Role of hospitality management department of Taiwan universities in addressing the talent needs of Taiwan’s hospitality industry

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Taiwan’s hospitality industry is experiencing labor and talent shortage because of the lower entry of new graduates relative to demand and the low retention especially of entry-level employees. Hospitality education plays an important role in matching and bridging the needs and expectations of hospitality students and firms by enabling students to meet the qualification needs of firms and influencing employment decisions of graduates. The study considered the effectiveness of role fulfillment by interviewing department chiefs and experienced teachers. The results showed the significant entry of graduates in hospitality firms but with room for increasing entry rate. The curriculum offered by universities sufficiently prepares students for work but motivating students to actually work in hospitality firms requires improvement. Research to keep track of industry needs, consultation with students over their employment concerns, and motivation to develop positive attitudes towards hospitality work especially for entry level jobs are for improvement.

Key words: Labor needs in hospitality industry, human resource management, hospitality management education, Taiwan hospitality industry, matching theory, bridging role of hospitality education, responsiveness of hospitality management education.

INTRODUCTION

Taiwan is developing its knowledge-based and service-driven industries in response to the shrinking manufacturing industry. Tourism and hospitality is a sector that experienced a boost from the emerging opportunities created by this shift. There is a growing market for hospitality services in Taiwan. However, the hospitality industry in Taiwan is facing shortage of talents. This affects service quality and firm/industry competitiveness. Hospitality education is linked to the problems faced by the hospitality industry and the solutions.

Demand for hospitality services in Taiwan

Records showed significant increases in tourist arrivals to Taiwan throughout the continuous promotions made by the Tourism Bureau. In 2008, Taiwan opened the country to tourists from the mainland. In 2009, the Tourism Bureau launched a tourist giveaway program and the Taiwan exploration contest. These activities contributed to the 14.3% increase in inbound tourism (Tourism Bureau, 2010a). Even amidst the health epidemics, natural disasters, and the global recession, inbound tourism in Taiwan is showing vibrant growth. Annual statistical reports of the Tourism Bureau (2010b) showed that between 2008 and 2009, the number of tourist arrivals increased by 18.7%, a value that is almost twice the growth rate of visitors between 2007 and 2008. Tourist arrivals have an impact on the hospitality industry. The average stay of tourists is 7.17 nights (Tourism Bureau, 2010b), which means a week of accommodation and food service demand.

With a growing market, the challenge is for the hospitality industry in Taiwan to maintain and improve service quality to establish a competitive position in the region and globally. Individual hospitality firms that want to expand and secure their market need to maintain high
quality. Service quality depends on talented human resources. As Schneider and Bowen (2010) explained, achieving high quality of service revolves around the establishment of value by people and for people by understanding and responding to the complexities of personnel, who comprise a key element of the service delivery process. Deery (2008) added that having talents in the firm have a positive and direct effect on job satisfaction, service quality, and customer satisfaction. Hospitality firms can become competitive by bringing and keeping talents in the firm.

Hospitality industry of Taiwan

The hospitality industry of Taiwan has grown rapidly in the last ten years. The Statistical Bureau (2007) reported that in December 2006, there were a total of 88,739 accommodation and food service firms, of which 4,582 are accommodation firms and 84,157 are food and beverage service firms. There was a decline in number in the succeeding years. Chen (2009) reported that as of 2008, Taiwan had 2,745 establishments offering accommodation services to tourists. The Tourism Bureau (2010c) reported a lesser number, with 2,171 firms offering accommodation services to tourists in 2010. No specific numbers exist for the food service firms after 2006 but a similar trend likely occurred, given shifts affecting the entire hospitality industry. The decline in the number of firms for 2008 and 2010 could be due to the impact of the global recession resulting to closures, business strategy leading to mergers and buy-outs, or competitive pressure caused by the change from the plum to the star rating system (Su and Sun, 2007). Nevertheless, the number remains relatively high with the establishments spread out across Taiwan's 7 cities and 18 counties.

With a resilient hospitality industry, the demand for human resource remains and is likely to increase. According to Taiwan's Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS, 2009), employees in the accommodation and food service sector totaled 687,000 in 2008, up from 532,000 in 2001 to represent a 29.15% increase and translate into the hiring of 155,000 new employees in 7 years or roughly 22,000 new hires every year. Estimated human resources needed by the hospitality industry should increase to 817,000 in 2011 (Chen and Wallace, 2009); this means there is a need to have 130,000 hospitality workers ready by 2011. This represents the huge human resource need, including the demand for talents, of the hospitality industry.

The huge work force need of the hospitality industry becomes a bigger problem when considering the turnover rate. The DGBAS (2009) reported that labor turnover in the accommodation and food services sector is 4.47 as the average accession rate and 4.12 as the average separation rate in 2008. The number of people hired by hospitality firms is only slightly higher or almost equal to the number of people leaving the firms. At the firm level, the turnover could reach as high as 95.5% (Chen and Wallace, 2009). The high turnover rate affects the retention of talents, both at the management and personnel level. High turnover rate of hospitality managers at the front line in Taiwan and problems with retaining employees (Chen and Wallace, 2009) makes training costly and impedes skills building and knowledge sharing (Yang, 2010) as well as service innovativeness (Chen, 2011), which comprise factors influencing service quality.

Overall, the hospitality industry in Taiwan is facing labor shortage and shortage of talents. The resolution of these issues determines service quality and competitiveness at the firm and industry levels. Part of the solution leads back to hospitality education.

Hospitality education in Taiwan

Hospitality education in Taiwan plays an intervening role in addressing the shortage of talents in the hospitality industry by influencing labor supply and qualifications. Hospitality education in Taiwan developed slowly but experienced growth in the last ten years. The initial programs, with hospitality subsumed under tourism, came out in 1968. There were seven undergraduate and one masters program. In 1971, the program became Tourism and Hospitality under the College of Management (Teng, 2008). In 1995, a significant change emerged with National Kaohsiung Hospitality College, further expanding tourism and hospitality by introducing specialized management programs such as 'Food and Beverage Management' and 'Hotel Management' (Chang and Hsu, 2010). To date, National Kaohsiung Hospitality College remains the only higher education institution offering specialized programs on hospitality education, with the thrust on educating and training managers to cater to the needs of hotels, restaurants, and tourism firms in Taiwan (Ministry of Education, 2010). A number of higher education institutions followed this strategy by establishing independent colleges focusing on hospitality education. By 2000, the number of undergraduate and master hospitality and tourism programs increased to 18 and 6 respectively. In 2000, the first doctorate program emerged. By 2007, there were 174 undergraduate, master and doctorate programs on hospitality and tourism in Taiwan (Chang and Hsu, 2010).

Hospitality education in Taiwan comprises a complex system with programs on hospitality and tourism offered by universities, vocational colleges, junior colleges, and graduate schools. The learning arrangement covers full-time, part-time, day and/or evening, advanced course, and extension learning (Chang and Hsu, 2010). Hospitality education is also a binary system with two branches, which are academic higher learning and...
technical/vocational education (Horng and Lee, 2006). The thrust of hospitality education has been to educate and train students to manage hospitality and tourism firms (Change and Hsu, 2010). Horng and Lee (2006) explained that with multi-level competition fuelled by globalization, the current programs in Taiwan should also integrated global competitiveness into the curriculum and academic research.

The research problem

Growth in hospitality and tourism programs in the past ten years should be able to address the growing labor and talent needs of hospitality firms. However, this is not so. Chang and Hsu (2010) reported that the enrollees of hospitality programs have been continuously increasing even if the enrollment rate in higher education has been decreasing in the country. However, Chen and Wallace (2009) explained that the number is still not enough since the expected labor needs of the hospitality industry is 130,000 new recruits between 2008 and 2011 but academic higher learning and vocational/technical programs only provide 28,000 workers to the hospitality industry per year. This indicates an accumulating deficit in labor, which hinders the likelihood of hospitality firms in addressing their talent needs.

An explanation for the labor shortage could be that not all who enroll in hospitality education programs finish the course and not all those who finish the course seek employment in the hospitality industry. Teng (2008) reported that only 39% of hospitality students who graduate seek employment with hospitality firms within the year immediately following graduation. Yadav (2002) identified poor work conditions and perceived low status of jobs as two things affecting the employment intentions of hospitality students. Hsieh (2006) further explained that disparity in pre-work expectations and actual work experience is the top consideration of hospitality students entering the industry. Students develop perceptions of the status of work and expectations of work conditions as students of hospitality education. Achieving congruence and fit between academic preparation and actual workplace conditions is an important task of academic institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutions of higher learning and the labor market

Higher learning institutions play an important role in the labor market by bridging the expectations of students and employers. The matching theory explains the differences in the expectations of students and employers towards the labor market and the role of higher learning institutions in matching these expectations (Jovanovic, 1979; Petrongolo and Pissarides, 2001). On the part of students, they develop views towards higher education, course preferences, and after-graduation work expectations. Institutions of higher learning influence work expectations of students by providing the theoretical and empirically drawn pictures of work, the workplace, and employment (Bills, 2004). Higher education institutions also play a direct role in providing students with knowledge and skills for transfer to the workplace (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Colleges and universities perform this role by providing quality education through the curriculum, teachers, and learning environment.

On the part of employers, they establish expectations of the labor market based on their needs. Employers participate in the labor market on the demand side with the expectation that those in the labor pool are willing to work and have the knowledge and skills they require (Nicoleescu and Paun, 2009). As enterprises, employers operate in the labor market as businesses by considering labor cost and marginal return as quantitative factors as well as skills and trainability as qualitative factors (Griffin and Moorhead, 2009). Employers look towards the institutions of higher learning in addressing their labor concerns. The encompassing concern of employers is obtaining the human resources they need and gaining access to talents, which higher learning institutions address.

Responsiveness to the labor market is a determinant of how well higher learning institutions play their role in bridging the expectations of students and employers. A narrow and broad perspective of responsiveness exists. The narrow perspective considers responsiveness as indirect employability with institutions of higher learning providing formative general education to students (Sakellariou, 2006; Olaniyi and Okemakinde, 2008). With the greater technical demands of the market, the narrow view involves the loose function of colleges and universities. The broader perspective treats responsiveness as direct employability - to call for the role of higher learning institutions in developing the skills needed by students to make them employable. This entails a more rigorous, market-driven flexible role of colleges and universities. Developing the range of soft-skills needed by students to make them ready for work after graduation covers effective communication, problem solving, entrepreneurship, management, and leadership (Kruss, 2004). A more dynamic, less passive or more pro-active stand by colleges and universities on their role fits the current context of the labor market as highly complex and fast changing.

Previous studies identified determinants of market responsiveness of higher learning institutions. Leigh and Gill (2007) pointed to conscientious leadership, commitment to market-responsiveness as a goal, existence of an internal system for developing and adjusting work-driven curriculum, and wide network and
close relationship with employers, labor pool, and other educational institutions as determinants of market responsiveness. Salmi (2007) also identified new leadership as an important element in the responsiveness adjustability of universities to emerging conditions.

Other studies identified ways in which institutions of higher learning can become responsive to the market. The earlier work of O’Brien and Deans (1996) recommended the adoption of industry models, by higher education institutions as a means of planning and managing tertiary education, such as the supply chain for higher education that brings together students, administrative staff, teaching staff, and employees to determine and address needs. While this reflects the perspective of employers more, the inclusion of students in the supply chain leads to representation. Gault et al. (2000) stressed on the importance of networking by higher education institutions to facilitate the interaction between students and employers through on-the-job training or internship programs that mediate expectations. Purcell (2008) confirmed previous studies by stressing on the importance of developing sustainable relationships and adopting a business-like perspective. The author added that higher learning institutions can become responsive to the market by seeking market intelligence through interaction with stakeholders, practicing accountability and transparency, and developing effective organizational governance systems. Lam (2010) discussed work-integrated learning as a means for higher learning institutions to respond to the labor market. Work-integrated learning combines work- and school-directed learning through two general activities, which are bringing students and employers closer via immersion programs in local and international firms and encouraging industry professionals to share their knowledge in colleges and universities.

Higher education institutions can bridge students and employers by doing their roles. Market responsiveness is an important mission for higher learning institutions. Colleges and universities can become responsive to the market by assuming a multi-stakeholder perspective and undergoing multi-dimensional changes in the school system and educational processes to become effective in aligning student and employer expectations.

Hospitality management education and the hospitality industry

Hospitality management education bridges students and hospitality firms. The achievement of its role involved the alignment of student and firm expectations. Wood and Brotherton (2008) discussed the common needs of learning institutions and firms as rationale in the supporting role of hospitality management education towards hospitality firms. On one hand, higher learning institutions offering hospitality management education target the following goals:

i. Improve student learning
ii. Enhance the hospitality education curriculum
iii. Increase the presence of learning programs in the hospitality industry
iv. Identify financial sources
v. Locate possible work opportunities for graduates
vi. Establish workplace exposure for students
vii. Enable professional development for teachers
viii. Obtain feedback on programs from stakeholders
ix. Intensify research activities.

The goals of hospitality management education are to provide excellent learning and training opportunities for students to prepare them for work in the hospitality industry. These goals require multi-factor focus, which covers the curriculum and the learning environment, teachers, network with hospitality firms, and participation from students. On the other hand, hospitality firms seek to achieve the following goals:

i. Engage hospitality students to work in the industry and meet the need for qualified personnel
ii. Influence decisions on the curriculum and curriculum development
iii. Endorse the industry as a future workplace for hospitality students
iv. Draw the interest of teachers to provide consultation and similar services
v. Participate as guest lecturers in classrooms.

To achieve these goals, hospitality firms have to make their needs known to hospitality education institutions, and institutions need to develop curriculum and programs that respond to these needs. The participation of hospitality firms in hospitality education can increase student interest in actually working in the industry because of factors such as interest fulfillment and good employment opportunities (Purcell and Quinn, 1996).

Hospitality management education is an outcome of the collaborative relationship of hospitality education institutions and the hospitality industry. Barrows and Bosselman (1999) explained hospitality management education as the means through which the hospitality industry can fulfill its requirement for managers with sufficient knowledge and experience through the development of a curriculum that combines classroom learning or formal education with workplace learning or practice experience. Hospitality management education involves the respective roles of education institutions and hospitality firms. Both parties develop the components of the curriculum and map out areas of cooperation. Hospitality education firms provide the bulk of classroom learning and coordinate with hospitality firms for workplace learning.
Morrison and O'Mahony (2003) mapped out the historical development and trends in the issues arising from hospitality management education, which was an offshoot of changes in vocational education. As such, hospitality management education initially had a practical thrust. Criticisms over the years from industry practitioners and researchers pointed to the need to include a theoretical component of hospitality management education. Evidence showed that despite the years since the establishment of curriculum in hospitality management education, there were no significant improvements in the management skills of graduating students in areas such as problem solving and situation analysis and reflection. The ongoing challenge is achieving a balance between practical and reflective learning (Morrison and O’Gorman, 2008). The balance reflects how well hospitality management curriculum adopts an integrative approach to learning.

Evidence and experiences in different countries

Previous studies on hospitality education in different countries show varying forms, issues and outcomes. The countries featured all have a strong or thriving hospitality and tourism industry. All studies provide evidence of the important role of hospitality management education.

The earlier study by Formica (1996) compared hospitality and tourism education in the United States and Europe based on underlying learning philosophy. Hospitality education in the United States developed from the Anglo-Saxon influence, which focused on professional development through knowledge and skills building on various key areas including problem solving. Hospitality education in Europe developed from the cultural approach that focused on the socio-economic aspects of hospitality and tourism. The outcome is hospitality, comprising a distinct curriculum under the Anglo-Saxon approach, and hospitality as an aspect of the general concept of tourism in the European approach. The difference in approach creates the issues of practicing theory in the Anglo-Saxon model and integration of reflective practice in the European model.

Fidgeon (2010) evaluated hospitality education in Great Britain and reported that evolutionary development has integrated both European and Anglo-Saxon approaches. Assessment of hospitality and tourism education, at present, in terms of course structure, showed a wide range of programs for different learning levels encompassing general and specialization focus. Tourism education has been able to transcend criticisms on its lack of theoretical basis by evolving into an academic discipline with theoretical framework. However, while this enabled curriculum development to extend beyond business management or social science, this option has not been widely explored by hospitality education institutions. Hospitality and tourism education became popular with students because of perceptions of career opportunities, particularly in management through the hospitality and tourism curriculum. Osmani (2007) reported a different experience in England and Wales. The public and private sector participate in the provision of hospitality and tourism education. Only the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow offers a specialist degree and postgraduate course in hospitality and tourism. The rest of the hospitality education institutions are colleges offering vocational or diploma courses. Although the curriculum covers classroom and workplace learning, hospitality education in Scotland remains closely rooted to its vocational beginnings and has yet to become an academic field with theoretical framework unlike in England and Wales. Moreover, industry conditions contribute to problems in hospitality and tourism education. Most of the firms in the industry are small to medium firms, some of which operate seasonally, and unable to provide career advancement opportunities or excellent working conditions. Poor industry orientation of hospitality and tourism institutions results to a mismatch between the objectives of the curriculum offered and the needs of the industry. The varying experiences of England and Wales with Scotland implies the importance of collaborative and networking relations between hospitality education institutions and the hospitality industry to understand the respective needs and the means of fulfilling these needs.

Ping and Liu (2010) compared and analyzed various aspects of hospitality and tourism management education at Purdue University in Australia and Dongbei University in China. The results showed that both programs in the two universities covered a wide range of areas including hospitality, languages, economics, history and other learning spheres. However, the program at Purdue University provided more learning depth by establishing hospitality management as a separate division, offering a broader curriculum, and enabling students to select the elective courses they prefer depending on their desired industry specialization. Relative to students, Lashley and Barron (2006) considered the learning preferences of new students in the hospitality and tourism courses in Australia and the United Kingdom. The results showed that most students preferred active and concrete learning style but students from Confucian or East Asian cultures prefer reflective and abstract learning. Student learning preferences also affect the development of programs in hospitality management education. Successfully integrating reflective and practical learning in hospitality management education, which reflects student learning preferences and industry needs, requires a change in the learning culture to require the role of academic leaders as catalytic agents in influencing a shift in the perspective of students, teachers and industry practitioners (Tesone, 2005).

Christou (1999) reported on hospitality and tourism education in Greece, one of the European countries with
a strong tourism thrust. Evaluation of the programs was through interviews with graduates. There was a general satisfaction with learning but there remains a wide area for improvement. Graduates reported difficulties in transitioning from the classroom to the workplace, particularly in the work areas of marketing, human resource management (HRM), organizational management, and laws and regulations. Feedback from graduates also identified lack of learning on soft skills such as leadership and motivation, time management, and team building. Most of the students were unaware or have a limited understanding of total quality management. Apart from these limitations in learning, there were also problems in transferring academic learning to the workplace. Initially, there was positive regard for the industry placement program. In the course of the program, many students experienced limited preparation for actual work or become de-motivated to continue working in the industry because of poor work treatment. Teachers were not strong motivators and lacked conscious awareness of their roles as motivators. Learning resources were also limited.

A number of studies focused on developing countries with growing or mature hospitality and tourism industry and found that the influence of the learning experiences of students on employment decisions and readiness support the importance of learning institution and industry linkage. Goldsmith and Zahari (1994) described the growing hospitality and tourism industry in Malaysia to require an increase in the number of qualified personnel. The coordinated integration of classroom and workplace learning raised curriculum standards to support qualified graduates. The growing work opportunities in the industry should comprise an incentive for graduates to work in hospitality and tourism firms. Mayaka and Akama (2007) described the hospitality and tourism education in Kenya, which has a developing hospitality and tourism sector catering to the international market. Education and training has not kept up with industry development. Only two institutions of higher learning offered hospitality and tourism courses, with the gap augmented by around 200 training centers. With the poor coordination of hospitality and tourism education, especially at the policy development and standards formation levels, the training programs offered by the centers were fragmented. The study recommended the application of the systems approach, in the case of Kenya, to stress on the role of education and training in supporting hospitality and tourism to usher socio-economic benefits to the country. Shakeela (2008) reported on the hospitality and tourism education in Maldives, an island state in South Asia with a budding hospitality and tourism industry. Hospitality and tourism education in Maldives was a foreign legacy intended to train locals to manage education in these fields. While a Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies (FHTS) emerged with a program on hospitality management together with an Accreditation Board to provide standards in 2001, it was only in 2007 that a bachelor’s degree on hospitality and tourism management became part of the plan to make Maldives College for Higher Education (MCHE) a university. There are three interconnected issues besetting the slow and uncertain development of hospitality education in Maldives. One is the failure of hospitality and tourism education institutions or educators to develop an educational framework that fits the context of Maldives and poor networking with the industry. The other is the inability of the government to incorporate hospitality and tourism education to the policy development and planning for tourism and related industries. Last is the limited participation of the industry in influencing policy development on hospitality and tourism education and in cooperating with institutions of higher learning.

These countries experiences comprise examples of ways in which hospitality management education needs to conform to the times (Qiumei, 2007). Different results emerge in the development of hospitality management education given distinct contexts. The thrust of hospitality management education affects the capability of the hospitality industry.

### Evidence and experiences in Taiwan

Previous studies on the country focused on two areas, curriculum development and stakeholders’ perceptions. The results informed on the developments in hospitality education in Taiwan as well as the impending issues.

Studies on curriculum development in Taiwan provided recommendations for improving hospitality education or indicated areas for improvement. Chen and Hsu (2007) introduced a curriculum for hospitality management that incorporated practice-based competencies. The curriculum comprised of 32 credits on the arts, 36 credits on profession-based subjects as electives, and 60 credits of required profession-based subjects. These incorporated 21 general and 95 professional competencies. To test the merit of the curriculum, the researchers devised a questionnaire, which was floated to 15 experts and specialists from the institutions and the industry. The results showed the curriculum’s comprehensiveness, applicability, ease of use, and alignment with the mission of technological institutions. Chang and Hsu (2010) also propounded a development model for hospitality and tourism education, specifically for Taiwan’s vocational programs. Based on data obtained from interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, the recommended development program focused on four areas, which are administration and management, service and resource, teaching and human resource (HR), and academic research and development. The major goals are practical HR developments, technical R&D developments, and innovative management of diverse cultural knowledge. The
development framework serves as a point of reference for innovations on hospitality education in Taiwan. Hsiao et al. (2009) explained the hiring of students as temporary workers in the hospitality industry as a means of addressing the human resource needs of hospitality firms. The positive view of hospitality firms towards this practice supports the importance of work-based learning for all stakeholders. There is need to determine in depth, whether hospitality education institutions understand the perceptions of students and firms in developing the hospitality management curriculum.

Two studies covered stakeholders’ perspectives towards aspects of hospitality education. Tsai (2004) investigated the nature and extent of gap in the perceptions towards the key competencies for entry-level managers in lodging firms. The study used a rating system for statements on competencies. The results indicated similarities in the ratings for most of the competencies. There are competencies, which if subject to focus in hospitality education, would likely strengthen the relationship of the institutions and the industry as well as usher improved outcomes. Teng (2008) considered student perspective, which most of the other studies on Taiwan’s hospitality education excluded, on the reasons for wanting to work, or, in leaving the hospitality industry after experiencing internship. The results showed that personality has an impact on the decision, with extrovert students more keen on working in the industry. This has implications on the building of soft skills and influencing personality or attitudinal traits, as part of ensuring congruence between student and industry interest.

Overall, theoretical and empirical evidence supports the important role of hospitality management education in bridging students and the hospitality industry to achieve everybody’s respective goals. As such, understanding the needs of these parties supports the bridging role of hospitality education and the hospitality education institutions. In Taiwan, previous studies focused on ways of improving the existing curriculum based on stakeholders’ views. While these provided important insights, in-depth investigation on hospitality management, as the curriculum addressing the need for quality management skills in the hospitality industry, and the role of hospitality management institutions in assuming the bridging role are of equal importance. The extent that hospitality management institutions recognize its bridging role determines the fulfillment of this role and the outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Investigating how well hospitality management firms recognize and fulfill their role in bridging students and hospitality firms through the curriculum, programs, learning environment, teaching personnel, and network can be determined by considering the perspectives, attitudes and practices of these institutions. Employing the qualitative method supported the collection of in-depth accounts and descriptions on the bridging role of hospitality management institutions. There were nine respondents who are chief directors and experienced professors of hospitality education in different higher learning institutions in Taiwan. The chief directors and experienced professors lead the hospitality management departments. The chief director unites the administrative team and the teaching staff towards the fulfillment of the vision of the institution. The chief director is a key respondent by being in the position to have a broad perspective of the role assumed by the hospitality management department and by playing a key role in policy development and decision-making. In addition, there are professors in the teaching staff of the hospitality management department with long experience in the academe and/or in the industry. The experienced professors teach in the hospitality management departments full-time or part-time. They also hold valuable insight on the position taken by hospitality management departments towards their role in integrating the perceptions and needs of students and hospitality firms.

In-depth interview was the data collection method employed to draw information from the chief directors and experienced professors of the hospitality management departments in Taiwan universities. The interviews focused on perspectives towards the role of the hospitality management department in providing talents to the hospitality industry. The specific areas covered during the interview include the curriculum, the programs, the educational culture and practice, the teaching and learning techniques, and the extent and scope of the networking of the department with students and the hospitality industry. Secondary research also served as a data collection method in the study by providing the investigative framework and springboard from which to commence the study. The study consulted previous researches and various reports on the hospitality management departments of the different universities in Taiwan.

The in-depth interview utilized open-ended questions intended to elicit information to determine how well hospitality management departments realize their role in bridging student and hospitality firm needs, via different aspects of hospitality management education. Follow-up queries on the primary questions were raised to gather in-depth accounts. The four main interview questions were:

1. To what extent have current graduates of the hospitality management department entered the hospitality industry?
2. To what extent has the hospitality management department integrated the qualifications required by hospitality firms in the courses offered to students?
3. To what extent has the hospitality management department consulted with graduating students over concerns in the decision to work in hospitality firms?
4. Which courses in the current hospitality management curriculum prepare students for work in hospitality firms and how effective is the curriculum in motivating students to work in hospitality firms?

The interviews took eight months to complete because of the hectic schedule of the target respondents. The schedule of interviews depended on the free time of the chief directors and professors selected through purposive sampling. The respondents were approached through personal visits as well as telephone and e-mail communications to seek their consent and schedule the interview. Confirmations were sought for the schedules and changes were made in case of unavailability. The interview session lasted between 30 - 45 min depending on the flow of the conversation and the extent of responsiveness to the interview questions. All interviews were recorded through a standard battery-operated recorder with the permission of the respondents. The interview responses were transcribed using a number system to identify the respondents and ensure confidentiality.

Analysis of the data obtained from the interviews and secondary research is through qualitative techniques. Use of typology classified the data according to the interview questions and general
Table 1. Entry of graduates in the hospitality industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Extent of entry</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Plenty</td>
<td>Tradition exists on working part-time or interning in different hospitality firms and selecting their favorite firms to apply for full-time employment after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Off-campus internship in international hotel chains influence the decision to work in the same hotel after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recreation Sports and Health Promotion</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Significant entry rate but low starting salary and job perception leads to high turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Department of Baking Technology and Management</td>
<td>Way better, 80%</td>
<td>Specialized training in baking technology and baking management supports student preparedness for work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>No graduates</td>
<td>Department has only been present for two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Different interests after graduation, some work in domestic hospitality firms, others pursue higher education outside Taiwan or set-up their own business that is not necessarily in hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Increase in recent years</td>
<td>Offering of master’s degree attracted existing employees of the industry and new graduates to pursue higher education for career development in hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Rate has improved</td>
<td>Interaction between current hospitality industry employees going back to school and incoming graduates influence employment decision after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>No graduates</td>
<td>Department has only been in existence for two years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

themes based on the purpose of the study. Comparison identified the similarities and differences in the accounts of the respondents on their perspective and experience of hospitality management education in different universities. Logical analysis integrated the responses to provide a picture of the extent of awareness and exercise of the bridging role of hospitality management departments.

RESULTS

There were four major interview questions. The responses of the nine interviewees are summarized and discussed further.

Entry of graduates in the hospitality industry

Almost all of the respondents expressed the significant entry of graduates from their departments in hospitality firms, as shown in Table 1. Four of the respondents were unable to provide exact values of the extent of entry and used the words 'many', 'plenty' and 'increased' instead. Three of the respondents were able to provide estimates of the rate of entry of their graduates, which are 50, 60 and 80% respectively. Two respondents were unable to report any data because hospitality management was a newly offered curriculum and there were no graduates yet during the time of the interview. Except for the latter respondents, all the other respondents reported a significant entry rate, albeit varying in extent.

An explanation for the variance in the extent of entry is student perspective over the nature of jobs in hospitality firms. The highest entry rate is for graduates of the department of baking technology and management (80%) followed by graduates of the recreation sports and health promotion department. The lowest rate is for the tourism department (50%). The department of baking technology and management as well as the recreation sports and health promotion department cater to specialized jobs in the hospitality and tourism industry. As such, the jobs available to graduates are likely to be limited in number, require specialized skills, involve higher compensation, and correspond with perceptions of higher employment status. The tourism department caters to a range of jobs including housekeeping, bartending, and other positions, which two respondents described as jobs with lower entry
Table 2. Integration of hospitality industry qualification needs in department curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Extent of integration</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Basic and general hospitality knowledge and skills together with specialized learning and management knowledge</td>
<td>Aligns with industry needs</td>
<td>Balance in general and specialized knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Courses that help students achieve certificates for qualification in hospitality industry jobs</td>
<td>Hospitality firms require professional certification</td>
<td>Focus on practical skills building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recreation Sports and Health Promotion</td>
<td>Theoretical and practical knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Obtaining certifications is an employment requirement</td>
<td>Additional focus on management learning, emotion management, and bilingual skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Department of Baking Technology and Management</td>
<td>Assistance to students in achieving professional certification</td>
<td>Certifications meets the requirements of hospitality firms</td>
<td>Additional focus on positive attitude building and bilingual skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Professional skills building</td>
<td>Similar requirements of the department and the hospitality industry</td>
<td>Additional focus on language ability to serve global customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>General textbook and professional knowledge</td>
<td>Enhance competitiveness of graduates</td>
<td>Additional focus on attitude building (international mindset) and bilingual ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Theoretical and practical knowledge and skills development</td>
<td>Requirements for graduation and employment in hospitality industry</td>
<td>Attitude building to develop passion for jobs in the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Theoretical and practical knowledge and skills development</td>
<td>Requirements for graduation and employment in hospitality industry</td>
<td>Technology adoption and adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Assistance to students in completing coursework and obtaining license</td>
<td>Ushers qualification for professional practice</td>
<td>Addition of language certification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and higher turnover rates because of the low status associated with these jobs, even if these are crucial jobs. The perception of students towards jobs in hospitality influences their entry into the industry.

Integration of hospitality industry qualification needs in the curriculum

Based on interview responses summarized in Table 2, the departments integrate theoretical and practical knowledge and skills building in addressing the qualification needs of hospitality firms. However, there are identified areas for improvement, especially in practical skills. The theoretical qualification covers the provision of
textbook knowledge to students covering management, service delivery, and work relations that are usually tackled in the first year of study. The practical qualification encompasses actual practice in cooking, waiting, and interaction among other specific practical skills learned during the higher years of learning. Theoretical and practical skills achievement is reflected by certifications received by students. Two respondents explained that the curriculum addresses the qualification needs of hospitality firms by aiding students to achieve theoretical and practical knowledge and skills expressed by academic and professional certifications. The respondents also explained that part of the practical skills achievement is exposure to actual work environments and fulfillment of actual jobs through internships and other similar modes of learning exposure.

The respondents also identified areas of practical skills that comprise the recommended focus of improvements. One respondent identified the importance of advising students over the need to make adjustments in their attitudes when they enter the actual workplace. The reason for this is the number of complaints posted by students about unmet expectations in actual work, especially in terms of working time, work demand, and pay. Two respondents identified the need for students to build positive attitudes towards working in hospitality firms. Another respondent added that students can develop positive attitudes by developing passion for the hospitality business while in school. Still, another respondent identified socialization skills, particularly emotion management, as an area of focus in hospitality management education. The hectic demands of working in hospitality firms require control of emotions to ensure effectiveness. Three respondents identified language ability, specifically proficiency in the English language or bilingualism, as a core skill needed by hospitality firms, to make this an important focus of hospitality management education curriculum.

Overall, the departments appear to have a sufficient idea of the qualifications required by the hospitality industry. However, integration of these qualification needs into the curriculum may require continuous improvement, especially given the attitudinal factors and practical skills identified to be current and necessary requirements of hospitality firms. The explanations of the respondents did not explicitly point to consultations with hospitality industry firms over current needs for integration into the curriculum. There is also no mention of the direction of hospitality management education towards strengthening empirical research on various areas and different issues faced by hospitality firms.

Consultation with students over employment concerns

Consultation with students over their employment concerns do not seem to be a widely explicit practice in the departments offering hospitality management education courses, as seen in Table 3. Only two respondents identified communication between students and teachers and listening to the employment-related issues faced by students as part of the educational process that influence student entry in the hospitality industry. Two respondents explained the provision of support to students in terms of exposing them to conditions in the actual workplace by visiting top hotels and inviting top chefs and other leading hospitality professionals to share lessons with students. However, there was no mention of actual consultation sessions with students to identify and address their work concerns. The other respondents described how the learning process influence and support students in their employment decisions but there is also no clear identification of consultation over employment concerns as an aspect of the process.

Based on the responses, the departments mostly obtain feedback from graduates who already work than those who do not work in the hospitality industry. One respondent explained that a number of the graduates who decided to work in the hospitality industry were able to reach management positions, to reflect a match between the expectations of graduates and employers. There are also a number of hospitality management graduates who establish their own hospitality firm or take-on management of an existing family business. The reasons for students not entering the hospitality industry are work conditions differing from their expectations and perspectives of the low status of entry-level jobs. On one hand, a respondent explained that graduates complain about long hours of work, strong work demands, and low pay in new entry jobs. These discourage incoming graduates from working in hospitality firms or continuing employment in the hospitality industry after internship. However, another respondent added that what students fail to realize is that taking on entry-level jobs is a learning experience that constitutes the foundation for a career in hospitality and the identification of an area of specialization, should they choose to do so. Part of these concerns relate to the work expectations of students while in school and during their learning exposure. As such, understanding and addressing these concerns, while students are still in school, may be able to align the perspectives of graduates and hospitality firms better. As one respondent explained, discussing the concerns of students regarding employment prospects in the hospitality industry is a way for hospitality management education to bridge incoming workers and hospitality firms.

Effectiveness of curriculum in preparing and motivating students

The respondents share the common perspective that the
### Table 3. Consultation with students over employment concerns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Extent of consultation with students</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Pursuit of department goals address student’s employment concerns</td>
<td>Use of interaction with industry professionals and internship answer employment concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Exposing students to real work practice and listening to the conflicts faced ease employment concerns</td>
<td>Educators should really get involved with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recreation Sports and Health Promotion</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Pursuit of department goals support student employment</td>
<td>Create opportunities for the entry of graduates in the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Department of Baking Technology and Management</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Pursuit of department goals address student’s employment concerns</td>
<td>Focus on human capability building to support employment readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Pursuit of department goals address student’s competitiveness concerns</td>
<td>Focus on competency building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Pursuit of department goals address student’s specialization concerns</td>
<td>Focus on industry orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Pursuit of department goals address student’s specialization concerns</td>
<td>Allow students to decide and pursue their area of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Pursuit of department goals address student’s specialization concerns</td>
<td>Develop a flexible employment direction for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Communication between teachers and students draw the employment concerns of students</td>
<td>Improve the communication platform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The curriculum of their departments is effective in preparing students for work in the hospitality industry. The respondents were able to identify the most important preparatory courses. However, there are varied responses on effectiveness in motivating students to work in hospitality firms. The responses are summarized in Table 4.

In the hospitality management department, one respondent identified Chinese and Western culinary practices and baking practice that are learned through demonstration classrooms, which mimic actual hotel rooms or kitchens, as most important. Another respondent from this department added that management courses tackling food hygiene and safety practices, purchasing, cost control, and marketing are important preparatory courses. Both respondents explained that the combination of theoretical and practical learning in simulated or in actual work environments thoroughly prepare students for work in hospitality firms. Student exposure to the work environment makes them more at ease during actual employment in hospitality firms.

The respondents from the tourism management department also expressed high confidence in the preparedness of students who have undergone the curriculum. One respondent explained that students are very prepared in entering the hospitality industry. The same respondent identified food and beverage service
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Curriculum effectiveness</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation</td>
<td>Lessons and demonstrations ensure student interest and familiarity with work in hospitality</td>
<td>Stress on demonstration classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation/Implied motivation effectiveness</td>
<td>Consciousness about real work demands and issues/Enjoyable experience in the actual workplace</td>
<td>Integration of academic and practical learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recreation Sports and Health Promotion</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation</td>
<td>Business ethics classes prepare students for ethical practice, decision-making, and problem resolutions</td>
<td>Focus on business ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Department of Baking Technology and Management</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation</td>
<td>Theoretical knowledge and practical skills help students become managers</td>
<td>Integration of theory and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation/Expressed motivation effectiveness</td>
<td>Practical skills building prepare students for the hospitality profession/Foster enthusiasm, positive work attitude, and good work relationships</td>
<td>Integration of theory and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation</td>
<td>In-campus and off-campus internship help students adjust to actual work</td>
<td>Focus on exposure of students to real work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation/Implied motivation effectiveness</td>
<td>Demonstration classes and off-campus internship support practical learning/Exposure of students help them decide on future employment</td>
<td>Focus on exposure of students to real work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation</td>
<td>Courses taught by professional teachers support practical learning</td>
<td>Focus on exposure of students to real work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Effective for work preparation/Expressed motivation effectiveness</td>
<td>Basic courses, professional courses, and internship allow students to experience the real workplace/Communication platform between teachers and students influence students to work in the industry</td>
<td>Build communication ability and expose students to real work experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
together with food hygiene and safety as core preparatory courses for future steward/stewardess while Chinese and Western culinary practice and baking are preparatory courses for internal service providers. Two respondents from the tourism management department also expressed strong belief in the manner that the curriculum in the department prepares students for work. The same respondents identified visitation to actual business firms and interaction with hospitality professionals together with demonstration classroom as the components of hospitality management education that support students’ preparedness for work.

The respondent from recreation sports and health promotion department identified business ethics as a core preparatory course for students. A reason for the importance of business ethics in preparing students in this area of hospitality management is, as one respondent explained, the need for future employees to learn how to identify and face ethical problems. The nature of hospitality in this area involves unique issues on ethical practice that require preparation. The other respondent from the department of baking technology and management identified specific knowledge and skills in baking, hygiene and safety, and store management as part of the curriculum of the department to effectively prepare students for work in the hospitality industry.

While the respondents commonly expressed the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for work by identifying the core preparatory courses, there were varying perspectives towards the effectiveness of the curriculum in motivating students to work in the hospitality industry. Only two respondents from the hospitality management department and tourism department were able to explicitly discuss the effectiveness of the department’s curriculum in motivating students to work in hospitality firms after graduation. One respondent explained that the thrust of the hospitality management department’s curriculum is to “train professionals with highly enthusiastic work attitudes”. The other respondent explained that developing a communication platform between teachers and students is also a way of motivating students to enter the industry. The curriculum of these departments develops enthusiasm by focusing on diverse talent evaluation, interrelationship skills development, technical and creative talent building, and consideration of ways to create job opportunities. The curriculum also explicitly motivates students to work in the hospitality industry by building their interest and passion for the industry through technical, creative and soft skills for them to qualify for jobs in the hospitality industry, gain meaningful simulated and actual work experience, and take advantage of job opportunities. Another two respondents from the tourism department implied on the effectiveness of the curriculum in motivating students to work in hospitality firms through internships, which allow students to experience the actual work setting. However, with complaints on differences in expectations and actual experience coming from students, the internship only operates as a motivating factor when this provides a positive and enriching experience to positively influence their future employment decisions.

**DISCUSSION**

The hospitality management departments in Taiwan universities play an important role in addressing the growing talent needs of Taiwan’s hospitality industry. The hospitality management contributes to addressing these problems by responding to the needs of students and hospitality firms alike. Hospitality management comprises of general and specialized curriculum intended to bring together students and hospitality firms. There are broader and specialized courses in hospitality management. At the same time, the curriculum also includes in-campus simulation and off-campus real work exposures for students. Top hospitality professionals are also invited to interact with students or students are brought to top hospitality firms to enhance their learning experience. These constitute an application of the matching theory (Jovanovic, 1979; Petrongolo and Pissarides, 2001), with the curriculum of the departments providing the education and learning needs of students to support their preparedness and influence their employment decisions after graduation as well as providing the manpower and talent needs of the hospitality industry by producing qualified graduates. The thrust of the hospitality management department in Taiwan universities is to provide people equipped with competencies as employees and managers.

The hospitality management department of Taiwan universities adopted a broad level of responsiveness to its bridging role. The level of responsiveness can be narrow or broad. Narrow responsiveness means the provision of formative general education (Sakellariou, 2006; Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008), with curriculum completion as the end goal. Broad responsiveness directs higher learning institutions to provide education that support employability after graduation (Kruss, 2004), which implies employment as the end goal and education as the means to qualify for employment. The hospitality management department in Taiwan universities adopted the broad perspective by integrating theoretical and practical education as a way of preparing their students for employment in the hospitality industry. The hospitality management department reports the entry of a significant number of graduates in hospitality firms as employees or as entrepreneurs. Providing education for employability comprises an explicit or implicit goal, as supported by the positive perspective of the department chiefs and experienced teachers over the extent that the curriculum offered by their respective departments fosters the preparedness of students for work.
While the hospitality management department in Taiwan universities adopted broad responsiveness towards their bridging role, the means of achieving responsiveness had strong and weak areas. The area of strength covers the integrative approach of the curriculum. The descriptions and explanations given by the department chiefs and experienced teachers about the curriculum align with classroom and workplace learning (Barrows and Bosselman, 1999). The focus on competencies (Chen and Hsu, 2007), work-integrated learning (Lam, 2010), and development model focusing on administration and management, services and resource, teaching and HR, and academic research and development (Chen and Hsu, 2010). The hospitality management curriculum in Taiwan universities integrates theoretical and practical learning that target preparedness for employment of graduates in hospitality firms. Based on the development model, an area for improvement in the curriculum is academic research and development that received little focus in the hospitality management curriculum. The area of weakness arises from practical knowledge and skills. The hospitality management department faced the challenge of balancing practical and reflective learning (Morrison and O’Gorman, 2008). In particular, the hospitality management departments identified practical areas as focus of improvements. These are advice over work concerns and expectations of students, development of positive attitudes towards hospitality, socialization skills and emotion management, and language ability particularly in English.

The weakness in practical learning relates to the bridging role of hospitality management departments. Key to bridging expectations is consultation with different stakeholders (O’Brien and Deans, 1996) to integrate the expectations of students and hospitality firms (Wood and Brotherton, 2008). The network of hospitality management departments should be wide enough to encompass different stakeholders (Gault et al., 2000) and deep enough to ensure sustainable relationships with stakeholders (Purcell, 2008). Through the network, hospitality management departments can obtain feedback from hospitality students and hospitality firms over their respective needs and find ways of addressing these needs through its curriculum, teaching techniques, and learning environment. In the hospitality management departments of Taiwan universities, network relationship with hospitality firms is established via internship and other exposure programs in hospitality firms together with invitations for hospitality professionals as guest lecturers. While this links the departments with the hospitality industry, the low priority for research and nil consultation over industry needs limit the ability of the departments to thoroughly determine and remain updated on the current and emerging needs of hospitality firms. Only a few hospitality management departments include research as part of the learning program. In addition, consultation with students is not a pervasive practice. Only a small number of departments conduct consultation sessions with students as a formal part of the learning process. The impact of the limited consultation with students is the weak influence on the employment motivation of students. Both the preparedness and motivation of students are important in effectively bridging the needs and expectations of hospitality students and hospitality firms.

Conclusion

The demand for hospitality service in Taiwan is stable and increasing. There are sufficient hospitality firms to address demand. However, the hospitality industry is experiencing talent shortage due to the insufficient entry rate of new graduates into the industry and the high turnover rate, especially of entry-level employees. The study investigated the role of hospitality management department of Taiwan universities in addressing the labor and talent needs of the hospitality industry. Interviews with chief directors and experienced teachers of the hospitality management departments provided data. The results showed the common perception over the significant entry rate of students in hospitality firms but with higher entry rate in specialist jobs such as baking and recreation sports and health. The hospitality management department of Taiwan universities has integrated the qualification needs of hospitality firms into the curriculum by integrating theoretical or reflective learning with practical or experiential learning. Consultation with graduating students by the departments to determine and address employment concerns is limited. Only a few universities conduct formal and explicit consultation sessions with students as part of the preparation and motivation processes. The hospitality management departments holds the uniform belief towards the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for employment but there is varied belief in the effectiveness of the curriculum in motivating students to seek employment in hospitality firms. An explanation for the latter is the limited consultation with graduating students over their employment concerns together with the weak integration of employment motivation in the curriculum with only some universities targeting the goal of building positive student attitudes towards hospitality and opening teacher-student communications.

Hospitality education departments play an important bridging and matching role between the needs and expectations of hospitality students and hospitality firms. The hospitality management department in several Taiwan universities played this role by offering curriculums that enable students to develop the qualifications required by hospitality firms. The departments are effective in responding to their role in terms of the significant entry of students to hospitality firms and provision of curriculums that prepare students for work.
However, there are areas for improvement in the fulfillment of their role, as indicated by the possibility of increasing the entry rate further for both general and specialist courses. These areas include research to gain in-depth and updated information on the needs of the hospitality industry, consultation with graduates over their employment concerns, and motivating students to develop a positive attitude towards working in hospitality firms. The achievement of these improvements can support higher entry by graduates in hospitality firms and maybe even higher retention for entry-level jobs.

The hospitality industry benefits from improvements in the curriculum of hospitality management departments through well prepared and highly motivated graduates who are willing to work in hospitality firms. The hospitality industry can support these improvements by participating in research efforts, strengthening coordination with hospitality education institutions, and connecting with students by providing positive learning experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has been able to gain insight into the role of hospitality management departments of Taiwan universities in addressing the talent needs of hospitality firms. Future research can focus on two areas. One is the measurement of the effectiveness of hospitality management departments in fulfilling their role by using the quantitative approach or mixed method approach. The other is the inclusion of student and manager perspectives towards the role played by hospitality management departments in addressing their common and distinct needs and expectations.

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