The Gap between the Hospitality Education and Hospitality Industry

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Abstract
Hospitality graduates in Ghana face many challenges when finding job in today's competitive market.
The aim of   this research seeks to find out if graduates meet the expectation of potential companies as well as the cause of gap that exist between training of students in hospitality and the expectations of the potential companies. The objective of the study was achieved by the use of questionnaire and interviews. The respondents were educators, students and managers of hotels. The findings indicated that there are differences in what education offers and what industry demands. Hospitality education is primarily concerned with professional preparation of the individual who desire to work in any of the broad group of professions that make up the hospitality industry.   As a field of multidisciplinary study which brings the perspective of many disciplines to bear, hospitality education needs a well structured curriculum.
Keywords: Needs of the industry, Competitive job market, Hospitality education, Practical training, Graduate expectation

INTRODUCTION

In most countries, there is a considerable gap between what is learned in the classroom and the world of work in the hospitality industry. Hospitality students in Ghana who graduate today face many challenges when finding job in today's competitive job market. Graduates must meet the expectations of the potential companies. One may ask how education is responding to the needs of the industry. Academic Hospitality programs are designed to teach the skills that will prepare them to be competitive in the workplace. These skills should enable the graduate to manage the rapidly changing demands in today's hospitality industry.

According to Johnstone (1994), there are large discrepancies between formal training and employer demands in the hospitality industry. The Johnstone research outlines the issues within the hospitality industry and underscores the direct link to education. Academic Hospitality programs should be addressing these skills which are deemed necessary for graduates to have, yet these programs are leaving some or many of these skills to be taught by the employers. Employers feel their recruits are less adequately prepared for work after graduation. They found out that some recruits lack the requisite skills needed for the world of work. In a research by Goodman &Sprague (1991), education as we know is in danger of vanishing. Hospitality education programs must continually shift to meet changing demands in the hospitality industry. These issues need to be understood as they represent a core within the industry. The hospitality industry operates in a very competitive environment taking into consideration the continual and swiftly changing consumer trends. For this reason, hospitality programs must be especially keen in adapting to these shifts, responding to them with educational content and programs that make practical sense to the graduates so they will possess the desired skill sets for the job market they enter.

Polytechnics in Ghana offer a three-year diploma course, after students' secondary school education. There are currently (10) polytechnics in Ghana which reports to the Ministry of Education.

A unique approach that Cornell University School of Administration is taking to meet the demand of students and job market is to apply a "freshman level principles of management" course. In this course, fresh students are required to create a "real life" business plan and then implement the plan along with laboratory work where they actually research, plan and implement business plans. They are also required to attend lectures by the instructors who are called consultants. This course actually helps students learn through a "real world" experience (Fitzgerald & Cullen, 1991). Cornell University is calling their Business Group Experience an experimental learning course. The University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout) has developed innovative projects that set UW-Stout apart from others in the field, including its comprehensive laboratory management program. Students are required to work and manage two campus-dining facilities. According to Darrell VanLoenen, program director of the Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management program at the UW-Stout, "This real-world environment gives them the opportunity to put their skills and knowledge to the test, to learn from their mistakes and celebrate their accomplishments" (Crockett, 2002).

To continue to satisfy the basic purpose of hospitality education, a curriculum needs to be driven by current industry needs. Students need to depend on timely curriculum to form their preparation (Reigel, 1995).

According to Kluge (1996), information technology in the hospitality curriculum will be required to be sure that the skills students obtain during their studies will prepare them for a career in hospitality.

Crockett (2002), predicts that academic programs will be increasingly driven by technology and curriculum will need to keep pace with change as they are looking toward the future of educational delivery systems. A 2001 National Restaurant Association report cited technological changes as six of the top 10 trends affecting the restaurant industry by the year 2011 (Klassen, 2001). Mark Hamilton, director of the Technology Research and Education Center at the University of Houston's Conrad N. Hilton College, states that "Changes in technology make it incumbent upon hospitality education to provide students with the basic knowledge, skill and attitude necessary to be effective in this environment,"(Klassen, 2001). Today's hospitality industry comprises a growing number of regionally and globally dispersed multi-unit firms. The increasingly complex nature of how these firms are organized, along with the continuous state of change and market uncertainty in all sectors of the business environment, create a situation that requires constant learning for all managers (Cho, Schmelzer, 2000). To address the need for re-educating managers in the hospitality industry, a conceptual model is presented, which combines critical thinking, collaborative learning and just-in-time (JIT) education, tools that managers or supervisors need to be successful in the workplace (Cho, Schmelzer,2000). Another concept that is similar to JIT is the use of distance education tools, to deliver timely and contemporary concepts to traditional and non-traditional students.

In the 1998 study completed by Breiter & Clements, the top three skills that were deemed important by hospitality recruiters of new graduates were; leadership skills, managerial communications and, employee relations (Breiter & Clements,1998). According to the same study by Breiter & Clements (1998), they stated that as educators plan the program curricula of the future, they must develop ways to prepare students to be innovators of the future while providing key concepts that industry demands. They predict that excellent human and conceptual skills will be very important into the 21st century. This research seeks to find out if graduates meet the expectation of potential companies as well as the cause of gap that exist between training of students in hospitality and the expectations of the potential companies.

2.0 METHODOLOGY
2.1   Research design
A case study, method of data gathering was used for the survey (Yin, 1984:45-78). The option to use a multiple or more than one method as a data gathering instrument was to allow for more corroborative evidence (Yin, 1984:45-7). According to Yin, "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. This type of research is a survey type, since the researcher used interviews and questionnaires in collecting data.
2.2   Population and Sampling size
This deals with the type and number of respondents as well as the process used in choosing the research unit of the target population which would be used in the study. The research population was 535 and the sampling size was 100 comprising 50 graduates, 25 teaching staff, and 25 industry managers was used.
2.3   Data collection
The data collection would be from the primary source which includes the use of questionnaires interviews and observation.
2.4   Methods of Data Collection
With the nature of this research it required the use of both the primary and secondary methods in the collection of the needed information. The primary method included the use questionnaires and personal interviews (face-to-face). The secondary method included textbooks, newspapers and other important documents which aided the research.
2.5   Data Analysis
For easy interpretation of the data collected, both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods were used. Also the use of graphic tables aided in the comparison of responses from the data collected. The drawing of tables was made easier by using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software program and Microsoft Office Excel (MS Excel).
2.6   Ethical Considerations
With respect to the kind of society in which ethical issues are very important, the researcher   took into consideration the norms and values of the people. The purpose of the study was made clear to all participants and confidentiality was maintained. Finally, the researcher did not coerce or influence the respondents in any way.

Result and Discussion
The structure of the analysis is based on two parameters: that is Graduates expectations of the potential companies and to find out the cause of gap that exists between training of students in hospitality and the demands of companies. Results are explained and recommendations regarding the findings are made.

In achieving these objective, the managers of the hotels we visited came out with the view that most of the courses being taught in the tertiary institutions are theoretical and that the curricula needs to be driven by current industrial needs. Information technology in the hospitality curriculum will be required to ensure that the skills students obtain during their studies will prepare them for a career in the hospitality industry. Since most of the programs will be increasingly driven by technology and curriculum, we need to keep pace with changes towards the future of educational delivery system. According to Breiter & Clements 1998, the top three skills that were deemed important by hospitality recruiters of new graduates were; leadership skills, managerial communications and, employee relations. This prepares students to be innovative of the future while providing key concepts that the industry demands.

To find out the cause of gap that exists between graduates expectations of the potential companies, the researcher came out with these findings:

Most of the courses being taught in the tertiary institutions are mostly theoretical. Many students find the nature of the job to be stressful and strenuous. Others perceived reasons that have been given by students for not joining the industry are the semi-professional nature of the hospitality industry as compared to other industries such as education, law, engineering and other related industries. This can be supported by the finding of Pavesic (1993), that some hospitality programs are faulted as being too theoretical, and in other instances, they are criticized as being too industry focused and technically orientated. Thus, a standard foundation that industry seeks may not be provided to students.

Table one indicates what the respondent lack in school in terms of practical skills;

According to our research conducted 44 people working in the industry lacked needed equipments which represented 44% ,21 people had poor teaching skills which represent 21% insufficient time and space were lacked by 24 people working in the industry which represent 24% and also 11 people lacked none of the things mentioned above. This depicts that most people lacked needed equipment.

Table two indicates what the respondent were taught in the tertiary, whether it's applicable in the hospitality industry. According to our research conducted 33 respondents working in the industry said YES which represent 33% and 63 respondents said NO which represent 63%.This depicts that most of the workers are not satisfied with what is being taught since they find it to be more theoretical rather than practical.

Table three indicates if the respondent were able to meet the job requirements after completing their education; According to our research conducted 19 respondents said YES, they were able to meet the job requirements which represents 19% of the workers whiles NO was said by 81 respondents which represent 81% of the workers. This result depicts that most of the workers were not able to meet the job requirements.

4.2   Conclusion

Hospitality education needs a well structured, articulate and a well implemented hospitality curriculum to achieve a meaningful development. The courses that are taught should be practical and skills oriented. Training students should be well focused on mainly on leadership skills, managerial communication and employee relation. This will make students creative and innovative.

4.3   Recommendation

The results of the comparative study indicate that Leadership was the most important skill that employers felt was relevant for hospitality students to possess. Educators need to rely on the practical needs of industry while serving the long term educational needs of the students. The curriculum should keep pace with the current trends in the industry. There should be collaboration between the school and the industry when the curriculum is being reviewed.

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Data Presentation and analysis

Table one: Practical skills

Materials	Frequency	Percent %
lack of needed equipments	44	44.0
poor teaching skills	21	21.0
insufficient time and space	24	24.0
none of the above	11	11.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2013

Table 2: What you were taught in the tertiary (polytechnic), do you think it is applicable in the hospitality industry.

Relevance	Frequency	Percent%
Yes	33	33.0
No	67	67.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2013

Table 3: Job requirements after completing school

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	19	19.0
No	81	18.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4: Tick any of the courses that needs to be restructured

Courses	Frequency	Percent%
front office	25	25.0
food and beverage	19	19.0
Accommodation	9	9.0
food production	26	26.0
none of the above	21	21.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2013

Factors	Frequency	Percent %
Lack of facilities	18	18
Outmoded course outline	47	47
Inadequate time for industrial work	23	23
Just in time lectures training	12	12
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey 2013