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More hours, more areas, better practicum training....?

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Abstract

This study aims to find the expectations of various stakeholders in the practicum training experience. Students physically undergo the training so that they can experience actual work in their chosen specialization. Industry partners provide the facilities and the “mentors” who will act as “teachers” to these students. Teachers provide the foundational skills in knowledge, technical and values, to prepare them for this course requirement. If there are gaps, in the expectations and implementation, interventions can be undertaken policy and agreements. These stakeholders have different roles to play, provide different inputs, and yet, are expected to have one output, practicum training.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Practicum, internship, on-the-job training, these are some of the words used interchangeably to describe a course for supervised work experience in a tourism and hospitality sector enterprise. Students look forward to this opportunity as this is where theory meets practice based on an enterprise standards. It is a taste of what is to come, after they graduate from their program, to see where they feel they will enjoy and will utilize their skills best, and from this experience, will define what job they will pursue in the future. For some, it simply becomes just an academic requirement which they need to comply as their interests may not be working in the industry but may be something else like becoming an entrepreneur or may pursue work or studies in an entirely different field. For industry partners, it is a “recruitment” pool, to pick the best candidate to fill a vacant position, or it can be an

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additional workforce, minus all the expense, or it can be an advocacy, that allows them to partner with a school that will lessen the gap between theory and practice, and leveling the job realities of student expectations. For the school administrators, it is a way of measuring the academic program they have, if they have prepare the students well, and can perform their assigned tasks. Any feedback is used to enhance/enrich their program for the succeeding students.

However, there are challenges experienced by the various stakeholders in the recruitment, implementation of the course requirements and the institutional requirements that lead to discontent among the stakeholders. For students, some of the challenges include difficulty in getting a placement as there are many students also looking for placements due to the increase in tourism and hospitality enrollment; limitations in the areas where they will train as various institutions restrict the training in non-customer interaction areas; absence of a training program as some institutions look at practicum students as extra staff who can be deployed in areas where they lack manpower. For the training partners, the students are an interruption of their operations as they need to spend time training them instead of focusing on their work; practicum training program is looked at as revenue center as students wishing to take practicum must pay the enterprise to be trained; students become their personal assistants who are tasked to do things that may not be relevant to their program i.e. filing, preparing coffee, errands to buy things or other materials which are not part of any competency standard.

Some students have resorted to taking their practicum in establishments that may not offer quality training in their establishments. Some have even resorted to paying establishments a fee so that they can complete the required training hours. With many students required to take practicum, some establishments have limited their training hours, or have become exclusive training partners of some schools. Seeing that there is a huge demand for practicum training, some establishments are now making training as a revenue center in their organization. Faculty members are now pursuing alternative practicum training options for their students such as international practicum, immersion programs or have built their own facilities to provide “practicum” training for their students.

1.2. Purpose of the paper

This study would like to find out expectations of various stakeholders in the practicum training experience and use it to make policy recommendations for industry, government and academe. As practicum training is an academic requirement in tourism and hospitality programs, the results of this study would be useful for the guidance of key stakeholders.

Students, industry partners and faculty members are involved in the practicum experience. Students physically undergo the training so that they can experience actual work in their chosen specialization. Industry partners provide the facilities and the “mentors” who will act as “teachers” to these students. Teachers provide the foundational skills in knowledge, technical and values, and prepare students for this course requirement. If there are gaps in the expectations, each one should undertake interventions to minimize these challenges. These stakeholders have different roles to play, provide different inputs, and yet, are expected to have one output, practicum training.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Philippine Tourism Industry Landscape

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) report projects that international arrivals to the Asia Pacific Region will increase from 204M to 285M for the period 2010 to 2016, and of these arrivals, the Southeast Asia region will get 69 to 98 million arrivals. The Philippines is now experiencing positive tourism growth. There is increased international and domestic tourism arrival, increased business investments in tourism related business sectors, and requiring increased manpower requirements.

The Philippine’s Department of Tourism (DOT) is the government mandated agency responsible for the promotion and development of tourism as a major socio-economic activity that will generate employment and economic initiatives that will spread the benefits to both private and public sector. The last few years have seen a growth in tourism and hospitality industry, especially in the Southeast Asian region, including the Philippines. For 2013, international the tourism arrivals reached 4.7 million (DOT), and had around 27.9M domestic tourists in 2011. Based on the DOT National Tourism Development Plan for 2011-2016, the target for international tourists is 10

million international tourists and 35.5 million domestic tourists by 2016. There is need for many employees who have the skills sets needed to work in different sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry. The plan identified strategic directions and the third one is focused on education and training. It is Improve Tourism Institutional, Governance and Industry Manpower Capabilities and cites various activities that will “*Develop a competent, well-motivated and highly-productive tourism workforce. ...involve: building skills training capabilities by establishing ...skills assessment centers, and a skills recognition system...*”

Last 2011, DOT requested the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for technical assistance (TA) to improve competitiveness in tourism. The TA of ADB in cooperation with Canadian International Development Authority (CIDA) indicated in the report: “*...DOT and tourism providers are especially concerned about relatively lower service standards and employers complain about the skills mismatch of many school leavers entering the industry.....Many young people ... are not considered to be adequately trained. training curriculums of occupations in the industry are not frequently updated to meet changing international standards and practices, and skills development in tourism is underfunded.*” DOT received \$7.1M technical assistance grant from ADB CIDA that will have several project components, one of which will focus in skills training programs for the private sector in the pilot areas of Cebu, Palawan, Davao and Bohol.

These two reports, indicate need to strengthen skills training so that competent, well-motivated and highly productive tourism workforce that meets the international standards and practices graduates from various educational and training facilities.

2.2. The Philippine Higher Education Landscape

Table 1. Distribution of HEIs by Region and Sector (CHED)

REGION	PUBLIC				LUCs	Others	Total	Private	Total
	SUCs		Campuses	Sub Total					
	Main	Satellite							
I	6	21	27	4	-	31	83	114	
II	5	18	23	1	-	24	49	73	
III	12	37	49	11	1	61	165	226	
IVA	5	55	60	13	1	74	229	303	
IVB	6	42	48	1	-	49	41	90	
V	8	24	32	16	-	48	106	154	
VI	11	53	64	9	1	74	77	151	
VII	5	24	29	10	-	39	123	162	
VIII	10	28	38	3	-	41	54	95	
IX	6	46	52	-	-	52	54	106	
X	6	33	39	6	-	45	67	112	
XI	4	8	12	4	-	16	84	100	
XII	4	11	15	-	-	15	77	92	
NCR	8	9	17	16	3	36	302	338	
CAR	6	14	20	-	1	21	36	57	
ARMM	4	4	8	-	7	15	51	66	
CARAGA	4	10	14	1	-	15	45	60	
TOTAL	110	437	547	95	14	656	1,643	2,299	

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is the government agency mandated to regulates and monitors the operation of academic institutions in promoting quality education in higher educational institutions (HEIs). As of 2012-2013, there are 2,299 HEIs, where 28.53% are classified as public and the rest are privately owned.

The public HEIs include 547 state universities and colleges (SUCs) funded by the national budget, 95 local universities and colleges (LUCs) funded by the local government unit, 1 is a CHED-Supervised Institution, 5 are special HEIs, while the remaining 8 are considered as other government schools. There are 1643 Private HEIs with

1,296 are non-sectarian private while 347 are sectarian HEIs. The National Capital Region (NCR) has the largest number of HEIs at 338 and the second biggest region is Region IV-A. The NCR is composed of 16 cities – namely the City of Manila itself, Caloocan, Las Pinas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Pasay, Pasig, Paranaque, Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig, Valenzuela. The Region IV-A is known also as CALABARZON and is composed of five provinces: Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon. Distribution of HEIs per region and sector is found in Table 1.

Policy Standards and Guidelines in the offering of tourism and hospitality programs is found in CHED Memorandum Order No. 30 Series of 2006. Requirements for practicum training are found in Table 2.

There are also guidelines in practicum training as issued by CHED. These are CMO 23, Series 2009 entitled Guidelines for Student Internship Program in the Philippines (SIPP) for all Programs with Practicum Subjects and CMO 22 Series 2013 entitled Revised Policies, Standards And Guidelines (PSGs) On Student Internship Abroad Program (SIAP). Requirements include that Memorandum of Agreements/Understanding be signed with the training institution, report requirements, and for international practicum, institutional qualifications of at least Level 2 accreditation level.

Table 2. Practicum Details based on CMO 30, S. 2006

Program	HRA/HRM	Travel Management	Tourism Management
Practicum hours/units	7 units/420 hours	6 units/360hours	6 units/360 hours
Areas of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicum I (240 hours/4 units) in Housekeeping and Food & Beverage Operations • Practicum II (180 hours/3 units) in Front Office and Other areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicum I (180 hours/3 units) in Outbound Travel • Practicum II (180 hours/3 units) in Inbound and Domestic Tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Tourism Agency • Local Government Tourism Offices • Non-governmental organizations

As of 2011, there were around 2,282 HEIs recognized by CHED. Of these, there were 349 HEIs offering Tourism, from 133 only in 2005, and 761 HEIs offering HRM from 321 in 2005. As of AY 2012-2013, there were 978 HEIs offering HRM and 391 HEIs offering Tourism program. Based on CHED statistics, as of 2012, there is a 21.54% national program voluntary accreditation achievement only. With these developments, CHED issued a moratorium (CMO s. 32 s. 2010) on applications of various programs including HRM due to various reasons including the proliferation of schools offering these programs and if uncontrolled, will result to *the deterioration of the quality graduates, and the skills mismatch of graduates as needed by industry.*

The interest among students in pursuing programs in tourism and hospitality in higher educational institutions (HEIs) has also generated an increase in enrolment. Based on a report submitted by 2,282 HEIs as of July 10, 2012 to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Top 10 Most Populated Baccalaureate Programs with Enrolment for AY 2011/12 identified BS Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) with 226,950 enrolled students and was ranked third, next to Business Administration and Information Technology. The same report also notes that the Top 10 Most Populated Baccalaureate Programs in terms of Graduates as of AY 2010/11 shows that there were 27,074 graduates of HRM, ranking third with Nursing at 1st with 84,094 graduates and Business Administration at 2nd with 39,580 graduates. The enrollment figures for AY 2012-2013 and graduation figures for AY 2011-2012 are found in Tables 3 and 4, and were provided by CHED IPD-OPPRI from reports submitted by HEIs as of October 7, 2013.

Based on the figures presented on table 2, assuming that there would be around 15% of the total enrollment who would go into practicum, there were around 37,109 HRM students and 2,938 Tourism students looking for practicum. With these numbers, there may be a huge supply but a limited demand. And thus, there are interests in looking for placements not only in the Philippines but also outside, and so some schools are sending students for practicum training in other countries.

Table 3. Higher Education Enrollment in HRM and Tourism: AY 2012/13

Region	HRM	Tourism
01	13,225	1,047
02	12,455	211
03	22,891	1,786
04	30,596	2,642
05	6,084	716
06	22,351	2,049
07	23,121	1,669
08	9,980	331
09	5,756	310
10	7,771	353
11	9,278	235
12	5,886	151
NCR	59,048	6,105
CAR	10,447	1,040
ARMM	628	196
CARAGA	3,474	102
MIMAROPA	4,363	648
Grand Total	247,354	19,591

There were close to 45,000 graduates from both HRM and Tourism from HEIs in AY 2011-2012. This number may not be sufficiently absorbed by existing sectors in the local tourism industry, and thus many of the graduates look for work in non-traditional sectors such as hospitals, call centers or work abroad.

Table 4. Higher Education Graduates in HRM and Tourism: AY 2011/12

Region	HRM	Tourism
01	2,056	255
02	1,603	138
03	4,531	196
04	5,945	392
05	1,153	211
06	4,651	248
07	3,666	259
08	1,517	91
09	892	36
10	1,129	136
11	1,423	55
12	938	22
NCR	8,873	1,053
CAR	1,656	108
ARMM	168	26
CARAGA	565	6
MIMAROPA	766	60
Grand Total	41,532	3,292

2.3. Relevant Articles

Dutta and Singh (2010) identified six factors that would lead to successful internship placements for hospitality students. These factors are : orientation to the workplace and supervisor support from the supervisor as he would

mentor the student trainee during his stay in the institution; the work environment as these is where student will learn and so feedback and suggestions would tell student trainee if they were doing things correctly or not; coordination between the school and the organization on training program requirements; the demand for interesting and challenging jobs by the student trainee; giving of appreciation and feedback helps in the overall development of the trainee; and planned training program with comprehensive orientation. These factors must be defined well to ensure that practicum training, expectations from all stakeholders can minimize the gaps among expectations of the various stakeholders. In another study by Ching and Lam (2007), they identified three factors that would lead to student overall satisfaction and these were supervisor, team spirit and involvement, autonomy and help from supervisor.

It appears that critical in the practicum training program was the role of the supervisor in ensuring that students are able to undertake a successful internship.

3. Methodology

The Tourism Industry Board Foundation Inc. (TIBFI) is a tripartite body composed of representatives from the government, private and labor sectors which aims to provide manpower development within the hotel and restaurant industry. Amidst all the growing challenges in practicum training, TIBFI conducted a survey that was circulated through an online link to its members. The link was available to receive responses for five weeks, from December 4, 2013 to January 10, 2014. Questionnaire had common questions for all sectors and some that were specific to a sector. Multiple choice answers were provided, and open choices that allowed for other answers to be given by the respondent.

4. Findings and Discussion

There were 243 responses received from the various sectors. There were more female (72%) than male respondents (28%). Respondents could belong concurrently in various sectors i.e. academe but also part of an industry organization, or academe and government. Respondents were academe (44%), government (25%), industry (19%), students (9%) and labor (3%). There were respondents from all 16 regions except for CARAGA, and biggest number of respondents resided in the National Capital Region (53%), and second biggest group came from CALABARZON (19%), and then Central Luzon (10%). The biggest number of respondents were members of COHREP (23%), followed by AAHRMEI (12%), and these are both professional organizations of educators.

Distribution of schools as noted in Table 1 indicate that NCR has the highest number of HEIs with Region IV or CALABARZON as second most populated HEI region. Most of the hotels, restaurants and other tourism sectors are located in the NCR, where most business and central government offices are located.

The Academic respondents were from CHED HEIs (54%), and faculty members offering both the CHED & TESDA Technical Vocational programs (29%). There were faculty/administrators (43%) faculty (24%), and administrators (27%). Most of the faculty members were full time (92%).

The student respondents are taking tourism related programs (80%), on their 4th year level (77%), and have taken practicum training already (75%), with some who took their practicum in the 3rd year (49%), and in their 4th year (26%).

The industry respondents are from management level (30%) coming from hotel operations (24%), and from travel operations (16%). Most of industry participants (70%) are DOT accredited. When an establishment is accredited, it signifies that it has met the quality standards specified by DOT for their type of business operation. Of those that are not accredited, they indicated that they were still completing some documentation requirements, and/or waiting for construction completion of facilities or accreditation standards for their type of business was not yet available.

Only 98% of the industry respondents accept practicum students, and 20% of them accept 100 students annually, with 36% of them accepting 10 to 20 students per batch, and 51% accept a batch every quarter. This particular response is of interest in this study as the volume of students intending to take practicum number around 40,000 and placements accepted by each institution range from 10 to 20 per batch or 40 to 80 students annually. For 40,000 students to take practicum, around 500 to 1000 training institutions need to take 40 to 80 students annually. As

most tourism related institutions in NCR, it becomes a challenge for HEIs located in other regions to place students, and some of the students pursue practicum in NCR, but encounter additional costs of board, lodging and transportation, which makes practicum financially challenging. In some instances, in order to just simply complete their training hours requirement, some students go to establishments which may not be able to provide quality training as their operation does not meet local or national standards.

Most students (62%) are interested in international practicum for the professional and cultural experience it will give them. Around 71% of the schools had international practicum programs, with highest deployment in Malaysia (17%) and Singapore (15%). Most schools (50%) had 11 to 40 students taking international practicum and others (40%) had less than 10 international practicum students. Although international practicum is an option, many of the schools are not qualified as the HEI needs to have a Level 2 accreditation. There are only 484 (21.54%) of the HEIs that are accredited. Around 1,393 of programs in public HEIs and 1,392 of programs in private HEIs are accredited. Of the programs accredited, only 37.9% have achieved Level 2 accreditation. So even if students wanted to take practicum training internationally, if their school has not reached level 2, they can only take local practicum.

Some schools (34%) had 41 to 60 students taking practicum annually, with 20% having more than a hundred students taking practicum annually, and some extreme schools (3) that had more than 1000 students taking practicum annually. With the growing interest in HRM and Tourism programs, some schools have increased their enrollment significantly. Lyceum of the Philippines University, Manila has around 8,500 students enrolled in Tourism and Hospitality programs. LPU has a teaching hotel, The Bayleaf Intramuros. However, it can only accept 20 students of trainees per batch.

Some students (25.71%) completed 400 hours training. An equal number of industry partners (29.41%) each, indicated that they give 200 or 300 hours minimum training; with some (29.41%) giving a maximum of 600 hours. Some schools (23.29%) require 1000 hours practicum. If CHED did not specify the practicum hours, students (31.75%) preferred 300 hours, while 30.16% prefer 400 hours. Faculty members (22.97%) prefer 400 hours only. Due to a higher demand for practicum slots, some industry partners have limited the number the training hours to give them a higher turnover in accepting students. The variance of 300 to 600 hours training limits the number of trainees that an institution can take.

Most students (53%) want to train in 3 areas, while some (30%) prefer two areas only. Industry partners (50%) give training in three areas. Schools (52.9%) require three areas. Schools (41%) schedule the practicum on the second semester, and some (28%) put it in summer, while some schedule it even summer so that more students can take slots of schools that do not schedule practicum during some periods.

Students (75%) start processing their requirements including the pre-practicum seminar before the practicum semester. Some (47%) need to finish some major subjects, but others (42%) need to complete all the academic requirements before they start their practicum. Around (92%) have pre-practicum seminars, that include mock interviews (30%), speakers from training institutions (20%), practicum requirements (19%), and preparing the CV (15%). Schools (30%) have eight hour pre-practicum seminars. Educators (60%) do not allow students to take practicum if they did not attend the pre-practicum seminar, and 66% of the schools allow students to take practicum with academic subjects.

Educators (97%) assign a faculty to handle practicum students, who coordinate placement 15%, visit students onsite 17%, coordinate training programs, 16%, read reports and grade them 18%, conduct pre-practicum orientations 16%, settle concerns 17%. Faculty members are given transportation allowance (32%), meal allowance (20%), however 15% are given nothing. A faculty (48%) is given 31 to 40 students per section, and some (39%) are given less than 30 students.

All of the student respondents agreed that practicum was needed in their program. Even with limited practicum placements in industry, students (62%) were not willing to pay for practicum placements. There were students (33%) willing to pay as long as quality training was given. Industry participants provided duty meals (34%), uniform (21%), transportation allowance (14%) and some (20%) do not give anything. Industry partners prepare a training plan (87%), and do not assign trainees in the graveyard shift (82%), and 91% of the industry partners do not charge any training fee.

Results of the survey show common areas of interest between the stakeholders such as giving 400 hours of training in three areas for students, having pre-practicum seminars, and assigning faculty members to monitor the students.

5. Conclusion

The study examined perceptions of various stakeholders – student, faculty and school, and industry partners, in the practicum training activity. The practicum training is a requirement in tourism and hospitality programs. Due to the increased enrollment and limited placements to undertake this activity, several interventions are suggested to address these gaps.

Schools can undertake a pre-practicum orientation for their students so that expectations and procedures can be presented and discussed. Faculty members can also search for non-traditional practicum placements for their students, veering away from hotels and restaurants, but going to other areas i.e. Events or MICE organizers, call centers, hospitals that offer customer service operations similar to hotels, exclusive or membership clubs that offer accommodations and food and beverage services to their discriminating guests. If a school qualifies for international practicum placements, schools may also pursue these as an option to local practicum provided that pre-practicum sessions include awareness of the culture in that country is conducted to reduce challenges in understanding the local people.

Faculty members may discuss with potential training partners a training program design that would be acceptable to both of them, so that there is meaningful practicum training experience for the students. Assigning a faculty or school representative to monitor practicum training of students would ensure that the objectives of practicum are achieved.

Training partners may assign practicum mentors who will take charge of the practicum training of the students, and give feedback to the students periodically. They may also conduct a briefing or an orientation prior to the start of the practicum training so that the students can be briefed about the organization, protocols and other unique operational concerns.

CHED may also look at the practicum component of the curriculum and indicate a generic course description and suggest that the minimum number 300 hours/5 units. Just like in the other academic requirements of the CMO, it indicates the minimum requirements, and it is up to the school to either increase or retain the subjects/units based on the objectives of the program. Areas for training may be suggestions only, as there are emerging tourism sectors that may not be identified at the moment, but would need tourism professionals. There may be need also to review policies on local practicum where majority of students are involved, involving academe, industry and labor in its technical working groups.

Ultimately, it is really not the number of hours, the number of areas that would lead to better practicum, but the quality of training that is undertaken by the student that will lead to better practicum!

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