dissatisfaction due to seniority and hierarchy in workplace, however, they have to omit the discussion or complaints because of impoliteness. They sometimes fall in the situation that they feel “*Krengjai*” so they will not voice their complains or feedback. At one point, it is over the limit and they decided to resign or look for new opportunity in the meantime. In this research, the management trainees also reported that they were obligated to accept the employment contract from superiors and the management even though they are not inclined to take the job offer. It was explained that they are grateful (*Bun Kun*) to the opportunity given from the company so it would be impolite to not return *Bun Kun* to take the offer. So the offers were accepted but with silent gloominess.

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Another approach to understand this phenomenon is the research conducted by Allen and LaFollette (1977) to explain the alienation among management trainees. They explained that management trainees do feel alienation due to the indication of the personal dissatisfaction on the social elements. The dissatisfaction in questions refers to the powerlessness, normlessness, social isolation, meaninglessness, and estrangement of oneself. In work context, work alienation is the dissatisfaction from professional progress and development and the hopelessness of fulfilling social norms (Allen & LaFollette, 1977). The result from this research found that the relative factors to cause disappointment for management trainees are, hierarchy, the excess of control from supervisors, the refutation of opportunities to participate in determining directions of organizational activities. In contrast, the inverse relationship was found between involvement in decision-making (opportunity to lead) and alienation at work. This clarifies why the successful case of management trainees whom adapted to the seniority and hierarchy reported that they have been given chance to lead a small team or to take part in strategic meeting together with the management.

Zumrah and Boyle (2015) found that job satisfaction increases when employees perceive that the organization values their contribution (positive transfer of training) and their well-being. In another similar research contextualized in service industry, Zumrah, Boyle, and Fein (2013) correspondingly discovered that when the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned from training are positively used and applied, job satisfaction is enhanced subsequently. Likewise, the positive transfer of training significantly related to service quality which can also stimulate trust and confidence.

### **Suggestions for the company**

According to the discussion with the company, the program in question is now being paused for review due to the decrease of the successful cases as mentioned earlier. Meanwhile, the company is now drafting the re-design of the new management trainee program. It has not been finalized so it is still under confidentiality. Therefore, researcher was briefly explained about the new program for basic understanding. However, the company will incorporate the results and suggestion from this study.

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First of all, the basic qualification of the management trainees is planned by the company to be altered in the newly-modified program. As the pre-requisite, the management trainees will be nominated internally with two to three years of impressive work experience in the company. They will be selected and assessed through the assessment center like before. In this regard, the finding of this research ratifies and supports this amendment as the seniority and hierarchy are critical factors in Thai work environment that affect the transfer. With two to three years of experience, the candidates will not be seen as an unexperienced junior anymore. They will be seen as a performing talent. With some work experience, the vulnerability will be strengthened to withstand seniority and hierarchy. Also, this will enhance trust in management trainees.

In line with management trainee program implementation guide, the candidates will be assessed in each stage of the selection process. They are assessed according to the leadership competencies that are constituted and reinforced widely in the company. Several management trainees and general manager reported work culture shocks as the management trainees do not have work experience and they are recruited from international college in Thailand or from abroad where they adopt westernized mindset. They are not aware of the dynamics of service industry and real hotel working environment. Researcher suggests that this assessment should include the awareness of Thai values such as humbleness, respects for seniors, trustworthiness and flexibility. This will help ensure that person-environment fit is reached which will contribute to transfer of training (Awoniyi, Griego, & Morgan, 2002; Werbel & Johnson, 2001). This can be done by using behavioral assessment embedded in interview or assessment center. The scenarios can be given to candidates to solve or response individually and in group. Questions can be asked and candidates' answers will be evaluated by the assessors. For example, one of similar questions can be asked; how can you deal with the situation where senior colleagues do not follow your suggestions because you are younger? This will contribute to the right selection and successfulness of the candidate in their career path and cooperation from senior colleagues in their daily activities.

Secondly, this study suggests that there should be a capability assessment of the receiving hotel and department in terms of work environment and the need of talents. The hotel should assess its the work environment whether it facilitates the learning of the management trainees or not. Each hotel has its own unique

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characteristics that can either impede or enhance the implementation like years of opening, degree of seniority and hierarchy, operational readiness, future employment, succession needs and commitment from each trainer such as general manager, talent development manager, department heads. On the other hand, the management trainees should be recruited with pre-selected department of specialization. This way will help assessors find the match between the talent needs of the receiving hotel and the inspiring career path for the management trainees. This will prevent the resignation due to the lack of vacancy or incapability of the hotel to provide post-program employment. This way, transfer also will be ensured.

Thirdly, the program must initiate a formal feedback and assessment session in order to ensure the follow-up and the transfer of training. This should be conducted at the end of each phase of the program before beginning the consecutive phase to give feedback to the trainees to strengthen the performance and develop the weaknesses. It should be done with calibration from coach, human resources and department heads in order to certify fair results. In return, the management trainees should be encouraged to voice what can be done to facilitate the transfers as the support from the management. The evaluation of the training itself and its frequency was found to have a positive relationship with transfer of training (Saks & Burke, 2012).

Lastly, the awareness of the program should be promoted so that all employees are aware that the management trainees are not student trainees. This will support the opportunity to perform and the social support. Management trainees will be in the supervision of the manager or the department head. This way the employees can signal that they are not student trainees and the staff will associate the trust and respect from the manager with the management trainees.

There are more findings that are only relevant to the company that were voiced by the interviewees but they are not related to research framework. These finding will also be communicated to the company for improvement such as the commitment from the coach, the disappointment about program implementation, sources of recruitment, lack of career plan and challenge, seniority-based promotion and management trainee network.



### **Limitation**

As discussed earlier in the literature that the research in the field of transfer of training is huge in availability but the transfer of training specifically in Thai context is very limited. Furthermore, the seniority and hierarchy which is an influential construct in Thai workplace is also limited. Therefore, this research has to integrate and derive the available one into the research framework which makes the aspects and perspective becomes narrowed.

Furthermore, the number of management trainees from the unsuccessful subgroup were expected to be higher in order to investigate if seniority and hierarchy made any influence on their decision to leave the program. However, it was challenging trying to reach those who have decided to leave the company. Several of them were reached but they remained salience to the invitation to participate. Due to ethical reason, researcher did not push them to participate. Moreover, the data retrieved from those who are willing to participate where sufficient credible and valid to explain the phenomena.

The exact numbers of Thai management trainees are available. However, the data were not given to researcher due to confidentiality reason. Therefore, researcher could not use such exact number to see the ratio. The numbers that is known in this research are referenced from the interviewees and from project leaders of the program. It would have been another promising way to analyze data by utilizing the exact number of the successful, unsuccessful cases in total and the trends of resignation.

Furthermore, there are only a few participants from each hotel were interviewed. Therefore, the result could be subjective in measuring the degree of seniority and hierarchy using numerical scale. Researcher found fluctuating results in a couple of hotels that the management trainees reported high degree of seniority and hierarch but the general manager and human resources directors reported low degree of existence. To generalize this construct, a quick survey could have been sent out to team member in each hotels to gather a qualitative data to analyze. However, it was not possible in this project because of time constraint and it requires higher-authority person to enforce this kind of participation in the research.

### **Future research**

There is a considerable research gaps in the field of transfer of training and Thai work environment to explore and contribute to the literature. For example, as found in this research that seniority and hierarchy can influence knowledge hiding from a senior worker to a younger worker in order to secure the job. This will be an advantageous knowledge in order for business to be aware and create mechanism to prevent such counterproductive activity. This was not in the focus of this research so it was not explored deeper. Researcher would also like to propose how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect management trainee programs from other industry beside hotel industry. The finding should also be salient as one of the participants on this research suggests that management trainee program fits more in other industry as they have to interact less with people. Lastly, in relation to this research, the consequence of nepotism in Thai organizations on management trainee program is still unexplored.

### **Conclusion**

This research initially aims to investigate why the number of successful management trainees who are hired by a leading international hotel chain in Thailand is decreasing. Research in the literature shows that the management trainees are learning considerably during the training. However, they cannot transfer the learned skills into workplace. The model of transfer of training by Baldwin and Ford (1988) were used to explain the transfer of training construct in the context of management trainee program in Thailand. Blume, et al. (2010) further suggest the work environment factor in which can support or impede successful transfer. In Thai context, seniority and hierarchy plays an important role in their daily lives. Juniors has to respect seniors and juniors cannot criticize or comment senior colleagues. Besides, when you are junior, you will be perceived as unexperienced resulting in lack of trust (Cardona, et al., 2013).

Consequently, research aims to investigate the degree of existence of seniority and hierarch in participants' workplaces and what are the effects and their potential consequences on the transfer of training of management trainees. The research uses generic research analysis to understand the experience from the participants with the assistance of qualitative analysis software. The result shows that there is high degree of seniority and hierarchy in which affects the transfer of

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training of the management trainees. They reported lack of opportunity to perform, unhealthy transfer climate and low social support. These effects result in job satisfaction if the management trainees manage to pass through the pressure and resistance. However, it can also destructively result in job dissatisfaction and eventually resignation (refer to **Error! Reference source not found.** for a simplified model).

Seniority and hierarchy in Thai work environment can be seen as a double-sided sword. It can contribute to the warmth and respectful workplace but if the management trainees cannot adapt to it, it can cost destructive damage to themselves and the firm. In organizational level, this research is useful case to challenge the balance between localization and internationalization of any international firm when planning strategic talent management and local culture. The balance should be considered so that the strong local culture should interfere with effectiveness the least and the internationalized culture should be promoted well to bring the people and organization forward.

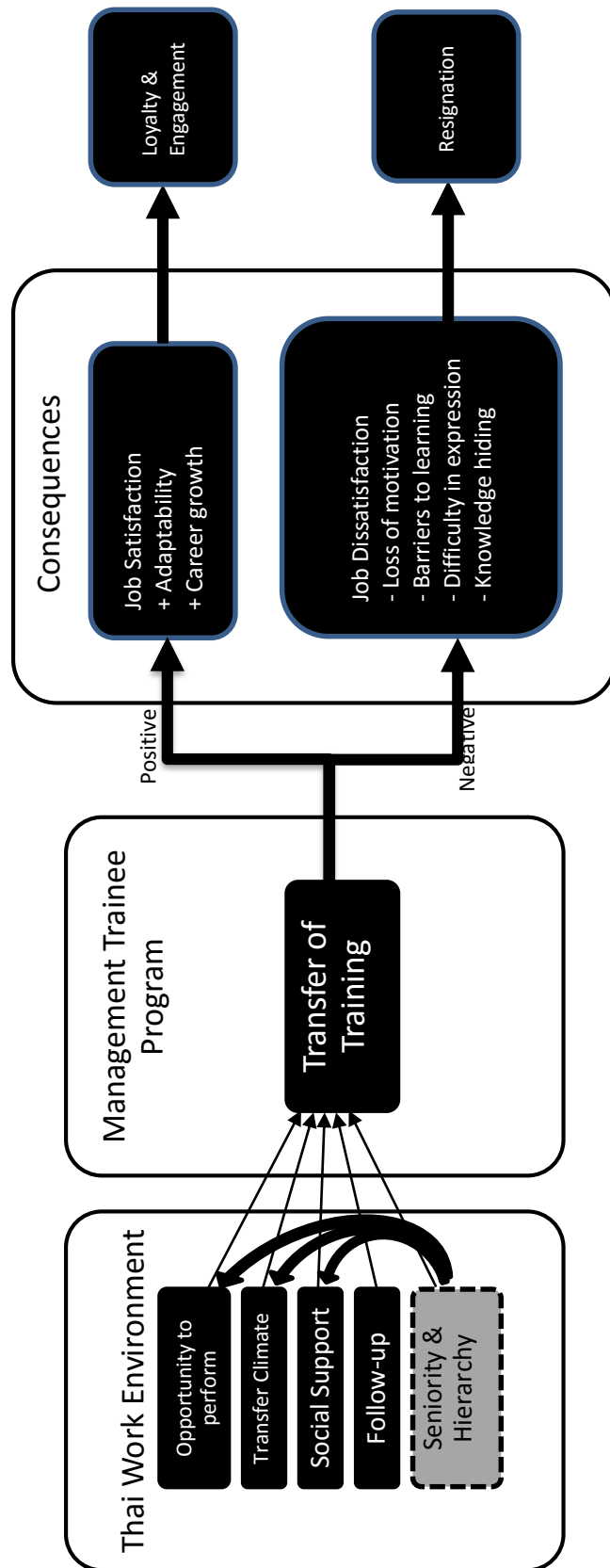


Figure 5 Simplified model summarizing the results.  
The effects of seniority and hierarchy in Thai work environment on transfer of training of management trainee program followed by consequences.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1 – Interview Questions*

#### *Interview guidelines for HRDs*

- Demographics (Age, Gender, Degree, Years of Experience, Position, Nationality) อายุ เพศ การศึกษา ประสบการณ์การทำงาน ตำแหน่ง และ สัญชาติ
- How familiar are you with the management trainee program?  
คุณมีความคุ้นเคยกับโปรแกรมนี้อย่างไร
- How often do you meet the management trainees?  
คุณมีโอกาสดำเนินการผู้ร่วมโปรแกรมบ่อยแค่ไหน
- How many batch of management trainees has your property had?  
โรงแรมของคุณได้มีโปรแกรมนี้มาที่รุ่นแล้ว
- Were they successful? Or Unsuccessful? How? ผลสำเร็จหรือไม่อย่างไร
- How important is the management trainee program to your company?  
โปรแกรมนี้มีความสำคัญต่อคุณและบริษัทอย่างไร
- Do you think Thai work environment is different than other culture?  
คุณคิดว่าการพัฒนาวัฒนธรรมการทำงานในประเทศไทยแตกต่างจากวัฒนธรรมอื่นหรือไม่
  - o If yes, how? What make it different? ถ้าใช่ อย่างไร และอะไรทำให้แตกต่าง
- Are you aware of the term “Transfer of Training”?  
คุณเคยตระหนักถึงคำนี้หรือไม่ การถ่ายทอดสิ่งที่ได้เรียนรู้สู่การทำงานจริง
- Can you give example of explicit actions that reinforce transfer of training? (Policy, SOP, measurement)  
กรุณายกตัวอย่างถึงเหตุการณ์ที่สนับสนุนการถ่ายทอดสิ่งที่ได้เรียนรู้สู่การทำงานจริง
- Please explain the working culture of your workplace?  
กรุณายกตัวอย่างวัฒนธรรมการทำงานในสถานที่ทำงานของคุณ
- Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace/Thai workplace? Provide example. How strong is it given a rating of 1-10?  
คุณคิดว่า ระบบอาวุโสและการแบ่งลำดับชั้นยังคงปรากฏอยู่ในสถานที่ทำงานของคุณหรือไม่ กรุณายกตัวอย่าง และกรุณาประเมินจาก 1 ไปยัง 10 มีเด่นชัดเพียงใด
- Do you promote younger manager or management?

คุณสนับสนุนการขึ้นตำแหน่งของผู้จัดการหรือผู้บริหารที่อายุน้อย

- Do you give coaching or regular discussion with the management trainees?

คุณให้การฝึกสอนหรืออภิปรายอย่างสม่ำเสมอแก่ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการหรือไม่

- o What are the major issues? Common issues?

เรื่องใดคือปัญหาหลักหรือปัญหาโดยทั่วไป

- o Was there any case related to seniority and hierarchy in workplace?

และมีปัญหาใดที่เกี่ยวข้องกับระบบอาวุโสและการแบ่งลำดับชั้นหรือไม่

- Suggestions or comments on the topic? มีข้อเสนอแนะหรือข้อคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับเรื่องนี้หรือไม่

### *Interview guidelines for management trainees*

Demographics (Gender, Age, Degree) อายุ เพศ การศึกษา

- Do you have work experience before join this program?

คุณเคยทำงานที่ไหนมาก่อนที่จะมาเข้าร่วม โปรแกรมนี้

- What is your motivation for join this program?

อะไรเป็นแรงบันดาลใจให้คุณเข้าร่วม โปรแกรมนี้

- So far, how has the program benefit you?

จนถึงปัจจุบันนี้ โปรแกรมนี้ให้ประโยชน์กับคุณอย่างไร

- Do you get a direct coaching? Please describe.

คุณได้รับการสอนงาน โดยตรงจากผู้จัดการทั่วไปหรือไม่

- Do you think Thai work environment is different than other cultures?

คุณคิดว่าบรรยากาศในการทำงานในประเทศไทยแตกต่างกับประเทศอื่นหรือไม่

- o If yes, how? What make it different? ถ้าใช่ อะไรที่ทำให้แตกต่าง

- How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?

คุณได้รับโอกาสในการเข้าร่วมการอบรมบ่อยแค่ไหน

- o Are they in-house training? เป็นการอบรมในโรงแรม

- o External training? หรือเป็นการอบรมภายนอก

- o Opportunity to train abroad? โอกาสในการอบรมต่างประเทศ

- Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?

คุณสามารถนำสิ่งที่เรียนรู้จากการอบรมมาปรับใช้การทำงานได้หรือไม่

- Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks?

Provide examples.

คุณเคยแนะนำเพื่อนร่วมงานเกี่ยวกับวิธีการทำงานรูปแบบใหม่หรือไม่ กรุณายกตัวอย่าง

- Was it acceptable? ได้รับการยอมรับหรือไม่
- Did you feel any resistance? หรือว่าคุณรู้สึกได้ถึงการต่อต้าน
- Would you be punished if you make mistakes at work?  
คุณจะถูกลงโทษหรือไม่ถ้าเกิดการผิดพลาดจากการทำงาน
- Does your supervisor/manager/colleagues give you a chance to apply what you have learnt into real work place? How?  
หัวหน้างาน ผู้จัดการ หรือเพื่อนร่วมงานของคุณเคยเปิดโอกาสให้คุณนำสิ่งที่เรียนรู้มาปรับใช้ในการทำงานหรือไม่
- Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?  
คุณมีความสัมพันธ์อันกับ จีเอ็ม หรือไม่
- Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?  
คุณได้รับโอกาสในการนำเสนอสิ่งที่คุณได้รับการอบรมมาถ่ายทอดให้แก่เพื่อนร่วมงานหรือไม่
- Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?  
คุณได้รับการมอบหมายงานจากจีเอ็มหรือผู้จัดการหรือไม่หลังจากการอบรม
- Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?  
ในที่ทำงานของคุณมีเพื่อนร่วมงานที่อาวุโสกว่าเป็นจำนวนมากหรือไม่
- Have you try to suggest them about what you have learnt from the training? และคุณเคยพยายามที่จะแนะนำพวกเขาเกี่ยวกับสิ่งที่คุณได้รับมาจากการอบรมหรือไม่ อย่างไร
  - Was it accepted? ได้รับการยอมรับหรือไม่
- Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (Example, Rating 1-10) คุณคิดว่าระบบอาวุโสและการแบ่งลำดับชั้นยังคงปรากฏอยู่ในสถานที่ทำงานของคุณหรือไม่  
มากน้อยขนาดไหน กรุณาให้การประเมินจาก หนึ่งถึงสิบ
- Can you give example of a situation which show seniority and hierarchy?  
กรุณายกตัวอย่างสถานการณ์ที่แสดงให้เห็นถึงระบบอาวุโสและการแบ่งลำดับชั้น
- If yes, how does it impact your work daily?  
ถ้ามี จะส่งผลกระทบต่อการทำงานในทุกๆวันของคุณอย่างไร
- If you were trained of a new way to perform task and you have to apply this in work place? Would you feel hesitated? Why?

ถ้าคุณได้รับการอบรมเกี่ยวกับการทำงานรูปแบบใหม่และคุณต้องมาปรับใช้ในสถานที่ทำงานแห่งนี้ คุณจะรู้สึก  
 ลังเลใจหรือไม่ เพราะอะไร

- How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?

คุณคิดว่าระบบอาวุโสและการแบ่งลำดับชั้นจะมีผลต่อโปรแกรมนี้หรือไม่

- Which position are you expected to be promoted after completion of this program? ตำแหน่งใดที่คุณคาดหวังว่าจะได้รับหลังจากโปรแกรมนี้จบลง

- o Possibility? เป็นไปได้หรือไม่

- If you are not promoted, what do you think is/was the reason?

ถ้าคุณไม่ได้รับการเลื่อนตำแหน่ง คุณคิดว่าเพราะสาเหตุใด

- Have you faced any seniority-promotion or seniority preference?

คุณเคยเผชิญกับการเลื่อนตำแหน่งโดยระบบอาวุโสหรือระบบที่เอื้ออำนวยผู้อาวุโสหรือไม่

- Do you face any difficulty or resistance from colleagues?

คุณเคยเผชิญกับความยากลำบากหรือการต่อต้านจากเพื่อนร่วมหรือไม่

- During the program, did you have any intention to resign? Why?

คุณเคยมีความคิดที่จะลาออกจากโปรแกรมหรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด

- What is your plan after completion?

คุณวางแผนไว้อย่างไรหลังจากจบโปรแกรมนี้

- How long are you planning to work for the company? Why?

คุณคิดว่าจะทำงานในองค์กรนี้นานแค่ไหน เพราะอะไร

- Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect management trainee program?

คุณมีข้อคิดเห็นหรือข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับวิจัยเรื่อง ระบบอาวุโสและการแบ่งลำดับชั้นในบริบทของประเทศไทย

ส่งผลต่อโปรแกรมนี้อย่างไร

For alumni only สำหรับผู้ที่ลาออกจากโครงการแล้วเท่านั้น

- What was the major issues that cause you to resign?

อะไรเป็นสาเหตุหลักที่ทำให้คุณลาออก

- Did you face any relational/seniority-related/hierarchical issues while you were a management trainee?

คุณเคยประสบกับปัญหาเกี่ยวกับระบบอาวุโสและลำดับชั้นหรือไม่ ในขณะที่คุณเป็นผู้เข้าร่วมโปรแกรมนี้หรือไม่

- Were you given a chance to apply what has been learnt?

คุณเคยได้รับโอกาสในการนำสิ่งที่เรียนรู้มาปรับใช้หรือไม่

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*Interview guidelines – GM/Coach*

- Demographics (Age, Gender, Degree, Years of Experience, Position, Nationality)
- How many management trainees have you coached?
- How management trainee program is important to the company?
- How often do you meet with the management trainees for coaching or discussion?
- What are the major issues of difficulties encountered by the management trainees?
- How do you integrate the management trainees into the workplace and management? Please explain.
- Please explain the working culture of your hotel?
- How long has the hotel been operated?
- Do you think Thai work environment/culture is different from other culture? If yes, how? What makes it different or unique?
- How do you perceive seniority and hierarchy in your workplace? Provide example. How strong of the existence? Given a rating of 1-10.
- How do they affect transfer of training?
- Do you think the working climate allow management trainees to apply learned materials, to suggest new way of working or to make mistakes in order to learn from it?
- Please give example of how you follow up on management trainees to make sure that they apply what has been learned into workplace?
- Any comments or suggestions regarding how seniority and hierarchy affect management trainee program?

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*Appendix 2 – Summaries of twenty-two interviews***Interview Summary - Coach/GM - 1****- Demographics**

I am 45, Male. I graduated with a hotel management degree, having 22 years in hotel industry. I am a general manager and I am Korean with Hong Kong citizenship.

**- How many management trainees have you coached?**

I have coached 5 management trainees within the company.

**- How management trainees are important to the company?**

Definitely, the main purpose is to develop potential leader to support the pipelines of hotel. The number of hotels keep increasing. To support the industry growth and support local community to bring out young talents. It is very important. They need young blood to bring in innovation and new ideas. Most of the hotels employ this program like corporate trainee. It is a fast-track program to elevate career path.

**- How often do you meet with the management trainees for coaching or discussion?**

Actually we meet bi-weekly for half an hour each. Every two weeks or twice a month. It is more than required by the program (once a month). I like to spend sometimes with them because I have hired them so I would like to take responsibility. And having bi-weekly discussion is good for a catch-up on a regular basis about recent issues. One month is too long.

**- What are the major issues of difficulty encountered by the management trainees?**

The management trainees feel uncomfortable and challenging when they rotate to the department that he or she is not planning to pursue. They found it less appealing. Small assignments on top of the learning checklist will be given when they go to this department. For example, what can be improved in terms of performance and customer service. This will keep them concentrated.

**- How do you integrate the management trainees into the workplace and the management?**

The management trainees are invited into event or management meeting. They can involve in the discussion. I always make them feel important as part of the management. They are invited to the department head meeting

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and team building. In another word, they are part of the management team. When they move to different department, the department head is given a briefing to be ready to host the management trainee. The training is sometimes switched to another department when it is appropriate and timely for such training. They are given a chance to introduce themselves to the staff and the team.

- **Please explain the working culture of your hotel?**

Team work. We have to support each other. Communication. We emphasize on communicating effectively. The best communication channel must be implemented both ways. Family style. Be flexible and friendly but when it comes to serious issues, it has to be dedicated on work yet to be stressful.

- **How long has the hotel been operated?**

26 years

- **Do you think Thai work environment/culture is different from other culture? (how and what makes it different or unique?)**

The working environment can be relatively the same but the local culture is different. In this hotel, there are a lot of older staff so they are reluctant to change, stubborn and narrow-minded. However, they are experienced and warm. Every hotel has its own unique working environment. There is seniority and hierarchy in work culture mostly in every hotel. However, this particular hotel (out of 12 hotels that the I have worked with) do emphasize more on seniority and hierarchy. Especially in Thai culture, the age is valued. If the person is older than you, then you must respect that person. It's very strong. Of course, the job title brings in ranking, hierarchy and social position in the community.

- **How do you perceive seniority and hierarchy in your workplace? Provide example. How strong of the existence? Given a rating of 1-10?**

So this hotel has a stronger seniority and hierarchy expectation. I rate 7. It used to be higher but now, many senior staff have retired. Younger people is coming in. It will continue to decrease gradually.

- **How do they affect transfer of training?**

They are given close mentoring and guidance as a positive side.

- **Do you think working climate allows management trainees to apply learned materials, to suggest new way of working or to make mistakes and learn from it?**

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Management trainees are given task, extra project to be creative and to get involved with action plan of the project. They are asked how can the ways of working be improved through technology or other ways. It is always welcomed. They are allowed to make mistakes by trying and may be fail to learn. They do not have to stay with the outlined program only. They have not been sent to external training but they are sent to join workshops and conferences with corporate office.

- **Please give example of how do you do follow-up on management trainees to make sure that he/she applies what has been learned into workplace?**

After learning from each department, we do have review meeting. They are asked on the understanding of the department. management trainees are asked to give feedback to the department head. They can apply what is being learn directly. They are also asked to go back to help some departments covering busy period. management trainees must give presentations about their learning constantly.

- **Any thoughts, comments or suggestions regarding how seniority and hierarchy affect the management trainees?**

Both parties need to be dedicated. management trainees must also be dedicated. They should commit themselves to the work. Many graduated management trainees do not stay with the company. They have to be committed. They have to bite the bullet and do it. You might not enjoy it and dislike it but at the end you will shine. They should not give up early. You cannot be a GM in 4-5 years, it is impossible. In one of the conference, the poll asking how long does it take to become a GM, on average it is 17 years are spent in the industry. However, Gen-Y is impatient. The company emphasizes that management trainees must be taken care of in order to develop their career path within our company. It is difficult for younger management trainees to grow too fast because they do not have solid background and experience. They might fail lacking the proper experience and knowledge.

#### Additional notes

The performance review and bonus were conducted according to the year of service. This hotel has 460 employees with 700 rooms.



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**Interview Summary – Coach/GM – 2****- Demographics**

52 years old. 31 years of experience. 10 years of working at this hotel. Master of Business Administration in Marketing. Thai

**- How often do you meet with the management trainees?**

Usually, once a month but in the beginning of the program, I tried to meet them once a week for a better transition of integration into the organization.

**- What are their major issues or difficulty encountered?**

They usually consult the pressure and difficulty that they have faced and they will ask what should they do. So I ask them back first what would they do to stimulate their thinking and problem solving. I emphasize that I do not want to tell them what to do but rather to trigger their thinking about what they should do or what they would do. This is what the coach should do instead.

**- How do you integrate them into the workplace and the management?**

I will try to assign them to a small work unit. For example, if the management trainee decided to specialize in front office, I will assign him or her to work at the executive club with a smaller team. Therefore, the person has to practice leading the team with projects such as guest satisfaction. If the management trainees fail to lead such a small team, it will be impossible for them to lead the whole department. In fact, I first have to assess and craft the receiving team and make sure they are a welcoming and friendly team so that the management trainee will not be overwhelmed with resistance. This might demotivate them. This might be a tough way but I want to strengthen their competencies as we invest greatly in training them. Otherwise, it is wiser for me to groom my supervisory team members. For the integration with the management team, due to an organizational structure of the hotel, most of the management and executive committee running the hotel is from the sister hotel. The only management is myself. Consequently, there is less possibility to integrate them into the team. They will interact more with department head and supervisory-level employees. I suggested that there should be a few coaches for the management trainee in order to get a diverse knowledge. Should not be only the GM.

**- Please explain the working culture of your hotel?**

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Committed, transparent and fairness. I encourage everyone to be transparent and fair. I do not implement open-door policy because my staff will not come to me. We have high power distance here in Thailand. I would rather approach my team. Every Friday, I try not to stay in my office. I will visit the employees at their workplace and greet them. I try to be as humble as possible. I try to have more interaction with my employees to create the family or brotherhood working environment.

- **Do you think Thai work environment/culture is different from other culture? how? What makes it different or unique?**

Thai working environment is uniquely beneficial to the organization. Thai working environment relies heavily on networking and interaction within parties. This will ignite the collective relationship within the team. Thais are very committed and hardworking which sometime might interfere with personal life. However, they tend to not take ownership of tasks.

- **How do you perceive seniority and hierarchy in your workplace? Provide example. How strong of the existence? Given a rating of 1-10?**

I admitted that I am a conservative person. I said that the seniority and hierarchy in this hotel is quite high in terms of age. I would rate 9 on the scale. I even want to rate higher but I think the younger generation recently joining us lowered it. However, it is absolutely not criteria for career promotion or progression. Seniority and hierarchy concept is a beautiful characteristic of our culture. Therefore, we have to maintain it. Being respectful toward senior colleagues and being graceful for those who train you is very important and unforgettable. This is the charm of Thai culture.

- **How do they affect transfer of training?**

It should not have a big impact on the transfer of training. If it does affect the transfer of training, it is because of the incompetency of leadership skill of the leader in terms of change management.

- **Any thoughts, comments or suggestions regarding how seniority and hierarchy affect the management trainees?**

One of the reason that the program does not work is that we hire management trainees but we do not give them a chance to lead others or to lead any projects. Moreover, the projects given are not challenging enough for them. The company aims to train the management trainees to become leaders in the nearest future but the company still hires them just because

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they used to be management trainees, not their performance. There should be a review at the end of the program to evaluate if he or she has successfully meet the requirement to be a management trainee graduate.

The program should be reconsidered or even discontinued. We implemented in Thailand in 2006 with six trainees. From this first batch, there is only one person left in the hotel industry. After that, we continued with the program but currently there are only three management trainees working with our hotel and several resigned during or after the program. We invested several resources on recruitment, selection and intensive training but the result is not favorable. Why do we need to continue? The management trainee might work for other industry where you work less with people but it is not suitable for hotel industry, people industry.

The company has made a mistake by placing the graduated management trainees into a position where there is no subordinate. In some cases, the management trainees are placed in a supervisory level according to the objective but in reality, there is no subordinate for them to supervise. I think it is not cost-efficient to run this program.

The trainer or coach of the management trainees are not trained on how to train these younger learners. However, there is a coaching handbook for GM but it is not so structured and there is no concrete structured evaluation in each phase.

It is not durable to allow the trainee to choose the department to specialize after their rotation in phase one. It is wiser for the company to assess its shortage of high-potentials in which department in order to hire management trainees accordingly. Otherwise, the company will end up having employee surplus.

### **Interview Summary – Coach/GM – 3**

- **Demographics**

48 years old. 25 years of experience, hotel management certificate. Thai

- **How many management trainees have you coached?**

- 2 management trainees, I have also been an accessor of management trainees.

- **How often do you meet with the management trainees for coaching or discussion?**

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There is no scheduled meeting with co-mentor but informal sessions are always conducted for management trainee to consult on difficulties they face. Usually when they have critical challenge they will come to me.

- **What are the major issues of difficulty encountered by the management trainees?**

Usually about work challenge. Management trainee is like a tree that is being bio-engineered to grow quicker. They are trained intensively in 6 months. The program is quite new. They experience every single operation in the hotel but they lack of detailed expertise in those departments that they visited. They also face the situation where the existing employees think that they will be trained to be superiors while these management trainees are junior still. So they are pressured on how they can become a leader at a younger age. Most of the time they face work-related challenge because they lack of expertise in each department when they rotate to. Therefore, they will have only an overview and main tasks of each department. So during the first phase they are pressured by the team about expertise and learning. After selecting department to specialize in phase two, they will face department-related problems and they will face even more pressure because they will need to learn deeper about the selected department in a shorter period.

- **How do you integrate the management trainees into the workplace and management?**

Management trainees will be assigned project to support the management team and some specific departments with guidance. When a particular department is extremely busy or in need of extra hand, the management trainees will be assigned to help to cope with this demand. In Thai culture, when you are perceived as a supporter or a helper, you will be respected warmly and beloved by colleagues. However, if you are perceived as a learner or trainees, you will be respected a competitor who will learn and eventually will take the position away. So we try to integrate them into the department as a supporter rather than a learner. Furthermore, they are invited to be part of the management team and to join the outing, meeting, and activities for the management team. They will be in an organizing team of events. So they will be able to build up network and introduce themselves with the heads of department.

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- **Please explain the working culture of your hotel?**

Family working culture. Conflicts in the meeting or in open area are often avoided and they will be discussed informally outside of the meeting. Conflicts are most of the time solved by negotiating softly and calmly to each other. For example, in the regular meeting for management, the meeting is informative but if there is any issue being brought up, it will be postponed to discuss informally among relevant parties after the formal meeting. Working culture here aims to form a helpful and unified team. For example, when it is extremely busy in the morning serving breakfast to our guests but food and beverage department cannot handle the chaos by themselves, other department will send their staff to help. He also marks that the culture of workplace in the province and in Bangkok is quite different. People here is less competitive but more cooperative.

- **Do you think Thai work environment/culture is different from other culture? If yes, how? What makes it different or unique?**

I have never been working abroad. However, I have worked with direct manager and general manager from many culture likes Swiss, German, Singaporean and Australian. So I can see the difference and mostly, these expats will also adapt into Thai working environment.

About Thai working environment, it is a culture that values empathy for each other and flexibility. So the management team will have to be middlemen between the leaders and the employees to soften the pressure from western leader where their culture is more masculine than ours. So the department head is a key driver in the hotel.

- **How do you perceive seniority and hierarchy in your workplace? Provide example. How strong of the existence? Given a rating of 1-10?**

7 because even though there is high turnover rate. The supervisory employees are working with us longer because they are being paid higher and they await future promotion so they know the organization better than the newcomers. Although the newcomers are more experienced but they are less familiarized about the organization and its environment, they are regarded as junior worker. Seniority here does not only means the biological age but it also includes year of service at the particular property. This is important. So they can be senior employees at the previous workplace but when they join our hotel, they are regarded as a junior team member because

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they are not familiarized with the organization and they possess less year of service. So from time to time, new supervisors might be quietly challenged and questioned about their skills by their subordinates who are senior.

- **How do they affect transfer of training?**

Yes, up to certain degrees, it does effect the transfer of training of the management trainees. As said earlier, one of most frequent challenges faced by the management trainees is about people. They are pressured by the senior workers. They felt that they are not being trained sufficiently and willingly. However, this pressure is to be expected normally as the management trainees is a fresh graduate. Their hotel experience is blank so when they are being trained by the staff in the department, they will tend to get questioned how can you soon be a leader. So if the management trainees are patient enough to pass through this tough time of the program and learn as much as they can. Then the future is bright. Anyway this is not a usual case as we have seen, they are mostly less patient and fragile. They are not strong enough towards resistance. They tend to resign and look for a new job instead of persisting the hardship.

Moreover, being management trainees, they witness problems and loopholes in every department they rotate to. Therefore, it seems like there are lots of problems to solve rather than learning.

- **Do you think the working climate allow management trainees to apply learned materials, to suggest new way of working or to make mistakes in order to learn from it?**

A lot, they are given assignment as an opportunity to apply what they have learnt together with what they think will be a useful way for success. They are given a project with instructions and target results. So they are fully allowed to suggest ideas creatively to tackle the problem. This way they can use their skills and potentials freely with guidance from the management.

- **Are they given any leading role during the program?**

No, they are often placed in the supporting role for management as they are fresh graduates so they lack of experience as a leader in an organization. So they might be unconfident to lead or even if they are sufficiently confident to lead, they might not lead into the right direction. So they have to learn by observing first during the program. Then they will get to lead after the program when they are formally hired.

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- **Please give example of how do you do follow-up on management trainees to make sure that he/she applies what has been learned into workplace?**

Program checklist forms will be used to follow-up if management trainees have learned all of the required training. They will also be asked to give feedback as well as the department head will be asked to give a review about the training of the management trainees.

- **As the number of successful case is dropping, what do you think is the reason?**

There are a few significant main reasons. The first one is management-trainees-related. They face a lot of resistance due to seniority and hierarchy in the organization causing them to lose motivation and commitment to the program and resign eventually. Moreover, it might also be the time that management trainees are still looking for what they really like to do a career. They are still finding themselves so it is a chance to try hotel industry as a management trainee and they found out that it is not for them so they leave to look for new industry.

The second one is the mentor. It is important to the management trainees if the management is committed to coach them. Some mentors do not have time for management trainees. They have high potentials to grow in the industry but they still need experience, guidance, and know-how. So mentor has to pass on this knowledge to groom them. So if they are left out from their mentors, they will usually be less committed to stay onto the end of the program. So mentor is very important.

Another reason is also the position that the management trainees would like to pursue is not available at the property. Therefore, there is no opportunity for them afterward. Would it be possible to create a position? Yes, it is possible but it is not cost-efficient to do so.

- **Any thoughts, comments or suggestions regarding management trainees?**

They should have pre-requisite knowledge about the hotel industry. The management trainees should also select the department at the beginning of the program so they have a clearer direction. Also there is a discrepancy in the demand and supply between the hiring hotel and the management trainees because the hotel wants the management trainees in operational

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department but the management trainees themselves tend to select administrative department for their specialization. There for there is no equilibrium.

- **Are the management trainees suitable for Thai working environment?**  
It is still challenging because Thai working environment vales seniority and hierarchy. The program is new to the locals and to the industry. Especially the fact that Thai working culture tend to resist those who are younger or junior to be their superiors. However, it depends on the management trainees if they have enough patience to pass through this difficulty and proof that they can do it.

#### **Interview Summary – Coach/GM – 4**

- **Demographics**  
40 years old, Female, Bachelor in Hotel Management. Used to be a management trainee (It was called corporate trainees) Room Division background. Australian Nationality.
- **How many management trainees have you coached?**  
3 management trainees I have coached.
- **How often do you meet with the management trainees for coaching or discussion?**  
Coaching basis once every two weeks. The discussion is about coaching on leadership and also about their project progress.
- **What are the major issues of difficulty encountered by the management trainees?**  
Most of the time it is not difficulty. It is more of their developmental plans about their challenge they have face in the department that might impact the learning. After 12 months, they will be put into a senior role to manage the team which the time that they face challenge and pressure from guests and team member. The reflection of how they handle the situation to learn from it.
- **How do you integrate the management trainees into the workplace and management? How**  
It is fairly common to have management trainee in hotels nowadays. All of the department heads in the hotel are supportive for their learning. management trainees are invited into operation meeting and strategic



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meeting. They are part of all hotel meeting like Town Hall meeting or CSR activity. They are regarded as one of the active member of the management team and they are encouraged to be present in all hotel events. They can learn that they need to be visible by the employees.

- **Please explain the working culture of your hotel?**

This hotel has a high employee engagement score. Five corporate cultures (Five Wining Ways) are reinforced and implemented as a hotel culture because they provide a core fundamental to guide team how to work.

The communication and the way things are discussed is open and non-judgmental. The team is invited once a month to a hearing and discussion with the GM. So they are given an open forum to give suggestions and issues about the management so things are more clear and transparent to employees.

- **How long has the hotel been operated?**

7 years. 567 rooms 420 employees

- **Do you think Thai work environment/culture is different from other culture? If yes, how? What makes it different or unique?**

Yes, it is different than others. In Australia, efficiency is the first priority as well as multi-skills because wage is really high so there has to be a momentous reason to hire one person into a position. In Thailand, people are more dedicated to their own job, not how they can contribute to the person next to them.

There are much more procedures and rules in Thailand like signing documents and approvals. I used to sign 10 percent in Australia of what I actually sign here. There are also many names and signatures to approve one issues in which it might infer to the status and ranking in the work place. Seniority and hierarchy does exist. The positive part is that people are respectful and genuinely friendly. The negative part is that it holds people back sometimes. I cannot imagine that Thai workers would be brave enough to call someone out on something in the meeting but in Australia, this would not be an issue. There will be no hesitation. There, the organization structure is quite flat. For example, there will not be a problem for someone to walking to the GM office to discuss about an issues whereas in Thailand, frontline workers will never do the same. The complaints will come via the

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lines of commands which might or might not be heard by GM. So seniority and hierarchy definitely exist.

- **How do you perceive seniority and hierarchy in your workplace? Provide example. How strong of the existence? Given a rating of 1-10?**

It does exist. I think I would be a 7.

- **Do you think the working climate allow management trainees to apply learned materials, to suggest new way of working or to make mistakes in order to learn from it?**

The department are supportive. Every opportunity is given to them to learn and try it out. However, it is a two-way stream. They have to stretch themselves and commit.

- **Please give example of how do you do follow-up on management trainees to make sure that he/she applies what has been learned into workplace?**

It is a balanced between their personal development plan and the progress on their project. They are given small projects in conjunction with the department head. The project must be important and useful for the department. Like problem-resolution project and upselling project.

- **Any thoughts, comments or suggestions regarding how seniority and hierarchy affect the management trainees?**

The working environment is important but it also comes together with the trainee characteristics. They have to take ownership, committed and proactive. The factor like years of establishment of each hotel is also important because the years of the service of staff might have a positive relationship with the degree of seniority and hierarchy as well as the average age of employees.

### **Interview summary – Human Resources Director (HR) - 1**

- **Demographics**

Bachelor of social science, 51 years old, 20 years of experience in hotel industry.

- **How familiar are you with the management trainees Program?**

Very familiarized. She is the expert on the program as she run the recruitment and selection of the MT. She has been through the entire process of the program.

*Selection:*

Local candidates. Bachelor degree, fluent in English. Must possess leadership competency. They must be assessed in several stages. They have to pass through the application screening, phone interview, face-to-face interview, assessment center, online attitude and ability test and final interview with the general manager respectively. The competency does not include suitability or adaptability of the candidate in Thai working environment.

- **How often do you meet the management trainees?**

I meet them informally quite often to ask about how they progress.

- **How many batch of management trainees has your property had?**

5 batches since 2011

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different than other culture? If yes, how? What make it different?**

It is very unique. There is seniority and hierarchy but however it gradually decreasing nowadays because we have younger generation joining the organization and they bring in new ways of working overcoming to old working climate. If you discuss with more senior colleagues, they will still stay with the conventional way of working. They will speak about how long it took them to reach this point so you will have to go through the same process. All in all, seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace absolutely exist but it is not as strong as how it was before.

- **Are you aware of the term “Transfer of Training”? Can you give example of explicit actions that reinforce transfer of training? (Policy, SOP, measurement)**

Actually there is. Training and development of the hotel has the policy that after the training is finished, the head of department must measure the application of what has been used from the training and submit the feedback to the training manager. However, the operational teams of our hotel like F&B, housekeeping are very busy all year, so this procedure is usually omitted.

- **Please explain the working culture of your workplace?**

Working culture here employed the working ways provided by the corporate values. Do the right thing, celebrate difference, aim higher, work better together and show we care.

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- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace/Thai workplace? Provide example. How strong is it given a rating of 1-10?**

5. It varies from organizations to organizations. The organization that has been internationalized with modern ways of working, well-structured, standardized and diverse. This type of company will draw younger employees' interest and will have less seniority. However, if it is an organization that still maintain localized ways of working with more bureaucracy, the level of seniority and hierarchy will be higher. This hotel has welcomed younger generation to join the team and the senior employees are retiring. Those who are in the mid-range group are also adaptive and tolerant to change to follow the organization values and ways of working.

- **Do you promote younger manager or management?**

In our hotel, the promotion of our staff is considered virtually by looking at their work performance, not years of service in the organization. The department leader will select the high potentials and propose to HR to review the qualification. All in all, the hotel supports promotion of younger manager by performance.

- **Do you give coaching with the management trainees?**

It is normally scheduled to be once a month but sometimes both parties are busy then it is agreed to meet once every quarter. Primarily, they have to meet with the general manager once a month on a regular basis.

- **What are the major issues? Common issues?**

In the big organization like ours with 900 employees with high turnover rate, our staff in the department that the management trainees have to rotate to are constantly changing. So the program is new to them. They lack of understanding of who is the MT and why are they here. They have difficulty to understand the purpose of the program. The senior employees will have a difficulty understanding about the program. So, I try to encourage them to cope with the situation by exercising their leadership competency to make them understand and accept. Some of the cases related to seniority and hierarchy but it is not a common issue that they consult with me.

- **Suggestions or comments on the topic?**

This program depends tremendously on the characteristics of each of them. They are different. Therefore, it is hard to judge whether the program fit

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well or not in Thailand. But now it company start to realize that the successful cases are minimal. It depends on the qualification of the candidates that we drew from the recruitment. It must start from the recruitment process. Furthermore, the workforce in the hospitality industry is shrinking. The source of our graduates are mainly from the international college in Thailand and these group of students always come from sophisticated background. They tend to shift the interest to financial industry and corporate work. They are well exposed to mass communication and media so they are confident that other industry can make them grow faster and give them higher income rather than spending 18-month learning again about hotel industry. 80 percent of the resignation case of MT is because of pursuing higher education during or after finishing the program. The market is pressuring people to possess master degree or higher to win the competitive job hunting.

#### **Interview summary – HR – 2**

- **Demographics**

41 years old, Male, Tourism and Hospitality Management. 20 years of experience in HR.

- **How familiar are you with the management trainee Program?**

I am quite familiar with the program. I take part in the early stage of the selection as a face-to-face interviewer.

- **How often do you meet the management trainee?**

I meet them once every two weeks but they are always welcomed into my office when they need consultation because it is a compact work office not like city hotels in Bangkok.

- **How many batch of management trainee has your property had?**

2 batches.

- **Were they successful? Or Unsuccessful? How?**

The first batch of the management trainees was successful and the hotel hired her afterwards. She currently serves the company in a managerial level. However, the second batch is not successful as she fell into the transition between two coaches. The coaching style and commitment are different. The second management trainee is in the time of her life where she is still finding herself of which field of career she wants to pursue. The

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two management trainees that we have are quite different. Clearly, the first one was a proactive learner.

- **How important is the management trainee program to your property and the company?**

Management trainee program was implemented in this hotel initially because it was a mandate from the corporate office and it was one of my key performance indicators (KPI) to have a management trainee. The hotel would like to support the corporate strategy to groom of younger leader for future growth. After hiring the first management trainee, it is beneficial for us to implement this program and we receive a well-qualified talent from a pooled recruitment process.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different than other culture?**

Acceptance of younger leaders. It is hard for the younger management trainees to gain acceptance from senior colleagues whom are much more experienced and have worked longer. However, their competency such as English fluency, presentation skill and confidence can win over the heart of seniors. The first management trainee that this hotel has is well accepted because of her characteristics and her commitment to the job. She also tries to support other department when they need help. In Thai workplace, people do value seniority and hierarchy but it has dropped slightly.

- **Are you aware of the term “Transfer of Training”?**

We do implement 70-30 training model. 70 percent of then training are conducted on the job and 30 percent are done in training room. (He was not familiar with the Transfer of Training).

- **Please explain the working culture of your workplace?**

Sociable and casual working environment. Everyone uses five corporate values (five winning ways). Mostly, I can see clearly that staff care for each other. They do not strictly aim too much for result but they are flexible. This create the casual working culture. More than half of the staff is aged between 30 years old. So the majority is young generation.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace/Thai workplace? Provide example. How strong is it given a rating of 1-10?**

**8** There is a high seniority and hierarchy but it is on a positive effect. It is more about brotherhood that the juniors have to respect the seniors but we take care of each other and help each other. There are some cases of

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promotion because of seniority and year of service. He gave example of the accounting and food and beverage department that an employee was proposed to be promoted because he or she has been working for a long time but not really qualified. It is partly Thai working culture and mindset of respecting senior and saving face of other. If there is a restaurant captain who works for longer period but if the hotel would like to promote a new staff to be a supervisor. It is seen not respectful to promote the new staff into a higher position. Therefore, I have to promote this person to be in the equal position as the restaurant captain. It is acceptable to promote the younger person to be in the same step but it is unacceptable to promote the newcomer to a position ahead of a senior. This hotel has received the highest employee satisfaction score. The department heads take care of the employees really well like brothers and sisters. They play sports, sings, do activities together. This is when seniority and hierarchy has a positive influence.

- **Do you promote younger manager or management?**

Yes, the obvious case is our first successful management trainee. She is the first younger manager that we ever promoted. Usually in this hotel, you must be mature enough in terms of seniority and equipped with required competencies to be promoted.

- **Do you give coaching or regular discussion with the management trainee? What are the major issues? Common issues?**

How to write KPO? How to build their personal branding in the organization as the management trainees? Mostly they ask for consultations. Management trainees faced difficulty in adaptation into the team as she is too direct and straight-forward to other colleagues that deal the task with. It is because she is confident in the way she works and she is used to western style of working. However, the colleagues cannot adapt to being direct and frank and it is not our working culture. They also consult about their preferred area of learning but the hotel is not able to provide such opportunity as it is not cost-efficient. They also think that the program and the project is not challenging enough so some of them seeks for a more challenging work. They do face seniority and hierarchy related problems. They face resistance from the team member in each department.

- **Suggestions or comments on the topic?**

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The management trainees program should limit the specialization within operational department only like food and beverage, front office and room division. The recruitment for this program should not draw applications direct from the university or fresh graduates. Fresh graduates are not strong enough to go through resistance. They need to have some experience before being able to apply for the program.

### **Interview summary - HR - 3**

- **Demographics**

39, Female, Bachelor, 12 years of experience. 6 years in the hotel industry.

- **How familiar are you with the management trainee Program?**

Quite familiar with the program in my previous property.

- **How often do you meet the management trainee?**

Once a month to catch up especially in their first phase.

- **How many batch of management trainee has your property had?**

5 batches of management trainees have been hired here but I experience coaching only the recent 3 batches of management trainees.

- **Were they successful? Or Unsuccessful? How?**

I am quite proud of the current management trainees who has decided to specialize in HR and I coach the management trainees myself. She is graduating and giving a commitment to continue the employment with the hotel. I had one unsuccessful case because the tasks and the program are not as challenging as she expected. Some tasks that she does during the first rotation was too basic. The potentials and ability was not efficiently utilized by the hotel. Therefore, she resigned.

- **How important is the management trainee program to your property and the company?**

It is an important program as a tool from corporate's people strategy to groom young leaders for the fast growth of the company. However, it is challenging to fit the program in Thai work culture. Senior workers have been working for so long and waiting for promotion but why the management trainees can climb up the corporate ladder to be ahead of them as their supervisors and being paid more than those seniors. It is unlikely that these Thai fresh graduates will be accepted by these senior colleagues. The management trainees have to build trust and integrate into group of



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those seniors. Our ongoing management trainees at this hotel is very down-to-earth and humble. That is the key why she is successful. She always gets corporation from her older colleagues.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different than other culture?**

It is not significantly different. All working cultures are similar. People have to treat each other with respect. You have respect older colleagues or higher-rank employees.

- **Are you aware of the term “Transfer of Training”? Can you give example of explicit actions that reinforce transfer of training?**

Yes, I have heard about it but not fully aware of it. They appoint one trainer in each department to train the staff in their own areas. They make sure that the staff are trained by these trainers and the staff can perform and transfer what is being trained such as service behaviors, not only the training record. The performance of staff in each department will be the tool to evaluate and make sure transfer of training is being reinforced. Another example is when the employees were sent to attend external training, they have to cascade the message from the training by giving a presentation to the team or at least to the boss on what was covered in such training and how we implement it.

- **Please explain the working culture of your workplace?**

The hotel is quite old (25 years old). The average year of service of the staff is surprisingly long. People do respect each other like their family member.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace/Thai workplace? Provide example. How strong is it given a rating of 1-10?**

10. It is a good organizational asset that should be maintained. So the degree of seniority and hierarchy here is extremely high. For example, I recently hired a new executive sous chef from a 5-star sister hotel from Bangkok. So the newly appointed executive sous chef (equal to assistant manager) is still young (around 30) and energetic. He is quite frank and straight-forward. The staff in the kitchen raised the issue that long-service executive chef (equal to manager) has worked for a long time; he started at the lowest rank and climbed to be the executive chef today so he felt how tired and tough the job will be. However, the new executive sous chef is younger than them and trying to push them to work faster and more energetic. He fails to realize that the senior workers there are used to the slow pace and laborious way of working. They concluded that he does not respect the seniors and they claim

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that they have been in the comfortable way of working so many years and who is this young executive sous chef trying to change us. It is unacceptable. Interestingly, the executive chef allows them to behave in such way because he has been working with them since long ago and he embraced the seniority values himself. At this hotel, the seniority and hierarchy always come first even before the business.

- **Do you promote younger manager or management?**

We do promote young managers. Every department must pinpoint who is their successors and high-potentials in order to replace them. However, seniority-based promotion strongly exists here as well. I was surprised when I faced this type of promotion and it was reasoned that these employees have been working for us for a long time and they have never been given promotion. So they should be promoted. There is no other reason or evidence to rationalize the nomination such as a hardworking evidence, competency, recognition, or impressive leadership skills. When I first started to work here, ten kitchen staff and twelve engineers were promoted at the same time because they have never been promoted and they have been loyal with the hotel. Moreover, this year is my second year working here, I recently encountered the same issue just like last year. They want to promote six engineers because they have been working here for a long time. One person was recently promoted last year to be duty engineer and this year he is nominated to be promoted as a senior duty engineer. There was no other evidence of performance indication given. The nomination for promotion is also done according to the seniority. The staff that were promoted last year had a longer years of service. After being promoted, the nomination of the next group with the second longest year of service is done this year. The performance review here is done according to the standard of the company but it has never been utilized for any purposes such as bonus or salary increments because this hotel has a labor union. Therefore, the bonus and salary increment are being calculated and paid out according to the year of service. The longer you work, the more bonus and salary increment you will be granted regardless of how much you perform. If you work here for one to four year, you will be given 100 percent of announced bonus but if you work here for ten years and above, you will be given 175 percent of

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announced bonus regardless of how poor perform. This demotivate the new but hardworking workers.

- **Do you give coaching or regular discussion with the management trainee?**

I meet the management trainees once a week for a short meeting but it is flexible. Most of the time they are happy with the job and rotation in each department. People are friendly to them. I normally give them a small assignment to observe internal working environment of each department. I ask them to be a detective sometimes for internal politics in each department. In some department there is a really high turnover rate because the senior workers there are very stubborn and are neither willing to change or adapt to new ways of working nor cooperate with the new employees.

- **Suggestions or comments on the topic?**

The program is not successful because the commitment toward to the program is not sufficient. The department head and the trainers treat the management trainees just like one of the conventional student trainee. They treat the management trainees as one of the workforce rather than supervisory trainees. GM and heads of department have to commit and take the training seriously and intensively.

#### **Interview summary - HR - 4**

- **Demographics**

35, male, BBA International Business, MBA Human Resources abroad, 13 years of experience, Thai

- **How familiar are you with the management trainees program?**

Very familiar. I have been the assessors for the management trainees since the first batch.

- **How often do you meet the management trainees?**

Meet once a month officially. But I meet them casually very often at work. They are also invited to the management operation meeting. They are also invited to attend staff general meeting. The management trainees have to present what are they doing or learning at the moment in the management meeting as well as in the staff general meeting (so called town hall meeting). My intention is that the management trainees will be highlighted by the management team and by the staff. This will distinguish the management

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trainees from the typical student trainees. Sometimes they are treated as student trainees but after the new departmental leader seeing that the management trainees are invited in the management meeting, they will treat them differently and they will understand that these management trainees should be trained more intensively. Most of the management trainees found the first phase to be boring and non-challenging. They have a lot of energy and high expectation on the program. Therefore, being trained on simple tasks in the first phase is too simple for them. Furthermore, it is a mistake when they are trained in the first phase as the rank-and-file staff by colleagues or supervisors in each department and in the second phase of the program, the management trainees will have to act as a supervisor leading those trainers. Consequently, they will face resistance because those trainers think that the management trainees are new and inexperienced. They are the trainers of the management trainees and how can they now be supervisors.

- **How many batch of Management trainees has your property had?**

3 batches of management trainees

- **Were they successful? Or Unsuccessful? How?**

The majority of the management trainees is successful. Most of the management trainees who were trained from our hotel continued within the company.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different than other culture?**

Not only in Thai working environment but also in Asian working environment, seniority and hierarchy does exist. It is very important and highly valued in Thai environment. Thai workers can be seen to be quite casual but they can also be stubborn. They are sometime vague in the way they work; not black and white but grey. If you ask if Thai colleagues understand the task, they will say yes but they will either not understand it fully or they will not proceed as agreed. Although other Asian culture might have seniority just like how Thai people value, other Asian culture like Japanese, Singaporean and Korean do enjoy clearness and precision in the way they work which Thai working environment tend to have less or lack of. It has to do with a unique Thai culture called “Krengjai”, the way that Thai people do not want to bother or they are afraid of hurting other people’s feeling by rejecting. So they are obliged to accept the offer. It is hard for

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Thai people to confront with others and argue constructively without emotional consequences. Therefore, in the meeting, it is considered rude to question or argue constructively while it is okay to be straightforward and argue in western culture. Most of the time, Consensus is not reached. Thai working environment is highly collective which is positive for team work and people are helpful to each other but sometimes it can also be negative. Employees will team up into gangs and smaller group to resist and quietly rebel for their needs. They also follow what is being said by their gang leader only. If the leader resigns to work in another place, they will also follow along.

- **Are you aware of the term “Transfer of Training”?**

Yes, I am aware of the transfer of training or transfer of learning. The company has developed the new leadership model called 70-20-10 model. 70 percent of the training must be done on-the job, 20 percent must be through mentoring and 10 percent must be learned from theory and classroom training. This has replaced the two-day leadership training.

- **Can you give example of explicit actions that reinforce transfer of training? (Policy, SOP, measurement)**

Using the leadership training model as an example, the trainees of the leadership program has to learn in the classroom by self-reading and sharing with others in class. After that they have to apply in the real workplace with acknowledgement from the departmental leader. This will make sure that they have to apply into the real workplace. However, for general training in the hotel, there is no such policy or mechanisms making sure that the staff is apply what has been trained into the workplace.

- **Please explain the working culture of your workplace?**

Luckily this hotel has a younger staff. In another word the average age of employees is quite young. Even though they have some senior employees, those people are modern just like younger ones. The communication of within the organization is democratic, transparent and open. Most of the decision making process involves staff. Employees are encouraged to be tech-savvy. Everyone in the hotel is reached out through social medias like Facebook. They try to employ bottom-up strategy of managing people. They listen to their staff and try to accommodate the need as much as they can.

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- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace/Thai workplace? Provide example. How strong is it given a rating of 1-10?**

Seniority and hierarchy absolutely exist here but it is not so strong because of the younger age. I rated it as 4. The management trainees sometimes feel hesitated to question senior colleagues and employees. However, I have worked here since the opening of the hotel so I shaped the culture and considered to be senior in this hotel. Therefore, most of the time people will listen to me even though they are older. This is may be because I have worked here longer, they will listen and respect my ideas.

- **Do you promote younger manager or management?**

They do take performance of employees as the main criteria of promotion. Seniority and year of service do not have any impact on promotion. For example, my subordinates are older than me and he recently promoted young front office manager.

- **Do you give coaching or regular discussion with the management trainees?**

Most of the challenge that they have concerns with the information and the quality of the training that they receive. It was not challenging enough for them. In first phase, they found it not challenging enough and there is less commitment from the trainer. The training was not intensive enough for them to grow in a higher position. In the second phase, they were disappointed on the coach or trainers that were appointed which is normally a supervisor, not the department head as how it is supposed to be. They also had to practice the same tasks that they were trained in the first phase. Therefore, there is no value added in the program having no difference from the student trainees. In the last phase, they do not feel that they have sufficient competency to act as the supervisor or assistant manager. So they have potentials, skill and knowledge but they have not built up sufficient soft skill and people skill.

- **Suggestions or comments on the topic?**

Phase one for the program is too long. It should be 2-3 months instead of 6 months and the second phase should be stretched to the 8-9 months. The second phase requires longer time for deep learning about the department and more on-the-job training. They should also learn about profit-and-loss, numbers and budgeting of their chosen department. This will be challenging

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for them. This has an impact on respect and trust toward the management trainees. If they are treated just like student trainees at the beginning of the program, they will still be perceived as the student trainees when they have to act as the supervisor or assistant manager of the department. Therefore, they will be pressured and resisted by their senior colleagues. The management trainees have to know how to position themselves in the property. This is the key to success. The onboarding and orientation of the management trainees program should be done at the corporate office just like how the recruitment was done centrally. Today, the quality of the onboarding program fluctuates and it is inconsistent which depends highly on the understanding and commitment of the GM and HR at each property. If the orientation in the first week is done centrally. The program could have been much more harmonious. I do think that we should recruit Thai candidates but it is not effective to hire fresh graduates. The candidates should be nominated internally from potentials employees or supervisors. This way the trust and acceptance from colleagues will be much higher. The candidate can easily gain more trust and they can easily cope with resistance from their peers. They should have 2 -3 years of experience. I opposed to the reason of resignation from many management trainees that is to pursue higher education. But in fact, he said it is just a reason to leave because the program is not challenging enough and not concrete. It is basically not what they expected. The promotion of the program over-promises them a day-dream. Therefore, they would rather resign to study or they reasoned to the property that they go to pursue higher education. I think they are afraid that they will be impolite and not graceful by saying that they cannot fulfilled the program. The company has to reconsider and restructuring since the recruitment. We recruit a high-profile background graduate so they do not tolerate resistance and pressure.

#### **Interview summary – Management Trainee (MT) – 1 (Ongoing)**

- **Demographics**

23, Female BBA Tourist and Hospitality Management

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

Training center at the university and an internship at Shangri-La in Dubai for three months.

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

Heard about this program from my seniors at the university. I want to challenge herself.

- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**

I realized that the theories that I have learned from college is totally different from what it is in real life. I have learned how to deal with people in a different kind of people.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

Supposedly, the resident manager is the one who coaches the management trainees at this hotel. However, he resigned when I entered the program so the GM has to take responsibility. I have a short discussion with the GM for twenty minutes each.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

It is quite different. Staff empowerment is less important in Thai working culture. It has to go through hierarchical level.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

Fire evacuation training, band standard but I have never been trained abroad and externally.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, it also depends on which department. If it is something that I know well or I am confident, I will suggest the new way of performing like English skill. I might get a chance to teach simple task to a newcomer but I am afraid to suggest the new way of working to the older colleagues. I feel hesitated to do so.

Most of the time when I rotate to each department, my colleagues in each department are not aware of the management trainee and they do not even know about the program so they will treat her like a typical student trainees or as one of the man power. Therefore, I have to carry the learning checklist of the program with me so that the trainers follow the training guidelines.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

The coach is quite open for discussion and he is supportive. We have good relationship but as the GM is often busy, I demand for more commitment for the program from my coach.



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- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?**

No. I was not given a chance to talk to the colleagues in the departmental meeting or anything. I was put on the job right on the first day. This might be the reason that staff do not know about the program. I went to each department in advance to tell them that I will be trained here soon.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

There was no follow-up plan given so far when I rotate to different sections. I was asked casually about the next department and where is my training now but there is no concrete assignment to follow up.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, a lot of them are older than me. Almost everyone is senior than me. Now I am in the first phase so I feels that everyone in the hotel welcomes me. I have not felt the resistance yet but it might come later when I have to cooperate with them in the near future.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? Rate 1-10**

The level is extremely high. It is even reinforced from the management and the GM. The GM is very strict about the level of hierarchy and seniority. He is quite conservative when it comes to lead others. I would rate 9.

- **Can you give example of a situation which show seniority and hierarchy?**

The average age of the staff and year of service is quite high. They have been working here for a long time. Therefore, the seniority is high. The people are who more senior must be respected and must be given importance in order to gain their cooperation.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

It is like a wall or barriers against the learning and speaking up of the management trainees. It is difficult for us to express our ideas. We have creative ideas but we have to keep it quiet because it might create a new task for someone or it might hurt others in the workplace. Therefore, it is not an open communication.

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- **Which position are you expected to be promoted after completion of this program?**

I have not decided what is her plan after the completion because now my focus is on which department I should choose to specialize in. At the end, I have an idea that I might take a break to try out something else to find out what I really wants to do. However, if I choose the right department and I really enjoys my job, I am also willing to continue with the company. I do expect that the program will deliver the promise of fast track promotion.

- **Do you face any difficulty or resistance from colleagues?**

The unpleasant working environment from colleagues when they are pressured by guests made my stressed. I understand that they are all busy. I do want to have a conference to get to know other management trainees in Thailand or in Asia. I need to have a feedback of my performance that I have never received. Finally, the company especially the central corporate office to should pay more attention to the management trainees. Currently I am basically a one-man-show in the property so it will be helpful to meet other management trainees or to have a management-trainee network in the area who have the same interests and difficulty to share and learn from each other. I felt left-out from other management trainees and corporate office. There are some moments that I have low motivation because of many reasons but I still plans to continue with the program.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the management trainee program?**

The program is great but corporate office should reach out for management trainees for conference call or for feedback session and small training. It does not have to be corporate office but it will be beneficial if there is a chance for the management trainees to meet each other and catch up. There should also be a workshop on how to select the department, the direction of the program. it would be also a great way to learn by hearing from alumni who is still in the company.

#### **Interview summary - MT – 2 (successful)**

- **Demographics**

24, Bachelor in Business, Female

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

No. This is my first full-time job after graduating.

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

I seek for a valuable and fast career path. It is an interesting offer for fresh graduate in a hospitality field.

- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**

Yes. It has been beneficial to my learning and career path. I have chosen the right department and the right time so I am the successor of the retiring employee. It was frustrating but it was quite challenging. So those motivation and expectation that I had for the program at the beginning have achieved.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

No. I have not received direct coaching from GM but rather been coached by resident manager whom has resigned during phase three. So I do not have usual coaching once per week that I used to have anymore. I meet with the GM once every six weeks. Since I have chosen to specialized in training and development, GM cannot really coach me much on the required skill because it is not his specialization. Therefore, GM will coach me more on communication, soft skills and supports from him.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Yes, it is different. Funnel-way of communication. It is difficult for Thais to be direct and straightforward. You cannot express yourself or express your ideas in public without talking or signaling about it in advance. In the meeting, to get the job done, you have to lobby others for cooperation casually before saying it publicly. It is hard to get acceptance if you go western way. If you want to ask them to complete one task, you cannot ask directly but you have to humbly introduce and ask how can we do it so they can be involved in the decision and planning. Additionally, being younger or junior, it is difficult to give negative feedback to seniors and it is even rude to criticize seniors in the meeting.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training? Which?**

Accelerated Leadership Development Program (Externally). Craft Training Certificate. But I have not been sent to train abroad.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

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Yes, tremendously because I have chosen training and development as my specialization so I stated that what I have learned in the first phase can be transferred into her work now. I know how the operation will be like in each department and how to deal with it. I have an overview picture of what the task is like when I give training to employees.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

Yes, I have tried to suggest new ways of working for them. There are some cases that they accepted but there are also some cases that they rejected by saying that they have tried it but it didn't work out so they remain with the same way of working.

I try not to reveal my age or my status as a management trainee to new colleagues that has just joined the team because they will think that I am young and used to be a trainee so it will be difficult to gain respect and trust especially when they are older than me.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?**

Yes. I had a chance to present myself in some department and talk to the employees in each department. Luckily this hotel has been hiring management trainees continuously so existing staff are familiar with the program. The staff will know the management trainees program by associating to the previous management trainees that the hotel used to have or the management trainees that they admired. They also know the sequence of the rotation of the training. However, they do not know the actual aim or purpose of the program.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

Yes, it depends on each department. Mostly I will be assigned with task to do and present it once completed. I was also given an overview of the training in each department and given advise on highlighted point that I have to master when being trained. Sometime I act as a spy to get information from the department.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, majority of them are older than me but I get along well with them.

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- **Have you try to suggest them about what you have learnt from the training?**

I tried to suggest the new way of working for them but mostly they will not accept because they have been working here for a more than 15 years and it is hard to locate them out of their comfort zone. It is hard to change them. I did not intend to push much either because the consequences do not have any impact on my work so I leave it as that.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (Rating 1-10)**

I actually wanted to rate 10 but it will be too subjective so I think it is around 9. I remembered that I have to adapt a lot even though I grew up in conservative Thai school and family. However, I have become more westernized when I was an exchange student and an education in an international college. This period of life shaped me to become direct and more expressive. Since I started working here, I have to think and rethink before saying and doing anything. I have to adapt myself to fit in the organization due the main reason which is seniority and hierarchy. On the other hand, if there is less seniority and hierarchy, I could have performed better because it is the barriers to speak up.

- **Can you give example of a situation which show seniority and hierarchy?**

It is hard to give example but seniority and hierarchy does exist in almost everything that is carried out in this hotel. For example, when sending emails, the list of the recipients must be carefully and sequentially listed according to their rank of seniority and hierarchy. The name of the senior colleagues cannot be at the end of the list or the name of the higher rank cannot lie behind the lower ranks.

- **If yes, how does it impact your work daily or affect management trainees?**

The management trainees program is meant to be a fast track program that elevate your career. You become a leader in a shorter time. However, there is a barrier of age and year of service in Thai working culture. You are younger, how you can lead the older colleagues. The senior colleagues have been working here for a long time, how can I cross over them and get promoted ahead of them.

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Furthermore, it also impacts how I express myself or give feedback. I cannot be direct and open. It is often said that fresh graduates are a new, energetic blood to lead changes in the organization. It is not true. As a younger worker, I cannot do so and expect to get acceptance from seniors. No.

- **If you were trained of a new way to perform task and you have to apply this in work place? Would you feel hesitated? Why?**

Yes, I cannot do the job as how I would normally do it. I have to adapt the way I implement, cooperate or request for some changes in the organization without being direct and strong. I have to be to very humble. If I want to learn about my tasks, I have to go in and offer to help rather than ask colleagues to teach me.

- **Which position are you expected to be promoted after completion of this program?**

Assistant Talent Development Manager

- **Have you faced any seniority-promotion or seniority preference?**

I have seen some case but most of the time, if the junior colleagues are being promoted, the benefit of the seniors will also be raised like salary increment in compensation of not getting promotion and to prevent conflict between the two candidates

- **Do you face any difficulty or resistance from colleagues?**

When I first decided to learn about job training and talent development, my senior trainer whom I will have to succeed told me that I might have to initially work as training coordinator or training executive after completing the program. It was not expected that I will one day I will act as an assistant training manager. Hierarchy and seniority strongly exist so I always have to be very humble. I try to adapt towards this culture so that it has positive impact. I was not trained intensively until it is confirmed that my trainer will retire. May be she was pressured by GM to train me rigorously. (*Seniority and hierarchy might lead to knowledge hiding and less sharing to younger potentials in order to secure the position*)

- **What is your plan after completion?**

I plan to accept an employment offer after the program as the Assistant Talent Development Manager. But I plan to continue master degree at one point in the future.

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- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the management trainee program?**

The rotation in the first phase could have be longer. There should be a second coach rather than a GM that can discuss once a week or bi-weekly. The coach has to really be committed. The department head of the landing department should really believe in the program.

#### **Interview summary - MT – 3 (successful)**

- **Demographics**

BSc Hotel Management, Male, 28,

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

I finished hotel education and I did not want to start from the beginning to learn from basic. Therefore, I seek to join hotelier career accelerating program. So I expected to grow faster in his hotel but my expectation has not been achieved. I did not finish the program with an accelerated position that was offered by the company.

- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**

In terms of learning, there was an imbalance between what you want to learn and what the hotel or the coach wants you to learn. In my case, I wanted to learn about one thing but my coach and the hotel's need directed me to learn another expertise with the strategic aim that can benefit the hotel after program's completion.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

Yes, I met with the coach once a month but after I chose the department, GM passed on the task to coach with department head.

Therefore, I did not get coaching and insights from GM. I was given mostly work-related advice, not managerial or people skills that would have received from GM. I was also given a second coach by the GM (buddy program) but after his second coach resigned, the second-coach practice was discontinued.

If I feel the desperate needs for help or when I was lacking of motivation, I will not go to my coach as I am afraid that the coach will perceive me negatively and it will affect my future career or promotion. Therefore, I mostly consult with colleagues or supervisors in the department.

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- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Thai people desires respects. If you have any new creative ideas, you will have to find a respectful way to propose it. Otherwise it will be rejected. If they are senior, you cannot propose new ideas or criticize the existing ideas without giving respects, you basically cannot be straightforward when speaking. Since I was educated abroad it was difficult for me to do this and my ideas were rarely taken because I openly proposed it or I was too frank. To do it right, if I have any ideas, I have to consult it personally and verbally with the person first. Emails or memos should not be used as means. I have to show respect when speaking to them gently and humbly. If they see that I am respecting them, they will listen and cooperate.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I attended onboarding in corporate office in Bangkok which was the only external training I received.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, there was an opportunity for me to apply what I have learned. For example, I was trained in front office and I moved to reservation, I could apply what I had learned from front office to the task in reservation which is related. Also when the employees do not understand the task that must relate to another department, I can explain to them and help them connecting the two departments. However, if the problem is about the misperception of another department, it is impossible for him to change or to correct it.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

Yes, I suggested new ways to execute emails or inquiries from guests. They accepted it but they return to the old way of working when I left the department.

- **Does your supervisor/manager/colleagues give you a chance to apply what you have learnt into real work place? How?**

Yes, I was given a chance to apply but due to the company's standards that has been set for consistency, I could change anything much.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?**



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There was an introduction about the program to the staff in the general meeting and I was given a chance to introduce myself when I rotated to new departments. The hotel was successful in making the employees acquainted with the program.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

I was given a follow up assignments when rotating to each department and I was also obligated to request feedback from department leader after the training.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

The majority of the colleagues were older than me.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (Example, Rating 1-10)**

I rated 8. For example, a senior employee was unhappy reaction on an event that she was not communicated about nomination of department representatives to join staff activities. If this would have happened to a junior employee, it would not be an exaggerated problem. So senior colleagues can never be overlooked yet they have to be prioritized.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

The management trainees have a lot of new and creative ideas to propose. At first it was accepted by the department leaders but the ideas have never been implemented because the second highest leaders in the department usually rejected those ideas and their voices are usually louder than the voice from management trainees.

- **Have you had any moment that you want to resign?**

Yes, many times because the company cultures, way of working might not be for him. I sometimes felt that the program cannot deliver my expectation especially when I was not given any offer for employment after program's completion. So I was waiting for a few months. It was because there was no vacancy in the position that I aimed for and this position was not budgeted in the company manning plan. When it comes to hiring, budget comes first. If there is budget but there is not vacancy, the hotel can create the position for you but if there is no budget for hiring, it is difficult to land into your desired position. This is why the chosen department of management trainees

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should match the needs of the hotel in order to offer the employment afterward.

Being a graduate of the management trainee program, I do not see the superiority, value or privilege over the other candidates when it comes to hiring, employment or movement within the company.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the management trainee program?**

The program itself is well-designed but the implementation and the receiving hotel that has to deliver the program well. The management trainees themselves will also have to be able to handle people. Most of the challenge that becomes a pushing factor does not relate to tasks or the program but it relates to people in the that particular organization. So they have to be aware of this and being able to adapt. Or else, they will end up exiting the program.

- **Were you given a chance to apply what has been learnt?**

I was trained about his work-related training that must be compulsory. I could apply what I had learned but there was no follow-up from the trainers.

#### **Interview summary - MT – 4 (unsuccessful)**

- **Demographics**

Female, 30, International Tourism, Master

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

1. HR Analyst supporting affiliates in Italy, ExxonMobil Limited for 1.5 years
2. Project Coordinator for the hotel renovation project and other special projects, Balios Resort Khaoyai and Palio Khaoyai for 8 months

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

Learning from the job of the project coordination, I realized that I was suitable for a large-scaled companies which provide employees the systematical working approach .The ad-hoc approach employed in the family-business style of the second company I joined made me quite frustrated while working .Furthermore, I still needed to work in the same field as the one I had studied in the master level, which was tourism and hospitality field .Thus, the MT program which was organized by the

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international hotel chain and the well-designed program should satisfy my preference. In addition, I was not a fresh-grad anymore and was a bit older than other candidates so I believed joining the program could provide me the shortcut to move up to the managerial positions faster.

- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**

The knowledge and experiences gained from the program enabled me to understand the whole processes happening in the hotel operation and how all departments cooperatively worked with one another. Even if the duration of program was not long, the learning process and the program design were intensive enough to provide me the complete holistic picture of the hotel business. Such understanding helped me very much when teaching my students during my current career as a lecturer. The real experiences could be used as examples further explaining the theories I teach.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

Yes, especially from my first GM who used to be a management trainee with the company before. Hence, he really understood how the program functioned and what are were expected by the management trainees. He did not only teach me the works and the systems operated in the hotel but also suggested me how I should adjust my characteristics shown to the public in order to become a good and approachable leader.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Yes, I think the work environment of each country is unique, depending on the overall culture and organizational culture of each specific country. The Thai work culture, when being compared with Italian work culture which I used to work with, is more compromising and more flexible to serve customer's request. This tends to match the Thai culture which always tries to please others and does not strict much with the rules and regulations. Thus, the high level of flexibility is demonstrated.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I had the equal opportunity for attending the general training like the one provided to the executive committees of the hotel. For external training, I attended mainly within the hotel chain or the corporate office.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

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Mostly yes, especially the in-house training teaching the product knowledge and culture of the company namely the core values and norms of service standards .The understandings derived from the company in-house training enabled me to comprehend the whole direction of the umbrella brand as well as why and how the hotel implemented all necessary policies to pursue such direction .Even if the customization in some acceptable degree was done to implement the corporate initiatives, especially in my previous property which had been rebranded several years before I started the work there, the clear understanding about the new corporate direction and policies allowed me to comprehend the reason behind each policy and supportively perform my work towards the desirable direction aimed by the company. This really made me adjust myself well with the changes initiated by the corporate office due to the sufficient understanding .In contrast to some colleagues who had been worked in my previous property when the previous brand had been active, they struggled with following the different policies initiated by the corporate office since they were not familiar with the new way of working and were not be convinced why it is necessary for them to follow the new corporate policy.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

In fact, I did not feel any resistance with my own initiative because I left the program before the phase in which I could teach or suggested any initiative to other colleagues .Generally, during working there, it was the phase in which I needed to learn and adjust myself with the corporate work culture which was considered new for most staff members in my previous property . The resistance I could feel is the one towards the new corporate work culture and general corporate culture which were not communicated well enough and were communicated by the leaders (mostly foreign leaders .)Such leaders did not select the appropriate communication way/style that was suitable to Thai audiences, ignored some cultural differences between the Western and Thai cultures .Thus, my Thai colleagues who were familiar with and admired the previous oriental working style (Japanese brand :Pan Pacific )were not happy with the communicator (their bosses), and this led to being resistance with the initiative communicated.

- **Would you be punished if you make mistakes at work?**

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I have never been officially punished so I could not confirm if the punishment was enforced for real .However, as far as I know, the position of a management trainee should be treated like other positions .Hence, the punishment should be enforced in the same way as other positions need to face if there is any mistake created.

- **Does your supervisor/manager/colleagues give you a chance to apply what you have learnt into real work place? How?**

As I focused on training in the front office department during my second phase, I had plenty of chances to apply the knowledge learnt from the corporate policies in the front-of-the-house operation, especially when serving guests. When dealing with guest problems, many unpredictable situations could happen and sometimes, there was no rule to suggest which solution should be used. However, the understanding of the corporate culture and policies could give the rough guidelines for me to create the customized solution which matched each unpredictable problem faced by guests, and did not violate the corporate culture.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

Our relationship was very good but it was not close. It seemed to be a bit official relationship probably because my own personality did not support to have very close relationship with any direct boss in order to keep it professional. However, my GM tried his best to be approachable to me and was willing to give me the suggestions regarding both work-related and personality-related issues. Until now, even if I have resigned already, we still keep in touch between each other since he is still supporting me as much as possible for my current career. For example, he provided the hotel visit for me in his new property and allowed me to have a talk with him about further cooperation between my own research work or the internship opportunities which his property could collaborate with my current university.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?**

Yes, especially for some updated ideas or policies received from the corporate training. Furthermore, my understanding of such topics also enabled me to explain my colleagues who did not understand the reason

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supporting the new corporate policies or who were not convinced with such policies. However, for the operation knowledge, I rarely shared it with them since I was still learning such knowledge from them during my work period.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

Not really since I did not stay until the phase in which the formal assignment was given by GM. I was still during the learning process.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Approximately 50% of all colleagues were older than me.

- **Have you try to suggest them about what you have learnt from the training?**

Yes, but I did it indirectly and subtly to avoid their resistance. I did it through the storytelling approach, telling them I had got the relevant information from the training session in the corporate office and would like to update it to them, especially when they did not understand why the new corporate policies needed to be implemented. At least they did not resist my explanation relating to the reason why the new corporate policies needed to be used. However, I was not sure how much they really understood it and was convinced with the message I sent to them.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? 1-10**

I would rate it 7 out of 10. For example, if the junior talent who was promoted to the higher position, he or she needed to be qualified enough to get such position. Otherwise, his/her colleagues would doubt if it was fair to promote such junior talent when there were some senior employees who might be qualified more for such position. Thus, his/her performance in the previous position in the property needed to be good enough to convince other people that he/she deserved such higher position. If he/she came from another organization, he/she needed to strongly prove herself to other senior colleagues that he/she was sufficiently qualified. It was challenging to prove in the beginning if the junior talent was qualified. If he/she could successfully prove him/herself, usually there was no outstanding resistance from senior employees. For the hierarchy, both previous corporate culture and the current one supported that all supervisors and managers should be approachable by their subordinates. Although, each leader was powerful in their roles when leading people to work in the same direction and to

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maintain the high quality of services, most leaders in my property were very open and positioned themselves as a good supporter and listener. Thus, the hierarchy was not much intense in terms of work atmosphere. Only the policy-related or quality-related issues were kept strict by the leaders and their subordinates needed to follow their directions.

- **If yes, how does it impact your work daily?**

As mentioned before, the seniority and hierarchy were not intense. Thus, the work environment still allowed me and my colleagues to raise any question or new idea to our leaders. Besides, it still forced us to be strict to the direction of quality and policies set by our leaders since the hierarchy was still active in some degrees for such issues.

- **If you were trained of a new way to perform task and you have to apply this in work place? Would you feel hesitated? Why?**

I would not feel hesitated if the logic or the reason behind the new way was sufficiently explained, and was justifiable to follow, and to prove that it could really support the higher work performance and overall corporate performance.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

For sure, if they are too strong and with the lack of understanding about the program, it would be a barrier for the trainees to get the acceptance and the justifiable level of promotion when finishing the program. However, if the seniority and hierarchy exist due to the local culture of each property, and are not too strong, like in my property, I would say they may not harm the program. They could be perceived as challenges for the trainees to adjust themselves and to prove themselves that they are qualified enough to get promoted after the program completion. Such challenges could be beneficial for the trainees as working in the hotel industry, you may be rotated to different geographical locations with diverse degrees of seniority and hierarchy. If the trainees have already been trained to handle such aspects in the program, they could manage this kind of challenges in the future more easily.

- **Which position are you expected to be promoted after completion of this program?**

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Duty manager or Sales assistant manager since I planned to be specialized in two departments namely, Front Office and Sales and Marketing. I think it is quite possible to get one of them since I tried to estimate the possible positions from the previous batch of management trainees and from the talk with my two GMs. They were very supportive to encourage me to go for such positions.

- **If you are not promoted, what do you think is/was the reason?**

I did not stay until I could get the promotion. In my opinion, if it happened, I would not think seniority should be the reason as it was not too strong in there. However, the possible reasons would be that I might not pass the expected performance level to get the higher position, or the budget of the hotel might not be sufficient to pay for an additional supervisory/managerial position in my selected department. (in case there might be no available position during the program completion.)

- **Have you faced any seniority-promotion or seniority preference?**

It was not that strong in my property. Thus, the senior colleagues needed to be qualified enough as well to be promoted. Otherwise, they could just stay in the same positions.

- **Do you face any difficulty or resistance from colleagues?**

Not for the work-related issues. However, I faced the difficulty of getting along with one person in the managerial position because she disliked the way I presented myself and requested for further possible opportunities to learn the tasks and to be promoted from my first GM. In my opinion, *I think she envied the opportunity I got from the program.* Hence, such manager created the rumor against me and some of her close colleagues believed her and tended to show the negative attitude towards me. *This issue was not directly work-related so it did not negatively impact my work. But, it really disturbed me since the work environment among me, her and her fellows were quite stressful.* At the end, I talked to her directly to clarify all conflicts between us both and we kind of understood each other better. Thus, she stopped creating the rumor and stopped such resistance to me.

- **What is your plan after completion?**

When I was in the program, I planned to get the position I referred before and work in my property for a while. I really hope I could be rotated to other brands under the same umbrella brand to get even higher position since I



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did not mind working in the smaller or lower brands. I saw it as the great opportunities to grow faster.

- **How long are you planning to work for the company? Why?**

I used to plan to stay at least 1-2 years after the promotion. After that, I would be open to any opportunity to move up faster in the same umbrella brand or other umbrella brands.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the management trainee program?**

As referred before, if the seniority and hierarchy exists in any workplace in the proper degrees such as in the degree to which the trainees could learn how to be humble and harmoniously work with other senior colleagues, the seniority and hierarchy for sure are perceived beneficial or even necessary for the learning process of the trainees. However, in some properties in which these two systems are too strong or even stronger than the international corporate culture, it is a barrier which could discourage the trainees to be successful in the program, or even could stimulate the trainees to leave the program. This is not beneficial for the trainees themselves as they lose the opportunity to gain the advantages and experiences from this worthwhile program. For the properties themselves, they lose the potential future leaders from their companies and lose all resources which have already invested in the training process for such trainees. Moreover, it could even demonstrate that the corporate culture might not be strong enough to control the direction of the specific properties for real if the management trainee program could not be implemented successfully in all properties which showed intention to join. Thus, before deciding to join the program, I strongly suggest that each property should assess its readiness and potential in depth. Not only the agreement from the owners or the ex-com members but also the consensus from all supervisory levels as well as their collaboration to help communicate the understanding of this program to all subordinates, are necessary. If the understanding could be established to majority of people working in the hotel in all levels, the management trainee program could be implemented more easily and effectively.

- **What was the major issues that cause you to resign?**

There was nothing to complain in terms of the program. I resigned because my ultimate career goal was not in the industry and I just found it after joining the program. In fact, I would like to pursue my career goal in the academic field and this leads to my current job which is an instructor for tourism and hospitality management.

- **Were you given a chance to apply what has been learnt?**

Yes, very much. I would say the management trainee program really enabled me to be qualified to effectively teach, spending quite short time. The reason is that in the tourism and hospitality fields, people should have some relevant work experiences before teaching since these fields are not pure sciences. Hence, for my case, the 1-year period I took in the program is very precious for me as it provided the shortcut for me to learn the overall picture of the hotel operation and how each department cooperatively works among one another. Thus, all real experiences and understandings could become the examples and comparison between the theories and the real practices in the industry, which are taught in my class. I would say I have never regretted to join this program.

**Interview summary - MT - 5 (successful)**

- **Demographics**

26 years old, female, BBA

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

Yes, self-employed. I started and managed my own restaurant in my hometown for three years.

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

I always wanted to work in the hotel. I wanted to apply for this program specifically because of the high benefit like remuneration. The entry job would not give me this.

- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**

I had a chance to learn about the overall operation of hotel and I know what are the task of each position so other staff cannot fool me because I have been through all of these positions.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

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Yes, I was given direct coaching once a month. I had two coaches. For the second coach, I approached him once a week. I always go to see him. I think its better than letting him call to see me.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

I have please other people in order to get what you want. I think another unique point of Thai working environment is that your colleagues tend to interfere in your personal life. It is normal here when people gossip about you but it is also how you present your personal branding.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

- I was the first of batch of the management trainees here so I always have to explain staff about the program and they will always question my ability and my loyalty to the hotel.

- **Opportunity to train abroad?**

Yes I went to train abroad before started my first position after the program.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, I apply what I have learn from the training to improve the task and performance of the hotel. For example, I can apply it through creating new action plans.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

Usually people do not listen to me because I am new and young. However, I was told by my first coach when I voiced with him that I was not trained during my rotation. He suggested me to bring this to be a challenge that I have to cope. I have to find a way to stimulate individual trainers in each department to teach me and listen to me.

For resistance, I did not feel the explicit aggression or resistance from colleagues but I think there is implicit resistance in questioning my ability.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

Yes, I have good relationship with both of the coaches.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?**

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I was given a chance to attend management meeting as well as I was introduced when I rotate.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

No I was not given the follow up plan but I think the management trainee has to be independent enough to follow up yourself.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (Example, Rating 1-10)**

I would rate 5. I think it is not very high but it does exist.

- **Can you give example of a situation which show seniority and hierarchy?**

According to the typical structure of the hotel, the position that I received after the management trainee program was in level 4 but since I was promoted after being a management trainee, I was given the position but lowered in level to level 5 because I have less experience and I am junior. So there is a high level of seniority here.

Another example, working process sometimes is redundant and time consuming. The younger generation sees that such process can be shortened but they are not allowed to do so or to question it because the senior colleagues told them to do so. If they question or try to change it, the senior might lose face and perceive them negatively.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

It blocks my ideas and creativity. I have to always consult with seniors first before suggesting or proposing. I always have to ask for their opinions. I cannot voice my ideas and my opinion. Sometimes seniors are used to what they do. Therefore, they cannot see the mistakes or the new way of doing it.

- **Have you faced any seniority-promotion or seniority preference?**

Yes, in accounting department, I have noticed that they were promoted because they have been working here for a long time and they are senior. In order to respect them, they should be promoted. However, they were not really qualified.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the management trainee program?**

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The promotion and the awareness about the program is not sufficient among the management. They do not fully understand about the objective and the aim of the program. The turnover of the management trainees is considerably high. More than 50 percent of the management trainees resigned. The program draws for excessively high qualification so the majority of those who made it to the assessment center were from X University. However, they are mostly from rich family with attractive profile so they will always look for a better option. They will not withstand the pressure and challenge and they do not value the opportunity. So after all, the program is not valuable. The recruitment should rather seek for those who can stand pressure and possess high adaptability to survive.

- **What contribute to high turnover?**

The qualification of the candidate was too high. Fresh graduates from X university are surely cream of the crop, the support they received from their family is as much as the salary of the management trainees so why should withstand the difficulty. Some of them joined the program in order to get the know-how to manage their family business.

Secondly, the support from each property. The management trainees reported loss of direction and mentor. They need support and directive coaching. The owner sometimes questions back to the management why do we have to hire the management trainees when the cost of the management trainees can hire two other staff for the team and the loyalty to the property is not guaranteed.

- **Have you ever thought of resignation during the program?**

Yes, I wanted to resign at one point. I just felt that sometimes people are unprofessional here.

**Interview summary - MT - 6 (unsuccessful)**

- **Demographics**

Female, 23

Master's Degree: Global Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

Bachelor's Degree: Tourism and Hospitality Management

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

Yes, but all part-time (English teacher and liaison)

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

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Fast-track to career advancement and great program for self-development. I was also inspired from respected seniors from my university. Lastly it looks great on my CV.

- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**

Life time opportunity to be trained by great mentors, worked with diverse type of colleagues, and learned and developed well-rounded skills and competencies intensively through hands-on experience.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

Yes, I was coached directly from GM, head departments, and supervisors while I was on the training.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Yes, the power distance in Thai Culture is relatively high. There are still limitations or barriers such as age and gender. Power distance, culture and stereotyping make Thai culture different. Thai people are not familiar with 'management trainee'. The graduate program is new for most organizations in Thailand. Furthermore, the empowerment of younger employees to speak up and be innovative is low. This are important when you are young and you wanted to progress your career.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I was trained quite often and mostly they are in-house training. I was sent abroad but it was not for training, it was for VDO-shooting purpose.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, I can apply.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

Yes, a more effective way to use computer software like Microsoft office and English communication skill. I helped them correct grammatical errors. It was accepted because it was clear that it was beneficial to them and I have high English proficiency. However, other changes could be hard to adapt but I see they tried.

- **Would you be punished if you make mistakes at work?**

No, but I could feel criticism among the team members.

- **Does your supervisor/manager/colleagues give you a chance to apply what you have learnt into real work place? How?**

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Yes, I was assigned a couple of projects just before I left the company.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

Yes, I feel I could be honest and open with him about anything.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?**

I did have the chance to exchange and share my training experience at my property with other management trainees from other property, but there was never an official talk or speech.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

Yes

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, there were older than me.

- **Have you try to suggest them about what you have learnt from the training?**

No, I have tried.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (Rating 1-10)**

I think it is around 6.

- **Can you give example of a situation which show seniority and hierarchy?**

There are no obvious examples. However, limitations to speak up for an idea to increase work performance to senior might be regarded as disrespect. It did not affect me much because I learned to adapt.

- **If you were trained of a new way to perform task and you have to apply this in work place? Would you feel hesitated? Why?**

It would be considered as a challenge, because people hate changes. Therefore, implementing one might raise resistance among the staff.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

Depends on who you are dealing with. I was fortunate to have an open-minded and modern mentors. But with others, it would have an impact.

- **Which position are you expected to be promoted after completion of this program?**

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Food and Beverage Analyst. It was quite possible I was told by the HR director that the organization is moving towards F&B prioritization.

- **If you are not promoted, what do you think is/was the reason?**

It could be because there is no vacancy.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the program?**

There are still many aspects that could be improved to develop and retain management trainees. If only management trainees have a chance say to how it could be improved.

- **What was the major issues that cause you to resign?**

I expected more of the program and I didn't have the chance to fully utilize my ability.

**Interview summary - MT - 7 (unsuccessful)**

- **Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**

Female, 23, Tourism and Hospitality Management Bachelor Degree.

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

- No I do not have any previous work experience and it was my first employer.

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

- I want to work in the same field with what I studied in university.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

- I had a catch up once a week or once every two weeks to share what I have learned in different departments during the rotation. However, during my training as a management trainee, the hotel changed the GM so it is not a continuous process. I did not get direct coaching like I used to.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

- Yes, it is different and because it is different, I cannot be very direct with the co-worker as a part of Thai culture.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I get to join training when the hotel arranged the trainings for the staffs but I did not attend training abroad.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**



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Yes, I think the advantage of switching to different department helps you to work a lot easier as you are close to everyone and it is easier to cooperate.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks?**

**Provide examples.**

No because I have least experience. I do not think that they will listen.

- **Would you be punished if you make mistakes at work?**

No I don't get punish if I made mistake.

- **Does your supervisor/manager/colleagues give you a chance to apply what you have learnt into real work place? How?**

During the third Phase I don't really get to learn a lot from my coach who is departmental leader because sales department is more of talking and dealing directly with customer. I only get do more of an observations and simple tasks.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

- My relationship with my director was okay but because he does not even know what the management trainee program is and does not listen when I told him that he should let me involve and learn more sale-related tasks. Most of the time I get to do job like photocopying, sum-up room nights in my third phase which according to the program, in this phase the management trainees should learn deeper and conduct more challenging tasks, leading team and projects. After I suggest about training, there is nothing changed.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

No follow-up was given.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, all of them are older than me. Therefore, yes there are seniority and hierarchy.

- **Have you try to suggest them about what you have learnt from the training?**

Yes, I don't think people who work there for a long time or those who have worked there before me would like any changes that I suggest.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (Rating 1-10)**

I would honestly rate it at 9.

- **If you are not promoted, what do you think is/was the reason?**

If I am not promoted, it is may be because I need more time and have to learn more.

- **Have you faced any seniority-promotion or seniority preference?**

Sometime for example when going for sales calls, there is no specific schedule for which sales manager would take me to sales calls with them so I have to go into the office every morning with no plan. So I had to go around and ask someone to take me out to sales call with them. I felt left out and not valued.

- **What is your plan after completion?**

My plan after completion is continue study but I could not stay till completion.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the management trainee program?**

The major reason that made me resigned was I don't think the program delivered what it advertised at recruitment. I think the management trainees should have play more roles and be given more opportunity to learn even they are still young. In my experience, I did not believe that they trust management trainees enough to do anything so we could not really proof ourselves. We do not get opportunity to learn to lead either so how can we become a leader.

**Interview summary - MT - 8 (successful)**

- **Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**

Female, 25, Food Science and Technology

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

No I don't have.

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

I was recommended by the senior friend from my college and I think it will be a beneficial program for my future. The program has strengthened my confidence and knowledge of hotel operation since I did not graduate with hotel management degree.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

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I was coached by many leaders since I have been through the transition of each GM. After my first coach moved, I had direct coaching with hotel manager and less with my GM.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Yes, you always have to take an indirect approach when talking to seniors. Language used must be soft and gentle. You always have to be humble in order to integrate into a workplace.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I was given opportunity to train within the property but I have not had any chance to go train abroad.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, it depends on which department you are in. It depends on the trainers. Sometimes, the trainers allow you to practice and made mistakes in order to apply what you have learnt. Most of the training is done on-the-job.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

No because I have least experience

- **Would you be punished if you make mistakes at work?**

No I don't get punish if I made mistake but I am given advise for caution.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

We have good relationship but I could not get to see him as much as I want to have regular coaching with him because he is too busy. If I am ever feel demotivated, I will not go to my coach but I will go to my informal coach at work whom is like my older sister. There are many things that happen in one month before I meet the GM and sometimes I cannot hold one issue to talk about it with him. Moreover, sometimes the appointment with the GM were postponed because he has urgent meeting so I will talk to my informal coach instead.

- I was given a chance to introduce myself when I went to training in each department. However, the frontline staff do not really know what is the purpose of management trainee program. They know the name of the program but they are not really aware of the program.

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- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

Yes, I was given a small assignment to observe what is there to improve. I was not given any project even in the third phase when supposedly I should be given a project to manage. It is also because I have been through the changes of GM for three times so there was one point that I felt that I have no coach and I am lost. I was appointed as a lobby manager after the program. However, there was no direct-reports that I have to lead.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, all of them are older than me. There is sometimes what they used strong words to me but I did not take it personally.

- **Have you try to suggest them about what you have learnt from the training?**

Yes, I cannot really order or assign what they have to do but I rather ask them to do it for me. The language used in order to ask them has to be really gentle.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (Rating 1-10)**

I would rate it **7**. I think it is quite strong. I see it as I have to respect senior colleagues but I do not think that they will get a better opportunity than younger ones. However, I always have to be gentle and humble towards them. I felt that I am new to this industry so I felt that I am unexperienced. When I have to give opinion, I am afraid to propose suggestion because older colleagues know more than me. So I would rather suggest in terms of questions first. I suggest the new way to change like correcting English grammar in the letter to guests. Initially they still question me because it has been used like this. However, after I explain to them they accepted eventually to change it.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect management trainee program?**

I had a really high expectation about the program. I also had high expectation that the coach will be supportive for me but I did not get such when I was on the program. Seniority and hierarchy can extensively limit or impede the thinking or creative suggestions from management trainees.

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We have inputs to propose but we are influenced by the seniority and hierarchy so I do not think it is open to accept my thoughts.

For potential improvement of the program, the aim of the program should be clear to the candidate so they know what is the objective. Currently, the program aims to groom the GM for future but not every management trainee wanted to be the GM. They want to be future leaders which could be HR director, Director of Room or F&B Director.

Secondly, the awareness of the program should be raised within the staff and department head. I believe that if the leaders in each department are aware of the program and the objectives, they can support us much more in a more suitable and more intensive training. Now, they still train us like we are student trainee.

- **Did you have a moment that you wanted to resign?**

Yes, because I was lost. I felt like what am I doing here? I did not have any concrete tasks or work to do. I was not given any plan or any development plan after I graduate. I did not know what I would be doing after I finished the program. Such discussion with the coach or with HR did not happen because they were all very busy with something else. So I had no career direction to look forward. My contract as a management trainee ended in January and not until March when I was offered a job as a lobby manager. So there was a gap of one month that I did not know what to do and in which role that I suppose to work as. I had no direction.

**Interview summary - MT - 9 (successful)**

- **Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**

26, female, BBA (Marketing)

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

I had internship experience with marketing firm for three months. Freelance translator and event organizer.

- **What is your motivation for join this program?**

I heard about the program from my friends that it is very competitive to get into this program so I want to try. Also, the benefit package is more attractive than the entry position and it offers fast track career path. As of now, I think those expectations were not achieved in term of position that I

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supposed to be offered. However, there is a development plan given after I finished.

- **Do you get a direct coaching?**

I was given monthly coaching from the GM. I was in the transition between two GMs. Luckily the second GM was committed to the management trainee program.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

I have experienced some Thai companies that has not been internationalized. There is high seniority and hierarchy within the organization. The voices of younger or lower-rank staff are not heard. Age and years of working do matter. The communication is one way from boss to subordinates. Tasks are distributed by ordering rather than assigning. So there is a small room for you to think. You have to follow your manager's instruction.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I was rarely given any training during the management trainee program. I was supposed to get leadership training but I was not given such training either.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, I tried.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

Yes, I tried but it was not accepted usually. I think it is because I have less credibility to them as I am still young and inexperienced. However, there are some colleagues who saw that I completed tasks faster so they asked for my advice to improve.

For resistance, some staff show resistance about the program and about the management trainee. They do not truly understand the program and they do not really understand why do we need a management trainee in the hotel.

- **Did you get a chance to apply what you have learned?**

In Front Office department, I did not get a chance to have hand-on experience. I only had a chance to stand by and doing simple tasks. So I think they are not open for me to make mistakes. I assume that they are afraid that I will make mistakes when checking in the guests.

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- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

Yes, I think we have good relationship and I am open to them. Both of my coach are quite supportive.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training?**

Yes, I was introduced as a management trainee. I must be trained in the management and supervisory level.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach?**

Yes, I was given follow-up assignment. For example, during my last phase in sales department, I had to present which company and how much revenue I can bring in potentially after each sales calls.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, they are older than me.

- **Have you try to suggest them about what you have learnt from the training?**

Yes, it was accepted if it would be beneficial to them.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? (1-10)**

I give it 5. Seniority and hierarchy do exist but it is moderate. I think it can be because I was in sales department and in our department, we have a lot of new generations and the turnover is also high. There are only some senior colleagues whom you still have to respect and treat them like your senior family member. For example, we have to inform them by including them when sending email even though it is not related to them. They will not be happy if they are not informed. So there is less authority and empowerment for junior employment like me.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

It does affect the program. Even though the director promotes me to a high position, my team does not have trust and still think I cannot perform as good as them, they will not listen to me. They will question my ability and deny to cooperate. It will take longer for us to proof ourselves.

- **Have you thought of resigning?**

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Yes, I had a moment that I wanted to resign to search for something new and more challenging opportunity. Furthermore, my career path during the last phase of the program was not clear at all. I did not have personal development plan so I had no focus.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect management trainee program?**  
Coaching is very important and it should be carried out with commitment. It could have been better if we really have a chance to really lead even a small team because we are being groomed to be a leader but we were not given any chance to lead. However, it is hard in Thai culture for a younger person to lead older team members. You first have to proof yourself and then you can lead.
- **Do you think the management trainee program matches Thai context?**  
To be honest, I think it is not suitable for Thai hotels. If it fits our culture, why there are so many management trainees resigning from the program and there is such a small number of successful case. However, the program is great.

#### **Interview Summary – MT – 10 (Ongoing)**

- **Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**  
Female, 25, Business Economics
- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**  
Yes, I worked for marketing firm for six months before I joined this program.
- **What is your motivation for join this program? Was it achieved?**  
I initially wanted to study hotel management but my family wanted me to study business administration. So it is the time now that I can mix my family's and my own interest. I applied for the management trainee program because I did not have any experience before so I seek for such program that provide you with training about hotel operation so this program is able supply such need to me.
- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**  
The hotel is quite new with this brand so I am given a chance to voice my ideas for improvement. I learned to be more confident and to be creative.



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Hotel info: 172 rooms with 200 employees. This hotel has very high turnover because it is isolated on the island.

- **Do you get a direct coaching? How often? With Whom? If not, why?**

Yes, I was given direct coaching from GM and my manager. I meet him once a month.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Honestly, it is difficult to work within Thai working culture when being a junior like me. It is difficult to work with those who are senior because they will not listen to you and they will not accept your inputs. One of the big problem is the age because my colleagues are older than me so I have older subordinates. They do not listen to me. Those who listen are those who join the team after me and they are slightly younger than me. So at first I will not inform staff about my age and I have to act like I am really mature. However, after they find out about my age, they will question my ability and will not listen to me.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

Not many training that I attend. I have not yet given a chance to attend leadership training by the hotel. Majority of the training that I attended was in mainland and I went together with other managers.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, I have to adapt from what I learned in the training. Not everything will fit in my hotel. So I have to extract the most important part to adapt into my own.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

I will usually suggest to those whom I know that they are open for suggestions. There are some colleagues whom I know that they are not open and are resistant to change, I will not suggest them. I will suggest through the superior manager or to GM.

I was given a chance to take leadership role in the department because after my first phase, almost all of the supervisor resigned, so I have to lead the team and solve guests' problems.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

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We do have good relationship and I am open to talk about it with him. He is quite supportive.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training? How and when?**

No, I was not given a chance to introduce myself. So staff are not aware of the program. I do not know about the program and they thought that I am a student trainee. However, after 9 months, I was given a title of “manager” from my coach and the staff thought I was the manager but they were confused why I was promoted to be manager and what was the program for. Not only staff, the department heads did not know about the management trainee program either. Departmental leaders knew about me as a management trainee when my coach called each of them to prepare about my training before I rotated to their respective departments. I think the awareness about the program is important because there were some department that I was not trained like F&B, I only had a chance to clear the table because they thought that I was a student trainee. I did not experience any supervisory overview.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach? Please describe shortly.**

Yes, I was given a small project to build up my leaning in each department and I have to give him a report and I put them all in my portfolio.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, first it was hard for me to change them and to supervise them. I tried to change or to suggest them but they did not listen.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? 1-10.**

I think I would rate an 8. It used to be a lot higher when I joined this hotel but there are those who have worked here for a long time before the hotel was rebranded. Now there are some newcomers so the level drop slightly. When there is a cluster activity, other management trainee in another hotel were sent to join but I was not allowed to join. Why? Sometimes I think that I have really creative ideas but it was disregarded because they think that I am young and unexperienced. They will not listen. There is one case that I tried to suggest the training manager who is respected as a senior in the hotel that he should not use Google Translate to translate from English material to Thai when conducting the training courses because the outcome is not

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correct and it can be misunderstood. He did not listen to me and he felt that I discredited and I did not respect him. So he does not like me.

Another leader was also not happy when I give negative comment for improvement about their department. I grew up within western culture so I tend to be straightforward but I was commented by another leader that I should not be so straightforward and I have to soften my personality to be more gentle and try not say everything that I have in mind. I was confused. If I have any counter comments or opposition about one topic, to me it is an aggressive argument but to me it is work. We give comment or argue constructively for a betterment but they take it personally.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

First of all, the management trainees in this program have such a high qualification so they can resign and get a new job easily or they can go to pursue their study because they all come from a well-educated background. It is not worth it for them to withstand the bad treatment or to be unvalued. There was a moment that I wanted to resign because I felt disappointed and demotivated when I was blamed for not following the instruction written in the emergency manual but I managed to save the guests anyway. So it makes zero sense.

I think it does affect the management trainees because I cannot utilize my full ability because I have to be very careful in forwarding the inputs. I have to first respect the seniors and follow the bureaucracy. I hesitate to input my full capacity. It is seen to be wrong when I use new way to perform task successfully but it was not the way how it has been done for 10 years ago. This also makes the younger generation hesitated in taking decision.

- **Which position are you expected to be promoted after completion of this program?**

I told me GM that I will not continue after the program. However, I have decided that I will continue to work here. It seems like I will be assigned to supervisor the newly-built villas. I plan to recruit and train staff myself to get right person into my new team.

- **If you are not promoted, what do you think is/was the reason?**

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I plan to work within the chain for a long time but I plan to work here for maximum two years. After two years I would like to have an opportunity to transfer to five-star brand of the chain within the area.

There were several moments that I wanted to quit the program. The biggest problem is the conflicts with people. The senior colleagues often criticize me and do not take my inputs. I was mistreated with living condition on the island that I cannot withstand.

I remembered the exciting moment in the assessment center when we all thrived to be the selected but after we were placed in the property, those feeling perished and the expectation we were given was failed to delivered. The positive thing is that I get to learn a lot. I felt like I grow with the hotel. My coach told me he wanted to hire me because he wanted a new energetic blood who has vision to develop the hotel and I think it is true. I took it as a challenge.

- **Any comments or suggestion regarding the research on how seniority and hierarchy in Thai workplace affect the management trainee program?**

The awareness of the program should be improved among the staff and the departmental leaders I the property. If they are aware, the quality and intensity of the training can be increased.

#### **Interview Summary – MT – 11 (Unsuccessful)**

- **Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**

Female, 25, Chinese for Business (Tourism Management), Thai

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

Yes, work and study program in Vancouver. Internship with Expedia Cruise-ship center and restaurant business.

- **What is your motivation for join this program? Was it achieved?**

The selection process was quite tough and challenging so I would like to challenge myself to pass it. I also wanted to accelerate my career and I think it is a good commencement of my career since I did not graduate with hospitality major so this program would provide me with a holistic overview of hotel operations. So far I think 75 percent has been achieved.

- **So far, how has the program benefit you?**

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I know how to connect the dots within hotel operation. It is still my first workplace so I can adapt into real workplace which I enhance my practical experience rather than theoretical experience.

- **Do you get a direct coaching? How often? With Whom? If not, why?**

Yes, I was coached by two coaches. I specialized in sales and marketing but I am actually interested in F&B revenue management but revenue management falls under sales and management. However, the hotel did not focus much on F&B revenue management so most of my learning was on room revenue and the hotel did not have on-site director of revenue. He works at another hotel in the area but he is clustered to work for this hotel too. Therefore, I did not get much coaching and training. He works at our hotel for 40 percent a week so I sit at his working desk and I have to move to work somewhere else in reservation office when he comes to work.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

- In general, Thai organization has high degree of complexity in protocol and courtesy in any conducts. Western culture focuses more on result but Thais focus more on process. We also have hierarchy and seniority. It has both negative and positive consequences. It is really hard to integrate in the new workplace especially when you are young. This causes high pressure especially when you are young with senior subordinates. It takes time to be accepted and cooperative. However, it can be positive in terms of collectivism. We respect each other. We regard each individual as your brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. It can be more effective to cooperate. Our relationship lasts even outside of workplace too.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

Yes, I had a chance to attend some training such as leadership training and basics of revenue management from other property.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

No. it was not applicable. From where I was train, we have different characteristics and criteria. So what I was trained in another property was not transferred.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

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- Yes, I suggest them how to provide better service to the guests. Sometimes they do not accept because I am not their direct manager. It seems like they listen sometimes but when you leave they will continue doing the same. It is worse if you try to suggest the new way of performing task to the supervisor or to the manager. It is extremely difficult to influence them. I discussed this with my coach actually once about driving change through managers is dramatically difficult here. This was the main challenge and difficulty that I faced because I am younger and I am a management trainee. So they perceive that we are younger, newer and less experience so how can I tell them what to do. It is impossible. I was very direct when commenting or asking for cooperation. So they were not willing to listen. I think they prefer that you have to be humble and use a funneled conversation to get to your point.
  - **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**
  - Yes, I am open and direct to my coach. I am not hesitated to talk to him openly. I meet both of my coach once a month but when I entered phase 3, I met my coach once a week.
  - **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training? How and when?**
  - Yes, I was given a chance to introduce myself but honestly, the staff or even directors working there are not aware of the management trainee programs. They did not understand the program and they perceive me as a typical student trainee from a college. I have to speak about the program in every department to almost every week. I can record it and play to them because I talk about the program that often.
  - **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach? Please describe shortly.**

Yes, I was given a project to apply what I have learned and a chance to cooperate with other department. I will update him on the status and he will leverage the difficult that I faced. For example, if the project got stuck because the other department do not cooperate, I will inform him and he will discuss with the leader of the department in question. Sometimes the leader is not willing to cooperate or respect my suggestion because they

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think that I am junior. After I consult with my coach and after he discussed this with the leader, they cooperate smoothly.

During my specialized learning, I was doing most of the routine work like generating a lot of reports regarding revenue. This routine tasks are very boring and anyone can do it if you know the system and have basic understanding of reservation. So after a while of report-generating tasks, I was really demotivated and I felt like I have no energy to work. So I was pulled out of this work after my new coach arrived because he said it is not a significant task.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

I do have a lot of older colleagues at work. If they are liberal, they will accept my suggestions but most of them do not accept. Moreover, there are two types of resistance which are the silent resistance and aggressive resistance. If I want to influence anything, I have to do so through the GM or through department leader.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? Rating 1-10. 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest.**

8 There are some case that people in the company are treated differently in accordance to their age and social rank. There is once case when the HR office treat comparably identical issue differently. It was treated one way when the person is a normal young waiter but it was conducted with care and regards because the other person is a senior person.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

I think when some departmental leaders are promoted because of seniority and hierarchy, it is disappointed for management trainee to see that they are not really qualified and they do not have such skills. It is not professional. So it is not inspiring to us instead of seeing them as a role model.

Secondly, I am, as well as other management trainees, are very eager to learn and we are curious in learning. We like to ask questions. However, when we ask those questions innocently, they think that we are questioning their ability and their skill so I felt that it is not open for us to ask questions. Another example is that when there is something unethical or something that is not right being presented in the meeting, I cannot comment or say it

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publicly that it is not right. I have to play along with my boss and support it. However, I do not really support it because it is not right.

- **Which position are you expected to be promoted after completion of this program?**

When I am approaching the end of my training, the coach and hiring manager were still quiet about my future plan so I decided to ask about my future plan. After that, the hiring manager was alerted and asked the GM about it. I think it is not expected that I would have to go and ask for my future employment after the program when the company is saying that they need us. There should be future path set up for us in advance. It should not be us walking to ask do you have any position for me to fill. However, I already have plan B in case that they do not hire me after all. And my coach waited until it is too late to ask me what I wanted to do after completing the program. I have already decided to take on plan B which is to resign after the program. The coach told me that if there is no placement for me at the hotel, he can refer me to another property in Bangkok but I have to commit to that position for at least two years. Therefore, I only ask him to provide me with recommendation letter and I will look for opportunities myself because I think he requires too much commitment in that action to the position or workplace that I might not be happy.

- **Have you faced any seniority-promotion or seniority preference?**

Yes, I have seen the case when the accounting department, the chief accountant was promoted because she has been here for a long time and many staff in the department were promoted one level up because they work there for a long time and they have not been promoted. However, if we consider the performance and skill, they are not qualified.

- **Have you got a chance to lead the team?**

No, I did not get a chance to lead anyone. There is a small opportunity when I help food and beverage team serving breakfast in the morning and there are some students trainees that I advise them what to do but they were not really my team.

- **Have you had any moments that you wanted to resign during the program?**

Yes, during phase 2 because of many reasons. First, I was not trained what I should have been trained because there is not manager or director in charge of the specialization that I have chosen. Second, I wanted to resign during



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the transition of the coach. Third, I had a very high expectation on the program. Flashing back to the assessment center, it was very competitive and difficult to be a successful candidate. I expected more professionalism. However, after you participated in the program, I have faced many disappointments and the program has failed to reach the expectation. Lastly, I had conflicts with some senior colleagues. It started from work conflict that I do not inform her about an issue that is totally irrelevant to her. Then it went worse when she took it personal and spread the rumors that I am irresponsible. I did the correct step and procedure but she wanted to always be inform as she is more senior and she is a supervisor. And the conflict went on with another issues.

**Do you have any comment or suggestion to improve?**

Phase one should be lengthened because it was too brief in each department. The program and the purpose of the program is great. The program should be implemented and incorporated effectively with commitment. Those who implement it in each hotel should be committed because they are the significant factor to the learning and development of the management trainees. If it was not done effectively, the effort and time investment become wasteful for both parties, the company and the management trainee. Those who have power and responsibility to initiate and promote the program should do it successfully so that the key persons can train the management well. Then the company can benefit from the skill and potential from us.

I think the management trainee program can fit in Thai working context because we do have a lot of talented younger generation. However, it was to be done right.

**Interview Summary – MT – 12 (Successful)**

- **Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**

Female, 33, Master Degree of International Hospitality Management

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

Worked one year abroad as F&B attendant.

- **What is your motivation for join this program? Was it achieved?**

- I did not want to start with front-line level so I looked for something like management trainee level which gives me a shortcut to be a supervisor or

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manager. I know that working the hotel industry in Thailand, it will take me at least 10 years to be the manager but I am already here within five years. I think my motivation and expectation has been achieved.

- **So far, how has the program benefited you?**

- I think it has helped me with the connection and network. Since I had to rotate to work in every department so I know everybody from housekeeping staff to general manager. I know how and whom to ask for help or corporation that is necessary for my job today.

- **Do you get a direct coaching? How often? With Whom? If not, why?**

Yes, from my coach. I met him once a month formally but I go to see him informally quite often. If the issues are quite sensitive or insignificant, I can also consult with training manager who is in charge of the implementation of the program.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Comparing to western workplace, they are more direct and much more efficient. They give direct feedback and performance was measured literally based on your effort invested in the job not by year of service like in Thailand. I see F&B manager at the age of 23 which is really young. In Thailand, an organization is much more layered and hierarchical. We have many positions under one single direct report like supervisor and senior supervisor or duty manager is under senior duty manager. I experience much more bureaucracy and work etiquettes. The unique point of Thai working culture is the respect toward those who are older than you. This is how we have been taught since we were young. I think Thai working culture has a lot of positive advantage especially in hospitality industry.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I had a chance to attend GM meeting in Singapore. It was a great exposure for me and my career. I was there with the whole batch. I also attended leadership skill and other relevant training to the program. Most of the training I attended were in-house.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

I rather shared it to my coach so that he can explain to me further. I was promoted as the guest experience manager which is like a duty manager but I did not have direct reports. However, when I was in the second and third

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phase of the program, I was assigned to take care of executive club lounge. I did have three direct reports to supervise. A couple of them are older than me. I suffered some degree of resistance at the beginning because my older team member has work there before me and she knows the system better than me when I first started the assignment. However, the resistance diminished when I tried my best to catch up the skills and knowledge about the job afterward.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

Today, I have 45 team member to supervise and majority of them are older than me and I have worked with them since I was a management trainee. I think I am quite lucky that I do not have any resistance or from the senior team members because I am younger than them. First I had to perform tremendously to proof to them that I deserve this position even though I am younger. So we work together normally and smoothly. However, when it comes to giving assignment and driving for desired results, it is challenging because they are not used to giving assignment from me when I was the management trainee. They even trained me and we worked together. It is also hard to change them. It requires a lot of follow-ups and it is slow-pace. In case of my promotion, there was three candidates, two assistant front office managers and me. Both of them has about ten years of experience in front office but I was selected with five-year experience so I was chosen because of my performance I believe.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

Yes, I am open and direct to my coach. I am not hesitated to talk to him openly. I meet both of my coach once a month but when I entered phase 3, I met my coach once a week.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training? How and when?**

Yes, I was given a chance to give a speech and introduce myself and about the program. However, the staff do not understand the program so they recognize me as a student trainee. The leaders do have the understand. The training that I was given was like a student trainee. However, it depends on the management trainee themselves on asking question s and requests to

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learn more than that. You can observe the operations, manning and management in each department.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach? Please describe shortly.**

I was assigned some follow-up tasks after and during the program. I was given autonomy and support to execute those tasks. I was even given budget to those small project to accomplish after the presentation.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, they were older than me.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? Rating 1-10. 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest.**

6 There is some degree of seniority and hierarchy which is unavoidable in Thai working culture. I have team member who is much older than me so I still have to respect them and regard them like my aunts, uncles, brothers or sisters. I do have to respect and talk to them politely and gently even though they misbehave. I can never shout or abuse them verbally. In this hotel, staff are being recognized for their performance regardless of their year of service. I have team members who are promoted for their high performance although they are young. I was advised by my boss to see them name of the team members in selection for promotion. I have to conceal their years of service. There are still some of those in the department who have been working for a long time and more senior. If you ask them which team members to promote they will nominate the ones that has longer years of service. They value years of service and loyalty.

All in all, seniority-based promotion absolutely exists currently in other departments in the hotel.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

In a hotel with more of younger team like this, it is easier to implement but if the hotel is old and the majority of the staff are senior, then it will be hard for the management trainee.

- **Did you have a moment that you want to resign during the program?**

No, I did not have that moment because I am very determined. I returned from abroad specially for this program so I am committed to pass it.

**Do you have any comment or suggestion to improve?**

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The departmental leaders and the trainers should have a full understanding of the program and they should be committed in developing of the management trainees. I would say they pay less attention on the program. There was no feedback or intensive training that we deserve. If those who implement the program and the training are fully aware and committed, the program could have been much more beneficial to the hotel and the management trainees.

### **Interview Summary – Management Trainees – 13 (Successful)**

- **Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**

Female, 28, BBA Hospitality Management

- **Do you have work experience before join this program?**

I was a waitress in the hotel in the same company before joining the program. I also worked in Shanghai for the hotel in the same company too.

- **What is your motivation for join this program? Was it achieved?**

My motivation is to be the first female and the youngest general manager in Thailand. So the management trainee program will get me there.

- **So far, how has the program benefited you?**

The program has benefited me tremendously. I have had several progressive opportunity and to me, it is a fast-track program because my career acceleration is really fast and firm. We have such a huge company with many brands and opportunity for me to learn from.

- **Do you get a direct coaching? How often? With Whom? If not, why?**

Absolutely, I was coached bi-weekly. I still get direct coaching even for my current position.

- **Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Very different. I think it is absolutely different which is because of our Thai culture. We do value seniority and hierarchy. So if you have worked for a long time, you will first be promoted and considered for salary increment. However, there is another person who performed better but has a shorter years of service. The person with longer year of service will be considered first for promotion. We are still restricted to this paradigm. This differentiate us from western working culture where high performers are recognized, rewarded and promoted regardless of their age.

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Secondly, Thai working environment values male over female leader. We still believe in gender-related stereotype that males are suitable as a leader than females because female are emotion and males are rational in making decision. Third, Thai working environment has a lot of gossip and team up in order to talk about others or to protest against any undesired issues.

Fourth, it is difficult to provide and receive honest feedback. Negative feedback is hardly given to another person in Thai working environment because of saving face. Your colleagues will still say that you did a great job even though you actually made a lot of mistakes.

- **How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I was given a lot of internal and external training to learn I think I was given a great support to learn.

- **Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

It depends on which topic that you are learning. Mostly, you can apply what I have learned and I also train staff in my team and I use follow-up questions a few days after to remind and make sure that they remember.

- **Have you suggested your colleagues a new way of performing tasks? Provide examples.**

Yes, I changed them but there was high resistance. It was eventually accepted. I tried my best to change them slowly and do it with them.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

Yes, I have good relation with my coach. There is a moment that I felt really de-motivated but I was given such a good support from my coach. I still keep in touch with him even though he has left the company.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training? How and when?**

Yes, I was given a chance to give a presentation what I have learned and how I will apply to the learning. I used the materials from the training to learn. From my training, I think the hotel was quite similar of the one that I was trained so I can easily apply. I was also given a chance to give presentation in staff monthly general meeting.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach? Please describe shortly.**

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I was given a chance to set my personal development plan regularly with follow-up on those plans.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, I have a lot of older colleagues and direct reports. They predicted that I would resign after three months because I could not do lead and I cannot face resistance but I managed to complete the program. In suggesting new way of working, majority does not accept but once the rest of the team has already accepted and it has been proofed that it is a better way to work. They started to change slowly.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? Rating 1-10. 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest.**

**6** There was high level of hierarchy and seniority but it was not extremely high because I joined after the hotel was opened for a few years so the staff was also new. Moreover, there were many younger employees so seniority was not highly reinforced.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

I faced many situations when I suggest another way to perform task and I was replied that they have never seen these ways of performing and I have only done it my way. So senior colleagues will resist but I will never give up. I will keep trying.

The seniority and hierarchical situation is worse in the hotel outside of Bangkok because people are more modern in Bangkok. This affected management trainee significantly. I think the management trainees has to be really humble and down to earth. Sometimes they take too much pride that they are management trainee and it creates the gap between the other colleagues and the management trainees. So it will contribute to the resistance.

Your colleagues will always underestimate your skills and performance because you are young and unexperienced. They perceive that you cannot be a leader.

- **If you were promoted as the expected position, what do you think is the reason?**

I know that my performance is impressive because I work hard. So, the first reason that comes to my mind will be because I am younger than the

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successful candidate. The management trainees can be perceived as a threat because we are younger and we have high performance so people will try to trick us or they will have jealousy against us.

- **Have you faced seniority and hierarchy promotion?**

Yes, as I said that there was a high seniority and hierarchy in work culture. After I completed the program, I was supposed to be promoted as the assistant manager. The senior colleagues who is 37 years old with nearly ten years of experience. She was not satisfied and voiced it to the manager because she is older and has more experienced. I was younger and less experienced. However, my performance was impressive. So both are valuable to the hotel. At the end, the manager decided to promote both as the most compromising solution and we ended up having two assistant managers. This becomes even more difficult because I was being taken advantage and she took credit over my job and my performance.

- **Did you have a moment that you want to resign during the program?**

No, I did not have that moment because I am very determined. I returned from abroad specially for this program so I am committed to pass it.

- **Do you have any comment or suggestion to improve?**

I was the first batch and it was very successful because it was a great launch of the program and involvement from the corporate office which highly influence leaders in each property that had a management trainee. The recruitment was very intensive so it is worth it to be the successful candidate. Second, some management trainees were not given proper career progression as the objective of the program. After they graduate, they were not offered even a supervisor- level employment. Why? Because the decision was made by the leaders in the hotel and that when seniority and hierarchy becomes more influential. Consequently, it is a disappointment and they management trainee felt like they wasted eighteen months. Therefore, the trust and loyalty are withdrawn from the company.

It is important that there should not be two management trainees in the same hotel because there will be a comparison between them and the one who managed to complete the program will be the one who is more senior and has work longer.



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**Interview Summary – MT – 14 (Ongoing)****- Demographics (Gender, Age, Study, Degree)**

Male, 26, Bachelor degree in linguistics.

**- Do you have work experience before join this program?**

I had experience working in marketing firm and another one year working in hotel reception in the same company.

**- What is your motivation for join this program? Was it achieved?**

It is a great way to learn more about hotel business and in my initial hotel experience, I was impressive of my performance as well as the guests and colleagues so I think that I have the potential to grow faster in this field. So far I really believed that the program has been helpful to my work today.

**- So far, how has the program benefited you?**

First I have learned the holistic overview of hotel operation when I had to rotate to every department. Second, I also get to learn what is not in the textbooks. I learned tricks and professionalism from my colleagues.

**- Do you get a direct coaching? How often? With Whom? If not, why?**

I was not coached by the general manager but I was coached with the hotel manager. I meet once a month with my coach.

**- Do you think Thai work environment is different and other culture?**

Yes, it is different. It is uncomfortable for me when I have been assigned in a project with senior workers because I have to be very careful when talking, commenting and interacting with them. I cannot finalize the decision, call for meeting or take any actions without informing and getting approve from them. This slow down the project because they are always busy.

Second, we are indirect in giving comment or feedback. The opinion and evaluation given are frequently vague because people try to avoid giving negative feedback and not hurting the feeling of others. It is unclear for further improvement.

**- How often are you given an opportunity to attend the training?**

I had some opportunity to attend training but most of them are online courses. I never attend any training externally or abroad.

**- Can you apply what you have learned from training into actual workplace?**

Yes, I can apply what I have learned in the training and I knew that the work today is not right. I raised up the point and it was mostly heard. They listened

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to my point but it was not adopted anyway. I do not experience strong resistance but I think they are reluctant to change. They tend to work in a comfort zone.

- **Are you close with you coach? Do you have good relationship with this person?**

Yes, I do not a close relation with my coach and training manager. I will first go to training manager and I do not meet my coach so often so it seems distant.

- **Were you given a chance to give a speech or talk to colleagues about your training? How and when?**

There was a brief introduction in shift meeting. Most of the them ask personally about the program. Staff were not fully attentive about the management trainees and they recognize me as the student trainees.

- **Is there any follow-up plan that is assigned to you after your training by training manager or your coach? Please describe shortly.**

I was given assignment, presentation and follow-up discussion during phase 2-3. I had to update quite often on my tasks.

- **Do you have many older colleagues in your office/workplace?**

Yes, they are all older than me and they have been working here for a long time. I have one older colleague working under me. We have healthy relationship but I hear from others that there is a talk behind my back questioning why am progressing fast in the department although I am younger with less experienced.

- **Do you think seniority and hierarchy exist in your workplace? Rating 1-10. 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest.**

8 I think it is quite high and strong here. It is that strong that I am disinclined to send out email by myself. I have to draft emails for my manager so that he can copy to send on his behalf. It is basically the same that I send it myself but I am not authorized to do so and it will be impolite for me to do it. Furthermore, there was one time that it is really inefficient when my manager asked me to change the name of the file that I prepared for him. He even sent the name of the file that he desired. I think it is actually faster for him to do it but I cannot voice it to him. Many of the protocols slow down the progress when I have to personally update my superior even though he is included in the relevant emails.

- **How do you think that seniority/hierarchy has an impact on the management trainee program?**

I think it also has positive consequence. We have to update and get authorization for the senior superior. It is true that it slows down the progress but we can also get supervision when they approve our work.

- **If you were promoted as the expected position, what do you think is the reason?**

I have already discussed the expected position but honestly, I do not want to say yes to the offer because it is not up to my expectation. However, I think I have to keep the good relation with my superiors who supported me so I will have to accept the offer that I am not happy with. It is difficult for me to frankly reject the offer because I think I deserve more. There is high demand from work here but I have less resources to cope with. If it is really unacceptable, I will resign after six to ten months.

- **Do you have any comment or suggestion to improve?**

The implementation should be paralleled with the objective and importance of the program. Relevant leaders should be committed and trainers in each department should be informed about the program because once you have conducted the training. Staff were still confused about the program. There is no second chance. The training has to be right in quality for us. Lastly, there should be a joint community of management trainee online or actual meeting. We can meet and create network with those from other country. Now I am just a management trainee alone at my property.

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*Appendix 3 - Preliminary Thesis Report*