Vocational identity and working conditions in the sector of tourism: 
The views of employers and employees.

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1. Introduction: the context of the tourism sector and the hotel sub-sector.

Tourism is a basic sector in Spanish’s economy, providing 33,601 million Euros in 1999. It is an employment-generating sector whose direct participation in the overall national employment figures was 6.2% in 1997, or 780,425 people\(^1\). Besides, it is a growing sector, where there has been a constant growth in supply since 1995, especially in 3 to 5 star hotels. In this sense, it is also worth mentioning the growing internationalisation of large Spanish hotel companies.

If we look at the Valencian community area and more specifically at hotel sector companies, there was a turnover of 352.5 million euros with 9,981 jobs\(^2\). There were 500 hotels with 81,275 rooms in 2000. 40 of them were located in the Valencian city, which means 7,798 rooms, and over 90% of these were in the 29 hotels with 3 or more stars\(^3\).

In order to give a general overview of the situation in the sector we highlight five challenges the sector is facing at the moment:

a) Adapt to changes in demand

This is a complex sector, with a heterogeneous supply that comprises a large range of products that are progressively renewed. Tastes are diverse, and this requires the provision of a wider range of products that reflect this diversity. Not only does this segmentation of supply make new demands on the sector but it also opens up new possibilities. Furthermore, a more demanding, aware and selective consumer is emerging, and therefore quality and personalised customer care have become key factors in the design of products and the way work is organised.

All of this means an increasing need for functional flexibility of the work force, as it has to adapt to a wider range of tasks and keep up-to-date. This however does not mean that there is not a marked division of labour.

b) Address the problem of seasonality

In spite of the changes that are starting to take place, which involve a wider spread of holiday periods, as well as new products aimed at different groups in the low season, demand is still concentrated in very specific periods.

Because of seasonality there is an average variation of 11% in the volume of the employed work force\(^4\). This dynamic shows that there are two clearly differentiated labour segments: a more stable primary segment, and a temporary, insecure secondary segment. It implies a lack of longer-term perspectives for workers who cannot plan a professional career, and situations as overstaffing in the low season or understaffing in the high season. Seasonality means important difficulties to face fixed costs and recouping investment

c) Overcome the business fragmentation

Small and medium-sized companies are predominant in the accommodation sub-sector. In 1997 only 10.7 of companies had more than 20 paid staff. However, if we look at hotels with gold stars we find 46% of the establishments had more than 20 staff\(^5\). Small companies have more and

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\(^1\) INE: Encuesta de Población Activa, 1997.
\(^4\) Group IOÉ, o.c. pp.32.
more difficulties since they have to work in an increasingly global market, in which continuous investments in infrastructure and personnel, as well as access to information and the capacity to make themselves known in the market are essential.

The potential of large companies to face these challenges makes them more competitive. That’s why, in contrast with this fragmentation of the sector there is a growing importance of hotel chains and other forms of business concentration. In 1997 there were 80 hotel chains in Spain which comprised 20% of hotels, 41% of rooms and 36.5% of employment. And the tendency continues to grow as it implies greater competitive advantages such as the possibility of economies of scale, outsourcing of tasks (such as staff training and supply), better access to information, greater corporate visibility, etc.

d) Address job insecurity

A vital factor when attempting to address the challenge of quality is the need to deal with the bad working conditions that affect a large number of workers in the sector. This involves questions related to seasonality rates, salaries, working hours, and the fact that the tourism sector is weak in terms of the presence of unions.

Temporary job in the catering sub sector is 13 points above the work force average. This job insecurity mainly affects low level posts, while permanent jobs are more present in management and administration posts as well as middle level posts in catering and accommodation. In the Valencian Community we find 54.5% of temporary jobs in accommodation. In this way human resources are used flexibly, and according to demand, but without the necessary social guarantees or resources that would facilitate the promotion of these workers. This all implies a lack of career perspectives for a large part of the workforce, increasing difficulties entering the job, and a large proportion of irregular work, with the attendant consequences in social terms and in terms of the quality of production in the sector.

Furthermore, wages per hour are 15% lower than the average wage in the overall economy. If we focus on the accommodation sub-sector the average levels improve this figure slightly. As far as working hours are concerned, the average working day of waged hotel workers is more than the average working hours in the overall economy. As regards hotels 35% of the employees work over 40 hours a week, while it reaches 50% in boarding houses.

e) Qualifications

Factors such as the development of tourism-related qualifications in official vocational training, and the intensification of occupational and continuous training in the sector and the introduction of Tourism as a university qualification together made up a scenario with a lot of potential. Added to this is the recent creation and promotion, by Autonomous Community authorities, of specialised qualification centres, such as the Network of Tourist Development Centres of the Valencian Community.

However, these policies encountered a complex situation in the tourism sector due to the difficulties of the companies themselves; most of them are small, they cannot afford to allow employees to attend training courses and their mentality values experience more than training. Added to this were the difficulties that stemmed from the situation of many employees, especially those in less secure jobs (a lack of resources available to spend on training, the temporary nature of the work and a lack of perspectives which is a disincentive to the investment of time or money in training.) All these factors gave rise to a situation that was not favourable to the necessary development of a qualified work force.

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9 INE: Survey of salaries in industry and service companies. Madrid, 1,997.
10 CECS: “Employment and training ...”, o.c. pp.267
11 Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA). 2° trim. 1.998. Quoted by CECS: “Employment and training ...”, o.c. pp.269
In general, there is a low level of qualification of workers except for reception and middle management workers and also little encouragement for training from employers. Training was left to public initiative, the businesses in the sector externalised the training costs, and put recruitment before internal training. Furthermore, the reduction of internal promotion opportunities resulted in the disappearance of the “training for promotion” motive in many cases. Only large hotels, especially the ones that are part of large chains, offer opportunities for internal promotion, and design their own training programs.

2. Methodology.

Under the framework of the research project “Vocational identity, flexibility and mobility in the European labour market –HPSE-CT-1999-00042” our objective is to analyse the construction of vocational identities in some important and innovating sectors in Valencian context, as the case of tourism. We decided focusing our work in hotel companies, which are going on an interesting transformation process within the framing challenges we have explain. Specially, this can be found in 3 or more stars hotels, and that’s why we decided focus them in our research. So, we are interested in future of the sector.

Although our research is conducted towards employees discourse analysis, we decided to get a contrasting view trough high managers or employers interviews. Our idea was looking for the influence of the formal company discourse over the workers ones. Then we made 10 focused interviews to 10 employers (6 male and 4 female).

We based the selection of the workers to be interviewed trying to focus on the companies in which employers had already been interviewed, in order to facilitate contrasting data. In the sector of tourism, only one out of the eight hotels in the sample of employees does not match the employers’ sample: that means two out of thirty one interviews.

We have interviewed thirty one employees among hotels with a minimum of two stars. As a whole, the interviews took place in eight hotels, all of them located in Valencia or the surrounding area. The ages of the interviewees vary from 21 to 57, there are 14 women and 17 men. They are positioned in jobs for which, nowadays, there exist a recognized vocational qualification obtained either in initial VET or in university. We tried to cover all different departments in the hotel, in order to contrast discourses from different functional positions. We equally tried to look for employees with and without formal responsibilities.

Focused interviews (opened but with a guide) were made in order to get a discourse over the main issues defined as relevant in a preliminary phase. The interviews content has been analysed in a systematic and comprehensive way. This analysis starts from qualitative categories that were defined from the interviews discourse and some theoretical contributions. The result was a series of key factors in the vocational identity discourse of the workers. This paper present six identity types conceptually constructed from these factors.

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12 Group IOE, o.c. pp.60.
3. Key factors for a mapping of professional identity

The construction of a professional identity implies the interaction of various factors as experienced by each worker in his position within the production process and the organisation. These are questions that have to do with the worker’s subjective involvement in the work, the objective conditions in which the work is done, with the worker’s educational itinerary, with the worker’s understanding of the job and the actions this implies, with relationships and groups to which the worker belongs. An analysis of the interviews has shown which factors are most relevant in the discourse of hotel workers and how these factors are formed.

Our objective now is to identify, on the basis of the analysis, the principal discourse patterns that shape distinct basic types of professional identity. We have defined five types of discourse on a qualitative basis, using the factors mentioned. These types should be understood as “pure types”, which serve as tools for analysis. They are not intended as an exhaustive typology of identity; rather they constitute a basic definition of types that allows us to organise the most relevant factors that appeared in the interviews. The five types are the “professional”, the “technician/bureaucrat”, the “customer service worker”, the “trade worker” and the “newcomer / unconsolidated worker”. Lastly, we have also defined a sixth discourse pattern, using the employer’s interviews, which is an interesting contrast element.
a) The professional.

This type is defined by a strong professional identity, in which we found aspects as autonomy, a corporate sense of the profession, self-development in a job with an important vocational component, and an awareness of one’s value –as human capital- to the company. It is present among workers in positions of responsibility and considerable experience.

1. Involvement in the profession (stability/satisfaction).

These are workers with a permanent contract with the company, though there is a high incidence of workers changing companies in order to gain promotion. This is based on awareness of the value of one’s own experience and training as “high performance” human capital, as well as an understanding of work as a vocation. The search for conditions in which one can fully develop one’s professional capacity is more important than stability. On the other hand, there is no satisfaction with the recognition of the sacrifices and the working conditions. As regards working hours this type is characterised by a high level of availability that can be borne thanks to the vocational nature of the work. Lastly, polyvalence is seen as a key to professional behaviour, and an important element for promotion.

2. The Significance of Work.

The “professional” type exhibits a high level of job satisfaction, and the key to this is the vocational nature of the work. Work is seen as part of personal development, and is linked to the idea of the value of one’s personal potential. The experience of work as an opportunity to show “what you have within in you” is linked with the idea of creativity, and a conception of work as “art”. It is also worth pointing out that there is a discourse that refers to the ”contribution to the common effort” among those in positions of responsibility.

3. Group References

References to the particular professional group of the worker are relevant here (groups, persons or the “profession” as an ideal construct). Links to this group are basically informal rather than formal. Another aspect in this type is a lack of connection with the organisation (in the sense of corporate identification).

4. Personal labour capital

The worker of this type has a large amount of specialised knowledge. It is relevant to know the sector and keep up-to-date with new techniques. It is also necessary to have a capacity for organisation and planning, since often the worker aspires to positions of responsibility. As regards relational skills, it is remarkable the capacity for leadership. A professional’s attitude to work should not be limited to simply completing the task; rather it should be lived in order to produce quality work. Dedication, capacity for decision-making, imagination and creativity are key factors in a professional attitude.

5. Perception of the Hierarchy

In this type participation in the hierarchy is linked to professional development. The hierarchy is therefore respected both as part of the professional corporate culture, and because it is a personal goal. However the position of responsibility is also seen as implying the appearance of complications, because it presupposes time spent on aspects of management and human resources, which are not tasks for which there is a special vocation within the profession. It is emphasised that the function of responsibility involves recognising work done, as much as making demands and supervising. As regards relationships with superiors, they are understood as involving cooperation to ensure the success of the work.

6. Sense of involvement in the product

The professional takes part in a process in which his own potential is at stake, and to which he must contribute with personal initiative. Autonomy –which increases with experience–reinforces the sense of being a professional. There is also awareness of forming part of a whole coexists with the idea that one has one’s own field, in which no one from outside the profession should interfere.
7. Education and training

This worker sees experience as more relevant than training, in spite of the fact that more importance is being given to training. But the workers do not consider themselves professionals until they have undergone a learning process in the daily practice of real work; It involves the creation of ones own way of working and the readjustment of basic knowledge acquired in official training. Reference is made to the apprenticeship model of learning as a basis for professional practice. As regards continuous training, it is accepted as important for the purposes of keeping up-to-date. But participants are generally those workers who are still consolidating their professional status. Fully-fledged professionals keep up-to-date they by other means (fairs, congresses, meetings) and see it more as sharing knowledge with peers. Only professionals in hotel chains do participate in internal courses on relations and corporate dynamics.

b) The technician/bureaucrat with access to responsibility

This type is defined by a strong professional identity, centred on the organisation as a functional structure for work, which appears in workers involved in administrative management with responsibility (intermediate levels) or with expectations of early promotion. It appears especially frequently in large companies and hotel chains

1. Involvement in the profession (stability/satisfaction).

This worker has a stable situation with a permanent contract and expects usually to remain within the company and follow a career there. There are opportunities to gain promotion, though this may involve changing hotel –within the chain-. Knowledge of the company is a key factor in developing a career, as well as being good at one’s job. As regards the promotion criteria used for planning a career the discourse emphasises the importance of “a positive evaluation of the work by the company” together with personal initiative, without much emphasis on whether formal criteria exist. As regards job satisfaction, they value the type of work done, as well as the experience of responsibility, although it is felt that there is not sufficient recognition by the company.

2. The Significance of Work

It is centred on the idea of contribution to the common endeavour that is the company. Emphasis is given to a sense of teamwork and a view of one’s own work in the context of the organisation, with which the worker identifies strongly. This is complemented by an understanding of work as a medium for personal progress, which is seen as a step up the ladder, accompanied by recognition on the part of the company, as well as the practice of one’s own knowledge.

3. Group References

The discourse of this type of worker exhibits a group reference model which could be characterised as a “community” model, centred on the company, and the community of interest that includes workers and managers, and implies motivation to make a common effort to ensure the success of the company, with increasing involvement as they ascend in the hierarchy. Other relevant aspects are the importance given to teamwork, and to the functional responsibility of each individual for the collective group; the individualisation of company-worker communication systems, always mediated through formal hierarchical channels; the deactivation of the corporate labour discourse; and the existence of intense socialisation processes, more formalised the larger the company is.

4. Personal labour capital

This type of worker emphasises the capacity for organisation and planning, together with the technical knowledge related to his speciality. Moreover this worker has a more elaborate global discourse relating to the tourist sector and is aware of developments. Of especial importance are the capacity to manage human resources, and leadership skills, as well as an attitude of effort, responsibility and the capacity to take decisions in unexpected situations.
5. Perception of the Hierarchy

This type of worker is part of the hierarchy at intermediate level. This gives rise to a relationship of functional trust with superiors, while with subordinates there is a tension between control and closeness. Participation in the structure is the key to identity. There are different types of leadership that are found in varying combinations: paternalist (functional trust and recognition), authoritarian (distrust, pressure and control) and democratic (listening-dialogue and participative organisation) though the first two predominate in the discourse.

6. Sense of involvement in the product

Forming part of the hierarchy for them implies feeling more involved in the production process. Taking on responsibilities within the company is seen furthermore as an accumulation of problems. Even so the discourse regarding the implications of responsibility is still positive, because one is contributing to the success of the company, as in terms of the increased opportunities to develop one’s own career. This type of worker has a strong sense of autonomy, specially in the ambit of the department. There is an awareness of forming part of a whole at work. But the separateness of departments is superimposed on that perception, and it is emphasised that each one stay within his area.

7. Education and training

This is a worker with specialist qualifications, who values a strong theoretical and technical base, which furthermore should always be kept up-to-date. Emphasis is given to the importance of qualifications for access to an increasingly competitive and formalised labour market. But experience is what allows one to adapt this initial basic knowledge to the peculiarities of each job and each company. The evolution of a career in the company should combine good technical knowledge with practical experience that allows the worker to adapt efficiently within the organisation. Continuous training initiatives are increasingly organised by the large companies themselves. They tend to focus on technical innovations, but above all on questions of human resources management, leadership strategies and aspects of the organisational culture, and they constitute an important tool for the socialisation of managers by the organisation. There are difficulties in attending continuous training courses, given the time availability required. Furthermore, their interest in a career within the company leads these workers to give priority to internal training rather than external opportunities.

c) The customer service worker

This professional identity is focused on work with direct customer service, in which relations with people are the key to the significance of the work. The level of integration tends to be strong, although this depends to a large extent on the stability afforded by the company.

1. Involvement in the profession (stability/satisfaction).

Stability is important for this type of worker, since it determines the level of identification with the company, which means that customer service is framed within the organisational identity. Their experience of working combines satisfaction with the type of tasks and dissatisfaction with the salary and with working conditions. There is not a large degree of openness to change. However the diversity of customers implies a constant need to adapt, and this lack of routine is viewed as satisfactory. Promotion opportunities involve moving up within the department or transfer to an administrative department. This internal mobility is difficult. That’s why moving to other hotels in the chain is seen as a possible route. Moreover the possibility of promotion depends very much on the evaluation made by the company, rather than formalised criteria.

2. The Significance of Work.

The significance of work is situated in the service relationship with customers and their recognition of this service. A job well done implies anticipating the customers needs, so that the result is the customer’s well being. The functions require the worker to be “in the front line”, so
that they are the “face of the hotel”. The discourse is of vocation for service based on the corporate identity. Another emphasis is on teamwork: the idea that all have their role in the common effort to ensure the company’s success. We find a perception of the central nature of their role for the functioning of the whole.

3. Group References

Basically, this type shares the community reference. Workers identificate themselves as “the face the company shows to the client”, and that requires that the worker has assimilated the company culture. The sense of group identification with colleagues is based on the functional team relationships within the department and not on mutual support in opposition to the company (the worker collective is fragmented and identity is dissolved in the company community). The discourse of the “internal client” is important (regarding care of other members of the organisation) and it is linked to the quality of work and competitiveness.

4. Personal labour capital

The most important skills are relational ones: as skills that have to do with appropriate behaviour, as the capacity to deal with the customer according to his characteristics and expectations. All of this refers to an attitude to service that means a personal involvement in the custom’s well-being. Other attitudes like dedication and effort are important. As regard technical knowledge, the most important are languages, and computers, especially of specific software used in the job, as well as the use of Internet.

5. Perception of the Hierarchy

From the worker’s point of view the middle management are seen as close in terms of relations, as long as respect is maintained for hierarchy. Relations are considered to be good, and useful to do one’s job better. Leadership and fluid communications with the workers in the team are valued. Direct superiors are asked for doubts, even labour–related ones, rather than union representatives or colleagues. As regards higher levels of the hierarchy they are viewed as distant since contact is through formal channels.

6. Sense of involvement in the product.

This worker feels that he has a vital role: the satisfaction of the customer, which is a central objective of the hotel. They see themselves as having sufficient autonomy to do the job, framed within the limits defined by superiors to whom they have to report. This perception of autonomy affects the identity, reinforcing self-confidence. But some matters which can affect anxiety levels at work: a lack of clear criteria for action, indeterminate guidelines and objectives on the part of the organisation and a lack of feedback on the work done. This type of worker values good organisation and distribution of the work, which eliminates uncertainty. It is the existence of clear guidelines, more than supervision, which creates a framework to the autonomy.

7. Education and training

Learning through experience is valued, especially by older staff. This gives security, “know-how” and knowledge of the workplace and its real needs. However, more importance is given to specific training, which gives access to a knowledge base in a systematic way with fewer errors. Experience later modifies this base, first through placements, and then when they start to work. In any case, there is a perception that training is still a long way from company realities. Continuous training programmes are still not used much, except in cases where the company itself provides them. The commonest types of courses are languages, computers and customer service. Similarly, companies foster participation in courses that are centred on aspects of the organisational culture, with the aim of promoting identification with the company and its style.

d) The trade worker

This is a type of professional identity centred on specialist manual work, which implies the acquisition of knowledge of a trade (with a learning process and a progressive development in
terms of practice and responsibilities: from apprentice to leader of a team or area. Professional identity is centred on the idea of work itself as a value.

1. **Involvement in the profession (stability/satisfaction).**

   The integration of this type of worker is due to the assimilation of the value of work, experienced from the point of view of taking up a trade as one’s own. Assimilation, for the “trade worker”, requires a minimum level of experience in that trade. A factor contributing to dissatisfaction is the length of working hours due to the accumulation of extra tasks. The demand for this availability is justified by an “ethic of work and common effort”, which produces a low opinion of those who negotiate their availability. This becomes a criterion for evaluation of the worker. Discourse relating to the keys to promotion in the organisation is centred on “personal effort”, the value of work and the successful execution of the work. Although these workers are not especially well disposed to change, there is also the view that if change is required by the job it has to be accepted without question. This leads to the need for organisation, planning and forecasting as keys to quality work that help to eliminate uncertainty.

2. **The Significance of Work.**

   The key issue as regards significance is the value of work of itself. The indications are that one has to work, and the job one does is as good as any other, or at least it is the option available right now. The most important is execution of one’s functions, as well as the value of a job well done. The discourse, then, is one of “interiorised obligation”, not from a vocational point of view, rather from the perspective of a “work ethic” which acts as the key to motivation. This importance given to work is linked to the value of the result as the key to satisfaction: the focus is centred on efficiency and organisation.

3. **Group References**

   This type is also imbued with the community atmosphere of the company. This gives rise to a strong sense of belonging, with a heavily affective tone especially among “lifelong” workers. This participation in the organisational culture is focused on the question of teamwork and a common effort. In this effort the company is seen as an “aseptic” witness of the effort of the worker and the execution of the tasks. The process of socialisation makes it clear that the work is one’s own responsibility. The relations with colleagues are centred on the work and are guided by the channels established for the purpose. There is a perception of group fragmentation, which implies dissolution of the worker collective in the company community (labour matters are dealt individually with superiors).

4. **Personal labour capital**

   Together with the technical knowledge and specialist skills of the trade, which are heavily based on progressive practical experience, the type of requirements these workers place most emphasis on, are refer to effort, responsibility and good professional practice: work capacity, successful execution of tasks, punctuality, hygiene, order, seriousness and efficiency in the carrying out of ones functions, following the procedures and norms of the organisation, a desire to learn and improve etc. All of this is key to quality work.

5. **Perception of the Hierarchy**

   Relations with the hierarchy are centred on the workers functions and on the establishment of control and supervision mechanisms: a manager expect the workers to fulfil their obligations and do their work without creating problems. The role of the managers as those responsible for the work and its organisation implies also a confidence in their professional capacity, since they are seen as workers who are proficient in the trade and this is why they have been given responsibility.

6. **Sense of involvement in the product**

   The workers have autonomy as regards their own tasks, which constitute the area they understand. This gives a sense of “having a trade”, although one always works within guidelines established by the managers. The result is what matters. To facilitate this autonomy it is considered
important that tasks are well organised by the person in charge of the area, which eliminates uncertainty. It is important that the people in charge of an area, who know the trade, set these guidelines, since management by a superior who “doesn’t know the trade” may be an obstacle.

7. Education and training

The specialist technical knowledge of the trade is acquired through experience, and, increasingly, training. There is agreement that “work is what teaches the trade”. Training provides the basic techniques and knowledge of the organisation of work. Placements are considered fundamental for learning the trade and acquiring minimal skill levels. Continuous training is seen as a means to keep ones knowledge up-to-date. There is a wide range of specific courses for each of the trades of the workers. Courses organised by the company place emphasis on the organisational culture and the particular needs of each job. However, few workers have attended these courses yet. Furthermore in cases of more routine jobs there is not the same perception of innovation at work, so that the courses are not seen as vital for work.

e) The “newcomer / unconsolidated” worker

This type of professional identity is common in young workers, with unstable work situations, and who change jobs frequently, and can therefore not develop a special link to the company. They are defining their own priorities with respect to the profession and learning at work and their main aim is to gain experience. They work to earn a living and get experience.

1. Involvement in the profession (stability/satisfaction).

This discourse is typical of an identity in transition, in the process of integration into work. The “temporary” nature of the work is considered “normal” from the perspective of workers who are just beginning in their profession. They value it – despite their dissatisfaction – as a strategic opportunity to accumulate experience. The experience of frequent changes of job implies taking on different functions. This is valued as positive for the itinerary of learning experiences, although an excessive fragmentation can make difficult the learning of the job. There is also a discourse of “changing jobs without promotion” which is common in temporary workers in hotels where there are no expectations of stability. They focus on finding another job when the current one ends. The emphasis is on “earning a living”, but the salary is one of the factors that produce most dissatisfaction, especially when the conditions they have to accept are taken into account.

2. The Significance of Work

The most important refers to the experience of work as a way of earning a living and obtaining independence. The work activity itself is seen as “a job, no more than that”, although it is preferred that it be related to the subject one has studied. Seen from this perspective, initiation into the world of work is not easy, and it requires time and experience. Even though the work is insecure it is valued as a learning experience that provides knowledge of the sector.

3. Group References

We can state that, for this type of worker, the group references fit a model referred to as “dispersed labour” which is characterised by a lack of group references, as much from the point of view of a sense of belonging in the company as in the sense of a lack of identification with the job itself, and, lastly, without any special identification with the collective of workers. A fast turnover of workers in the hotel creates serious difficulties with respect to group cohesion. Mutual support links between workers are fragmented, since there are no opportunities to establish minimally stable links, so that each acts according to his interests and expectations within the company.

4. Personal labour capital

What is required is the will to work and make an effort, because in practice one can learn what one does not know. The attitude is important: one must want to work, and do the work as required. It is also important to want to learn. There is an awareness that one is still at the start of a
process of immersion in the world of work: the knowledge capital that the worker needs to make progress is still being accumulated.

5. Perception of the Hierarchy

The relationships with superiors directly related with the work are centred on the supervision of the task. Beyond this level contact is superficial and formal. There is a distance created by the hierarchical relationship, which involves a combination of respect and indifference. In any case, while the worker is in the company, the immediate superior constitutes the formal channel for relations with the management. Any matter which refers to working conditions has to be dealt with through this channel.

6. Sense of involvement in the product

The level of involvement of this type of worker is limited. As the expectations that the worker will be changing companies rise, the level of personal involvement drops. Basically, the temporary nature of the job implies little motivation to look for additional responsibilities. There is little autonomy: the tasks that have been assigned are the worker’s responsibility, but the experience is of strict supervision of the work.

7. Education and training

These workers emphasise the importance of the practical knowledge of the job that has been acquired through official vocational training, although this is sometimes described as distant from real work, which is why there is a lot of interest in work placements. But more importance is given to the learning that is acquired through varied experience in a real job. As regards continuous training, workers of this type are not very willing to participate since work itself is a priority, as opposed to more study. Another question is the difficulty of fitting in a flexible way periods of unemployment, to the calendars of courses, which is a barrier for those who are in unstable situations.

f) The worker in the employer’s discourse.

The discourse shows a worker defined by satisfaction with the job well done, an up to date technical knowledge and a vocational sense of the work. He is interesting in training to progress in the profession. And he has a deep identification with the company and understands responsibility of each function for the collective organization, from his own role to manager’s ones.

1. Involvement in the profession (stability/satisfaction).

This type of worker has good working conditions (permanent contract and a good salary) that promote his loyalty to the company. To the extent that the worker is a commitment employee, he will be reward with better working conditions and the possibility of promotional mobility and training according his own interest. This all shown as compensation system to get the worker’s interest, without talking about company’s benefits in it, not even the arbitrary nature than means the lack of formalised criteria. Similarly, the importance of temporary work and bad conditions working in the own company is underestimate.

2. The Significance of Work

The most important attitude in a worker is feeling proud of a “job-well-done”. This is why employers place special emphasis on the need for workers to have a vocation for the job. This vocation guarantees a key factor towards effort and quality. It’s a vocational approach that goes over technical work, that is, in any case, also important.

3. Group References

Discourse shows a “fusion” or “community” model of group reference. It means a comprehension of the company as a whole, in which each part is important to the achievement of the company’s objectives, since the sense of involvement is collective and shared by all employees. Workers are expected to identify with the hotel they belong to. There is a strong corporate identity,
and company goals appeared as collective goals, even worker’s. From this view, personal identity is linked with company identity. That’s why the need of promote employees loyalty appears as an important objective.

4. Personal labour capital

The discourse appoints new job profiles that emphasise the use of information technologies and languages, as well as customer relation skills. These three issues seems transversal to most of the hotels departments, and are conforming the companies’ training programs. The most important social skills are communication, teamwork, and the ability to be assertive. A vocation and a professional attitude to work appear in the discourse as key elements.

5. Perception of the Hierarchy

The discourse shows a functional understanding of hierarchy, within the community model: all the roles are relevant, playing their own functions for the global organization. That’s why hierarchy is necessary. It’s very important the department organization, and the role that intermediate managers plays in it. This allows an autonomy work within company guidelines. These managers must be trust persons, which share the culture and objectives of the company, and experimented professionals –rather than graduated ones-. Manager team appears as coordinated working guarantee in the global organization.

6. Sense of involvement in the product

This worker is strongly commitment with his job, having awareness of being part of a collective effort. Company objectives are assumed as the worker’s own goals. This makes him felt to be working for his own interest. In intermediate managers cases also exist an autonomy level that needs a strong personal commitment.

7. Education and training

Experience is a more valued factor than training, as a guarantee of professional behaviour. The importance given to formal professional training depends of the post in the organization and the kind of job. As regards to continuous professional training, it seems relevant because of the changes in sector. It permits facing as well company production needs, as much worker promotion and career possibilities –which is seen as a worker’s own interest use of company-.