From Teacher Centric to Student Centric Learning: Building Teaching Effectiveness in Hospitality and Tourism Education - A Critical Perspective.

Avin Thaliath
Department of Hotel Management,
Christ University, Bangalore- 560029.

Abstract
The objective of this paper is to analyze and reciprocate the traditional education practices with contemporary hospitality education framework. There is in fact a lateral shift in the teaching mode in colleges, from teacher to student centricity. Equal contribution is required from student as well as the mentor for the overall development. Higher education in India for a long period was used as a means to diminish the caste system prevalent in our country. Though education has played a very important role in reducing the societal differences in our culture it has also lost track in producing employable professionals. This piece of work aims to highlight the contemporary education practices in the field of hospitality management with the objective of creating highly skilled employable professionals and an attempt to think from the teacher centricism to student centric learning.

Keywords: Learner Centrism, Curriculum, Knowledge Dissemination, Hospitality and Tourism education.

Introduction
Good teachers know their learners; they create an environment and also situations where it is safe to express. Is there a perfect ‘recette’ for teaching? ‘A good student can learn from a bad teacher but a bad student cannot learn from a good teacher’. But who is a bad learner? Or have we failed to understand the learner’s style? The glory of a teacher is to produce a student who is greater than himself. Research says that the effectiveness of a lecture method is just 5% compared to 10% of self reading, whereas audio-visual aids impact 20%, demonstration could bring 30%, while group discussion, reading by doing and teaching others is 45%, 60% and 90% respectively. Higher education has made a significant contribution to economic development, social progress and political democracy in independent India. The proportion of our population in the relevant age group that enters the world of higher education is about 7% (Source: Nkc report 2006). The eleventh five year plan adopted by the national development council places high priority on education as a central instrument for achieving rapid and inclusive growth with specific emphasis on expansion, excellence and equity. This is reflected in the proposed allocation of rupees three trillion, a fourfold increase over the tenth plan (Source: Nkc report 2006). Even after these prodigal steps towards improving the education systems there still remains a huge vacuum between the number of management graduates who are passing out every year to those who are employable.

There is a school of thought which claims, that the present system of education is after all quite reasonable. What we need, is to make it a little more sophisticated much more polished with some modifications here and there, like locationalisation and job orientation. It has been prominently asked in defense of the present system, if we ourselves are not the product of that astern and whether we are not more or less quite well equipped to deal with our responsibility.
Though there is a matter of truth in the argument, what we need to realize is that we are lagging behind the current trends adopted by the world of education and also remind us to be at par with the ever changing corporate world. We have to make our education system better equipped in terms of both personality and skills, making it capable of meeting the demands and challenges of our present and future times.

**Hospitality and Tourism Education in India.**
Hotel management courses offered through various institutes or schools in India have always given weightage to hotel operations than management or hospitality research. The entire curriculum is focused on creating skilled supervisors with only a handful of students joining the industry as management trainees. This has been to an extent possible only because of the individual student initiative and his personality.

**Old Rule of Thumb Methods of Teaching in Hospitality and Tourism Education**
Traditional hospitality education practice barring the practical sessions has always been a black board chalk session with the faculty giving lectures handing out notes and dictations. With the introduction of technology the teacher has been able to make the class more interactive by the use of audio visual tools and the World Wide Web. Even though classes today use lot of gadgets to impart education, the core practice of knowledge dissemination from the source (teacher/internet) still remains the same. The ease with which information is available to the student and the teacher has negatively affected both critical and creative thinking. Even though virtual classrooms, social net working sites, blogs twitter have bridged the gap between teachers-students, students-students and teacher- teacher interactions. Only existing knowledge source is circulated effectively, no measures have been taken for the generation of the information that can be converted in to a knowledge source. Some of the other existing educational practices in hospitality management are practical sessions, industry visits, guest lectures, seminars and industrial training. Even though these practices have helped in the transfer of information and best practices in the past they have been highly limited in the generation of knowledge.

**Innovative Knowledge Dissemination Practices in Hospitality and tourism Education**

### 2.1 Student Empowerment

“Bringing in to a state of relief one’s ability to act effectively” (Lesley Ashcroft, 1987). Empowerment as a term has been used in educational literature since the early 1980’s. Boomer called for the empowerment of the students and investigated ways in which power and responsibility could be shared. Boomer added that teacher can empower students by allowing them to exercise their own powers and responsibility. His conception of empowerment is about teachers sharing power so students are able to exercise their power too.

1. **Faculty and Curriculum Evaluation by Students**
The students are given an opportunity to evaluate teachers and also been included in the curriculum revamping system process. Students actively participates in 360 degree appraisal system of the college their by contributing to the assessment techniques and also their consensus are taken and representatives across the discipline participates in the board of studies meeting and contributes their part.

2. **Measuring Impact factor of the Students Recommendations**
The students are evaluated and are awarded grades/credits on the impact their ideas, suggestions and recommendations made during their industrial training. This is possible only if the student had approached his training with a critical and creative mind set compared to the traditional practice of students undergoing training to understand hotel operations.
3. Student empowerment in the form of senior students taking up mentor roles (mentor assistant programme) for a group of juniors.
4. Students Self Assessment.
5. Involving students in college driven consultancies and also monitoring entrepreneurial consultancies undertaken by them.

2.2 Student Credit systems
1. Exchange of credits with experience
   Introduction of flexible credit based system as opposed to the traditional practice of awarding marks and grades. For instance a prospective student with industry experience could be invited to join the programme at a higher semester giving due weightage to his experience and aptitude.
2. International Credits
   Credits from other affiliated and collaborated institutes are acknowledged and accepted by the parent institute of the student.
3. Credits from other Discipline/allied Discipline (Certificate Courses)

2.3 Continuous learning Process
1. Alumni Interface in continuing education and knowledge transferring.
   Students who pass out continue to interact and transfer new thoughts and knowledge by creating a common platform for them. They act as a window for the institute and the industry.
2. Faculty Continuous learning Process (FCLP)

2.4 Innovative Curriculum
1. Deletion and merging of subjects with respect to industry requirements (merging front office and housekeeping to call it as accommodation management)
2. Introduction of curriculum, assignments or courses which would challenge the student to think creative as well as critical: introducing Imagineering, sustainability, hospitality ethics, and holistic education.

2.5 Using Fine Art as a Tool for Teaching Hospitality and Tourism
   Warren buffet has once commented “I am not a business man, I am an artist”. Today leading management schools are including the works of painters, musicians and actors in their management classes. For example IEDC bled school of management in Slovenia, as part of their MBA curricula include a full week of arts based leadership education in its MBA program.
   In the MBA program at Warwick business school in United Kingdom, students learn to express themselves more effectively by taking a theatre course on the work of Shakespeare. Adler believes that effective business leaders and successful artists have three skill sets in common: ability to see reality as it is, to imagine possibilities on the basis of that straight seeing and to inspire others see both reality and possibility. (Source: Teaching Business Leadership as fine art-seeing the company as black canvas, and the executive as would-be creative genius. Retrieved from http/www.forbes.com)
   Arts forms like craft works, theatre, storytelling, music, dance has helped to increase creativity, soft skills and imagination.

2.6 Responsible Management Practices
   Businesses today have started giving importance to social and environmental issues. This practice has led to the introduction of these subjects in the present management curriculum.

2.7 Student’s Support
   Support has to be provided in the form of qualified counselors to help and advises students on both professional and personal lives. In fact students should be counseled when joining or talking up
a particular course or career options in order to self assure the student about the possibilities and possible draw backs of his decision. Tools like psychometric tests and other personality and skill tests could be used to make better judgment.

### 2.8 Academic Research and Development

The academic institutions in addition in providing the industry should also start working with the industry for research and development. The academic community should not limit itself to the school environment but participate with the industry as well as try to understand their needs and challenges. The institutes should start acting as a source for new knowledge, innovations and solutions for the industry.

### 2.9 Industry Sponsored Referrals

Industry sponsored recommended professionals are admitted and given an opportunity to study and allows to finish his/her studies in the campus without compromising his job or timings are compromised by the industry in consultation with the academy.

### 2.10 Learner Centrisism

The theory of learning style principle is that children learn in different ways. It is possible to determine the learning style of the children. The success of the teacher is to find or test children for their style of learning. In 1982, Honey and Mumford Learning Questionnaire was launched in the United Kingdom. The questionnaire identifies four categories of learners; activists, reflectors, theorists and pragmatists. Activists learn to the fullest when brazen out with innovative ideas; reflectors are observers, and they listen to different viewpoints; theorists analyze complex situations on the basis of their existing knowledge; while pragmatists progress by making clear demarcation between work in the class room and life outside it. There are many models available to analyze different learning styles of students. But the most commonly used systems in schools and colleges is the VAK model, which differentiate a visual, auditory and a kinesthetic or a tactile learner. Visual learners learn through seeing, they enjoy visual stimulation, they want to see things. They progress through seeing maps, diagrams, pictures, colors; they often close their eyes to visualize or remember, use colors to highlight important points in the text and usually maintain detailed notes. Auditory learners learn through listening; a verbal lecture, listening to others, discussions excites them more. They seldom write notes and often prefer lectures to reading projects, notes and assignments. Kinesthetic learners learn by doing things, touching or moving. They improve through hands-on method (practical), speak with their hands and with gestures. They cannot sit for a long hours of lecture and they become restless soon. These learners enjoy drawing, art, cooking, building models, engineering, sports, and mechanics and are often adventurous. A world class learning temple should focus more on student-centered learning where the biggest challenge is the size of the class. In gurukula-learning the teacher knew his student, the background, his learning style, and his abilities. Teachers can foster ‘critical thinking skills’ through reasoning, decision making, reflecting, making inferences and problem solving, promote ‘collaborative learning’, and help and guide students access information, interpret, organize and use knowledge to solve problems. Being learner-centered focuses attention squarely on learning: what the student is learning, how the student is learning, the conditions under which the student is learning, whether the student is retaining and applying the learning, and how current learning positions the student for future learning.
This paradigm shift requires students also to don the role of an ACTIVE KNOWLEDGE SEEKER with constantly changing learning needs, rather than being mere passive recipients and also participate both cognitively and physically in the learning process which was traditionally done by the teacher. This means student centered learning is a process with students as the focus and teachers consider the views and needs of the students and make students feel included.

**Conclusion**
Technology has become an integral tool in today’s education systems. Though the large scale use of technology has immensely helped the educational systems, it has been used as an agent of knowledge transfer and circulation. Management educators should strive to not only transfer knowledge but also create and generate knowledge. The pupil should be challenged to use his imagination and creativity to make knowledge applicable. This call for a radical change in the mind sets of all the partners of education. It also requires the implementation of difficult structural changes which need to be conceived, designed and implemented on a sustainable basis. They also require totally major funding but also prudent planning prioritization and delicate balancing between the act of modifying or dismantling the old methods.

The education today should be a Metanoia of traditional and contemporary practices. The objective should be the right mix of old and new educational practices. This would ask for a radical change in the present curriculum of hotel management schools. This will envisage the need to detach the existing obsolete topics and replacing it with new innovative and contemporary subjects. The future of education would see the student’s empowered and given more control of their education. This will also bring about a change in the roles of the teachers. Teachers now would be required to take the back stage and act more like a guide.

Educational institutes will also be required to re-structure itself by providing students with tailor made curriculum and programs.

**References:**