



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jhlste

Students' perception towards hospitality education: An anglo-cypriot critical study

Stefanos Nachmias^{a,*}, Andreas Walmsley^b, Yianna Orphanidou^c^a Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham Business School, 50 Shakespeare Street, Newton Building, NG1 4FQ, UK^b Futures Entrepreneurship Centre, Plymouth University, Mast House, 24 Sutton Road, Plymouth PL4 0HJ, UK^c University of Nicosia, Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Sports Management, 6 Makedonitissas Ave, 2414 Nicosia, Cyprus

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Hospitality education
Hospitality student evaluations
Employment
Comparative analysis

ABSTRACT

The study investigates hospitality students' attitude towards hospitality education and hospitality careers. A qualitative approach was adapted to record students' attitude in the UK and Cyprus. The findings revealed that participants share common concerns and expectations regarding hospitality education and careers. A number of cognitive-person and external variables are perceived to act as influencing factors on hospitality education and careers, raising questions with regard to the student preparedness for the industry. This study provides a theoretical underpinning to hospitality literature that can be used to further fruitful thinking with implications for practice and further research.

1. Introduction

Hospitality is one of the fastest growing industries across the world (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013; People1st, 2011). The expansion of the hospitality industry may be translated into the need to develop effective hospitality programmes in order to adequately prepare the workforce to meet present and future demands within this enormous industry (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). However, the literature highlights a general disconnect between academic learning and employability skills creating concerns regarding the nature and context of hospitality education (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Airey & Tribe, 2005; Brown, Arendt, & Bosselman, 2014; Kim, 2008; Mayaka & Akama, 2007). In 2003 Morrison and O'Mahony commented that the existing hospitality curriculum model was unable to respond to the current and growing needs of the hospitality industry. After a decade these challenges still appear to exist. There are significant differences between the perceptions of industry leaders and academics concerning the skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes required by graduates for successful careers in the industry (Kim, 2008; Nachmias, Paddison, & Mortimer, 2014; Suh, West, & Shin, 2012; Teng, Horng, & Baum, 2013).

Despite a growing trend in higher education offering student internship opportunities to enable application of theory to practice (Aggett & Busby, 2012), and the fact that hospitality qualifications might lead individuals to senior management positions (Harkison, Poulston, & Kim, 2011), there still appears to be a problem with the hospitality industry's ability to recruit qualified employees as evidence suggests hospitality careers are not an attractive option for some hospitality students following graduation (Zainal, Radzi, Hashim, & Chik, 2012). The causes of this are admittedly manifold. It is not necessarily de facto poor working conditions that detract students from subsequent hospitality employment, other explanations include an exaggeratedly positive, even glamorous, industry image (Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015; Fidgeon, 2010). A frequently overlooked issue in studies of hospitality students' early career development is the surprises encountered by simply entering the world of work (Hughes, 1958, coined the term 'entry shock' in this

* Correspondence to: Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham Business School, Burton Street, Newton Building, NG1 4BU, UK.

E-mail addresses: stefanos.nachmias@ntu.ac.uk (S. Nachmias), andreas.walmsley@plymouth.ac.uk (A. Walmsley), orphanidou.y@unic.ac.cy (Y. Orphanidou).

regard). Rather than disappointment being directed towards the hospitality sector per se, the recent graduate may simply be surprised by the nature of working life itself (Walmsley, 2015). The literature highlights that a number of intrinsic and extrinsic variables are assumed to influence individual perceptions towards hospitality education, resulting in disillusionment with hospitality careers (Kim, 2008; Nachmias et al., 2004; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005).

The notion of hospitality having an image problem has been recognised in numerous studies and industry reports. Wood (1997), for example, pointed out that work in this sector is largely exploitative, degrading, unpleasant, insecure and taken as a last resort. This is more generally accepted for tourism employment where even earlier (Pizam, 1982, p.5) it was suggested that the tourism employee is often regarded as ‘uneducated, unmotivated, untrained, unskilled and unproductive’ and where in 2013 the World Travel and Tourism Council by means of a study that spanned three countries (the US, UK and China) sought to understand students’ perceptions of tourism and hospitality employment out of concern over sector recruitment difficulties. Moving beyond perceptions of the sector, it is a matter of fact that it attracts frequently marginalised groups in society such as women (Teng et al., 2013), immigrants (Baum, 2012) and youth (Walmsley, 2015). Studies such as those by Walmsley (2012) and Aksu and Köksal (2005) have demonstrated how attitudes towards tourism and hospitality employment in society can detract students from employment in the sector.

Current studies explore the overall education experience, curriculum development and educational environment (Alexander, Lynch, & Murray, 2009; Harper, Brown, & Irvine, 2005; Morrison & O’Mahony, 2003) but limited attention has been paid to understanding the link between student perceptions of hospitality education and careers. This study therefore aims to expand knowledge by exploring hospitality students’ attitudes towards hospitality education and how a range of intrinsic and extrinsic variables may have an impact upon their attitudes towards hospitality careers.

The study focuses on hospitality students’ perceptions based on research undertaken at various higher education (HE) institutions (universities) in the UK and Cyprus. The continuous growth of the hospitality sector in both countries resulted in a demand for capable professionals and the development of hospitality programmes with different specialisations emerging in an effort to educate future leaders in an ever demanding, labour intensive industry. Although education and industry structure, and scale differ between the two countries, HE has expanded rapidly in both countries over the last three decades (from elite to mass providers of education), off the back of massive growth in the tourism and hospitality service sector (Airey, Dredge, & Gross, 2015). The Cypriot university system specifically has undergone major changes with the ‘universification’ and expansion of private education. Prior to these changes, HE needs were mainly satisfied by tertiary education institutions “colleges” that offered various hospitality degree programmes since early 80s and from universities abroad, with UK universities being the first choice among school leavers (Cyprus Higher Education, 2014). Similarly, the UK HE sector has undergone several major expansions since 2000. In both cases, tourism and hospitality education expansion has intertwined with national policy goals to improve productivity levels and generate employment opportunities (Airey et al., 2015). Further to that the strong relation between Cyprus and the UK inevitably affected curriculum design providing a good comparative study of different cultural ‘norms’ within a similar education system.

Nevertheless, demand for hospitality and tourism education is beginning to flatten off due at least in part to the recent financial crisis and changes in HE funding arrangements (Airey et al., 2015). Calls continue to be made for HE to ensure academic integrity and maintain appropriate links with the industry (Airey & Tribe, 2005), and understanding and responding to these changes is of significant importance. Of course there are differences between institutions and countries, but the challenges that the HE sector faces remain similar.

The findings would enable HE institutions to continually adjust hospitality curricula reflecting to industry’s expectations and needs; thereby improving hospitality students’ preparedness for the industry and career prospects. Furthermore, the empirical data can be used as a framework to inform graduate recruitment practices in the industry and enable employers to understand graduate expectations necessary to apply the best possible graduate recruitment practices. The findings can be extended to other industries which are experiencing issues with regard to graduate skills and capabilities.

The study is divided into two parts. The first section covers contextual, theoretical and methodological perspectives through the relevant literature. The review around the value of hospitality education and the factors affecting students’ perception in achieving career goals are discussed thematically. The second part provides an insight into the findings and analysis, together with empirical discussions and implications to key stakeholders, followed by the conclusions.

2. Critical analysis of recent research into hospitality higher education

2.1. The value of hospitality education

There has been widespread support for industry-appropriate hospitality education. At the core of this issue lie the tensions and mistrust of various stakeholders including those of educators, graduates and the industry. Some commentators argue that technical skills and competences have become the dominant paradigm in hospitality education (Alexander et al., 2009). Others, in contrast, argue that current HE practices are moving away from developing technical skills to a more detailed appreciation of operating systems and concepts which are actually very important for managers in the industry (Ali, Murphy, & Nadkarni, 2014). This is an indication of the different approaches to academic and professional development in hospitality education across the globe (Dredge et al., 2012). Nevertheless, many of the challenges are shared. The current complex environment in terms of policy development, student expectations and skills reinforces the need for HE to design an effective curriculum to satisfy the business needs (Airey et al., 2015). Despite that educationalists have accused hospitality employers of out-dated and unsophisticated approaches towards recruitment and management in general (Morrison & O’Mahony, 2003). Williams, Bosselmanb, Hurstb, and Zhengb (2013) stated that

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5108374>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5108374>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)