

Customer Experience & Personalisation: Emotional Connection & Storytelling

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Abstract

The hospitality industry in the 21st century is opening to new trends and techniques. It is important that hospitality professionals as well as academics stay updated.

Presently, there is a wide gap between knowledge gained and required knowledge in India. Gaining knowledge is easy, but finding a job with that knowledge is quite difficult because the expectations of industry professionals are different from those of educational institutions. Educational institutions give more importance to theoretical knowledge than practical knowledge, but in industry, employers require people who will manage the work effectively.

Academicians today need to understand that we are responsible for keeping students updated. The gap between academics and the hotel industry needs to be narrowed. Faculty members need to use innovative techniques to keep the students interested in the lectures. Various workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions can be conducted where industry professionals can share their knowledge and experience with the students. Some short courses can also be introduced to improve the skills of the students. The industry should also coordinate with academicians by introducing some booster courses.

This study is an attempt to identify how there can be better coordination between academics and industry. This paper will also identify the challenges faced by academicians and industry professionals in bridging the gap.

Keywords: Collaborative, Academics, Training, Skills, Hospitality, Industry.

Introduction

The social and economic development of our nation is aided by education, which plays a significant role in our daily lives. Any educational institution's primary goal is to raise the standard of instruction and learning. Yet, there is currently a tremendous increase in global hospitality education. or ignorance. (Ahlawat S., Rawal Y.S., 2022)

Technologically, the hospitality industry has achieved many milestones and always tries to improve. People used to carry their food along with them while travelling because of their food choices. But now, everywhere you go, you will get almost all types of food. People were chosen to live in a Dharmshala to stay overnight at a cheaper rate with minimum facilities. But in the recent era, one can check all the facilities on the hotel app and select a room.

On the other hand, teachers still use notes to teach students. It is very essential to upgrade teachers, as the industry is upgrading tremendously. We need to conduct training sessions for teachers to introduce them to the new trends in the industry.

The survey conducted by Trading Economics predicts that India's unemployment rate will be 4.8 percent by the end of March 2017 and that it will eventually be around 4.60 percent in 2020. So, the unemployment rate would go down, which would result in more job opportunities. Hence, it is crucial for industry and academia to collaborate in a way that benefits both because they are closely related to one another. Universities want their students to be hired by reputable companies in order to promote the university.

Similarly, there are vacancies in so many companies every year, yet companies don't get workers for employment who can meet the requirements of industry standards, whether they be experts or students.

This study is an attempt to identify how there can be better coordination between academics and industry. This paper will also identify the challenges faced by academicians and industry professionals in bridging the gap.

Industry professionals frequently remark that the curriculum used by various universities is often out of date and not practically applicable to industries. Additionally, because professors lack industrial exposure, students need to learn the requisite abilities. Industry and academia should work together harmoniously so that both can benefit from one another and achieve success.

This gap is mostly caused by an out-of-date curriculum, a lack of real-world application, and a lack of communication. According to the current situation, many students are enrolled in hospitality programs and deal with a variety of uncertainties in the hospitality sector. Students who complete hotel management programs are prepared for careers in the hospitality sector, including supervisory positions.

Students learn how to accomplish tasks and get knowledge of many departments and their standard operating procedures through internships. Students gain knowledge of cost-control strategies, industry grooming standards, and the calibre of services provided to clients.

Objective of the Study

- To study the gap between Hospitality industry and Academia.
- To find the ways to bridge the gap.
- To understand important of collaborative learning.
- To foster a strong pipeline of skilled talent for the hotel industry through internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships.

Review of Literature

"Education is one of the most important parts of our lives. Education not only helps students develop morals and good habits, but it also improves their technical competency, which makes them competitive in the outside world. Businesses have determined a number of areas in which academics is falling behind. Therefore, it is the duty of the universities to overcome these educational difficulties and develop innovative ways to close those gaps. It would be possible to establish a regulatory organisation that would comprise members from academia and industry, keep an eye out for any gaps, and work to close them." (Popat M, Dr. Ganatra A, July 2017)

"Teachers must employ the best teaching methods possible because their main duty is to impart information to society. Building solid relationships with one another and meeting the requirements of society as a whole are the shared responsibilities of academia and industry. These partnerships with the academia sector could also aid in lowering India's unemployment rate." (Popat M, Dr. Ganatra A, July 2017)

According to Hsu 1999, "Teaching is a key component of accomplishing institutional goals including increased efficacy, efficiency, and student learning at colleges and universities."

As Sobaih & Jones, 2015 stated, "It has been found that establishing a knowledge-based economy requires collaboration and partnership between colleges and the travel and hotel industry."

According to Bartunek & Rynes, 2014 "Research questions and partnerships between academics and industry practitioners can be established if their areas of interest are comparable or overlap.

"In order for the curriculum to meet the demands and expectations of industry experts, hospitality educators must determine the needs of employers in the sector as well as their expectations for graduates. In the current environment, fostering collaboration between academia and business is essential; otherwise, there may be a mismatch between the supply and demand for skilled labour. A significant number of hospitality graduates were

produced as a result of the proliferation of hospitality colleges. Nonetheless, the rate of transition from college to hotels is high and difficult. This might be the result of a discrepancy between what educational institutions teach and what the hotel business demands of recent graduates. The majority of students are removed in the group discussion stages before their technical skills are evaluated, and the majority of students are unable to pass the first rounds of recruiting during campus placement drives. Therefore, addressing the aforementioned important concerns jointly and fostering collaboration between groups may benefit all parties involved in the hospitality industry. (Dr. Singh H, 2018)

"In addition to enhancing the educational experience, involvement in student activities like field trips and guest lectures will help students comprehend the demands and expectations of the industry. The necessity to create a curriculum that bridges the divide between academia and industry in educational delivery has made participation in curriculum development and delivery an increasingly important component of university-industry partnership." (Aneesha Chai Mee Fong)

"Despite being known to work closely with academia, the hospitality industry-particularly the hotel industry-tends to move more quickly, particularly when it comes to adopting new techniques and changing systems and procedures." (Sushant University, April 2022) "In the last few years, a gap has developed between what the students learn in classrooms and they actually do in the organizations." (Dr. Kurian S, August 2018) "There can be little interaction between academia and industry, but this might be easily fixed by actions like academics writing for trade periodicals, workshops offered to industry, and gatherings like round tables." (Barrows & Walsh, 2002)

As Ahlawat S. et al (2022) suggested, the students are deficient in a number of critical abilities needed by different hotel divisions. The institutions lack the newest industrial equipment and contemporary infrastructure. To help kids develop their complete personalities, much more attention needs to be paid to invention and originality. Research and development is an area where academia and industry must work together. Faculty and industry experts can exchange ideas, and student internships are beneficial to both.

Data Analysis

This study was prepared using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Primary data has been collected from the questionnaire, which was shared with respondents and then it analysed by using pie chart. I interviewed 10 people from the industry and 20 people from academia to get their views on what actions should be taken to bridge the gap between academics and industry. A questionnaire is attached here.

Questionnaire

1. Why there is a gap between academia and industry?
2. What is the biggest reason for the gap between the hotel industry and academia?
3. In what ways academia needs to collaborate more with industry?
4. How can academicians technologically be aware to share the knowledge?
5. Can collaborative learning be helpful to bridge the gap between the academia and industry?
6. With technological advancements in hospitality sector, what are your expectations from the students?
7. What changes in the method of teaching have you brought?
8. As hospitality educator professional/ Industry professional do you feel the need to learn the new technologies?
9. Suggest ways of collaborative learning of industry and academics.

I have interviewed HR Manager and Learning and Development Manager of JW Marriotts, Mumbai, Westin, Mumbai, Raddison Blue Resort and Spa, Karjat, Westin

Garden City, Mumbai, Fairmount by Marriotts, Mumbai. All of them were from Hotel Industry.

From academics I have interviewed Dean, Associates Dean, Training and Placement Co-ordinator, Principals from different hotel management institutes like, ITM-IHM Nerul, Pillai's HMCT, St. Andrews IHM, Sahyog College of Management Studies.

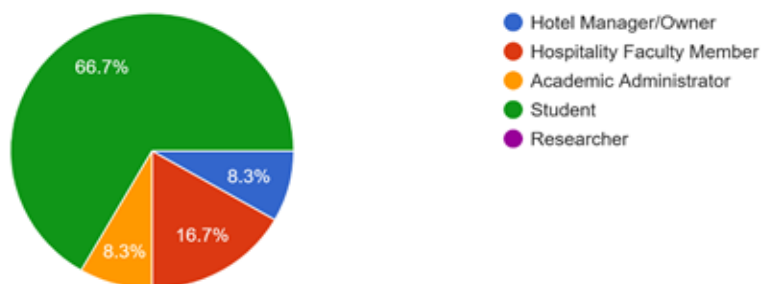
After interviewing people from both academia and industry, I understood that there is a huge gap between these two sectors, which is the main reason for the lack of skilled employees. There are many suggestions I got from both sectors, but a very important one is collaborative learning between academics and industry.

Academicians need to understand the expectations of industry. The hotel industry is upgrading every now and then and introducing new trends. But the academicians are still using old-school techniques.

- Sample Design- I have used simple random sampling. Where I have selected a group of people and every person got equal chance of getting selected.
- Sample Unit- The sample unit of this study is comprising students of hospitality institute, faculties of hospitality institute, a Training and Development department from the hotels, employee of that department.
- Research Area- I prefer the area for research, was Navi Mumbai.

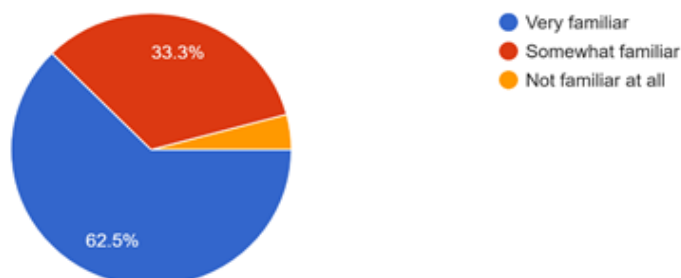
What is your role in the hotel industry or academia?

24 responses



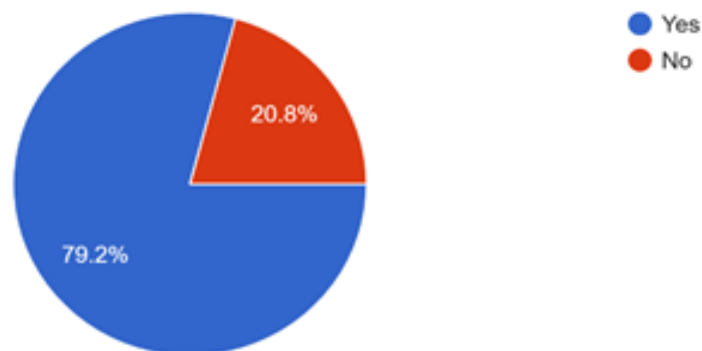
How familiar are you with the concept of collaborative learning between the hotel industry and academia?

24 responses



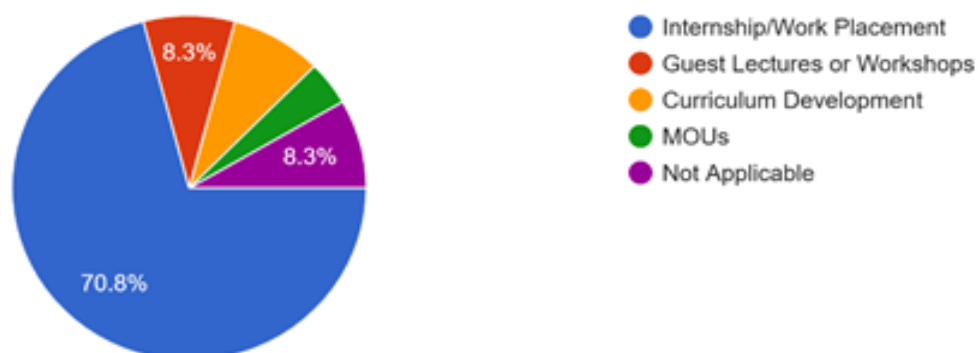
Have you personally been involved in any collaborations between the hotel industry and academia?

24 responses



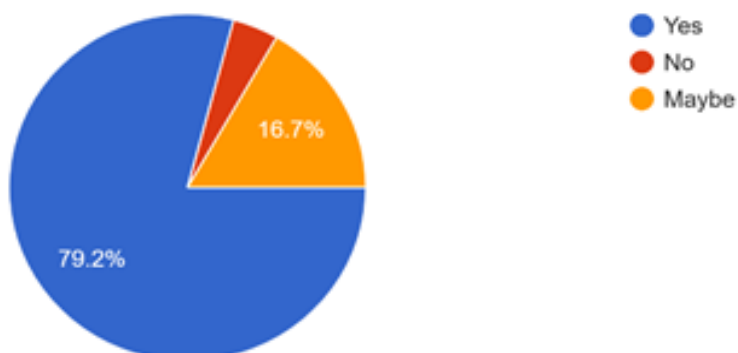
If yes, what type of collaboration did you participate in?

24 responses



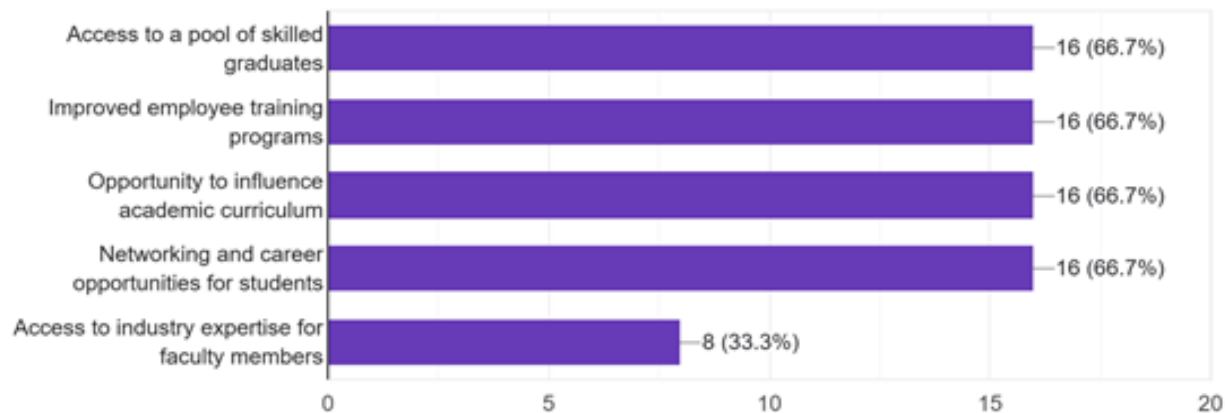
Do you believe collaborative learning provides mutual benefits for both the hotel industry and academia?

24 responses

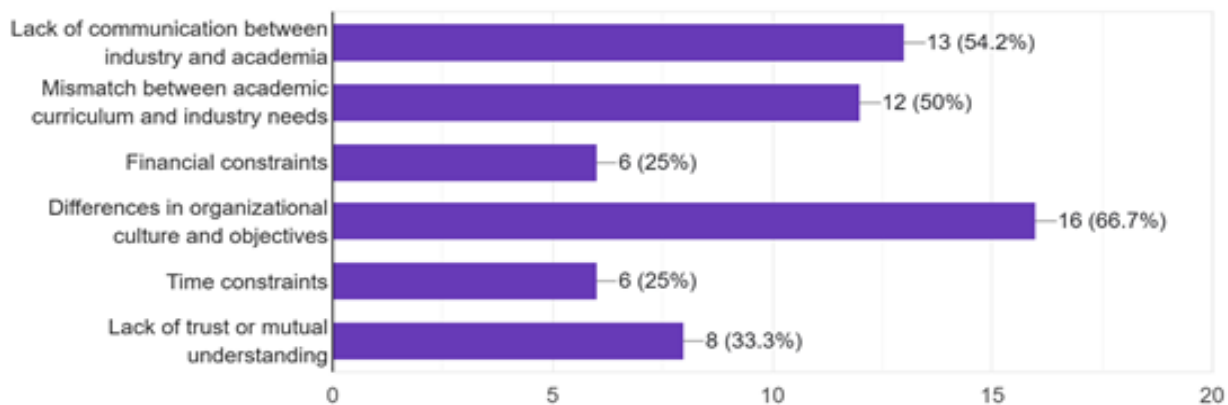


What are the potential benefits of collaboration from an industry perspective? (Select all that apply)

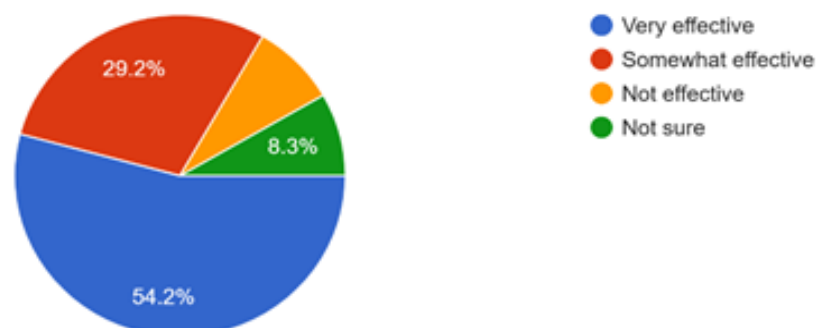
24 responses

**What do you think are the biggest challenges in establishing collaborations between the hotel industry and academia? (Select all that apply)**

24 responses

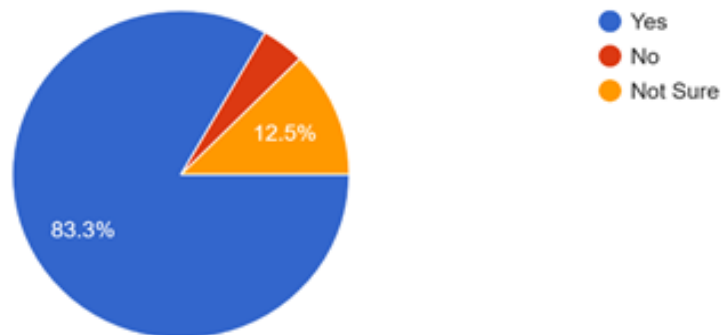
**How effective do you think existing collaborations between the hotel industry and academia are in terms of knowledge transfer?**

24 responses



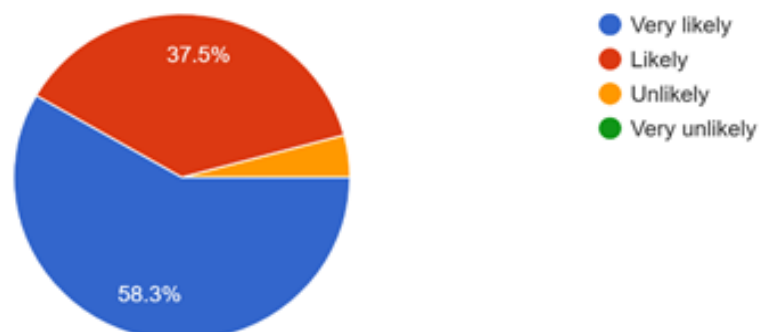
Do you think collaboration between academia and the hotel industry should be integrated into the curriculum more strongly?

24 responses



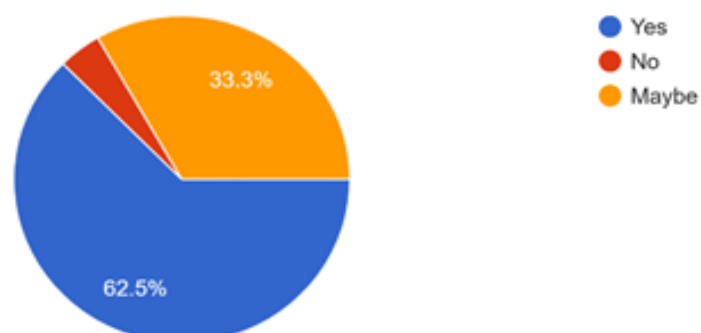
How likely is it that you would support future collaborations between your organization (or institution) and the other sector (hotel industry/academia)?

24 responses



Do you believe the collaboration between the hotel industry and academia will become more important in the future?

24 responses



According to the data collection, collaboration with the industry is very important. Industry people and academicians should work together and form a curriculum which gives better idea and learning to the students. Which eventually make students industry ready. This curriculum offers students more hands on practice and less theoretical knowledge.

Academicians Expectations

Industry has to take part in curricular activities, which are conducted by academicians. Hoteliers can organise some interactive sessions with the students on a regular basis to give them a brief idea about the new techniques and trends in the industry. Academics require the active participation of industry people in the restructuring of the syllabus. Our curriculum should not only be theory-based but also require hands-on practise. We need the input of professionals to review the syllabus.

Hospitality professionals emphasised that industry professionals should be involved in the design and development of the current undergraduate curriculum and that it has to be restructured to meet industry requirements. Educators must involve industry professionals on the Board of Studies (BOS) to design a well-structured syllabus and periodically take their suggestions and feedback on upgrading the syllabus as per emerging trends. (Dr. Singh Hardaman, 2018)

Nomenclature Change for Current courses like the committee, which included educators and business executives, stressed the urgent need to update the names of current core courses and further divide them down.

Unique Subjects/Coursework, subjects, industry experts recommended that in order to increase the specialisation skills of the students, educational institutions should add new subjects like fast food chains, work-life balance, safety and security, Indian classical cuisine, foreign cuisine, slow food, business ethics & sustainability, food plating, food photography, etc. as elective courses in hotel management. (Dr. Singh Hardaman, 2018)

The fundamental objective of short-term training programmes, which are included in the curriculum in many higher education institutions, is to give students useful practical knowledge. Students prefer well-known brands over start-up businesses.

Because startups don't have a set pattern and would require more innovation from students, the type of experience they receive there is significantly different from what they receive from large, well-known corporations. Several large, well-known corporations don't provide their students with real assignments; thus, they wind up doing more documentary work, which results in poor or no practical understanding. (Popat Mayuri, Dr. Ganatra Amit, February 2017)

When students are on an internship, they should not be treated as trainees. The industry has to give the same

responsibility to the students as it does to their employees. Then students will work more responsibly. The industry has to train students not only in operational areas but also in back offices like training and placement, revenue management, finance, human resources, sales and marketing, banquet sales, etc. Students will get an idea about this department. And they developed their interests, which helped them choose their area of interest.

The industry has to organise some training programmes and workshops for academicians to make them aware of upcoming trends.

Industry Professionals Expectations

To introduce new trends to academicians, industry has to organise the Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on a regular basis. In order to stay in touch with the most recent trends and practises, faculty members must be organised and given access to development programmes or refresher courses. Refresher courses on the hospitality and tourism sectors are now being offered by a very small number of UGC-HRDC Centres. Industries should lead the way on this. (Dr. Singh Hardaman, 2018)

The industry has to give the students more and more exposure. Many institutions send their students for a six-month internship in the second year of their degree course. But according to industry professionals, institutions have to send students for vocational training for a minimum of 15–30 days. So, students will get a brief idea of the industry. Academicians should know the skills of students, and according to that, they should get trained to shape their careers.

Students' poor communication skills: Students in the hospitality industry struggle with body language, personality attributes, and English communication. Another issue that many students deal with is the language barrier. The limited internship duration: Internships last for a very brief period of time. The students did not gain a thorough understanding of the industry and were unable to cover all of the essential departments. Absence of modern infrastructure: Students in the hotel industry are employable due to the lack of modern equipment for practicals and the absence of modern infrastructure. (Ahlawat S., Rawal Y.S., 2022)

Many pupils lack computer skills and are unable to use industry-standard applications. Theory classes are of greater importance to the institutions. The faculty places greater emphasis on theory-based learning than on practicals, which are more crucial to fulfilling industrial demands. The library' collection of literary reviews and textbooks is out of date. The institutions do not have modern e-library resources. The majority of the universities do not host conferences, seminars, or workshops that might benefit both teachers and students. Facilities for faculty and student research and development are scarce in academia. Participants in the industry and academia do not coordinate, which is detrimental to both. Students are

bored because teachers continue to use antiquated lecture techniques in the classroom. The pupils lack operational and managerial abilities, which are critical for meeting industry standards. Academic evaluation techniques are still outdated. Pupils are compelled to create presentations and homework that are plagiarised from online sources. The newest tools and equipment, such as projectors and smart boards, which enhance learning, are not present in classrooms.

Recommendations

A more practical focus should be incorporated into the hospitality course program. Practical and skills-oriented courses should be given in educational institutions to foster students' creativity and innovation. The infrastructure required for labs with the newest tools and technology must be provided by hospitality establishments. The most recent literature reviews must be updated in libraries, and e-library resources must be available. Students must have access to updated software programs and information systems in the computer laboratories. Artificial intelligence can be used to reduce the amount of plagiarism in online tests while simultaneously improving teaching effectiveness and simplifying administrative tasks. Several digital tools, such as Woo Clap, an audience response tool that professors and students use to communicate through test questions, word clouds, polls, or gamification to enhance the teaching-learning process, can be utilised to transform classrooms into virtual classrooms. Lesson preparation based on learning objectives, student engagement in lectures (student-centered approach), use of technology, role-plays, problem-solving, case studies, and involving students in games and activities are all components of the lecture method that need to be made more engaging. Institutions that serve both teachers and students must consistently host workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Experts from around the world may be invited to share the most recent information and methods employed in the field. Graduates in the hospitality industry must possess managerial and operational abilities in order to succeed in the industry and maintain their competitiveness. Enhancing graduates' performance and productivity in the hospitality sector requires the development of constructive thinking skills. Students should pay close attention to their connection, management, communication, and leadership abilities. The most crucial abilities that hotel managers need are team building, operational skills for the front desk, practical experience, and strategic planning. It is necessary to promote the appointment of industry-experienced faculty members so that they can share their industry knowledge and the most recent advancements. To learn about the most recent advancements and trends, both faculty and students need to visit the hotel industry.

The faculty members are more focused on assignments and presentations than they are on conveying academic knowledge. It is considerably more necessary for faculty

to focus on practicals rather than theories. Centres for research and development can be established to help innovate education for the benefit of both the economy and people. Some research institutes may be able to set up research centres, with help from the hospitality sector. These research facilities might be made available to professionals in the field who can collaborate with academics. For research and development to benefit both academia and industry, industry partnerships and collaboration are essential.

In order for lecturers to work as managers in the industry and managers to work as faculty in institutions that benefit both industry and academia and provide them the chance to alter the learning environment, job swapping must be promoted. Additionally, it can promote internships and placements for students. The input provided by industry professionals will aid in the development of a realistic curriculum that institutions can use to help their students develop their skills. English fluency of students would be increased by involving them in group discussions, extempore, mock interview. There is a need to improve their body language as well as personality qualities in order to match the industry criteria. In order for the students to have a more positive internship experience, much more attention needs to be paid to the safety and security of the girls' students as well as the working environment and rewards. Create an entrepreneurship cell to support students in starting their own businesses and to provide funding and support for original and creative ideas.

Findings

For educational institutions in the hotel business to be up to date with industry trends and demands, industrial connectivity is essential. In turn, it aids in giving students the knowledge and skill sets they need to be successful in the workplace. Industry-academic collaboration can improve employee abilities, enable knowledge sharing, and give students real-world experience (Deale et al., 2018). Through increasing staff skills, encouraging innovation, and raising customer satisfaction, industry-academic collaboration can raise the quality of services (Horng et al., 2019). Furthermore, Weber and Zopiatis (2018) discovered that through encouraging innovation, developing staff competencies, and raising stakeholder participation, this kind of cooperation might improve sustainability.

There are many ways to bridge this gap. We need to add current, relevant topics to the syllabus of hospitality education. And for that, academics can appoint industry professionals to their Board of Studies (BOS). Academicians must visit industry at least twice in the academic year to learn about new trends and technologies. Students need to get more and more hands-on practice to develop their skills and interests. Academicians have to send students to industrial training, ODC, industrial visits, vineyards, factory visits, etc. Institutions need to plan their academic year in such a way that they can take students

on industrial visits. For example, an institute can take students to a cheese factory to show the entire process of cheese making instead of explaining the same process in the classroom. The same applies for winemaking. The institute can organise vineyard visits, and students will see the process.

Academicians must be encouraged to attend the trade fairs. Students must also be allowed and encouraged to attend the trade shows of the hospitality and allied sectors regularly. There must be weekly guest lecture sessions that can be organised by hotels in their banquets or ballrooms for the HM students (hotels may charge a nominal rate); that way, hotels can also earn something and may garner a good response for the event. Institutes must create the infrastructure for the regular conduct of guest lectures.

Conclusion

The key to India's economic development is developing a skilled labour force. In India, developing human capital is a top priority. Without improving its human capital, no nation can advance. Never the machines behind the men; always the men behind the machines. Any nation's educational system is its foundation because it creates strong people and national leaders. Skills disruptions are undoubtedly affecting how prosperous modern global civilizations are. In the world, India has a demographic dividend and a strategic edge due to the size of its young population. For India to advance economically, students must be employable and deployable.

It is very important to bridge this gap between academia and industry. Academicians need to update themselves by visiting industry and staying connected with the industry's developments. e.g., institutions can send faculties for cross exposure in the industry for a minimum of 10 days, or for the Faculty Development Programme (FDP), the Refresher Programme, booster courses, or a certificate course. Industry and institutes can sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each other. Before signing it, both the parties have to discuss what expectations they have from each other to develop skill labour force. It will help faculties give students a brief idea of new trends and technology in industry.

Academicians should take the help of industry professionals while framing the syllabus. Industry professionals can also visit institutions not only for campus recruitment but also to connect with students and help them choose their career. The industry has to organise more and more interactive sessions with the students and faculties. Similarly, institutions can invite industry experts to speak as guest lecturers. The academic fraternity can stay in touch with the industry by organising webinars, competitions, events, etc.

To conclude, it takes a coordinated effort from all interested parties to close the skills gap that currently exists between

academia and industry, including educators, students, parents, educational institutions, business, intellectuals, and non-profits.

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