

Overview of Hospitality Education in India and Crossing the Barriers

Abstract

Hospitality education in India has come a long way since 1954 when The Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition, Mumbai, the first of its kind in South East Asia was founded by the All India Women's Central Food Council. Hospitality management education in India in recent decades has expanded hugely in quantitative terms, but quality remains a major issue. In stark contrast to the ineffective state of hospitality education in the country, the Indian hospitality sector is in a state of high growth and expansion and has also been termed as the great Indian hospitality boom (Thaker, 2005). Most international brands such as Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt are making forays towards greater expansion and quality education is the key to ensuring a skilled and competitive workforce. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate hospitality education in India from a globally competitive context. These findings will be relevant for hospitality institutions around the world that are keen to develop their presence and outreach in India.

Keywords: Hospitality, Education, Quality, India.

Introduction

The hospitality industry is a key member of the service sector and is linked directly to domestic and international tourism. Hospitality comprises a wide range of services such as accommodation, food and beverage, events and activities etc. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism has become one of the most important economic, social, cultural and political phenomena of this century. Recent studies by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) conclude that globally the hospitality industry is the second largest employer, generating one in 12 employments and this number is expected to grow. According to Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, the gross annual manpower demand in the hospitality industry is likely to grow to almost 920,000 by 2020, while the current supply of trained manpower through institutional sources in the country is only 70,000. Hospitality is one of the most rapidly growing industries in the world and the World Travel & Tourism Council estimates tourism generated 6.3% of the national GDP in 2015 (INR 8.31 lakh crore) and supported about 3.7 crore jobs (8.7% of total employment). This has resulted in increased demand for hospitality services worldwide that conform to internationally acceptable service standards. In this context, the country's education system can supply skilled manpower to the industry to provide services at globally competitive standards, on if the education system itself is globally competitive! This is all the more relevant in the hospitality industry because it is largely labour intensive and depends on skilled manpower at all levels. Hence, quality education is the key to ensuring a skilled and competitive workforce.

Review of Literature

There is lack of research material in the area of hospitality education in India. Deardroff (2003) defines Human Capital as the "stock of knowledge and skill, embodied in an individual as a result of education, training, and experience that makes them more productive".

International Labour Organization (1999) in its World Employment Report points to increasing evidence that education and skill levels of the workforce are significant determinants of success or failure and urges 'activist' human resources led strategy to meet the challenges of global competitiveness. Bharadwaj (2002) recognizes the importance of hospitality education to develop the requisite manpower and Bagri and Babu (2009) say that regional tourism development also depends on hospitality and tourism education. Umbreit (1992) Amoah and Baum (1997), Bagri and Babu (2009) point out the lack of uniformity in hospitality syllabi in India and Kumar (2014) observes that the hospitality industry is

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rapidly changing and to keep the curriculum at par industry representatives should be part of the syllabus designing process. In Hospitality Biz India (2013) various academicians recognize problems like questionable quality of education, faculty issues, industry connect, need for accreditation body etc in hospitality education in India. Thaker (2005) observes that in stark contrast to the ineffective state of hospitality education in the country, the Indian hospitality sector is in a state of high growth and expansion and has also been termed as the great Indian hospitality boom. Kumar (2018) argues that since manpower for the industry is produced by the education sector, industry is a major stakeholder and strong linkages should be built to support curriculum development, research, deputation of industry personnel in institutes and financial funding.

Hospitality Education in India

A rough estimate suggests that there are more than 250 institutions in the country imparting certificate, diploma, undergraduate or post graduate degree program in Hotel Management or in specialized areas like Food Production, Food & Beverage services etc. Most of these institutions are in the private sector and have mushroomed in the last two decades. The government institutions are run by National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT), which is an apex body under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and running 3-year undergraduate and 2-year postgraduate programs in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). A total of 41 Institutes of Hotel Management - 21 Central IHMs, 8 State IHMs, 12 Private IHMs and 5 Food Craft Institutes are following National Council's course curriculum. Some state governments and universities are also running Hotel Management institutions awarding diplomas, undergraduate and post graduate degrees in hospitality and hotel Management.

Private colleges awarding degrees are affiliated to various universities and those awarding diploma are affiliated to respective State Technical Education Boards. There are a few colleges with affiliation from foreign universities granting degree / diploma in Hotel Management. It is mandatory for these institutions to have statutory approval from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). Apart from these, there are a number of operators working as study centers of distance education of some universities. All together hospitality educational institutions churn out about 18,000 degree/diploma/certificate holders annually.

Methodology

Secondary data from journals, magazines, newspapers, internet and reports of many organizations were obtained. The author is in the area of hospitality management education since last more than two decades and hence; vast interactions, discussions and unstructured interviews with various stakeholders of hospitality management faculty, students and hotel staff were drawn upon.

The Problem

UNESCO has identified Quality Education as a prerequisite for education for sustainable

development. Premier Indian technical educational institutes like IIT's, IIM's, and AIIMS among others are known for quality education at par with international standards but unfortunately the same cannot be said of hospitality educational institutions in the country. Except for a few colleges across the country which stand out for their academic excellence, the country has seen a mushrooming of ordinary catering colleges in the last two decades or so. These institutions lack quality and hence churn out ill equipped and poorly trained hospitality graduates ready to work for whatever position offered by the industry at abysmally low wages. The hospitality education system remains inefficient and largely disorganized. Hospitality industry is a labour intensive industry and human capital plays a vital role in determining productivity. The hospitality education system in the country needs to match the demand for quality manpower with the supply of people who have specific skills at appropriate levels. International Hotel & Restaurant Association has identified human capital as one of the major drivers of competitiveness in the hospitality industry. Human capital can be acquired through education and training and it's quality depends on the quality of education and training. Human capital is the accumulation of knowledge and skills embodied in a person, typically considered in terms of the economic benefits that derive from it. World Employment Report, 1999 of International Labour Organization also points to increasing evidence that education and skill levels of the workforce are significant determinants of success and failure and urges 'activist' human resources led strategy to meet the challenges of global competitiveness.

Quality is certainly an issue that our hospitality schools need to address on an urgent basis. Quality as a concept is abstract and subjective and is defined as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs". Quality also refers to the inherent or distinctive characteristics or properties of a person, object, process, or other things, or may denote some degree of achievement or excellence. It is consistent performance of a uniform product meeting the customer's needs for economy and functions. The product of education system is a graduate and the customer is the industry or the end user of the services. Top hotel companies like The Oberoi, The Taj group of hotels and ITC Hotels had to open up their own education centers to meet their high standard human resource requirements.

Quality of education as a concept can be seen to mean two things:

Does the "product" (students in our case) meet the demands of the top and middle level hospitality companies in our country and abroad?

Does the education system provide the student with the requisite basic skills to continue to learn and improve knowledge in his career?

Only a small percentage of our "product" make it to good well paid positions in hotels while the remaining are recruited as supervisors or at lower staff positions in large / 5 star classified hotels and some shift to lower category hotels/

restaurants. It is a paradox that on one hand the industry desperately needs quality manpower and on the other many of those graduating from catering colleges remain unemployed or underemployed. The harsh fact is that most of these graduates are unemployable and hence they are absorbed at lower levels and in lower category hotels. It is also a pity that hotels sometimes find regular graduates better than hotel /hospitality management graduates and recruit them.

Hence, the aim of this study is to identify as to what ails the Indian hospitality education system and present suggestions regarding what needs to be done to rectify the situation.

Problems of Hospitality Education in India Infrastructure

The commercialization of hospitality education under the banner of a professional qualification led to the proliferation of the catering colleges all across the country. Except for institutions under the NCHMCT and a handful of prominent privately run establishments the remaining institutions suffer from poor infrastructure in terms of laboratories, adequately equipped libraries, and access to developing technologies.

Academic Consensus and Curriculum

Is hospitality education a science, a vocational field, related to business management or should it come under the arts? This lack of academic consensus is evident because of the range of qualifications offered that not only lacks uniformity, but is in a state of disarray. Some of them on offer are Bachelor of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, BSc (Hotel Administration), BSc(Hotel Management), BA (Hotel Management) and BTech (Hotel Management). Also there is a lack of a standard duration of a degree programme in Hotel Management as some are of four year duration and others are of three years only. In scant regard to the AICTE norm of four-year duration of a degree programme, NCHMCT continues to impart three-year degree programme in collaboration with IGNOU. The curriculum and teaching standards also greatly vary across these IHM's, university programs and private institutions.

This academic consensus has also not been achieved in the US, and to some extent in Asia Pacific and Europe. Hospitality departments or schools either operate independently or serve as units within business schools, consumer sciences, nutrition and sometimes even agriculture. However, despite this state of a lack of consensus, students still graduate with a common set of courses spread over four years wherein they typically take home a bachelor's degree in science specific to hospitality management or the like. In the US, students are also put through an academic curriculum that comprises general educational courses in mathematics, science, humanities etc.

In India though, hospitality education is still to break from the shackles of being under the "technical education" umbrella. This is because the NCHMT and the Institutes of Hotel Management have held sway over this field for a long time and were

happy (are perhaps still) to retain the status of hospitality education as a vocational discipline. Extraordinary emphasis on culinary arts and operational basics in the curricula of these schools leaves less time for courses and programs aimed at developing managerial skills in students. No wonder that hospitality education still falls under the purview of the All India Council of Technical Education. Put simply, unless hospitality education clearly evolves as a viable academic discipline such as business management, it is not likely to achieve any considerable level of competitiveness at the global scale. This does not imply that vocational courses in culinary arts and restaurant services should be done away with, but they should evolve as programs for serving manpower needs in lower level positions in the industry.

While NCHMCT has updated curricula most other institutes follow outdated curricula and there exists a lack of academic freedom to incorporate dynamic changes. A very few institutions are following the AICTE model syllabus and some universities/schools have deliberately omitted vital operational subjects. The university bodies like Board of Studies, Faculty Board, and Academic Council become quite ineffective as people from the subject background hardly have any presence in these bodies. Also, the industry has little say in curriculum design.

Quality of Faculty

Most faculties in the hospitality education sector, including the NCHMCT institutions, is not paid as per AICTE norms and government run institutions such as NCHMCT and those under state governments are bereft of professors/ senior faculty as per AICTE norms. It is a case of one hand of the government not respecting what the other hand is proposing. Due to poor salary structure, these institutions are unable to attract and retain quality faculty which affects quality pedagogy.

A teacher-student ratio of 1:15 prescribed by AICTE is hardly ever followed by private institutions that mostly operate as money minting ventures and surprisingly, government run institutions also do not adhere to these standards.

Another problem with faculty development is the lack of research culture in hospitality institutions in India. The lack of expectations and resources to conduct research compounded by the lack of academic freedom provides few incentives for faculty to be involved in research.

Industry Apathy

Industrial training is an integral part of hospitality education but most hotels in the country are poor platforms for such trainings. The industry typically treats students as cheap labour and fails to impart the requisite training based on mutuality and respect. The general perception of stakeholders is that hotel companies are poor paymasters and with the long working hours associated with the industry, most students/ young employees sooner or later, disenchanting with the industry, leave or migrate to other avenues. While the industry seeks cheap manpower with ever increasing greed, its contribution to curriculum development, infrastructure and faculty

internships etc. is minimal or perhaps even non-existent.

Post Graduate Education

NCHMCT has masters program in Hotel Management but lack of qualified faculty and curriculum design that does not address to the industry needs have made it ineffective. Some universities also offer postgraduate program as MHM, MSc (Hospitality), MBA (Hotel Management) but the quality of these institutions is not up to the mark and most do not even apply to National Board of Accreditation (NBA) of AICTE and there are a very few NBA accredited hospitality management institutions in the country.

Suggestions to Improve the State of Hospitality Education In India

Globally Benchmarked Curriculum

Curriculum must be benchmarked against global standards- the need is to study the curriculum of reputed international institutions and make some dynamic changes suitable to Indian requirements. Adapting to international standards will require a metamorphosis in infrastructure and will need faculty reorientation as well.

Infrastructure Improvements

At a time when the global trend in hospitality education is to have fully operational hotels and restaurants serve as laboratories for student development, Indian hospitality education has a lot to catch up with in this context. For example, hospitality schools at Cornell University, University of Delaware and several schools in Europe have fully functional hotels and restaurants that are integrated at the hip so as to impart industry relevant education and produce workforce ready students.

Faculty Quality/ Mindset

With the recent introduction of National Hospitality Teachers Test as basic eligibility test for applying for teaching posts in Institutes of Hotel Management, the quality of faculty may improve, though not necessarily as this test examines theoretical knowledge only while hospitality education has a major practical input. Also this test comprises a vast area of knowledge and thus it will be easier for generalists to qualify rather than persons specializing in a certain area.

A change in the mindset of hospitality teachers is also required in agreeing to the basic principle that though practical inputs are necessary, their importance cannot be at the expense of knowledge. As someone has rightly said, "there is no greater practical than good theory". Focus on knowledge gained through good theory (with discussions, research at the student level, etc.) should be made an important part of the entire teaching and testing methodology. We still look at a hospitality course as more practical and less theory which has to change.

Focus on Developing Soft Skills and Team Work

Hospitality graduates are required to be well groomed and display proper etiquette wherever they are at all times- this is usually ingrained in a person as part of his / her upbringing. However, with the world

becoming a global workplace and people traveling and working around the globe, etiquette and handling cultural diversity comes into play. Discussing these issues in a subject environment is important- global hospitality players are practicing this and institutes in India need to follow the same.

The industry is increasingly looking at soft skills while hiring and it is the responsibility of colleges to focus on developing these skill set in students especially considering the fact that many students come from rural backgrounds with poor communication skills. Developing skills like etiquette, manners, public speaking, making presentations, group discussion, answering techniques make all difference in job opportunities. The trend especially in private colleges is to have an outside consultant / part time faculty come and works on these aspects of a student's personality outside of the subject which is mostly done before placements. This short term fix may work to a certain extent, but there should be a system in place where making presentations, public speaking, discussions are built into the course content of each subject.

Being a team player is becoming increasingly important while most HM institutes put students through the practical classes by working as individuals or in teams of two and they get to work in teams only during quantity training classes for hardly a semester. In theory classes, there is little opportunity to develop team skills while upon graduation these students are required to work in supervisory/ management trainee positions which is about working in teams than anything else. Hospitality Institutes internationally focus on teamwork, getting things done together in both theory and practical classes e.g. Bulk cooking, coffee shop service, management games etc. In this way, students learn to adapt with others, appreciate the importance of "painting one part of the entire picture" and seeing the big picture.

Developing Research Culture

As pointed out there has been traditionally an absence of research culture in hospitality institutions in India due to lack of highly qualified faculty and stress on operational basics over managerial skill development. Educational institutes ideally should be centers where research is undertaken; knowledge is created and dissipated with the assistance of and for use by the industry. On the contrary, at present, institutions depend on the industry to provide exposure to students regarding latest developments.

In the US, Europe, Australia and the South East Asia, the importance of research in hospitality education has gained tremendous importance and numerous conferences are held in hospitality research that practically go without representation from Indian based faculty. Also, an emerging market such as India is hardly a research setting as opposed to China, South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia in most hospitality/ tourism academic journals. Therefore, we know very little about our own market and environment. Faculty should be given incentives for research and teaching posts equivalent to universities/ IIM's should be

created for IHM's so that research becomes an integral part of these institutions.

Industry Interface

Other industries (particularly in vocational courses) in India are partnering with educational institutes to build the curriculum and also help the students train in their factories. The CII has initiated this practice and the model can also be adopted by the hospitality industry. Universities and colleges need to tie up with hotel chains to get inputs on curriculum and teaching methods which can deliver rich dividends to both the hospitality industry and education so as to survive and flourish in a globally competitive environment.

Industry support in developing research culture is very important and support in terms of access to information, facilities and financial support will be a big boost to hospitality education. As in most developed countries, this approach will be mutually beneficial if applied research is conducted to solve actual problems faced by the industry.

In the US, the hospitality industry routinely provides endowments to hospitality schools either for professorships, faculty internships and even infrastructure development. The Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality Administration at Georgia State University's J. Mack Robinson College of Business in 2015 benefitted from \$ 1 million endowment from food service industry leader Regynald G. Washington. The school's graduate program has been named the Regynald G. Washington Master of Global Hospitality Management and the endowment will go towards student scholarships, their enhanced global experiences and pay for expanded teaching technologies. Companies such as Darden Restaurants, Marriott and Hilton have active foundations that contribute to hospitality programs as a way of giving back to academia for what they have received in terms of manpower. In India, with the exception of setting up their own schools for feeding into their systems, there is no record of a single endowment by even one hospitality company for the development of a public hospitality education program.

Faculty Feed back

Faculty feedback by the student and peers are very important from two aspects; improvement of faculty for betterment of the student and for faculty performance evaluation. However, this is a double-edged sword, if not used correctly; it can seriously harm the academic process because teachers can downgrade quality of evaluation to enhance their grades in the feedback form.

Examination Pattern

There is very limited focus on quality of examination papers in today's hospitality environment. Questions paper patterns are set by universities and faculty are forced to follow even if the pattern is outdated. Good educationists will admit that examinations are as important a learning and teaching tool as classes are and examination patterns as mandated by universities need to be looked at and revised every two years. The pattern should also be made dependent on the subject concerned e.g. the

pattern for an accounting paper would be different from that required for Food & Beverage Service. One look at questions papers and we can see that most tests administered by faculty rely too heavily on students' recall of information. When making question papers, it is important for tests to measure higher learning as well {Bloom's Taxonomy (1956)}.

Competitive Salary Structure/ Job terms

Hotels need to introspect as to what they are paying the new entrants. An article in Express Hotelier and Caterer in Oct. 2000 has cautioned, 'if you pay peanuts, you will get monkeys'. Jobs in hotels entail a lot of hard work including working on holidays, weekends, and even in break shifts but most hotel companies pay very low salaries to the Management Trainees and other new job entrants resulting in dissatisfaction and a high rate of turnover. As a result, many Hotel Management graduates are migrating to other lucrative avenues like Airlines, BPOs and Customer Care. A major challenge facing the hospitality industry is finding human resource with the right skill set and retaining them because in recent years decreasing interest has been observed in youngsters to take up hospitality education. "It's an irony that HM courses have fewer takers in a service-sector driven economy" (Andrews). If hotel companies pay well, at least at par with other industries, better quality students will opt for hospitality education that will in turn benefit the industry. It is also in the long-term interests of the industry that they pay well so that they attract, retain and nurture talent that is a major factor in enhancing competitiveness of the industry. All stakeholders must realize that this is a vicious cycle and passing on the buck will not help the matter. This is important in the long-term interests of the entire sector because less and less quality +2 graduates are joining hospitality education itself.

Quality Industrial Training

Industrial training is an integral part of the Hotel Management program and most hotels in the country are poor platforms for such trainings. Hotels treat students as cheap labour and fail to impart the requisite training but institutions must realize that the onus to providing training does not lie with the hotels alone and they should also drastically work on improving their quality of intake and infrastructure. Institutions must ensure that students are sent to hotels where quality training is provided and training should be monitored to ensure quality and also be evaluated so that trainees give it the due importance. Hotel management institutes need to develop a mechanism to involve faculty to visit hotels for feedback on both trainees' performance on the job and the property's attitude towards training students. Also it is time for hotels to get feedback from the trainees on how the hotel has trained him/her.

Constitution of Hospitality Council of India

At the outset, an oversight board should be developed by the Ministry of Tourism to shape the future of hospitality education in India which should include leaders of the Indian hospitality industry, academics of leading hospitality institutions in India and faculty of Indian origin serving in leading universities across the world. This board should be

typically named as the Hospitality Council of India to be set up along the lines of the Medical Council of India or the Pharmacy Council of India. This council should guide the development of hospitality education setting up a code of conduct, guidelines of operation and provide academic consensus for the development of the field. Uniformity in qualification nomenclature should be set up at all levels such as certificate, diploma, degree and post graduate degree with stipulations pertinent to basic academic outlines.

The immediate objectives of the council will be to

1. Provide a framework for infrastructure at hospitality schools based on the type of programs being offered.
2. Consolidate all the fragmented levels under which schools operate and bring them under the conformance of one umbrella. For example NCHMT, university departments, state run institutions, private colleges, should all be brought under the single purview of the council and no institution should be able to operate in the country, public or private, that does not conform to the requirements laid out by the council.
3. Provide a framework under which institutions can collaborate with international schools and programs in this area as Indian hospitality education is much lagging behind and such knowledge sharing and partnerships will go a long way in making Indian hospitality education globally competitive.
4. Create guidelines and a framework for a more purposeful and mutually beneficial relationship between industry and academia. Industry orientations should be structured and operate under the guidelines of the council and sanctions should be imposed on firms when they default over their basic obligations in this context.
5. Provide an academic framework under which hospitality education should be imparted and lack of conformance should lead to penalties and cancellation of accreditation.
6. Faculty in schools should be provided programs to set up research agenda, undertake research projects and provide incentives for faculty to engage and publish in leading hospitality and tourism journals.

Conclusion

The hospitality industry is poised for rapid expansion in near future and we have to match the demand for manpower with the supply of people with the right technical and leadership skills. Besides specific skills, there is a need to develop team dynamics, behavioral attributes, service orientation, and emotional intelligence etc. Equipping students with the right skills set will not only enhance the global competitiveness of our industry but will also open huge employment opportunities for them worldwide. Massive changes are required in the existing hospitality management education set up in the country if these objectives are to be achieved. Regulatory bodies like AICTE and NCHMCT need to be replaced by a single independent regulatory

authority on the lines of Medical Council of India with powers and agenda to ensure the delivery of quality education in hospitality.

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