

HOSPITALITY

Equipping the youth

NHI OFFERS A DIVERSE RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONAL COURSES DESIGNED TO SUIT THE NEEDS OF THE HOSPITALITY, TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTORS IN OMAN, SAYS ITS PRINCIPAL ROBERT MACLEAN. A REPORT



Can you give us a brief history about NHI?

NHI started in 1995 as a public company with many shareholders coming from the hospitality industry. NHI's purpose was to train and develop young Omanis for the growing hospitality and tourism industry. The training was to be vocationally based with the emphasis on competence. NHI opened with state of the art kitchens, public restaurant, real guest rooms and many more industry standard resources.

What are the services you provide on the training side?

NHI offers a diverse range of international vocational courses designed to suit the needs of the hospitality, travel and tourism sector in Oman. The courses range from full time and part-time. Within the NHI banner, there is the Gulf Chef School which delivers culinary courses to different nationalities. Gulf Chef school also offers leisure courses to enthusiasts and cooking courses to children and teenagers. A major part of its business is the training of young

Omanis on employment linked programmes funded by the Ministry of Manpower. These programmes are designed to deliver the basics of cooking and hygiene to these fresh school leavers. In addition to this, the Gulf chef school is very proactive and conducts inter hotel culinary competitions every three months. They also organise special gourmet evenings every two months at the Marina Bander Rowdha and specialty evenings at NHI on a bi-monthly basis. These events attract real paying customers and is seen as a great benchmark for the students to achieve.

How are the students/employees benefitting from your training programmes?

Students are able to study for an international certificate which ensures that the quality of the course is being protected. The local students have a guaranteed job to go to at the end of training. Other students carry out a three or six month internship which gives them the opportunity to understand more about the operations. During this time, prospective employers look out for opportunities to hire these internees once they have completed their course. The result is that NHI is in the centre of the industry with very interactive activities going on all the time. These are designed to enthuse the students and motivate them towards developing themselves for advancement of their own careers.

What are the programmes and courses that you are offering across the spectrum?

NTI's programmes range right across the area of culinary, hospitality, travel, food safety, language,

health and safety and many more. All the information pertaining to our courses are available on the NHI website. The programmes are designed to appeal to fresh school leavers, existing workers and to enthusiasts.

How is NHI establishing the link between education and job market needs?

Due to the fact that we focus on vocational training the link between training and the employers' needs is easier to ensure. Employers need competent workers who have the skills and knowledge to do the job. The courses at NHI are very much geared to achieving this. NHI has realistic working environments for students for training such as class room restaurant, which is open to the public as well, Al Daleh guest suites which are hired out to the public too. In addition to this, NHI has a reputation for keeping in touch with the local industry and listening to the needs of the industry and then tailor the courses accordingly.

What are the challenges faced in the training and education realm in the Sultanate?

The greatest challenge in Oman is lack of awareness on the opportunities for local people in the growing hospitality industry. This task needs to be addressed by the government. This will ensure that more people are aware of the opportunities. The next challenge is that the process to get local people into training and work is a very difficult and slow process which has the effect of turning young people away from the industry. With all the new properties coming up in Muscat, there are thousands of job opportunities which could be utilised.