

**TRANSFORMATION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN HOTEL AND CATERING
MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS TO MEET HIGH INCOME COMMUNITY IN
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract

The Hotel and Catering Management program has gone through years in Malaysian's conventional education. The pioneer of this program has been established at Institut Teknologi MARA in 1967 started from Certificate of Catering Services to Diploma in Hotel and Tourism Management. From its name School of Hotel and Catering Management, in 1991 it is called Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management. The faculty focuses in line with the country aspiration to produce graduates and professionals in the field of hospitality. Meanwhile, in secondary schools have made catering courses as an elective in Living Skill and vocational school has long made Certificate of Catering courses to students. In 1998, Politeknik Johor Bahru has opened first certificate and diploma programs in Hotel and Catering Management to produce workers in respective hospitality establishments available through Malaysia. It is considered the second public institution for hotel and catering programs in Malaysia. However, reports from the Traces Study and Alumni Department in Politeknik Johor Bahru had shown that less than 65 percent of students interested to work in the same discipline and the rest of them divided in all fields in workforce. This trend has been prevailing for years in the job market without any action been taken to address this problem. This paper is to look and to analyze the reason why students do not choose their first jobs associated with the areas that they have been studied. After finding out the cause of the problems, number of recommendations to the formation of a new curriculum on Hospitality Education should be made to fit the current trend and market. Therefore, the shortage of energy resources and dependency on external energy could be reduced. The new curriculum is hoping to be able in developing communities with high income toward Malaysian's vision to be a developed country in 2020.

Keywords: Hotel and Catering Management, Malaysian Conventional Education, Hospitality Education, Traces Study, Politeknik Johor Bahru, External Energy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nykiel (1983) defined the hospitality industry as products and services offered to the consumer away from home. It encompasses of travel, lodging, eating, entertainment, recreation, and gaming. Each component of the industry is very complex and often interrelates either vertically or horizontally with other components.

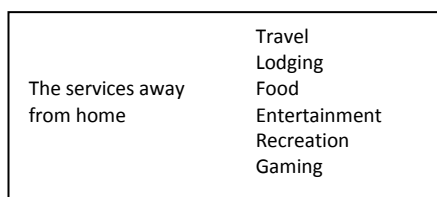


Figure 1 : The Hospitality Industries

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The History of Hospitality College in Malaysia

The hospitality industry in Malaysia has begun since the opening of Malacca as an international trading port in the year of 1500 by Portuguese followed by the Dutch in 1641 to 1824. In 1824 to 1941 during the era of British conquest, many new towns and ports have been opened due to the rapid growth of agriculture, tin mine and rubber industries. The new towns provide businesses, services, cultural activities and trading center for communities. When people started to migrate from one country to another, the needs for

transportations, foods and accommodations become important. Many new hotels, rest house, restaurants and other hospitality institutions become known to cater the rising demand. Unfortunately, the quality of services and products of hospitality is not to the level that can be proud of. However, there are many rooms to improve to the quality of services provided by the hospitality institutions. Therefore, the Malaysian government does aware that the hospitality industries capable to provide abundant economic and job opportunities and has becoming one of the major national income. Last year, a total of 24.6 million international tourists landed on Malaysian shores, which contributed to a staggering RM56.5bil in revenue for the government (The Star, 2011).

The government thru the Ministry of Education has thought about the need for a proper approach to serve and manage the hospitality institutions by knowledgeable workers. The standard of services should be standardized, commercialized and customer oriented. In 1967 the first hospitality school, Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM) was build to provide knowledgeable and experience workers to serve the industries. ITM is the pioneer college providing hospitality program in Malaysia offers a hospitality program for certificate and diploma in hotel and tourism management. The faculty's programs focuses on the nation's aspiration to produce professionals in the field of hospitality and tourism. Therefore, the main objective of this faculty is to increase the number of skilled and well-trained Bumiputeras to fulfill the needs of the hospitality and tourism industries (UiTM, 2011)

In first year of the opening for this institute, the demand for this program by post-secondary students is poor due to little promotion done by the management of the college. The myth of cooking profession by Malaysians is that, the culinary job is mean for women and less interesting. Many students are familiar with the scenario working in hotels and restaurants, the job will not guaranty for bright future, providing less pay, filthy working environment, hectic

job and difficult to get off day during weekends.

However, when Malaysia grows into a developing nation, this profession slowly gets attention by students. In 1990's, the mushrooming era for hospitality colleges by government and private companies has made profession of hospitality become a demanding job. The new colleges developed include : Kolej Damansara Utama, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, Universiti Tun Abdul Razak and Teachers College.

To horizon the hospitality education, the hospitality program also been thought at secondary school. It was founded by Sekolah Anika Jurusan (Multi tasking school) in 1965 focuses on tailoring and catering. The elements of language, religion and science subjects are added to enhance student's skills and knowledge. Today, the school name has been changed to Sekolah Menengah Vokasional Rembau. The idea of having hospitality skills for earlier education in secondary school had spread all over Malaysia and the vocational schools as well as some secondary schools have made Home Economic Education become an elective course.

In 1995 polytechnic has set up the idea to build the first hotel and catering school in Johor called 'Politeknik Johor Bahru'. The college provides certificates and diploma programs in hotel and catering as well as tourism management. In addition, to serve the community, Polytechnic Johor Bahru has begun to teach hospitality program to disable student (deft) since 2002. At present, Politeknik Johor Bahru has produce thousands of graduates working in hotel, restaurant, food contractor, cruise, food and tourism publication, hospitality consultant, dietitian, wedding planner, food manufacturing, lecturers, food franchisers, teachers, food retailers, dormitory supervisor and food manufacturer. In conclusion, the programs run by Malaysian's hospitality colleges are able to produce talented, skills,

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knowledgeable and competitive workers to serve industries need.

III. DISCUSSION

The Economic Impact from Hospitality Industries in Malaysia.

Malaysia is one of Asia's most popular tourist destinations, attracting 20.9 million tourists in 2007. Tourist receipts have also increased from RM36.3 billion in 2006 to RM 46.1 billion in the year 2007 (Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia, 2008). Yen, F. Lee and Othman, M.(2011) had stated that, the above statistics have shown the progress of tourism industry becoming an important sector of the Malaysian's economy by virtue of the amount of receipts collected from its activities. The tourism industry in Malaysia comprises of hotels, resorts, lodgings, tour services, travel agencies, restaurants, catering services and transportation. The scope of tourism services has progressed from supplying services or mass products and markets to more innovative tourism packages. These include eco-tourism, edu-tourism, health tourism, sports tourism and event organization (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions). The accommodation sectors remains as a major attraction to the tourism industry. It has been viewed as an industry that able to generate income in foreign. The industry today contributes directly to employment and indirectly facilitates tourism and commerce activities (Corporate Catalyst India, 2008).

To be brief with the hospitality business, it is basically based on lodging and food services to customers. It can be regarded as a form of niche or alternative tourism and as a result of escalating competition and a change in traveller wants in terms of destination experience, is now more often being included as a new or additional sector in the travel and tourism business (Poon, 1993, Ritchie & Crouch 2000, Rand & Heath

2005). The tourism industries in Malaysia has become the second largest national source of income. The increasing numbers of tourists arrival to Malaysia from all over the world has raised our foreign exchange earnings from RM17.3 billion in 2000 to RM31.0 billion in 2005. In terms of tourist expenditure pattern, accommodation remains the highest component, comprising 33.1% (RM9.6 billion) of the total expenditure, followed by shopping at 24.0% (RM7.4 billion) and spending on food and beverages at 17.4% (RM5.4 billion) in 2005 (Ninth Malaysian Plan: 2006-2010).

According to Zainal et. al, (2008) Tourism Malaysia has designed activities to stimulate Malaysian tourism and tourism related industries. Ultimately, the aim is to increase the number of foreign tourists to Malaysia, extend the average length of their stay and to increase Malaysia's tourism revenue. This is to help promoting new investments for the country while providing new employment opportunities. It is expected that the growth of Malaysian tourism will contribute positively to economic development and enhance the quality of life for all Malaysians. In 2005, tourists' expenditure patterns showed accommodation as the highest contributing component, comprising 33.1 per cent followed by shopping at 24.0 per cent and 17.4 per cent is accounted for food and beverages (Ninth Malaysia Plan : 2006-2010). In actual fact, food and lodging have become one of important element in the tourism industry in Malaysia and provide multi discipline in job opportunity.

The highly spending on food, transportation and lodging among tourists, besides natural physiological needs, food and beverages to the prospective of destination is generally presented as an attraction. No matter where we travel in the world, the hospitality product mentioned in figure 1 could not be ignored. It must be interdependent among the components of industries. The industries itself has seen to grow along with the steady income, stable political administration, high

population and educated community. For that reason, now it's becoming a trend that the whole countries or individual cities promoting their uniqueness of culinary attractions (Dann 1996:236; Noguchi 1992).

The Problem of Unemployment for Hospitality Graduates.

The growth of food and travelling attraction subsequently has influence the number of hospitality establishments. Hence, the industries have provided various job opportunities for local residents. Unfortunately, many graduates do not want to grab these opportunities even though they have undergone three years program for diploma and four years program for degree in the hospitality field. This issue has prompted an interest for researcher to explore the reason behind the phenomenon and looking for suitable suggestion to improve on the continual problems. National Higher Education Research Institute (2003) has published some statistic and result on *'Problem of Unemployment Among Graduates in Malaysia'*. The main factors of respondents being unemployed because 82.8% of them are still looking for a better job and meanwhile 25.6% are having difficulty to find suitable job. The suitability of job is related to their interest, talent, personality, and value. Some of them have low initiative to hunt for job in private sectors which is available all the time. As a matter of fact, millions of outsourcing labor from Indonesia, Philippines, India, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand flooded in all type of industries in Malaysia. At the same time, Malaysian's graduates do make a claim that job opportunities are stringent in the market which has creates unemployment phenomenon.

The research institute also reveals the statistic of 70.8% Malay's graduates show their deep interest to apply jobs thru Malaysian's Public Service Department compared to other races at 38%. It sounds that, by getting government posts, graduates

are guaranteed safeguard from unemployment problems. However, the availability of the vacancy is limited but the applicants are thousand in numbers. A chance of getting the job is getting smaller and it is not becoming a conclusion in solving unemployment issue. In the other study made by Tan King Hyang and Khalid Husseine Tuan (2008), according to Labor Department of Peninsular Malaysia shows that 63,000 graduates are jobless in 2005. The department also mentions that in 2007 there are 2,263 vacancies in hospitality industries. Part of the reason that graduates are unable to get these jobs because they are lack in some generic skills (Malaysian Association Hotels 2007 and Berita harian 2006). In the other point of view, Muhammad Shahrim (2007) also mentioned in his study about the critical aspect of human development in carrier opportunity is close related to leadership skill, responsible, able to make accurate decision making. Meanwhile Breiter and Clement (1996) stated their opinion that the leadership skills should lead some generic skills and it becoming a compulsory requirement in the hospitality industries.

The above statistics and reports are comparable to the study made by Unit of Traces Study and Alumni (2009) at Politeknik Johor Bahru. The diploma in Hotel and Catering Management graduates are about 66% of them are unemployed in the same field and still looking for a suitable job. The mentioned graduates of Hotel and Catering programs rank the third most unemployed among 19 programs offered at Politeknik Johor Bahru in 2009.

To response on the unsatisfactory statistic produced by the traces study at Politechnic Johor Bahru, 100 numbers of graduates from Diploma and Certificate of Hotel and Catering Management took part on the *'web based interview'* via Facebook Group (Unemployment Graduates) and using *'asking question'* option. The interview is conducted thru an open forum of 100

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samples in 'Unemployment *Graduate Group*'. This method of collecting data is able to response on few questions instantly depending on samples time frame. Most of the question will be based on '*the reasons for hospitality graduates refuse to get job in the same program they studied*'. The summary of comments and suggestion given are as below:

No	Comments
Problem 1	Practical training in hotel for six months has made them lost confident working in hotel because it was out of expectation. The condition working at hotel with shift hours, long working hours, no off day for 2 weeks, less pay and heavy work load made them exhausted and suffer. They were expected working at the conducive and elegance environment, good pay and steady position for diploma holder.
Suggestion 1	The strength and weakness of each student are different depending on their experience, knowledge, mental and physical fitness. For student with high motivation skill and ready for challenge is allowed to do their internship at five star rated hotel in respective departments. For those who are in between strong and weak condition, it is advised to place them in 3 star rated hotels and governments hospitality institutions. If they could cope up with the given 'job specification', slowly move them to the higher rated hotels. This will reduce the <i>culture shocks</i> of working in hospitality industries to the graduates and cause dimotivated. Some survival

No	Comments
	skill must be coached in order to meet challenge in work force. It is advised to choose for a right place for training.
Problem 2	Some students made their choice for hotel and catering program at polytechnic after not being able to get their preferred program. They have been forced by their parents to acquire the program offered by polytechnic due to inexpensive tuition fees of private college. As a result, students did not show their deep interest on program they pursue.
Suggestion 2	Secondary school's Carrier and Counseling Unit as well as parents have to discuss in detail regarding their children examination result, interest, college of choice, financial background and programs offers. School children are poor in making correct choice on what kind of programs suitable for them to be their carrier in future. With correct guidance, virtual information, coaching and site visits will at least give them a clear picture of what kind of program and where they end up working with. Many post-secondary students make their choice of program according to friends' suggestion and what they see only.
Problem 3	There are many graduates are having difficulties to understand and communicate in English when working at star-rated hotels. It is due to medium of instruction in teaching and learning in Malay

No	Comments
	language at former polytechnic. The three years program is seen not capable in forming student fluent in English.
Suggestion 3	The 'English Language Placement Test' is required to separate between good and poor students in English writing and speaking skills. Then, they will undergo for Foundation 1 for the poor English language skills and Intermediate 1 for the good English language skills. This program will at least help students to master the language before they leave polytechnic for their job.
Problem 4	Some five stars rated hotels are not interested in employing students who are less proficient in English speaking and writing due to their customer's preferences. The five stars rated hotels normally offers lucrative salary to their workers and becoming a dream job for many hospitality students.
Suggestion 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After students are allowed to enter at Polytechnic, they should take the 'English Language Placement Test'. Students must obtain at least a 'B' grade in SPM for English to enter hospitality program. 2. Polytechnic must make a compulsory rule for lecturers to communicate in English as their instructional medium. 3. Encourage for extra activities out of classroom. 4. English clinic for students and lecturers to enhance

No	Comments
	<p>quality of English language.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Use English language as a medium of instruction, references and administration task by 100 percents. 6. Encourage students to write diary, journal, assignment, paperwork in English.
Problem 5	<p>Some students are too complaisant with the three years diploma program at Polytechnic. They will only participate in the course required and refuse to do part time in hotel and catering institutions. Many new skill and knowledge could be gain when they go abroad especially for experience and knowledge. As the result, they have low marks on interview to get a suitable job with diploma they gain because of inexperience and incapability of some generic skills such:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. as interpersonal skills: 2. Leadership skills 3. Problem solving skills 4. Team work skills 5. Lifelong learning skills 6. Management skills 7. Communication skills 8. Entrepreneurship skills 9. Conceptual and analytical thinking skills 10. ICT skills
Suggestion 5	Enhance the 'Soft Skills' course with the element of generic skills required by the hospitality industries. The generic skills could be a based line of curriculum development and must be the 'Course Learning Outcome' (CLO). These skill is considered as a value added to students.

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No	Comments
Problem 6	Graduates holding a diploma have to get started working in long working hours as a cleaner, kitchen helper, front office with a take home pay less than RM700 per month (equal to USD200/month). The diploma they obtained is not being recognized to gain a good post in hotel and catering institutions.
Suggestion 6	This is a normal procedure for hospitality workers during 'Probation Period' . Only selected employees passing the grades of assessment will be offered a good post in the hotels and restaurants. Employees who do not reached the score, is devised to look for a job lower in rank. Try to improvise the knowledge and skills and try again for the same post.
Problem 7	Too much of overtime and working in shift hours make them difficult to have a quality time with family. The job is best suited for bachelors and teenagers. It creates stress, depression, tension and demotivated after years of working in the same institutions. Working in customer service institutions required close attention to customers' requirements and required more task.
Suggestion 7	Gets the most experience working in the hotels for different types of job during youth age. Slowly move to the management posts when engaged to family. Move to different hotels for a big posts and steady job.
Problem 8	Majority of Polytechnic's students are Muslim and some

No	Comments
	of them practice hijab (scarf covering head). Most of hotels in Malaysia required wearing uniform that are not allowing hijab and wearing skirt. It is considered a religion's boundary for employees. Some hotel do not allowing their service staff to go for Friday praying for Muslim and Sunday praying for Christian.
Suggestion 8	The 'Union' of each hotel is a platform where to complain and discuss problems. Get involve Manpower Department, Ministry of Human Resources to set rules of reducing discrimination in religion and races. There are few hotels in town do allowing staff to practice hijab and Friday praying such as Deplama Hotel, Primula Beach Resort, Park Royal Hotels and others.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has bring out the issue about only 65 percent of graduates at Politeknik Johor Bahru interested to work in the same discipline as they studied and the rest of them divided in all fields in workforce. This trend has been prevailing for years in the job market without any action been taken to address this problem. About eight numbers of issues has been identified for students that make them felt working in hotels and restaurant not an attractive and viable profession. Several suggestions are made to correspond to the problems and further actions should be taken in hospitality program to suite the job market. By making several changes and value added to the programs run in the polytechnic, it is a hope that many students are able to be employed to hold good positions in hotel and restaurant institutions. Indirectly it has made the profession of working in hotels and restaurants as high income profession toward Malaysian's vision to be a developed country in 2020

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