

An Analysis of the Challenges Faced by Hospitality Educators While Pursuing Ph.D.

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Abstract

With research gaining a lot of importance in today's world, the educators cannot be ignorant of this field and has to develop knowledge and skills to participate in active research. In view of the changing role of educators, it has become the need of the hour for the faculty to pursue Ph.D. However, for non-conventional professional courses like "Hotel Management" the shift is a little challenging since majority of the Hotel Management programmes offered across the country are Under Graduate level. The study aimed at analyzing the various challenges faced by hospitality educators in pursuing Ph.D. in the relevant field. The findings suggest that time constraint, job commitments, inadequate information & knowledge about research and lack of research culture are the major challenge faced by educators in pursuing their Ph.D. Moreover, collecting the required primary data from the industry is a challenging task due to the characteristic operational centric approach of the industry professionals. Effective time management is the key to overcome these challenges and the faculty can gain knowledge and confidence in research process by practicing research actively and networking with other research groups who are involved in research on topics that interests them.

Keywords: Hospitality Educators, Ph.D. Challenges, Hotels, Hotel Industry, Women Employees

Introduction

The education system in India is experiencing a paradigm change over the last few years. Moreover, the government policy to liberalize the education sector, has created

tremendous opportunities for students to pursue education in the field they choose to. Students are always on the lookout of non-conventional programmes and to pursue their careers in contemporary fields. Also, the entry of foreign Universities in the Indian market has forced the Indian education system to pull up their socks and to strengthen the system to make it competitive in the global market.

Education today, is not only confined to acquiring knowledge and adding to qualifications, but has a more practical and applied approach. "Research" has become an inevitable part of higher education and the students are expected to gain knowledge and insight of practical problems by conducting research. Thus, the colleges and institutions have changed their focus from "teaching" to "learning" thereby facilitating their students to develop a holistic approach towards education by laying emphasis on applied knowledge. To cope up to this paradigm change, the education system requires a facelift at all levels.

The changing role of teachers or educators in the current scenario is most vital and the perceived image of the teachers have to shift from "Sage on the stage" to that of a "facilitator" who has to facilitate the teaching-learning process. With research gaining a lot of importance in today's world, the educators cannot be ignorant of this field and has to develop knowledge and skills to participate in active research. Doctorate of Philosophy or Ph.D. is perceived as the higher level of education that exposes and educates the students in the field of research. It is believed that students pursuing Ph.D. develop analytical,

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reasoning and logical skills that are required to conduct any research. In view of the changing role of educators, it has become the need of the hour for the faculty to pursue Ph.D. and thus competent authorities like “All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE)” and “University Grant Commission (UGC)” have reframed their norms for eligibility of teachers and has made it mandatory for them to pursue Ph.D.

The application of these new norms was comparatively easier for institutions imparting education in conventional and established disciplines like “Engineering”, “Pharmacy” and “Management” since they already had a Ph.D. programme on offer in the relevant fields. However, for non-conventional professional courses like “Hotel Management” the shift is a little challenging since majority of the Hotel Management programmes offered across the country are Under Graduate level. Although some Universities offer Post Graduation programmes in the field, they are either not approved by the competent bodies or attract less attention of the students. Thus, in spite of the non-availability of post-graduation programmes in Hotel Management, it is expected by the faculty to pursue Ph.D. in the same field. This was the major reason apart from other challenges for resistance of the Hospitality educators to pursue Ph.D.

The study aims at analyzing the various challenges faced by hospitality educators in pursuing Ph.D. in the relevant field.

This study is relevant and of importance as it will provide an insight on the various aspects of challenges faced by the Hospitality faculty while pursuing their Ph.D. thus enabling their management and guides to make better policies to help them to overcome these challenges for the successful completion of their studies. This study should enable other faculties also to encourage and promote their research scholars by assisting them to complete their studies efficiently and timely.

Literature Review

Kirsi Pyhäntö, Auli Toom, Jenni Stubb, and Kirsti Lonkave identified several complementary factors that contribute to the doctoral experience like the supervisory relationship, the scholarly community and doctoral students’, and supervisors’ personal beliefs about research and supervision contribute to the overall doctoral experience. Their study focuses on exploring the problems

and challenges Finnish doctoral students themselves perceived as typical for PhD studies in relation to their well-being and study engagement. The majority of the problems were related to self-regulation, motivation, and self-efficacy and academic practices.

Dr. Bahaudin G. Mujtaba, Dr. Frank J. Cavico and Dr. Mustafa G. Mujtaba study reveals that earning a doctorate degree is one of the highest honors in one’s journey of academic progress; yet very few candidates actually achieve this rank as some of the challenges in achieving such a rank can be the time requirement, the rigorous and focused research process, passing the comprehensive examinations, a publication requirement, and successfully finishing the journal of the dissertation.

Deirdre Schwiesow, a faculty from Walden states that research is an integral part of being a scholar practitioner with the skills and credibility to effect social change. She advises all the research scholars the seven research challenges and the measures to overcome them. These challenges are: Choosing right topic, choosing the right methodology, assembling a research team, finding study participants, getting institutions to participate, staying motivated and working your plan, dealing with your data.

As per Maldonado, V. Wiggers, R. & Arnold, C. (2013) views, completing a PhD is not now – nor has it ever been – a guaranteed path to a lucrative end, and its general value has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. In this paper the author provides detail explanation of the PhD process, explores various labour market pathways available to doctoral graduates and provides recommendations to government and institutions about PhD programs.

Jenna Vekkailla, Kirsi Pyhäntö, and Kirsti Lonka find that pursuing a PhD is always a challenging journey. The students do face number of problems often originating from the relation between the doctoral student and the scholarly community. The study also explored doctoral students’ experiences of disengagement from their doctoral processes. The study provides new insights into doctoral education by shedding light on varying forms of students’ disengagement ranging from experiences of inefficacy to cynicism and sometimes exhaustion.

Prof. G.T. Thong states the challenges faced by teachers from affiliated colleges of the Nagaland University. Mostly the Private College teachers are granted study leave for 2 to 3 years to pursue PhD programs without salary. It is a

huge challenge, with some opting to resign to be eligible for some fellowship, while those remaining in service are left to fend for themselves. He further suggested that the teachers lacking PhD degrees should be encouraged to study, with salaries, while those without NET should be encouraged to acquire the same as early as possible.

RuchiChopda reveals the opinion and views of various individuals who are pursuing Phd education. Warn Ghose opines that many students pursue PhD for employment benefits and expect to happen it fast. He further states that students should keep in mind that there is no set time limit to complete it, and one should be clear about his/her vision for doing the research. Mr. Singhania advises that a PhD student should choose a good mentor/ guide as it is the most crucial factor in the successful outcome and timely completion of the thesis. The students faces innumerable obstacles, logistic problems, lack of funds, opposition, critical reviews from peers and experts. The students should possess deep-rooted passion and unshakable conviction in their research as it is direct or indirect benefit to the society at large.”

Prerna, a PhD candidate from TISS, feels that pursuing Phd offers flexibility to work and study at same time. But at times it is a lonely process when it comes to the peer level, as one works alone on that topic. She also advises further that the students should choose guides who can work with them for the specific period of study and is passionate about the topic.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the demographic profile of the faculty pursuing PhD from various Hospitality Institutes in Pune city.
2. To identify the challenges faced by the faculty while pursuing their PhD.
3. To recommend measures to overcome the challenges faced by the faculty while pursuing their PhD.

Limitations of the study

1. This study is purely based on the information given by the teaching faculty from Hospitality institutes of the various Universities in the Pune city.
2. The study is conducted in the current situation and the opinions, perception and expectations of the respondents may differ with time.

3. The study does differentiate respondents on basis of their demographic profile which may have an influence of their perceptions of challenges faced by them while pursuing PhD, thereby identifying the scope for further research.

Research Methodology:

A sample of hospitality educators pursuing PhD was selected from hospitality institutes affiliated to various Universities in Pune city. The primary data required for the research was collected using the following techniques:

- Personal Interviews: The researcher conducted personal interviews with few hospitality educators from various Hospitality Institutes pursuing their PhD in different Universities in Pune, to explore the challenges faced by them while doing so.
- Questionnaire: A questionnaire bearing straight forward and relevant questions were drafted and handed over to the sample to obtain their responses. The questionnaire was designed to identify the factors that are challenging for the hospitality educators while pursuing their PhD.

The collected data was analyze during basic analytical tools and the findings were presented graphically.

Discussions & Observations

Psychological Challenges

- i. Lack of confidence, fear of failure, lack of confidence in learning abilities:

Hotel Management is a practical oriented course where the educators are required to be through in their technical skills pertaining to various departments. Thus areas like research is more or less an unknown field for the educators an naturally the fear of the unknown leads to lack of confidence, fear of failure. Moreover, at times they feel that research is not their cup of tea and feel that they do not possess the learning abilities required for pursuing the Ph.D.

- ii. Feelings of isolation (depressed or stressed):

It is quite obvious that the moment one is put outside the comfort zone, there is a feeling of stress which may

at times lead to depression. A similar situation happens when the hospitality educator moves way from his routine teaching and lands in the mysterious area of research.

iii. Lack of motivation to pursue the research process:

As mentioned earlier, the hospitality course focuses on technical skills and thus the faculty never felt the need to venture into the field of research since they always felt that research is something very intellectual and theoretical and not worth spending their worthy time on. Moreover, the prevailing faculty norms then, never insisted on a Ph.D. With this thought process, there was no motivation for the educators to pursue research.

iv. Low aspiration and lack of role models:

With the prevalent conditions the faculty never aspired to pursue research and enroll for Ph.D. Also, there was no one from the hospitality academia or the industry who had taken this path and thus there was a complete lack of role models who would have inspired the hospitality educators to venture into research.

Physical Challenges

i. Forceful or Mandatory Nature of Education:

The first time that the hospitality faculty was forced to think about research was when AICTE reformed the faculty eligibility norms and put Ph.D. as a mandatory qualification to sustain if the field. A lot of resistance was posed from the academia due to the forceful or mandatory nature of education norm dictated by AICTE.

ii. Age:

The majority of the regular faculty in the hospitality institutions are having a teaching experience of more than 12 years and thus the average age of the faculty is about 40 years. Thus age becomes a barrier in pursuing Ph.D. since they do not want to start research from the scratch at this age.

iii. Insufficient or Lack of Qualifications:

As discussed earlier, hospitality studies is not a well-established discipline and majority of the Universities across the country offer under graduate courses in this field. Although there are certain post graduate courses on offer, they are not approved by AICTE and thus the educators were not attracted to them. Moreover, majority of the faculty had acquired their hospitality education

more than 15 to 20 years ago and during that time even under graduate courses were not available and thus the faculty were just Diploma holders. Although few of them had upgraded their qualification by pursuing a bachelor's degree in commerce and subsequently a Master's degree in some Management stream, they still lacked the required qualification to pursue Ph.D. in Hotel Management thereby creating a major challenge for them.

iv. Lack of Ph.D. Guides:

Taking cognizance of the above mentioned fact, the University of Pune decided to create a Hotel Management stream for the aspirants of Ph.D. However, there we nobody who could qualify as a Ph.D. guide for this stream and thus the aspirants had to be accommodated in some other Management stream and compete with other Management students who were specialized in that field. Thus there was a lot of students who could qualify for Ph.D. admission after the entrance test but could not get through due to lack of guides.

v. Job Commitments & Time Constraints:

This is a very common challenge that every professional faces when he has to balance his job commitments and personal aspirations in the given time constraints. Most of the time in doing so, he has to give priority to his job commitments over his aspirations including aspirations to pursue higher education like Ph.D.

vi. Financial Constraints Direct and Indirect Costs:

Ph.D. research is a long process normally stretching over a period of three to five years. Apart from time, the process also demands for financial support to pay annual fees, travelling to collect data, get access to the required resources etc. It may thus create a hindrance for certain people with multiple financial commitments.

vii. Lack of Genuine Research Culture:

Majority of the hospitality colleges lack the research culture required to conduct and promote research. The organization culture is inclined towards routine operations where research is the least priority. Faculty working in such institutions lack the required motivation and management support to pursue Ph.D.

viii. Lack of Attention of Guide:

The guides are normally senior working professionals with a set of their own responsibilities and job commitments thus guiding Ph.D. students becomes an add-on

responsibility for them. Most of the times the guides are simultaneously guiding many students belonging to varied subjects and different universities thereby making their job more challenging. This therefore acts as a limitation for students pursuing their Ph.D. under such guides.

ix. Insufficient Data From Respondents:

Ph.D. data collection becomes a very difficult task especially when the data has to be collected from the hospitality industry. The nature of operations in the industry and the approach of the professionals sometimes make the data collection very challenging.

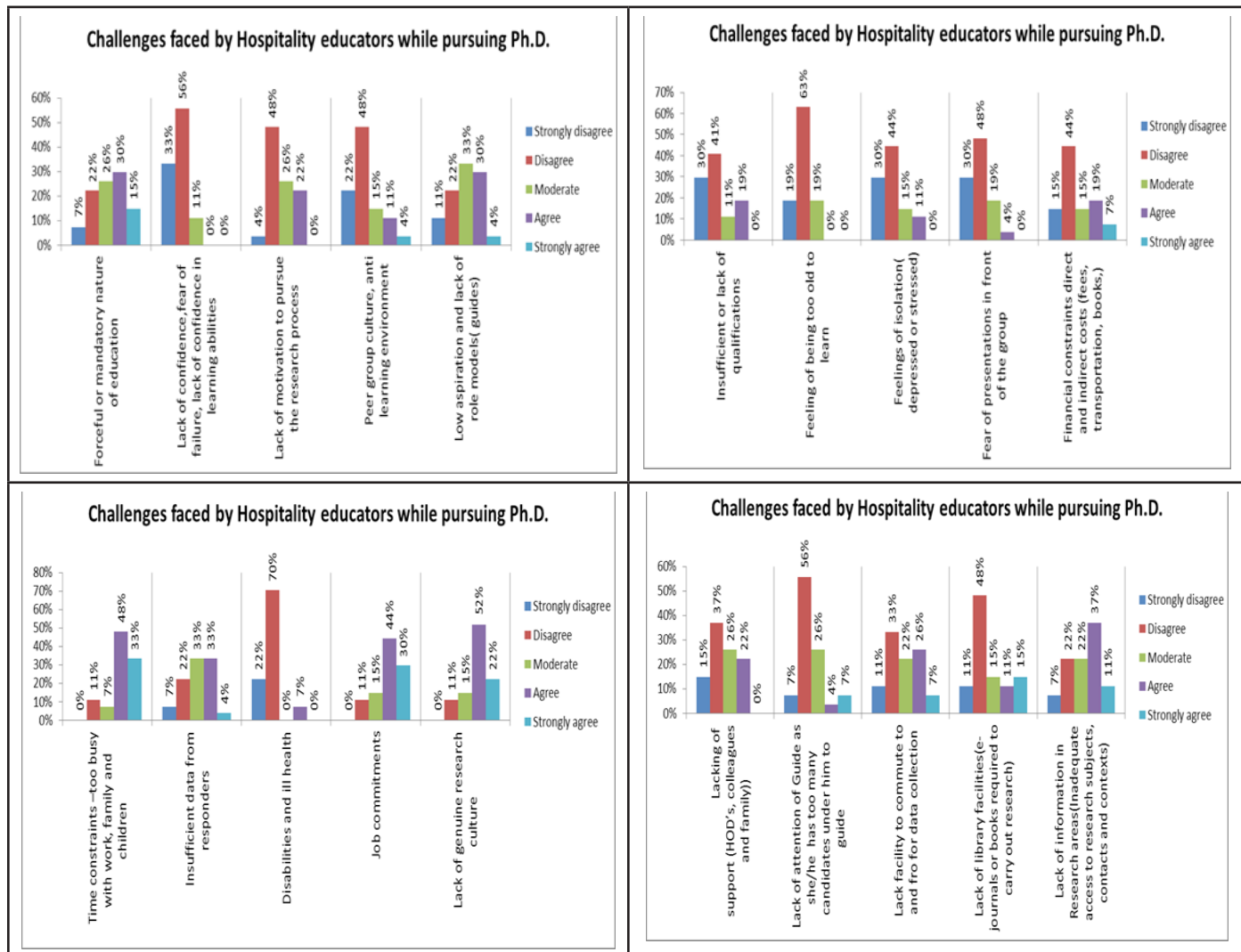
x. Lack of Physical Resources:

Hospitality educators have limited access to research resources like books, journals and other e-resources and have to struggle in meeting up with their requirements.

Findings

1. The average age of hospitality educators pursuing Ph.D. is 42 years and majority of them are married and have a teaching experience of over 12 years.
2. Majority of them have enrolled for Ph.D. in the year 2013.
3. Time constraint, job commitments, inadequate information & knowledge about research and lack of research culture are the major challenge faced by educators in pursuing their Ph.D.
4. There are challenges in acquiring the required data from the respondents.
5. Majority of the educators feel that they have to pursue Ph.D. due to forceful or mandatory nature of education.
6. Educators lack aspiration and role models for pursuing Ph.D.

Data Analysis & Findings



7. Educators have the confidence, motivation and required abilities to pursue Ph.D.
8. Educators pursuing Ph.D. get sufficient support and attention from their guides and have access to the required library facilities.
9. They do not feel that they are too old to pursue higher education.
10. There is a scarcity of Ph.D. guides in the field of hospitality and thus the intake of students for Ph.D. in hospitality is very less. The aspirants therefore have to pursue their Ph.D. in other management disciplines like "Human Resource Mgmt.", "Marketing Mgmt." etc.

Suggestions & Recommendations

Hospitality educators do encounter challenges in time management, motivation and creative thinking. To overcome these challenges, the following measures are recommended

1. They should attempt at reading research papers and other reference materials to keep themselves motivated and abreast with the latest research trends in hospitality. It will also help them to gain relevant knowledge in research methodology.
2. Effective time management is the key to research. Challenges like "Job pressure", "Job commitments", "Busy schedule" etc are very common and faced by every professional. Consider research as one of the job commitments and bring it higher on the priority list so that quality time is allocated for research without compromising on other professional commitments.
3. Focus on small targets and give time line for each of them. Research methodology is understood better by practicing research rather than just reading books. Aim at conducting research on topics with smaller scope and then convert them into research papers. Do not hesitate to share your research work with peers and get their feedback
4. Increase your networking skills with other research groups and get connected to people who are involved in active research on topics that interests you.

Conclusions

The findings of the research can be concluded as under:

1. The average age of hospitality educators pursuing Ph.D. is 42 years and majority of them are married and have a teaching experience of over 12 years.
2. Time constraint, job commitments, inadequate information & knowledge about research and lack of research culture are the major challenge faced by educators in pursuing their Ph.D.
3. Moreover, collecting the required primary data from the industry is a challenging task due to the characteristic operational centric approach of the industry professionals.
4. Majority of the educators feel that they have to pursue Ph.D. due to forceful or mandatory nature of education and they lack aspiration and role models for pursuing Ph.D.
5. Effective time management is the key to overcome these challenges and the faculty can gain knowledge and confidence in research process by practicing research actively and networking with other research groups who are involved in research on topics that interests them.

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