

Experiential Learning in Hospitality Education: A Case Study of the Service Learning

Introduction

Divide of theory and practice has been a frequently cited issue in hospitality education (Ruhanen, 2005). Today, various levels of education have implemented innovative and attractive teaching elements in and out of the classroom to enhance the students' learning experience and to fill the gap between theory and practice. Of all attempts, experiential learning is one of the most popular approaches in recent years (Kiser and Partlow, 1999).

Experiential learning theory differs from other learning theories because of its distinguished emphasis on the central role of "experience" in learning (Northern Illinois University Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, 2012). Within the concept of "learning through experience or learning by doing," experiential learning offers interactive, vibrant, and multidimensional approaches to enhance and enrich students' learning outcome (Northern Illinois University Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, 2012). Experiential learning is "the process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of understanding and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984: 41)

The benefits of experiential learning are well noted. In hospitality and tourism education, experiential learning is considered one of the key features of service industry education. Students are required to put theory into practice to succeed in this industry. Classroom environment, case study, guest speaker, laboratory, video, and role play are all part of experiential learning methods. Out-of-the-classroom experiences, internships, exchange programs, field works, and service learning experiences also comprise experiential learning methods. Therefore, experiential learning is important because it offers multidimensional functions to enrich students' learning experience.

Of all the experiential learning approaches, service learning is one such method that offers the opportunity for students to gain experience by offering services to the community.

Hospitality and tourism studies are closely related to commercial services, which emphasize practical experience. Practical experiences and food- and beverage-related activities obtained by working in kitchen, bar and restaurant comprise experiential learning methods. Students may be assessed through individual/group projects, reports, and exams. However, few alternative assessments methods may be available to evaluate their learning progress.

The unique nature of service learning subjects limits their inclusion in other hospitality and tourism related studies. Unlike commercial service subjects, service learning offers students an opportunity to serve the community. Bringle and Hatcher (1996: 222) noted that service learning offers “*an additional means for reaching educational objectives, and academic credit is appropriate for service activities when learning objectives associated with the service are identified and evaluated*”. Thus, service learning can be a remarkable experience for students in their school life.

We aim to investigate the alignment of school-intended learning outcomes for community service and the students’ reflective journals for the subject - Hospitality Management and Operations in Developing Regions. By analyzing the students’ reflective journals, we aim to understand the the students’ achievement and learning outcome at the program level to make recommendations for future subject design. The specific objectives of this study are to answer two questions: 1) how does service learning subject facilitate the students in achieving learning outcomes as required? and 2) what are the specific benefits that this subject brings to the students. These objectives will be realized through content analysis of the students’ reflective journals immediately after the subject. This approach may objectively present the students’ feelings and perceptions of the subject, and thus is valuable in gaining insights from the students’ perspective and adding to the existing literature. Through studying a specific service learning subject like this, we also intend to provide more contextual explanations since every real life learning program is unique and context-based.

Literature Review

Experiential learning often refers to “exploration of the realities in the workplace” by integrating various activities, such as internship, case study, field trip, and activity involvement, to enhance learning experience. Experiential learning method provides the opportunity for students to interact with educators and employers. Previous research works mentioned effective experiential learning activities, including the following: role play, lab, guest speakers, case study, and virtual learning (e.g. Ruhanen, 2005; Yan & Cheung 2012). This learning method emphasizes content, and the process of experiential learning is at the center of this learning method; the instructor acts as a facilitator and guide, rather than someone who directs the steps (Northern Illinois University Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, 2012).

Service learning experience is considered a form of experiential learning method that “combines academic study with service in the community” (Eyler, 2009: 2). ~~Amanda~~ Cecil (2012) considered service learning as a powerful pedagogy that integrates course content and community service experience to obtain a meaningful education outcome.

Bringle and Hatcher (1995: 112) pointed out “service–learning to be a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility”.

Furco (1996) stated that service learning is distinguished from other experiential method because it offers equal benefits to both service provider and to the recipient of the community service. Cecil (2012:318) enumerates four beneficiaries of service learning, as follows: students, faculty, institutions, and communities.

Involvement in service learning helps students become more proficient in communication, teamwork, and problem solving, which in turn enables them to become more active knowledge consumers rather than passive learners(Aldridge, Williamson, & Harris, 2011). Service learning offers opportunities for students to reflect on their service, democratic values, and citizenship (O'Halloran & Deale, 2004). Service learning also benefits learning development and encourages students to find solutions for real community issues and meet important human and environmental needs (O'Halloran & Deale, 2004).

Cecile (2012) further discusses that service learning programs benefit not only students and communities, but also faculty and institutions. Faculty members may incorporate additional practical techniques with problem-solving skills and active teaching methods. O'Halloran and Deale (2004: 66) noted that the service learning method gives opportunities for interaction within the community and the industry. Such opportunities “strengthen the ties between academic and real-world practice”. Aldridge et al. (2011) discussed the benefits of service learning to institutions, which include forming relationships between the institution and the community. Departments, schools, and universities can also “explore the critical skills that students will need to become successful global citizens”(Cecil, 2012: 321).

A community-based approach to hospitality and tourism education is unique because it “offers a practical application to social hospitality”. Rather than focusing on industry needs, the method provides opportunities to serve and transform the community into a better place (Aldridge et al., 2011). Markey and Holsinger-Fuchs (2004) also contend that service learning program is not only about students’ learning, but also about what the program can offer to the communities as well.

(Table 1 Summary of benefits of service learning subjects)

Moscardo and Pearce (2007) argue that focusing on the benefits that are derived from experiential learning process can be an alternative way to evaluate this teaching method. The authors have investigated the benefits that structured work experience can bring to three parties – institutes, students, and employers (Moscardo and Pearce, 2007). The benefits that the institutes target are “career development or testing, skills acquisition, skills application and real world practice” (Moscardo and Pearce, 2007:24). The benefits identified from students perceptions are mostly pragmatic and future job related, which include resume enhancing through gaining practical experience, developing network, testing out different career option, and learning skills. However, from the employers’ perspective, this kind of program offer them a chance to carry out corporate social responsibility by helping the students, risk reduction, and potential for innovative approaches that the students might bring about (*ibid.*)

Putting students in the center of teaching and learning, service learning subjects are unique in their learning outcome. Unlike other subjects that students only take inside the classroom during the semester, service learning provides an opportunity for students to step out of their comfort zone and offer their services to people in need. Students are thereby empowered to apply skills and knowledge learned in the classroom to the community. Students obtain two learning outcomes, as follows: “demonstrate empathy for people in need and a sense of civic responsibility” and “reflect on their role and responsibilities both as professionals in their chosen discipline and as responsible citizens”(Kwong & Lin, 2013: 2). The service learning subject also applies theoretical learning to practical settings, thereby emphasizing hands-on experiences and contributions to the community (Aldridge et al., 2011). Experts have noticed significant difference between students who receive service learning programs and those who do not, in a positive way, which include higher learning motivation and better application of knowledge (Markey and Holsinger-Fuchs, 2004).

While the benefits of experiential learning have been highlighted as above, there are negative voices. For example, Moscardo and Pearce (2007) have identified multiple negative voices from literature concerning structured work experience for tourism students including mismatching of learning content and learning objectives, poor outcomes of skills acquisition, and ineffectiveness in teaching skills, etc. This study argues that with well-designed structure of the subject, the instructor can overcome the negative voices of experiential learning.

The nature of the hospitality and tourism field requires young professionals showing positive attitudes, professional competence, responsible citizenship, and effective communication skills. Service learning subjects in higher education should encourage students to become better global citizens. Therefore, we aim to explore the role of service learning in hospitality and tourism higher education through a case study of a commercial guesthouse. The findings can be beneficial for further improvement of the subject, as well as providing implications for future experiential learning programs

Methodology

Background of the Study

Service learning has been implemented as a mandatory three-credit subject for all undergraduate degree students at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Students were required to choose a service learning subject in Semester Two and Three to fulfill the school requirements before graduation. In 2014, schools in Hong Kong, Mainland China, Africa, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam offered over 38 different service learning subjects. The School of Hotel and Tourism Management offered two other service learning subjects, apart from the one under study, in 2014: Community Tourism: Tour, Training, Operator, and Event from and for the Community (conducted

in Hong Kong) and Ecotourism in rural and developing regions (conducted in Sichuan Province in Mainland China).

The service learning subject, namely, Hospitality Management and Operation in Developing Regions, was offered for the first time by the School Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM), at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The objective of this subject is to train students with hospitality knowledge and skills in order to transfer their knowledge and skills to recipients in developing regions.

The recruitment process began by sending out interview invitations according to the online registration of students. Over 45 students attended the group interview sessions. They were asked to express their understanding of service learning and their intention to join the particular subject. Finally, 17 students enrolled in the subject.

The class was designed to meet for 9 out of 14 weeks in the academic calendar in semester two. In semester three, the class would spend 14 day in Cambodia. Students were required to work on various elements during semester two to prepare for their service in semester three, as follows:

- Understand service learning by e-learning
- Meet with client (Green Pasture Inn) via Skype
- Prepare a business proposal and training manual according to their assigned teams, as follows: front office, housekeeping, food and beverage, and marketing.
- On-site observation and hands-on experience for the four assigned sectors in Hotel ICON (training hotel of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University)

Students gained knowledge of the cultural background, logistics, and each service delivery task (business plan) during semester two. In semester three, the students spent 14 days in a field visit and service delivery in a guesthouse operated by a non-government organization (NGO) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. They were briefed and debriefed daily by their group leader and instructors before

and after service. At the end of the field trip, the students were required to hand in their individual reflection journals and team presentations, which were created, based on their overall experience. The instructional methodology related to service learning also emphasizes reflection from the students (Markey and Holsinger-Fuchs, 2004). The instructors applied 7 out of 18 experiential learning methods (video, training hotel, laboratory, talk by guest speaker, practicum, fieldwork, and student teaching) to enhance student learning in the subject.

Participants

The service learning subject - Hospitality Management and Operations in Developing Regions accepted only 17 students, which included 11 SHTM students and 6 non-SHTM students. Based on the nature and the needs of Green Pasture Inn, the students were divided into four teams, as follows: marketing, food and beverage, front office, and housekeeping. The teams were required to propose the following for their assigned areas: a business plan which includestraining manual, and a training video for four divisions. The goal is to deliver a well-structured business plan that Green Pasture Inn can sustain after students' service delivery

Recipients

Green Pasture Inn is a twelve-room guesthouse operated by a local NGO in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, under the leadership of Mr. Phany. Green Pasture Inn was an ideal collaboration partner because of the following reasons:

1. The guesthouse was newly established in January 2014;
2. Management has very limited knowledge and skills in guesthouse operation; and,
3. The staff did not have any relevant experience in running a guesthouse.

After a site visit in December 2013, both instructors agreed that the small-scale guesthouse operation is manageable and is an ideal collaboration partner for the student activities.

Data Analysis - Content analysis of 17 reflective journals

The students were required to submit reflective journals after completing the project, as specified earlier. Each journal contained approximately 2000 words to 3000 words. Upon submission, the research team applied NVivo (Version 10) to analyze the content of the journals based on the pre-designed learning outcome framework (Table 3). NVivo can organize specific entries or nodes into specified categories and sub-categories and can efficiently and objectively analyze qualitative data in the journals. Three researchers worked together to code the journals for consistency. Discussions on discrepancies in the interpretation of student reflections were conducted, and the discussion continued until the researchers agreed on more than 90% of coding.

Coding was conducted in terms of text units or sentence clusters expressing one complete idea according to the intended subject-level program learning outcomes (see Table 3 below).

(Table 2 Intended program learning outcome)

Below are two examples of text units:

Sample Text Unit 1

“As a Marketing Team manager, I am glad that I could use my Photoshop skills to design Green Pasture Inn Guesthouse Brochures and a Mini-Map for Green Pasture Inn.”– Student I

Sample Text Unit 2

“I will note down the work I will do in the morning, the learning process, and the performance of the staff. Moreover, I will highlight any problems and suggestions so that I can discuss them with my teammates, and we can all solve the problems more effectively.”- Student II

Sample Text Unit 1 was about the student’s application of one particular marketing skill, Photoshop, and was coded into A2 – Operational skills. Sample Text Unit 2 illustrates how the student learned to solve problems effectively, and was coded into D9 –Identify, define, and resolve relevant problems.

Findings

The coding process systematically categorized and sub-categorized the text units. Frequencies were calculated under the categories and sub-categories. The categories included (A) professional competence, (B) critical thinking, (C) effective communication, (D) innovative problem solving, (E) lifelong learning, and (F) ethical leadership. Each category was further analyzed at its sub-categories. Detailed information on categories and sub-categories are listed in Table 4. Under each sub-category, the salient points of the entries were summarized.

According to the above mentioned results, the students’ reflective journals covered all the intended learning outcomes. The students had the highest number of reflections on ethical leadership (169) and professional competence (103) out of 410 entries, followed by innovative problem solving (58). Effective communication, which comprised only one sub-category, had 38 entries. Entries on critical thinking (25) and lifelong learning (17) were also found in the journals.

The table below summarizes the results developed from data analysis by using the NVivo 10 software.

(Table 3 Content Analysis of students’ reflection writing (N = 17)

(Figure 1.Frequencies of categorized learning outcomes)

Ethical Leadership

The ethical leadership category had the most responses, with 169 out of 410 text units. The category described and reflected the perception of the students on how the service learning project helped them grow as ethical leaders. The category was further divided into four sub-categories, as follows: cultural sensitivity (58), teamwork and leadership (54), personal and corporate social responsibility (38), and specialist skills and knowledge in Hotel Management (19). The following is a discussion based on each of the above sub-categories developed and their salient points

1. Cultural sensitivity

The nature of the project required the students to complete their service learning in Cambodia, an under-developed and remote nation from the perspective of Hong Kong students. Many of the participants joined this subject out of curiosity of what it would be like to go to Cambodia. However, the result was much beyond their expectations. Cultural difference is the major source of such perception. The students had to adopt different service strategies to cater to such differences. The different culture also led to profound reflection from the students. This sub-category had 58 text units. Below is a sample statement for such reflection:

“Cambodia is truly a nice country even if the people may not (be) very rich. After 13 days service learning in Cambodia, I have a clearer appreciation of people and culture in Cambodia.” (Housekeeping 1)

2. Teamwork and leadership

The students reflected that they have learned and discussed teamwork on many occasions in school, but they have never practiced teamwork in a real-life work environment. Many students claimed that teamwork was not easy, but they managed to be cooperative and collaborative.

The students emphasized how happy they were when they began working as a team.

“Thankfully, after the three-day site visit, we began to mingle with each other. We started to work as a team and eventually operated as a team” (Project leader)

The students also gained a new understanding of the importance of leadership. The students who acted as leaders reflected on the challenges they faced and their changed attitude toward leadership.

3. Personal and corporate social responsibility

Besides discovering the culture, most students felt a sense of responsibility to help countries like Cambodia, where the people are friendly, but very underprivileged. The experience also made the students reflect on the underprivileged people in Hong Kong, thereby strengthening

the students' determination to help those in need. Below is a typical statement that the students made on responsibility:

“After this service, I do feel the need of caring more about the community.... There are so many people living in miserable situation...” (Marketing 11)

4. Enhanced specialist skills and knowledge in HM

Ten students reflected on their enhanced specialized skills and HM knowledge. Six of the 17 students were majoring in other areas, such as marketing, building and real estate, business, nursing, nursing and design.

As some students mentioned, the project was a real life and cross-cultural project that was very different from conventional classroom lectures. The participants had the precious opportunity to practice what they have learned but never really understood, such as teamwork and leadership. This may have been the reason why the students expressed the most insights on these topics.

Professional Competence

Professional competence had the second highest number of reflections. The category comprised 103 text units, which were further analyzed into the sub-categories of global understanding (32), operational skills (31), management skills (22), and elements of entrepreneurship (18). The following is a discussion based on each of the developed sub-categories and their salient points.

1. A global understanding toward HM

There are 32 text units stating about how the project helped the students gain a better understanding of HM. Regardless of their majors, the students obtained a holistic understanding of the hotel business. This kind of reflection is more profound from students who are majoring in other subjects. For example, one of the student said, “Though this subject, I have an overview of how a hotel run and know some basic knowledge of some departments. The more I do, the more I realize that I still have a lot of things need to learn. I need to keep moving.” (F&B 2). These students also developed their understanding of HM in a developing country, where the standard procedures and expectations were different because of limitations in resources.

2. Operational skills

Student-participants majoring in HM were more reflective on how they treasured the opportunity to practice what they learned in school on hotel operation. A total of 31 text units described the application of operation skills in the hotel business. The skills described were mostly area related, given that the students were divided into four groups. The marketing team reflected on their application of Photoshop skills, video shooting, website creation, online marketing, and so on. The food and beverage team reflected on restaurant service, their adaptation to the environment, and how they helped create a new menu. The housekeeping team reflected on how they assisted the guesthouse staff in improving room standards and quality.

The front office team reflected on how they learned related skills and how they transferred such skills to the guesthouse staff and managers. Below statement is from one of the housekeeping team members:

“We learnt very fast, and soon they felt confident to let us clean the rooms without their supervising or help. They trusted us that we could do as well as them. This was a great recognition for all of us. This experience also enabled me to have deeper understanding with the housekeeping department of the lodging industry, which was very valuable for my future career in the hotel industry.” (Housekeeping 2)

3. Management skills

The students noted their improvement on a wide range of skills, from generic people skills to training skills, such as presentation, communication, time management, and general problem solving. The marketing team, for example, reflected on the challenge of planning: “The most challenging situation that marketing team faced was the Fun Day Proposal for Precious Women. We had to come up with games suitable for them as they all have different history and background. We had to be very careful and considerate about the games we proposed. ..” . In total, this sub-category had 22 text units.

4. Elements of entrepreneurship

Several statements reflected how the students perceived their ability to help the business by contributing their expertise. They were satisfied and felt a sense of success. Their sense of achievement also came from the perception that the better service procedures, menu, websites, and positive comments on Trip Advisor benefitted the guesthouse. For some participants, the opportunity to apply what they have learned in school was already satisfying.

Innovative Problem Solving

1. Identify, define, and resolve relevant problems

This category on how the students identified and solved problems comprised a total of 45 text units. The students were allowed to practice their skills in a real-life situation, and they faced numerous problems and issues daily. Every problem was unique, and their textbooks did not contain exact solutions for every problem. Students had to learn to identify and solve problems by themselves, similar to learning how to swim. The students considered the experience precious because they could never have similar chances to develop their problem solving skills in a conventional classroom. Below quote illustrates how the student identified the language problem and managed to solve it:

“We were so shocked and worried as most the Green Pasture Inn staff do not know much English. After that, we figured out a solution to help with this problem: is to simplify and translate most of the PowerPoint slides into Khmer. If necessary, we will explain it more in

body language to let them understand more about what we taught and immediately go on to Google Translate website for translation when they really did not understand” (FO 1).

2. Innovative and strategic thinking

Some reflections were on the way the students demonstrated innovative problem solving skills (13). One student mentioned imaginative work in proposals, another mentioned new solutions to improve performance. The project even required an innovative menu design. For example, the F & B team reflected: “After deciding that food always comes first and service comes after, we had more jobs on designing menus and assisting the breakfast service in terms of cooking. Hence, starting from the second day, we had different designated menus every day, which meant I had to redesign the menu every day and our team had to prepare preference form every day to facilitate the preparation process. (F&B 3)”

Effective Communication

The students realized the importance of effective communication (38) through the project, as reflected by the following vivid descriptions of communication barriers: how they tried to communicate via alternative channels, how they tried to manage from shift to shift, and how they learned that language was not the only barrier for cross-cultural communication. The students were able to keep a detailed record of their use of willpower and process to conquer challenges. The reflections contained many expressions of joy when the participants finally

learned to communicate effectively with their fellow students and with the people in Cambodia.

The following quote has reflected the students' understanding of the importance of communication from the practical level, and is certainly more profound.

“I learnt that it is very important for different departments in a hotel to communicate and cooperate with each other. This concept only remained in the knowledge level. During this service learning, I realized that F&B need to communicate with front desk to confirm the number of guests who will have breakfast next day. Also, housekeeping and front desk need to cooperate closely to make sure which room is clean and available or dirty and occupied.”

(Group leader)

Critical Thinking

1. Critical thinking

This category contained 15 text units, thereby indicating that students demonstrated critical thinking by evaluating proposals and business plans and adjusting their plans to fit the real situation. Other students critically analyzed the problems they encountered. Below quote shows that the student started to have critical thinking by comparing the proposal and real time operation:

“I realized there were many differences between the proposal and operation. We cannot just put everything we prepared into the real operation. After constantly correction and adjustment, we can do better next day.” (FO 2)

2. Creativity and strategic thinking

Creativity and strategic thinking had 10 text units. Examples include changing proposals and plans to suit real-life situations and implementing new practices such as a Facebook page for the guesthouse. For example, one of the students said, “I improved a lot and trained to be more sensitive to locating the problems and be detail minded in formulating strategies to copy with difficulties.” (F&B 3)

Lifelong learning

The students described how the learning attitude of Cambodians affected them. For example, one student commented: “GPI (Green Pasture Inn) staffs are willing to ask questions so as to know more and wider while students in PolyU are very passive in asking questions. This leads me reflect on my attitude of study and allows me to think what the purpose of study is.” (FO2)

Students felt ashamed for not appreciating the rich learning opportunities and resources available to them in their home country.

The students expressed their determination to learn from the Cambodians and to study harder in the future. This experience also gave the students a more positive outlook toward life and the world.

This category contained 17 text units. Discussion and Conclusions

The present study addressed the important outcomes of service learning, which demonstrated some unique points of service delivery in a commercial setting. Unlike similar subjects, the students applied what they learned in school and practiced their HM and operation training on actual recipients (guesthouse staff).

From the above findings, the benefits that this service learning subject brings to the students are obvious. The four benefits that Cecil (2012) outlined (communication, teamwork, problem solving, and global citizenship) have been echoed by the benefits that are reflected from the students' journals. The chance to apply knowledge in real life working situation is greatly appreciated, which is expected, and this is in line with most literature on work-integrated-learning, experiential learning, and service learning (e.g. Eyler, 2009; Moscardo, and Pearce, 2007; Aldridge, et al, 2011).

Other benefits such as the increased awareness of cultural difference and a motivation for CSR are brought about by the uniqueness of the service learning subject under study. The fact that

the subject, especially the latter half, was delivered in Cambodia, has helped the students to understand much more beyond the subject scope. It brings the students closer to the community, which is one of the starting points of service learning programs (Markey and Holsinger-Fuchs, 2004). The project has helped induce a sense of responsibility for the community, which, according to the students, had never occurred to them.

The above findings also highlighted the enhanced learning experience of the students. Apart from being able to apply knowledge in real life working situation, this has also been realized through 1) cultivating a sense of achievement: the students felt proud of themselves when they saw changes in the F & B practice in the guesthouse, and when they saw how the guesthouse benefited from the innovative moves the students introduced; 2) an integration of learning and teaching: the students need to learn and to teach at the same time, and learning is usually more effective when the students need to teach right after learning; 3) memorable real life situations: all the problems, situations, cultural difference, and changes are real life, and the fact that this happened in another country are memorable for the students.

In addition, this service learning subject is deemed valuable in that it offers learning opportunities that traditional textbooks and classrooms cannot achieve. For skills such as teamwork and leadership, it is easy to discuss in class, based on theories and the teachers' explanation. However, it is only when the students are confronted with real life situations could

they genuinely understanding the issue deeply. It is a good example of expanding the students learning beyond the four walls of the classroom (Markey and Holsinger-Fuchs, 2004).

The above findings were shared among lecturers who led two other service learning subjects under SHTM. When interviewed, the lecturers shared that most of the above findings could be agreed upon, except for one sub-category- cultural sensitivity. Since one of the service learning subjects was carried out in Hong Kong, students from that subject did not have such reflections.

On the other hand, the findings of this study also have helped the researchers identify the shortcomings of such service learning program. For one thing, it is difficult to control or manipulate the students' achievement toward the intended learning outcomes. For example, the last category as it is indicated in Table 4 – lifelong learners has attracted little reflection from the students. For another, every service learning program is unique but also limited in scope, and therefore may only offer limited areas of learning opportunities. Unlike classroom teaching, it is difficult to include every desired aspect of knowledge in the subject. Different from the researchers' expectation, the students' reflection on management skill development in hospitality field was only a moderate amount compared to other sub-categories.

To conclude, the student participants gained an unforgettable learning experience from their exposure to the teammates, the recipients, the community, and the culture. The subject

strengthened the learning abilities of students in delivering services to communities. “Students learn to act and think like managers in hands-on situation” (O’ Halloran & Deale, 2004: 57). Moreover, the students were able to reflect on their learning environment and attitude in Hong Kong. The recipients from Green Pasture Inn were pleased with the students’ service delivery. The 14 day trip not only improved the service standards and food quality of the guesthouse, but also established a long-term partnership between the NGO and our institution.

The implication of this subject is beyond expectations by all stakeholders, students, recipients, instructors and institution. Firstly, The corporation between commercial operation (Green Pasture Inn) and the institution (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University) created a new business collaboration model for NGO to sustain in business operation and also support local staff by providing training skills and knowledge. There are many NGOs in Cambodia operate F&B and tourism related business which may not have all resources and knowledge support to operate. The case of this study can be served as a business model for NGOs by working with institution in order to build up the business and support local employment. Secondly, this collaboration can also be served a real hands on experience for students and instructors. By evaluating the needs of recipient, instructors can guide students to provide a tailor-made service plan to support these NGOs operation. Thirdly, the scale of guesthouse fits well with small class size of service learning subject (Hospitality Management and Operation in Developing Regions). With various backgrounds and departments of students, this subject fully incorporate

each student's skills and knowledge to support GPI training and operation. Still, the nature of the hospitality and tourism field is rather different from one to another. To replicate similar experience, instructor may consider the nature and scale of recipient before considering the group size of subject. In addition, for overseas service learning subject, the site visit and communication with recipient are crucial for instructors before conducting the subject. Service learning is a powerful experiential learning method that addressed the vision of transforming students into global citizens. Given the above, experiential learning needs to be practiced and implemented at university learning philosophy level, school program design, delivery and assessment in order to educate the young people with positive attitude, professional competency and effective communication skills.

Limitations

The first limitation relates to the nature of guesthouse operations. The newly established guesthouse is a small-scale lodging service. Thus, participant service delivery focused on standard operation and training for guesthouses, which were straightforward and uncomplicated.

The issues and challenges of the guesthouse were manageable. Participants might not have had sufficient opportunity to apply their critical thinking skills.

The second limitation relates to the background of the participants. We used the journals of 17 students, consisting of 11 hotel and tourism students and 6 non-hotel and tourism students. Most participants were freshmen who have only received general education, and the participants were in their second year, with limited hotel and tourism experience because of their major. Additionally, differences in background may have resulted in varied service delivery perception. Therefore, student background can be considered a limitation.

The last limitation relates to the nature of the subject, which required hands-on experience and implementing SOPs to guesthouse staff and guests. Unlike in other service learning-oriented subjects, students participated in a non-commercial setting. The students' reflections on their guesthouse experience might be different in a commercial setting.

The above limitations may be considered in conducting future research works on the implication of student learning experiences in commercial and non-commercial settings for service learning subjects. Furthermore, future study may consider to investigate the recipients' perspectives of service in learning subject, and also investigate the implementation of service learning in a commercial setting (for example, Green Pasture Inn). In addition, on site recording for students' daily reflections can also be investigated for the progress of their learning experience. Lastly, collaborative research among institutions, for example for the oversea service learning project, working with local institution for collaborative study.

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Table 1 Summary of benefits of service learning subjects (Cecil, 2012)

<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Teamwork • Problem solving • Global citizenship 	<p>Faculty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active teaching methods • Strengthen academic and real world practice
<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between the institution and the community • A medium through which the community and students can receive first-hand experience of each other 	<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succeed the community's goals and mission, reduce costs for service provided by service learning • Create new networking opportunities

Table 2 Intended program learning outcome

Categories	Sub-categories
A. Professional Competence	A1. Management skills
	A2. Operational skills
	A3. Global understanding
	A4. Elements of entrepreneurship
B. Critical Thinking	B5. Critical thinking
	B7. Creativity and strategic thinking
C. Effective Communication	C6. Effective communication using multiple media and tech
D. Innovative Problem Solving	D8. Innovative and strategic thinking
	D9. Identify, define, and resolve relevant problems
E. Lifelong Learning	E10. Foster a desire for lifelong learning
F. Ethical Leadership	F11. Teamwork and leadership
	F12. Personal and corporate social responsibility
	F13. Cultural sensitivity
	F14. Specialist skills and knowledge in hotel management (HM)

Table 3 Content Analysis of students' reflection writing (N = 17)

Categories	Subcategories	Frequency (%)	Salient points
F.Ethical Leadership (169 / 41.2%)	F13. Cultural sensitivity	58 (14.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understanding of another culture ✓ Awareness of cultural differences ✓ Different service strategies for different cultures
	F11. Teamwork and leadership	54 (13.2%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The importance of teamwork and leadership ✓ Reflections of the frustrations and difficulties of teamwork, and how the students overcome them ✓ The tactics and changed beliefs about leadership ✓ Collaboration and cooperation among the team members ✓ Joy derived from successful teamwork ✓ Different roles and functions in a team
	F12. Personal and corporate social responsibility (CSR)	38 (9.3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Care for the global community ✓ Reflection upon HK ✓ Motivation for further CSR
	F14. Specialist skills and knowledge in HM	19 (4.6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhanced understanding of HM ✓ Enhanced skills in HM ✓ Overall growth in HM
A. Professional Competence (103/ 25.2%)	A3. Global understanding	32 (7.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “Broadening horizon” ✓ Know more about Cambodia ✓ Changed beliefs about Cambodia ✓ Apply knowledge and skills in Cambodia ✓ A global understanding of hotel, tourism, and management (HTM)
	A2. Operational skills	31 (7.6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hotel operating skills: housekeeping practical skills, F&B service skills, front office operating skills, ✓ Photoshop skills and other marketing related technical skills ✓ Hotel IT practical skills, ✓ Apply knowledge on operating a guest house ✓ Learn the standard operating procedures (SOPs) in a guest house and obtain hands-on

			experience
	A1. Management skills	22 (5.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Generic skills, such as people skills, coordinating and collaborating skill, presentation skills, managing and leading skills, communication and problem solving skills, team motivating skills, and time management skills ✓ Training and teaching ✓ Tailor-made marketing activity development G. Developing and evaluating service tactics
	A4. Elements of entrepreneurship	18 (4.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dedicate efforts to make the real life project a success ✓ Novel experience in operating a guesthouse and applying knowledge and skills ✓ New challenges and experiences ✓ Making contributions to the operation of a non-profit guest house ✓ A chance to design, plan, try new activities, and achieve success
D. Innovative Problem Solving (58 / 14.1%)	D9. Identify, define, and resolve relevant problems	45 (10.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Descriptions of the challenges, problems, difficulties that the students across ✓ Description of how the students tried to solve the problems ✓ Adjustments and outcome of the problem-solving process ✓ Reflection on how much the students have learned from the problem-solving process ✓ Vivid examples of the abovementioned topics
	D8. Innovative and strategic thinking	13 (3.2%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Imaginative work in proposals ✓ Tailor-made marketing activities ✓ New solutions for improved performance ✓ Innovative practice to improve efficiency in HM operation ✓ Innovative problem solving
C. Effective communication (38/ 9.3%)	C6. Effective communication using multiple media and tech	38 (9.3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understanding the importance of good communication among different individuals and among different departments ✓ Communication via different channels, such as gestures when using a language does not work ✓ Reflective thinking on poor communication ✓ Enhanced communication skills ✓ Understanding cross-cultural communication
B. Critical Thinking (25/ 6.1%)	B5. Critical thinking	15 (3.7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reflection on the practice and coming up with different plans ✓ Analysis of an identified problem ✓ Better understanding toward HTM upon critical analysis ✓ Critical evaluation of proposals, practice, and outcome
	B7. Creativity and strategic thinking	10 (2.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Changing proposals and plans to suit the real-life situation ✓ Modification of current practice in the guest house for better performance ✓ Creating new practice, such as creating a Facebook page for the guesthouse, and new menu

			ideas for F&B
E. Lifelong Learning (17 / 4.1%)	E10. Foster a desire for lifelong learning	17 (4.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Experience in Cambodia made the students treasure what they have and increased their motivation to learn ✓ Learned from the spirit and attitude of Cambodians ✓ Changed beliefs about life and the world, thereby resulting in the students' determination to learn differently
Total		410	

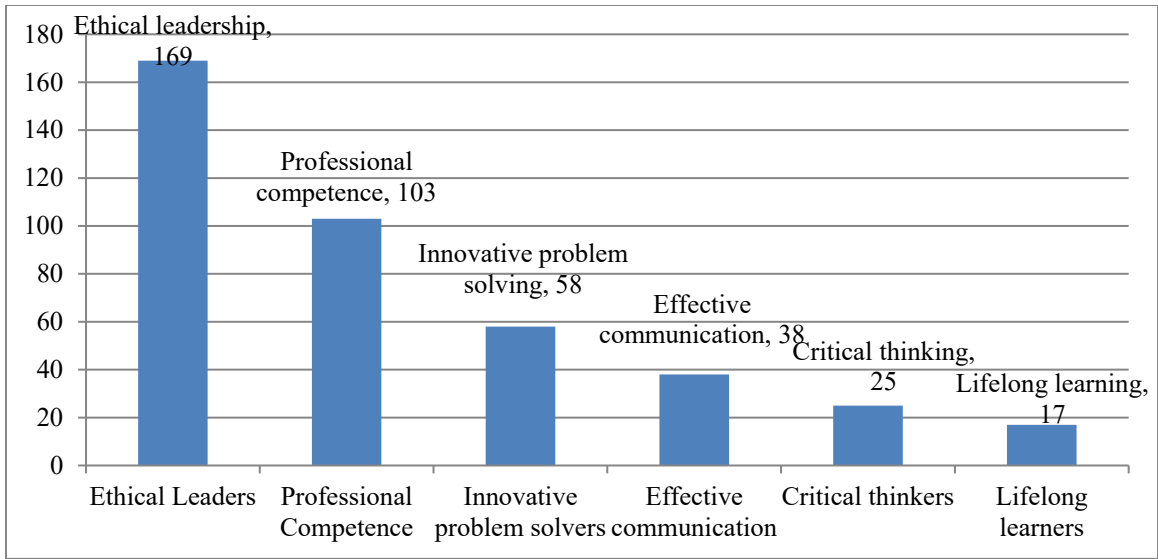


Figure 1. Frequencies of categorized learning outcomes