Book review

Innovation in Hospitality Education: Anticipating the Educational Needs of a Changing Profession

**Edited by Jeroen A. Oskam,
Daphne M. Dekker and Karoline Wiegerink**
Springer
2018
Review DOI
10.1108/JTF-03-2019-080

This book addresses what is surely a critical issue for the hospitality industry, namely, education and training in an era where the future of work in every industrial and commercial sector is being hotly debated. As the hospitality industry looks to the future, much of the work that has been associated with the industry and which continues to be the principal driver of its high employment characteristic, namely, low-skilled, repetitive and low-status jobs, may well be facing change or indeed extinction from the onslaught of demographic change, changing customer expectations and advances in technology (Solnet *et al.*, 2016). Indeed, it is this changing world of work in the hospitality industry that the editors of this book claim it addresses within the context of innovation in hospitality education.

Editor Oskam in Chapter 1 echoes the views of leading human resource researchers in tourism, saying that change in hospitality education is being driven by a range of elements including globalization, technological advancements, the increased complexity of business as well as generic advancements and changes in educational theory. He makes the case that the changes now under way and in the future will inevitably push hospitality education away from its practice-based training focus and accelerate the evolution of hospitality education to the higher levels of learning, the sort of learning described in Bloom's Levels 4–6, namely, analysis, evaluate and create (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). He points out finally that notwithstanding this evolution away from a "vocational approach," hospitality education should reflect the complexity of the industry it serves. In other words, hospitality education needs to be reflective, adaptable and free from the traditions of the past and to some extent

continuing paradigms that have defined its development over the past century.

For the most part, the book achieves its goal of identifying how educational change will meet the needs of the hospitality industry, at least in the short to medium term (two to seven years). The book begins this discourse by first tracing the historical development of hospitality education worldwide in Chapters 1–3. Predictably, this review focuses on the relative dichotomy between the development of industry-based training and education programs, primarily in Europe compared with the more academic approach which developed primarily in the USA beginning with the Cornell Hotel School almost 100 years ago. In summarizing this development, Oskam in Chapter 1 refers to "both different visions" and concludes that neither approach is sacrosanct but rather that hospitality education and educators must be ready to "[...] continuously adjust curricula to developments in the profession and in its environment," as sentiment that most readers would probably agree with (Oskam *et al.*, 2018a).

The majority of the book's discussion focuses on existing educational paradigms and discusses how they can be expanded, improved and how they can serve as a foundation for innovation. The two major sections of the book deal appropriately with what the editors call the design of hospitality curriculum (Section 2) and curriculum innovations (Section 3). These two sections comprise nine chapters in the book. Most of the chapters in Section 2 deal with innovations that are well known to hospitality educators such as broadening the scope of hospitality (Chapter 4), internationalizing the curriculum (Chapter 6) and the impact of information technology on the way hospitality does business (Chapter 7). Similarly, most of the chapters in Section 3 deal with familiar topics such as continuous improvement within the complex bureaucratic environments of education providers (Chapter 8), developing intercultural competence in students (Chapter 9), an attempt to better match curriculum with industry needs (Chapter 11) and the

© Michael Conlin. Published in *Journal of Tourism Futures*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

integration of simulations into the hospitality curriculum (Chapter 12).

Two of the chapters deal with subjects that warrant specific discussion in this review. In Chapter 5, Editor Dekker describes the concept of Guest Delight and ways in which the behaviors of employees that result in Guest Delight might be integrated into curriculum. She concludes by stating “[...] genuinely hospitable behavior entails selecting staff with certain personality traits, which are therefore equally important in education” (Oskam *et al.*, 2018b). This discussion addresses a conundrum which hospitality educators have struggled with for decades, namely, what is the link between traditional curriculums, be it practical or academic and the guest service experience. Indeed, the widely respected Canadian Hotelier Isadore Sharp (n.d.), the Founder of Four Seasons Hotels Limited, once said “We can upgrade technical skills with training, but no amount of training can change ingrained attitudes or create responsibility and initiative.” What Mr. Sharp meant, in this quote and many variations over the years, is that the technical skills of providing service and managing hotel companies can be taught but by inference, developing the appropriate attitude on the part of employees that results in Guest Delight is at best, very difficult. And if that is a correct inference of Mr Sharp’s thinking, what role do schools play in the preparation of people to work in the hospitality industry? In this chapter, Dekker points to one way hospitality educators can respond to this challenge. Somewhat ironically in a book that has a focus on change and the future, this innovation harkens back to the very old and traditional concept of the hotelier as “mein (or mine) host” (German or English – take your pick).

In Chapter 10 partly titled “Addressing the Challenges Facing Hospitality Academic Programs in the USA [...]”, Ammachathram and Anderson describe how the role of research is critical if hospitality programs are to be successful in the university environment. They promote the notion of “action research” involving the university, the hospitality industry and government. While this is commendable, it does not specifically address the real challenge which hospitality education, especially in universities, faces, namely, the diminishing importance and relevance which these institutions seem to attribute to hospitality education and research. The recent posting on Trinet by Larry Dwyer about the closing of the

tourism program at the University of New South Wales is just the most recent example of universities shedding their tourism and hospitality units. The apparent demise of tourism and hospitality programs at the University of Calgary and the closing of The Scottish Hotel School at the University of Strathclyde demonstrate that this is not an aberration or particularly new. It would seem that in addition to a need to professionalize work in the hospitality industry, there is a parallel struggle to ensure that education and research in tourism and hospitality is recognized and valued in academia.

In closing, this review would be remiss if it did not mention what is not in the book. Readers of this journal will find little in the way of discussion about truly future development of education in the book. The book’s focus is on innovation and incremental change and primarily with reference to curriculum. It can be argued that delivery and formatting of content will be equally important and subject to change in the longer term – and indeed in the shorter term – but the book does not address these areas.

What, for example, will be the nature of hospitality education in 2050? And will any of the innovations discussed in this book be relevant then?

Michael Conlin

Michael Conlin is based at Okanagan College, Kelowna, Canada.

References

- Anderson, L.W. and Krathwohl, D.R. (Eds) (2001), *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, ISBN: 978-0-8013-1903-7, Allyn & Bacon.
- Oskam, J.A., Dekker, D.M. and Wiegerink, K. (Eds) (2018a), *Innovation in Hospitality Education*, Springer, p. 7.
- Oskam, J.A., Dekker, D.M. and Wiegerink, K. (Eds) (2018b), *Innovation in Hospitality Education*, Springer, p. 73.
- Sharp, I. (n.d.), “Isadore Sharp Quotes”, Goodreads.com, Web, July 1, 2018.
- Solnet, D., Baum, T., Robinson, R.N.S. and Lockstone-Binney, L. (2016), “What about the workers? Roles and skills for employees in hotels of the future”, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 212-26.