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So..·What's Wrong With Hospitality Education?

Abstract

Three major issues surface in the current literature of hospitality education: Are hospitality educators in the business of training or educating? Who is in charge of the curriculum content of hospitality education programs-industry or educators? Is this really a profession in need of an accreditation process? The author discusses these three inter-related issues in light of the current efforts of the CHRIE accreditation committee, to systematically address and reconcile differences concerning the issues.

So . . . What's Wrong
With Hospitality Education?

by
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*Three major issues surface in the current literature of hospitality education:
Are hospitality educators in the business of training or educating? Who is
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address and reconcile differences concerning the issues.*

The hospitality management field is currently suffering growing
pains brought on by rapid development in the industry and the prolifer-
ation of university programs in this area. Many unanswered questions
about the purpose and nature of these educational endeavors have sur-
faced. Both industry and educators have serious concerns about
whether students are being properly prepared for the field. The source
of responsibility for curriculum content in this field created a predica-
ment for many and the necessity of an accreditation process to profes-
sionalize hospitality management has become apparent to both
educators and the industry.

It is not exactly clear when the field of hospitality management
moved from a support industry, one which depends upon another for its
existence, to a major industry, one which contributes substantially to
the GNP, which has a degree of independence, and which requires
technology and exploration of its own domain. However, in recent years
it is clear that such a transition has occurred; the hospitality industry
is, by all measures, a major, independent industry. Growth of the field
has been rapid and financial investment from many sources has in-
creased dramatically. Four significant components of the industry—
food, lodging, catering, and tourism—are experiencing rapid change.

The most significant reality in the industry is the rapid, complex,
pervasive change which leaves many behind. A good illustration of such
change is that which has taken place in the traditional labor force which,
since the 1950s, has consisted of teenagers. Demographic changes in
the last decade, however, have resulted in a sharp decrease in the
number of adolescents in society and in the labor force. Thus, managers
have begun to look to new sources, e.g., prison work release employees,
healthy and able retirees, and displaced homemakers. Such change af-

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fects not only the industry but carries some important—if, as yet, unclear—implications for education.

According to Warren Batts, president of Dart & Kraft, Inc., there are six trends which are expected to affect the industry over the next few years:[1] the carry-out phenomenon, the increased buying of food to take home and eat; menu churn, restaurants constantly experimenting and adding in response to change in public tastes, e.g., Cajun, Mexican, Oriental; market saturation, the expansion of existing services and products in order to grow; labor shortage, the loss of the traditional labor force, i.e., teenagers; recent regulating legislation, e.g., taxes, minimum wage and drunk driving laws; and operational consolidation, made necessary by slow growth environment. All of these trends work together to set the agenda for both the hospitality industry and for education in the field.

Yet another illustration of growth was the formation of the CHRIE organization which describes itself in the following words:

> CHRIE (Council of Hospitality, Restaurant, Institutional Educators) was founded 35 years ago by industry, educators and executives to improve the quality of education and training for hotel, restaurant and institutional occupations. The council's purpose is to encourage the professional growth of its members, to promote research and to disseminate information. The council also assists in the recruitment for prospective students for industry careers and aids institutions in locating professional staff. CHRIE serves as a professional society of more than 1000 members for hospitality educators.[2]

While the organization was formed 35 years ago, refereed journals in the field didn't appear until in 1983, largely as the result of activity in professional organizations. There were three or four non-refereed journals which served as the foundation for what later became the two referred journals: *The Florida International University Hospitality Review (FIU Hospitality Review)* and *Hospitality Education and Research Journal.*

Industry and Education are More Visible

The service industry has become more visible to educators and the public within the last 35 years, as evidenced by growth in educational programs, professional associations, and professional journals. Despite increased visibility, four-year institutional hospitality education programs have been slow in coming. Long-standing programs, such as the one at Cornell University, have been the exception and not the rule. But in recent years, we have observed a sharp increase in both university hospitality education programs and in the industry. One such program in hospitality management is at Purdue University, which has grown from 64 students in 1972 to almost 1,000 in 1988.

There is a relationship between hospitality education and the industry that needs to be understood. This relationship is perhaps closer than most because industry depends upon education for continued rapid growth.

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As an academic and scholarly profession, hospitality management education is considered a newcomer by comparison with university programs that have been in place for decades. It has been said that hospitality education is at the same stage as were colleges of business administration 25 years ago.[3] Some issues which are similar to other newly emerging programs, yet unique to the field of hospitality education, present themselves for examination.

These issues are currently being discussed in the literature. At first glance they appear too complex even to begin an analysis. In fact, only recently has a plan been proposed to systematically address important questions in the field, issues which are interrelated and dependent upon each other.

There are three related issues which suggest implications for the future of hospitality education. The first deals with the question of whether hospitality education is a matter of training or educating. The second rests in the realm of professional accreditation. The third and perhaps most critical is that of the relationship between hospitality education and the hospitality industry: Who drives whom?

The single most important philosophical question is who determines the content—industry leaders or educators? This conflict revolves around an industry that wants a marketable product and educators who need to draw the line somewhere on outside influence in their programs. Industry tends to want a working product at the moment of graduation. Educators, however, focus on teaching theory and generating understanding of the key concepts, with the goal of producing critical thinkers. These are all questions for educators who are trying to shape an emergent field like hospitality education to consider.

As is true of other fields, hospitality educators are undecided as to the primary source of curriculum content. Educators debate whether to draw program content from developing technology and current practices or from the existing research and a theoretical base. Even among educators an internal conflict prevails because some tend to draw more from practice rather than from well-developed theories. A theoretical base would give greater and more systematic meaning to current practices. However, a closer relationship to existing conditions in the field would render curriculum more timely. While educators want the industry to play a major role in developing curriculum, they are naturally unwilling to lose basic control of what is to be taught to future practitioners.[4]

Technology Impacts Upon Graduates

New advances in technology pervade nearly every aspect of society, and hospitality is certainly no exception. Hospitality graduates entering the field find themselves surrounded by such innovations as computerized point of sale, bar management, hotel reservations and front office energy management, menu forecasting, and accounting and inventory systems, along with computerized cooking equiment, such as fryers and microwaves. Unfortunately, it is said that many of the graduates lack the basic understanding of how this technology will af-

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fect their professional roles or the overall direction of the industry.[5] There is a call for hospitality education to place more emphasis on providing students with this understanding. As of now, it is not clear whether this concept of understanding requires an educating or a training focus.

In order to begin the exploration of the training/educating issue, a more basic question must be asked: What is the purpose of hospitality education? This question lies under the surface of almost every conflict in hospitality education to date. Traditionally, universities have articulated the value of educating, assuming that some other institutions train. Hospitality educators find themselves in an ambiguous situation for, like medical educators, they are doing more than training practitioners. They are preparing practitioners with the theoretical basis for making independent decisions. Just as medical educators provide biology, histology, and gross anatomy for future doctors, hospitality educators provide cost accounting, food sanitation, and inventory control for those who will go out into the world to make independent decisions under complex, changing, and ambiguous circumstances.

Training is defined as "the systematic practice in the performance of job related skills," while educating is "organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding, valuable for all the activities of life."[6] The distinction between both is important. Training is associated with timeliness; the essence of what is being learned is critical and consumable at the time it is learned in training. Education, on the other hand, is considered timeless, embracing life-long learning, critical thinking, and process skills. The difference between training and education is subject to how the element of time affects what is being learned and how it is to be used. The learning that takes place in education is geared toward making the individual more versatile and flexible—ready to handle new and different situtations. The usual goal of training is to prepare learners to operate within a specific, controlled environment. The preparation of hospitality educators is a combination of both training and learning.

The controversy continues with some educators calling for the preparation of students to work in the industry by imparting knowledge, or by skill training, or by a combination of both. At most four-year institutions, it is believed that "hands-on" training belongs with the vocational school or in a two-year program. Others support the mix that includes educating as well as skill training. But even among hospitality educators there is a lack of agreement as to where training ends and education begins. The philosophy of many educators is that they are preparing future managers who need no skill training in order to be effective. Others strongly believe that managers must possess the same skills as their employees do in order to be effective; therefore, it is education's obligation to provide the students with these necessary skills.[7] This controversy is affecting students and remains a major philosophical and pedagogical issue in the hospitality education system.

By evaluating the evolution of almost every field of education, one

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can see a similar path to the one hospitality education travels now. "The move away from 'vocationalism' may be viewed as an appropriate maturation of the academic field of business administration as the stress moves from training to education."[8] The division between skill training and educating is still unclear: There is no absolute point where training ends and education begins. Palmer argues that neither training nor education exist in the pure sense and reports that many feel until educational objectives are established concerning training, no higher level learning can take place. Many argue that educational objectives require a strong theoretical base from which they can draw. Others passionately believe that until programs are accredited, the field of hospitality education is not a profession and cannot claim a theoretical or knowledge base. The hospitality educator is faced with the question of which issue to address first.

Accreditation Is Part of Debate

Further analysis is necessary to delimit and clarify where the training/educating issue stops and accreditation of the profession begins. From the philosophical standpoint, these questions are not mutually exclusive. Accreditation is embraced in the struggle to decide whether hospitality educators should train or educate.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, one meaning of accreditation is to certify that some object is prescribed or that it meets a desirable standard. It is expected that prescribed or desirable standards will contribute causally to specified educational outcomes. Implicit in this is the notion that differences between specified or ideal and actual outcomes can be measured and that causality for a discrepancy can be attributed to a deficiency in or lack of particular standard. While in more developed fields this logic might be applied, hospitality education has not formally defined either its actual or ideal outcomes, nor has it adequately defined its curriculum content.[9] The lack of literature in hospitality education and management supports this notion. Despite the size of the industry, the literature contains very little predictively reliable research concerning the outcomes of educators' efforts.

The current situation shows 120–150 hospitality programs all housed in different places and presents the challenge of how to describe each in terms that are measurable. Some are found in colleges of business, home economics, or agriculture. Some exist as separate schools or colleges. Program thrusts may vary from a food service, to a lodging, to a travel orientation, or to a combination of all three. Resource allocations per student vary considerably, with faculty/student ratios being the best example of this variability, no matter how they are calculated. Faculty output resulting from traditionally recognized scholarly efforts is even more variable as to research efforts and scholarly activity. Consequently, quality standards or performance measures which are objective, consistent, and fair are yet to be developed.

Inherent in the accreditation process is the function of evaluation. Accreditation is viewed by some as a process of evaluation, not regulation. This process usually includes both internal (self-study) and exter-

nal (peer-based) evaluations as the foundation upon which accreditation is granted or denied. The introspection of one's program is facilitated by the structured evaluation process accreditation puts in place. Evaluation is seen by Tanke[10] as serving "the theoretical paradigm for quality control as well as the conceptual framework for continuous self-improvement," and "it must be seen as the beginning of new activities and not just the summation of past ones." The accreditation process is based on evaluation and what is done with evaluation.

Accreditation Provides Protection

There is yet another purpose of accreditation—that of protection against both internal and external forces, political or otherwise. Even though accrediting bodies have no legal means of control, the mere presence of the accreditation process serves to hinder those groups which, in the past, have sought to interfere with the educational process or with academic freedom. "Accreditation means more than just acceptance, it means evaluation of four categories: internal; external; professional; and social objectives and choices."[11] This complex process works to enhance the quality of the organization.

The quality of education is of interest for hospitality management professionals. This concern is due, in part, to a lack of common criteria or standards with which to assess the quality of the available education. Educational quality is traditionally assessed through the evaluation of goals and objectives, curriculum, facilities and equipment, faculty, administration, finance, and student services.[12] Prior to the implementation of accreditation, criteria or standards must be developed for each of the mentioned areas. The development of educational program standards is the task of the professionals in the field so that accreditation services can be afforded. Consequently, the immediate task of the hospitality educators is the formulation of, and agreement upon, criteria for each area.

A CHRIE committee has been operating since 1983 to conduct preliminary research related to the establishment of a specialized accreditation process for hospitality education programs. The committee was charged with forming an accrediting commission during 1989. Four subcommittees have been appointed to address the development of a proposed budget, a constitution and bylaws, a self-study, and a training manual for evaluators.[13] Hospitality educators are beginning to organize and set goals for themselves and their programs. Moreover, there is a call to the profession to decide whether it is in the business of training or educating, and to what degree the two techniques can be merged. It is critical that this decision be made first. Otherwise, the accreditation process becomes too general and vague to be of merit.

Education and Industry Are Interdependent

Blended into the question of accreditation is the larger question of who dominates whom—does education influence industry or industry influence education? It is felt that both the educator and the industry are interdependent. However, hospitality educators must evaluate how

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this relationship works with industry, and whether it is as effective as it could be.

Wrapped up in the issue of the industry/educator relationship is the suggestion that there are three reasons why education has been less than able to provide the essential technological understanding for its students. The first is that educators lack the resources. The second is that hospitality education students tend to have less than adequate technological skills. The third reason has been that hospitality education is slow to incorporate new technology into its programs.[14] Overall, the first two reasons for inadequacy appear to be circular and not defensible under close scrutiny. For instance, many of the resources available come from industry and are limited only by the lack of educator creativity and willingness to solicit. The lack of student skills is another relevant argument, with students departing programs without technical skills. It is suggested that those skills are subject to the time lag of the curriculum. However, the third reason—the slow pace of education in incorporating new technology—offers a great deal for the hospitality educator to consider.

Much of the lag in incorporating technology is due to the reflexive reaction of educators. For a long time education has waited for industry to announce what it needed in a student. Much of what is taught in the classes is what happened yesterday in the industry and which will be obsolete within one year of graduation. Technology is always changing. As a result, instead of being a generator of new ideas in the technological area, hospitality education is in danger of becoming only a repository for industry ideas and practices.[15] Educators must take a more active role in controlling the destiny of hospitality education.

Education Responds to Industry

In order to provide students with a better understanding of the hospitality field, should not the educator anticipate and explore for the industry? Instead of looking back at what was done three, two or even one year ago, why not generate applications that might be used in the future? This is to say that "educators should turn away from the current practices of today's skills and work on preparing for the future."[16] The time is at hand to accept the hospitality industry experience as a knowledge base and build on it. If present knowledge and understanding are sufficient, some projections will occur and educators will have performed a valuable service for graduates and the industry. Perhaps the issue at hand is nothing more than the ability to sell the hospitality educators' services and expertise.

Hospitality educators must continually give industry a reason to turn to them. The operational value has long since been established that educators do what is dictated by the industry. It is now time to depart from the past trends of training and following industry. There is a great demand to anticipate and explore the future of hospitality management and support or even lead the industry. Hospitality educators are in greater numbers now more than ever for the industry to draw upon. Educators should answer the call to bind the reality of

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practice to the insight of principle. Educators have the ability to merge the experiences of industry with the theory and principles of higher education. What other real alternative does industry have for achieving the dynamic growth demanded by the consumers of the service industry?

Philosophical Questions Provoke Conflict

Hospitality education is not the only educational specialization to ponder philosophical questions. At one time or another, most educators ask the same questions: Are they in the business of training or educating? Should they allow industry to control curriculum content? Do they need an accreditation process for their programs? Inherent in the very nature of higher education is conflict over such philosophical questions. But an even more troublesome and complex question concerns the very nature and purpose of technology in a research institution that must, of necessity, also teach future practitioners.[17] Educators are faced with the challenge of reconciling the reality of practice, which is embedded in technology, with the assumptions of theory.

All such philosophical questions are, as indicated above, embedded in a definition of technology. What is at issue here concerns not just technology, but the wider implications of the term. Some professions and many citizens of manufacturing and/or service-oriented countries use technology synonymously with hardware, equipment, or tangible goods. Educators, however, use the word to include a more theoretical meaning. Technology, according to this view, is not simply machinery. It also includes a way of thinking that emerges from any given piece of machinery. For many scholars, technology is any change or intervention which must also give rise to a particular set of traditions. However, some educators consider it more than a "high-tech" way of thinking. By its very nature, technology shapes perceptions of reality and causes humans to see the world differently. Reconciliation within higher education institutions rests in the acceptance of technology as both theoretical and tangible.

The implications point to a diverse approach in addressing the issues of hospitality education. Professional associations within the educational community and food service industry must begin communicating; representatives must define issues and develop strategies to resolve them. The problem of rapid technological growth is real for the industry—now is the time for teachers and practitioners to work together to produce a new synthesis.

Hospitality educators know it takes more than just the backing of industry with practice and money to help the knowledge and theory base grow; it takes disciplined inquiry. Educators must now assume responsibility for guiding the profession as well as the industry through research and technological developments. The future is much brighter if there is a systematic approach to hospitality education. There is increasing evidence that hospitality education is beginning to take charge of its own destiny.

The issue of accreditation appears to be the force organizing hospi-

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tality education. One can see this by reviewing the proposed standards of accreditation for four-year baccalaureate programs. In fact, the current CHRIE accreditation committee is actively responding to these theoretical issues. The standards are self-explanatory.[18] See Appendix A for the text of the proposed standards.

The implications for the field of hospitality education are many, not the least of which is that there is an attempt being made to systematically organize the profession. This should insure that both educators and industry will have their needs met. The movement toward being organized suggests that technology may be more rapidly incorporated into academics. Now educators will better know how to respond to the rapid changes of the industry.

It is obvious that the profession is thinking about many of the issues in hospitality education. Decisions are being made as to how to respond to the training or educating questions. The accreditation question is being answered by the fact that committees have been formed and standards proposed. The third and final issue of who influences whom is being explored and responded to as hospitality educators are seeking to set standards. It seems that seeking accreditation standards is the vehicle which will lead to answering the philosophical questions plaguing the hospitality industry.

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