

## Rethinking Knowledge and Competences in Hospitality Education

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Fierce competition in the tourism industry is influencing the nature and scope of managerial work at all levels, not to mention the volatility and sensitivity of the industry. The hospitality business is becoming more sophisticated and complex in today's robust business environment. Managing in uncertainties requires a new set of competences beyond the traditional management skills and competences. Consequently, the competitive hospitality business environment suggests that managerial demands will be different from the past. Intensified global competition has also increased the pressure on business to respond quicker and develop new and innovative approaches to compete in the business. Hence, today's entry-level managers need a diversity of talents, skills and competences in order to meet the demands of the industry. In this respect, an effective hospitality management education programme must be able to respond to the demands of the constantly changing environment. To aggravate the situation, the rapid development of new hospitality management programmes, not to mention the increased enrolment figures of existing hospitality schools, has led to an increased concern about programme credibility and effectiveness.

Institutes of higher education should be more than places for academic development, and that institutes of higher education should develop not only academic competences but also occupational and personal competences. As such, it is imperative for HEPs to ascertain the expected personal and occupational competences—predictive expectations in Prakash and Lounsbury's term. The issues of knowledge and competences have been dealt with in many educational initiatives. Knowledge (however defined) is one of the essential components to competence. Nevertheless, the literature on educational effectiveness has adopted a range of terms (or a plethora of terms) to describe their ideas on the subject.

Parallel to this, the industry believes that an educational institution must incorporate relevant knowledge and competences of the industry if graduates are to perform effectively in the world of work. It is believed that the prosperity and future of the industry will be thwarted due to an incapable workforce who are not able to handle the uncertainties and turbulent of the business environment. It is crucial for hospitality management graduates to possess relevant managerial knowledge and competences upon their graduation. The relationship between higher educational providers (HEPs) and the environment are highly complex. As such, HEPs need to look beyond the traditional or conventional knowledge domain. The academic dogma that HEPs pursue knowledge for its own sake should be given serious reconsideration. At the same time, in order to reconceptualize curriculum issues managers must 'defamiliarize the familiar'.

With regards to curriculum planning and design, Barnett [1] states that there are two types of knowledge involve in the domains (cognitive) of professional education curriculum: the core knowledge (within a discipline or profession) and contextual knowledge or conceptual skills. This is not something new, decades ago Crombag et al. have identified two types of cognitive skills which are relevant to the discussion of knowledge and competence [2]. The two cognitive skills are 'Operations on knowledge' (remembering facts) and 'Operations with knowledge'. 'Operations on knowledge' refers to the operations that are performed on knowledge which lead to the development of

new knowledge. Hence, it is unequivocally accepted the importance of knowledge as a construct that contributes to competence.

It is clear that hospitality management education must be updated and improved accordingly. As the industry expands, present knowledge and competences of management are rapidly becoming obsolete. It seems that the greatest challenge faced by hospitality educators and managers is that the business is constantly changing. What best yesterday is no longer appreciated today and tomorrow [3].

As mentioned earlier, HEPs must be able to respond to the demands of the constantly changing environment. However, in addressing or evaluating an educational issue, we need to ask the question whose interest and perception are we taking into account—key stakeholders. Lacking a systematic framework for understanding these perceptions and expectations will put HEPs in a very tough situation to navigate the future direction of any educational programs.

Given the diversity of the stakeholders, differences of opinion emerge between them. The initial disagreement between key stakeholders must be considered as strength and opportunity since it informs us of the different options leading to shared commitment and possible alternatives.

### References

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