REDIFINE THE CHALLENGES OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EDUCATION FOR A SEISMIC SHIFT

Ramanayaka S.K.L.J

Language Department, Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM), Sri Lanka

lathishar@slithm.edu.lk

Abstract

While hospitality and Tourism education is relatively new to the country, it is being recognized as vital for the growth of the industry. Thus, drawing on quantative data gathered from Advanced Level Accommodation Operations students (Batch no.237) at Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM), this research paper sheds light on their perceptions of significant challenges facing contemporary Hospitality and Tourism education. These include: engaging contemporary students particularly through new technologies; resource pressures and the distinctiveness of hospitality management education; ongoing tensions between hospitality's intellectual development and its practice focus; and new course structures, delivery modes and partnerships. The study also investigates their views on how those are likely to expand in the future. The purpose of this research was to redefine these challenges and find innovation keys to mitigate those challenges for revamping Hospitality and Tourism education. Self-designed 04 questionnaires and 02 interviews were utilized to collect data from all the 25 Accommodation Operations students. The students' responses were carefully analyzed and evaluated to find the reasons for the challenges. The main reasons were the less exposure to the Hospitality and Tourism industry and new technology, lack of leadership skills, internationalization, innovative teaching methodologies and simulation activities. Hence field trips, experiential learning, personality and leadership development workshops, trainings for online learning and introduced overseas programmes in the pursuit of internationalization as strategies for diversity in Hospitality and Tourism education which yielded favourable results. According to the results of this research it is highly recommended that the curriculum might be improved by creating modules of related courses, applying a cross-disciplinary approach to studies, using corresponding teaching-learning methods and creating a supportive learning environment, initiating autonomous learning for the students and motivating them for studies for a seismic shift.

Keywords: Hospitality and Tourism, challenges ,field trips, experiential learning , delivery models

1.0.Introduction

Education in the hospitality industry has become a major factor in emerging nations. As a result, these economies identified hospitality as a means of achieving their desired levels of development and expansion. The same is preferred in Sri Lanka, which also encourages the growth of the hospitality industry and related industries. Every budget's increased sanctioned amount informs the government of the importance of the matter. Similar importance is placed on building the capacity of people entering to study this trade along with constructing new educational institutions to provide hospitality, tourism, and related programmes, while concurrently providing the same discipline in the existing schools. In this sense, Sri Lanka is consistently regarded as a top choice for higher education in general and is gaining popularity for its hospitality programme.

1.1 The concept of education

When used broadly, the term "education" refers to the act of removing ignorance from a person's body, mind, and spirit. It is not only educational in nature. It improves a person's personality and gives him the self-assurance to interact with the outside world. "Education is a process beginning right from the mother's womb," said Swami Dayanand Saraswati. The growth of every activity within the person that

allows him to govern his surroundings, according to John Dewey. Learning is therefore a lifetime process, one of personal growth from childhood through adulthood.

1.11 Hospitality Management Education in Sri Lanka

The phrase "hospitality" describes the amiable and generous welcoming and amusement of guests, whether on a social or business basis. Since time immemorial, Sri Lankans have been famed for their exceptional hospitality because they believe that a guest is similar to a deity. In the past, pilgrims were housed in temples and monasteries in Sri Lanka while food was provided by houses along the path. Institutions of hotel management were established to supply skilled labour.

1.2 Research Objectives

The following objectives were anticipated to achieve from this research paper.

a) To identify current status and potential of hospitality education in Advanced Level Accommodation Operations Discipline at SLITHM, Sri Lanka.

b) To identify future challenges and opportunities of hospitality education in Advanced Level Accommodation Operations Discipline at SLITHM, Sri Lanka.

1.3 Literature Review

However, very little study has been attempted on India's tourism and hospitality education. Education in hospitality and tourism has long been considered important for the growth of tourism in any area (Bagri and Babu, 2009). Education in the hospitality and tourist business is crucial for producing the correct sort of labour, which may lead to improved planning and the industry's needed professionalism (Bhardwaj, 2002). Issues with hospitality education, such as the lack of standardization and uniformity of courses, cause conflict between employees and employers (Amoah and Baum, 1997). Variability in curriculum and products that come from it limits job opportunities in a healthy way (Bagri and Babu, 2009); not living up to employer expectations (Baum, 1995). Sri Lanka's educational system falls short of international norms in terms of quality. According to Umbreit (1992), educators must take the initiative to give their students a curriculum that is appropriate for the twenty-first century. He thought that in order for graduates to succeed in business, the curriculum needed to be changed. The interaction between education and training is crucial for the development of human resources in the hospitality and touristm industry (Doswell, 1994).

2. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted using a thorough analysis of secondary data, namely literature reviews from a range of journals, periodicals, newspapers, the World Wide Web, and reports from the Sri Lankan Ministry of Tourism and SLITHM, including annual reports and other documents. The primary objectives were to gain knowledge of current hospitality education and investigate numerous issues that

the Sri Lankan hospitality sector, namely the Accommodation Operations Discipline at SLITHM, faced. Primary data obtained through in-person interviews with Advanced Level Accommodation Operations Discipline students at SLITHM and with hotel managers in the metropolitan area.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The following results were obtained from this study and depending on the results, some recommendations are suggested.

3.1 Emerging Trends in Hospitality Education: New Challenges in Sri Lanka

The process of building a relationship with a host and a visitor is referred to as hospitality. It can also refer to the art or behavior of being hospitable. The country's economic liberalization, open skies policies in the aviation industry in the early 1990s, and later the effects of globalization gave the industry a new boost. However, the proliferation of hospitality institutes has put the quality of education at risk because many of them are operating without the necessary infrastructure. The success of every business nowadays depends on providing excellent customer service and ensuring that customers are satisfied. In addition to the hotel, restaurant, cruise, and catering businesses, students who graduate from hospitality colleges learn about their role in non-catering sectors such retail stores, hospitals, telecom industries, food packaging, hospitals, private banks, and BPOs. For the nation's hospitality schools, the influx of more international colleges and institutions presents a significant challenge. Universities and institutes in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Australia, and New Zealand are pursuing proficient English-speaking Sri Lankan students from wealthy backgrounds.

3.2 Challenges of Hospitality Education for Advanced Level Accommodation Operations Discipline at SLITHM, Sri Lanka

a) The content and instructional materials influence how well a course is received. Given how swiftly the hotel industry is developing, the curriculum needs to mirror the requirements of the industry. To help with curriculum development, the syllabus committee must include business experts (preferably general managers or operation managers).

b) For adequate oversight and standardization, it will be a good idea to combine all aspects of hospitality education under one roof.

c) Technology has ingrained itself into every aspect of our everyday lives. It has become essential to manage hotels using technology. It is crucial to have knowledge of these technologies, especially in property management. The need of the hour is for more emphasis on the use of computers and Learning Management System (LMS) software at the institute level for creating presentations, teaching, conducting research, etc. Education programs should promote greater familiarity with and usage of contemporary technology in the hospitality industry.

3.3 Incorporate Changes Teaching Methodology

The curriculum and course materials determine whether a course is successful. The curriculum must reflect the demands of the business given how quickly the hospitality sector is changing It is true that hotel management is frequently seen as a skill-based field. After graduating, Advanced Level Accommodation Operations students join the operational areas and steadily move up the corporate ladder to assume the roles of General Manager and Front Office/ Housekeeping Executive. As a result, task-based practical classes should be given more attention in classroom instruction. In addition, managerial abilities should receive adequate attention in the curriculum. The development of the students should make use of case studies, presentations, situation handling, demonstrations, panel discussions, and other cutting-edge teaching techniques.

3.4 Faculty Development

As the foundation of every institution's success and a direct indicator of the calibre of Advanced Level Accommodation Operations students it produces, faculty development should be made a continual process. A few ways to grow the faculty are to encourage students to pursue further education, attend seminars and workshops, do research, and publish their findings. A minimum of 15 to 21 days of training in the sector to study the changes in operation and management would extend the faculty's perspective and, in turn, assist students. Hospitality education will benefit from faculty members participating in international seminars and workshops as part of faculty exchange programs with reputable universities and institutes.

3.5 Student Support Activities

Student assistance programs at institutions present one of their biggest issues. An ideal learning environment may be created by having clean campuses, well-ventilated classrooms, conference rooms, sports facilities, laboratories with contemporary equipment, a well-stocked library, hostel and gym facilities, etc. for general growth. The institute must regularly hold seminars, meet with business leaders during visits, host workshops for personal growth, and other activities to improve the caliber of its students. Student growth is aided by encouraging students to take part in a variety of inter- and intra-college activities, whether they are sporting or cultural events. House theme parties, yearly food festivals, and other student-organized events help kids acquire leadership skills, teamwork, and playing abilities on a large stage. Commercially owned hotels (advance training centers) and resorts affiliated to the Ministry of Tourism will give students the opportunity to work in the field during their leisure time, which helps them develop their professional abilities and find employment.

3.6 Teaching for the Future

The Sri Lankan hospitality sector has grown steadily over the years, yet there is a shortage of qualified workers. Along with guaranteeing a steady supply of human resources, it is imperative to prepare students for the challenges of the future through hospitality education. A look at the current state of education and training in the Sri Lankan hospitality sector and the expected future developments is vital.

3.7 Getting Future Ready

The hotel sector is currently as dynamic as any other sector. In light of this, the industry has occasionally suggested altering the current curriculum to make it more efficient. According to industry experts, the course content has to incorporate accounting and marketing in addition to shop floor instruction for students. Along with behavioural training, on-the-job training is also necessary. Today's students must be multi-skilled because most hotel businesses require multitasking to reduce expenses. Hospitality schools in India should examine some of the issues the business faces, attract the proper talent, and foster the correct mentality in order to enable the supply of a qualified and effective human resource for the sector.

4.0 Conclusion

The curriculum and course materials determine whether a course is successful. The curriculum must reflect the demands of the business given how quickly the hospitality sector is changing. The syllabus committee has to include industry professionals, ideally general managers or operation managers, to assist in creating the curriculum. SLITHM has undertaken the required efforts to reform its courses in order to provide a value-based education. Operations at a High Level of Accommodation The needs of the hospitality business must be met by the training of students. Industry-institution partnership is required at all levels, i.e., training, course development, motivational and guest lectures by industry experts till the final placement. The study's key result is that, if the government steps forward to make these courses upgraded and updated it would benefit the Advanced Level Accommodation Operations students a lot. Further, hospitality industries may be encouraged to be partner with educational institutions. Introducing earn while you learn programme shall be an effective to attain the objective of ensuring employability of Advanced Level Accommodation Operations students.In the words of Martin Luther King Junior:

"We may have all come from different ships, but we are in the same boat now. It would be a win -win situation for all if the stakeholder can work together in cooperation and mutual understanding".

5.0 Declaration of Interest Statement

The author declares that they have no conflict of interests.

References

1.Airey, D., & Tribe, J. (2000). Education for hospitality. In C. Lashley, & A. Morrison (Eds.), In search of hospitality: Theoretical perspectives and debates (pp. 276-92). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

2.Alexander, M. (2007). Reflecting on changes in operational training in UK hospitality management degree programmes. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 19(3), 211-220.

3.Alexander, M., Lynch, P., & Murray, R. (2009). Reassessing the core of hospitality management education: The continuing importance of training restaurants. Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 8(1), 55-69.

4.Barron, P. & Arcodia, C. (2002). Linking learning style preferences and ethnicity: International students studying hospitality and tourism management in Australia. Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 1(2), 15-27.

5.Bellur, S., Nowak, K. L., & Hull, K. S. (2015). Make it our time: In class multitaskers have lower academic performance. Computers in Human Behavior, 53, 63-70.

6.Biggart, N.W. (2016). Biggart's lament, or getting out of the theory cave. Journal of Management Studies, 53(8), 1381-1387.

7.Bird, J., van de Mortel, T., Holt, J., & Walo, M. (2015). Academics' perceptions of continuous and collaborative curriculum review: An Australian case study. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management, 24, 18-24.

8.Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

9.Cheng, Y. (2016). Learning in neoliberal times: Private degree students and the politics of value coding in Singapore. Environment & Planning A, 48(2), 292-308.

10.Copley, J. (2007). Audio and video podcasts of lectures for campus-based students: Production and evaluation of student use. Innovations in Education & Teaching International, 44(4), 387–399.

11.Dredge, D., Benckendorff, P., Day, M., Gross, M. J., Walo, M., Weeks, P., & Whitelaw, P. (2012). The philosophic practitioner and the curriculum space. Annals of Tourism Research, 39(4), 2154-2176.

12.Dredge, D., Benckendorff, P., Day, M., Gross, M. J., Walo, M., Weeks, P., & Whitelaw, P. A. (2013). Drivers of change in tourism, hospitality, and event management education: An Australian perspective. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 25(2), 89-102.

13.Fullagar, S., & Wilson, E. (2012). Critical pedagogies: A reflexive approach to knowledge creation in tourism and hospitality studies. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management, 19, 1-6.

14.Getz, D. (2002). Event studies and event management: On becoming an academic discipline. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management, 9, 12-23.

15.Green, A. J., Chang, W., Tanford, S., & Moll, L. (2015). Student perceptions towards using clickers and lecture software applications in hospitality lecture courses. Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 15(1), 29-47

16.Lugosi, P., Lynch, P., & Morrison, A. (2009). Critical hospitality management research. The Service Industries Journal, 29(10), 1465-1478.

17.Lynch, P., Germann Molz, J., McIntosh, A., Lugosi, P., & Lashley, C. (2011). Theorizing hospitality. Hospitality & Society, 1(1), 3-24.

18.Ma, C., & Au, N. (2014). Social media and learning enhancement among Chinese hospitality and tourism students: A case study on the utilization of Tencent QQ. Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 14(3), 217-239.

19.MacQueen, K.M., McLellan-Lemal, E., Bartholow, K., & Milstein, B. (2008). Teambased codebook development: Structure, process, and agreement. In G. Guest & K. M. MacQueen (Eds.), Handbook for team-based qualitative research (pp.119–35). Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press