Students’ expectations and satisfaction of a food and beverage management course

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Abstract

Higher education of food and beverage practice courses is confronted with a number of challenges relating to resources, facility management, and recruitment. Also, in order to deliver the current foodservice education, food and beverage management programs must respond to the changes in industry and the needs of students. The purpose of this paper is to identify the students’ expectations and satisfaction of food and beverage management course that more accurately reflects the learning experiences appropriate for students entering the food and beverage industry.

Key Words: Food and beverage management course, students’ expectations and satisfaction

Introduction

Since the initiation of the first hospitality program at Cornell University in the 1920s, there has been a significant increase in hospitality and tourism education at universities (Goodman & Sprague, 1991). A recent report of the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (Rigel & Dallas, 2006) indicated that over 970 institutions offering hospitality and tourism management programs exist all over the world, and about 170 bachelor degree programs are available in the United States.

Food and beverage as an operational discipline has been a fundamental component of hospitality management education from the commencement of the hospitality education. In fact, almost every hospitality program offers at least one course in food and beverage management that provides a kitchen and dining room type environment. However, food and beverage courses and facilities have remained unchanged for the last 30 years in most of the four-year hospitality programs (Jones, 2004). This is a critical problem because food and beverage education will have a serious discrepancy between industry’s current needs and graduate competencies, since student needs and industry demands are constantly changing.

The purpose of this study is to investigate students’ expectations and satisfactions of food and beverage management course. More specifically, the relationship of occupational curriculum and updated learning environment with students’ expectations and satisfactions of food and beverage management course is investigated.
Literature Review

What are students’ expectations of food and beverage management education?

When food and beverage management students enter the real industry, they need to possess a broad variety of skills such as food marketing, menu development, a basic understanding of the culinary arts, and knowledge of foodservice management in commercial foodservice (Ladkin, 2000). Several studies have attempted to identify the learning expectations of food and beverage management students. Ford and Lebrunto (1995) state that students want to have experiential or practical hands-on work experience since they believe it to be the most effective application of the theoretical classroom content. Other research has found that students enrolling in foodservice operation programs are motivated by expected occupational and career outcomes (O'Mahony et al., 2001). Raybould and Wilkins (2006) have summarized students’ expectation of learning in food and beverage includes; gaining a broad base experience in food and beverage operation management, developing basic skills and knowledge of cooking, staying current with new technological advances, and developing communication skills.

Therefore, when students have higher expectations of food and beverage management course and if they receive fulfillment of learning experience, they will have higher satisfaction from the course. Winsted (2000) states that if universities know how their students perceive the offered services, they may be able to adapt their services to a certain degree, which should have a positive impact on students’ perceived service quality and their level of satisfaction. In this perspective, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Students’ expectations of food and beverage management course is be positively related with students’ satisfaction

What are the needs of foods and beverage management graduates?

All hospitality and tourism education at universities are not based on the same curriculum. Some institutions place a greater emphasis on vocational training through internships; others develop an academic approach to hospitality management. However, the main goal of all programs is to maintain the hospitality industry’s competitiveness in both the academic and the vocational elements (Hofmann, 1998). Particularly under hospitality and tourism curriculum, food and beverage management courses have tended to highlight the importance of practical and operational skills. In fact, most hospitality management programs incorporate food and beverage practical training opportunities to combine both the academic and vocational elements.

Accordingly, the educators have begun implementing quality initiatives since the early 1990s (Karathanos, 1990). However, those educational efforts were fragmented with no clear direction, and there is a widening gap between the needs of the foodservice industry and the education currently being provided (Ladkin, 2000). However, there is a commonality of interest among educators, industry and students in the currency of workplace skills. Several researchers (Christou, 1999; Jayawardena, 2001; Yeung, 2004) state that food and beverage management programs must turn out graduates who are more aware of the real environment of the industry and have the ability to translate their knowledge in the work place. Also, students expect the foodservice courses to prepare them to enter the industry after graduation.

Research on students’ needs for foodservice programs (Jayawardena, 2001) found that students have more expectations of occupational learning experience and they satisfy more
when they receive more practical education in food and beverage management course. Based on the discussion above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H2**: Occupational curriculum of food and beverage management course will be related with students’ positive expectation of the course.  
**H3**: Occupational curriculum of food and beverage management course will be positively related with students’ higher satisfaction with the course.

**The current learning environment of food and beverage management courses**

Food and beverage management training courses are beneficial, but these courses have numerous problems due to resourcing, recruiting and facility issues (Baker et al., 1995; Harrington et al., 2005). For example, operating a food and beverage laboratory has high portion of operational costs, and it is difficult to find stable financial resources. Moreover, schools are confronted with the challenging task of creating and maintaining a facility that meets the current trends of the industry. This requires a vast amount of investment (Leong & Hancer, 2010).

In order to provide learning experiences that accurately reflect the real foodservice industry for students, the structure of food and beverage learning environment must be similar to the current setting of the restaurant industry (Jones, 2004). Winsted (2000) found that students were willing to participate in a food and beverage course, when the learning environment reflected the actual industry and they have higher satisfaction with the course. However, relatively little empirical research has been conducted on testing the connection of updated learning environment and students expectations and satisfaction with the food and beverage management course. Thus, following hypotheses are proposed:

**H4**: Updated learning environment will be related with students’ positive expectations of food and beverage management course.  
**H5**: Updated learning environment will be positively related with students’ higher satisfaction with the course

*Figure 1. Conceptual framework*
Research methods

In order to measure students’ expectations and satisfaction of food and beverage management courses, a survey questionnaire will be developed based on literature review and interview with food and beverage management courses’ students. A pilot study will be conducted to test reliability of the survey questionnaire. The survey will be administered to approximately two hundreds students in food and beverage management class before taking the course and after finishing the course at five leading hospitality universities that provide food and beverage management course in the U.S. between the December 2010 and January 2011.

Expected implications

The findings from this study will have implication in designing food and beverage courses and that meets students’ expectations and satisfaction.

References


pp. 5-50). Richmond, VA: International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education.

