

Hospitality Education: Is it Worth It? An Investigation of Industry and Student Perceptions of the Relevance of Hospitality Management Education.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess industry and student perceptions of the benefits of hospitality education. This was achieved by determining industry and student opinions concerning the relevance of hospitality education programmes. A sample was conducted of 150 hotel managers within New Zealand's hospitality industry. Out of a total 150 respondents, 67 valid responses were returned and subsequently analysed providing a response rate of 44.6%. Additionally, a total of 61 surveys were sent to students undertaking hospitality management education from CPIT and Otago Polytechnic, 43 were subsequently returned giving a response rate of 70.4%.

The results indicate that both the student and industry respondents view the skills taught within hospitality education curriculum as relevant to their requirements. However, both groups of respondents raised concern over the omission of industry placement from curriculum and recommended its reinstatement.

It was also identified that industry respondents use educational background as a factor in the recruitment process however, this was not the only consideration, with educational background being rated as secondary to personal skills and attributes and experience. Secondly, the results also indicate that there was no direct relationship between an industry manager's lack of educational background in the area of hospitality and acceptance of candidates who had completed hospitality education.

The results from this study also indicate that a significant number of industry representatives believe that educational institutions are out of touch with industry needs in terms of educating future hospitality workers and argue that a greater level of consultation is needed between educational institutions in the provision of hospitality education in order to keep educational programmes up-to-date with industry requirements.

Although this research has identified favourable attitudes on behalf of both the industry and student respondents towards hospitality education providers and their programmes it is evident that comprehensive effort on behalf of educational institutions is needed to increase the level of industry support and involvement in the development and provision of hospitality education programmes. This study identifies that the key to increasing industry support for tertiary education programmes in hospitality lies in encouraging cooperation between education providers, students and industry in the development of effective working relationships, which in turn will aid in the creation of relevant educational programmes that meet industry needs. In order to aid in the continued professionalisation of the industry, this study recommends that educational institutions should consider use the issues raised in this research as a tool in developing effective hospitality education programmes.