

Higher Education Program Curricula Models in Tourism and Hospitality Education: A Review of the Literature

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The relevancy of program curricula in tourism and hospitality education has been called into question by key stakeholders in light of ongoing changes in the multifaceted tourism and hospitality industry. Various program models have been identified. Program content and quality of student preparedness have been debated. Balance and areas of emphasis in program curricula have also formed part of the discussion. This article explores the major program curricula issues that have been raised.

Keywords: Curricula, Tourism/Hospitality, Models

The tourism and hospitality (T&H) industry has experienced tremendous growth both in size and complexity during the latter half of the twentieth century (World Tourism Organization, n.d.) That growth in turn fuelled a dramatic increase in the number and types of T&H programs at two and four year colleges in the United States (Brent-Ritchie, 1995; Goodman & Sprague, 1991; Jafari, 1997; Riegel & Dallas, 1999). In addition, changes in the work environment, increased competition, a demanding and increasingly sophisticated clientele, advances in technology and the changing expectations of investors, employers and employees have profoundly impacted education and training as it relates to the industry (Breiter & Clements, 1996; International Labor Organization, 2001).

As the industry continues to evolve, program curricula have come under intense scrutiny from key stakeholders namely educators, alumni, students, and industry professionals (Casado, 2003; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Lefever & Withiam, 1998; Pavesic, 1984, 1993; Tribe 2002; Umbreit, 1992). Two possible reasons have been advanced for this increased attention: a) the need to satisfy institutional and industry demands (Cooper & Shepherd, 1997; Martin, Ryan, Regna, & Regna, 2002), and b) the industry as an academic discipline is relatively young compared to other established disciplines (Nelson & Dobson, 2003; Smith & Cooper, 2000). In order to meet the needs of the various stakeholders educational institutions have responded with program curricula reviews and revisions. Further more there appears to be consensus on the need to constantly review the program curriculum, a view which would seem to support what Briggs, Stark, & Rowland-Poplowski refer to as “continuous program planning” (2003, p. 364).

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Human resource issues particularly recruitment and retention ranks as one of the leading problems facing the T&H industry (Lefever & Withiam, 1998). Martin, Ryan, Regna & Regna (2002) described the competition for qualified people in the hospitality industry as fierce. At the same time T&H curricula is being criticized for not being able to adequately respond to the current and emerging needs of the industry. Some argue that tourism and hospitality programs are too technically oriented or what is termed “vocalization” of the curriculum (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Pavesic, 1993; Powers, 1980). Grubb and Lazerson (2005) contend that this “narrow vocationalism” is pervasive throughout higher education in the United States and “undermines genuine occupational preparation and also impoverishes the intellectual and civic roles that higher education can play” (p.16).

On the contrary Woods (2003) and Chipkin (2004) see the curriculum as being too theoretical, a notion that is also supported by Kay & Rusette (2000) and Casado (2003) and who also highlight the importance of technical skills/operations courses. Still others call for undergraduate curricula that are broad in scope and teach concepts and principles that can be applied across industry segments (Gunn, 1998; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Pavesic 1993) and which can serve as a base for lifelong learning (Nelson & Dopson, 2001; Ritchie, 1995). Additionally Woods (2003) notes that prospective students are confused about careers in hospitality management, tourism, and recreation sciences due to the fact that these majors are offered in different departments at different institutions. This article seeks to examine program curricula models that have been advanced and how they relate to the issues at hand. The research therefore sought to answer the following questions:

1. What T&H program curricula models have been advanced?
2. Are there philosophical concerns underlying the models that have been advanced?
3. How do program curricula play out in the current human resource issues facing the industry?

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Methodology

An extensive review and analysis of related literature formed the basis for answering the questions posed. Electronic databases including journal databases and online indexes were used to identify and locate studies. The following key words were used alone or in various combinations to generate as much data as possible: “curriculum development/planning,” “two year college/community college” “university” “hospitality” “tourism” “travel” “model” “theory” In addition organizational websites and books relevant to the topic were used. The results were reviewed, compared and categorized to provide preliminary answers to the questions. The resulting data was then synthesized and summarized leading to conclusions and recommendations. First, the results of the literature review were reviewed and compared several times for individual research questions. Following, conclusions were synthesized and summarized from the outcomes of step one, and used to inform recommendations.

The Evolution of T&H Programs in the United States

The first organized program for the industry was a hotel management curriculum at the first hotel school established in 1922 at Cornell University in Ithaca New York (McIntosh, 1992). The second program followed five years later with the establishment of a similar program at Michigan State University in East Lansing. The Hotel Administration major was then housed in the Division of Liberal Arts. In the 1930s programs commenced at Denver University in Colorado, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. According to Fletcher (1991) the greatest expansion of programs in hospitality education occurred at the community colleges.

The first Travel and Tourism Management four year major began in 1969 at the Michigan State University. A decade earlier in 1959 at the convening of the first annual meeting of the Western Council for Travel Research (WCTR) the need to advance the study of travel and tourism had been a focal point of discussion (Hunt & Layne, 1991). The information however on early programs is somewhat limited. Woods (1991) highlights the lack of scholarly work on the history of the industry in spite of its importance, a situation which he attributes to the applied nature of baccalaureate-level hospitality management programs.

With the exception of a few four year programs, hospitality education prior to 1950 concentrated on skills training. As the industry expanded and the need for more qualified employees grew, educational efforts in the 1950s and 60s focused on the associate degree which emphasized operational knowledge along with some business skills. In the 1970s and 80s as the industry rapidly evolved reflecting the need for a highly skilled workforce, there was a sharp increase in the number of four year programs. In the 1990s the industry continued to increase in complexity and so did the demand for knowledgeable and highly skilled managers with graduate degrees (Fletcher, 1991).

Curriculum Development

Toombs and Williams (1993) view the curriculum “as an intentional design for learning negotiated by faculty in light of their specialized knowledge and in the context of social expectations and student’s needs” (p. 183). Curriculum planning serves various purposes and can be for: teaching specific units of content, teaching particular courses, devising sequences of courses within a program or department, or developing curriculum plans for entire colleges (Stark, Lowther, Sharp & Arnold, 1997). The development of curricula program models are influenced by a number of factors. These include institutional culture, departmental culture, disciplinary culture, leadership, faculty background and their educational beliefs (Briggs, Stark, Rowland-Poplowski 2003; Chen & Groves, 1999; Ritche, 1995; Stark, Lowther, Sharp & Arnold, 1997). Differences in epistemological beliefs among faculty in the same discipline also impact program development

The goal of curriculum development is to facilitate learning. Gagne (1962, 1973) envisioned learning as occurring in a hierarchy where intellectual skills develop in a sequence, with prerequisite skills serving as the base for the development of higher order skills. Instruction accordingly is sequentially designed. Gagne’s (1985) focus on learning outcomes calls for instructional designers to use intellectual skills, verbal information, cognitive strategies, motor skills and attitudes when analyzing curriculum content. Transfer of learning is germane to this discussion. Gagne (1970) notes, that learning should be transferable to one’s life and occupation. The instructional designer therefore needs to incorporate experiences with real life and novel situations for the learner. Kolb’s (1984) model of Experiential Learning depicts learning as a four part process: “concrete experience” the result of direct experience, “reflective observation” the process of reflecting on past experience with new perspectives, “abstract conceptualizations” deriving meaning from the experience that inform future thought and action, and “active experimentation” whereby the learner tests what they have learned in situations that are more complex.

Curriculum design is an intensive process and one where a planning model can provide needed direction. The Tyler Model (Tyler, 1949) has been referred to in the T&H literature as one of the planning models that have been employed in program curricula planning. In his model, Tyler addressed the main sources from which the goals of education can be drawn and allows the planner to decide on how these goals should be refined into instructional objectives. The Model describes curriculum development as a rational process and identifies four aspects of the curriculum planning process in the form of questions:

- What are worthwhile educational objectives?
- What activities will allow us to accomplish these objectives?
- How should we organize the activities?
- How will we know if we've accomplished the activities?

Dobson and Tas (2004) stress the need for educators to comprehensively answer all four questions when applying this model to hospitality education. Smith and Cooper (2000) note the first question relates to identification of competencies and values. An important aspect of curriculum planning is the need to continuously review and revise the curriculum. "Continuous program planning" according to Briggs, Stark, & Rowland-Poplowski (2003) refer to models that demonstrate continuous reflection, reappraisal, and adjustment to the curriculum, the result of which can either lead to major, minor, or no change at all.

Program Models

Program curricula models have been approached in different ways. In this study a program curricula model consists of a sequence of courses in T&H programs which form the basis for matriculation. Four models identified in the literature are presented: Chen and Groves' (1999) model; Reigel and Dallas' (1999) approach; Koh's (1995) model, and Ritchie's (1995) hybrid model of tourism/hospitality education. There are also instances in the literature where specific courses, skills, and or competencies are highlighted but not within the specific framework of a program model but which nonetheless are relevant to the topic.

Chen and Groves' Model

Chen and Groves (1999) suggest a model that considers the philosophical differences between hospitality and tourism, which they argue is necessary for providing a philosophical foundation on which educational goals can be based. They acknowledge that different philosophies lead to different orientations which in turn lead to conflict. Philosophy also plays, a role in the administrative control under which tourism and hospitality programs fall. Three basic models were identified: Model 1 (M1), Model 2 (M2) and Model 3 (M3) each of which has a number of different structures. These structures are dependent on the extent of the roles that either tourism or hospitality occupies in the three models.

In *M1* tourism and hospitality are seen as achieving a balance. Each field maintains its identity but there are common areas of overlap that serve as processes between the two. These processes can be applied and transferred from one to the other. The areas that are different are viewed as content specific and not transferable between the two. Courses appropriate to each discipline and overlapping processes are identified. Instructional methods are also suggested. In this model the process is very important in relation to content. There are more institutional studies and research than job training, and practical aspects are often taught through internships and practica. Student outcomes from this model include the ability to solve problems, the ability to view the big picture and knowing how to function within a system.

In *M2* Hospitality is in a dominant role to tourism. Tourism is viewed as the travel sector in these models. The focus is on business management and specialization in the hospitality sector such as hotel, restaurants, and clubs among others. This approach is related to job training for a profession. Institutions with these programs offer two and or four year degrees. Tourism courses are taught as services to the hospitality industry. It is usually professionally based. "External influences such as practitioners in the business community often drive most of the changes that take place in the curricula" (p. 40).

In *M3* tourism is in a dominant position to hospitality. In these models the basic difference is the position of tourism to hospitality. Tourism in these models of curricula development focuses on economic development, with some concern for the influence of development on social, cultural, and ecological factors. The primary focus is on the development of infrastructure to support tourism which is viewed as a system. Hospitality is one segment of the system. Courses are suggested which in most four year programs are designed to focus on liberal arts, general tourism courses, and the remainder in student selected interest specialty. The intent is career preparation by infrastructure. A drawback to this model is the difficulty in finding employment.

Reigel and Dallas' Approaches

Reigel and Dallas (1999) used the term "approaches" to group programs with similar features. Most hospitality programs they wrote consist of four main areas: the major, general education and advanced learning skills, electives, and workplace experience. Five such approaches used to design courses in hospitality and tourism majors were identified: Craft/skill approaches, Tourism approaches, Food Systems/home economics approaches, Business Administration approaches and Combined approaches.

Craft/skill approaches. This approach emphasizes the functions and crafts employed in hospitality and tourism operations. Its goal is to help students acquire technical, operations, and in some cases, management and supervisory skills. These programs are common at community colleges, but also exist at some four year colleges.

Tourism approaches. Primarily these programs emphasize tourism content such as concepts, trends, and economic impact. The social sciences which contribute to the tourism field such as sociology, anthropology, and economics are essential program aspects. Often they include course work in business administration as well.

Food systems/home economics approaches. These programs have been usually housed or started in colleges of home economics. Heavy emphasis is placed on nutrition and food science, and food production and delivery systems, as well as both the natural and social sciences. Principles of management and administration are also stressed, but to a lesser degree than in business administration programs.

Business administration approaches. These programs are usually housed in colleges or schools of business administration. The focus is mainly on fields related to business administration such as management, finance, operations, and accounting with less attention given to products such as food or rooms.

Combined approaches. Programs in this category combine two or more of the previously mentioned approaches. Such programs are commonly found at independent hospitality schools and colleges with four year degree programs.

Riegel & Dallas explain that the general education component of the curriculum is what is left of the core liberal arts education which at one period was the dominant type of American undergraduate education. General education provides students with skills that enable them to pursue advanced studies and lifelong learning. Electives provide opportunities for the student to broaden his or her educational experience in ways that are personally important to them. Relevant work experience is an important part of the curriculum that is usually paid by an outside employer and ranges from between 400-1200 hours.

Ritchie's Hybrid Model of Tourism/Hospitality Education

In developing a *Hybrid* model Ritchie (1995) first critically reviewed existing models of tourism/hospitality programs. These included the Hotel School Model, The General Management with a Tourism Focus (GMTF), and the Liberal Arts program with a Tourism Focus (LAPTF).

The hotel school model. The most famous of this model is the Cornell University program. Traditionally this model has focused almost exclusively on preparing individuals for management roles in hotel and resort properties. In terms of structure the hotel school model consists of two main components: courses related to various aspects of the hotel property, and courses related to various aspects of management related to the successful running of a hotel. Such programs produce students who are knowledgeable and skilled in the operation and management of a hotel or resort property. The trade off is that students forego the broader liberal arts and they pursue a narrowly focused management program in comparison to the general undergraduate management program. Another area of weakness is that such programs make little reference to or linkage with the rest of the tourism industry although there has been some changes over the years.

The GMTF model. The GMTF attempts to broaden the educational experience of students while still providing a strong industry orientation. The core of the program is essentially a general management education that includes liberal arts, languages and mathematics. Instead of concentrating on more advanced courses in a particular functional area of business, the program enables students to take courses related to the tourism hospitality industry. Some programs may focus on one specific sub-sector. To gain operational knowledge and skills provided by *Hotel Schools*, GMTF programs frequently include a number of practical work terms as an integral part of the learning process. Such programs are usually located in schools of business and other academic units. They were then relatively new at the time the article was written and did not have a track record.

LAPTF programs. These programs include a very broad range of program types namely *Discipline* based programs, *Recreation or Leisure Studies* program, and *Multidisciplinary Majors in Tourism Studies*. *Discipline based* programs are most commonly related to fields of geography economics or sociology. They tend to depend on the reputation of one or two individuals and as such have not proven to be successful on a broad scale. *Recreation or Leisure Studies* program frequently include a significant tourism component and are multidisciplinary in nature. They draw heavily on the social sciences along with input from such fields as physical education and computer science. A distinguishing feature of these programs is that they tend to have an academic as opposed to an industry

orientation. *Multidisciplinary Majors in Tourism Studies* are similar to the previously mentioned category but distinguished by the fact that they tend to have a much stronger industry orientation. Consequently they offer management related courses, place greater emphasis on language training, and increasingly offer courses which relate tourism planning to environmental issues.

The major criticism of LAPTF programs is that they are too theoretical and hence do not sufficiently address industry needs. However it provides students with a broader understanding of the societal dimensions of tourism and its impacts. It also offers students a high degree of flexibility in selecting courses of interest that are not tourism related but provides them with knowledge that is highly relevant for success in the field. They can be easily adapted to incorporate new topics and issues than are more structured programs.

Based on the review of the models Ritchie proposed a *hybrid model* comprising of two programs: the traditional *Hotel School* model and the *hybrid model of tourism/hospitality education*. The proposed hybrid model would aim to train managers and future industry leaders for the tourism industry in its broadest sense. The features of the program would include:

- A five-year program of studies which includes a total of twenty four months of practical work experience as an integral part of the program.
- A strong management orientation balanced with an emphasis on those social science disciplines which contribute to a broader understanding of tourism and all its impacts.
- A balanced perspective concerning tourism development and environmental protection and enhancement.
- The development of language capabilities.
- A strong emphasis on the development of close working relationships with tourism organizations in both the public and private sectors.

This *Hybrid* model was recently implemented in institutions in Australia, Britain, and Canada. The Canadian program is a four-year program offering a Bachelor of Hotel and Restaurant Management degree (Ritchie, Hudson & Sheehan, 2002). The program is organized in a 2+2 model where the first two years focus on general management knowledge and hotel and restaurant management skills, and the next two on general management knowledge, tourism management knowledge and general education knowledge. The program is especially geared towards students who are seeking long-term careers as opposed to a job in the industry. Its major strength is the ability to combine practical training with a broader based management education. The authors also indicate that graduates from this program are highly sought after by industry. Weaknesses cited include the continued skepticism with which tourism is viewed in the academic community, and the reluctance with few exceptions of the tourism sector in Canada to provide funding to support such programs.

Koh's Model

Koh (1995) sought to determine the necessary elements in the four year tourism management curriculum. He utilized a two phase study the first of which involved a panel of industrial experts and the second involving tourism executives and educators, in which the findings of the first phase were validated. The study identified twenty six elements that were classified under four general headings: general education, business education, tourism education and experiential education as comprising the four year tourism management curriculum. Of the twenty six elements fifteen were found to be very important each having a mean score of at least 4.00 on a five point scale. Interestingly though, it was found that the tourism executives and the educators disagreed significantly on twelve of the twenty six elements for which two possible explanations were suggested:

- 1) Most tourism educators are of the belief that tourism education should be designed in accordance with the traditional ideals of higher education, while industry is more concerned about getting technically competent graduates and 2) either educators are reluctant to concede to the demands of the industry or they remain unaware of what the industry wants (p. 69)

Other pertinent concerns regarding T&H program curricula center on either broader or more narrowly defined aspects. Casado (2003) found that alumni, recruiters and human resource directors of lodging and restaurant companies, overall agreed that a balanced curriculum is one that combines management, business, and operation concepts. Breiter and Clements (1996) focused on the specific management skills that hospitality managers considered important for success in the industry, while Kay and Rusette (2000) examined competencies.

Degrees of Concern

The models offer curricula perspectives that reflect the broad range of occupational and other interests as well as current thinking within the industry. They are also symptomatic of the continuing effort to define the field. The Chen and Groves (1999) model examines curricula from the perspective of the disciplinary influences exerted on programs in relation to their administrative home within the institution. Such influences impact program content as

well as the type of students attracted to them. The various approaches of Reigel and Dallas (1999) also allude to some amount of institutional location influence and disciplinary orientation as do the models of Ritchie (1995). Koh's (1995) model specifically examines a tourism management program and what course components are important to such a program. His view of the program curricular is similar to Reigel and Dallas in terms of the four major headings that he used to classify his elements. Similarities can also be found among Chen and Groves (1999) *M2*, Reigel and Dallas' (1995) *Craft/skill* and *Food Systems/home economics* approaches, and Ritchie's (1995) *Hotel School* model. The LPTF model of Ritchie (1995) most clearly demonstrates the disciplinary orientation of some programs. Differences among models stand out when a particular structure is more narrowly defined.

Manifestations in the Workplace

T&H employers readily acknowledge the human resource problems within the industry. Educators and industry professionals alike point out the need to prepare a more competent workforce. Smith and Cooper (2000) attribute problems being experienced to the slow recognition of the role of tourism education, training, and human resource development to the competitiveness of the industry. When the models are examined it appears that some may not be adequately addressing the issues expressed. In the M3 model Chen and Groves (1999) suggest that students from these programs experience difficulty in finding employment in the industry, a situation which in part is due to the apparent disconnect between course work and practitioner based programs. A similar situation exists with the LPTF model of Ritchie (1995). It is often criticized for its theoretical focus and limited attention to the needs of the industry. The more specialized programs like the Hotel School Model (Ritchie, 1995) and particularly those of four year programs also come in for scrutiny. In some cases it is felt that while graduates are technically and or operationally competent, there is need to develop managerial competence.

Tourism training as opposed to education has been in existence for some time and has provided the industry workforce with the necessary craft skills (Cooper and Shepherd, 1997). At the two year institutions where the *Craft/skill approaches* are common (Reigel & Dallas, 1999), Goodman and Sprague (1991) point out that such programs recognize the many skill levels in the industry and therefore generate large numbers of well trained line level employees and supervisors. Koh's (1995) model presents another perspective concerning T&H programs: the differences between industry and educators as to curricula goals and hence the type of graduates that should come from these programs. This was evident in the significant disagreement between educators and industry executives on twelve of the twenty six elements. Experiential learning in the form of work experience is a vital component of the curricula and also falls victim to the different objectives among parties. Educators and students want a realistic experience that will provide the student a structured situation for growth and development. However industry may not always share the same objective when confronted with economic pressures or may lack the kind of policies that would optimize employee development (Cooper & Shepherd, 1997). Program curricula therefore factors into the human resource development issues in the industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although T&H as an academic field of study is relatively young compared to other established disciplines some strides have been made in the area of program curricula development. But as is evident there are complex issues surrounding such programs. A close examination of the models reveal strengths and weaknesses as well as the influences which come to bare on program development. Chen and Groves (1999) pointed out that philosophical orientation between tourism and hospitality faculty is a significant area of contention. This also bears out in the debate over whether the curriculum is too theoretically oriented or whether it is too vocational. Closely associated is the institutional location of such programs and its affect on students' choice of majors. Another important observation relates to the sources for academic goals which Tyler (1949) identified as the student, the subject matter, and society. Societal stakeholders however, do not always agree on the same objectives.

From the foregoing it is clear that philosophical underpinnings play a key role in program curricula development. It is therefore important for those involved in program curricula development within a department, college or other organization be aware of the role that philosophical beliefs play in influencing program decisions. It would be important to examine prevailing philosophies within the controlling unit with the intent to develop a guiding philosophy on which educational goals are based and which can best serve the interest of stakeholders. Program content analysis using the learner outcomes as outlined by Gagne (1988) can be referent point for addressing the issue of student preparedness for the workplace. In so doing the issue of transferability will also be addressed. This is especially relevant for program models where job prospects are low or where the relation to

industry appears to be weak. Since the learner is preparing for life's many roles program curricula should provide contextual situations in order to optimize learner outcomes.

Implications for HRD

Human resource development professionals will have to concern themselves with the types of curricula issues in T&H programs and how these impact human resource development needs of the industry. Since the quality of the workforce is to some extent dependent on program curricula of higher education institutions, the human resource professional is responsible for assisting these potential employees to effectively fulfill their roles within the organization. Knowledge of T&H program curricula provides the HRD professional with information that can be useful in training decisions for example by identifying possible areas in need of development. An employee from one program will very likely possess certain skills sets with a particular industry orientation. Professionals can play a consulting role in bridging the gap between the various stakeholders. Knowledge of philosophical orientation is also instructive for the HRD professional when working with clients and or stakeholders. In an industry often characterized as having poor human resource policies, it is incumbent on the human resource development professional to advocate for the appropriate policies and structures to be put in the work setting so that employee capacity to perform can be more effectively addressed.

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