"Professor-for-a-Day": Nurturing Communities of Learning and Practice in Hospitality and Tourism Education

Abstract

Inviting industry professionals as speakers in university classrooms for the benefit of future managers is essential to an applied field of higher learning. This study examines the role of "Professor-for-a-Day" in nurturing communities of learning and practice in hospitality and tourism programs at universities. Data were collected (auto-) ethnographically over five years (2012-2017) in Hong Kong, through in-depth interviews with guest speakers from the industry, subject lecturers who invite industry executives to their classes, and students who are exposed to these industry professionals. Simultaneously, participant observations of, and documentary sources about, industry executives' guest lectures, are also used in the analysis and report. The research results reinforce and reiterate the role of industry professionals as guest speakers in building communities of learning and practice in an applied field of study. Implications of this discussion for applied higher education are then deliberated, so are the study's constraints acknowledged, and directions for future research explored.

Keywords

Community of learning and practice; university-industry partnership; "Professor-for-a-Day" (PFD); hospitality and tourism education; Hong Kong

1.0 Introduction

An applied field of learning and practice is characterized by the responsiveness of the academia to industry and governmental practices (Weiss, 1979, 1980; Wenger, 1998). Hospitality and tourism is such a field of education, research and practice characterized by a large and growing number of knowledge producers, brokers and end users. The capacity building of this applied scientific community conjures up interactions and exchange amongst its academics, industry professionals and decision-/policy-makers through various knowledge networks and platforms, innovative groups, individuals and organizations, as well as bridging initiatives or outreaching services (Perkmann, et al., 2013; Weiss, 1979, 1980; Wenger, 1998; Xiao, 2007). Of the various capacity-building approaches, "Professor-for-a-Day" (PFD) is such a bridging or brokering mechanism usefully implemented in applied educational programs to enhance learner experience and to nurture a community of learning and practice in university curricula.

Notably, PFD programs serve as an interactive platform for industry-based professionals as guest speakers, university-based subject lecturers who invite industry executives to their classes, and students who register for the subject of study. Typically, industry executives, policymakers, and sometimes prominent alumni are invited to campus to teach a class or conduct a seminar through the PFD program. Unlike a conventional approach of inviting guest speakers (regardless of their being academics or practitioners), PFDs are sometimes asked to share their industry experience in regard to their own career path and professional development. Hence, the goal of such a bridging/brokering mechanism is to provide university students with an opportunity to interact with industry practitioners, and to learn first-hand on how their education applies to the real world. Students generally find these industry guest lectures a welcome addition to their regular class schedule, partly because academic programs at universities are overall limited in practical exposure (Dredge, Benckendorff, Day, Gross, Walo, Weeks, & Whitelaw, 2012; Gross, Benckendorff, Mair, & Whitelaw, 2017), or because semester-long internships prescribed in the curricula are too much work-integrated (Tse, 2010). Moreover, PFD programs also serve as a unique learning experience for industry executives themselves, as they could keep abreast with ongoing research and new

knowledge from the academia, and stay connected with young (under-) graduates or tomorrow's professionals.

This ethnographical research involves long-term participant observations over a period of five years (2012-2017) and reflections of the authors on the use of PFD sessions in their hospitality and tourism programs at a university in Hong Kong. According to the dean of the school of this study, the initiation of PFD programs has to do with community perceptions of being a university professor in Hong Kong.

> *The title of a professor has a different meaning here. It is only reserved for full professors; it is a very honorable position. Why don't we honor guest speakers from the industry with the title of "Professor for a Day" by giving them a university professor certificate after a guest lecture. Many executives love to be called professors, and they are so proud... it is also a good advertisement for the academic institution* (Interview transcript, 30 August 2013).

Interestingly, in the earlier tourist experience literature (Cohen, 1972; Graburn, 1977), PFD runs closest to the promotion or communication of tour packages through markers such as "peasant for a day" for city dwellers or "king for a day" for ordinary non-royal visitors. Accounts on such reverse modes of "city dwellers being peasants/farmers for a day" are in line with notions such as strangerhood (or touristhood) through a liminal state of experiential learning or learning by doing on the part of the program participants (Cohen, 1972).

Turning to brokering and bridging tactics in knowledge development and education research, an overwhelming body of literature has been built on "theory and practice" (Ruhanen, 2005), "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998), and "experiential learning" (Kayes, 2002). Kolb's (1984) seminal work postulates learning "as a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p.41). Building on and departing from such bridging/processional/experiential paradigms, this study aims to explore the integrative and interactive nature of theory and practice, and to (re)consider a learning agenda to encompass more fully the complex relationships between tacit and explicit knowledge. Specifically, the PFD programs in the hospitality and tourism school reported in this study serve as the context to explore the perceptions and perspectives of

industry guest speakers, subject lecturers, and student learners on the nurturing of communities of learning and practice through such bridging/brokering initiatives.

2.0 Communities of Learning and Practice

A community of learning and practice consists of a group of people having a common area of interest, in which members learn from each other through sharing information and experiences so as to develop themselves both personally and professionally (Wenger, 1998). Much of its research rests upon the assumption of integrating theory and practice, and consequently reiterates propositions that learning is a process instead of an outcome, a derivative from actual experience (or learning by doing), problem-based in which learners are often involved in finding solutions to a problem at hand, and transformative in nature (Taylor & Snyder, 2012). It is often viewed as holistic and integrative in nature, and calls for interactions or interplay between the learner and his settings or environment – a process which inevitably results in experiential learning, diffusion of innovation, and promotion of better practices (Kayes, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Senge, 1990; Wenger, 1998).

2.1 Theory and Practice

Centering around "theory and practice", a number of conceptualizations along with varying utilization practices have been proposed and studied in the knowledge development literature (Xiao & Smith, 2007). Notably, the two-community theory was originally developed in the late 1970s and early 80s to describe the low level of instrumental use of social sciences research by practitioners (Caplan, 1979; Dunn, 1980; Weiss, 1979, 1980). It suggests that academics (knowledge producers) and practitioners or policy makers (knowledge users) reside in two culturally different worlds, each with different mandates, priorities and norms, following different rules, and facing different restrictions or challenges (Henry & Mackenzie, 2012). Metaphorically, utilization of academic research is often seen as a barrier-overcoming process with "bridges", "gaps", and "vehicles" as implied in many outreaching practices (or extension services) such as knowledge transfer (more often in engineering), knowledge management (in business), knowledge exchange (in health studies), organizational learning or learning organizations (organizational studies), and knowledge mobilization or communities of practice (in

education and community development studies). From an evolution standpoint, with the community paradigm gradually in place, the incorporation of the researched or knowledge users in the utilization spectra marks an important shift in the studies of theory-and-practice relationships (Xiao & Smith, 2007; Henry & Mackenzie, 2012). This is reflected in a change of focus from the conventional positivist/post-positivist measurements of knowledge use (through tools such as level-of-use scales, utilization indices and use indicators, experimental methodologies, and path analyses of use stages), to a community paradigm of knowledge stakeholders, which is characterized by notions such as knowledge networks through collaborative research, co-creation partnerships, communities-of-practice, organizational learning cultures, utilization-focused program evaluation, naturalistic studies of utilization settings, as well as ethnographies of knowledge exchange (Hartas, 2015).

As relatively younger fields of studies, leisure, hospitality and tourism (LHT) are no exceptions to the paradigm shift of knowledge generally observed in social sciences. While concerns for the limited use of academic research for practice have widely been expressed in these fields (Frechtling, 2004; Howey, Savage, Verbeeten & Van Hoof, 1999; Vong, 2017), questions are also raised about the relevance of academic research and theories to the delivery of LHT services, or more precisely, why LHT practitioners generally do not find academic research relevant to their needs (Hemingway & Parr, 1999; Kelly, 2000; McLeod & Vaughan, 2014). There are also concerns about the intellectual insularity of academics who speak to and write only for themselves (Samdahl & Kelly, 1999), the indifference of practitioners to academic research journals (Jordan & Roland, 1999; Nogradi, 1992; Cooper, 2015), and more generally, the impacts of academic research for industry practice (Madrigal, 1999). Donovan-Neale and Mannell (1983) suggest that practitioners rely more often on intuition and personal experience for management and policy decisions than on research. These authors see a paradox in which practitioners espouse an appreciation for academic research but fail to use it. They also find that the most important source used by practitioners is word-of-mouth among colleagues, while journal articles and research reports are least used. Moreover, studies also allude to the nature and characteristics of small and medium-sized enterprises, which

acts as barriers to knowledge management strategies in these fields (Ruhanen & Cooper, 2004; Cooper, 2015).

2.2 Learning as a Process

Experiential learning theorists tend to understand managers' learning in terms of their identification of, and responsiveness to, meeting and satisfying a diverse set of demands in business, social/environmental, and even personal/individual contexts. Learning hence occurs in a cyclical/continuous process of acquiring and transforming knowledge. According to Kolb (1984) and Kayes (2002, p.145), while the former, acquisition, requires a learner to resolve the tension between apprehension (which results from concrete and direct experience through sensory perceptions of the real world) and comprehension (abstraction through meaningful concepts and symbolic representations or systems), the latter, transformation, is characteristic of a learner in an equally dynamic tension between internal reflection of previously acquired knowledge and active experimentation to go beyond herself in order to interact with the external world.

Thus, in a cyclical learning process, concrete experience is represented in managers' internally reflective terms, where abstraction serves as an integrating mechanism through which their industry experience is made meaningful and appears organized. In experiential learning approaches, the interaction between personal and social knowledge is often realized through mechanisms or programs such as industry attachment, work-integrated learning (or internships), and PFDs in university classrooms.

2.3 Experiential Learning in Hospitality and Tourism

A recent review suggests that, with community of learning and interactive classroom being the trend, learning styles or learner preferences in relation to authentic, experiential and problem-based approaches have emerged as major themes in hospitality and tourism education (Hsu, Xiao & Chen, 2017). Learners consistently perceive, interact with, and respond to learning activities in accordance to their styles or preferences (Riding & Cheema, 1991). Johanson and Haug (2008), in their study of learner preferences in undergraduate hospitality and tourism programs at UK/Australian and Norwegian universities, concluded that learning style can change and hence curriculum content

should be amended in accordance to learner preference change. Likewise, a US-based study reported a correlation between active, sensing, visual and sequential learning, suggesting an influence of learning style on study preference (Cranage, Lambert, Morais & Lane, 2006). Furthermore, in a cross-cultural study of preferences, students are found to prefer learning styles that are concrete rather than abstract, and active rather than reflective (Lashley & Barron, 2006). The authors proposed that the development of "balanced" learning strategies could lead to reflective practice.

In addition, a variety of approaches have been explored in hospitality and tourism education research, including active, authentic, experiential and problem-based learning. For example, La Lopa (2005) described active learning as a student-centered, team-based, kinesthetic, and often reflective learning style. Dawson and Titz (2012) documented problem-based learning as a common method to facilitate active classroom interactions. Boer and Otting (2011) examined students' participation and performance in problem-based learning, and noted that learning in a problem-based curriculum can be characterized as "contextual, collaborative, self-directed, and constructive" (p.31) as real life problems derived from the industry help form a natural contextualization for the learning process.

Notably, authentic learning is often blended with internship or work-integrated education, where the latter serves as a means to the end of the former. In a study on the implementation of experiential learning in hospitality and tourism, Ruhanen (2005) demonstrated this as a valuable approach to bridging the divide between academic knowledge and practical skills. Furthermore, Conceição and Skibba (2008) concluded that experiential learning activities can be usefully incorporated in programs of leisure and enrichment travel education. In the same line of discussion, Stoner and her colleagues (2014) suggested that experiential learning through educational travel could facilitate the nurturing of global citizenship as an outcome of tourism education. On the hospitality side, much of the discussion on experiential learning concentrates on notions such as internship and university-industry partnership (Ruhanen *et al.*, 2013; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013). While internship is part of a hospitality and tourism curriculum, it is often perceived as semester-long and too much work-integrated (Tse, 2010). In a hospitality internship review, Yiu and Law (2012) presented the dynamics resulting from

the perspectives of students, employers, and educators. More holistically, Tse (2012) documented the creation of a teaching and research hotel as a platform for the nurturing of communities of learning and practice in hospitality and tourism education in Hong Kong. Overall, academic programs in hospitality and tourism are generally in search for more student exposures to industry practice, and for alternative or different ways of doing so (Dredge, et al., 2012; Gross, et al., 2017).

Inductively, while maintaining theoretical sensitivity to such conceptions as community of learning and practice, experiential learning, and theory and practice, this study aims to foray into the perceptions and perspectives of the knowledge stakeholders involved in the PFD initiatives, namely, industry guest speakers, subject lecturers, and student learners. In particular, the exploration is developed around questions such as why busy executives come to university as a "Professor-for-a-Day", how they feel about it, whether and the extent to which inviting academics see PFDs as achieving subject study objectives and perceived learning outcomes, and what students learn (or what learning experience they feel) from participating in these PFD lectures.

3.0 "Professor-for-a-Day": The Ethnographic Inquiry

As noted above, of the various bridging or outreaching initiatives in education and knowledge development studies, PFD is one approach to building communities of learning and practice (at least temporarily) by inviting practitioners or industry executives to university classrooms to share their experience or tacit knowledge on a subject of common interest so as to enhance the quality of learning of the subject. This undertaking could be considered as a partially (auto-)ethnographical and partially reflective action research (Hartas, 2015), as authors of the paper have been "living with" the problem and embedded in the study situation for many years. They are not only academics who have invited industry guest speakers to their own classes; some have also involved in the coordination and administration of university-industry partnerships including the PFD initiative. Hence, methodologically, they are performing both the role of the researcher and that of the researched in their reflexive accounts for PFD as a community capacity-building initiative.

As one author and frequent inviter of PFD speakers recollects,

As an instructor of subjects on strategic management, innovation, and cruise, I normally invite two to five guest speakers for each subject I teach. These speakers could include my alumni, previous students, friends, or acquaintances met at industry conferences or referred by colleagues. They were invited to my class either to share their experience, or to speak as a panelist on a specific topic. Sometimes, my PFD sessions were combined with students' field trips or study site visits where for example my guest speaker was also my host giving a talk in his/her own hotel or resort. This was often a fascinating learning experience for the student participants. (anonymity of informant for manuscript review)

Another author is both academic lecturer and administrator of university-industry partnership programs. He both invites industry-based guest speakers to his class, and amongst other industry partnership mandates, he also coordinates PFD contacts for other faculty members in the host institution.

I actively seek to maintain relationships with the industry and establish new relationships. Apart from inviting industry executives to be PFD in the subjects that I teach, I also refer PFD to faculty members. Academic staff who are new to Hong Kong would usually need some help in sourcing PFD. In my experience, industry executives are extremely helpful and willing to share their experience with students. I also find that faculty members embrace the PDF idea very well. I think the wish to engage each other is mutual from both the School and the industry alike. Students are also appreciative of the insight provided by PFDs because it complements classroom and textbook materials and it is usually up-to-date and practical. (anonymity of informant for manuscript review)

Indeed, newly recruited faculty members or junior academics joining the school with a fresh PhD find the PFD initiative useful in either filling their gap of industry experience or complementing to their class in terms of location specific knowledge or expertise.

I don't have a lot of industry experience, which is a major weakness in my teaching. So, inviting PFD can be a complement to my class, by providing more practical information and experience for my students. Before the guest lecture, I do my best to promote the topic to students: what they can learn, how they can put our regular class discussions into practice, etc.. After the lecture, it is also useful to tie the content back to my own teaching. (anonymity of informant for manuscript review)

Additionally, one of the authors teaches a "consultancy" subject at the postgraduate level. The subject introduces students to the world of consulting and requires them to work as "consultants-in-training" on a group project given by an industry partner. Other than teaching them the skills required to be an effective consultant, this author invites experienced consultants from leading consultancy firms to share their knowledge, experience or expertise with her students. Learners in her class benefit a great deal from such PFD sharing sessions as they can apply the learned skills readily to their own projects and to the satisfaction of their clients.

In addition to researchers being at the same time the researched, the ethnographic nature of this inquiry is also characteristic of participant observations of other PFD sessions through prolonged engagement with the problem at hand and with the people under study. As Adams (2012) noted, "it is only through participating in and observing everyday life over a long period of time that ethnographers could hope to begin to see and experience the world through the eyes of those whose lives they seek to understand" (p.340). Furthermore, the study also follows an action research paradigm (McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996). As reflexive academics preoccupied with notions such as interactive classrooms, work-integrated education, and communities of learning and practice, authors of this article hope to anatomize problems of their own so as to facilitate and promote better practice in their own profession.

Specifically, for the purpose of this ethnographic report, data and materials were collected over the period of 2012-2017 in the following formats: 1) Reflective journals of these authors who are in the meantime lecturers or learning facilitators inviting PFD guest speakers to their own classes. 2) Participant observation notes or memos from the research team. In total, 30 PFD sessions at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels were observed. The topics covered a wide range of hospitality/hotel, leisure/tourism, casino/cruise, finance/accounting, marketing/management, convention/event, as well as human resources subjects. The foci of observations were: Overall flow of a guest lecture, content delivery approaches, performance of the guest speaker and of the students, teacher-student interactions, as well as the dynamics or atmosphere of a guest speaker class. 3) Secondary sources such as general office's regular announcements of upcoming

10

PFD sessions, appreciation notes to distinguished industry professionals who have recently served as guest speakers, full lists of PFDs published in the school's magazine, as well as colleagues' feedbacks on guest lectures. 4) Semi-structured interviews with guest speakers, subject lecturers and student learners. In total, 45 interviews with varying length from 10 minutes to an hour (depending on availability of the participants) were recorded either with an audio-recording device like a smart phone (for subsequent transcription), or with written notes on the interview guide.

Conducted either before or after a PFD lecture, these informal, semi-structured interviews explored a set of largely open-ended questions. For guest speakers from the industry, the study probed on their academic or disciplinary backgrounds and career path, why they spared time to come to university campus to do PFD lectures, whether they had prior guest lecture experience in/with other institutions (or programs), and their favorite topics if they could make a choice. When the free chat occurred after a lecture, the PFD speakers were also invited to reflect upon their immediate past experience as a "Professor-for-a-Day", their perceptions and feelings, whether their expectations (if any) were met or exceeded, their comments on students and subject lecturers, as well as their intention or willingness to do it again.

Notably, the following probes were used as "interview guide" for industry guest lecturers:

1) Please introduce your education background and career path.
2) Why do you accept the invitation to be "Professor-for-a-Day" and give a lecture to college students? Any other reasons?
3) Can you give some comments on being the "Professor-for-a-Day" of my class? What do you like about it? Does it meet your expectation? How do you feel about giving lectures to university students?
4) Any comments on the host subject lecturer(s) and the students?
5) Do you have any other guest lecturer experiences? If yes, please describe the process.
6) Do you want to do it again? Why or why not?
7) If you can choose the lecture topic by yourself, what are the top two topics you want to cover?

8) Anything else?

For host subject lecturers inviting PFD guest speakers, the focus was on their intent and designated learning objectives of the subject or of the particular session, how they perceived guest speakers from the industry or government, why they invited them to their class, their comments on a guest professor's performance and whether it met expectations, feedbacks from students or guest speakers on PFD sessions (if any), as well as their past experience with and future intention to have PFD guest speakers in class.

Specifically, these queries are included in the "interview guide" for host subject lecturers who invite PFDs:

1) Please introduce learning objectives of the subject and of the guest lecture session.
2) Why did you choose this person to be "Professor-for-a-Day"? Any other reasons that influenced your choice?
3) How did you view the guest professor's performance? Does it meet your expectations?
4) Any comments or feedback you received from the guest professor and/or your students on the "Professor-for-a-Day" program?
5) Have you invited other guest speakers as "Professors-for-a-Day" in the past? If so, please briefly describe the experience.
6) Are you planning to invite guest professors again? Why or why not?
7) Anything else?

For student learners sitting through PFD sessions, we wished to learn about their reactions to and expectations/perceptions of such industry guest lectures. Student informants were also invited to compare or contrast a PFD session with their regular subject lectures or with other guest lectures they have recently sat through, in terms of interactive/delivery styles and learning experience. Their recommendations were also solicited on future running of the PFD program. Respectively, we asked students the following questions:

1) What were your reactions/expectations when you found out that there would be a "Professor-for-a-Day" lecture? How do you feel about the lecture by this industry guest speaker?

2) Why did you think your host subject lecturer invited this person as the guest professor?

3) How does this guest professor's performance compare with other lectures – both academic and other guest lecturers you have had? How about the learning experience? How does it differ?

4) Any other comments on this guest professor?

5) Do you want to see more "Professors-for-a-Day" from industry and government departments visiting our school in the future? Why or why not?

6) Any recommendations on who you would like to see, and why?

7) Anything else?

Moreover, as stated in the acknowledgement line, this report is part of a deliberation of the authors' research grants, which aim at assessing and promoting university-industry partnerships for the capacity-building of hospitality and tourism as a community of learning and practice. Ethically, permissions to sit through a PFD lecture were obtained from the incoming guest speaker and the inviting host subject lecturer. The host school is very proud of its connections with the industry through its annually more than 200 PFD sessions in addition to its many other university-industry partnership initiatives. "Upcoming PFD lectures" were email-announced by the school's general office, so were "heartfelt thanks to the distinguished industry professionals who recently served as professors for a day" extended to its academic and industry communities on a bimonthly and sometimes quarterly basis.

In the following narratives, participants were kept anonymous or reported with a pseudonym after a quote, where no revealing attributes were identified. The overall exposition of results was carried out with the principles of beneficence in mind (Hartas, 2015; McNiff, et al., 1996). The following accounts reveal what was learned from this ethnographic/action inquiry over the past five years.

4.0 "Professor-for-a-Day": The Narrative

Foremost amongst the participants that form the PFD initiative are the guest speakers themselves. Notably, these PFD guest speakers come from almost "all walks of life" in the hospitality and tourism industries, and their *profiles* are subject to no brief uniform descriptions. Nonetheless, their experiences and responsibilities encompass positions or job titles such as hotel general and departmental management, industry association directors, convention and exhibition center managers, presidents/CEOs of theme parks like Disney and Ocean Park, travel services/agencies managers, airline in-flight service managers, airport authorities, international cruise liner representatives, Hong Kong Tourism Board senior executives, city planners, club managers, as well as executive chefs. Geographically, these distinguished industry guest speakers are primarily from Hong Kong and Macao, some from mainland China or Taiwan, and a good number from overseas beyond the Greater China Region.

In terms of content/topical coverage, PFD lecturers variously speak on subjects such as online travel agencies, mega events, leadership, hotel technology, destination service, entrepreneurship, urban planning, aviation, hotel service quality management, new hotel development, convention and exhibition management, managing ecotourism attractions, organizational culture, expatriate managers in the hotel industry, innovation and new product development, restaurant finance and marketing, human resources management, leisure management in non-profit organizations, visitor experience management, cutting-edge technologies in hotels, luxury (service) management, and working with Gen Y, to name only a few from a diverse list. Most of the topics are applied in nature, and much of the delivery falls within business and management contexts.

4.1 Guest Speakers

Overall, these PFD speakers are diverse in backgrounds, and are often from different sources of, or in various associations/connections with, the host school, including (and not limited to) leading industry executives, professionals with specialized expertise, academic staff's personal or social networks, and former graduates or established alumni of the institution. Derived from participant observation, this account about Luke (in

pseudonym) offers a typical scenario of a PFD lecture (Subject: *Tourism – China and the World*; 18 July 2014),

> *The "professor" wore a "blue" t-shirt of the host school. He greeted students with a handshake when they walked into the lecture theatre, asking their names, and introducing himself as their guest speaker. After a routine introduction of the guest by the subject lecturer, Luke continued by saying he was no stranger, and in fact a student, like the participants themselves in his class. He was an ongoing doctoral candidate with seniority and lots of experience of the Chinese hotel industry. Speaking in English and code-switching with some Chinese (Cantonese) expressions here and there, his guest lecture lasted for about one hour. The topic was on the origins, present development, and future of the hotel industry in China and Hong Kong, covering financial aspects of hotel establishment, market factors and why some establishments were more successful than others, and possible research topics for interested students.*
>
> *A large majority of the students were interested and attentive; they jotted down notes. Luke was interactive, calling students by names that he happened to remember when meeting them before the class began, and talking to them as if it was a one-on-one chat, about economics theory, especially with a student who sat in the front, who kept nodding his head. Only a few questions were raised during the Q and A, even though a good number of some 50 students were present in the class.*
>
> *A PFD certificate with a souvenir (a pen this time) was presented as a token of appreciation at the end of his lecture, immediately prior to a group/class photo with the guest speaker and the subject lecturer standing in the front middle surrounded semi-casually by students. The souvenir was probably the 8th or the 9th of its kind (alternatively, a school bag or an umbrella was used as a gift) that Luke might have received in return as a guest lecturer. Given his wealth of knowledge and experience, he was a common speaker, friend, visitor and vip (in lower case) at many of the functions within the host school.*

Elsewhere, in academic institutions, "guest speakers" or "guest lecturers" are more often used as terms to refer to such capacity-building or knowledge-brokering roles. "Professor for a Day" as a (the) title was received with rather overwhelming and sometimes fancy connotations by some guest lecturers. One speaker, when asked what he felt about when being introduced as a PFD, responded, "*I think the title is a bit exaggerating. I can say I am only able to share my experience. But then, 'PROFESSOR'* (in audible Hong Kong accent)*! Well, thank you very much! It is really something very exaggerating for me......*" (Subject: *Cruise Management*; 16 March 2015).

An underneath query guiding this inquiry is the motivation of these "busy" industry executives coming to do PFDs. When asked why they come to talk to university students, various reasons were heard, ranging from obligatory reflections, to experiential learning through keeping abreast with new knowledge or staying "connected" with the young or tomorrow's industry professionals. The voluntary and obligatory note on "return to education and indeed return to the community at large" was most explicitly uttered by Peter (pseudonym) as a "Professor" in a "*Hotel Brand Development*" subject (19 January 2013),

> *The major reason is because I think I am part of the industry, and then for the school it is training up the people for the industry. I think it is part of my obligation to pass what I know to the students, because I hope that my experience can give them a better understanding of the industry. Speaking of professional ethics, I think we all need to do something for the community, and that is why I come to speak to the students, and of course I would also like to keep myself in the trend, so that I would know what the school is about, what today's students want to know, and what is really happening outside….Yes, I can say at school, professors like yourself teach students all the knowledge, but sometimes in the actual field we see something that you cannot see in the school. That is why.*

Anecdotally, many senior PFD speakers have expressed or revealed a passion to share industry (and sometimes personal growth) experience with young students. David (pseudonym), director of engineering of a Shangri-La property, reflected upon his own past as an inexperienced student of design longing for industry experience and practical knowledge, "*When I was a graduate, I wish I could go to a big company, but I had no experience to join the company to do design. Everybody there was working on the computer doing design every day. I need more practical experience if I want to join them*" (Subject: *Energy and Water Conservation in the Hospitality Industry*; 11 November 2014).

Astonishingly, "experiential learning or the fun of being a professor in a university class" has recurred as a strong theme. This relates variously to PFD speakers taking the commitment or arrangement as a learning experience for themselves. They could "stay sharper", as a few speakers would like to put it. For example, they could learn about what

university students think and what they are fascinated about. They could stay "connected" or "interact" with young people through PFD sessions. They could also learn how to relate "their experience" to "students' experience". As noted by Irene (pseudonym, director of human resources of a local hotel), "*Most people of the young generation are totally different from our old generation. We have to study their thinking and tailor make programs for them in order to keep them working/staying in the hotel industry. We know they want to change jobs very frequently*" (Subject: *Leadership and Creative Management*; 25 March 2013).

Through such "live" interactions with study participants, preconceptions about Asian students being "quiet" in the class could even be proved otherwise. Paul (pseudonym, an expatriate hotel manager in China) found his students were "*really responsive, and open to questions and discussions*" in his session on "*Organizational Culture*" (4 November 2012).

Per class observations, PFD lecturers vary extensively in delivery and presentation styles. Some are passionate speakers and simply enjoy talking to students whereas others facilitate their sessions in more interactive or engaging manners. Ruby (pseudonym, a theme park manager) contrasted university lectures to her routine meetings with resort management and service staff, and found the former much more pleasurable and rewarding than the latter in imparting or communicating messages. Occasionally, an embarrassment felt could turn out to be a useful experience learned by an industry guest speaker in a university class. Robin (pseudonym, director of sales and marketing of a convention center) reflected upon his opening of a PFD lecture with "cold" questions: "*I was so frustrated when these leading questions were not well taken, as I have tried to organize my contents around these questions. I found good opening questions should not be too practical. They* (students) *should have something to relate to from their knowledge or experience*" (Subject: *Convention and Exhibition Management*; 7 March 2014).

Interestingly, it is really heartening to hear that "*doing a guest lecture on a good topic on a 'quiet and slow' campus could be just as a break or escape from the usual, busy business environment*" (John, pseudonym, senior vice president of design and

project services of an international hotel brand. Subject: *Trends and Development in the Hospitality Industry*; 15 March 2015).

4.2 Subject Lecturers

From the host subject lecturers who invite PFD speakers to their classrooms, views were solicited on why they invite them, whether and how such guest lectures are seen as fulfilling subject objectives, and their perceived learning outcomes from guest speakers. Notably, it was repeatedly heard that PFD lectures are seen as a *learning experience* for the academic subject instructors themselves. This, in a way, relates back to the discussion on limited practical exposure of academic programs, as well as the need for alternative or different forms of connection with industry practice (Dredge, et al., 2012; Gross, et al., 2017; Tse, 2010). The following "thank-you" email from the host subject instructor after a guest lecture is a typical expression of not only gratitude but also why industry executives are invited by academic subject lecturers to their class.

> *Dear Mr. Lee* (pseudonym),
>
> *It was very nice meeting you yesterday and thank you for your support. I learned so much cruise related knowledge in such a short period of time. As a new teacher and researcher in the field of cruise, I need your additional help to enhance our school's cruise management courses and improve my teaching skills....* (Subject: *Royal Caribbean International and the Cruise Industry*; 19 November 2012)

The note on expertise or practical experience from the field was echoed in our interview with another academic lecturer who invites a guest speaker from the Leisure and Cultural Service Department to her class. In reviewing her subject agenda, Denise (pseudonym) recollected,

> *One of the major topics in the subject syllabus is leisure service systems. That's why I invited the guest speaker to come and tell us about the system in Hong Kong. She just came last week and shared with us that there were lots of limitations to social services in Hong Kong, not just in providing recreational activities but also in offering social services, child care or family care* (Subject: *Leisure and Society*; 11 November 2014).

Feedbacks from academic instructors on subject objective fulfillment and learning outcomes also include some critical reflections such as "*too much personal experience*" or "*too often case studies of their own companies*". While some personal anecdotes could be inspirations for students' career commitment – as in Andrew's (pseudonym) story on "*How I Get Promoted from an Entry Position*" (20 November 2012), over use of personal experience or company-based case studies could be seen as "*self-advertising or self-promotion*" and could be consequently detrimental to the overall effect of a PFD lecture. In the same line of critiques are concerns about some lectures "*being too practical to be 'generally' useful*", or some speakers "*being less competent to enhance discussions to a desired theoretical level*" (Subject lecturer interview transcript, 21 March 2016).

4.3 Student Learners

Solicitations from student learners center around their learning experience from PFD sessions and perceived differences (if any) from regular academic lectures. Coding through semi-structured interview transcripts, the frequently spotted and often complimentary buzz words include "*Interesting contents/interesting videos, unique insights, practical/professional experience, real-life examples/real-life practice, informative/useful information, knowledgeable, humorous, interactive, engaging, well prepared, excellent*, etc.". Many of these comments were also made in a comparative light.

Turning to quality of learning from PFD sessions, the study finds that learner experience varies as students react rather differently in accordance to the speaker (who s/he is), the topic or subject under discussion, and styles of the facilitator in delivering contents or engaging participants with her/his prepared contents. In a graduate class that one of the authors sat through (Subject: *Strategy*; 8 March 2015), the quality of discussion and interaction was found to be so good that there was simply insufficient time to address all the questions from the audience. The speaker, Henry (in pseudonym), was a Cornell alumni working as director of development in a Hotel Jen property of the Shangri-La International Hotel Management Limited. Instead of the usual ways of presenting with power-point slides, Henry engaged his mature students with anecdotes,

stories, and personal experiences in eloquently good English. He spoke in a soft voice in a medium-sized seminar room. It was felt that the quality of interaction has resulted from the level of engagement derived from experiential learning of both the facilitator and the learners.

Indeed, Henry is not alone in skipping power-point presentations amongst the PFD speakers. In another guest lecture observed on 21 October 2014 (Subject: *Customer Relationship Management*), the "Professor" (Jenny, in pseudonym) was a mid/upper-level manageress with work experience in the casino industry from both Las Vegas and Macao. Jenny began her talk by saying that she was hoping for students to engage in informal discussions, and that she deliberately did not prepare any power-point slides in the hope for the discussion to get more conversational and free-flowing. But, other than two-to-three questions, there was not much of student feedback or response. Jenny admitted she had talked to the subject lecturer beforehand on the topics of the course and knew that the students' classes were mainly theoretically orientated, and apologized in advance that her "from the industry" terms might not be the same as those found in the "textbooks". During the brief five-minute break, some students were found to be exchanging name cards with the guest speaker, who also probed on where some of those international (foreign) looking students were from.

As Jenny's job dealt with data management and collecting and targeting different market segments (customer groups) by analyzing how they behaved and spent (e.g., time, money, whom they were with), she was able to share with the class different mathematical formulas used to calculate the perceived value of customers (based on how much they were betting, length of stay, the odds, and the number of games). Such information obtained about gambling habits was then used for marketing and promotional purposes by means of offering free meals, ferry rides, hotel rooms, discounts, lucky draws, etc.. The observer author found that the students were all interested in what Jenny had to offer. The content, being quite different from what they knew and often heard, was a valuable insider view that people outside the casino industry did not usually know. From students' questions and reactions, it seemed they were surprised at how market-driven and money-orientated casinos were. In fact, the class observer even felt that the

students were rather dumbfounded or awestruck by all the "new information", especially those on how a casino operated, and how many and different "behind the scenes jobs" there were, which in essence have been making and keeping casino a profitable business.

However, there are also instances where students are not as engaged, or where interactions are of mediocre quality when participants are too shy to ask questions, or even if they do, questions appear to be "*too easy, less practical, or less engaging*". Occasionally, having lower interest in a topic could also result in lower level of engagement with the speaker, as noted in the following class observation by one author,

> *As I came in late, I was sitting at the back and could see the students in front of me. A few were playing on their computers or smartphones; it was obvious they were not very interested in the topic and perhaps the speaker (as a result), as they had their minds somewhere else. But the "professor", with some embarrassment or even annoyance, tried to make attempts to bring the audience into the picture, by raising practical or "real" questions such as "Where does Hong Kong's energy come from?"* (Subject: *Hospitality Facilities Planning and Maintenance*; 11 November 2014)

In addition to content-based learning, students also experienced a kind of emotional or moral support from PFD guest speakers; some felt these "Professors" would be their role models for future career development. From the rejoinder of a second-year Hotel Management student, "*I hope I can be more confident to handle and solve practical problems by myself. I hope I can learn the skill for handling these accidents in order to provide a professional service to our guests*" (Subject: *Front Office Management*; 10 April 2013).

When asked to compare or contrast a PFD session with a regular academic lecture, students tend to see or associate the latter with a stronger focus on theory than the former, which is more often practice- or experience- oriented. Nonetheless, students also acknowledge that no simplistic comparison could be made in terms of learning experience. Additionally, a note on "*experiential learning or prior experience from internship paving the way to students' better appreciation of a PFD lecture*" is noteworthy:

The guest lecture is totally different from what I usually learn in class. I think it's not textbook knowledge but my prior internship or working experience that helps me better appreciate the lecture. It is because I have experienced the real operation of a hotel that Inow understand the contents better. I therefore believe that my working experience contributes to my study. I also believe my study helps my working. For example, I know the structure of the hotel departments; I could now easily understand why I need to follow certain procedures. I also know what attitudes and methods I should adopt when facing problems. My feeling after the hotel GM's lecture gave me a huge motivation to work in the hospitality industry (Subject: *Lodging Management – Current Issues*; 8 November 2012).

5.0 Conclusion

This article reflects upon "Professor-for-a-Day" (PFD) as an initiative for the nurturing of a community of learning and practice in hospitality and tourism education. Based on class observations, participant interviews and secondary sources derived from the authors' own engagement in coordinating or inviting industry-based guest speakers to their own classes, the ethnographic report presents the perspectives of PFD guest speakers, academic subject lecturers inviting them, and student learners exposed to such non-academic industry executive teaching sessions. The recurrence of PFD as a unique learning experience for the guest speakers, the subject instructors and the student participants highlights the effectiveness or role of PFDs as a mechanism in nurturing a community of learning and practice carved out by a subject or topic of common interest.

Notably, these guest speakers have diverse career backgrounds and industry experience; they are voluntary and passionate to share their expertise and knowledge with students; and are hence capacity-builders in the applied field of hospitality and tourism. Very often, these established industry professionals (including some distinguished alumni) feel the "obligation" of returning to education or joint preparation of tomorrow's industry professionals. In the meantime, from an experiential learning perspective, they also hope to keep abreast with new knowledge coming from the university and to stay "connected" with students in order to better understand the mindsets of the younger generation. By chance as much as serendipity, in some PFD sessions, industry executives are not only engaging and eloquent speakers on their topic, they also demonstrate passion and capacity as well as knowledge and skill to be a university academic if they wish.

Likewise, academic lecturers inviting guest speakers from the industry also take such interventions as a learning experience to themselves. The diffusion of knowledge and expertise from the "actual and practical world" is seen as complementary to the usual academic perspectives and to fulfilling the objectives of application desired and designed in an applied educational program (Dredge, et al., 2012; Gross, et al., 2017).

Moreover, students exposed to PFD lectures give compliments both to the guest speakers and to the quality of learning associated with such sessions. These established industry executives or distinguished alumni are sometimes seen as role models for fresh graduates or young professionals to embark on a career in tourism and hospitality. The quality of learning also comes from the facilitators' contents, perspectives, and styles, which are typically perceived as "*experiential learning from the practical world out there*" (Tse, 2010).

In summary, academics' longing for better practices, as well as practitioners' yearning for knowledge sharing have footnoted the practicality and effectiveness of PFD programs in the nurturing of communities of learning and practice (Senge, 1990; Vong, 2017; Wenger, 1998; Xiao & Smith, 2007). In this instance, university classrooms simply serve as an attractive platform for industry executives to share their knowledge, experience and expertise. Arguably, as a reverse mode of experience conceived along the continuum of familiarity and strangeness (Cohen, 1972; Graburn, 1977), "Professor-for-a-Day" (not unlike "king for a day" or "farmer for a day") offers experiential learning for all knowledge stakeholders involved in the program (Kayes, 2002; Kolb, 1984).

As an applied field of education and research, the implications of experiential learning, or learning through practical exposure, for the capacity-building of scientific communities (Xiao, 2007), and for teaching and pedagogy are self-evident. In hospitality and tourism, prior studies on experiential learning tend to focus on internships and university-industry partnerships (Ruhanen *et al.*, 2013; Yiu & Law, 2012; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013). Attention was also paid to the creation and use of distinct entities such as a teaching and research hotel for the nurturing of a community of learning and practice (Tse, 2012). By analogy, creative initiatives such as PFD serve just as well as a "live theatre" to link the two apart worlds of theory and practice on the same stage.

Overarched within the community paradigm of knowledge development (Xiao & Smith, 2007), experiential and problem-based learning through interactive classrooms and with facilitators in possession of real world experience has been effective approaches to fulfilling quality of learning (Dredge, et al., 2012; Gross, et al., 2017; Hsu *et al*., 2017). As a blending strategy, the PFD initiative has been usefully and indeed successfully implemented to bring practitioners' perspectives into the academia to the end of authentic (experiential) learning, and ultimately for bridging the divide between academic knowledge and practical skills (Cooper, 2015; Ruhanen, 2005; Vong, 2017).

Notwithstanding, the "insider's" view on the PFD initiative and its associated perspectives have to be acknowledged with caution and care. The embeddedness of "the researcher with the researched", as noted in these ethnographic narratives, could well be a double-edged sword – with both the texture and textuality of watching from within, as well as the contexture and contextuality of the inquiry due to potential hindsight or oversights. Understandably, other viewer perspectives, and potentially overlooked context specificities could inform promising future research on PFD as a "community of learning and practice" initiative.

6.0 References

Adams, K. (2012). Ethnographic methods. *In* L. Dwyer, A. Gill & N. Seetaram (eds.), *Handbook of research methods in tourism* (pp.339-351). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Boer, M., & Otting, H. (2011). Student's voice in problem-based learning: Personal experiences, thoughts and feelings. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 23*(2), 30-40.

Caplan, N. (1979). The two-community theory and knowledge utilization. *American Behavioral Scientist, 22,* 459-470.

Cohen, E. (1972). Towards a sociology of international tourism. *Social Research, 39*, 164-182.

Conceição, S., & Skibba, K. (2008). Experiential learning activities for leisure and enrichment travel education: A situative perspective. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 7*(4), 17-35.

Cooper, C. (2015). Managing tourism knowledge. *Tourism Recreation Research, 40*(1), 107-119.

Cranage, D., Lambert, C., Morais, D., & Lane, J. (2006). The influence of learning style on hospitality and tourism students' preference for web assignments. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 18*(4), 18-26.

Dawson, M., & Titz, K. (2012). Problem-based learning as a strategy to teach service quality: An assessment of on-line reviews. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 24*(2-3), 67-72.

Donovan-Neale, W., & Mannell, R. (1983). Information seeking behaviors of municipal recreation practitioners. *Recreation Research Review, 10*(2), 19-27.

Dredge, D., Benckendorff, P., Day, M., Gross, M., Walo, M., Weeks, P., & Whitelaw, P. (2012). The philosophic practitioner and the curriculum space. *Annals of Tourism Research, 39*(4), 2154-2176.

Dunn, W. (1980). The two-community metaphor and models of knowledge use: An exploratory case survey. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 1,* 515-536.

Frechtling, D. (2004). Assessment of the tourism/hospitality journals' role in knowledge transfer: An exploratory study. *Journal of Travel Research, 43*, 100-107.

Graburn, N. (1977). Tourism: The sacred journey. *In* Smith, V. (Ed.), *Hosts and guests: The anthropology of tourism* (pp.17-31). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gross, M., Benckendorff, P., Mair, J., & Whitelaw, P. (2017). Hospitality higher education quality: Establishing standards in Australia. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 30,* 4-14.

Hartas, D. (2015). *Educational research and inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* London: Routledge.

Hemingway, J., & Parr, M. (1999). Leisure research and leisure practice: Three perspectives on constructing the research-practice relation. *Leisure Sciences, 22*, 139-162.

Henry, A., & Mackenzie, S. (2012) Brokering communities of practice: A model of knowledge exchange and academic-practitioner collaboration developed in the context of community policing. *Police Practice and Research, 13*(4), 315-328.

Howey, R., Savage, K., Verbeeten, M., & Van Hoof, H. (1999). Tourism and hospitality research journals: Cross-citations among research communities. *Tourism Management, 20*, 133-139.

Hsu, C., Xiao, H., & Chen, N. (2017). Hospitality and tourism education research from 2005 to 2014: Is the past a prologue to the future? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 29*(1), 141–160.

Johanson, L., & Haug, B. (2008). Students' preferred learning styles and the importance of curriculum content: A study of Norwegian tourism and hospitality students. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, *20*(2), 24-33.

Jordan, D., & Roland, M. (1999). An examination of differences between academics and practitioners in frequency of reading research and attitudes toward research. *Journal of Leisure Research, 31*, 166-170.

Kayes, C. (2002). Experiential learning and its critics: Preserving the role of experience in management learning and education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 1*(2), 137-149.

Kelly, J. (2000). The "real world" and the irrelevance of theory-based research. *Journal of Leisure Research, 32*, 74-78.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

La Lopa, J. (2005). The benefits of teaching a course on hospitality and tourism sales and service via active learning. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 17*(1), 39-47.

Lashley, C., & Barron, P. (2006). The learning style preferences of hospitality and tourism students: Observations from an international and cross-cultural study. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 25*(4), 552-569.

Madrigal, R. (1999). Comment on the impact of leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research, 31*, 195-198.

McLeod, M., & Vaughan, R. (2014). *Knowledge networks and tourism*. London: Routledge.

McNiff, J., Lomax, P., & Whitehead, J. (1996). *You and your action research project*. London: Routledge.

Nogradi, G. (1992). The potential for cooperation between academics and recreation practitioners: More a reality than a myth. *Journal of Applied Recreation Research, 17*, 87-108.

Perkmann, M., Tartari, V., McKelvey, M., Autio, E., Broström, A., D'Este, P., Fini, R., Geuna, A., Grimaldi, R., Hughes, A., Krabel, S., Kitson, M., Llerena, P., Lissoni, F., Salter, A., & Sobrero, M. (2013). Academic engagement and commercialisation: A review of the literature on university–industry relations. *Research Policy, 42*, 423-442.

Riding, R., & Cheema, I. (1991). Cognitive styles: An overview and integration. *Educational Psychology*, *11*(3-4), 193-215.

Ruhanen, L. (2005). Bridging the divide between theory and practice. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 5*(4), 33-51.

Ruhanen, L., & Cooper, C. (2004). Applying a knowledge management framework to tourism research. *Tourism Recreation Research, 29*(1), 83-88.

Ruhanen, L., Robinson, R., & Breakey, N. (2013). A tourism immersion internship: Student expectations, experiences and satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 13*, 60-69.

Samdahl, D., & Kelly, J. (1999). Speaking only to ourselves? Citation analysis of Journal of Leisure Research and Leisure Sciences. *Journal of Leisure Research, 31,* 171-180.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* New York: Doubleday.

Stoner, K., Tarrant, M., Perry, L., Stoner, L., Wearing, S., & Lyons, K. (2014). Global citizenship as a learning outcome of educational travel. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 14*(2), 149-163.

Taylor, E., & Snyder, M. (2012). A critical review of research on transformative learning theory, 2006–2010. *In* E. Taylor & P. Cranton (eds.), *Handbook of transformative learning theory* (pp.37–54). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tse, T. (2010). What do hospitality students find important about internships. *Journal of Teaching in Travel and Tourism*, *10*(3), 251-264.

Tse, T. (2012). The experience of creating a teaching hotel: A case study of Hotel ICON in Hong Kong. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 24*(1), 17-25.

Vong, F. (2017). Relevance of academic research to hospitality practitioners. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 29*(3), 116-128.

Weiss, C. (1979). The many meanings of research utilization. *Public Administration Review, 29*, 426-631.

Weiss, C. (1980). Knowledge creep and decision accretion. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 1*, 381-404.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Xiao, H. (2007). *The social structure of a scientific community: A case study of the Travel and Tourism Research Association*. PhD thesis, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Xiao, H., & Smith, S. (2007). The use of tourism knowledge: research propositions. *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*, 310-331.

Yiu, M., & Law, R. (2012). A review of hospitality internship: Different perspectives of students, employers, and educators. *Journal of Teaching in Travel &Tourism, 12*(4), 377-402.

Zopiatis, A., & Theocharous, A. (2013). Revisiting hospitality internship practices: A holistic investigation. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 13*, 33-46.