

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN TAIWAN: THE CAST AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

HSIAO-I HOU¹

School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism, Humber College, Toronto, Canada
National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism, Taiwan

The main purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which internationalization of hospitality education in Taiwan has grown and changed over time. Literature related to recent strategies and policies in internationalizing Taiwan's higher education and hospitality education are reviewed. A qualitative case study approach was adopted to learn what strategies a public vocational university has adopted to make it successful. The findings shows that some patterns of development are identified, and numerous strengths and challenges in institutional strategies are revealed. An in-depth critical analysis of the case leads to recommendations for institutional governance and operations in internationalization initiatives.

Internationalization, Hospitality Education, Mobility, Cooperation and Competition, Institutional Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Learning from the experience of neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, and Korea, the government of Taiwan has launched several national plans to increase its international fame. Among such plans, most are related to the promotion of Taiwan's tourism, service, and food and beverage industries. In response to the open policy for tourists, rapid economic growth, and the entrance of global hotel chains in late 1970s, the hospitality and tourism sector was consciously developed in both comprehensive and vocational sectors in tertiary education (Horng & Lee, 2005). Between 1995 and 2003, forty-four colleges and universities established hospitality and tourism related programs or departments, and this period was identified as the "growth period" when the hospitality and tourism education and industry increased in popularity (Horng & Lee, 2005, p.176). In 2008, the newly elected President MaYing-Jeou stated clearly in his inauguration speech of his awareness of Taiwan's isolation in the world. He emphasized the importance of continuing Taiwan's globalization, and its integration into the global system. In the same year, the government launched several new national plans to promote Taiwan's international status in the world, including active participation in world organizations, signing new partnership agreements with other Asian countries, promoting Taiwan's tourism industry to the world, and internationalization of Taiwan's higher education. These new policies have significantly influenced Taiwan's higher education components, especially in the hospitality and tourism related fields.

¹Address correspondence to Hsiao-I Hou : School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism, Humber College, Toronto, Canada, 205 Humber College Blvd., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M9W 5L7 Email: houx0020@gmail.com

According to Ministry of Education's data (MOE 2009), there were over 97,000 vocational high school students (27.47%) majored in hospitality field in 2009.

Because of the huge supply of high school graduates, more and more vocational universities and colleges, especially those in the private sector, have established new departments in this field. In 2009, there were over 132 departments in higher vocational institutions offering programs in this field. This number is four times greater than the number in 2003. In order to promote the national plans, the demand for cultivating international hospitality and tourism talents in Taiwan is increasing. However, none of the current research has focused on discussing the phenomenon and the practice of internationalization of hospitality higher education in Taiwan's context. This study will examine strategic practices for hospitality educators and researchers to accelerate the educational quality in Taiwan.

The Case Study

Taiwan's public universities and colleges are government funded institutions. They are more prestigious, have better reputations, and rank higher than private institutions. In addition, they are usually centers of political activism and the cradle of political and intellectual leadership in the country. This study examines the internationalization efforts in one of Taiwan's public vocational universities. This vocational university was founded in 1995 as a vocational institute in southern Taiwan. It was promoted as college in 2000, and was promoted to its university status by Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2010. This university consists of approximately 3,053 total students (undergraduate and graduate), and 123 full-time faculty members. There are thirteen undergraduate and six graduate departments and programs housed in the following schools: School of Hospitality Management, School of Tourism, and School of Culinary Arts. The thirteen undergraduate departments and programs are: Food and Beverage Management, Hotel Management, Hospitality and MICE Marketing, English, Japanese, Travel Management, Airline and Transportation Service Management, Chinese Culinary Arts, Western Culinary Arts, Baking Technology and Management, Leisure and Recreation Management, International Tourism, and the International Culinary Arts Program. Programs range in focus from academic research in hospitality and tourism management, applied food, beverage, and bakery management, applied social science research in food culture, to pre-professional education in hospitality fields. Each program offers undergraduate and graduate level degrees.

To advocate the philosophy of "learning by doing and doing by learning," this vocational university is the first institution in Taiwan to promote service learning and the sandwich model, which means that students have to actively participate in community service work and during their junior year they must gain relevant experience in industry. These learning models have been widely adopted by other schools in vocation sectors in Taiwan. In addition, every student has to participate in an overseas program in their senior year for two weeks to broaden their international views and to understand other cultures. Because of its unique curriculum design and school culture, this school's ranking in the national entrance exam is always among the top.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which internationalization has grown and changed over time, and to learn what strategies the school has adopted to make it successful. These lessons can then be transferred to other vocational institutions in Taiwan that wish to achieve similar levels of internationalization. In addition, current and future challenges will be analyzed. The main focus of this study is discussing issues related to institutional strategies of internationalization defined by Kehm and Teichler

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN TAIWAN : THE CAST AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

(2007, p.264). To accomplish the purpose of this study, data collection was obtained through interviews and document analysis. While findings from this case study may not be generalized, transferable lessons have nonetheless been learned, and as such, can be implemented in future internationalization processes at other institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategies for Internationalizing Taiwan's Higher Education

Internationalization is an important driver in higher education worldwide. It involves cultural exchange and awareness and it is a process of integrating an intentional, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of tertiary education (Harris, 2009; Knight, 2006). Koutsantoni (2006) observed that English speaking countries (i.e. US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) tend to identify "revenue-generation" and "skilled migration to drive cross border mobility" as their main rationales to internationalization. In some other developing countries in Asia, internationalization in higher education is not seen mainly as being driven by economic concerns; instead, it is an unresisting trend for universities to stand at better positions to integrate with the local and international needs (Wisansing, 2008).

To internationalize higher education in Taiwan, the president MaYing-Jeou has proposed several strategies to internationalize Taiwan's higher education in 2008. Those strategies include improving higher education quality, attracting more international students, encouraging using English for instruction, and promoting Taiwan as the world Chinese cultural center.

As President Ma proposed, one important strategy for internationalizing Taiwan's higher education is to continue improving quality, and to expose Taiwan's research productivity in the world. For example, in 2005, the government launched a program for developing first-class universities and top research centers. The program aims to promote at least one university to the world's Top 100 universities in five years, and to do so, the government invested a budget of NT\$50 billion (Chen & Lo, 2007). In 2009, the President Ma proposed a new project entitled The Intelligent Taiwan-Manpower Cultivation Project. The aim of this project was to leverage the close links between manpower cultivation, human capital, and competitiveness by ensuring that educational resources are allocated as efficiently as possible (Executive Yuan, 2009).

One of the main goals related to higher education teaching and learning for this project was to continue to promote and foster the goals of the "Development Plan for World-Class Universities" and "Teaching Excellent Project" in order to cultivate high-level human resources and bring the standard of research in Taiwan's universities up to the world-class levels. To reach these project goals, the total budget will be NT\$77 billion from 2009 to 2016, and will be implemented by the Ministry of Education (Executive Yuan, 2009). According to the most updated world university rankings in year 2010-2011 conducted by the Times Higher Education in UK (2010), there are four public research-oriented universities in the Top 200 list: National Tsing Hua University (107), National Taiwan University (115), National Sun Yat Sun University (167), and National Chiao-Tung University (181). As of this writing however, none of these universities has broken the Top 100 list yet.

In addition, to enrich the international perspective of higher education in Taiwan, over the past few years the Ministry of Education has redoubled efforts to attract foreign students, especially those in Southeast Asia. The ministry has offered scholarships to more than 2,000 foreign students and will add NT\$100 million to its budget next year to provide more scholarships for foreign students. According to the Ministry of Education's data, 39 of the 70 public and private comprehensive universities in Taiwan offer a total of 9,350 English-speaking courses, though foreign students make up 1.3 percent of all college students (Chang, 2010). In the end of 2009, President Ma pledged to increase the international competitiveness of Taiwanese universities and said he expected more courses taught in English in order to make them more attractive to foreign students and more competitive globally ("An education," 2009). In this talk, he also stated that the government expects to double the percentage of foreign students to 2.6 percent in the near future.

Another important strategy is the promotion of Taiwan as the Chinese cultural leader in the world. The government tried to promote top quality Chinese language education, especially to foreign students interested in learning traditional Chinese characters. The government collaborated with several language education centers at universities and colleges to increase the number of bilingual teachers. In addition, the government recruited qualified bilingual teachers to teach Chinese in the United States, Australia, Vietnam, France, Thailand, and some of Taiwan's allied countries. Scholarships are also provided to international students for learning Chinese in Taiwan. According to the Department of Statistics' data (2010), this strategy has been successfully implemented. In the last five years, the number of international students in Taiwan has increased significantly, particularly in for those who come to Taiwan to learn Chinese.

Taiwan's national plans have helped universities and colleges adapt to the changing climate of internationalization in past decades. Given mainland China's large economic and political impact, the promotion of Taiwan as a Chinese cultural leader is not an easy goal. The government should identify broader and longer-term planning in order to attain this goal. In addition, administrators in colleges and universities in Taiwan should study global markets of higher education for establishing the conditions and suitable environment for recruiting foreign students and exchanging experiences and educational innovation.

Strategies for Internationalizing the Hospitality Education

The increased volume of worldwide travelers has led to the increased interest in hospitality and tourism education in last twenty years. Internationalized tourism and hospitality programs aim to prepare students to develop tolerance and understanding and hence, their ability to function in an international and inter-cultural context (Christou & Sigala, 2003). The need for the internalization of hospitality and tourism education could simply be based on the reason that tourism and hospitality is by definition, an international industry, and that employees are likely to meet foreigners at all job levels. Education in this field prepares students with the skills necessary to supply the industry with sufficient human resources. Many scholars (Black, 2004; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2003; Hobson & Josiam, 1996; Jayawardena, 2001) suggest that with the increasing international mobility, the tourism and hospitality employees will become multi-national and multi-cultural. As Jayawardena (2001) mentions, the hotel sector all over the world has faced many international and people oriented challenges. In addition, the internationalization of corporations and business industries add to the international

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN TAIWAN : THE CAST AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

imperative in the educational system. These developments are recent trends that cannot be ignored by colleges and universities.

The body of literature dealing with the internationalization of hospitality and tourism education has dramatically increased in the past twenty years. Much of the research focuses on comparative studies in curriculum design (Christou & Sigala, 2003; Formica, 1996; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2003), strategies and approaches to internationalization (Black, 2004; Chon, 1990; Hobson & Josiam, 1996; Jayawardena, 2001), and case studies of certain countries (Horng & Lee, 2005; Horng, 2004; Sangpikul, 2009). Most of the research highlights the importance of internationalization in hospitality education. Current research pertaining to Taiwanese hospitality and tourism higher education indicates that the international dimension is not yet sufficient. More focused research on this area should be encouraged.

Most studies in this field strongly advocate the importance of expanding the international dimension to hospitality and tourism education, but reaching this goal requires sound strategic moves. In South Korea, collaboration with overseas institutions, credit transfers, student exchanges, faculty exchanges, and joint research projects, have been strongly sought after by many hospitality and tourism programs (Kim, Choi & Raab, 2006). In Thailand, the outcomes of internationalizing the hospitality education have become notable. Some strategies include studying abroad, offering international programs, establishing alliances with overseas institutions, and opening branch campuses in foreign markets have brought positive impacts on the development of hospitality education (Wisansing, 2008). In China, international cooperation programs with overseas institutions, and student exchange programs are key strategies in implementing internationalization. No great progress has been made for internationalizing the hospitality education (Zhang, Lu, Hu, & Adler, 2010).

In Taiwan's case, the strategic move is highly connected with national development plans. Learning from the experiences of nearby countries like Thailand and Korea, hospitality and tourism development has been exclusively considered a capital investment issue by the government. In 2002, one of the sub-plans in the project Challenging 2008: the National Development Plan launched by Executive Yuan (2002) was "Doubling Tourist Arrivals Plan." The goal was to increase the number of international tourists to two million in 2007. The strategies included organizing travel routes, constructing tourism websites, redesigning traffic and public signs to be bilingual, promoting the event planning industry, and enhancing international promotions. Due to the impact of SARS in 2003 and China's promotion of its 2008 Olympic games, the outcomes of these projects were relatively unsuccessful. In addition, since this was the first national project focused on promoting tourism and hospitality, the professional manpower in this field was not yet ready to support it. According to Chen, Hu, Wu, and Wei's study (2005), most administrators at secondary and tertiary levels of institutions maintain positive attitudes toward this plan because they believe it will contribute more job opportunities and positive impacts on development of Taiwan's vocational education in this field. Regarding the influences of this plan on curriculum, fifty percent of the administrators mentioned that this national project has had some impacts on their curriculum design, including increasing the teaching hours of English and re-adjusting the course content of English training and some management courses. In addition, more research productivity and industrial-cooperation projects in related fields were conducted by faculty at tertiary education levels (Chen, Hu, Wu & Wei, 2005). This study shows that there is a significant

connection between government policies and curriculum design in hospitality education in Taiwan's tertiary levels.

As the 21st century approached, new tourism destinations in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Macau, and Singapore opened, thus competitions for tourist dollars were intensifying in Asian markets. President Ma continued the drive toward the internationalization of the hospitality and tourism industry. In 2009, the government of Taiwan proposed a new promotion plan, the Project Vanguard for Excellence in Tourism by Taiwan's Ministry of Transportation and Communications, to turn Taiwan into a major tourist destination in Asia. To reach this project goal, a budget totaling NT\$30 billion from 2009 to 2012 was instituted. Internationalizing the hospitality and tourism industry and education in Taiwan suddenly became hot topics. The government realized that the professionalism of Taiwan's service industry personnel does not meet international standards, and international marketing talents are inadequate. Therefore, in this project, issues related to human resource quality improvement and talent cultivation became major focus points. This included strengthening vocational education training and on-the-job training, and collaborating with top international schools in the world for sending industrial representatives or academic instructors for overseas training. In 2011, the government will send about one hundred industrial experts overseas for professional training; twenty industrial experts to the Disney Institute in Florida, forty to Le Cordon Bleu in Australia, and thirty to the University of Hawaii for fourteen-day professional training programs related to the hospitality industry. Among those participants, about fifteen percent are faculty members who teach at hospitality related departments at tertiary institutions. The outcomes of this project have not yet been evaluated, but its influences in Taiwan's hospitality and tourism industry and higher education are beginning to be seen.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore institution-wide strategies that a unique public higher institution in Taiwan adopted to implement its internationalization initiative, and what challenges this school will face based on Kehm and Teichler's (2007) themes. Data were collected by employing the methodology of semi-structured interviews and through a review of internal documents such as program descriptions and meeting records for selected departments. Interviews were conducted with two senior administrators, and two faculty members. This researcher's selection of interviewing was purposeful, and the option of criterion sampling was utilized. The central criterion for selection was that the interviewee must be directly involved with the university's internationalization initiative.

To ensure validity of this study, this researcher employed the highest standard of data collection and analysis. To establish the trustworthiness of the findings, individuals in various positions were interviewed. The goal was to obtain multiple perspectives. Audio recording interviews added to the reliability of the data. In addition, multiple sources of data were utilized, and the technique of member-checking was employed so as to ensure the integrity of the findings.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Internationalization is an explicitly articulated school-wide strategic priority. When the school was founded in 1995, internationalization was part of the motto, which reads as follows: "Professionalism, Humanity, Entrepreneurship, and Internationalization." This school's global engagement became more visible to the university community in the

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN TAIWAN : THE CAST AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

winter 2002. At that time, the former president and vice president convened a task force on internationalization initiatives. The chair of the task force was the vice president and the dean in academia and administration served as key committee members. The task force was charged with identifying major initiatives that would advance the school's international mission of teaching, research, and service. After the institutional-wide evaluation, the task force identified short, mid, and long-term goals for internationalization initiatives. The short-term initiatives that were recommended including creating a bilingual environment, improving student and staff English ability, encouraging engagement in international activities and events, strengthening the relationships with overseas sister schools, and expanding overseas internship sites for students. The midterm goal was to establish on-line English learning platform and websites. The long-term initiatives were integrating international certified programs into the hospitality curriculum, promoting Chinese Culinary Arts to international markets, and enhancing cooperation with higher institutions in China. The task force's recommendations were the first step in building the foundation for this school's global presence. It clearly showed that several strategic goals from a variety of school-based initiatives were implemented hierarchically from the central administrative system.

This task force met regularly throughout 2002 to 2004. In November 2004, the president's presentation revealed the barriers to internationalization for this school. First, there was a lack of coordination and information available regarding engagement in international initiatives. Second, many constraints existed due to limited availability of funding for international work. Third, there existed a series of inflexible administrative policies that served as disincentives for participation in international initiatives. Fourth, there was a lack of qualified staff and personnel to facilitate international initiatives. Fifth, China and Taiwan government's participation in WTO causes negative impacts on Taiwan's hospitality education including increased competition with China and other countries. To overcome those barriers, the presentation stated some strategies for future development in internationalization, including encouraging faculty writing proposals involving international research or cooperative projects to receive grants from MOE, promoting study abroad programs in English speaking countries, developing dual degree programs with Le Cordon Bleu, encouraging students to obtain international certificates both in English proficiency tests and professional licenses, recruiting international students from Vietnam, establishing International Schools to promote Taiwan's culinary arts programs, and recruiting international students for oriental culinary arts programs.

The president's presentation stimulated a higher level of international activities. After 2004, a greater number of faculty members were actively involved in international cooperation projects sponsored by MOE. These projects include hosting international conferences on campus, promoting student English language education, and faculty advanced training in the United States and European countries. In 2006, the first study abroad program was established with a public college in Toronto, Canada. In addition, more overseas internship opportunities were created including placing students in hotels in Singapore and Thailand. In 2007, twenty-four international students from Vietnam enrolled in the Hotel Management program as a cohort. In 2008, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) set a branch on campus and started to offer training courses for students or faculty to obtain this internally recognized certificate. About the same time, the International Affairs Office was established to manage institutional partnerships, international education programs, overseas internship placement, and international student recruitment. The newest strategies that the president proposed in 2009 to MOE committee members were to promote the school as the most prestigious

institution in the hospitality field in Asia, to establish the International School for promoting internationalization and localization, to establish International Culinary Arts Center cooperated with Le Cordon Bleu, and to recruit more international students from Southeast Asia countries, including India.

The increase in international activities and the long-term sustainability of those programs require not only new strategic initiatives proposed by executive administrators but also an administrative structure capable of supporting all of these activities. Two barriers, the lack of qualified personnel and a rigid administrative system, were identified as future challenges for this school by interviews with administrators and faculty. As one faculty member noted:

Most of the staff do not have the sense of internationalization and they don't understand the importance of internationalization in higher education. For faculty members, they believe if their English skills are not good enough, their chance to be involved in internationalization is limited. It is obvious that restricting certain people's involvement in international activities and distributing resources accordingly is not very fair.

Another administrator mentioned that the rigid administrative policies from MOE and within the school are burdens to the faculty member. Compared with institutions in the private sector, public institutions have less freedom in budgets planning. In addition, limitations in available financial support make it difficult to secure the necessary funds for travel and other expenses. Faculty members have to work independently to write proposals for international research or cooperative projects. Again, he mentioned that limitations on foreign language ability and a lack of knowledge of internationalization by staff and faculty members are major problems for implementing school-wide international strategies at this school.

Lack of staff support within the school to assist with international activities and study abroad program coordination is another challenge. Ideally, personnel should be knowledgeable about all administrative procedures associated with international activities, do the paperwork associated with international grants, organize and update the information for all study abroad programs offered by the school, and organize information sessions about these programs for students. According to one participant's words, currently, only a few faculty perform many of these functions individually.

CONCLUSIONS

The two main goals of this study are to uncover the reasons behind this public, hospitality-specialized university's success in internationalization and, secondly, to identify the challenges that this school faces in this arena. Overall, this study found that, in the context of an institutional passion for and commitment to internationalization, some patterns of development are identified, and numerous strengths and challenges in institutional strategies are revealed. It is obviously that this public university's internationalization strategies are highly connected with the national plans. To implement those strategies, it mainly relies on government's funding. The strengths of these strategies include leadership's commitment to internationalization, an articulated vision, prioritization of global activities recommended from an empowered group such as the task force, and unique program design in curriculum. Challenges could be identified in terms of governance, operations, and human resources. Since the government's national plans play an important role in this institution's policies and strategies in internationalization, those policies and strategies priorities are highly relied on for central

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN TAIWAN : THE CAST AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

administration. Administrative approaches to internationalization, however, are not yet clear on the operational level. The communications for long-term internationalization, funding, and infrastructure support are not clear among faculty and staff. These circumstances are also observed in Zhang et al (2010) study. The disconnect between institutional intentions and support mechanisms is exacerbated, perhaps due to an embedded organization culture. Thus, internationalization is solely dependent on faculty members with good English skills and is heavily related to private goods, not public goods. There are needs for better communication channels and an incentive system to encourage more faculty and staff involvement in international activities. As a result, it is recommended that senior leadership focus on the following endeavors: (1) thoroughly and accurately assessing why more students, faculty members and staff within all schools are not participating in international experiences; (2) supporting, empowering, and providing incentives including providing sufficient funding and decentralizing the administrative power at the school level for participating in interdisciplinary global activities; (3) ensuring that measurable outcomes are defined for all global endeavors.

While the research believes that this study contributes to the body of literature on internationalization of hospitality education in Taiwan's context, it does not include a student perspective. A similar study focused on the student perspective would enhance knowledge in this area. Other studies could also focus on comparative studies of best practices for internationalization of hospitality education in developed countries or in Asian countries.

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