Assessment of the Practicum Training Program of B.S. Tourism in Selected Universities: Basis for Proposed Practicum Training Program

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Abstract

This study intends to assess the Practicum Training Program of B.S. Tourism of selected universities in the Philippines in terms of selected components and its relevance to industry needs. The descriptive method was used to expound on the actual situation and the concerns of the personalities involved in the study with the use of the questionnaire as the major gathering tool. Three groups of respondents were selected for this study. The first group was composed of faculty members; the second group was comprised of students while the third group consisted of the industry practitioners from selected hotels and travel and aviation agencies. Findings revealed that the features of the B.S. Tourism curricula of the selected universities in terms of course outlines, qualifications of school administrators and faculty members, and facilities and equipment are very relevant to the requirement of the Commission on Higher Education. The practicum training programs are generally effective particularly in terms of the attainment of the course objectives, as assessed by the respondent tourism graduates and faculty members. Moreover, practicum training programs of the selected universities are relevant and beneficial in enhancing the self-development, job knowledge, communication skills and customer relations skills of the tourism graduates, as assessed by both the respondent tourism graduates and industry practitioners. However, the conduct of the practicum training programs of the selected universities is beset with problems and the most common problem identified by the respondents is the heavy class loads for students, that is, practicum being taken simultaneously with other major subjects. Other problems identified by most of the respondents are the incongruence of the classroom learning experiences to practicum learning objectives and that students do not get enough exposure in the field.

Keywords: tourism outlines, qualification of school administration, facilities and equipments, course objectives, training contents.

Introduction

The tourism industry has become a major stimulus for economic development in developed and developing countries and even in underdeveloped countries that are struggling to bring money in under uncertain economic circumstances. For instance, Cruz (2004) cited that tourism is highly regarded as a major economic and cultural activity in the Philippines. This is highlighted by tourist arrivals in the Philippines which have grown to almost twenty times since the adoption of mass tourism in 1973. This explosive growth of tourism has been brought about by both external forces and deliberate policies of the government. However, a recent assessment of tourism industry in the Philippines by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) led to reveal that the Philippines is yet to fulfill its considerable potential and establish itself as a premier tourist destination is Asia, taking advantage of the increasing development of the Asia Pacific region into one of the world's fastest growing tourist regions. Consequently, it has fallen behind with many of its neighbors, who have achieved substantial rates of tourism growth and development even in the most trying of circumstances. Despite many political, economic and nature based factors having a significantly negative impact on Asian tourism in recent years, countries such as Thailand and China have managed to overcome these obstacles and strengthen or at least maintain in their market position. In the light of the existing circumstances and with the assistance of WTO specialist, a series of policies have been formulated with a view to reviving tourism in the Philippines, through socio-economic development, tourism sector development, as well as short and long-term policy actions. The tourism industry consists of firms and people who serve the needs of travelers, direct providers such as airlines, the hotel sector, restaurant, travel agents, shops selling goods, and this requires staffs who can convey a high level of service. Hospitality enterprises develop as a direct consequence of the development of the tourism industry and this turn, boosts the local economy in terms of jobs growth, bringing in travelers and revenue.

Literature Review

According to Lockwood and Medlik (2002), the tourism and hospitality industry is one of the world's major industries and so greatly influences the world's economic development, countries balances of payments, employment and regional balances. They are also important socially, culturally, environmentally for those become tourists and for their hosts. The Arthur Anderson report (2004) labor shortages on the horizon" cited that training in the accommodation sector remains an "in-house" activity with on-the-job training as the most common practice to train front-line employees. Herein lays the polarization which exists between industry and

educational programs.

The Word Tourism Organization (WTO) (cited in Escoffier and Remington), 2002) defines tourism as "the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Braun Stein (2002) cited that a major benefit of the practicum training program was the opportunity for employers to screen potential future employees. This means that the practicum training program was seen by employers as part of an effective graduate recruitment strategy leading to leading to reduced costs of recruitment and training and better graduate retention rates.

Boud, Solomon and Symes (2001) cited 'work-integrated-learning (WIL) and work-based-learning" as terms used to describe a class of university programs that bring together universities and work organizations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces. Robothan (2004) explains that the amount of learning that trainees transfer from the training room to the work place depends mainly on two aspects of the workplace conditions, the degree of similarity between what occurs in the workplace and what was learned in the training program and how easily the trainees can integrate into the work environment the skills or knowledge gained in the training program. Sison (2003) identified that one of the type of training is the "learners in the industry" and these are usually graduating students in college who are required to gain experience as a requirement for graduation. Cubit's (2004) study was to understand from the describe experiences of disadvantages individuals enrolled in a technology-based job-training program what their views were of the various components of the training program.

Methodology

The descriptive was used to expound on the actual situation and the concerns of the personalities involved in the study. According to Best (2001) the descriptive method typically employs' a survey or an assessment approach for its purpose is to collect information that permits one to discuss the characteristic of person and their perceptions. Three groups or respondents were selected for this study. The first group was composed of thirty (30) faculty members of five (5) selected colleges and universities The second group of respondents was the student group composed of one hundred fifty (150) B.S. Tourism graduates   The third group was composed of (50) industry practitioners from selected hotels and travel and aviation agencies in the country.

The Findings

In the analysis and interpretation of data and the findings of the subject based on the results of the study.

1. **Relevance of the Features of the B.S. Tourism Curricula of the Subject Schools to the Requirement of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as Assessed by the Faculty Respondents**

1.1   Tourism Course Outline

Table 1.Assessment of the Faculty Members on the Relevance of the Features of the B.S. Tourism Curricula of the Subject Schools to the Requirements of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Terms of the Tourism
Course Outlines.

INDICATORS	ABE WM	OLIVAREZ WM	PATTS WM	SOUTHV WM	PERPETUAL	AWM	Verbal Interpret
1.The Tourism Course includes subjects under The Tourism Core, Hotel Operations Core, Travel Management Core, Business Education Core, major subjects and practicum.	4.75	4.75	4.78	4.57	4.86	4.73	Highly Relevant
2.The Tourism Core includes the following 3-unit subjects: a. Principles of Tourism	4.75	4.50	4.89	4.86	4.83	4.80	Highly Relevant
b. Tourism Planning & Development	4.75	4.50	4.89	4.86	4.83	4.80	HR
c. Languages	4.75	5.00	4.89	4.71	4.83	4.80	HR
3.The Hotel Operations Core includes a 3-unit Introduction to Hotel Operations course with front office and mock room demo.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	Highly Relevant
4. The Travel Management Core includes a 3-unit Introduction Travel and Tour course	4.75	5.00	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.93	Highly Relevant
5. The Business Education Core includes the following 3-unit subjects: a. Principles of Management	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	Highly Relevant
b. Principles of Marketing	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.97	HR
c. Entrepreneurship & Business Planning	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.97	HR
d. Accounting Appreciation for Non-Accountants	4.75	5.00	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.93	Highly Relevant
e. Basic Finance	5.00	4.75	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.93	HR
f. Computer Application for the Hospitality Industry with Hands-on activities	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.97	Highly Relevant
6. The major subjects included in the curriculum are relevant to the needs of the area/region	4.75	5.00	4.89	5.00	5.00	4.93	Highly Relevant
7. The practicum has a minimum of 200 hours for each area of specialization.	4.75	4.75	5.00	4.71	4.83	4.83	Highly Relevant
Overall Mean	4.86	4.89	4.95	4.84	4.94	4.90	
Verbal Interpretation	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR	

As seen in the table 1 the B.S. Tourism Curricula of the subject Schools strongly complied with the requirements of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in terms of the tourism course outlines. This finding was

supported by the "highly relevant" ratings of the faculty respondents on all indicators as denoted by average weighted means which range   from 4.73 to 5.00.

1.2   Qualifications of School Administrators and Faculty Members

Table 2 Assessment of the Faculty Members on the Relevance of the Features of the B.S. Tourism Curricula of the Subject Schools of the Requirements of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Terms of the Qualifications of School Administrators and Faculty Members

INDICATORS	ABE	OLIVAREZ	PATTS	SOUTH VILLE	PERPETUAL HELP	AWM	Verbal Interpret.
	WM	WM	WM	WM	WM		
1. The school administrator is at least a Master's Degree holder and has a degree in Hospitality Management or related fields either in the undergraduate or the graduate studies	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.97	Highly Relevant
2. The school administrator has at least three (3) years of teaching experience in the tertiary level.	4.75	4.75	4.89	4.71	4.83	4.80	Highly Relevant
3. The school administrator has taken a skills based competency training course, seminar or workshop	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	Highly Relevant
4. The school administrator is a full-time employee of the institution.	4.75	5.00	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.93	Highly Relevant
5. The school administrator is an active member of a hospitality related professional / educational association.	5.00	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.97	Highly Relevant
6. Faculty members are at least Master's Degree holders and have a degree in Hospitality Management or related fields either in the undergraduate or graduate studies.	4.75	4.50	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.87	Highly Relevant
7. Faculty members have an equivalent number of years of professional experience in the field of specialization or the industry.	4.50	4.50	4.89	4.86	4.83	4.77	Highly Relevant
8. At least 25% of the total number of faculty members teaching the professional subjects are MA degree holders	4.50	4.50	4.78	4.71	4.67	4.67	Highly Relevant
9. At least 40% of the total numbers of units of professional subjects are taught by a full-time faculty core.	4.75	4.75	5.00	4.86	5.00	4.90	Highly Relevant
OVERALL MEAN	4.78	4.75	4.95	4.86	4.93	4.87	
VERBAL INTERPRETATION	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR	Highly Relevant	

Table 2 shows the relevance of the features of the B.S. Tourism Curricula of the subject schools to the requirements of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in terms of the qualifications of the schools administrators and faculty members. Tabular data reveal the "highly relevant" mean ratings ranging from 4.67 to 5.00 on all indicators.

1.3   Facilities and Equipment

Table 3.Assessment of the Faculty Members on the Relevance of the Features of the B.S. Tourism Curricula of the Subject Schools to be Requirements of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Terms of the Qualifications of the Facilities and Equipments.

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INDICATORS	ABE	OLIVAREZ	PATTS	SOUTHVILLE	PERPETUAL HELP	AWM	Verbal Interpret.
	WM	WM	WM	WM	WM		
1. There is a mock-up travel counter provided with the following:							
a. desks and counters	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	Highly Relevant
b. filing cabinets	5.00	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.97	Highly Relevant
c. telephone and communication facilities	4.25	4.00	4.11	3.86	4.17	4.07	Highly Relevant
d. waiting area	4.50	4.50	4.89	4.86	4.83	4.77	Highly Relevant
e. accounting machine	4.50	4.25	4.44	4.14	4.17	4.30	Highly Relevant
f. machine	5.00	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.97	Highly Relevant
OVERALL MEAN	4.71	4.54	4.74	4.64	4.70	4.68	
VERBAL INTERPRETATION	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR	Highly Relevant	

As shown in the table 3, the mock-up level travel counters in the subject schools are very adequately provided with the following facilities and equipment as gleaned from the "highly relevant" ratings of the faculty respondents.

2.1 Course Objectives

Table 4.Assessment of the Respondent Tourism Graduates Regarding the Practicum Programs of B.S. Tourism of the Subject Schools in Terms of Course Objectives.

INDICATORS	OLIVAREZ	PATTS	PERPETUAL HELP	AWM	Verbal Interpret.
	WM	WM	WM		
1. Provides the student with an opportunity to gain practical experience in a recreation, parks, or tourism setting under professional supervision	4.24	4.46	4.32	4.40	Agree
2. Provides the student with an on-site orientation experience for the purpose of broadening his/her knowledge of Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management as a profession	4.20	4.36	4.28	4.32	Agree
3. Supplements the student's classroom experience and allow for adjustment or redirection of knowledge, skills, and abilities.	3.92	4.25	4.04	4.16	Agree
4. Assists the student in understanding his/her own capabilities and select areas of specialization for future course work and employment	3.88	4.30	4.12	4.20	Agree
5. Provides opportunity to test the B.S. Tourism Program against the changing times.	3.84	4.25	4.12	4.16	Agree
6. Stimulates the professional growth of the student trainees.	4.16	4.39	4.20	4.32	Agree
7. Enhances the work values, skills and personality of the student trainees.	3.60	4.04	3.76	3.92	Agree
OVERALL MEAN	3.98	4.29	4.12	4.21	Agree
VERBAL INTERPRETATION	Agree	Agree	Agree	AGREE	

Table 4 presents the assessment of the respondent tourism graduates regarding the practicum training programs of B.S. Tourism of the subject schools in terms of course objectives. The respondent tourism graduates consistently posted "agree" responses on all indicators with average weighted means ranging from 3.92 to 4.40.

2.2 Training Content

Table 5.Assessment of the Respondent Tourism Graduates Regarding the Practicum Training Programs of B.S. Tourism of the Subject Schools in Terms of Training Content.

INDICATORS	OLIVAREZ	PATTS	PERPETUAL HELP	AWM	Verbal Interpret.
	WM	WM	WM		
1. The content of the practicum training course had a practical application on the B.S. Tourism graduates' jobs.	3.80	4.32	3.88	4.16	Agree
2. The content of the practicum training course has been valuable for the career development of the B.S. Tourism graduates.	3.84	4.21	4.04	4.12	Agree
3. The content of the training is interesting.	4.08	4.13	4.12	4.12	Agree
4. The training content was well-organized.	3.72	3.98	3.88	3.92	Agree
5. The training program responds to the needs of the tourism industry.	3.88	4.16	3.96	4.08	Agree
OVERALL MEAN	3.86	4.16	3.98	4.08	Agree
VERBAL INTERPRETATION	Agree	Agree	Agree	AGREE	

Table 5 shows the assessment of the respondent tourism graduates regarding the practicum training programs of B.S. Tourism of the subject schools in terms of training content.   The respondent tourism graduates posted "agree" responses on all items with average weighted means ranging from 3.92 to 4.16.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the significant findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn: Firstly, the features of the B.S. Tourism curricula of the subject schools in terms of the course outlines, qualifications of school administrators and faculty members, and facilities and equipment are very relevant to the requirement of the Commission on Higher Education as evidenced by their very high level of compliance to the minimum requirements set by the CHED memo No. 31, Series of 2001. Secondly, the practicum Training programs of the subject schools are generally effective particularly in terms of the attainment of the course objectives, as assessed by the respondent tourism graduates and faculty members. To conduct of the practicum training programs of the subject schools is beset with problems and the most common problem identified by the respondent faculty members, tourism graduates and industry practitioners is the heavy class loads for students, that is, practicum being taken simultaneously with other major subjects. Other problems identified by most of the respondents are the incongruence of the classroom learning experiences to practicum learning objectives and that students do not get enough exposure in the field.

It is recommended therefore that the selected schools should not only put in meeting the minimum requirements set by the CHED but should further improve its B.S. Tourism curricula to be at par with international standards since the trend now is globalization. This could be achieved by establishing stronger linkages with the tourism industry and by increasing industry's presence on the advisory board of the B.S. Tourism in the Universities/colleges. Their influence would help develop and design curriculum format applicable to industry needs. Likewise, monitoring techniques employed in the practicum training program should be improved while expanding the program to provide optimum work experience of the tourism students. Also, to develop methods of electronic monitoring by the faculty coordinator/advisor to assess the tourism student's process in a timely manner. Bi-weekly or monthly student portfolio could be completed on-line for direct submission to the faculty coordinator/advisor facilitating timely feedback on student progress. And lastly, concerned education officials and universities/college officials should consider the institutionalization and adoption of the proposed manual/guidelines for the conduct of the practicum training program for the B.S. Hospitality Management (HM)/Tourism degree in this study.

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