PROFICIENCY IN HOSPITALITY PROGRAM AMONG UNDERGRADUATES: A MAP REVEALED (AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY)

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Abstract:
In response to the needs of the hospitality industry, training providers have established a number of hotel, leisure, travel and tourism degrees. Hotel management students seem to rate the value of their degrees higher than do employees in the industry. As such there always seem to be bridge between what the hotel management students and the assumption of the hotel industry. This study has taken steps to identify managerial employment components, and managerial employability opportunities. For undertaking the study, a detailed literature review was examined in addition to questionnaires being circulated to around 60 final year students of hotel management program in a Hyderabad. The questionnaire was also circulated to 45 alumni students of 2 the Hotel management program who are currently working as managers in hotels. The analysis of data helped to examine and compare results based on the study of the literature review. This study found that even if students and managerial personnel share some common understanding, many voids still exist between them. Suggestions and recommendations relating to students" expectations and expectation of their job entry level, the working environment in the hotel sector, the demands of the hotel industry, and the value of a 4 year Hotel Management bachelor's degree in University will be covered in the study. Furthermore, the study identifies some limitations of this study and scope for further research.

Keywords: Hotel management, managerial skills, competency mapping, employability

1. INTRODUCTION

In the study of establishing "what competencies the various stakeholders (students, industry mentors, faculty) think are the ideal competencies needed by employees in the hotel field in places such as hotels, food service providers, restaurants and lodges, compared to those actually displayed by hotel management students" by (Coll & Zegwaard, 2006), it says. This situation may arise from the fact that students lack employability skills. Behavioral (soft) skills such as those gained through curriculum, that addresses critical outcomes such as analytical skills, teamwork, organize and manage one, usually deliver more competent and employable. The competencies such as customer service, flexibility, concern for order, quality and accuracy, teamwork and cooperation as well as self-control will allow students to understand how to operate efficiently and professionally in the demanding environment of hotel

Hotel management competencies: do faculty and students concur on employability skills?

Employers have indicated that students are often not prepared for the workplace and call on universities to produce more employable graduates (Kay,Christine,2011). Conclusion was that by providing transferable skills that students can adapt that can be taken into the workplace. "Employability skills and students" self-perceived competence for careers in the hotel industry" by (Godwin-Charles Ogbeide) indicated that curriculum update must be a continuing process, with educators remaining up-to-date with the changes and leading the changes. Respondent consider themselves to have a high degree of competence in all of the employability skills. At the very least, it can be concluded that these students have confidence in their abilities related to employability skills. Further research should be conducted to determine what aspects of the program or non-program experiences are contributing most to the development of these skills. It would also be of value for research to be conducted focusing on the employability skills the students considered themselves to have the lowest competence. Hotel management programs, students and faculty are always seeking ways to improve job placement rate for their graduates. Owing to a sharp increase in schools that offer hotel degrees over the past quarter century, and a more complex and sophisticated hotel industry looking for high- quality management talent, the bar has been raised in terms of qualification of the hotel graduates (Chi,Christina,2009). Research in graduate skills has focused on management expectations and has been criticized for

adopting a one-sided perspective that ignores graduate perceptions. The studies that have included found graduates rated human resource skills and liaising with guests as most important. These students" perceptions of skills needed in hotel management appear realistic, as many of the studies of management expectations have also identified interpersonal skills as a key area of importance. Studies of management expectations have generally shown that industry believes management skills are more important in the academic curriculum than technical skills (Raybould, Mike; Wilkins, Hugh) Assessment Of Tourism And Hotel Management Competencies: A Student Perspective (Helen Breen, Maree Walo, Kay Dimmock) says "Tourism and hotel employers are encouraged to structure the induction and training of new graduates to take advantage of their strong mentor competencies and to further develop co-coordinator competencies through job work experience. This would build further depth in perceived managerial strength in managing people and reduce perceived managerial weaknesses in managing and designing work." Competencies for a career in the hotel industry: an Indian perspective (Jauhari, Vinnie) states: As the supply of hotel graduates is larger than the demand for management positions therefore these results in mismatch of career aspirations. So there are a number of hotel graduates available at any given point of time, which is willing to work for low wages. A lack of management oriented training leads to a myopic vision of ones job in the industry. It results in viewing hotel industry as just focusing on cooking and delivering food with little concern for building management competence, cost management, building brand equity, developing national or international brands. The academic input focuses only on operational related aspects which are not sufficient for creating and building brands.

Hotel graduates and managers: the big divide by Harkison, Tracy; Poulston, Jill; Jung- Hee, Ginny Kim. International Journal of Contemporary Hotel Management "found that a vocational qualification was a more significant influence on career than the length of education. That is, a hotel diploma was as likely as a degree to assist career progression, and a master's degree did not accelerate promotion.

In the Study "Emerging critical generic managerial competencies" Wadongo, Billy; Kambona, Oscar; Odhuno, Edwin, in African Journal of Economic and Management Studies,it mentions "With the increase in the number of hotel graduates, questions have emerged regarding industry expectations pertaining to generic managerial competencies.

Hotel Management Educators vs. the Industry: a Competency Assessment by Michelle Millar Zhenxing Mao and Patrick Moreo states "The food and beverage industry and the corresponding faculty, appear to be in sync with each other. There are some gaps, however, between lodging educators and professionals. One educator points the finger at the industry by stating: "at a lot of companies the job description doesn't even say that you need to have a hotel degree. A comparative analysis of job competency expectations for new hires: the relative value of a hotel management degree by PETER RICCI "This study compared lodging managers "job competency expectations for newly hired employees in possession of four-year (baccalaureate) degrees from a college or university and concluded that" Results indicated overwhelmingly that lodging managers surveyed held higher expectations for new-hires who possessed a hotel-specific baccalaureate degree. Even though only one quarter of the respondents actually possessed such a degree, all managers surveyed consistently expected more for students who emerged from such programs and joined the lodging industry. Former research specific to hotel general manager job competencies utilized industry executive and academic input in determining relevant job competencies.

1.1   Problem Statement

Does or has the hotel management curriculum adequately prepare students to be Hotel Industry ready managers? If not, how can the program improved to meet the ever demanding requirements of hotel employers, and employability among graduating students.

1.2   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the competence (operational and managerial skill) required to bridge the gap and develop the curriculum and pedagogy required, to be addressed to the graduating students to enhance the employability at Managerial cadre and build professionalism.

1.3   Objectives

1.   To describe the students perspective of their own level of competence at performing

employability skills necessary for managerial careers in the hotel industry
2.   To develop an academic model to bridge the gap, if any

2.   Methodology

The study involved students of Hotel Management course in Hyderabad. Out of which, 60 students were in the final year and 45 alumni who were employed as managers in Hotels for a minimum of five years, therefore considered as industry participants. In addition, faculty members from reputed Hotel Management colleges in India were also approached for their responses. As a part of quantitative research a survey was used to collect information. The results were analyzed statistically to arrive at strategies.

3.   Results & Findings

When analyzing the survey questions, some answering scales were merged in order to obtain more accurate results.

Table 1 Cross Tabulation Analysis of Student's Career Expectations for the Future-I

Study year Chi-square (Sig.) .283		Final Year	Alumni	Total %
Expectation after graduation				
Probably	Observed	19	7	92.7
	Expected	13	08	
Uncertain	Observed	20	9	7.3
	Expected	08	21	
Count		60	45	100.0 105

Most student respondents wanted to work in the hotel industry after completing their courses. Alumni students were the most adamant that they would work in the hotel industry after completing their course. Final year students indicated 'certain' less than the alumni students who were working, shows that the 'observed' frequencies are not significantly different from the 'expected' frequencies. Consequently, the two variables are not related; that is, there is no evidence of relationship between students" study year and expectations of a career in the hotel industry after graduation.

Table 2 Frequency analysis of students' career expectations for the future –II

Job Field / department	F&B		House Keeping		Front Office		Admin. & General		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	25	37.2	3	2.2	14	24.1	18	36.5	60	100
Entry Level Position	**Frontline Employee**		**Management Trainee**		**Department Manager**		**Department Manager**		**Total**	
	25	37.2	18	26.7	7	10.2	10	5.8	60	100
5 years after graduation	**Low Management**		**Mid Management**		**Top Management**		**Self-Employ**		**Total**	
	7	10.2	15	41.6	18	35.0	05	13.1	60	100
10 years after graduation	0	0	8	5.8	21	56.2	26	38	60	100

Table 2, shows that student respondents preferred working in Food & Beverage (F&B) departments as their first job field/department and then Administration or General, including Human Resources, Finance and Sales or Marketing Departments. Furthermore, Management Trainee level was the position students thought most likely to be their job entry level. A minority of the students expected that they would start working in a Housekeeping Department as a front line employee or a Management Trainee. A total of 25 (37.2%) student respondents expected that they would work in the hotel industry as Mid Management manager (e.g. department manager) five years after graduation. A total of 26 (26.7%) student respondents expected that they would work as a top manager in the hotel industry

whereas 38 (38%) student respondents thought that they would be self- employed ten years after graduation. The findings of students" career expectation for the future suggest that most student respondents want to work as a Management Trainee in a Food and Beverage department in the hotel industry after completing their course.

Table 3 Frequency analysis of student's awareness of the working environment in the industry

Hotel industry is a growing industry	Count	%
Agree	50	94.1
No opinion	2	0.7
Disagree	8	5.1
Total	60	100

Chi-square result indicates the level of association is significant as many hotel management students were aware of the working environment in the hotel industry. Table 6 shows that most student respondents (n=50 or 94.1%) believed that the hotel industry is a growing industry with many career opportunities. However, table shows that jobs in the industry are poorly paid (n=94 or 68.6%). Many hotel roles require shift work, so employees need to work roster shifts. As a result, employees may need to work weekends, public holidays and late at night or early in the morning. Student respondents may be aware of this working environment through their part-time working experience in the industry.

Table 4 Analysis of Employee Skills Expected by the Industry

Hotel managers tended to think that personality is the most important factor for a new employee. On the other hand, qualifications were not rated highly by hotel managers (n=9 or 5.4%). Furthermore, hotel managers believed that commitment was the most important characteristic for an employee (n=13 or 31 %%). Willingness to learn had 7 employees (16.1) of responses. However, many employees did not consider specific skills as the most important characteristic for an employee. On the other hand, qualifications were not rated as an important characteristic for an employee, or an important factor to possess as an employee in the hotel industry.

Table 5 Hotel management education and existing gaps between educators and the hotel industry

Criteria for a new employee	Knowledge & Experience		Specific Skill		Personality		Qualification		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	12	18.9	13	13.5	8	62.2	12	5.4	45	100
Criteria for an employee	Enthusiasm		Commitment		Willing to learn		Specific Skills		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	13	17.6	13	31	7	27.0	12	8.1	45	100
To possess as an employee	Knowledge & Experience		Specific Skill		Personality		Qualification		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	9	16.2	06	17.6	21	64.9	09	14	45	100
For career development	Communication		Using Initiative		Human Relation		Problem Solving		Self-Management	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	9	20.3	7	28.4	8	18.9	8	16.2	13	16.2

Cross-tabulation analysis of educators knows the industry well with internship/career in the hotel industry.

Cross-tabulation analysis of educators knows the industry well with internship/career in the hotel industry.				
Internship will help a student career in the hotel industry	*Agree*	*No opinion*	*Disagree*	*Total*
Educators know the industry well Chi-square (Sig.) .000				
Certain	Observed	31	0	1	78.4
	Expected	28	2	2	
Uncertain	Observed	13	2	0	17.6
	Expected	12	0	1	
No	Observed	1	0	2	4.0
	Expected	3	0	0	
Count		45	2	3	45 100%

Chi-square result indicates the level of association is significant Most hotel managers believed that the study of hotel management is beneficial to the industry and they respected their education providers. A total of 31 (78.4%) hotel managers felt that hotel management educators know the hotel industry well and 40 (93.2%) of hotel managers believed that an internship may help students" careers in the hotel industry. A total of 77 percent (n=35) of those believed that students" educators knew the industry well and an internship/ could assist students" career development. Only a minority of employees indicated they had no opinion or answered this question negatively.

Implications
Results suggest that hotel management students want to work in the hotel industry after completing their courses although, to them, this usually means working as a front line employee. If graduates of hotel management courses enter the hotel industry after finishing their studying, the industry will have well qualified employees. Graduates may be able to work more efficiently and successfully than unqualified employees may because they have a valuable insight into hotel management from their study. As a result, hotel organisations may be able to succeed with less training, thus reducing the organisations" financial expense. If organisations are able to use some of that saving to fund other initiatives for improving employee's working conditions, employees may show greater motivation to work in their organisation.

Student' expectations of first job department (field) were similar with findings of the background of employee's working career histories in this study. Of 45 hotel managers, 33 (44.6%) started in the Food and Beverage department in the hotel industry. The Front Office department was ranked second (n=12 or 21.6%). However Opportunities for Management Traineeship seem to be limited. In order to enter the Management Traineeship, candidates are expected to meet specific requirements, such as previous working experience in the industry and relevant qualifications. This study identified that undergraduate students had high expectations of entry-level positions, which were discordant with the reality of management pathways in the industry. The students" high expectations may have

dangerous implications for students and the hotel industry. If jobs do not meet student expectations, students may lose their motivation and may abandon or change their job. Therefore, the hotel industry must be encouraged to communicate entry requirements to prospective students in an effort to promote realistic career expectations. Their study found that one of the reasons for selecting a hotel degree was the students" goal to operate their own business and to be independent in the future. The difference may be a result of cultural values and a perception in India that life as a self-employed worker is more attractive than life as a salaried employee.

This study also explored managerial employee expectations of hotel management graduates during their employment at a hotel (this question was asked only of hotel managers). The data indicated that the responses for three different answers to this question were equal. The three equal responses were: graduates of hotel management work effort related to a willingness to perform good general knowledge of the hotel industry the ability to work effectively in teams during their employment at the hotel These results may be very important information to students and education providers of hotel management courses due to provide students" future working career in the hotel industry. Furthermore, students

also indicated that knowledge of the industry and experience are more important than qualifications in the hotel industry. Furthermore, many hotel management students are international students who may have a heightened view of how important communication skills are, as they tend to face greater communication related challenges. In addition, jobs in the hotel industry often require communication with many different people, so students might think that communication skills are the most significant skill for their career development.

If hotel educators know the industry well, they are able to teach hotel management students in such a way that these students meet the industry's needs. The educators are very important to students, as educators prepare students for entry into the hotel industry. Therefore, in order to reduce the gaps, the educators and employers have to find solutions for developing the transition from hotel education into the hotel industry. Furthermore, educators and hotel employers need to reach a compromise as soon as possible, as many valuable graduates are concerned about their careers, having spent a lot of money and time studying. If they leave the hotel industry, this industry in India will suffer, as graduates will search for better prospects overseas, as has occurred in other industries. Therefore, hotel employers should share their changing needs, expectations, and priorities with the educators.

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