Research Article

Reforms in the hotel management curriculum followed in Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Hospitality business in Ethiopia is in a constant stage of improvements by constructing luxury hotels, upgrading existing hotels and tie-up relationship with international and local branded chain of hotels. In accordance to the new trends and expectations of the industries requirements the changes in the hotel management curriculum is inevitable. The objective of this research is to investigate the hotel management curriculum owing to any reforms. Descriptive research design and judgmental sampling techniques were used in the investigation. Study participants such as managers and hotel management educators emphasized the importance of reforming the existing curriculum by modifying the course contents as well as adding additional new courses to cope with the industries needs and improving skill competencies of the hotel management graduates in par with international standards.

Keywords: Competencies, Curriculum, Education, Hotel management, Reforms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Background

Ethiopia being home to the third leading diplomatic communal in the world, after New York and Geneva, the nation, and Addis Ababa in specific has become home to numerous new star hotels.

According to World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Ethiopia's travel and tourism economy in 2018 grew by 48.6% the biggest in the world. Eight hundred seventy-one thousand foreign tourists visiting Ethiopia in the year 2016-2017 was an impressive surge from previous years, yet the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOCT) presumes this to upturn and forecasts that there will be 2.5 million arrivals per year by 2020.

Taitu Betul, an Ethiopian Empress and the wife of Emperor Menelik II built the first hotel in Ethiopia named "Taitu Hotel" in 1905 or 1906 in the middle of the city (Piazza) to provide foreign guests a place to rest and dine.

Ethiopia's hotel industry has shown progress over the previous few years. The government started working to standardized hotels by adopting a policy with the aim to flourish the industry and increase up its economic benefits.

According to the Ethiopian Second National Hotel Grading Report of 2019, eighty-eight Ethiopian hotels were identified to obtain star grading and among these, 83 hotels got rank from one up to four stars. Conferring to the 11th Annual survey by World Hospitality Group, Ethiopia positions fourth in hotel development in Africa and the country has seen another increase in conduit deals, up from thirty-one hotels, engaged by the international and regional chains such as Accor, Hilton, Aha and Latitude.

Projected unfulfilled mandate for single night rooms in hotels in Ethiopia in the years 2015 and 2020 will be 1.3 million and 3.1 million, correspondingly(Ebisa and Gobena, 2013)

JLL report validates that the nation has anticipated economic growth will positively influence corporate demand for hotel accommodation in the following few years. Ethiopia presently has more than 21 globally branded hotels under progress, which could add up to 4,300 rooms.

Customer's behavior and needs are changing. Digital populaces are beholding for quickness, technology and trustworthy practices, living air & lifestyle of the area where they are traveling. They want to learn as much as they can and on their own. The education system is ever fluctuating towards more self-learning, e learning and mechanisms that can familiarize to the competence of each pupil. The learning occurs on multiple devices through theory in online and practice in classes.

The need for reforms in hospitality management education raised due to significant changes in the competitive environment of business and education, along with changes in the macro-environment as well as significant differences in the current skill set and the anticipated skills. Students were found to be deficient in almost all the principal areas of the hospitality such as Human Resources, Food Production, Food and Beverage service, Front Office and House Keeping. (Kavita KM and Priyanka Sharma, 2011)

It is vital that education providers have a clear permissive of industry and employer anticipations of the abilities that graduates should formulate on accomplishment of a degree program. (Gilbert and Guerrier (1997)
According to Kay & Russette, (2000) it is crucial for hospitality educators to maintain a continuous discourse with industry specialists to keep curriculum current in order to meet industry needs, Hence, this study is aimed to investigate the pit falls in the hotel management curriculum offered in the higher educational institutions in Ethiopia taking the opinions of educators and industrial experts.

1.2 Statement of the problem:

Hospitality industry is growing worldwide and the need for skilled and talented work force in this sector demands higher attention pertaining to the delivery of quality services to their clienteles. The hotel management curricula, which founds necessary in the skill and competency development of students remains outdated and not in par with the international standards and the expectations of the industries. Hence, this study is aimed to investigate the pit falls in the hotel management curriculum offered in the higher educational institutions in Ethiopia

1.3 Objectives

The study's general objective is to investigate the hotel management's curriculum offered in higher educational institutions in Ethiopia. The specific objectives are:

➢ Portray the industrial leaders opinions of the courses to be offered in hotel management curriculum

➢ To identify the actual requirements in the courses and other competencies to be available in the hotel management curriculum

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study design and period

To bring out this research study, the investigator had used a Descriptive research design. The qualitative data was obtained from the hospitality leaders working in the star hotels in Gondar town using structured interviews and focus group discussions with the educators teaching hotel and tourism management subjects in various higher educational institutions in Ethiopia from March to May 2021. The study is registered with Research Registry www.researchregistry.com bearing registration id: researchregistry6822

2.2 Study Population

The study population comprises of managers working in star rated hotels in the Gondar town as well as the educators teaching hospitality and tourism courses in several higher educational institutions in Ethiopia.

2.3 Sample size and sampling procedure

Affording to the website data of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT), Ethiopia, there are seven star-rated hotels in Gondar town. These hotels hold 451 rooms, 520 beds, 223 male employees, and 379 female employees. Judgmental sampling technique was used in the study. Accordingly, the managers working in the star-rated hotels in Gondar town as well as the educators teaching hospitality and tourism courses in several higher educational institutions in Ethiopia were selected for the study purpose due to their relevancy to obtain qualitative data. The eventual sample size was fifteen, which includes seven managers and eight educators.

2.4 Data collection tool and procedure

The data collector explained this study's firmness to the managers and obtained proper appointment time in advance for the interview and the managers were interviewed based on the prefixed schedule. Further, Focus group discussion was also conducted with the selected educators to strengthen the study

2.5 Data processing and analysis

Information collected from the managers and educators was listened carefully and analyzed by the investigator. Descriptive statistics (percentages, frequency, mean) were used in the examination for a few replies, and narrative approaches were carried out in the interpretation to publicize their ideas and actions.

3. Results and Discussion

The Results and Discussion pertaining to responses from the interview and focus group discussions are furnished below:

3.1 Results

Table-1-Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (N=15)

Variables	N (%)
Gender	
Male	12(80.0%)
Female	3(20.0%)
Education	
Masters	13(86.7%)
PhD	2(13.3%)
Age(In years)	
25-30	3(20.0%)
31-40	4(26.7%)
41-50	5(33.3%)

Above 50	3(20.0%)
Marital Status	
Single	3(20.0%)
Married	12(80.0%)
Job Position	
Lecturer	2(13.3%)
Assistant Professor	4(26.7%)
Associate Professor	2(13.3%)
Front office Manager	1(6.7%)
Human Resource Manager	2(13.3%)
General Manager	4(26.7%)
Years of Service	
Less than 2 years	3(20.0%)
2-5 years	2(13.3%)
5-8 years	5(33.3%)
More than 8 years	5(33.3%)

Table-1 illustrates the socio-demographic characteristics of the managers and educators participated in the study where the majority 12(80.0%) are male, 13(86.7%) of them are Master degree holders, 5(33.3%) of their age falls under 41-50 years. Further, 12(80.0%) are married, 2(13.3%) working as Lecturer, Associate Professor and Human Resource Managers respectively, and others 1(6.7%) job title is Front Office Manager and 4(26.7%) job titles are Assistant Professor and General Manager respectively. Equally, 5(33.3%) participants' years of experience range from 5-8 years to more than 8 years.

3.2 Managers responses to interview questions

For the first objective "Portray the industrial leaders' opinions of the courses to be offered in hotel management curriculum", the industrial leaders such as the managers working in the hotels were

approached with various questions during the interview and the managers had given necessary supportive inputs that are presented below:

➢ For the Question """What are the problems that are identified from hotel management students when they are recruited for jobs in your hotel". The answers given by various managers during the interview are:

- Most of the students lack in the communications skills especially speaking in foreign languages
- They lack in technical skills in operating various machineries and tools
- They lack capability in working for long hours
- They lack in the practical knowledge about the various operations in hotels
- Poor leadership and team working skills
- Insufficient awareness of organizational culture and behavior
- Unaware of the recent trends, technologies exists in the hospitality businesses

➢ For the Question """What are the courses and other competencies to be available in the hotel management curriculum". The answers given by various managers during the interview are:

- The courses such as Front office operations, Housekeeping, Food preparation, Bakery and confectionery, Food and Beverage service, Food and Beverage Cost control, Event Management, Hygiene and Sanitation, Customer Care, Internship, Foreign Language courses such as English, French, German and Arabic and computer applications are essential for providing quality customer service in the hospitality industries.

➢ All the managers taken part in the interview announced that the following are the competencies required for the hotel management graduates in their curriculum:

- Ability to meet, greet and converse with customers in different languages
- Operate various software's in the hotel operations
- Potential to undertake reservations for room, meeting, conference and other facilities and events booking
- Empathy to listen and solve guest complaints
- Working in teams

- Capacity to work for long hours in any challenging situations
- Organize, coordinate and effectively run various events etc

3.3 Results of the Focus group discussion

➢ Focus group discussion was conducted with the educators (Teaching faculty experts) from various higher educational institutions in Ethiopia pertaining to the second objective of this paper "To identify the actual requirements in the courses and other competencies to be available in the hotel management curriculum". The responses/outcomes that are recorded from the discussion are furnished below:

- The educators carefully viewed the existing B.A Degree hotel management curriculum and raised their opinions on the positive and negative sides underlying in that.
- Almost all the participants collectively agreed that the major reforms to be undertaken in the existing curriculum that is offered for three years and pointed few pitfalls that are existing in various courses listed in the table below:

Table-2-Problems/Discrepancies existing in the existing hotel management curriculum

S.No	Name of the courses	Problems/Discrepancies identified
1	Food and Beverage Preparation I	Needs Credit and Course content modification
2	Food and Beverage Preparation II	Needs Content modification
3	Food and Beverage Preparation III	Needs Content modification
4	Food and Beverage Preparation IV	Needs Content modification
5	Food and Beverage Service I	Needs Content modification
6	Food and Beverage Service II	Needs Content modification
7	Food and Beverage Service III	Needs Content modification
8	Statistics for Management I	Name to be changed as "Introduction to Statistics"
9	Internship 1	Needs credit hour as well as duration modification

10	Internship 2	Needs credit hour as well as duration modification
11	Business statistics	To be removed as the same content is already been taught in Introduction to statistics
12	Food and beverage cost control	Needs name change as Food and beverage cost control I as there is going to be one more cost control course in the advance level
13	English for Travel and Tourism	Needs name change as "Hotel English"

- Almost all the participants jointly decided that the major reforms to be undertaken in the existing curriculum by changing the program to be offered for 4 years rather than 3 years and suggested adding few additional courses that are needed for the graduates to understand and actively work in the hospitality sectors. The details of the courses to be added are listed below:

Table-3-The details of the courses to be added in the hotel management curriculum

Name of the courses	Remarks
1. Innovation and Technology For Hotel Management 2. Food and beverage cost control II 3. Event management	These courses were suggested by educators to include in the curriculum based on industrial needs
4. Critical Thinking 5. Economics 6. Global trends 7. Geography of Ethiopia and the Horn	These courses were suggested by the educators for inclusion based on the new policy of MOSHE converting 3-year degrees to 4-year degrees as per

8. Math for Social Sciences 9. General Psychology 10. Physical Fitness	the direction from them to include for the students taking social science streams.

4. Discussion

The study carried out by Kyoo Yup Chung (2000) supports the similar idea of the managers' perception with regard to availability of the courses in the hotel management curriculum, as they are essential for providing quality customer service in the hospitality industries. Accordingly these courses such as Front office operations, Housekeeping, Food preparation, Bakery and confectionery, Food and Beverage service, Food and Beverage Cost control, Event Management, Hygiene and Sanitation, Customer Care, Internship, Foreign Language courses such as English, French, German and Arabic and computer applications are required to be available in the hotel management curriculum.

The studies conducted by Nurhazani Mohd Shariff (2014) and Pradyuman Singh Rathore (2017) confirms the managers opinions in having the Practicum internship is one of the practical courses believed to play influential role for the real value of the curriculum by balancing the needs of theory and practical.

The managers expectations of the required competencies of hotel management graduates pointed by them such as "Ability to meet, greet and converse with customers in different languages, operate various software's in the hotel operations; potential to undertake reservations for room, meeting, conference and other facilities. Further, empathy to listen and solve guest complaints, working in teams, capacity to work for long hours in any challenging situations as well as to organize, coordinate and effectively run various events etc" are also incited by the study conducted by Johanson, M., Ghiselli, R., Shea, L.J. and Roberts, C., (2010) and Raybould, M. and Wilkins, H., (2006)

The investigation undertaken by Min, H., Swanger, N. and Gursoy, D (2016) confirms the necessity in modifying the course content and adding additional courses that are required to meet

out the industries advancements, which were raised by the educators in the focus group discussions.

5. Conclusion

Ethiopia's hotel sector is in progressive stage from building new hotels to standardizing the existing hotels to various star categories that helps in the attraction of more international visitors. Hospitality education in Ethiopia needs a continuous change with modification and inclusion of new courses in the hotel management curriculum to meet out the alarming demand of the hospitality industries expectations and advancements.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest to disclose

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