

Employability and Pertinence of Work Based Learning for International Hospitality Management Students: A Comparative Study of Indian Students and UK Nationals

***Bernie Quinn, Bryan Cruden QMU Edinburgh
Rupa Datta IIBM/QMU Kolkata***

Purpose

To consider how the diverse backgrounds of two different groups of students have prepared them for academic HE studies and how their indigenous preparations ready them for the ultimate challenges posed by the contemporary hospitality industry.

Methodology/Approach

Researchers took a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with International Hospitality Management students in Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. Researchers also reflected on anecdotal evidence from personal involvement in overseas delivery programmes and involvement with overseas employers to provide background detail on international student work based learning and UK students' involvement in supervised work experience and/or part-time employment.

Findings

There are large discrepancies between both groups of students who are about to enter the UK workplace after graduation with a degree in International Hospitality. Indian students have a very short 6 month 'internship' but unlike UK contemporaries have no opportunities for part-time work either before or during studies. The concept of part-time work is virtually unheard of in India. In contrast, it appears that most UK based students, who have extensive access to full or part-time work and the opportunity to complete a 12 week second year work placement, may not enter industry with the same application or even enthusiasm as their Indian counterparts. It is suggested that Indian students coming from in-country college teaching and an intensive internship are highly trained in both practical 'hard' skills and also 'soft' skills. UK students may not be as highly motivated to enter the graduate workplace, particularly if they view the position as beneath them as recent graduates. From the employer perspective, it is recognised that employers value internships, placements and students involved in experiential working both in India and the UK. However Indian employers appear to provide training in a more holistic skills set than UK based ones. Final considerations are interesting as researchers suggest that UK HE educators may need to think further about the inclusion of different levels of soft skills in the curriculum and attempt to meet the expectations of students and employers in the realistic preparation of students for industry.