

## Gap Analysis in Hospitality Education and Industrial Requirements

Ashaq Hussain Najar\* Syed Aasif M. Bukhari \*\*

Assistant Professor (Central University of Kashmir)\*

Assistant Professor (Central University of Kashmir)\*\*

---

### Abstract

The hospitality industry has seen rapid growth in the last four decades still in today's competitive job market hospitality graduates face uncertainties in terms of the needs and expectations of the hospitality industry. As a well-known fact there is a considerable gap between what educators teach in the classrooms and needs at the actual work place. Thus the paper conceptually analyzes the reasons behind the gap and the factors that will bridge the gap. The result indicates some of the common drawbacks that are identified by the pass out hospitality graduates are as "inadequate computer training, multi-lingual barrier, short period of internship etc." while as hospitality practitioners have emphasized on some important skills that need to be injected in hospitality graduates which would help them to be the part of hospitality industry for e.g. "operational skills, management skills, human relation skills, etc."

Hospitality graduates need the above mentioned skills that will enable them to function effectively in the hospitality sectors. These skills are meant to make them more useful to their employers and the customers they will be serving.

**Keywords:**-Hospitality industry, Hospitality graduates, Operational skills, Management skills, Human relation skills, Hospitality practitioners

---

### INTRODUCTION

Hospitality education is technical learning and as we all know that in technical oriented learning practice clarifies theory, therefore it is important for hospitality students to undergo industrial attachment in order to understand the actual business setting of the industry. Hospitality professionals expect hospitality students to be prepared for not only skills and competencies at the front line level, but to also have critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence etc. However, Hospitality education does not necessarily provide the provision of experiential learning experience (Zopiatis, 2007a),(Goh, 2011; Dale and Robinson, 2001; Airey, 2005; Asirifi et al., 2013) claimed that, what educators teach in the classroom does not match current industry trends, hence criticized hospitality educators for not adequately preparing students for employment in the industry, which sometimes impedes employment opportunities for hospitality graduates. Johnstone (1994) pointed out that in the hospitality industry there is a huge gap between formal training and employer demands.

The researchers have discussed the paper conceptually to explore why hospitality graduates face uncertainties in terms of the needs and expectations of the hospitality industry. The study also sums up the skills needed for hospitality graduates to meet the industrial expectations.

The result identifies less exposure/practical work; multi-lingual barriers, short period of internship, outmoded lessons, inadequate computer training and modern equipment for practical lessons at school, more emphasis on theory, etc. are some of the reasons why hospitality graduates are not able to meet industry needs after graduations. In view of this hospitality educators and industrial practitioners suggested that close link between the educators and the

industry, organizing field trips for students, regular conferences, seminars and workshops, extending the period of internship etc. can enhance experiential learning of students. Further the researchers want to join the debate to address the unresolved problem between the hospitality educators and the industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There exists a gap between academics and practitioners in almost all educational fields and industries (Jenkins, 1999; Stanton, 2006; Anderson, 2007; Lilien, 2011; Brownlie et al., 2008; Belli, 2010). Hospitality educators are unable to adequately prepare students for employment, which sometimes obstructs their employment opportunities. (Dale and Robinson, 2001, Airey, 2005, Zopiatis, 2007a, (Goh, 2011, Asirifi et al., 2013).

(Collins, 2002; Harkison, 2004b; Li & Kivela, 1989; Petrova & Mason, 2004; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005 as cited in Kim, 2008) have pointed out the difference in perception between educators and industry as a problem. In order to overcome this problem, hospitality sector courses and curriculum must be driven on industry oriented skills and soft skills (Connolly and McGing 2006). (Walo 2001) also identified some essentials for hospitality graduates i.e. interpersonal communication and human relation skills. According to Kluge (1996), hospitality curriculum must have information technology as a subject in order to equip the students with these skills during the study and will prepare a student for a career in hospitality industry. (Asirifi et al, and Avornyo, 2013, Pavesic (1993) also stated that hospitality education is more theoretical and less practical.

Noble Amoako Sarkodie, Kwame Adom (2015) pinpointed that multi lingual, communication skills, skills in computing , and operational skills as the most prominent skills needed to fit into the industry. The research is supported by Weing, (2008) who stated that communication skills are the key to graduate employment. Hospitality Industry requires a set of standards from a future employee.

(Rees et al., 2006). The UK Higher Education Academy proposed that knowledge, management and operation skills, transferable skills and intellectual skills, are required by the industry

Furthermore, Ogbeide (2006) have also identified the level of competences i.e. self-development skills, teamwork, decision making, planning, communication skills as the key needs of the hospitality industry. Hang (2009) also has figured out that the need for cognitive skills (mainly critical thinking, problem solving, and situation analysis), communication skills, interpersonal skills (leadership and teamwork), ethics and moral responsibility, knowledge recall and demonstration, technology and mathematical statistical techniques as important skills for hospitality students.

Kiser and Partlow (1999) concluded that the hospitality educators have recognized the need for experiential learning but the implementation and variety of experiential learning techniques are limited in scope.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

This paper is conceptual and the information gathered has been pooled together from the previously researched strands mainly literature review from various journals, magazines, newspapers, world wide web, Ministry and hotel association reports like that of FHRAI, MOT-GOI. The study outline (Fig.01) has been developed to analyze the reasons behind the gap and the factors that will bridge the gap. This formulated study outline can be considered as the base

of this research. It spells out the reason of the gap between hospitality education and industrial requirements.

<b>(A). General teaching methodology in hospitality institutions</b>	
Lectures	Mock interviews
Practical classes	Events
Assessments	Conferences
Group Discussions	Internal examination
Presentations	Computer knowledge
seminars	field trips
<b>(B). Industrial Requirements</b>	
Customer service	IT skills
Languages	Professionalism
Specialty knowledge	Managerial potential
Operational skills and understanding of the industry	Financial management
Flexibility and adaptability	Marketing ability
<b>(C). Gap Analyzed Between Teaching And Industrial Needs</b>	
Multi-lingual barriers and Poor Communication skills	Fewer workshops for both teachers and students
Short period of internship	Less exposure to practical work
Poor Operational skills	Outdated text books and Inadequate computer training
Very less knowledge of security functions and first aids skills.	Inadequate modern equipment for practical lessons at institutions
Little exposure to customer relationship and leadership skills	Lacking personal and problem solving skills
<b>(D). How To Bridge The Gap</b>	
There should be a close link between the educators and the industry	Regular conferences, seminars and workshops will help in exchanging the ideas among students and teachers
Organizing field trips so that students will get exposed to current industrial trends	Providing a good library with new and updated books for effective research work.
Improving institutional infrastructure	Providing the latest teaching materials and regular review of the curriculum
Emphasis on strengthening of the communications skills and multi-language	Building modern food laboratory and computer laboratory furnished with modern equipments
Extending the period of internship	Regular in-service training of educators

## CONCLUSION

A sense of complacency within microcosms (hospitality training institutes), augmented with lack of understanding of current trends and requirements of hospitality sector remains one of the profound reasons for the gap between what is required and what is offered. An ideal situation would have been taking hospitality as profession on board while devising curriculum for hospitality institutes, who can give inputs to greater extent. It is an irony that a hospitality graduate is expected to learn operational skills in four main areas, conceptual skills in general and strategic management, organizational behavior, human resource management, accounting management skills within three years which puts him under lot of pressure and mostly a graduate ends up becoming jack of all traits and master of none.

Faculty development programmes are perceived as redundant exercise by hospitality training stalwarts, the faculty members spent most of the time reading the books and imparting bookish knowledge to the students, the lack of infrastructure and practical exposure also plays its role in making a candidate unemployable. The student spends time imagining things, he learns from books.

Assignments have become a mockery and two day show, where a student is forced to copy things from internet and other sources because of fear of losing marks and to stay in good books of professors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Close and continuous interaction between students and hospitality professionals to impart skills and knowledge about entire gamut of current service expectations and trends
- Training and development programmes for the hospitality educators, which must necessarily include the on the job training and refreshment training capsules.
- Requiring students to complete assignments on scientific lines, which can include analysis and study of specific operation of particular organization
- Change in curriculum, and reform antediluvian process to bring newness and freshness where scope for innovation is provided
- Putting checks and balances in place so that training institutes don't become small kingdoms for arbitrary rule by autocratic directors who define the institutes by what suits their person interests.
- Encouraging faculty to undertake research and development projects by incentivizing such efforts.
- Defining at outset what is expected of a particular semester and introducing branches for specialization during undergraduate level itself
- Increasing duration of course if required, and introducing parallel and continuous programmes for industry interface during entire course.
- Shedding off unnecessary study load, redundant subjects and nugatory knowledge as per the requirements of industry
- Attending the concerns of students arising out of improper handling and aquiline attitude of seniors during industrial training.

## REFERENCES

1. Airey, D., & Tribe, J. (2005) Issues for the future. In: D. Airey, & J. Tribe (Eds.), *An international handbook of tourism education* (pp. 501-506). UK: Elsevier.
2. Anderson, N. (2007). The practitioner-researcher divide revisited: strategic – level bridges and the roles of IWO psychologists. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 80, 175-183.
3. Asirifi, G. H., Doku, V., Morrison, S. & Sackey, A. S. (2013). The Gap between the Hospitality Education and Hospitality Industry. *Journal of Education and Practice*. Vol.4, No.24, 2013 19. Retrieved from: <http://www.iiste.org>. [Access: 06/12/13]
4. Avorny, R. (2013). Bridging the gap between the tourism industry and tertiary institutions offering tourism in Ghana: a case study of Cape Coast. *European Scientific Journal* December 2013 /SPECIAL/ edition vol.2 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431
5. Brownlie, D., Hewer, P., Wagner, B., & Svensson, G. (2008). Management theory and practice: bridging the gap through multidisciplinary lenses. *European Business Review*, 20(6), 461-470.
6. Chang, C. T. (2009, September). Enhancing graduates' employability skills & competencies for hospitality & tourism program through Thai qualifications framework and credit transfer. Paper presented at ASAIHL 23rd Conference, Chiangmai.
7. Connolly, P. & McGing, G. (2006). Graduate Education and Hospitality Management in Ireland. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18(1), 50-59.
8. Dale, C., & Robinson, N. (2001). The theming of tourism education: a three-domain approach. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 13 (1), 30-34.
9. Goh, E. (2011). The Value and Benefits of Fieldtrips in Tourism and Hospitality Education. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 1(1), 60-70.
10. Jenkins, C. L. (1999). Tourism academics and tourism practitioners: bridging the great divide. *Contemporary issues in tourism development.*, 52-64.
11. Johnstone, D. B. (1994). College at work: Partnerships and the rebuilding of American competence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 65(2), 168-182.
12. Kluge, E. A. (1996). A literature review of information technology in the hospitality curriculum. *Hospitality Research Journal*, 9(4), 45-64.
13. Lilien, G. L. (2011). Bridging the academic–practitioner divide in marketing decision models. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 196-210.
14. Noble Amoako Sarkodie, Kwame Adom (2015). Bridging the Gap between Hospitality/Tourism Education and Hospitality/Tourism Industry in Ghana. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies* Volume 2, Issue 7, July 2015 (page 117)
15. Ogbeide, G. C. A. (2006). Employability skills and students' self-perceived competence for careers in hospitality industry (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri--Columbia).
16. Rees, C., Forbes, P., & Kubler, B. (2006). Student employability profiles. *The Higher Education Academy, York*.
17. D'Auria Stanton, A. (2006). Bridging the academic/practitioner divide in marketing: An undergraduate course in data mining. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 24(3), 233-244.
18. Walo, M. 2001. Assessing the contribution of internship in developing Australian tourism and hospitality students' management competencies. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 2(2): 12-28.