

Assessment of Labour Market Situation in the Hospitality Industry: A Baseline Survey of Utalii College Graduates in Hotel Establishments in the Coastal Region of Kenya

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hotels and restaurants sub sector remains highly unstable and contingent upon prevailing socio economic and political developments locally, regionally and globally. Such that any structural shocks and imbalances to equilibria often causes contractionary effects on employment levels with debilitating impacts on job security and sustainable livelihoods. The labour market often reacts causing intermittent cycles of disguised and seasonal unemployment. The outcome not only affects the bar for service standards offered to clients but also the career growth paths and choices made by employees. With questions being raised regarding the adequacy of supply of professionals, this seasonality poses varied labour and human resource challenges to suppliers of skilled human resource for the sub-sector hence this study. Although Kenya Utalii College (KUC) has been training for the last three and half decades, this study shows that other institutions of middle and higher learning have emerged and now offer cut throat competition to KUC graduates. With the hotel and travel sub-sector treading a stable growth path and with many institutions emerging to supply skilled labour, questions have been raised regarding KUC's impact on the labour market in terms of volumes of graduates being rolled out. Although there are many on the job trainees in the sampled hotel establishments, KUC graduates remains more competitive in food production, housekeeping and front office departments.

Findings show that Utalii graduates are rated highly with regard to neatness and smartness (80%), professionalism in interacting with guests (77.5%), ability to effectively express themselves (77.5%), ability to get along well with co-workers (62.5%) and customer relations (67.5%). Others were that Utalii graduates willing to take up assigned tasks as per job description (72.5%), are accepted as leaders by other staff (62.5%),

demonstrate professional competency and knowledge of products (67.5%) and are able to work with minimal supervision (65.0%). In other areas, graduates were rated as follows; truthfulness and trustworthiness (47.0%), ability to take responsibility for actions (52.5%) and ability to cope well with tasks assigned in situations that are beyond the normal description of their duties and responsibilities (40.0%). Overall, the study shows that KUC graduates remain competitive in their skill areas and currently account for 16% of the total labour force in Coast region.