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CURRENT AND FUTURE TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Recent scholarly articles and the popular press predict the imminent demise of traditional higher education, often due to financial pressure, globalisation and technology. This paper reviews current higher education trends and suggests projected trends. The findings give scholars a platform for future research, help bring academics up to speed on their working environment and give higher education practitioners reasoned insights for strategic planning.

Key Words: globalisation, technology, MOOC, accreditation



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INTRODUCTION

Despite sweeping technological advancements through the ages (Anderson et al., 2012), universities generally operate within neogothic architectural buildings as they have for centuries (Hansmann, 2012). However, headlines such as ‘The End of the University as We Know It’ (Harden, 2013) and ‘How California’s Online Education Pilot Will End College as We Know It’ (Ferenstein, 2013) portend traditional higher education’s demise. Yet demand for higher education continues to grow. For example Australia targets 40 per cent of 25-34 year olds completing an undergraduate degree and participation by the bottom socioeconomic quartile moving from 15 to 20% by the year 2020 (Bradley, 2008). In the world’s largest country, the Chinese education ministry projects a 17% growth—from 2009 to 2020—of on campus higher education students (AEI, 2010).

In parallel with the growing demand for higher education, is concern about meeting this demand via traditional campuses (Daniel et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2012). Technology, globalisation and economics seem both the catalyst and cure for higher education’s future (Daniel, 2012; Anderson & McGreal, 2011; Hansmann, 2012).

Tourism and hospitality, an information intensive field, is a natural for the union of education with technology, globalisation and economics (Cantoni, 2011; Kalbaska, 2011; Nadkarni & Venema, 2011). Furthermore, skill shortages and commercial pressures have increased industry demands for job-ready graduates with communications, teamwork and problem-solving skills (Cantoni, Kalbaska & Inversini, 2009). This paper addresses higher education in hospitality and tourism in two parts, reviewing current trends and forecasting future trends.

CURRENT TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM HIGHER EDUCATION

Growing globalisation

Global access to higher education for post-secondary students has been widening during the last three decades. A massification and commodification of higher education

creates ever-increasing capacity demands (Hansmann, 2012; Scott, 1995). For example, adults in OECD countries with higher education qualifications doubled from 22% to 44% between 1975 and 2000 (Wooldridge, 2005).

One response to this growing demand is more approved higher education institutions, and many outside the traditional university sector (Ryan, 2012). Laureate International Universities <laureate.net> and the University of Phoenix <phoenix.edu> have hundreds of thousands of students. At the other end of the spectrum, small hospitality niche providers such as the Australian School of Management <asm.edu.au>, Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School <bluemountains.edu.au> and Berjaya University College of Hospitality <berjaya.edu.my> have hundreds of students.

A growing and mobile global population increases the push for streamlining higher education to promote “cultural heterogeneity” among different countries’ awards and enhance student mobility, notably the Bologna Process in Europe (Guellerin, 2008). To enhance student mobility further is an Australian impetus to introduce Unique Student Identifiers (USIs) across education sectors to enhance the granting of credit, similar to an educational passport (DEEWR, 2011). This educational passport, and the increasing number of private institutions, underscores growing commercialisation in higher education.

Changing economic reality

The emerging 21st century higher education paradigm suggests commercialisation replacing the collegiality of prior times, with higher education providers becoming fierce competitors (Leeland & Moore, 2007). This shift requires a high level of entrepreneurship to ensure an institution can promote its point of difference through, amongst other things, the innovative ways it delivers courses.

Students today are informed shoppers; they ask tough questions and compare products rigorously. In 2010, one in four first year students applied to seven or more institutions and three of four applied to at least three (Hopkins, 2011). Added to the shopping mix is the rising costs of education and subsequent questions of practical affordability. From 1982-2007 the average price of a college education in the US

increased over 430%, whereas median family income increased only 150% (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008).

This economic squeeze has resulted in non-traditional students as the norm. According to the US Department of Education, 75% of today's student consumers juggle some combination of family, job, and education while trying to commute and attend classes (Bloom, 2012). As well, students are taking on more debt and more students are borrowing; student debt in the U.S. more than doubled in the last decade (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008).

Finally, there has been a shift away from publicly funded higher education to a user pays model, in some cases supported by government loans. The share of private funding at tertiary level increased in 20 of the 26 countries with comparable data between 2000 and 2008 (Schleicher, 2011). Private funding increased by six per cent, on average, and by more than fifteen per cent in Portugal, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom.

Emerging technologies

Anderson et al. (2012, p. 1) argue that 'market factors will push universities to expand online courses, create hybrid learning spaces, move toward "lifelong learning" models and different credentialing structures by the year 2020'. Technology experts, however, disagree about how these whirlwind forces will influence education.

With the current technology, particularly online technology, associated delivery models continue to evolve at an accelerated pace relative to past decades (Hill, 2012), compelling education providers to investigate technological changes (Daniel, 2012). Online educational resources and content have become more readily available in recent years in general and in hospitality in particular (Salmon, 2012; Kalbaska, 2011; Nadkarni & Venema, 2011). Offline, there is a move to imbed work experience in undergraduate degrees (Morrison, 2012).

The transmission of knowledge need no longer be tethered to a college campus. Cloud-based computing, digital textbooks, mobile connectivity, high-quality streaming video and "just-in-time" information gathering push knowledge to the "placeless" Web (Anderson et al., 2012).

Open educational resources (OERs), particularly Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), exemplify online learning, lifelong learning, hybrid learning spaces and different credentialing structures (Cooper & Sahami, 2013). Three exemplar MOOCs from Stanford, MIT and Google each enrolled over 160,000 students in a free class (Daniel, 2012). OERs, less self-directed and interactive than MOOCs, continue to expand and evolve (Cantoni et al., 2009; Nadkarni & Venema, 2011; Kalbaska, 2011) such as Tourism Australia's e-Kits <atdw.com.au/tourism_e_kit.asp> and the International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism's e-Tourism curriculum <ifitt.org/home/view/the_ifitt_eTourism_curriculum>.

FUTURE TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM HIGHER EDUCATION

Students as consumers

If higher education providers are to achieve the economic drivers that governments require, change is inevitable. For example, the unit of consumption should continue to shrink as students increasingly shop across institutions for individual subjects rather than seek a single vendor of a three or four-year experience (Hansman et al., 2012). Students have greater choice, and institutions have greater pressure to offer flexible and innovative courses; to ensure they 'provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives; empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them; and, finally furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known' (Illich, 1970).

Assessment as a core product

Whilst universities have for decades asserted many roles, core to their existence has been the gatekeeper of credentials – approved to validate their students' achievements and ultimately confer their award. What seems missing, or at least not specifically stated, is the higher education provider's role to provide assessment as an inherent validation requirement. The assessment function in the vocational training sector is already the most significant component of the process and is an independent

business function for most vocational training providers
<vetassess.com.au/resources/ca_pathways_to_competency.cfm>.

Strategically targeting assessment might help higher education providers achieve somewhat bullish government projections, for example, the Australian Government's goal 'for this country to be amongst the most highly educated and skilled on earth, and in the top group of OECD nations for university research and knowledge diffusion' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

Although assessment is part of the traditional teaching function, the evolution of online delivery accentuates the need for assessment to become a new revenue source. Based on 2010 research, Australia's National Quality Council recommended to give states and territories priority for building assessor capabilities, including the role of moderation and validation in managing assessment quality (Australian Productivity Commission, 2011). If assessment as a product in vocational training is a norm, higher education providers should heed this emerging opportunity.

With MOOCs offering free content to tens, or hundreds of thousands of students, an obvious opportunity emerging for education providers lies in assessment only pathways. Education may become more about providers assessing students who have gained knowledge across multiple learning platforms and models, either on-the-job or with multiple institutions throughout their lifelong journey. Validating this knowledge and providing credit or indeed, if the learner warrants, appropriate certification is an opportunity for the education industry.

Technology driving a new learning paradigm

An opportunity seems to lie in higher education providers firstly embracing the concept of MOOCs and then developing select MOOCs core to a specialisation with broad appeal. Over time one or two MOOCs might own the space for a niche area, such as *Introduction to Hospitality and Tourism*. Consequently, other providers may utilise the predominant MOOC rather than develop their own. Institutions that develop successful MOOCs may commercialise their MOOCs, allowing potential licensees to avoid the unnecessary burden of duplicating the up-front costs associated with curriculum development.

An aspect of Google's Advanced Power Searching MOOC <powersearchingwithgoogle.com/course/aps> could enhance and alter the MOOC landscape. This MOOC ran for 16 days, with less time and less depth than a typical university class. Massive Open Online Modules (MOOMs), such as Advanced Power Searching with Google could complement and augment MOOCs. For example, educators could customise a MOOC based on a combination of MOOMs.

Finally, online educational platforms such as TED <ted.com>, iTunes U <apple.com/au/education/itunes-u>, Khan Academy <khanacademy.org> and eduFire <edufire.com> enable everyone to enjoy the best lectures worldwide free of charge. These and other platforms amplify the role technology will play in higher education's future (Coiffat, 2012).

Accreditation and accreditors

Industry consortia and independent accreditation bodies like the International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (The-ICE), the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (ICHRIE) or its Asia Pacific chapter (APacCHRIE) may provide opportunities for members to streamline cross-institutional recognition or credit between members already "in the club". There is an existing level of understanding and comfort in the quality of each member's educational goods and services as well as an existing platform to promote new inter-institutional collaboration.

In facilitating this cross-institutional recognition or credit, industry consortia provide a conduit for students to study at many institutions, complementing their educational experience with multiple campuses across multiple borders in multiple modes and languages. In the background the member institutions grant credit for all learning and prior learning validated by any member institution. This initiative also increases global infrastructure support for the concept of lifelong learning.

If improved collaboration across providers and educational sectors improves cross-institutional recognition, then an extension is for higher education providers to recognise all learning, no matter where it takes place. For example the concept of

academic credit for certified military or public service training opens new and exciting opportunities for the education industry (Fain, 2012).

Taking this concept a step further, higher education providers could recognise accredited or approved training with private organisations such as Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, the American Institute for Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters or the Institute of Public Accountants. If higher education providers become flexible enough to recognise such learning, business opportunities and models—and subsequent future revenue streams—lose their shackles. In this future, education has an opportunity to satisfy its most fundamental reason for being: everyone, regardless of their gender, socioeconomic background or circumstances, has access to quality education.

(Un)bundling

Among the various future opportunities, higher education providers should reconsider the existing bundled approach to education services. Similar to what other industries have done for decades, higher education providers could begin outsourcing or unbundling inherent services to reduce their costs and improve performance.

Possible services to unbundle include administration, accommodation, pastoral care, library and even research. “The multifaceted nature of the services and costs centers associated with this aggregation of function and service provide the context for the possibility of disaggregation and removal or outsourcing of selected component pieces of this complex education system. This unbundling could form the basis for the cost advantage of many online institutions’ (Anderson & McGreal, 2012, p. 381).

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Technology will continue to be a key strategic driver in the development of new and innovative ways of delivering content to students who demand choice, mobility and value. Furthermore, content and some certification may be free to all due to the ubiquitous nature of sharing online resources. Institutions will charge for assessment and certification, maintaining their role as “gatekeeper of credentials”.

New technologies will also allow greater institutional collaboration thereby enhancing student mobility between institutions and creating an increasing role for accreditation of providers and their courses by professional associations, industry consortia and independent accrediting agencies. This concept of greater student mobility not only enhances the opportunities for hospitality and tourism students but for the hospitality and tourism industry itself as it delivers the infrastructure to support the individual's mobility.

A limitation to these conclusions is that new technology is dynamic and constantly evolving, particularly MOOCs (Daniels, 2012). Therefore strategic decision-making will need to be nimble to take advantage of the perceived opportunities. Yet as MOOCs are free and only a few winners may emerge, institutions should think twice about any MOOC initiatives. Given the dynamic area of higher education today, scholars should revisit this topic at least annually. Finally, these findings give scholars a platform for future research, starting with proposing a research agenda.

One such research agenda item is to monitor the uptake of online learning and the role new technologies such as MOOCs and MOOMs play in delivery of content. Future research could quantify the extent that inter-institutional collaboration provides opportunities for students to mix and match components of their awards across a broad range of institutions. Another promising research stream is the vocational training sector, which feeds into hospitality and tourism higher education. In Australia, moderation and validation in managing assessment quality in vocational training is a priority (Australian Productivity Commission, 2011).

The failure of the education industry to explore if not completely overhaul how it does business will in the end become its Achilles heel if the industry does not take the time to collectively and strategically re-think, embrace and re-position itself as a highly competitive and more effective industry in the future.

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