AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE ACADEMIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS CERTIFIED LEARNING FACILITATOR (CLF) TRAINING PROGRAM AT NCHMCT

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ABSTRACT
Background: *Indian hospitality industry is witnessing an exponential growth. The industry has recorded a double digit growth of more than double digits percentage figure in terms of revenue, from past few years and is still growing very rapidly. New major international chains are entering the expanding Indian hospitality sector and existing major national and international players are outreaching or stretching their footprints towards moderate and growing cities that are generally categorized by tier - 2 and 3.* **Objective:** *To study the key factor for an effectiveness of Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF) learning and to understand the impact of resources (Master trainer and Infrastructure) on CLF training program.* **Methodology:** *Survey method through a questionnaire was primarily used for research. A sample of 50 respondents was selected, who were the faculties of various IHM's and who also have undergone the CLF training program.* **Results:** *Question Technique, Class Room Communication (VC; NVC), OOO Learning - Demo ; Theory and OOO Learning-Practice Sessions received maximum mean as 4.64, 4.64, 4.66 and 4.64 respectively. Master Trainers were using Activities, Role plays; Communication and Approachable/ Sensitive having maximum mean as 4.88, 4.86 and 4.84 respectively.* **Conclusion:** *Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF)' training program will help meet the current and future industry needs and expectations of the hospitality industry perspective, academia and upgrade standards of NCHM affiliated Institute of India at a global platform.*
Key Words: *Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF), hospitality education, industry needs, hospitality curriculum.*

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality Industry-An Overview: The hospitality industry is an industry where lakhs and crores of money has been invested, it is therefore sometimes symbolized by an industry where multibillion of dollars investment. This industry mainly depends on the availability of leisure time and disposable income. A hospitality unit such as a hotel, restaurant, or an amusement park consists of multiple groups such as facility maintenance and direct operations (butlers, servers, housekeepers, porters, kitchen workers, bartenders, management, human resources and sales and marketing, etc. (Wikipedia, 2018).

Right now the Indian hospitality industry is witnessing an exponential growth. The industry has recorded a double digit growth of more than double digits percentage figure in terms of revenue, from past few years and is still growing very rapidly. New major international chains are entering the expanding Indian hospitality sector and existing major national and international players are outreaching or stretching their footprints towards moderate and growing cities that are generally categorized by tier - 2 and 3. Many a global hospitality major such as Marriott, Accor, Best Western and Carlson already have a crucial addition to their existing portfolio of hotels (Aspiring minds National Employability Report, 2012).

Some key findings of this report are:
1. The percentage of Hotel Management candidates those are directly hirable for a hospitality job after college is quite low (6% to 18%).
2. Only 6–18% of students passing out from Hotel Management institutes are fit to work in the hospitality sector. Candidates scored low on fundamental skills like English language skill, Logical Ability and soft skills like Self-Management, Quality Orientation, and Managerial Skills etc. This indicates that Hotel Management institutes are unable to either attract or train the right kind of talent. These points toward a scenario where there are unfilled vacancies on one hand. Employability of IHM's (39–49%) is significantly higher than that of Non-IHM's (25–31%). Since most companies restrict themselves to visiting IHM's and few other institutes (Aspiring minds National Employability Report, 2012).

National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT)
The NCHMCT : JEE Information Brochure (2018) highlights that NCHMCT was established by Ministry of Tourism(MoT), Government of India in 1982 to oversee hospitality and catering education offered by Institutes set up by it. The Council has been responsible in providing professional and highly skilled human capital to the hotel and tourism industry through its eleven programs. NCHMCT is an autonomous body under Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The Council centrally run and regulates academics for M.Sc. in Hospitality Administration, B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration and 8 other structured courses of study that are imparted at the 21 Centrally affiliated

Institutes of Hotel Management, 22 State Government Institutes of Hotel Management, 01 Public Sector Undertaking and 14 Private Institutes of Hotel Management, besides 12 Food Craft Institutes located in various parts of India. It is also offering various diploma programs in core operational areas to meet the entry level requirements of the industry. Both the M.Sc. and B.Sc. courses are offered jointly by the National Council for Hotel Management and the Indira Gandhi National Open University. All Institutes strictly follow standardized course curriculum prescribed by the Council for various professional programs. Quality of education and training provided by the Institutes help students to emerge as professionally qualified professional for hospitality and related service sectors.

Khanna (1990) admits that there is a need for higher education in hospitality and the recent curriculum only cater to basic requirements at the entry level. He emphasized that present curriculum do emphasize a lot on technical skills and is not doing enough to prepare them for the managerial functions. Most competency related studies in hospitality have focused on examining specific components of hospitality and tourism management careers. Mayo (2003) identified and ranked relevant competencies needed by graduates of hospitality and tourism programs.

The following important differences appear in publication of Educational Institute of American Hotels and Motels Association (1999).The primary difference is that training prepares a person to perform a specific job related skill or set of skills, while education facilitates the learning of new information, behavior, or skills that contribute to one's total life growth. With training, the person will practice skills during training and apply them on the job soon afterwards.

Hospitality Education in India

At present there are broadly 4 major kinds of hospitality education modes in our country
1. 3 Year Bachelors level ,2 years Masters level program and recently launched Ph D level program under National Council For Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT).
2. 4 Year degree program by state affiliated Institutes/Universities.
3. 3 Year Bachelors level, 2 Years Masters level and a 3-4 years Ph.D level program under private universities.
4. 3 Year Bachelors level, 2 Years Masters level program under distance mode and 3-4 years Ph.D under part time mode by both private and government universities (NCHMCT, 2018).

MoU with Lausanne Hospitality Consulting (LHC) and the association with Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow
NCHMCT (2015) reported that it was in the year 2009, when UNWTO mapped the curriculum of National Council of Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) and observed and felt the need of improvisation to International level. After obtaining approval from Board of Governors (BOG) of NCHMCT.

Ministry of Tourism and NCHMCT, Noida entered into an agreement with Lausanne Hospitality Consulting (LHC, a division of Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne) for identifying the possible opportunities for improvement in IHM's and to meet the gap and expectations of the hospitality industry, with a focus on

- Faculty development
- Reviewing curriculum

Faculty Development: A series of Qualified Learning Facilitator (QLF) and Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF) programs have been conducted for faculty development in teaching and training techniques so far. Now NCHMCT is only focusing on the capacity building by conducting the CLF training programs. The participants for QLF had to attend the 50% of the training at NCHMCT, Noida and remaining 50% of the training along with final assessment at Lausanne, Switzerland. The entire training for CLF as well as assessment happens at NCHMCT.

Curriculum: For the curriculum, LHC had already recommended inclusion of management courses, adopting adult education techniques and introducing specialization. IIM, Lucknow supported in this arena by mapping the top hotel management schools of the globe and present gap in the syllabi and other related academic standards.

"Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF)": Faciitators' Based Training Program

NCHMCT, 2018 discussed the logic behind this program by stating that NCHMCT designed Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF) training program, on the lines of QLF. This program was initially run by QLF qualified faculty members. This special program was tailor made for the academicians and intended to be not only just a training program, but a key part of the larger strategy of enhancing the levels of IHM's. This program provided mentors and faculties of respective IHM's, a platform to share ideas, experiences and practices. The program addresses various elements essential for facilitating effective learning. These includes one-on-one learning, one-on-many learning, preparation of learning artifacts, HRD, moving from teaching to learning and international business protocol. This program definitely provides rich and meaningful experience and results in enhancing their present teaching skills. Following the recommendations of Lausanne, the IHM values were rolled out for the Principal's and HOD's of all the IHM's. Seven workshops were conducted for the roll out in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. These workshops were attended by more than 120 participants.

Lausanne Hospitality Consulting, 2015 presented Pre Module Guided Reading; a study material relating to effective delivery is also mailed to the participant normally 15 days before the actual commencement of the program, a print out of which is expected to be distributed to each participant, by the Principal of the respective IHM. While preparing to attend the program, faculties are requested to observe the following:

a) That they read the PMGR before the first day of the training

b) That they follow the proper formal dress code for all days is business attire;

c) All are requested to bring one laptop on individual basis;

d) The CLF training is very intensive program and essentially includes lot of evening assignments; therefore, all participants are expected to keep their evenings free.

For a higher level of learning experience, the following methods of learning are recommended as prescribed under CLF. Lectures definitely form an important aspect of the teaching methods employed, but will be designed to facilitate other forms of learning. Workshops to be used across the width of the program and will be seen as an integral part of the learning process. Seminars must also be used with a prime focus on the student led presentations and debate. Seminars essentially must be prevalent throughout the program. Case studies methodology must be used across the whole program, with the principal role of illustrating issues pertaining to analysis, problem solving and decision making. Directed and independent learning is regarded by CLF as a major source of learning and which is supported by text, journals, periodicals, internet, video etc. The coursework assigned for the purpose of internal assessment, definitely requires deep thinking and investigation that should question assumptions. These internal assignments do provide an engaging learning experience. The Group work along with various individual research based studies is assigned on regular basis which promote team work, planning and creativity.

CLF Guidelines

NCHMCT, 2018 synthesized that the following strategies were proposed to achieve the aims of the program and are in tune with the philosophy of the CLF as well. The student (CLF participants) would integrate program studies with Case studies, Seminars, Business Plan Development and Business Simulation with clear managerial focus. The students undertake research, participate in seminars that consider and investigate diverse issues relating to hospitality management. At the end, CLF Levels 1 and 2 (Certification Training Program) journey ends with an individual theory (Open book) examination approximately of 1 hour and 10 minutes.

In order to carry out this focused research the following specific objectives were set:

• To study the key factor for an effectiveness of Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF) learning.

• To understand the impact of resources (Master trainer and Infrastructure) on CLF training program.

METHODOLOGY

The study was empirical based. Survey method was primarily used for research. For data collection questionnaire was developed to systematize the collection of data and to ensure that all the respondents are asked the same questions and in the same order.

A sample of 50 respondents were selected, who were the faculties (Assistant Lecturer/ Lecturer/Senior Lecturer/ HOD) of various IHM's (affiliated under NCHMCT) and who also have undergone the CLF training program. The questionnaire was personally administered to the respondents. An individually filled questionnaire was given at NCHMCT at the final day of their program, just after an open book examination. These questionnaires were collected in person by NCHMCT stipulated personnel, including myself. Some of the questionnaires were collected from the master records for CLF, at NCHMCT. All the responses are expected to be free from biasness and that is the reason why personal details were not been asked to be given while filling these questionnaires in the respondents own handwriting. However the details of these academicians are available in the records.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to study the key factor for an effectiveness of Certified Learning Facilitator (CLF) learning t-test was conducted on data collected. Question Technique, Class Room Communication (VC & NVC), OOO Learning - Demo and Theory and OOO Learning - Practice Sessions received maximum mean as 4.64, 4.64, 4.66 and 4.64 respectively (Table 1).

Table 1: One-Sample Statistics on CLF Trainers

Key Factors	N	Mean	SD	SEM
The Learning Process	50	4.40	.670	.095
Question Technique	50	4.64	.525	.074
The Science & Art of Learning	50	4.46	.646	.091
Class Room Communication (VC & NVC)	50	4.64	.598	.085
OOO Learning-Demo & Theory	50	4.66	.519	.073
Giving & Receiving Feedback	50	4.52	.839	.119
OOO Learning-Practice Sessions	50	4.64	.563	.080
Executive Dress Code	50	4.38	.945	.134
Preparation of Learning Artefacts	50	4.50	.707	.100
Training Methods	50	4.54	.646	.091
Preparation for OOM	50	4.46	.646	.091
Learning Objectives	50	4.42	.758	.107
OOM Practice Session	50	4.52	.580	.082
From Teaching to Facilitating Learning	50	4.56	.760	.108
Leadership and Role of Facilitator	50	4.52	.707	.100
Course Design and Course Plan	50	4.32	.844	.119

In order to understand the impact of resources (Master trainer and Infrastructure) on CLF training program the following are the frequency distribution of attributes of the master trainer in which the

most important is communication followed by Activities, Role Plays, approachable having maximum mean as 4.88,4.86 and 4.84 respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: One-Sample Statistics on Master Trainers

Key Factors	N	Mean	SD	SEM
Approachable/ Sensitive	50	4.84	.422	.060
Communication	50	4.88	.385	.055
Knowledge	50	4.78	.507	.072
Attends to questions	50	4.82	.438	.062
Activities, Role plays, etc	50	4.86	.351	.050
Use of Audio/ Visual	50	4.70	.505	.07

CONCLUSION

The One-On-One (OOO) Learning, i.e. one facilitator, one learner- Demo and Theory, a drill with emphases on: Question technique, logic in design and sequence of task analysis has emerged as the most important key learning for the participants of CLF training program. The Question Technique, Classroom Communication (both verbal and non-verbal) and OOO learning-Practice sessions (dry run followed by actual run) emerged as the 2nd most important key learning factor for the CLF training program. Rather than just focusing on the traditional ways of teaching, facilitation has emerged as evolved key areas for the development .Leadership and Role of Facilitator, OOM Practice Sessions and Giving and receiving feedback are also key factors. Preparation of Learning Artifact, i.e., preparation of Word handouts, Secondary research and PowerPoint are vital paraphernalia from the learning aspect through CLF training program. This kind of facilitator's based training (Lausanne Hospitality Consulting) model can be taken as an example for implementing it in other educational organizations to alleviate the standards of their own facilitators as well as for their different teaching programs thus, to become a centre of excellence model.

Similarly, for a master trainer the most important factor emerged here are the Communication skills. This is very essential for building an epistemological environment during the class/session. Activities, Role Plays, etc are the next level but important factors for a master trainer to carry out or administer in training program such as CLF. The trainer must be more approachable and respond to queries of the participants of the program. These qualities and skills may be honed and imbibed by other trainers to match the expectations of academia from International perspective.

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Further researches must be carried out to identify the best (most suitable) model for Hospitality Curriculum that would be ideally based from the Indian Hospitality perspective and also focus on the key parameters that may be adopted to bridge the gap between academia and the Indian Hospitality Industry.

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