1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the problem

The main function of an education system is to provide education for its Community, Dekker & van Schalkwyk (1995:32). Taylor (2003:8) is of the opinion that higher and further education institutions have a responsibility towards society and employers to provide and entry-level work force of high caliber, ideally one that is ‘job-ready’.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at an institution such as the Vaal University of Technology, is a mechanism to assist students and other stakeholders to benefit from what should be a mutually beneficial engagement. This paper analyses who the different stakeholders are in WIL placements (attachments) with the hospitality industry in particular, and also tries to show what each of these stakeholders expects from the partnership. The stakeholders are the students, the university and the employer (industry). All three of these contribute to the overall quality, education and career preparation of work integrated learning. This study was limited to industry professionals working in the hotels.

Work Integrated Learning is defined by Mothata (2000) as the “learning through experience rather than through books or formal study”. Many programmes at the universities of technology require students to complete a period of work integrated learning as a compulsory component of their studies before graduating. This is happening when the students are placed for the first time in industry after completion of the theory part of the study. The students will then be placed into the actual working environment. As students are our foremost clients, universities should put in place beneficial measures such as meaningful WIL in order to ensure that students receive the best service we can provide whilst simultaneously meeting the needs of the industry.
1.2 Problem statement

The education system supporting the hospitality industry by creating entry level managers have been faced with many changes that affect the methods used to prepare highly educated and qualified students to fit the demands of the hospitality industry, Miranda (1998:1). The importance of work integrated learning within the parameters of university level hospitality curricula is widely recognized by both the academic and industry sectors. The provision of work integrated learning benefited hospitality students in numerous ways. Simmons (2006:1) states that the students are often eager to learn and apply their classroom knowledge to the industry.

Researchers found out that one of the best ways for the education system to keep up with the industry’s demand is through WIL. A common problem found throughout the hospitality industry is high turnover rates. Many hospitality industry professionals see that often the reality of students’ first jobs within the industry may not match their expectations of their first job.

Education also needs to address the rapid technical change in the hospitality workplace. Higher levels of technology must be introduced in the hospitality classrooms. The questions to be answered by the study were identified as follows:

- To meet the expectations of industry, is there a need for the university, particularly in the field of hospitality to evaluate their curriculum to assume that their graduates are introduced to the theories, concepts and technical aspects of their profession?
- Is there a need for the hospitality industry to work with education to deliver the curriculum content that needs the current and future needs of the industry and the students career?

1.3 The purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to investigate whether there are stakeholder expectations in the hospitality industry with regard to work integrated learning, (preparation of students for the real world of work) and to investigate whether there are some skills need before WIL. The input of this research will be analyzed and used to design an appropriate intervention, thus allowing institution of higher learning to better prepare their students for the real world of work.

1.4 Constraints and limitations

The significant limitation in this study is the self-administered questionnaire which was delivered by hand during monitoring of the students to the hotels. The study was intended as a pilot study to investigate the stakeholder expectations in the hospitality industry. The study was
limited to industry partnerships in different hotels who are training the hospitality students and who are Mentor of hospitality students in Vaal University of Technology. It would be valuable to extend this research to all stakeholders involved in this venture.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hospitality Education

The literature review for this research identifies the stakeholder expectations in the hospitality industry, hospitality students and the hospitality education. Although the focus of this research is based on expectations on hospitality industry, the two parties will also be discussed. It was noted by other researchers that hospitality education should maintain a leadership role, providing industry with graduates that are capable of conducting the affairs of business and maintaining a readiness to approach future management issues without reservation.

2.2 Hospitality Students

There are many factors that affect students expectations of their first job within the hospitality industry. Factors may include: comments made by peers, personal experience working in the industry and the employees observations. Often researcher find similarities among group of individuals sharing a common opinion regarding first job within hospitality industry. Many students are becoming critical consumers of education and as they complete their education, they tend to analyze what they receive for their time and money invested in education, Mateo (1991). Every students with personal relationships and life experiences being unique, each student will have their own set of expectations for their first job within the hospitality industry. The researcher will make further research on student expectation.

2.3 Hospitality Industry

Work integrated learning does not guarantee future employment. Developing interns commitment is valuable for both the intern and the employer because many companies eventually hire their interns. Industry has a strong preference to hire people with strong practical skills. In VUT industry plays a vital role with regard to presentation of the industry information to hospitality management. For the selection of the students, industry have their own requirement. Most of hospitality industry is operating on shifts, therefore they require good students and hard workers.
2.4 Career education and work preparedness skills

Mayo (1997) states that hospitality careers can present the most energizing, motivating and challenging avenues and opportunities today. The success of hospitality industry are based largely on employee performance and because of their service encounter nature, attributes and behaviors are key determinants of service quality. Students seem to have lack of communication skills. Both written and oral communication relates to what we do every day, Chon & Sparrowe (1995). The basic skills can be sharpened through classroom and work experience. By identifying and developing the important competencies that are believed to be needed by employers, work integrated learning programmes have the purpose of preparing students for the workplace, Hodges & Burchell (2003).

In South African context, it is accepted good practice to prepare students for WIL. A variety of topics are generally presented so that students should enter the workplace with confidence. CTP & SASCE (2000:91) identifies topics for a suggested pre-placement orientation programme. Taylor (2003) confirmed the need for the generic topics required for workplace preparation. The Co-operative education at VUT assist by providing assistance in different skills with the help of the WIL Coordinator, the library, Information centre, Student Counseling and university Career Centre.

2.5 Quality assurance and WIL

Training plays a role in the quality of service offered especially in the hospitality industry where quality remains the most critical characteristics distinguishing a company from its competitors, Pratten & Cutis (2002). In SA higher education sector, quality assurance is a priority even to the WIL component programmes. The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) has identified specific audit criteria that must be met on the issue of what is called Work based learning. In VUT, SASCE quality assurance guidelines is followed.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the stakeholder expectation in the hospitality industry. The research involved one primary hospitality stakeholder amongst two primary hospitality industry. This research was used as a pilot study to test the reliability and validity of
the data. Further research will be undertaken in depths for the three stakeholders being the students, the industry and the higher education institution.

The target population of the study included industry stakeholders who are the mentor of the students in different hotels in South Africa. Only twenty hotels has been used to undertake the research. The questionnaire was selected as the method of collecting data. A five likert scale was used to collect data. This questionnaire was divided into two sections: the demographic section as Section A and the stakeholder expectations as Section B. Section be includes the skills which acquired by students in order to be trained and skills that hospitality industry need or expects from the students. The research was quantitative in nature as it was the best and less expense to deliver by hand during monitoring of the hospitality students. Questions were ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The questions were analyzed and will be presented by power point presentation on the day of the conference.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made with regard this investigation:

- It is recommended that the university curriculum should be re-visited twice a year to fit with skills and competencies that hospitality industry need from the students.
- It is recommended that the university inform the students the importance of WIL.
- It is recommended that work integrated learning programmes clearly identifies the area of training in the hospitality industry.
- It is recommended that further research should be undertaken to include large number of respondents and other universities.
- It is recommended that research be undertaken to involved more diverse group of industry professional working in other hospitality industry segments.
- It is recommended that universities should negotiate with industry the stipend of the students during training.
- It is recommended that additional skills that are not included in the training programme be included as are valued important.
It is recommended that the university should keep on conducting Advisory Committee Meetings to get help in formulation of curriculum from the companies in order to limit the unnecessary costs.

The skills are very important and needed by graduates when entering the industry. Universities are only concerned with lot of theory and forget to teach the students the basic skills need to the industry.

6. LIST OF REFERENCES


CTP & SASCE 2000: Best Practice in Co-operative Education. Durban: SASCE.


MIRANDA, P. 1998: The level of technical skills and management competency demanded by the hospitality industry as perceived by hospitality recruiters. Degree in Masters of Science. University of Wisconsin-Stout.

