Issue of effective student engagement in Hotel Management Colleges of India

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Abstract

In the last decade, the demand of Hotel management colleges has witnessed a growth of 55% all over India. Prospective students demonstrate keen interest to be a part of the skills based hospitality industry. The notion of effective engagement plays a crucial role in the transforming individuals to life - long learners. The Hotel management colleges provide a platform for students to sharpen their skills and develop their intra- personal qualities to become hospitable services provider. Nevertheless, all the colleges are facing issues of effective student engagement; this piece of research attempts to provide solution on the subject matter with the help of innovation. The researcher reviews the connection between teaching method and level of engagement. It also provides critical discussion over deep v/s surface approach of learning. Further, the researcher highlights the importance of student centric learning in correlation with constructivist theory of learning. Lastly, the article infers steps to be undertaken for effective student engagement through experiential learning.

Key Words: Hospitality education, student – centric learning, student engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Benson et al. (2019) from past few decades increasingly importance is given to the quality of teaching and learning in the hotel management colleges. Skelton (2004) has termed higher education as 'contested concept' in which the good teaching is measured with the amount of student learning that occurs. Also Doyle (2019) claimed that the students learning is completely dependent on the teachers effectiveness as researchers like (Sajjad and Doyle 2019) have provided with reasonable suggestion that teachers can present context and skills that will help enhance students learning opportunities. Furthermore effective learning is been broadly understood by Penny (2003) stating that the teaching which is completely oriented and focused towards students learning, Simpson (2019) indicated this approach as student centred learning. The major purpose of this research is to enlighten the concept of student centric teaching in the hotel management universities, the researchers have attempt to discuss the importance of the student centric learning along with providing the effective student engagement through varied assessment and experimental learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Teaching Methods

In simple sense, teaching is a skill, which focuses on students and their learning. Hativa et al. (2001) pinned that effective teaching is bases over four dimensions; interest, clarity, organization and positive climate. On the other hand, Kreber (2002) added to Hatvia's statement and pointed our the in order to teach an individual must possess sound knowledge over the subject matter and must know the art of motivating students and help them to overcome their learning barriers. In India, in most of the Hotel management colleges, the professors mainly adopt teaching methods like lecturing, case study – explanation, solving a problem, and practise sessions in labs.

2.2. Surface vs Deep level learning

Bennet (2008) has explored higher education into surface level learning and deep level learning. Surface level learning is based on the short term memorization, it represents visible choices but with minimum understanding. Furthermore, Chickering et al. (2005) indicated that surface level learning can be stored in books, computers and in mind/brains, therefore most of the learning in the colleges is considered to be surface level as it focuses more on the awareness and memorization which leads to inadequate focus on understanding the concept of the subject. For example, National Research Council (2000) has expressed that Indian Educations system emphasis on surface level of leaning to pass a quiz or examination.

On the other hand Bennet (2007) elaborated deep level learning is a serious attempt to turn others idea into own specified structure, the source of deep level lies in one's creativity, intuition, pattern, and experience. Deep level is a broaden source of knowledge with more and more learning which is built up in unconscious manner. Deep level approach focuses much more on the student engagement and student centred learning to enhance the effective learning within the individuals. Bennet (2008) deduces stating that it is an area where knowledge begets knowledge. For instance, National Research Council (2000) has articulated that the United States education system teaches students using a wide and deep level approach.

2.2.1. Constructivist theory

Through deep level learning, the key roles and responsibilities of both learners and instructors changes drastically. The instructor transforms to facilitator for learning. Hence, learning becomes an active process which allows the learner to construct the meaning on his/ her own rather then depending on the instructions of the faculty. In other words, the instructor lead less and learners take full responsibility for learning through analaysing variables, co-orelating with examples and constructing real life situations (Mc Combs and Whistler 1997).

The constructivism is a holistic approach of teaching and learning in which the individual construct one's own understanding by previous experience and reflecting on the same. Constructive learning emphasis problem-solving, using authentic tasks adapt varied assessment to address students, using of manipulative materials, dynamic knowledge and are flexible towards change along with new experience.

2.3. Student engagement

Student engagement is been defined by Dougherty (2013) stating that the engaged students makes an effort of psychological investment in learning likewise Bolliger (2018) added that student engagement helps in increasing the students satisfaction, students motivation to learn also reduces sense of isolation and overall helps in improving the performance of the student.

The growing interest towards student engagement Conner (2011) justified by stating that the faculty could affect student engagement to a great extent in the terms of productivity or counter-productivity (Trowler 2010). As a matter of fact the student engagement is dependent on the educators along with the universities behaviour and approach, Jensen (2013) suggested that the sympathetic planning and implementation of research-based approach were found to be the most fruitful outcome for the students in individual's practical life along with the academic performance. The growing interest towards student-centric teaching approach has replaced the tradition teaching style. The paradigm has shifted from the mentor to the learner, the novice are treated as co-creator in teaching and learning process (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

2.4. Assessment Methods

The notion of assessment methods is crucial and need to complementing the teaching style and student engagement. The key assessment methods practiced in Hotel management colleges is of written examination, viva, situation handling and practical examinations in labs. Such assessment are not student centric, usually a student would perform surface research and present the information in the teacher. However, Bolliger (2018) added that if the assessment methods are well planned then it imparts students with more level of knowledge. Additionally, the assessment method of examination is loosing its vitality, as students are not able to extract the best of the learning.

International universities have integrated some of the contemporary methods of assessment which focuses on student centric learning and develop critical thinking skills. For instance, a interview examination, attend a conference and present detailed analysis over the subject matter; promote innovation and creativity, all of them leading to experiential learning.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this paper, to reach the outline purpose, the exploratory research was conducted which aims to critically review on student centric learning in the correlation with the constructivism theory and focuses more on the deep level of learning. For this research an access to the articles from scholarly journal was gained through EBSCO with the keywords of student engagement, student centric learning, deep level approach and varied assessment. Also secondary research was conducted and required data was collected from recommended books, articles of Taylor and Francis group were referred, many journal articles like High Education Research and Development, Journal of diversity in High Education and Journal of Higher Education for the future through SAGE Journals, Science Direct, Emerald Insight and Elsevier.

4. DISCUSSION

According to Dougherty (2013) there are noticeable gap in student centric learning that can either be on the faculties part or on the students aspect, however (Taylor & Parsons, 2011) added that the difference can take place because of the different levels of students engagement. Thus even the performance of the deprived learner can be improved through effective engagement and teaching while Jensen (2013) criticized by stating that if there is not effective mentor then even the intense learner can deprive and affect the learners engagement.

The hotel management universities are much more focused toward providing practical assessment to student but looking towards the theoretical learning there are least assessment and student engagement been sighted by the researcher. However through constructivism learning theory and deep level learning the universities can achieve effective student engagement and also have successful shift to student centric learning. According to Dougherty (2013) constructivism is a theory of knowledge in which the learner generate knowledge from an interaction of individuals experiences, research and ideas. The importance of student centric learning can be correlated to deep level learning and constructivism theory as in the notion of student centric learning the major focus of the universities is the learners engagement and these two are the perfect base for the student centric hotel management universities.

The universities have to emphasis on the varied teaching methods and assessment which will promote student engagement within the university and also assist in improvising the academic performance of the students and also learners will gain interest towards learning. For example in India, The University of Mumbai offers traditional lecture based learning for one of the field research subject that is New Enterprise Creation while in comparing the same with one of the hotel management university that is ITM-IHM provides an opportunity to the student for primary and secondary research based essay in which the students are expected to provide with the entire business plan along with three years of finance to support the business which actually gives and opportunities for the students with dynamic knowledge of market, the learners also develop a sense of ownership and efficiency when they get through mentor, peer and self-assessment feedback to make adjustments, improvements and changes to what they understand and also helps in enhancing the individuals ideas of innovative business with exceptional marketing strategies. Lastly, along with the research based essay the students also have to get through the bank style interview which helps the student to understand the bank loan procedure for starting up a new business.

One of the assessments which are primarily developed in the United Kingdom universities is the game based learning these tasks invoke different responses and require different ways of visualizing student thinking. In this assessment the students acts as an hotel manager on the online based hotel where the manager is responsible for taking decisions for any small change been constructed, the learner have to provide justification for any action taken along with the basic cost occurred and why the change was needed, this will help students as it offered opportunities to express their understanding at different points and also enables the students to develop their understanding by presenting and evaluating different types of work. This approach makes students more aware of their own thinking and prompts them to reflect on their learning process. They have opportunities to shed light on their misunderstandings. Students become aware of what they can do and what they understand, and can identify and ease practical knowledge through this assessment.

One of the deep level approaches that influences students engagement is also the Microsoft Power Point Presentation (PPT) which is used in an undergraduate bachelor's programme in Hotel and Tourism in United Kingdom universities. The students have to undergo research of hospitality brand in which the learner has to study the 5 years annual report in which the major focus was on the varied organizing and marketing strategies, growth of the brand, basic accounting information and so on, the study is based on comparing the strategies and stating it into the PPT. As this assessment is a group exercise, it provides an opportunity for participants to learn and improve skills the students collectively make decisions to complete the assignment along with that individuals also develop effective team building and also students learn and develop soft skills which will further help them in the industry for presentation. More commonly this also includes collaboration, leadership, taking initiative, creativity, problem solving and also the ability to perform in public. This form of assessment is interrelated with the constructivism theory as the faculty here is a facilitator and provides feedback on the work performed and also to achieve the reliable annual reports the students have to make use of manipulating material and also have dynamic knowledge regarding the same.

Furthermore Bolliger (2018) recognized that along with these three approaches there are various other approaches just as case study learning, primary research based learning, role plays, script play and many others which will influence the student engagement in hotel management universities.

5. CONCLUSION

The researchers would like to conclude that teaching and assessment methods, learning approaches and student engagement play a vital role in transforming students to life – long learners. More importance need to be given to student centric learning, as it develops student's cognitive skills. In other words, critical thinking skills helps student to comprehend, apply, analyse, and evaluate a given situation and develop reasoning ability. Contemporary teaching styles and assessment methods can help student to be independent. The education system need to be comprehensive enough to cater to the demands of the students and enhance their learning experience. The teaching methods and assessment methods requires review and the notion of experiential learning or research based learning could be incorporated for levels of education. Lastly, the researchers would like to highlight the key limitation of this research paper, i.e. primary search, the generalization made over the paper were only based on secondary research and Secondly the time – frame for this research was limited only to 15 days. At the end, researchers would like pin that primary research over the topic by comparing two education system (research based and examination based), as it will give clear picture of what is better and what can be done to improvise the existing situation.

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