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Finding the Hospitality Industry? Or Finding Hospitality Schools of Thought?

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide an overview of hospitality research and how it has developed over the last thirty years. To do this, the state of hospitality research is briefly reviewed and Veal's (2002) analysis of leisure studies is presented. Hospitality is then compared with leisure studies in order to identify similarities and differences. This comparison then leads to the identification of alternative schools of thought within hospitality, which are described and critiqued. The article ends with some conclusions about the state of hospitality research.

Keywords: hospitality research, schools of thought

Introduction¹

This article is prompted by the ongoing debate within this journal between Paul Slattery and Bob Brotherton (Slattery, 2002; Brotherton, 2002a; Slattery, 2003; Brotherton, 2003) under the headline 'Finding the Hospitality Industry'. Whilst reading this exchange of opinion, I had been in the process of writing an article which I had provisionally titled 'Hospitality Research: Intellectual Void, Theoretical Crisis, or Mature Complacency?' This was unashamedly adapted from an article by Veal (2002) which considered how the field of leisure studies had developed over the last 30 to 40 years. Veal writes:

Depending on who you read, leisure studies is either in a state of desperate intellectual crisis or basking in a somewhat self-satisfied

¹ I would like to make it clear that this article does not specifically derive from my work on RAE Panel 43. In carrying out their task, such panels make collective, cabinet-style decisions which are then communicated to the institutions who submitted returns. Panel 43 also published an article (quoted later in this article) to provide further feedback to the academic community as their *collective* perspective of business and management research. The views expressed in this article about hospitality research are my own, which may – or may not – be consistent with those published by the panel as a whole.

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sense of achievement and progress after 30 years of productive work.
(2002:37)

I was struck by the resonance this has with a debate earlier than Slattery versus Brotherton within the field of hospitality, exemplified by Taylor and Edgar (1999) who refer to hospitality as a 'lacuna or lost cause?' Moreover, both fields of study have existed for the same time span and the number of academics and journal publications is broadly similar, adding further validity to this comparison.

Botterill (2000) also notes that the 'proximity of leisure studies to hospitality studies is generally well understood'. But he goes on to say that 'in respect of the sustaining of an emancipatory social science there would appear to be a considerable difference' (2000:192). He argues that unlike leisure, hospitality has been devoid of disciplines such as sociology and political economy, and hence, has never developed critical theory. This argument is one of many about the nature of hospitality and research in the field that this paper will return to.

Void, crisis or achievement? The story so far

There are relatively few articles that have considered the state of hospitality research and how it has developed. Early contributions to hospitality theory and hospitality research include Nailon (1982), Slattery (1983) and Cassee (1983). But it was not until nearly a decade later that the first review of hospitality was conducted by Litteljohn (1990). He suggested that research in the field was already 'mature' and there were three alternative approaches to hospitality research (1990:209-10):

- hospitality research based on the natural and physical sciences, 'such as food science and technical equipment design and testing';
- the hospitality management approach which 'focuses on that activity characterised by the active coordination and balancing of the interrelationship of the external environment, the human resources, the technical infrastructure and management information system' (which is clearly based on Nailon's earlier work);
- and the hospitality studies approach which places a greater significance on a 'wider interpretation of social techniques when analysing a problem of situation, rather than a more immediate concern with operational issues'.

In discussing these further, Litteljohn goes on to explore the differences between them in terms of their philosophy of science and scientific method. He identifies very little difference between hospitality science and hospitality management. Both are essentially positivist. The main difference is their respective focus of attention. The science approach confines itself to natural and physical phenomena for which existing models exist, whereas management focuses on hospitality-specific phenomena for which the researcher is seeking to build hospitality models. The hospitality studies approach however adopts a broader social science approach and 'places greater emphasis on the (outside) environments of hospitality' (Litteljohn, 1990:222).

In 1996, Jones authored a Viewpoint article in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* called 'Hospitality research – where have we got to?' This rejected the Litteljohn view that the discipline was mature. Jones argued that hospitality research work did not compare well with research in the generic fields of operations management, organisational behaviour, marketing, and so on. He stated that there was much low quality output, displayed by four faults. First, there was poor citation of other work. Second, he expressed concern about papers with 'no methodology, no rationale for the methodology, and/or no explanation of the methodology'. Third, those that were methodologically correct were often 'perfectly conducted studies of the fatuous', typically using hospitality students as their sample frame. Finally, he wrote 'far too many hospitality researchers cannot write, and in particular cannot develop argument' (1996:8).

Given the forthright and critical tone of the article, it was clearly designed to provoke debate and further argument. It might be expected therefore to have generated a number of responses, if not direct refutations of the views expressed. In fact there was only one other contribution to the debate, a Viewpoint article by Taylor and Edgar (1996). They agreed with the notion that hospitality research, even by the mid 1990s, was embryonic or, at best, developing. They also explored the nature of research output in the field by analysing the research methods adopted in CHME (Council for

Hospitality Management Education) research conference papers between 1992-1995 and later (Taylor and Edgar, 1999) for articles in the *Hospitality Research Journal* for the same period. This essentially provided a comparison between UK and US practice. They found in both cases that around one third of work was conceptual – ‘indicative of efforts by hospitality researchers to undertake theory building’ (1996:214) – but that research based on fieldwork was essentially quantitative, indicating to them an overwhelmingly positivist approach to hospitality.

In their later contribution to the debate, Taylor and Edgar (1999) began with the statement ‘hospitality management research is on a slow train headed nowhere’. They too were critical of hospitality research but for different reasons to Jones (1996). The reason for this is that they believe that up to that time there was ‘a lack of any clear articulation of what is meant by the term hospitality management’ (1999:20). They therefore began by identifying both the purpose and scope of hospitality management research.

Having reviewed various previous contributions to the debate (Jones, 1996; Litteljohn, 1990; Shaw and Nightingale, 1995; Taylor and Edgar, 1996; Wood, 1994), Taylor and Edgar (1999:24) suggest three principal purposes of hospitality research, as follows:

- ‘to uncover and make sense of existing patterns of behaviour and phenomena within the hospitality industry’ – essentially a positivist approach
- ‘to identify new and better ways of managing within the hospitality industry’ – a normative approach
- ‘to enable hospitality faculty to educate future practitioners’.

They then go on to suggest that the scope of such research could be considered at three levels comprising micro (i.e. firm level), meso (sector level) or macro (industry level). However they do not suggest which approach - positivist or normative – nor level or levels, are most appropriately for consideration as ‘hospitality research’.

One year earlier than Taylor and Edgar’s exposition, in 1998, there was a special edition of the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* devoted to a review of hospitality research. In six articles, authored by a team of twelve international authorities on their discipline area, 547 refereed journal articles were reviewed and categorised. There were some interesting results. Nearly half of the work reviewed was conceptual in nature, not based on any primary research. This was especially so in the disciplines of finance/accounting and systems/technology. Of those studies that did engage in primary research, the marketing and operations management disciplines adopted a predominantly quantitative approach, finance/accounting a qualitative one, and human resources a balance between the two. As editor, Jones (1998) drew a number of conclusions from this review of a decade of hospitality research output. These were:

- There had been too much conceptualisation and not enough primary research.
- Conceptualisation suggested a preoccupation with hospitality being different to other industries.
- There was a failure to articulate and debate fundamental issues relating to research philosophy and methodology.
- There was a need for multidisciplinary and there was a difficulty in achieving it.

Taylor and Edgar (1999) went on to place hospitality management research in the context of generic debates about alternative research philosophies and methodologies. They suggest that hospitality researchers should have a ‘grasp of the philosophical aspects of the research process’ (1999:27) and that most lack any ontological or epistemological position. This followed nearly three years of debate amongst some UK academics about this very issue. The culmination of this debate was the text *In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical Perspectives and Debates* (Lashley and Morrison, 2000), which as we have seen has proved controversial (see for example, Slattery, 2002).

Olsen (2001) provides a rare American perspective on the issues. He too begins by identifying the tension between the rigour of academic scholarship and the needs of ‘users of this research [who] are very practical people who demand relevance and immediacy to the solutions of their problems’. In

addition to relevancy, Olsen (2001) also writes ‘hospitality academics often talk to each other and do not benchmark the standard measures of research effort and quality outside of their own field’ (2001:97). The dangers of this are then exposed when he analyses the methods used in hospitality research.

Olsen estimates how much hospitality research has been conceptual (25 per cent), or based on survey research (30 per cent), case studies (25 per cent) and multivariate techniques (20 per cent). Of this total output, Olsen suggests that very little has actually tested theory or developed causal relationships, and so ‘most of the work is descriptive’ (2001:102). He believes that a high proportion of survey-based research has simply applied existing theories and survey designs to the hospitality context, what he terms ‘replication studies’. Case study research too, he judges to have been largely comparative, making little contribution to theory and reliant on theory from other disciplines. Research using multivariate techniques ‘for the most part is still in the replicative and theory testing arena’. And as to the contribution of conceptual research, he concludes that ‘there were many instances no doubt when a conceptual piece was not researched or validated in the industry context (2001:102-3).

Olsen’s concern is clearly shared by British academics. Taylor and Edgar (1999:20) wrote ‘within hospitality management there would appear to be have been little or no explicit dialogue concerning research philosophy’. Whilst Brotherton (1999:541) suggests ‘there is a need for the hospitality management research community as a whole to engage in more substantive, agenda setting, conceptual research’. The review of contributions to this debate summarised above give some weight to these views. There is also concern about theory building or conceptualisation and a *de facto* acceptance of the positivist approach to research. Given these concerns, there seems to be a *prima facie* case for arguing that leisure studies and hospitality may face a similar divergence of opinion as to the state of research in their respective fields. And as to the issue of crisis? Olsen (2001:104) writes:

All scholars must address and question their comfort levels with the current state of research and begin to shape theories that are relevant to this heterogeneous hospitality community going forward into the future.

Leisure studies compared with hospitality research

The origins of leisure studies is identified by Veal (2002) as being government sponsored research in the USA into outdoor recreation during the 1960s. Large social surveys were devised to determine leisure participation, and eventually, leisure behaviour. Surveys were also used to forecast demand and assist in the development of government policy. In 1969, the leading North American journal in the field, *Journal of Leisure Research* (JLR) was established. It reflected the orientation of leisure research at this time towards outdoor recreation. The nature of published research in JLR and the second American journal – *Leisure Sciences* – was ‘traditional, positivist, quantitative, ‘scientific’ according to Veal (2002:38). He agrees with Coalter (1997; 1999) that this has led to a ‘trans-Atlantic divide’ since the UK-based journal *Leisure Studies* has a ‘more pragmatic, sociologically-influenced and qualitative style’ (Veal, 2002:38). Coalter argues these two approaches can be labelled ‘leisure science’ and ‘leisure studies’.

Journals in the field of hospitality management also originated in the 1960s and 1970s. In the United States, the *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* (CHRAQ) first appeared in 1960. Subsequently, in 1976, the Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (CHRIE) began to publish the *Hospitality Research Journal* (HRM), now the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* (JHTM). The first UK-based journal was the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (IJHM), first published in 1981. It is clear that the origins of these journals are very different to those in leisure studies. The CHRAQ was sponsored by a university and the HRM was developed by an association of educators to serve its members. IJHM was developed in the context of the International Association of Hotel Management Schools (IAHMS), based predominantly in the UK.

The early editorial policy and content of these journals makes it less clear as to the nature of enquiry and research in this field compared with leisure studies. There appears to be no great difference based on geography. Both HRM in the US and IJHM in the UK published articles that covered a wide spectrum of topics based on a range of different approaches and methodologies. In general, they had an empirical and positivist orientation, but not exclusively so. The CHRAQ, on the other hand, was more practitioner oriented and hence, pragmatic in its approach, but not exclusively so.

The lack of clarity about the nature and ethos of hospitality research may be due to the complete lack of any major government sponsorship in hospitality research, right from these early days up to contemporary times. As a result, hospitality researchers have never been clear as to what audience they are addressing with their research – industry practitioners, policy makers, research user groups, academics or students.

The emergence of schools of thought in leisure studies

Veal (2002) argues that over the last thirty years a number of schools of thought have emerged to reflect a number of debates that are part of the wider social science tradition. He argues that Kuhn's (1970) view of the predominant paradigm in a field being questioned and replaced by another dominant paradigm is too simplistic. Within a field traditions and schools of thought:

...rise and fall over time. The boundaries between [them] are in practice less clear than implied, and from time to time there are links and 'conversions' between schools... It is possible for some schools to be experiencing crisis while others are not... For example, schools of thought that relate to sociology have, in recent years, experienced considerable instability as sociology has adopted and discarded a variety of paradigms, whereas the economics-related school of thought has been much more stable. (Veal, 2002:42)

On the basis of this framework, Veal (2002) proposes an 'indicative' list of schools of thought in leisure studies, as follows:

- leisure science model – influenced by psychology;
- prescriptive – policy, planning, management;
- leisure economics;
- critical social theory – neo-Marxist, cultural studies, feminist studies, postmodernism;
- pragmatic social research;
- specialist – research that overlaps with other fields such as tourism, sport, culture.

Veal (2002:43) goes on to argue that each of these may be in a different state, as summarised below:

- leisure science model – currently 'in a crisis of relevance and communication with its target audience';
- prescriptive – no sign of crisis;
- economics – no sign of crisis but 'an ever-changing source of research challenges';
- critical social theory – 'clear sense of intellectual crisis [due to] decline in Marxism, the illusiveness of postmodern ideas and the continuing challenges presented by feminist theories';
- pragmatic social tradition – more confident following the decline of critical social theory school;
- specialist – may reflect the evolution and crises evident in co-requisite fields of study.

This approach is highly valuable in informing an analysis of hospitality and the extent to which it too has alternative schools of thought. The framework developed by Veal (2002) begs the question as to whether or not hospitality has also seen the emergence of schools of thought? If not, why not? But if so, in what state is each school of thought?

Hospitality schools of thought

It is immediately clear from the relative homogeneity of most hospitality research journals that identifying alternative schools of thought is less straightforward than it appears to be in leisure studies. In some respects it is easier to identify what schools of thought do *not* exist. Botterill (2000) argues persuasively that the critical social theory school evident in leisure does not exist in hospitality, at least in any great significance. He goes on to suggest that it would be a positive contribution to the field if such a school did develop:

I would argue that, in living closer to the discomfort of uncertainty and looking outwards for solutions, hospitality researchers could begin to re-position themselves in relation to the wider social science community.... [They] would do well to locate their work in the nexus of the debate [between constructivists and critical realists]. (2000:195-96)

It is also clear that, potentially, for many hospitality researchers the issue of what school of thought they belong to is not relevant. Hospitality may not be in a state of intellectual crisis simply because it is not, nor ever has been, very intellectual. Brotherton and Wood (2000:152) state:

...it is to be expected that reactions [to their analysis of schools of thought] may range from a view at one end of the continuum that this is a lot of unnecessary nonsense which only serves to confuse the issues further, to that which sees this exercise as a stimulating and liberating contribution at the other.

The extent to which the hospitality academic community does regard this as nonsense is difficult to gauge. But in one sense, it is clear that alternative views do exist – amongst different communities of hospitality scholars. Almost all the debate about the nature of hospitality research has been based in the UK, with limited contribution from US academics. This is not to say that North American hospitality researchers are entirely uninterested (see for example, Shaw and Nightingale, 1995), but simply that they have tended not to engage in the debate through publication. This is also the case with hospitality researchers located in other parts of the world.

Despite the limits on, and lack of interest in, alternative schools of hospitality thought, a number of contributions to the debate, as discussed above, have identified alternative perspectives. On the basis of this I would identify an ‘indicative’ list of five principal schools of thought. Before discussing these, it should be noted there may be other schools of thought that have flourished and died, or are now at a nascent stage. For instance, there may be an emerging ‘multidisciplinary’ school of thought that, as yet, has not had a great impact on the literature. It is also the case that Littelljohn’s analysis in 1990 continues to be robust, as three of the five schools are consistent with his three ‘paradigms’ (sic).

The principal schools of thought are as follows:

- hospitality science model – this is based on the natural and physical sciences using well established theories and research tools in the fields of chemistry, biology, physics and so on. Studies of this type include research in diet, nutrition, ergonomics, equipment performance, and so on. There have been research journals in hospitality that report on such research, but increasingly hospitality-related studies of this type are published in generic specialist journals in this field such as the *British Food Journal*.
- hospitality management school – this is largely positivist, based on empirical and quantitative studies, often related to studies of hospitality marketing and consumption. This is based largely in North America and the current editorial policy of JHTM strongly reflects this school of thought.
- hospitality studies – this is more eclectic in its philosophy of science, allowing scope for some non-positivist approaches, and thereby including qualitative as well as quantitative methods as legitimate approaches to research. This is based largely in the UK and is reflected in some articles published in IJHM and *Tourism and Hospitality Research* (THR).

- hospitality relationship - this is a recent and emergent school of thought that considers hospitality as separate to, and distinct from, any management or industry association. This school has emerged in the UK and is exemplified by many chapters in the book *In Search of Hospitality* (Lashley and Morrison, 2000).
- hospitality systems - a limited number of UK and Canadian academics have intermittently contributed output within this context (for instance, Kirk, 1995; Jones, 1999b). Like the hospitality studies school, a wide range of methodologies are used within this school, but behind this lies an overarching philosophy and set of systems theories. System thinking accommodates both positivist and normative research.

There is a sixth type of research that cannot really be described as a school of thought, which can be called the 'pragmatic tradition' – this is reflected in journals such as CHRAQ and the stated aims of the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (IJCHM). It is, by definition, normative in its approach.

I will now go on to discuss each of these schools of thought, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and answering the question as to their relative state of crisis or otherwise. Before doing so, I must state two caveats. The first relates to the extent to which these schools of thought are unambiguous and differentiated. Just as in leisure studies, the scope of these alternative schools is not at all clear, and the boundaries between them are fuzzy. Hence, for the purposes of analysis, a distinction will be made that in reality is less clear cut. The second caveat relates to the objectivity of the author and how an analysis of a number of schools of thought may be tempered by an allegiance to one in particular. Given that I cannot divorce myself from my philosophy of science, all I can do is to identify myself as operating in the context of the hospitality systems school of thought. Each reader must then judge for themselves how my analysis may have been coloured by this.

Hospitality Science

Research in this school of thought is strongly grounded in disciplines with a long history, well established theory and high degree of empirical rigour. Such disciplines are 'hard' sciences such as chemistry and biology. As a school of thought, it plays some role in informing our understanding of hospitality, but as Litteljohn (1990:222) wrote 'a weakness appears to lie in its exclusion of the social dimension of hospitality provision'.

Hospitality Management

Brotherton and Wood (2000) argue that there is no such thing as 'hospitality management'. They write 'hospitality management does not exist other than as a linguistic label employed to describe programmes of study, styles of research, and so on, prevalent in higher education'. They go on to suggest that the term 'currently enjoys (albeit tenuous) hegemonic grip on the community of scholars who identify themselves as being engaged in hospitality management research' (2000:144). So it is quite clear that this school of thought exists, albeit that Brotherton and Wood believe its members to have falsely assumed management can be given an 'epistemologically privileged status'.

Research in this school draws upon a wide and extensive literature in areas such as marketing, business strategy, production and operations management, finance and organisational behaviour. However, management research is itself not homogenous. Different management disciplines have profiles similar to that for leisure and hospitality, comprising different schools of thought, sub-disciplines and approaches. For instance, in marketing, original marketing theory was based on manufactured goods, this led to a different approach based on services marketing, and a further set of ideas termed relationship marketing. There is also some evidence of a Scandinavian school of marketing thought and a North American one. Other areas of management thought may also have similar profiles. So placing hospitality research in these contexts may create all kinds of problems in terms of creating a coherent understanding of hospitality phenomena.

Nonetheless, there is little doubt that this is the dominant school of thought in hospitality research, if the term 'dominant school' can be used to describe such a diverse and fragmented group of researchers. If any school is in crisis, it is this one, as three alternative perspectives seem to be emerging.

The traditional perspective is to see hospitality as a special case within each of the management disciplines. In other words, research is conducted in hospitality marketing, hospitality operations, hospitality accounting, and so on. There is a great danger in this approach that is sometimes evident in published outputs. New research studies derive from previous studies within the sub-discipline with little, or (very often) no, reference to the mainstream discipline. For instance, to take a hypothetical case, there may be recent studies of hospitality pricing strategies that cite only previous hospitality marketing studies. It may be that in the generic field of marketing, theories of price have changed significantly, but this will not be reflected in the hospitality marketing literature. The small critical mass of hospitality researchers often leads to this stagnation of theory development.

A second perspective is to ground the research firmly in the main discipline and to use hospitality as a particular context both to inform this discipline and provide inputs to hospitality education. This overcomes the problem of stagnation. Researchers who adopt this approach can, however, be sometimes frustrated that the output they publish in generic journals fails to be cited in studies undertaken by devotees of the first perspective.

Finally, there is a third perspective, which has the potential to become a sixth school of thought. This perspective adopts a multidisciplinary approach and attempts holistically to understand the hospitality phenomenon from a variety of management disciplines. There is always much discussion and debate at hospitality conferences about the notion of inter- and multidisciplinary, and how the hospitality industry is an ideal context in which to develop this approach. However, there is more rhetoric than reality in this debate. Only one small group of researchers in the UK seem to be pursuing this very particular line of enquiry (Roper and Brookes, 1999).

Hospitality Studies

This school of thought derives from the human sciences such as economics, psychology and sociology. It tends to use the hospitality industry as the context for its research rather than be interested in the industry per se. It therefore has some similarities with the second perspective within the hospitality management school of thought, with the same inherent challenges. Academics in this school are not in crisis largely because they see themselves as economists or psychologists or sociologists first, and hospitality researchers second.

Hospitality Relationship (The 'Three Domain School')

Academics who subscribe to this school of thought may think that the crisis in the hospitality management school derives from the scrutiny of their approach, whereas it was probably at crisis point before the emergence of this school. The issue is the extent to which hospitality offers an alternative that addresses the issues in mainstream hospitality management research. Lashley (2000:7) writes:

With one notable exception (Wood, 1995) hospitality academics have not engaged with sociological and cultural dimensions of human food and drink systems, nor with the role that consumption of food and drink plays in communicating the consumers' position in the social world.

This is due to the 'tyranny of relevance' identified by Taylor and Edgar (1996). A view not shared by Lockwood and Jones (2000).

Brotherton and Wood (2000) rehearse the arguments for suggesting that hospitality management is a flawed concept (as discussed above). They argue that:

for those who make claims to scholarly seriousness in the field, a proper understanding of the concept of hospitality will be central to prescriptive pronouncements on strategy and technique in the management of the hospitality industry (2000:144).

Given the debate between Slattery and Brotherton, there now seems some doubt as to whether this really is a school of thought.

Hospitality Systems

Systems theory and methodologies are elegantly explained by Arbnor and Bjerke (1997), as well as carefully contrasted with the scientific (i.e. positivist approach) and 'actors approach' (i.e. ethnographic approach).

Clearly, this school of thought has a strong theoretical underpinning, as well as the potential to make a significant contribution to understanding the complexity of the hospitality industry. The limited contribution of this group derives not from the significance or otherwise of its contribution to the body of knowledge, but from a lack of a critical mass of like-minded researchers, who are predominantly academics who teach operations management. Such academics frequently have a strong industry background but limited research expertise, making them research inactive. Of those that are active, only a few specifically subscribe to the systems school.

Hospitality Pragmatism

The IJCHM editorial policy articulates the philosophy and approach of academics and researchers who contribute to this tradition. The IJCHM aims to 'communicate the latest developments and thinking on the management of hospitality operations'. IJCHM contributors are 'encouraged to identify the practical implications of their work'. Articles should be based on experience and evidence, rather than philosophical speculation, whilst collaborative work between educators and practitioners is encouraged.

Within this, I would place two specific kinds of research. The first is obviously the research that is conducted by practitioners, or for practitioners, addressing issues of concern to them. This is highly grounded in practicality, answering research questions that do not derive from theory. Often practitioners want research that forecasts the future. Examples of such research would include work sponsored by organisations such as the International Hotel & Restaurant Association (IH&RA), the Joint Hospitality Industry Congress (JHIC) and other trade organisations. Examples of such research output would include Guerrier et al. (1998), Cline and Rach (2000), and Connolly and Olsen (2000).

Second, there is research that specifically investigates functional areas of activity in the hospitality industry, which is strong in application, but weak in theory. I would suggest some research in areas such as human resource management, quality management, yield management, and accounting is of this type. To take one example, there is a small but clearly identifiable body of literature on the topic of menu development and analysis (see Mifli and Jones, 2001 for an overview). Very few of the articles in this literature refer to underpinning theoretical frameworks that may provide a rationale for practice, such as cost accounting, pricing, or game theory. One way to identify research of this type is to look at the bibliography, which almost always will only cite sources that relate to that topic. For instance, the origin of research into menu development can be traced back to Kasavana and Smith (1982) who wrote a 'practical guide' to menu analysis.

A feature of this approach is that it is not a 'school' at all, for many of the academics and researchers who publish work of this type, belong predominantly to one of the other schools of thought. They bring from this other school their knowledge and expertise. They engage in pragmatic research for two main reasons. First, it can be argued that academics cannot and must not ignore the real world – engagement with practitioners in an industry-specific field such as hospitality is essential. Second, pragmatic research of this type is often sponsored and paid for by industry and hence, it is an additional stream of research income.

This obviously leads to an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of pragmatic research. Its strengths lie in the high regard research users and practitioners have for the output of this school. And given the inability of research in the other schools to attract public or government funds, the income it generates helps to sustain the hospitality research community. The obvious weakness is the explicit lack of theoretical underpinning. Slightly more worrying is the fact that there is research output I would place in this category which its authors might believe lie in some other. Here, the lack of theory is implicit and possibly unacknowledged. Such output tends to answer the 'what?' question but not the 'why?'

Implications

In the UK, throughout 2003, there has been an ongoing debate about the relationship between teaching and research brought about by the publication of a government white paper on higher education. For me, it is clear from this analysis of hospitality that there is a link between research and teaching. Whatever school of thought an academic belongs to will affect both what is taught and how it is taught. Perhaps more importantly, it will also impart a set of values about how to operate in the world, or what soft systems analysts call 'weltenshuang'.

I will conclude this review with some issues that I believe need to be addressed – perhaps through JoHLSTE – and which may be controversial.

In the UK hospitality research is very fragmented. It is fragmented in size and scope due to its position within the system as a whole. Most hospitality programmes are now part of Business Schools in which the hospitality academics are a small, dedicated team. However, perhaps more importantly, it is fragmented in terms of philosophy. This article has identified seven different 'groupings' – hospitality science, hospitality management (divided into three sub-groups), hospitality studies, hospitality relationship (so-called 'three domainers'), and hospitality systems. In all likelihood, the number of academics who can clearly be identified with any one of these groups is less than ten. The majority of hospitality academics are hospitality pragmatists. Recognising this fragmentation, Brotherton (2002b) has proposed 'a general theory of hospitality' designed to provide 'a basis and rationale for the further exploration of a range of conceptual and theoretical aspects of hospitality' (2002b). He is concerned that hospitality needs to be studied at the macro, meso and micro level on the basis of a sound theoretical framework – but one that might be viewed as not being grounded in any existing school of thought.

Pragmatism and fragmentation might not be important if the quality of hospitality research was high. It might be assumed that the recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) demonstrated an improvement in hospitality research quality. Those 'hospitality schools' that submitted to the Business and Management panel (panel 43) generally improved their rating from five years earlier. However, there are now very few schools or departments that are exclusively hospitality. Because hospitality academics are in business schools, with only one or two exceptions, the RAE submissions included not only hospitality research outputs, but usually generic business research, and often tourism research.

Regrettably, hospitality research submitted to Panel 43 of the RAE does not appear to have been rated highly when compared with other business and management disciplines. The panellists wrote (Bessant et al., 2003:60):

The [hospitality] submissions offered limited work of international quality, with around half rated at below national level. Much of the output was conceptual in nature, or comprised extended literature reviews or reports on small - often pilot - studies.

Hence, any improvement in the overall rating may be a result of the performance in generic business and/or tourism research. Ironically, this comes at a time when the field of hospitality is very strong outside the UK. This is reflected in the growth of programmes in the USA and Asia-Pacific. It is

demonstrated by the number of research journals in the field. One consequence of this is that amongst all hospitality research, the proportion published by British academics is decreasing.

The weaknesses identified in the research literature clearly have implications for teaching also. At worst, students may be taught as 'facts' - results from research studies that are erroneous. At best, research fragmentation means that research makes little or no impact on the curriculum. Large parts of the hospitality curriculum have remained unchanged over the last thirty years, except for updating content, usually on the basis of contemporary industry practice. Perhaps the best example of this is how foodservice is taught in teaching restaurants. Both Jones (1999a) and Brotherton (1999) identify experimental methodologies as being appropriate and relevant to hospitality, and where better to conduct such research than in the 'laboratory' provided by the typical teaching restaurant? However, rather than develop intellectual understanding, these facilities are almost exclusively used for basic training.

Conclusion

In summary, UK hospitality research, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is at best static or even in decline. This may be due to factors that academics might like to think of as outside their control – declining student numbers, marginalisation within their institutions, lack of external funding, failure to attract PhD students, lack of industry support. But evidence from other countries suggests that these factors have not affected hospitality research. Indeed, Pizam (2003) writes from the USA that:

Hospitality educators are among the top academics in many universities around the world (sic) and hospitality students are as intelligent and academically adept as students in the science, humanities, business and arts.....our field is sufficiently challenging to attract the best young minds of our generation. (2003:241)

In the natural sciences there have been many controversies between alternative schools of thoughts, perhaps most famously between creationists and Darwinists. Such debates require protagonists to sharpen their logic, develop their arguments and produce their evidence. Until recently, hospitality researchers and academics have tended to avoid controversy. Perhaps a sign of maturity would be to welcome it?

If this analysis is sound, hospitality researchers can only change those things over which they have control, whilst seeking to influence 'external factors'. This means introducing more rigour into the research process from beginning to end – thorough literature reviews, better designed studies, better executed data collection, and in particular, more rigorous refereeing of conference papers and articles when submitted for review. I am sure editors of journals and conference organisers would argue that their processes are robust. But given the number of journals and conferences, relative to the size of the field, this system is clearly under strain. Simply finding enough referees with the time and expertise to be rigorous must be a challenge. There is a danger that the quantity of published research is affecting the overall quality of this work.

But underlying all of this, there needs to be much greater clarity about the philosophy of science on which the work is founded. Perhaps within schools academics might devote a research seminar to discussing this issue. Perhaps groups of hospitality academics might publish in JoHLSTE their 'research manifestos' which would articulate their philosophy of science.

Which school of thought do you belong to?

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