

# **The Effectiveness of Hospitality Education in Developing Graduate Competencies**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Training and Education, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other learners.

Signed: Angela Harvey

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Dated: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to establish the effectiveness of hospitality education in developing the competencies that graduates need to be successful in industry. With the rise in global tourism, the need for highly skilled and well-trained employees has never been greater. According to the Irish Hospitality Institute (2016) attracting skilled employees continues to be a challenge for many businesses, despite the growth in availability of hospitality management courses over the past twenty years.

This study builds on existing research and brings new insights into the perceptions of both hospitality managers and lecturers on graduate competencies and how pedagogical practice can develop these. There is a need to examine the teaching approaches used in hospitality and their ability to shape practice as academia does not operate in isolation and the labour needs for the industry into the future will be more diverse (Lugosi *et al.*, 2009).

The research objectives for this study follow three strands of enquiry:

- 1) To establish the graduate skills most sought by hospitality employers.
- 2) To ascertain hospitality lecturers' perceptions about these skills for employability in the sector.
- 3) To understand to what extent lecturers adapt their pedagogy to deliver on the desired skills and competencies.

The research methodology undertaken for this study follows an interpretivist/constructivist approach using qualitative research. The data collection methods involve both unstructured and semi-structured interviews which were chosen to gather the necessary information and insights to assist in answering the objectives.

The research reveals that traditional skills such as teamwork and problem-solving are still highly valued in the hospitality industry. Other outcomes encompass more modern day skills to include greater emphasis on the importance of grooming and the lucrative art of upselling. Disclosed also are new insights into teaching strategies where group case studies and the discussion method appear to enhance greater communication and internships help to develop critical thinkers.

Finally, the study makes recommendations for higher institutions to address these findings which include the deployment of those teaching strategies which develop graduate skills and more support for lecturers in their implementation. Areas worthy of further study are highlighted to include more research on smaller class sizes and the contribution technology makes to education.

**Keywords:** Hospitality Education; Teaching Strategies; Competencies; Sandwich's Competency Domain Model; Interpersonal Skills; Leadership Skills.

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## **CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

Institutes of higher education have always been concerned about skills delivery and the challenge of keeping pedagogy current to meet business needs. As the hospitality industry grows in Ireland the need to promote skills valued by the sector increases and has become an important issue. This dissertation consists of five chapters which cover the purpose of the study, the research objectives, the literature review, the research methodology approach, data analysis and presentation and discussion of the findings. Finally, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made for the future, areas for further study are outlined and the contribution this study has made to the existing body of knowledge is highlighted. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the purpose of the research, convey the significance of the study, outline the research objectives and explain the structure of the research.

### **1.2 Research purpose**

This study examines the effectiveness of hospitality management education in developing both interpersonal and leadership graduate skills to satisfy employer needs. A preliminary research of secondary data revealed that while the body of knowledge on teaching and education is comprehensive there is insufficient evidence to aptly understand the teaching methods that can best deliver on skills. This study set out to fill that gap through further research. It examines themes related to graduate competencies and explores their value to the hospitality industry from the perspective of both hoteliers and educators. The study further explores the current hospitality education offering and the extent to which lecturers adapt their pedagogy to develop the desired graduate skills.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This study is important in developing an understanding of perceptions of both hoteliers and educators with regard to essential graduate skills necessary at entry-level in the hospitality sector. This has become a key issue since the industry is on track to create an additional 40,000 new jobs by 2021 (IHI, 2016) and educating people to work in the industry is an important component in meeting these goals. The growth of tourism in Ireland, the recent

Horizon Report (2017), the comprehensive body of literature on education and the publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 Report have all contributed to being the driving forces for this study. The research has contributed significantly to the existing body of knowledge regarding graduate competencies valued by industry today and how effective teaching methods are in developing these.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This study builds on existing research bringing new insights into the perceptions of both hoteliers and educators working in the industry in Ireland today. The research objectives for this study follow three strands of enquiry:

- 1) To establish the graduate skills most sought by hospitality employers.
- 2) To ascertain hospitality lecturers' perceptions about these skills for employability in the sector.
- 3) To understand to what extent lecturers adapt their pedagogy to deliver on the desired skills and competencies.

#### **1.5 Structure of the Study**

The five chapters each contribute to answering the three research objectives. This Chapter explains the purpose of the research, the significance of the study, the research objectives and summarises the structure of the study.

Chapter two discusses the challenges facing the tourism and hospitality sector in Ireland and reviews the literature on graduate competencies valued by employers. It also provides an overview of hospitality education and the competencies it develops for learners. The aim of this chapter is to inform the reader, by way of a literature review, of the subject area and to provide the basis to support further primary research.

Chapter three provides a detailed account of the study's research strategy, design and methodology by describing the process underpinning this dissertation. A justification is also made for adopting an interpretivist/constructivist philosophy using a qualitative approach. It also highlights the research limitations and ethical issues.

In Chapter four the findings of the primary research are presented and discussed. This chapter considers the gaps which arise from the literature review and discusses whether these have been addressed by the primary research. This facilitates an understanding of what contribution the research study has made to existing knowledge and outlines the implications of the findings on the research objectives.

Chapter five draws together and presents the study's main conclusions and recommendations and suggests areas for further research. It also highlights the contribution of the study to the existing body of knowledge on valued graduate competencies and hospitality education.

## **CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will first examine the difficulties facing the Irish hospitality industry particularly in relation to recruitment challenges for competent staff to meet its future needs. Secondly, a definition for professional competencies will be sought. The use of Sandwith's (1993) model will form a foundation from which a review of those staffing competencies needed for success in the hospitality sector will take place. This will be followed by a detailed examination of the existing hospitality education offerings outlining where the management discipline currently sits within academia, and its' ability to deliver the necessary competencies desired by industry.

### **2.2 Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

With the rise in global tourism, the need for highly skilled and well-trained employees has never been greater. Global tourism constitutes 10% of the world's total Gross Domestic Products and accounts for 1 in 11 jobs worldwide and is expected to rise approximately 2% annually to 2030 (WTTC, 2017).

According to the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF), tourism is vital for Ireland's economic well-being and as one of the largest indigenous industries it accounts for €7.5 billion in annual spending and represents 4% GNP (IHF, 2017). Ireland's reputation as a leading tourist destination is evidenced by the many World Travel Awards it has won in recent years namely Guinness Storehouse, 2015; Titanic Belfast, 2016 and Spike Island in Cork, 2017 (grad Ireland, 2017). Ongoing investment in marketing and development of tourism infrastructure and products is critical if Ireland is to maintain its visibility and compete internationally as an attractive destination for holidaymakers and business travellers (IHF, 2017).

The Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI) forecasts the creation of an additional 40,000 jobs by 2021. Educating people to work in this industry is an important component in meeting these goals; however, attracting skilled employees continues to be a challenge for many tourism businesses (IHI, 2016). There is a lack of research as to why this is the case since there has been a huge increase in the number of hospitality management educational programmes developed in Ireland over the past twenty years to meet the growing demand from industry.

This is an important gap to fill as employers in the hospitality industry rely on higher education institutions to produce graduates that not only have a theoretical understanding of their field, but also obtain practical skills and knowledge to enable them to become independent thinkers and to adapt to changing business needs (Spowart, 2011).

### **2.3 Definition of Competencies**

Educators have always looked to industry professionals for advice and feedback regarding the essential competencies that graduates need for professional success (Kay and Russette, 2000). The concept of competencies has been defined by numerous researchers. Tas (1988) suggests that competencies encompass those activities and skills judged essential to perform specific duties and are made up of the knowledge, behaviours and attitudes required to perform a role effectively (Kiely and Brophy, 2002). A more common acceptable definition is that expressed by Nath and Raheja (2001) who state:

Competencies are a combination of observable and applied knowledge, skills and behaviours that create competitive advantage for an organization. They focus on how an employee creates value and what is actually accomplished (p. 26).

These explanations imply that the possession of the relevant competencies enables an individual to perform the required function much better than others who do not possess such knowledge, skills and behaviours.

#### **2.3.1 Competency Domains**

Sandwith's (1993) work provides a model which is widely used in competency assessment. Building on the prior work of Katz's (1955) three-skill approach, Sandwith (1993) introduced a five-field competency domain model for managers which encompassed interpersonal, leadership, concept, technology and administration skills.

The interpersonal domain focuses on the skills for effective interaction with other people. It includes the basic face-to-face communication skills such as problem-solving, written communication, teamwork, handling complaints and customer service (Sandwith, 1993).

The leadership domain refers to the leadership necessary to put ideas into action. According to Sandwith (1993) a successful leader is a role model who exhibits flexibility, a strategic vision and an ability to empower people to build an effective work team.

The conceptual domain refers to the cognitive skills needed to understand the important elements of a job and how one's role in the organisation relates with others. It encompasses skills such as comprehension of the organisation's strategy and responses to change (Sandwith, 1993).

Technology refers to the technical skills needed to carry out a particular task. Essential competences include product knowledge, operational processes, equipment, new technologies and quality assurance (Sandwith, 1993).

The Administration domain refers to the management of personnel and financial issues in an organisation. Skills include knowledge of performance appraisal, training, and budgeting.

Research utilising Sandwith's model has been conducted in the hospitality industry since the 1980s. Numerous studies undertaken with general managers of top hotels have examined the competencies essential for management graduates in the United States (Tas, 1988; Kay and Russette, 2000) and in Britain and Greece (Baum, 1990; Christou and Eaton, 2000). Their investigations reveal that during these two decades the emphasis on essential competencies has altered from more technical/operational matters to interpersonal and leadership ones. Indeed, Kay and Russette (2000) found that while the essential graduate competencies fell under all five of Sandwith's competency domains, it was those competencies within the leadership and interpersonal domains that were rated most highly by the hotel general managers. This reflects the changing industry needs and the more professional stance taken by the industry during this period. Indeed the significant revelation of the importance of these two domains is further endorsed by Ipe (2008) who suggests the modernised workplace setting means the employee skill set has evolved, transforming their role from linear to multi-tasking where soft skills appear to be the foundation for excellent customer service. As a result of this key finding, this research will exclusively focus on those soft skills that fall under both the interpersonal and leaderships domains to form a basis of a framework in this study.

## 2.4 Graduate Competencies desired by Employers

Increasingly companies are looking for graduates with a more practical training and experience and with 'skills that machines can't yet replicate' (McMahon, 2017, p. 6).

Kay and Rusette's (2000) research revealed that hospitality employers place heavy emphasis on interpersonal and leadership skills. In Ireland, this is particularly true where Connolly and McGing (2006) found that hotel managers had a strong preference to hire people with problem-solving and people management skills. Further studies reinforced these attributes where soft skills such as the ability to communicate and teamwork are highly valued in hospitality (Gamble *et al.*, 2010; Spowart, 2011) and particularly in front-line roles, soft skills appear to be the foundation for excellent customer service (Ipe, 2008).

More recent evidence to support the desire for interpersonal and leadership competencies is given by Doyle (2017) who found the hospitality industry requires graduates to demonstrate teamwork, leadership, budgeting, strategic thinking, customer service and a thorough understanding of the business. Comprehensive research on soft skills by Weber *et al.* (2009) also showed evidence of supporting these domains. Their study revealed that the most important competencies were the ability to work effectively with employees and customers, set a positive example, display honesty and commitment and develop creative solutions to problems. Another detailed study carried out with 200 industry professionals by Tsai *et al.* (2007) revealed that communication, service quality and flexibility most influenced career success. However, while communication skills are highly valued by hospitality employers, research has indicated that they have not been paid much heed by universities (Trung and Swierczek, 2009).

To summarise, the changing needs of the hospitality sector have transformed the roles of employees in the industry and soft skills appear to be the foundation for excellent customer service. Indeed, the literature reveals that employers desire graduates with both interpersonal and leadership skills who can decisively anticipate and manage problematic situations (Kay and Rusette, 2000). However, it has already been disclosed that the increasing need to attract such skilled employees continues to be a challenge for many tourism businesses (IHI, 2016). This is the case despite the huge growth of hospitality management educational programmes in the past twenty years to meet the growing staff demands. It appears, therefore, there is a gap in the literature as to how effective the

current hospitality education offerings are in delivering these skills for industry. The purpose of this study is to fill that gap by first establishing those competencies that are currently required in hospitality and then ascertaining the extent to which lecturers understand these and adapt their teaching practices to deliver on these.

## **2.5 Hospitality Education**

Irish Institutes of Technology and universities have a worldwide reputation for hospitality education, attracting students from many countries and offering courses from Higher Certificates to Ordinary and Honours level degrees, Master's and Doctorates in Tourism (gradireland, 2017). At present there are eleven institutions offering between them a total of fourteen bachelor degree programmes in hospitality management, a rise from just three management degree courses available twenty years ago (bachelorsportal, 2017) reflecting the demand from industry as it continues to grow each year (IHI, 2016).

Universities around the world have always been concerned about skills delivery for meeting the needs of industry (Tsai *et al.*, 2007). Consequently, many colleges have spent enormous resources to restructure their pedagogy for the purpose of graduate competency improvement in terms of skills (Trung and Swierczek, 2009). However, this is not as straightforward a task as it may appear. Knowledge, skills, and other attributes of learning are not simply present or absent, there is a continuum that proceeds in an orderly fashion (Dreyfus, 2008; cited in Leach 2008). The novice learner first learns the rules of the discipline, then as an advanced beginner they apply the rules in certain contexts, as they become more engaged and accountable they have reached a competency level, then proficiency follows through learning to read contextual cues reliably and finally mastery develops through the integration of learning into a personal style (Dreyfus, 2008; cited in Leach 2008). It appears, from a pedagogical perspective, the more attention lecturers pay to certain skills, the more confidence graduates have toward these skills (Trung and Swierczek, 2009). In the final analysis, the core value of any hospitality educational programme remains the art and science of service (Cannon, 2008).

As the global tourism industry continues to grow, the emphasis on hospitality education has moved from a strong vocational foundation to a more academic discipline (King and Craig-Smith, 2005). However, Professor John Tribe (2011; cited in Goh 2013) highlights the mediocrity in hospitality education and he emphasises 'the need to examine new



approaches to teaching to respond to the evolving education arena' (p. 56). Indeed Lee *et al.* (2008) argue that, despite the growing importance and need for increased professionalism in hospitality, research is still limited on the effectiveness of management education to deliver the relevant skills.

Ivory *et al.* (2008) criticise today's university business degrees as being unsuited to the demands of modern-day management as graduates are weak in critical thinking preventing them from challenging received assumptions and beliefs. Kuhn (1996; cited in Lugosi *et al.* 2009) suggests a model for the charting of hospitality education development where academics can actively engage students in reflection giving them the facility to question the prevalent beliefs of the time. Morrison and O'Gorman (2008) emphasise this as being essential for progress as critical reflection contributes 'valuable texture and structure to a maturing academic subject' (p. 2015). It is not new that academics have questioned the theorisation of hospitality (Nailon, 1982) however, there is a need to critique the approaches used to teach it and their ability to shape practice as hospitality academia does not operate in isolation and the labour pool for the industry is arguably more diverse than before (Lugosi *et al.*, 2009).

### **2.5.1 Teaching and Learning**

Much has been written in the literature about the dualism of teaching and learning orientations: teacher-centred versus student-centred approaches (Harden and Crosby, 2000; Kember 1997). A teacher-centred orientation focuses on the teacher as transmitter of knowledge. With the student-centred approach the teacher acts as a facilitator in guiding the students' learning with an emphasis on the concept of the student 'doing' through active learning (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005). This concept of active learning is important because, while there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of teaching methods used in hospitality education, research carried out by Kulisha (2009) on future hospitality specialists revealed that the use of 'active teaching methods' were found to be 'significant by lecturers (96%) and by students (95%) during the teaching and learning process' (p. 78).

It is important then to consider what these active teaching methods incorporate. Studies have revealed that active teaching techniques are characterised by the application of theory

to real-life situations promoting a higher level of student involvement in activities such as case studies and discussion (Anderson, 1997; Granitz, 2001).

What is known is that active learning is useful in raising students' awareness, knowledge and understanding of the international business environment (Paul and Mukhuopadhyay, 2004) and it helps students to develop critical thinking, analytical and problem-solving skills (Benbunan-Fich *et al.*, 2001; Granitz, 2001) desirable in a hospitality business. However, what is not known is whether these skills are considered sufficient by employers to meet the needs of managing a luxury hotel business today or to what extent hospitality lecturers are aware of the relevance of these active teaching techniques in delivering on these interpersonal and leadership competencies. This is important because educators need to pay attention to the pedagogical implications since these will determine the success of students in their studies and their future occupations (Juhary, 2005).

A recent study undertaken by Zaitseva *et al.* (2016) revealed a number of problems in the system of hospitality education such as weak practices and an 'incomplete compliance of the professional competencies of graduates with the requirements of the labour market' (p. 9164). Indeed, as Tapscott (2009) argues higher education institutions face a challenging period in respect to how they deliver the skills for their millennial graduates to enter a rapidly changing workforce. What is important, however, is that a competency-based education is provided as this is a key asset for students in today's 'globalized workplace that challenges university graduates' employability' (Gablis-Cordova *et al.*, 2017, p. 132).

To provide such a competency-based education requires knowledge about the optimum teaching methods to develop the desired skills. Therefore, the next step is to review the literature on current strategies used in hospitality education and outline what has been revealed about the competencies they develop. It commences with an overview of those teaching methods which are common in hospitality education namely case studies; discussion method; internships; the traditional lecture and technology enabled learning.

## **2.6 Teaching and Learning Strategies**

### **2.6.1 Case studies**

Trung and Swierczek (2009) suggest that the case method of instruction is an effective approach in developing students' employability skills by allowing them to practice decision-

making without fear of failure. Hammond (2002) concurs with this and also argues that one of the greatest benefits of the case study approach is helping students develop skills associated with learning to ask the right questions. Case studies help students to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real business situations (Lamb and Baker, 1993) and they provide a learning activity that mirrors the decision-making process needed in the workplace (Jonassen, 2004).

Case studies assist in achieving practical tasks (O'Neil and McMahon, 2005) and therefore the students are empowered with those 'hands on' skills desired by hospitality employers (Connolly and McGing, 2006, p.56). They provide the facility to move teaching beyond the use of just illustrative examples to a deeper level of engagement and this motivates students to think about theory from an analytical perspective (Brooke, 2006).

The use of extended case studies helps students to develop applied skills where Walker (2009) states:

Students learn through their extended case experience that knowledge is understood and applied within the context of problems and issues that are continually developing in the world around them (p. 220).

Walker's approach of using extended case studies is interesting particularly for final year students who are preparing to deal with real-life work situations. However, regardless of how relevant the case may be, the students would still need to be motivated to participate (Fletcher, 2005) and this can present a challenge to educators.

So we know that case studies are effective in providing students with those leadership competencies such as decision making and problem-solving. What is not known is how well they can deliver on the interpersonal skills such as teamwork and communications.

## **2.6.2 Discussion Method/Group Work**

Discussion-based teaching has long been recognised as a way to promote engagement in the classroom since this method is centred on the exchange of ideas (Henning et al., 2008). Using this strategy requires the teacher to play several roles as leader, guide, initiator, referee and summariser and in so doing they emphasise the process of 'coming to know' as

being as valuable as ‘knowing the right answer’ (Omatyseye, 2007, p. 88). This strategy enables students to think critically and learn to evaluate ideas and challenge concepts on the basis of a clear set of parameters (Garside, 1996).

Discussions promote genuine intellectual learning that builds important individual skills and strengthens the sense of community in the classroom (Keene, 2014). This ability to collaborate among students promotes effective communication skills which according to Adler (1988) not only helps students learn in the classroom, but also resonates throughout life and in every area of human endeavour. Group discussions help also to generate teamwork (McInnis, 2003) and significantly contribute to the development of interpersonal skills, cross-cultural collaboration and higher-level learning (Sweeney *et al.*, 2008).

Many teachers find discussion in class difficult in practice and rarely are teachers ‘given explicit instruction on how to conduct a discussion’ (Henning *et al.*, 2008, p.123). Indeed, as Gall *et al.* (2007) found the discussion method is often more work than a lecture because it requires a strategy for dealing with the unexpected as well as the expected. Cross (2002) sums this up where she states:

Too many well-meaning teachers embark on in-class discussions with the overly simplistic objective of getting students to participate but participation alone is an insufficient condition for learning (p. 5).

While the discussion method is helpful in engaging students and in developing collaborative thinking and communication in the classroom, it also enables students to think critically and challenge concepts. In so doing, this method promotes those interpersonal and leadership skills valued by employers. However, little is known about its practice in hospitality education and whether or not lecturers are supported in using this method to develop graduate skills.

### **2.6.3 Internships**

Many universities have incorporated internships into their programmes in order to fulfil their missions of providing work ready graduates for industry (Milne and Caldicotti, 2016). Internships are designed to integrate theoretical learning with practical experience and to give employers the opportunity to assess student performance on-the-job (Baltescu, 2016;

Kosli and Ilban, 2013). In this way, internships provide 'a form of experiential learning where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

According to McNamara (2013) employers are deemed to be the best judges of professional competence as the alternative of student self-ratings and academic assessments are less appropriate in this regard. Indeed, Ferns and Moore (2012) support this view and state, 'the key to the success of recognising the effectiveness and value of the internship is dependent upon the experience and approach of the person providing the feedback' (p. 215). However, from the teacher's perspective this can result in inconsistent experiences for students working in different companies.

While consistency may be difficult to control, there is an abundant amount of existing studies which have concluded that internships play an important role in developing those transferable skills much desired by employers such as communications, customer relations, teamwork and problem-solving (Collins, 2002; Beggs *et al.*, 2008; Busby, 2003; Mistilis and Harris, 2009).

Effective internships will teach students to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings increasing their employment opportunities (Roy and Sykes, 2017). However, the literature has revealed a lack of models that can be applied to an internship that is conducted on the ground yet supervised at a distance. Consequently, consistency in learning remains a challenge with this method and the internship experience is uneven for both the learner and the employer. There is little evidence in the literature to understand to what extent universities modify the internship programme to incorporate more consistency into the process and to what extent lecturers are involved in this.

#### **2.6.4 Traditional Lecture**

The traditional lecture form has been the most frequently used teaching method reported by hospitality lecturers (Deale *et al.*, 2013). The level of students' maturity in higher education may be one of the reasons for the popularity of using this method (Omatseye, 2007). As Dalsgaard and Godsk (2007) remark:

A traditional university course can be characterised as curriculum focused using lecture based teaching and a non-

interactive approach that represents a concept of 'knowledge as content' provided by the teacher (p. 31).

Erdemir (2011) supports a similar view:

The traditional lecture, generally incorporating PowerPoint slides, has been a popular method of instruction preferred by higher institutions because it is a more convenient, low cost and efficient method to offer the most information in a short time (p.177).

However, Kelly (2012) questions the effectiveness of the traditional lecture form given that lecture notes are commonly uploaded onto a college's virtual learning environment. Even so, professional educators such as Race (2014) have long promoted the belief that students want human contact with lecturers during their university experience. To suggest, therefore, that the traditional lecture is dead is too presumptuous as many lecturers have taken to using a variety of interactive and multimedia tools to liven up the traditional lecture session, which include discussion and quizzes, with the intention of students becoming more active participants in their own learning (Mollenberg and Aldrige, 2010).

This shift in power from the expert teacher to the student learner has been driven by a need for a change in the traditional educational atmosphere as students have become 'passive, apathetic and bored' (Rogers, 1983, p. 25) and demonstrates the drive on behalf of most lecturers to have what Prensky (2010) argues is the desire and ability to go beyond 'I'm teaching this because it's in the curriculum', to 'here's how this relates to each of your worlds in a real way' (p. 73).

Despite the emphasis on passive learning in traditional lectures, Goh (2011) argues they are necessary because they serve as a foundation for providing background information, basic concepts and theories required by students before they embark on their independent learning journey and become effective participants in discussions.

Overall, the literature reveals very little about the competencies developed by the traditional lecture form. Given the popularity of the use of this method in hospitality education this is a key gap which needs to be filled in this study.

### **2.6.5 Technology Enabled Learning**

Bhakare (2014) argues that today's young learners are extremely dependent on technological gadgets and consequently business lecturers must understand this and include technology effectively in the teaching and learning process. This is commonly referred to as technology enabled learning (TEL) which Walker *et al.* (2012) define as 'any online facility or system that directly supports learning and teaching' (p. 2).

The influence of technology has increased throughout higher education and the Horizon Report (2017) contends that TEL may be beneficial in assisting higher education policymakers balance the student-centred approach with subtle but effective facilitation.

Gamification, which incorporates a number of tools including quizzes and discussion forums such as Kahoot and Padlet, is now popular. Gamification is useful in keeping students motivated and engaged in the learning process (Hanus and Fox, 2015) and research has shown that it improves those competencies valued by employers such as decision-making and critical thinking (Gablis-Cordova *et al.*, 2017). However, despite its increased adoption, there is still much to be learned about its effective educational contribution (Kirkwood and Price, 2014).

Even leaving aside the contribution that technology can give to teaching, the invasion of technology in daily hotel operations has led to a modernising work place (Ipe, 2008) and this fact must be addressed by educators.

## **2.7 Summary**

While interpersonal skills such as customer service, teamwork and communications and leadership attributes such as decision-making and problem-solving appear in the research (Connolly and McGing, 2006; Gamble, 2010; Spowart, 2011; Doyle, 2017) there is an insufficient understanding of whether the various teaching strategies used in hospitality help to develop these skills and competencies. What is known is that in recent years, pedagogical practices have been influenced by the need for a more student-centred approach with a focus on active learning rather than the mere presentation of knowledge (Harden and Crosby, 2000; O'Neill and McMahon, 2005).

The information gathered in this chapter is the result of a detailed examination of the current data available on hospitality education and the needs of industry. While the body of

knowledge on hospitality education is comprehensive, there is insufficient evidence with regard to understanding how effective current teaching methods are in developing the learners' interpersonal and leadership competencies so valued by industry. Filling this gap will make an important contribution to the area of hospitality education as according to Tsai *et al.* (2007) educators must continually identify and investigate the essential competencies that are recognised by industry professionals.



## **CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter on research methodology describes the research philosophy and how it has influenced the selected approach to the research. The chapter outlines the research strategy and design as well as the methods used to collect the data as a result of the gaps identified in the literature review. A description of the techniques used to analyse the primary data which will assist in addressing the research objectives is also included followed by the ethical considerations of the research and limitations of the study.

The main focus of this study is to ascertain the graduate competencies most desired by hospitality employers and assess the extent to which hospitality lecturers are aware of these competencies and adapt their pedagogy to develop these. To do this, three in-depth interviews were carried out with industry employers and three semi-structured interviews with hospitality lecturers. These were used to generate the primary data for this phenomenological study based on an interpretivist/constructivist philosophy.

### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

There are two main research paradigms which are positivism/postpositivism and phenomenological/interpretivist and these are commonly referred to respectively as quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Collis and Hussey (2014) argue that positivists/postpositivists try to maintain an objective stance since they suggest that only phenomena which are observable and measurable can be regarded as valid knowledge. On the other hand, phenomenologists/interpretivists attempt to minimise the distance between the researcher and that which is being researched. The extreme difference between the two approaches is captured by Smith (1983) who argues ‘in quantitative research facts act to constrain our beliefs; while in interpretive research beliefs determine what should count as facts’ (p. 10).

Hammersley (2012) refers to phenomenology as ‘the appearance of things in experience’ (p. 9) and in an educational research context this means an examination of how people perceive or experience themselves and their world around them. Conversely, he describes

positivism as a scientific method with the aim of reorganising society in a more rational manner.

While the paradigms are two extremes Collis and Hussey (2014) argue that few researchers would operate within their pure forms. They explain:

The interpretive/phenomenological paradigm is concerned with understanding human behaviour and its' qualitative approach stresses the subjective aspects of human activity by focusing on the meaning rather than the measurement of social phenomena (p. 48).

With interpretivism knowledge is developed and theory is built through developing ideas from observed and interpreted social constructions (Rubin and Babbie, 2010).

For this study the use of a phenomenological approach appeared to be the most suitable in terms of meeting the objectives of the research. To fully understand the competencies desired by industry requires an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of top managers and as Phothongsunan (2010) argues interpretivists seek to investigate how humans perceive and make sense of this world and use small numbers of participants in their research. Similarly, such an approach will assist in understanding the lecturers' perceptions of the necessary skills as interpretivism is labelled by Hammersly (2012) as the task to understand how people see, think and feel about the world. So, interpretivists attempt to understand subjective realities and to offer explanations, which are meaningful for the participants in the research.

### **3.3 Research Strategy and Approach**

There are three strands of inquiry in this research:

- 1) To establish the graduate skills most sought by hospitality employers.
- 2) To ascertain the hospitality lecturers' perceptions about these skills for employability in the sector.
- 3) To understand to what extent lecturers adapt their pedagogy to deliver on the desired skills and competencies.

Following a detailed examination of the different research methodologies available and taking into account the small size of the participants and the exploratory nature of the inquiry, it was considered that the use of an interpretivist/constructivist philosophy using a qualitative approach would provide the optimum fit for this study. Such an approach enables the use of methods that will allow for discovery and do justice to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations (Atieno, 2009).

Interpretivism is clearly outlined by Mason (2002), he states:

Interpretivism is closely associated with the qualitative method where data is collected in order to develop explanations, arguments and generalisations based on people's knowledge, views, understanding and experiences of the social reality being explored (p. 7).

Constructivism attempts to understand the root of social phenomena, its exploration is unique and its findings cannot be used to make generalisations (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). As Durbarry (2018) puts it 'a constructivist researcher will consider the feelings and discourse of the subjects to understand and explain the world from the subjects' own perspective' (p. 18).

The interpretivist paradigm was chosen due to its suitability to analyse the way in which lecturers perceive their role in developing employability and the extent to which they adapt their pedagogy to enhance their ability to deliver on the skills desired by industry. The constructivist approach was chosen for the industry research as it recognises that knowledge is socially constructed and many studies have revealed that an interview conversation is mutually constructed between the researcher and the respondent and promotes discussion (Silverman 2006; Miller and Glassner, 2004).

Further justification for the approach is derived from Light and Cox (2001) who explain:

A qualitative inquiry gives a deeper impression of the experience within an educational setting than a quantitative one and it enables the researcher to appreciate the more complex human relationship context and to understand the

unintended outcomes in addition to the achievement of specific objectives (p. 197).

Kozleski (2017) supports the view that qualitative research is commonly used to shape and advance important questions of educational practice and policy. Brantlinger *et al.* (2005) suggest qualitative research produces information about perspectives and involves data collection tools such as unstructured and semi-structured interviews.

However, while the evidence is there to indicate that qualitative research is the best fit for this study, there are still some criticisms about the efficacy of the approach (Daniel, 2016). The main disadvantage is that the collection of qualitative data is generally more time consuming than quantitative data collection and therefore smaller sample sizes are used. This means that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative data analysis can (Atieno, 2009) and consequently, it is less easy to generalise (De Vaus, 2014). Since the qualitative approach is characterised by feelings and personal reports, Atkins and Wallac (2012) believe it 'cannot give reliable and consistent data when compared to using quantifiable figures' (p. 18-23). However, on consideration the benefits of using a qualitative approach for this study outweigh the disbenefits.

### **3.4 Research Design and Methods**

As already discussed the research methodology undertaken for this study follows an interpretivist/constructivist approach using qualitative data to explore both industry and academics' conceptions of graduate attributes in the context of hospitality education. Therefore, the qualitative data collection methods were chosen in order to gather the necessary information and insights to assist in answering the three strands of enquiry as outlined above.

The research strategy allowed for the dual collection of data through the use of unstructured interviews with industry partners and semi-structured interviews with lecturers. With unstructured interviews there is no specific set of predetermined questions, although the interviewer usually has certain topics in mind that they wish to cover during the interview (Fontana and Frey, 2005; cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this case, the topics were provided by both the literature review and Sandwith's (1993) competency

model. However, as the industry progresses and attempts to meet the changing needs of its customers, it was important to more fully understand those competencies that are considered vital for the industry today from the perspective of management. Therefore, the purpose of using unstructured interviews with industry enabled the researcher to probe and uncover a deeper and more significant insight into the competencies that hospitality employers most desire from college graduates to meet current and future needs.

On the other hand the use of semi-structured interviews with the hospitality lecturers allowed the researcher to prepare questions in advance. These were developed using the broad themes from Sandwith's (1993) competency model in addition to those topics which emerged from the hotel industry research. The questions acted as a guide for the lecturers to respond 'without closing down avenues of explanation that might arise in the dialogue' (Durberry, 2018, p. 87). This interview approach facilitated control and enabled the exploration of particular themes related to the topic and it provided a platform from which to build reliable, comparable, qualitative data and information.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

The use of a qualitative approach applied through the data collection method of face-to-face unstructured and semi-structured interviews made it possible for the interview questions to be modified during the course of each interview (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). This encouraged discussion in order to best understand, on the one hand, the needs of industry and, on the other hand, the lecturers' interpretation of what is important. Mann (2016) suggests this method provides flexibility and a deeper interaction in an interview setting. The primary data collection research instruments used for this study are described below:

#### **3.5.1 Unstructured Interviews**

The unstructured interviews took place over a two week period in December 2017. The interviews were conducted with three five-star hotel human resource managers to ascertain the graduate competencies desired by employers. The human resource managers were selected as they are increasingly called upon to create competitive advantage for their organisations through effective people management (Meisinger, 2008). Choosing interview participants from only the luxury hotel sector was deliberate as it was felt that those

competencies required of graduates in this sector would be more than sufficient for those working in the mid-range or budget category.

The human resource managers were contacted via email inviting them to participate in the study. In advance of the interviews, a participant information sheet about the study (see Appendix 1) and a consent form (see Appendix 2) were sent to the participants to assist them in preparing for the interview. By doing this, the managers were assured that all feedback given during the interview would be anonymous and that they would not be identified by name in the study but instead as Hotel A or Hotel B and so on. The interviews were recorded using the researcher's mobile phone which is password protected using touch ID thereby guaranteeing data confidentiality. The participants were assured that all recordings used for the purpose of this study will be deleted following the examination board meeting or after two years whichever is the sooner.

The interviews lasted on average fifty minutes and the use of the smartphone to record them provided minimal inconvenience and enabled the researcher to focus entirely on the interview process without the distraction of having to take notes and it ensured the discussion was captured accurately. The recordings were then transcribed and manually coded. Coding is the process of organising and sorting the transcribed text data into categories from which themes can be uncovered for analysis (Durberry, 2018). Using this method involves attaching codes to 'chunks' of varying size (see Appendix 3) whether it be words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The broad themes which arose from the literature review in addition to Sandwith's (1993) competency model were used to guide the conversation and to ensure the participants did not stray away from topic (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). As such, the interviews were loosely guided around three interview questions (see Appendix 4).

Malhotra and Birks (2003) argue that an unstructured interview is direct and personal where a single respondent is probed by an experienced interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a topic. The decision to carry out face-to-face interviews with the managers was based on the fact that email or postal enquiries lack observational data (Chisnall, 2001) and as Carson *et al.* (2001) state:

The overall strength of in-depth interviewing is its ability to gather rich and meaningful data, the analysis of which will lead to a significant depth of understanding that would be difficult to achieve by using any other method alone (p. 91).

With unstructured interviews there needs to be freedom to create questions and to probe relevant responses to try to develop the best set of data (Tull and Hawkins, 1993). This kind of interviewing is open in nature providing for a greater amount of 'flexibility and freedom' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002, p. 35) and enables the interviewer 'to follow up interesting developments and to let the interviewee elaborate on various issues (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136).

### **3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews**

With the agreement of three hospitality lecturers semi-structured interviews took place over a two-week period in February 2018. These were undertaken to assess the lecturers' understanding of graduate competencies desired by industry and to what extent they adapt their pedagogy to develop these competencies. The lecturers were contacted via email inviting them to participate in the research with both the information sheet and consent form attached. They were advised that all feedback given during the interview will be anonymous and that they will not be identified by name in the study but instead as Lecturer 1 or Lecturer 2 and so on. The interviews were recorded using the researcher's mobile phone guaranteeing data confidentiality. The lecturers were assured that all recordings used for the purpose of this study will be deleted following the examination board meeting or after two years whichever is the sooner. The duration of each interview lasted approximately fifty minutes after which they were transcribed and manually coded where the data information was segmented into categories for analysis (see Appendix 5).

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009) semi-structured interviews use themes instead of questions and so they strike a balance between an unstructured and structured approach. On the one hand it involves a broad investigation (unstructured) and then follows with a very structured explanatory/descriptive approach (Altinay and Paraskevas, 2008). In preparation for the semi-structured interviews three areas were taken into consideration; first, the themes which emanated from the hotel interviews; secondly, the competencies provided by Sandwith's model and other secondary sources and finally, the teaching

methods from the literature review. The information from these three strands were extracted and administered to guide the interview conversations (see Appendix 6).

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Qualitative interviews tend to generate large amounts of data (Neuman, 2007) and in this case the amount gathered was prohibitively vast for a Master's thesis. Each interview took approximately four hours to transcribe and on average fifteen pages of transcript. Using all of the themes during both the hotel and lecturer interviews resulted in the collection of a large amount of valuable data. To analyse the entire amount gathered would involve going beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, an informed decision was made to concentrate only on two of Sandwith's five competencies. The interpersonal and leadership themes were chosen since these had been rated highly by hotel managers in previous studies (Kay and Russette, 2000; Tas, 1998).

Consequently, the coding process involved using two pre-determined codes for the themes which were further segmented into categories for data analysis. This ensures the reliability in the approach as 'coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks of related information before bringing meaning to the data' (Rossman and Rallis, 1998; cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 187). Coding involves a two-step approach of segmenting the text into categories and then classifying and ordering these categories with a term (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The coding process is then used to generate a description of the categories into themes for analysis. The themes are those that appear as major findings in the research.

The last and crucial stage in the analysis process involves interpretation of the data and Creswell (2009) suggests this should be reflexive where the effect of the researcher on the process and their personal opinions are also considered. This is important as it affects not only the quality of the interview, but the validity and reliability of the whole research.

### **3.7 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability is the extent to which a data collection method and analysis will yield the same result for multiple participants in the research process (Thyer, 2010). The reliability of a qualitative study can be more challenging to achieve because it is subjective in nature



where ‘meanings rather than frequencies assume paramount significance’ (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p.5).

The challenge lies in deciding what to count as a unit of analysis and this requires judgement and choice and so researcher bias needs to be minimised. At the same time, Nour El Imane (2013) argues that such variance should not be seen in terms of ‘deviance hindering reliability but as a reality to be dealt with’ (p. 4).

Validity in qualitative research is concerned with extracting the truth from study findings (Thyer, 2010) and as Hammersly (2012) argues it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide a chain of evidence and set of narrative accounts that are plausible and credible.

To maximise both the reliability and validity of this study, the researcher adopted three strategies suggested by Johnson (1997) which are:

1. Reflexivity – Throughout the study the researcher has understood the importance of self-awareness and has embraced critical reflection on potential biases and predispositions when interpreting the data.
2. Peer review – This involved getting a ‘disinterested’ peer to be sceptical and play ‘devil’s advocate’ challenging the researcher to provide solid evidence for any interpretations or conclusions.
3. Low inference descriptors – The use of descriptions phrased very close to the interviewees’ accounts and use of direct quotations

In doing the above, the onus on this researcher has been to make their relationship to the material clear and ‘to ground analysis in participants’ own accounts’ (Madill *et al.*, 2000 p. 17)

### **3.8 Limitations of the Study**

There are a number of limitations relating to the research undertaken for this study which may in turn influence the accuracy of the findings taken from the primary research. Time scarcity was a key impediment. The whole area of hospitality education, still in its infancy as an academic field (Tribe, 2011; cited in Goh 2013) is so vast and complex that it was impossible within the timeframe to research all aspects of the topics necessary to

understand in detail the impact education has on preparing graduates for employability in the industry. Given the large amount of data received from the interviews and the decision taken to concentrate on analysing fewer themes than were researched, the subject is worthy of further study to incorporate these additional categories. However, even with the time constraints, the objectives of this research were achieved.

### **3.9 Ethical issues**

All research should be carried out using a strong ethical framework, firstly to provide a protective function for the researcher and the researched and secondly, to support the professional conduct of research endeavours (Cousin, 2009). Therefore, the ethical considerations formed an ongoing part of this research at each stage of the process (Miller and Bell, 2002).

First, it was important to get permission from the Research Ethics Board at Griffith College to undertake the study. To achieve this information about the research aims, nature and procedures was submitted in order to get approval and acceptance (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

Secondly, it was necessary to get fully informed consent from the participating industry managers and hospitality lecturers and this was achieved through the use of a consent form (see Appendix 2). In advance of completing the consent form they were issued with an information sheet (see Appendix 1) which provided detailed facts about 'the nature and the purpose of the research, the risks, and benefits' (Anderson and Arsenault, 2005, p.18).

Thirdly, it was crucial to give a guarantee to all of the participants that their contributions would be handled with the utmost confidentiality, anonymity and their privacy protected at all times (see Appendix 1).

Carrying out these steps involved integrity in the research, showing respect for participants, guaranteeing all data gathered would be confidential and ensuring that consent was sought from and received from all participants (De Wet, 2010).

Finally, due to the fact that the researcher is interviewing past and current colleagues from both industry and academia, it was necessary to minimise interviewer bias and ensure the researcher's subjectivity had the least amount of influence on the research process.

Therefore, the researcher has been very conscious of taking into consideration adequate interpretation and representation of data when analysing the findings and presenting the dominant insights emanating from the study.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has described and critically analysed the research methodology employed for this study. All of the steps in the research process have been presented including the research philosophy, the research strategy and approach, the design and collection methods and data analysis. A detailed account of the suitability of selecting an interpretivist/constructivist approach has been given based on the work of various academic researchers. The chapter also addressed the limitations of the study, the importance of reliability and validity and the ethical issues.

## **CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings generated from the primary data which were collected and analysed according to the research design outlined in the previous chapter. It discusses the extent to which the themes that emerged are supported by the arguments developed in the literature review. It also considers those gaps that arose from the literature review and discusses whether these have been addressed by the primary research. This facilitates an understanding of what contribution this research study has made to the body of work already available on graduate skills and hospitality education. To do this, the findings and subsequent discussion are presented simultaneously to provide a comprehensive and fluid discussion of the data and to outline the implications of the findings on the research objectives.

Only those findings which support and help to achieve the research objectives will be given as advised by Kinnear and Taylor (1991). Therefore, the findings will be presented and analysed and the subsequent discussion and implications will be linked back to the three objectives which are:

- 1) To establish the graduate skills most sought by hospitality employers.
- 2) To ascertain the hospitality lecturers' perceptions about these skills for employability in the sector.
- 3) To understand to what extent lecturers adapt their pedagogy to deliver on the desired skills and competencies.

To achieve this, the chapter is divided into four parts. First it will commence with a profile of the hotel respondents. Since a large body of work undertaken in the primary research emanates from the hotel interviews, it is important to take into consideration the specific characteristics of the respondents as their opinions are being observed in the findings. Secondly, those findings which arose from the hotel interviews are presented and discussed to address the first objective of establishing the graduate skills valued by hospitality employers. This will be followed by a profile of the lecturer respondents as their characteristics will have a bearing on the findings. Finally, those findings which emerge from

the lecturer interviews are then presented and discussed. These will address the needs of objective two, to ascertain lecturers' perceptions on skills, and objective three, to understand the extent to which they adapt their pedagogy to deliver these skills.

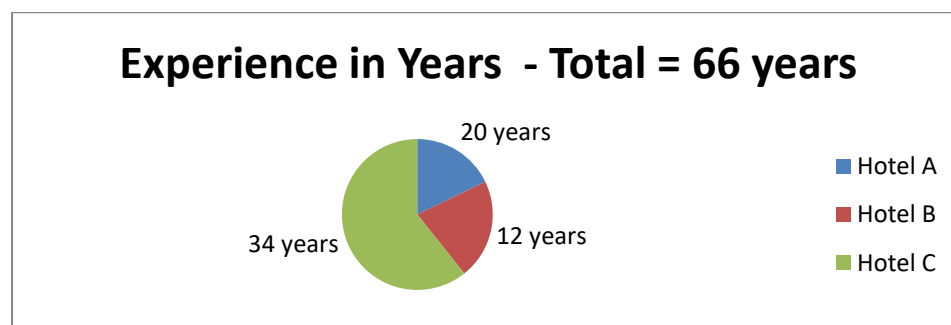
## 4.2 Profile of the Human Resource Managers

Each manager completed a questionnaire which included seven background questions to ascertain their profile (See Appendix 7).

### 4.2.1 Experience in the Hotel Industry

All of the hotel managers have considerable experience working in the industry with a total of 66 years between them. They are aptly positioned to understand the optimum staff competencies required to work in a hospitality business.

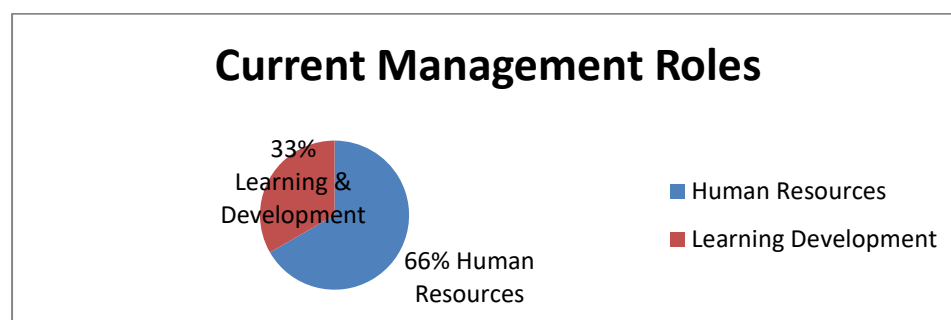
Figure 4.1



### 4.2.2 Job Title

The current roles held by the managers indicate that they are all involved directly in people management with authority to recruit and select graduates to work in their hotels in a number of entry-level management positions.

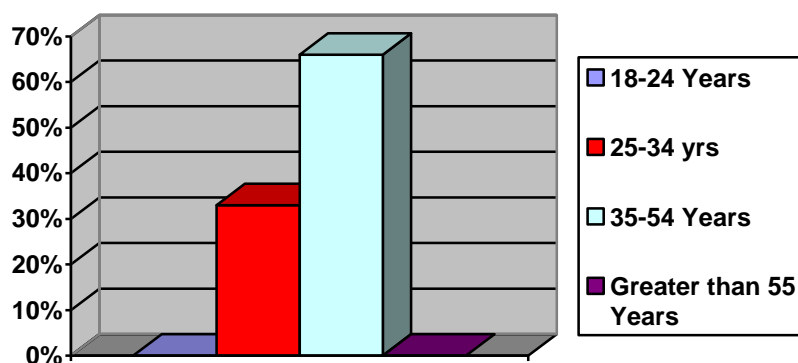
Figure 4.2



### 4.2.3 Age Profile

The hotel managers range in age from between 25 to 54 years reflecting their vast experience working in the industry. The wide gap in their age range means that the opinions of both younger and more senior managers are being taken in account when looking at the competencies required by industry.

**Figure 4.3**



### 4.2.4 Qualification in Hospitality or Management

**Table 4.1**

Hotel A	Yes
Hotel B	Yes
Hotel C	No

This finding indicates a growing professionalism in the hospitality career path but was also important to assess in order to ensure no bias towards graduates could be a barrier to discussing the skills they need for industry.

#### 4.2.5 Membership of a Hospitality Management Association

**Table 4.2**

Association	Hotel A	Hotel B	Hotel C
Irish Hospitality Institute	X		X
Irish Hotels Federation	X	X	X
Hotel Sales and Marketing Association			X
Society of Incentive Travel Executives		X	
Incoming Tour Operators Association	X		

There are a number of associations that support and give assistance to the hospitality industry in Ireland and abroad. They include the Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI), the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF), Society of Incentive Travel Executives (SITE), Hotel Sales and Marketing Association of Ireland (HSMAI) and the Incoming Tour Operators Association (ITOA). Membership is dependent upon experience in the industry, peer recommendation and involvement in meetings and activities. This indicates that the managers are aware of current issues in industry and are keeping abreast of any changes as they occur and how this might impact on their people management.

#### 4.3 Research Background – Hotel Interviews

The hotel interviews took place separately at different times over the course of three weeks during December 2017. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at each hotel location and were from 45 minutes up to one hour in duration. The two broad themes of interpersonal and leadership skills taken from Sandwith's (1993) competency model were used as a framework to guide the interviews as outlined in the research methodology chapter. Therefore, the coding process involved using these two pre-determined themes, segmented into categories, for data analysis and these provide the headings for the findings outlined and discussed below. Precise quotes from the interviews are used to illustrate these themes and to demonstrate validity in the research process.

#### **4.4 Findings and Discussion from Hotel Interviews**

**Objective One: Analysis and Discussion - to establish the graduate skills most sought by hospitality employers.**

Using Sandwith's (1993) competency domain model, which acted as a guide for the themes in the interview process, the findings are presented and discussed under two main headings: (i) interpersonal and (ii) leadership (as discussed in chapter three). These are linked back to the research objectives by discussing how these competencies are viewed by industry, in addition to other themes that emerged from the data and the subsequent implications for hospitality education.

#### **4.5 Interpersonal Competencies**

The primary research revealed interpersonal skills as critical for graduates with all respondents stating they are of paramount importance. This is no surprise as many researchers have already attested to their significance in hospitality (Kay and Rosette, 2000; Connolly and McGing, 2006; Gamble *et al.*, 2010; Spowart, 2011). As Sandwith (1993) explains the interpersonal domain focuses on the skills for effective interaction with other people and includes teamwork, communication, complaint handling, problem solving and customer service, all of which emerged during the primary research and are discussed below.

##### **4.5.1 Teamwork**

Teamwork is considered by all respondents as a key skill and this corresponds with the work of Doyle (2017) and Weber *et al.* (2009) who found that it is a vital component in ensuring success in any role. While the managers agreed that some graduates are coming with no experience of working in a team, its potential is always sought when hiring as Hotel B puts it, 'They've been through school, they have been to college, they play sports so they understand collaboration, without teamwork it's impossible' and Hotel A comments on the importance of teamwork and how education assists here:

Teamwork is vital especially because we're dealing with a multicultural workforce. I think group assignments help



develop these collaboration skills, the more challenging they are the better.

This is useful information for educators to be aware of as it recognises the contribution that group work makes in the workplace.

#### **4.5.2 Communication**

Communications also arose as an area that is not without its challenges in both verbal and written formats. As Hotel A observed,

We are dealing now with a generation who are online and this impacts on their writing skills and how they present themselves, even their ability to talk clearly...the majority of the team are front facing so they're dealing with a guest and I think for a young graduate that can even be quite intimidating.

Writing skills arose as a concern for managers and they believe this has to be addressed by going back to basics for good letter and email communications. Also young people need to talk more as Hotel B notes, '...less emails and more telephone communication, speak to the guests, speak to your colleagues otherwise the message can get lost in translation'. On the other hand managers find that graduates are much better now than before at sharing ideas. They have more confidence and 'are not afraid to stand up for themselves' (Hotel B). However, verbal communication can be a challenge in five star properties particularly in a rural setting where local dialects such as 'ye' and 'howaryee' are the norm. In Dublin there is a language challenge too with trying to remove 'no problem' from staff vocabulary.

These findings indicate that what is desirable from graduates is more etiquette in communication as guests expect this in a five star property. As Hotel B explains, 'staff need to be still friendly, still warm but always professional'. This finding implies that communication etiquette needs to be addressed through the use of those teaching methods which enhance this skill such as the discussion method and internships. Not surprisingly the findings indicate that both verbal and written communication skills are highly valued by hospitality employers and this is consistent with previous studies (McMahon, 2017; Gamble *et al.*, 2010; Spowart, 2011; Tsai *et al.*, 2007). However, we know from Trung and

Swierczek's (2009) research that communications in teaching practice 'has not been paid much heed by universities' (p. 579).

On further analysis of the data, an outlier within communication which was not mentioned in the literature, is the issue of personal grooming. All respondents mentioned this as a huge concern since it sends a message to guests that the standard of professionalism and quality is not five star as they expect. As Hotel A remarks, '...grooming standard, I'd say that's a bigger area' [than verbal and written communication] and Hotel B comments:

Grooming is something that I would say absolutely needs to be discussed, it's not okay to come on duty with dirty shoes or an un-ironed shirt or a tie that's not done right and make-up has become a huge thing for the girls and this is a problem because they are overdone.

The policy in all of the hotels is to have no visible piercings or tattoos and in the case of Hotel B candidates are asked this at interview. This implies that personal grooming and appearance is a key area that needs to be addressed by education.

#### **4.5.3 Handling Complaints and Problem-Solving**

These are two connected skills that fall under the interpersonal domain. The hotel interviewees spent considerable time talking on these issues as they arise regularly when dealing with the general public. The ability to handle problems is a critical skill for working in the industry but it is generally weak as Hotel B puts it:

The amount of graduates that would come on board with zero experience is huge and that's a problem for us. They learn because we push the problems back to the employee and they are empowered to solve complaints and are advised to fix the problem, don't let the problem leave the building. Our goal at the end of the day is that every guest leaves happy.

And Hotel A had a similar opinion, ‘they’re not coming with a problem [to management], they’re coming with a problem and a solution’ and Hotel C remarks that staff are encouraged to ‘own the problem and make it right’.

It is clear when it comes to handling complaints and solving problems managers need graduates who are solution focused. On the one hand this finding is not surprising as we know already from previous studies that problem-solving is a key skill requirement in the industry (Connolly and McGing, 2006; Weber *et al.*, 2009). However, what is interesting to note is the emphasis on empowering staff to deal with the issues and taking ownership of them. This implies that educators need to embrace this and find strategies to help improve student empowerment through the development of critical thinking skills which according to Ivory *et al.* (2008) are not currently being addressed.

#### **4.5.4 Customer Service**

All of the respondents placed an important emphasis on customer service skills which is no surprise given the nature of the industry. As Hotel A explains:

I have always been happy with graduates in this regard. Their approach to guests has been excellent. I think it comes back to attitude and respect...I’ll refer to the Disney motto: you train for skill, you hire for attitude.

These findings are consistent with past studies which assert the importance of customer service skills (Gamble *et al.*, 2010; Spowart, 2011; Ipe, 2008; Weber *et al.*, 2009; Tsai *et al.*, 2007). However, as graduates, their inexperience can mean that sometimes their enthusiasm works against them as Hotel C points out:

They can get over involved with doing things for one customer to the annoyance of other customers waiting in a queue, they don’t know how to politely cut someone off and get the balance right.

However, as they get more confidence this improves so it comes with experience and Hotel B finds that internships are good to assist with giving graduates the necessary customer service skills and she comments, ‘at the end of their placement the difference in the

students from the day they arrive, they change, they mature and they have grown into their roles'. Hotel C agrees:

If the person has the right attitude and are curious to know how things work compared to what they learn in college. By the end of three months they are much better than when they first started and we do a report for the college.

These findings imply that internships should be included as a mandatory practice on a hospitality management programme.

#### **4.6 Leadership Competencies**

The primary data revealed very little about the managers' feelings regarding leadership qualities in graduates. This is unexpected since Kay and Russette's (2000) research indicated this was a key skill required by hotels. According to Sandwith (1993) a successful leader is a role model who exhibits a strategic vision, flexibility and an ability to empower people. Those skills that did emerge under this category are discussed below:

##### **4.6.1 Strategic Vision**

What was uncovered regarding leadership was the ability of graduates to understand the business from a strategic perspective. This is not unexpected as it reflects Doyle's (2017) research which found that desirable skills for hospitality graduates include strategic thinking, budgeting and a thorough understanding of the business. This is something that the respondents thought graduates are good at as Hotel C states:

The understanding of the working of the business is good but the financial knowledge is poor. The big thing is actually being able to read a financial report from a hotel and to look at all the key metrics.

Further, Hotel A remarks, 'I think there is a general understanding [by graduates] of profit and loss but I would say understanding of labour costs and other overheads and how they're managed is lacking'. The respondents revealed that graduates are empowered to 'run

[departments] like their own business' (Hotel B). This implies the necessity to use teaching strategies which can develop those skills needed for student empowerment.

#### **4.6.2 Flexibility**

What did arise is that flexibility is certainly highly valued by hoteliers. The emphasis is on hard work for which the industry is renowned and the ability to trust an employee to be flexible with hours and shifts according to business demands is problematic, as Hotel A comments:

It's a massive problem, they need to learn from different situations and expose themselves to different departments. Even if they're only interested in working in one area their understanding of the other will help them hugely to grow in the industry.

Further, Hotel B also notes:

It's a huge issue for staff to understand that they need to be flexible in this business but it comes with time and it's not easy for them. It's a big deal to give up your weekends, your Christmas, Mother's day, all those festive occasions but they need to come with that knowledge.

These findings correspond with the literature review where the importance of commitment (Weber et al., 2009) and adaptability (Tsai et al., 2007) are key graduate traits. The implication here calls for lecturers to develop these traits by incorporating them into their teaching practices.

#### **4.7 Other emerging themes**

On account of the unstructured nature of the interviews, other themes emerged which had not arisen in the literature review. One such theme was that of upselling. All respondents revealed this is a vital skill for front facing staff and in all cases the hotels give training on it. As Hotel C explains:

We have a big programme for upselling and they can find this difficult and in some cases stressful. Last year we did between €5,000 and €7,000 per month on breakfast sales from the front desk so it's very lucrative. Now we have also started to upsell dinner so it's all about upselling now and we train them on how to do it.

On this point, Hotel B comments:

Upselling is very important. Every department has upselling targets and they all run an interdepartmental competition, healthy competition and really all we are doing is driving sales...we do training and assist with this.

Hotel A also confirmed that upselling is actively encouraged with financial incentives and she notes, 'we run a house and food and beverage upselling workshop...we try to be innovative'.

It is clear from this finding that upselling is a lucrative skill much valued in graduates. This implies that it is necessary for educators to address this through the use of teaching techniques such as the discussion method which promotes negotiation and the exchange of ideas (Henning *et al.*, 2008).

#### **4.8 Summary**

The findings from the primary data with the hoteliers revealed those competencies that are valued by industry employers. Some existing themes such as teamwork and communications arose and new themes emerged such as the importance of grooming and upselling. In addition, the implications these have on education has been discussed. The next step is to review the findings from the primary research undertaken with the lecturers to address objectives two and three.

#### 4.9 Profile of the Hospitality lecturers

The participating lecturers each completed a profile form which included seven background questions to ascertain their experience and other characteristics pertinent to the study as their opinions are being observed (See Appendix 8).

Some of the information gathered was condensed onto a table to help see at a glance their teaching and industry experience, their qualifications and gender.

**Table 4.3**

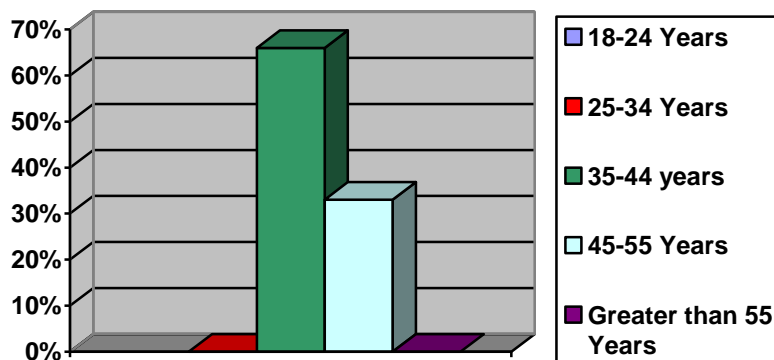
	Years Teaching In hospitality	Industry Experience (yrs)	Hospitality Educational Qualification	Gender Male or Female
Lecturer 1	10 years	20 years	Yes	Female
Lecturer 2	5 years	20 years	Yes	Female
Lecturer 3	6 years	15 years	Yes	Female
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21 years</b>	<b>55 years</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All female</b>

Between them the lecturers have a total of twenty one years of teaching experience and a total of fifty five years of industry experience. They are aptly positioned to understand the skills that industry seek from management graduates as well as being aware of the optimum teaching strategies needed to develop these competencies.

##### 4.9.1 Age

With regard to age, the lecturers range from 34 to 55 years and this range bodes well for looking at how different teachers with various experiences will view the education process for graduates.

**Figure 4.4**



#### 4.9.2 Hospitality Management Association Affiliations

**Table 4.4**

Association	Lecturer 1	Lecturer 2	Lecturer 3
Irish Hospitality Institute	X	X	X
Irish Hotels Federation	X		X
Hotel Sales and Marketing Association		X	
Society of Incentive Travel Executives			
Incoming Tour Operators Association			

Membership of aforementioned associations indicates that the lectures are aware of the current trends in industry and are involved in networking with hospitality practitioners who can assist in arranging internships for students.

#### 4.10 Research Background – Lecturers Interviews

The individual face-to-face interviews with the lecturers took place after the hotel interviews during February 2018. This was a deliberate decision which ensured those themes which emerged from the hotel respondents could be incorporated into the semi-



structured interviews with the lecturers. In addition, Sandwith's competency model and other themes which arose from the literature were included to act as a guide.

The first strand of inquiry with the lecturer interviews addresses the second objective in this study which is to ascertain the hospitality lecturers' perceptions about graduate skills for employer needs. The second strand addresses the third objective which is to understand the extent to which lecturers adapt their pedagogy to deliver on the desired skills. This involved probing the respondents about the teaching strategies they believe can deliver on the competencies which emerged from the literature and the primary research with the hotel respondents.

Overall, this approach to the research offered consistency in the topics discussed with the lecturers. Precise quotes from the interviews are used to illustrate the themes and to demonstrate validity in the research process. As before the coding process used the two pre-determined interpersonal and leadership themes as categories for data analysis and discussion on skills and the five teaching strategies which emerged from the literature review. These provide the main headings for the findings outlined and discussed below.

#### **4.11 Findings and Discussion from Lecturer Interviews**

**Objective Two: Analysis and Discussion - to ascertain the hospitality lecturers' perceptions about these skills for employability in the sector.**

##### **4.11.1 Interpersonal Skills**

Analysis of the primary data which emerged from the lecturer interviews revealed that educators are very aware of the needs of industry and also have a good understanding of the capabilities of their graduates. An open-ended question posed at the beginning of each interview was designed to ascertain the skills that lecturers believe industry needs from graduates. Without being prompted, all respondents immediately mentioned the importance of interpersonal skills such as teamwork and communications. Their comments adequately reveal their opinions on these skills as Lecturer 1 states, 'I think they need to have very good interpersonal skills because they are dealing with different people, different customers and different cultures.' Lecturer 3 remarks, 'they need to be able to communicate with people at all levels...and work with people from international

backgrounds’ and Lecturer 2 explains, ‘they need to be able to be part of a team and respect other cultures...basic communication should be learnt in first year, basic communication and appearance’.

This last comment is interesting because it raises the issue of appearance which emerged during the industry research as important. It implies that lecturers are aware of the need for graduates to be well versed on the importance of grooming in the hotel sector. Although on probing it appears that they do not have any formal strategies to develop this student competence in their teaching and this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

#### **4.11.2 Leadership skills**

Analysis of the primary data revealed that lecturers are very aware of the importance of leadership skills for graduates. Their comments aptly express their feelings as Lecturer 1 explains, ‘they need to be flexible, they need to be able to think on their feet, they need to be able to handle pressure and they need to really want to be in this industry’ and Lecturer 2 remarks ‘they need to be aware of the current needs of the business...they need to have a strong work ethic because to succeed in the hospitality sector you have to be a hard worker’. Lecturer 3 made reference to the autonomy issue which arose as important during the hotel interviews. She comments, ‘they have to be decisive [on the floor] and go with what they think is right and stick to that’.

So these findings reveal that hospitality lecturers think similarly to industry practitioners in terms of the skills and competencies that graduates should possess at entry-level management positions in the industry. Again the importance of teamwork, communications, problem-solving, diligence, flexibility and customer service have all been highlighted by the lecturers. These are positive findings and correspond with what was revealed from the literature review. However what is not clear is how educators can develop such skills in their students and the teaching strategies they can deploy to assist here. This leads into the next strand of enquiry in the lecturer research to address the third objective of this study.

## **4.12 Findings and Discussion from Lecturer Interviews**

**Objective Three: Analysis and Discussion - to understand to what extent lecturers adapt their pedagogy to deliver on the desired skills and competencies.**

When asked about the teaching strategies they feel would assist them in developing the key skills, the lecturers freely discussed the approaches they use in their classrooms.

### **4.12.1 Traditional Lecture Method**

The most commonly used teaching method by all of the respondents is the traditional lecture. In all cases, they revealed their class sizes are small with twenty students being the maximum and consequently they are 'very much like tutorials' (Lecturer 1).

The respondents revealed the traditional lecture format allows them to cover the curriculum in a given semester. Such popular use and logic for using this method is not unexpected as it corresponds with previous studies. These reveal that the traditional lecture form has been the most frequently used hospitality teaching approach and it is preferred by higher institutions because it is an efficient, low cost method which offers the most information in a short time (Deale *et al.*, 2013; Erdermir, 2011). The lecturer respondents also revealed the traditional lecture allows them to cover the basic concepts enabling the students to undertake their own independent learning outside of the classroom as Lecturer 3 explains:

The classroom setting is important to get the grounding right...you know how you have the theory and you learn the background as to why things are the way they are. You learn about the industry.

Further, Lecturer 2 notes, 'we would go through all of the classical theories of management [in the classroom], we would go through the theory and try to give them examples'.

Again this is not surprising as it corresponds with Goh's (2011) finding that the traditional lecture is necessary as it serves as a foundation for providing background information and 'knowledge as content' (Dalsgaard and Godsk, 2007, p. 31) before students embark on their independent learning journey.

What is unexpected though is that the smaller number of students means that the class has more of a tutorial feel and greater interaction occurs than would normally be the case in a large lecture hall as Lecturer 1 comments:

It's different if you're in a big lecture hall and you have a hundred students, there's no interaction, no interaction whatsoever. I don't just lecture, it would be very interactive...we would tease out issues through examples.

The respondents feel that the traditional lecture is very much about trying to give examples rather than just imparting theory and to assist in engaging the students more fully in a topic. To do this the use of videos and smartphones is promoted as Lecturer 1 explains, 'videos are embedded in PowerPoints, and other times students are allowed to use their phones and look up topics to explore'. These findings correspond with Mollenberg and Aldrige's (2010) study which found that many lecturers are now using a variety of interactive and multimedia tools to liven up the traditional lecture with the intention of students becoming more active participants in their own learning.

When asked what they believe the skills are that students will gain from the traditional lecture, the respondents revealed that because classes are more intimate they can facilitate the development of skills such as communication, confidence and presentation style. As lecturer 2 puts it:

I always think how do we make sure that they're good communicators? I think in my module that the presentations the students do are good. If they do a very short presentation in first year, a little bit longer in second year, by third year they're a lot more confident and I do think it helps their communications skills and their confidence.

This is aligned with Hotel B's observations that graduates have more confidence and 'are not afraid to stand up for themselves'. However, the revelation that communication skills can be developed through this method is wholly unexpected since Trung and Swierczek's (2009) research indicated that the communications area 'has not been paid much heed by universities' (p. 579). It appears then that higher institutions have taken this on board.

The overall findings regarding the skills developed by the traditional lecture are quite unexpected since the literature review revealed very little about the competencies this teaching technique can deliver. Given its popularity this is a key gap that needed to be filled and therefore these are positive findings as the traditional lecture is the most important aspect of a university's service offering. Perhaps the key to developing such competencies from this method lies in the small class size as opposed to the large lecture hall scenario but further research would be needed in this area.

#### **4.12.2 Case Studies and Discussion Method**

These two teaching strategies have been paired together as the respondents spoke about them simultaneously since many case studies involve collaborative work and group discussion. As Lecturer 2 explains, 'so if you give them a case problem and put them into a team and try to solve it, they learn from each other and it helps them, rather than them sitting there on their own trying to solve it'.

Two of the three lecturers use this case study method of instruction on a regular basis and find these techniques good for developing leadership skills such as decision-making and problem-solving and interpersonal skills such as communications and cultural understanding. This latter finding is unexpected since very little was revealed in the literature about how effective case studies are at developing interpersonal skills, however, the group component could be making the difference here.

Lecturer 1 often uses cases taken from newspaper articles and comments, 'they give them a feel for what's going on, that's a real practical application, it's giving them a feel for the real world and the opportunity to make decisions to address the problem'.

These leadership skills are consistent with many past studies which found that using cases assists students to bridge the gap between classroom learning and solving problems in real business situations (Lamb and Baker, 1993). They mirror the decision-making process needed in the workplace (Jonassen, 2004) enabling students to have 'the ability to think on their feet to solve problems' (Connolly and McGing, 2006, p.55).

The awareness of the importance of communications and diversity skills were also revealed as Lecturer 2 remarks:

The group work we give them in a classroom setting is very good and breaks them up away from their friends and they can intermingle. So you start sitting with other cultures and you start to accept other cultures...it helps break down barriers and get them ready for the international setting because that's the reality. It's about improving communications and they are going to be working as part of a team.

And Lecturer 1 comments, 'if they have group work to do, they're going to be dealing with different personalities and that can often test their temperaments. However, Lecturer 3 only finds case studies and group work useful to a certain extent and notes, 'they provide a bit of a distraction and if it's true to life you can use that to kind of give examples'.

These findings are not surprising as they correspond with previous studies which found that group discussions help to generate teamwork (McInnis, 2003) and contribute to the development of interpersonal skills, cross-cultural collaboration and higher-level learning (Sweeney *et al.*, 2008).

However, when the lecturers were asked if they received any training on carrying out case studies or using the discussion method in class, they admitted this had never happened. As Lecturer 3 puts it, 'we are very much left on our own to decide how our classes run' and Lecturer 2 comments:

I chat to other lecturers to get ideas but there is no formal get-together to network and exchange ideas or learn how to do in-class activities such as group work. I think it's just expected that we know how to do this. Technology is talked about more and sometimes a demonstration will be given to show how something can be used...and that's helpful.

This lack of support when using these methods is not unexpected as the literature review revealed that rarely are teachers 'given explicit instruction on how to conduct a discussion' (Henning *et al.*, 2008). This is a problem because this method is often more work than a lecture since it requires a strategy for dealing with the unexpected as well as the expected (Gall *et al.*, 2007). This implies that training in this area needs to be incorporated for

hospitality lecturers so they can use this method confidently to enhance their students' skills.

#### **4.12.3 Internships**

The lecturers revealed that in many cases their students undertake internships between second and third year of the hospitality management programmes. They find that internships are hugely beneficial for building confidence in their students and enable them to apply their learning in a practical way. As Lecturer 2 observes from students on their return:

They have more confidence for sure and are a lot more familiar with what's happening in the marketplace, current trends and all that. They know better what they want from industry, an internship helps them make that decision. So, they usually want out of breakfast or out of night shifts.

Lecturer 1 also sees the benefits:

They are well able to apply what they've learned in a practical way. They have to make decisions on the floor and solve all sorts of day-to-day problems as they arise...this all helps to develop their confidence and understanding of the business and helps them to understand how to be flexible and this is key in the operation.

Similarly, Lecturer 3 remarks on the confidence that internships bring to students, 'they have to learn how to deal with customers, deal with staff, even deal with stress and so it's confident boosting and I think it's good to have it'.

These findings correspond with the views of the hoteliers and the literature review. Hotel B revealed that during internships the students mature and grow into their roles and all of the hoteliers mentioned the importance of flexibility. Many studies have attested to internships developing skills such as communications, customer relations, team work and problem-solving (Mason, 2017; Collins, 2002; Beggs *et al.*, 2008; Busby, 2003; Mistilis & Harris, 2009)

and successfully integrating theoretical learning with practical experience (Baltescu, 2016; Kosli and Ilban, 2013).

However, Lecturer 1 commented on the problem regarding the inconsistency in the type of placements on offer. This, she contends is something that the industry needs to address:

Tourism is growing so we need the industry to get involved and assist with giving structured placements, to facilitate the students' careers and not just part-time seasonal jobs. We need a long term view.

This observation is consistent with Ferns and Moore's (2012) study which found that the value of the internship is dependent upon the employer and this can result in an inconsistent experience for students in different organisations. This implies that lecturers need support when planning student internships and that industry needs to do more to facilitate them to ensure consistency in learning for the students.

#### **4.12.4 Technology Enabled Learning**

The respondents all use a virtual learning environment (VLE), which is managed and supported by their higher institutions, to communicate with and assist students with their learning. The VLE is used mostly by lecturers for uploading lecture notes and articles to support the traditional lecture form, a finding that corresponds with Bhakare's (2014) argument that lecturers must include technology effectively in the teaching and learning process.

Despite understanding the importance of technology to students, it appears that the lecturers do not use many other technological tools to enhance learning. As lecturer 1 comments, 'I don't do any blended learning, I don't do any podcasts, I don't do any quizzes so I don't really use much technology...I do use a discussion board' and Lecturer 3 explains, 'I put all of my notes up on Moodle so they have access to them. I probably don't use it as much as I could'.

These findings indicate that the use of technological tools such as kahoot quizzes and padlet are rare in the classroom even though studies have shown them to be motivating and



engaging for students in the learning process (Hanus and Fox, 2015) and can improve those competencies such as decision-making and critical thinking (Gablis-Cordova *et al.*, 2017).

It is difficult to understand why the lecturer uptake on using technology is so slow. It might be because its contribution to education is relatively unknown (Kirkwood *et al.*, 2014) and further in-depth research is needed to determine this.

What is interesting to note is the lecturers do not believe that students are as proficient with technology as might often be expected given their age. As Lecturer 2 observes:

I think they are very good at it [technology] but funny enough they're not very good at something like an excel sheet which is very important in the industry...they're absolutely brilliant on social media.

Furthermore, Lecturer 3 explains 'I think some level of IT skill is necessary now especially with managers. You're doing a lot of reporting and a lot of it has to do with finance'.

So, despite the lack of its use in the classroom, the lecturers feel that technological proficiency is a necessary skill for graduates. This finding corresponds with Ipe's (2008) research which indicated that the invasion of technology in hotel operations has led to a modernising workplace and she suggests that this fact must be addressed by educators. These findings imply that technology, both as a learning aid in teaching and as a subject area in its practical application to business, needs to be addressed more fully in hospitality education.

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented, analysed and discussed the main findings revealed from the primary research and comparisons have been made with the arguments which arose from the literature review and between what hoteliers are looking for and what lecturers understand about meeting the needs of industry. The findings are also reflective of their contribution to answering the three research questions and give a good insight into the needs of hotel managers, the perceptions of hospitality lecturers and the implications these have for hospitality management education. In the final chapter that follows the

implications of the research findings will be summarised and recommendations will be made for the future.

## **CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study has looked at the effectiveness of hospitality education in developing graduate competencies for industry. It focused on three strands of inquiry, first to establish the graduate skills sought by employers, secondly to ascertain lecturers' perceptions about these skills and finally to understand to what extent lecturers adapt their pedagogy to deliver them. The purpose of this final chapter is to draw together and present the study's main conclusions and recommendations and to suggest some areas for further research. It also considers the new insights the research has brought to the current body of knowledge on graduate skills and hospitality education and evaluates what the study has achieved in terms of outcomes and contributions.

A comprehensive literature review revealed past studies which addressed graduate skills valued by hospitality employers and examined how effective teaching strategies are in developing these. Despite this, gaps were identified in recognising those necessary skills to meet the current and future demands of the industry and the teaching practices to deliver these. This research set out to fill these gaps and the study is successful in achieving the three research objectives. The conclusions and recommendations are outlined as they relate to each of the three objectives and areas that require further research are highlighted.

### **5.2 Objective One: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The first research objective was to establish the graduate skills desired by hospitality employers. Sandwith's (1993) competency domain model was used to form the basis for the interview themes along with other secondary sources. As discussed in chapter three, the interviews generated too large an amount of data for analysis given the scope of this study. Therefore, an informed decision was made to concentrate solely on analysing the data from Sandwith's interpersonal and leadership themes and present and discuss the findings from the categories that fall under these.

The primary research provides evidence that those competencies which fall under interpersonal and leadership skills are highly desired by industry employers. These findings correspond with past studies: Kay and Rosette (2000); Connolly and McGing (2006); Gamble

*et al.* (2010) and Spowart (2011) although some new insights did arise. Other unexpected themes also did emerge to include grooming and upselling.

### **5.3 Interpersonal skills**

Skills such as teamwork, communications, complaint handling and customer service all emerged during the primary research and are outlined below:

#### **5.3.1 Teamwork**

The primary research revealed that teamwork is a vital skill required in hospitality and while graduates may not always have the experience of working in a team, its potential is always sought when recruiting through evidence of playing team sports or doing group assignments in college. This knowledge provides useful information to educators that group activities and assignments are important. The recommendation here would be to encourage lecturers to include these elements into teaching practice due to the contribution that they can make to teamwork in the workplace.

#### **5.3.2 Communication**

The importance of both written and verbal communication skills was revealed by the primary research. Written skills are found to be weak and the hotel managers believe that there is a necessity to go back to basics with good letter writing and email communication skills. Etiquette in verbal communication also poses a problem where the use of local dialect can be a challenge in five star properties and what is needed is friendly but professional staff. It became obvious to the researcher that hospitality education needs to make provisions to address communication etiquette. This prompts the recommendation to deploy teaching strategies which can tackle this issue such as the discussion method and internships which were revealed in the primary research as being good for enhancing communication skills.

An unexpected revelation around communication was the issue of grooming as this did not emerge in the literature review. For both the hotel managers and the lecturers this is a huge concern as it appears that graduates do not fully understand how to dress and present themselves in a professional manner. Such absence of basic grooming requires the

recommendation to include criteria around personal appearance and dress when students are making assignment presentations in any subject area.

### **5.3.3 Handling Complaints and Problem-Solving**

As with past studies, the primary research supports the reality that complaint handling and problem-solving are key desired competencies (Connolly and McGing, 2006; Weber *et al.*, 2009). The respondents revealed these skills are generally weak in graduates (Ivory *et al.*, 2008) but they all emphasised the importance of empowering staff to deal with issues and be solution focused. The conclusion here is that graduates need strategies to assist them become critical thinkers to embrace empowerment. The lecturers perceived case studies and the discussion method as being useful in this regard as lecturer 1 stated, 'they give [students] a feel for the real world and the opportunity to make decisions to address the problem'. A logical recommendation then would be to make these teaching methods mandatory in the hospitality classroom and support lecturers in how to conduct them. This is important as critical thinking skills are not currently being addressed (Ivory *et al.*, 2006) and this study demonstrates their necessity in embracing empowerment to handle problems.

### **5.3.4 Customer Service Skills**

Overall the hotel managers felt that graduates have a good approach and attitude with regard to customer service and these skills are paramount in this industry. All of the hotel and lecturer respondents believe customer service improves with experience and commented on the role that internships play in assisting with these. This suggests that internships help to develop these skills and as such prompts the recommendation to include an internship as a compulsory teaching strategy in a hospitality management programme. The key aspect here is to secure collaboration between academia and industry to ensure consistency in the learning for students.

## **5.4 Leadership Skills**

The primary research revealed very little insight into how employers feel about leadership qualities in graduates although strategic vision and flexibility emerged as important and are included below:

#### **5.4.1 Strategic Vision**

Overall the respondents were pleased with the graduates' general strategic understanding of the business and their budgeting ability (Doyle, 2017). However, they believe graduates are weak in their knowledge of managing labour costs and other overheads and consequently they are encouraged to run departments like their own business. This insight demonstrates the need to recommend those teaching practices such as case studies, the discussion method and internships which develop the decision making and critical thinking skills needed to embrace empowerment.

#### **5.4.2 Flexibility**

The hotel respondents revealed that flexibility is a vital skill as graduates must understand the business and be ready to adapt and change to its needs. A practical recommendation here would be ensure the development of these adaptation skills through the use of in-class group assignments such as those revealed by the lecturers as being useful with the traditional lecture form. In addition, the lecturers all see flexibility as a key benefit from internships and therefore a practical recommendation is to include it as a learning outcome when using this teaching method.

#### **5.5 Upselling**

The primary research revealed the importance of upselling as a key skill by all of the respondents. The significant emphasis placed on upselling in today's hotel business prompts the author to recommend that teaching techniques such as the discussion method and internships are deployed by lecturers to develop negotiation and sales skills to assist with the art of upselling.

#### **5.6 Objective Two: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The second objective was to ascertain the lecturers' perceptions about the skills for employability in the sector. The primary research revealed that lecturers think similarly to employers regarding the importance of both interpersonal and leadership skills needed by graduates at entry-level positions in industry. Interestingly, the issue of personal appearance also arose which demonstrates that lecturers are also aware this is an

important matter although it is not explicitly included in any module. Therefore, the aforementioned recommendation stands to include criteria to promote these attributes when students are making assignment presentations in any subject area.

## **5.7 Objective Three: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The third research objective was to understand the extent to which lecturers adapt their pedagogy to develop graduate competencies. The primary research revealed lecturers use five main teaching practices that are common in hospitality education as highlighted below:

### **5.7.1 Traditional Lecture**

The primary research provides evidence that the traditional lecture form is still the most common technique used and allows the lecturers to cover the most information in a short time (Deale *et al.*, 2013; Erdemir, 2011). It also emerged that class sizes are small and consequently they are more like tutorials. The impact of this is that the lecturers can focus on presentation and communication skills during these classes. The conclusion here is institutions have taken on board Trung and Swierczek's (2009) advice on the importance of addressing communication skills. Indeed, the lecturers revealed they incorporate interactive work such as presentations and multimedia tools (Mollenberg and Aldrige, 2010) to engage students and build their confidence when using this method. While the lecturers feel confident about the ability of the traditional lecture method to provide these communication competencies in small classes, this did not emerge in the literature review. Given the popularity of this teaching format a recommendation could be to ensure smaller classes are continued although further research is needed to fully close this gap.

### **5.7.2 Case Studies and Discussion**

The respondents perceive the use of group case studies and discussion methods to be useful in developing students' communication and problem-solving abilities. The use of groups with these teaching methods appears to make the difference in developing the interpersonal skills. This is in line with Hotel A's belief that group assignments help develop collaboration skills. It is recommended then to encourage educators to use these methods with groups of learners rather than individuals to develop these skills.

A closer inspection of the primary research indicates that lecturers do not receive any training on how to conduct a discussion (Henning *et al.*, 2008). This suggests that given the importance of these methods in developing key competencies for students, that training is a key requirement. A recommendation, therefore, is to incorporate training on these methods for all hospitality lecturers.

### **5.7.3 Internships**

The primary research indicated that internships are highly rated by lecturers as being useful in bridging the gap between learning theory and practical application. This corresponds with the perspective of employers who believe internships are critical in addressing graduate flexibility and customer service skills. It prompts the recommendation to make internships compulsory as part of the learning experience for students.

However, the research revealed that lecturers are concerned about the workings of an internship. They feel there is an inconsistency in students' learning and the industry needs to do more to counteract this. It became obvious to the researcher that this is an area that needs attention. A recommendation would be to ensure greater collaboration and agreement between industry and academia on the learning outcomes of an internship programme.

### **5.7.4 Technology Enabled Learning**

Finally, the primary research revealed that the use of TEL by lecturers is confined mostly to embracing the colleges' virtual learning environments (VLE's) and they indicated little knowledge about the educational contribution that other technological tools can make. This slow uptake by lecturers in using TEL is surprising as the influence of technology has increased throughout higher education. However, it may be due to a lack of understanding about the contribution technology makes to student learning (Kirkwood and Price, 2014) and further research is needed to determine this.

Despite its lack of use in the classroom, the respondents did reveal they believe technological tools such as excel and PowerPoint are important for students to know. The conclusion here is that technology is vital going forward and the author recommends its



practical application in hospitality education both as a learning aid in the classroom and a subject area to deliver essential business tools.

## **5.8 Areas for Further research**

Research is a continuous process, it provides answers to specific questions but in doing so it also raises many others. The main objective of this research was to examine the effectiveness of hospitality education in meeting graduate competencies for industry. There is considerable potential for expanding this body of research. Further investigation would be best served by concentrating on a number of issues:

1. While the primary research revealed that using small classes with the traditional lecture method provides good communication skills, this did not emerge in the literature review. The popularity of this teaching format justifies further research to gain a comprehensive understanding of how this works.
2. A gap has been identified in the literature regarding the importance of grooming as a valued graduate skill. The significant emphasis placed on personal appearance by the hoteliers mandates that further research on the criteria needed to develop this skill through education is needed.
3. Explore in any future research the significance, if any, of the additional themes from Sandwith's (1993) competency model namely administration, conceptual and technology.
4. Further investigation is required into the contribution technology makes to student learning to encourage lecturers to adopt this method more frequently.
5. Include in any future research the opinions of three and four star hotels to gain a more comprehensive picture of the skills needed across the range of hotels in the sector.
6. Further investigation is needed to determine how internships are implemented and managed to ensure consistency of learning for students. Such a study would require looking at learning outcomes and the relevant teaching and learning activities necessary to deliver on these.
7. Any future study would also benefit from examining in detail the significance of curricula content in developing graduate competencies.

The author believes that continuous research is necessary to ensure greater understanding of how teaching strategies are evolving to meet the needs of industry. This will allow educators to design programmes for maximum success by helping to identify how best to serve the industry as well as graduates.

## **5.9 Contribution to the study**

This study has contributed significantly to the existing body of knowledge through the amount of qualitative data that has been gathered in the pursuit of its objectives. The significance of the research should be evaluated taking into account the following:

- The research builds on existing studies into the graduate competencies desired by hospitality employers and has added a new dimension by exploring these for luxury hotels as a means of ensuring their sufficiency across all hotel standards.
- This study has analysed the perspectives of hoteliers and lecturers for both graduate competencies and pedagogical practice and has provided new insights into how the changing needs of the industry requires new skills and the adaptation of teaching methods to develop these.
- The author has identified how the knowledge derived from the study can be applied in practice by suggesting clear and realistic educational recommendations and identifying the wide ranging possibilities for further research.

Perhaps what the author considers has been one of greatest contributions of this study is the fact that the research methodology adopted has proven to be particularly effective in forging links between academia and the industry. The hotel managers were enthusiastic in relating their needs and the lecturers were eager to discuss their understanding of graduate competencies and willing to share information regarding their teaching methods during the interviews.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Participant Information Sheet

<b>Project Title:</b>	Effective Teaching Strategies in Hospitality Education
<b>Researcher:</b>	Angela Harvey, Hospitality Lecturer, Griffith College Dublin.  Mobile: 087 231 3226
<b>Background:</b>	You are being asked to participate in a research study on the relevance of hospitality education in meeting the needs of industry. The study will gather data from three Human Resource Managers in large hotels and from four hospitality lecturers at Griffith College Dublin. It is anticipated that the research study will contribute significantly to a greater understanding of the needs of industry and how teaching strategies can be adapted to meet these needs.
<b>Purpose:</b>	This data is being collected for a dissertation which will form part of a level 9 MA in Training and Education at Griffith College Dublin.
<b>Study Procedures:</b>	All data gathered from you will be taken in the form of an interview. The location of the interview will be selected to suit your needs and the time allocated for the interview will be one hour.
<b>Benefits:</b>	The main benefit of undertaking this research will be to have a greater understanding of the competencies required by industry for hospitality graduates in order to ensure that appropriate teaching strategies are being deployed to deliver these. While there is no direct benefit to you as a participant in this research, you will be eligible to share in the findings of the study, should you so wish, upon its' completion.
<b>Confidentiality:</b>	All data gathered for the purpose of this research study will be used in strict confidence. Your feedback given during the interview will be anonymous and you will not be identified by name in the study. To achieve this, the data will be transcribed in the study using Hotel A or Hotel B etc and Lecturer A and Lecturer B and so on. All feedback will be recorded during the interview process. The researcher's smart phone will be used for this purpose and it is password protected using touch ID ie fingerprint recognition. All recordings used for the purpose of this research will be destroyed following the exam board meeting or after two years, whichever is the sooner.
<b>Participation:</b>	Participation in this research study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time up until the interview takes place and without having to give a reason. However, once the interview has been completed it will not be possible to withdraw the data.
<b>Ethics Board:</b>	The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at Griffith College Dublin and has received approval. This office is independent from the researcher.

## APPENDIX 2

### Participant Consent Form

To be completed by the participant

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I have read the information sheet about this study. <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study. <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions. <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I have received sufficient information about this study. <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time before the interview takes place and without having to give a reason for withdrawing. <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I have given permission for the researcher to record the interview on her phone with reassurance that all data collected will be deleted after the exam board meeting or after two years whichever is the sooner <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I understand that my research data may be shared and used for a further project and/or additional publications in anonymous form. <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I understand the dissertation for which the research data is being collected may be published on the college repository. <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• I know that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I agree to take part in this study. <input type="checkbox"/></li></ul>	
Signed (participant)	Date
Name in block letters	
Signature of researcher	Date
This project is supervised by: <b>Dr Fiona Broughton Coveney @Griffith College Dublin</b>	
Researcher's contact details: Name: Angela Harvey Email: angela.harvey@griffith.ie Mobile: 087 231 3226	

### APPENDIX 3

#### Categories from Hotel Respondents for Data Analysis from Coding Process

#### Interpersonal

Competencies	Categories	HOTEL A	HOTEL B	HOTEL C
	Teamwork	Teamwork is vital – especially because we’re dealing with a multicultural workforce Over 39 nationalities on our team I think group assignments help develop these collaboration skills, the more challenging they are the better	It is key. Some graduates are coming with no experience of working in a team but “they’ve been through school, they have been to college, they play sports” so they understand collaboration “without teamwork it’s impossible	
	Problem solving	Solution focused – “they’re not coming with a problem , they’re coming with a problem and a solution”	It’s a critical skill for graduate managers however but it is weak “the amount of graduates that would come on board with zero experience is huge and that’s a problem for us” They learn because “we push the problems back to the employee	it’s a huge competency that’s required in the day to day operation. The staff in the front office have full autonomy they are encouraged to own the problem and make it right for the guest
	Complaint handling	“listening is paramount” Autonomy	Staff are empowered to solve complaints... “fix the problem, don’t let the problem leave the building” “Our goal at the end of the day is that every guest leaves happy”	Staff have full autonomy as before
	Problem -solving		Stronger than a couple of years ago but it comes with work experience. More confidence in addressing issues - less fear than before and generally supported by management – own the issue!	
	Communications	It’s so important yet “we are dealing now with a generation who are online” Impacts on writing skills & how they can present themselves. Even to ‘talk clearly’  “for the majority of the team they are front facing so theyre dealing with a guest and I think for a young graduate that can even be quite intimidating”  “Grooming standard, I’d say that’s a bigger area “	Graduates are much better now than before at sharing ideas. They have more confidence and ‘are not afraid to stand up for themselves’  Verbal communication is a challenge in a five star property in a rural setting where local dialect can such as ‘ye’ and ‘howaryee’ is the norm. Challenge also to remove word ‘no problem ‘ from their vocabulary  ‘Staff need to be ‘still friendly, still warm but always professional’  Back to the basic for good letter and email communications. But also less emails and more telephone communication –speak to people because the message can “get lost in translation”  “grooming is something that I would say absolutely needs to be discussed, it’s not okay to come on duty with dirty shoes or an un-ironed shirt or a tie that’s not done right” “make-up has become a huge thing for the girls” and is problematic because they are “overdone” Policy in this hotel of ‘no visible piercings and no visible tattoos”	Communication is key in this business because things change so quickly.

	Customer Service Skills	<p>Attitude and respect</p> <p>Have always been happy with graduates in this regard. Their approach to guests has been excellent.</p> <p>“I’ll refer to the Disney motto: you train for skill, you hire for attitude”</p>	<p>At the end of their placements the difference in the students from the day they arrive, they change, they mature and they have grown into their roles</p>	<p>they can get over involved with doing things for one customer to the annoyance of other customers waiting in a queue, they don’t know how to politely cut someone off and get the balance right.</p>
	Anticipate situations	<p>being proactive – “this comes with actual hotel real world</p>	<p>This area “would certainly need work” guests often give throwaway comments and these need to be picked up and acted upon for example “a guest casually says their room is a little cold to the waiter, and the waiter needs to get a heater into that room before they return after their meal”</p> <p>If we don’t act the guest “will say it on tripadvisor”</p>	<p>These graduates also have access to lots of information on a daily basis which comes from the director of sales around VIP lists, visiting journalists or travel operators or CEO’s of companies, anyone of significance who will be staying at the hotel so this helps to build their confidence in how to anticipate and deal with these guests. Sometimes the graduates have to google these people, even famous ones, as their age may be the reason why they wouldn’t know some of them eg visiting artists such as singers etc.</p>
<b><u>Leadership</u></b>	People management	<p>” Comes with experience</p> <p>“I think it’s something that they only learn once they’re in the workforce”</p>	<p>.”It comes with time, it doesn’t necessarily come immediately”</p> <p>In graduates it depends on the position that they get at entry level but you often find the two extremes “you have the ‘please would you mind awfully, you know nearly begging and overly polite in asking and others ‘I have my authority here, now I’ve been to college and I’m a graduate”</p> <p>Important issue is to be a team leader and a team player – difficult to do both for the young manager</p>	<p>Some of the graduates are born leaders, they are more forceful and have more confidence in what they can do. But I think it also depends on nationality and the culture they come from.</p>
	Flexibility Diligence	<p>“this is a massive problem”....they need to learn from different situations and expose themselves to different departments”</p> <p>“Even if they’re only interested in working in one area their understanding of the other will help them hugely to grow in the industry’</p>	<p>The graduates are usually very trustworthy and hardworking- they learn over time who they can trust and go to “and bounce ideas off”</p> <p>It’s a huge issue for staff to understand that they need to be flexible in this business but it comes with time and it’s not easy for them. As hotel B states “it’s a big deal to give up your weekends, your Christmas, mother’s day, all those festive occasions but they need to come with that knowledge</p>	
<b><u>Leadership and Administration</u></b>	Financial management	<p>“I think there is a general understanding (by graduates) of profit and loss but I would say understanding of labour costs and bigger costs and how they’re managed is lacking”</p>	<p>“The financial knowledge is poor”</p> <p>“The understanding of the working of the business is good”</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to “run it like their own business”</p> <p>They can read a p &amp; L but not understand what it means in bigger</p>	<p>The understanding of the working of the business is good but the financial knowledge is poor</p> <p>The big thing is actually being able to read a financial report from a</p>

		“Big thing is actually being able to read a financial report from a hotel and to look at all the key metrics”	picture - costs v’s income and what we need to do	hotel and to look at all the key metrics
<b><u>Conceptual</u></b>	Organisational skills	“I guess we have to make sure they are in an environment where they’ve been trained properly and they’ve been shown everything”	Generally good skills here	
<b><u>Technology</u></b>	Sales - Upselling	Upselling is actively encouraged with financial incentives for staff and we carry out training for this  We run a house and food and beverage upselling workshop  We try to be innovative	“Very important “ “Every department has upselling targets and they run an inter-departmental competition” Driving sales is encouraged in this way whether its in the bar/restaurant with menus or upselling to a suite We assist and give training for upselling	We also have a big programme for upselling and they can find this difficult and in some cases stressful. Last year we did between€ 5,000 and €7,000 per month on breakfast sales from the front desk so it’s very lucrative. Now we have also started to upsell dinner so it’s all about upselling now. we train them on how to do it.
	Health and safety	“That’s our number one priority”..... “we have to be responsible hoteliers”....”have a duty of care to our guests and our team members”	Its an essential skill set to have. All staff need to be certified in all H & S issues – fire, first aid, service of alcohol, manual handling etc Turnover of staff means it’s a constant issue. We have 30 first aiders so someone always on duty!	This is all covered in the training programme and by the induction programme. The aim is that within 2 months all employees are up to speed, it’s not something that I think graduates need to have before they work – it’s up to the workplace to provide this
	Practical Training		The graduates seem to have good practical training in Food and beverage areas but not in front office. “I’m always amazed at the limited amount of hotel systems that they have worked on, some can be scared of it to a certain degree” This is critical because the hotel ‘system has everything on it regarding the hotel’s business – check ins, departure, in stays etc” “it’s all linked so it’s a huge element of the hotel and the front desk”  Internships help hugely with gaining practical experience but they need to be at least 5/6 months duration so they can work in two areas for 3 months each and really learn. See notes pg 20 hotel B “they change, they mature .....also notes on p 23	Graduates can’t cope without technology if the system breaks down, if the power goes out. They don’t know what to do. They re helpless because they have no phone numbers in their heads. They can’t use a manual system – had no conception of how to go manual. Can’t manage without the keyboard!



## APPENDIX 4

### Unstructured Interviews– Broad Themes/Questions

1. What are the competencies /skills that are desired from management graduates by five star hotels?

2. How important do you feel the following skills are and why are they relevant in a management context in the industry?

1. Interpersonal skills:

- Teamwork
- Evaluation evidence - Problem solving and decision- making
- Communication
- Customer service Skills – complaint handling
- Anticipate situations
- Negotiation and organisation skills

2. Leadership skills

- People management skills – building teams
- Strategic thinking ability – understanding the business/budgeting
- Flexibility, diligence and trust
- Enthusiasm

3. Administration

- Personnel management – disciplinary actions
- Financial management - budgeting and accounts

4. Conceptual/creative

- Company culture and strategy - vision
- Ability to adapt to change - flexibility
- Understanding the business – macro factors
- planning

5. Technical

- Departmental work processes – SOP's
- Practical training in Front Office/ Food and Beverage/ Health and Safety
- ICT skills
- Sales
- Monitoring and reporting

3. How challenging is it to find these competencies in management graduates?

## APPENDIX 5

### Categories from Lecturer Respondents for Data Analysis from Coding Process

Themes/Teaching	Categories	LECTURER 1	LECTURER 2	LECTURER 3
<b><u>Interpersonal</u></b>	Teamwork	I think they need to have very good interpersonal skills because they are dealing with different people, different customers and different cultures.'  Students need to have a good attitude and show respect	'they need to be able to be part of a team and respect other cultures...basic communication should be learnt in first year, basic communication and <b>appearance</b> '.	'they need to be able to communicate with people at all levels...and work with people from international backgrounds'
	Problem solving			
	Complaint handling			
	Communication			
	Customer Service Skills			
	<b>GROOMING</b>			
<b><u>Leadership</u></b>	Strategic vision	they need to be flexible, they need to be able to think on their feet, they need to be able to handle pressure and they need to really want to be in this industry'	'they need to be aware of the current needs of the business...they need to have a strong work ethic because to succeed in the hospitality sector you have to be a hard worker'.	'they have to be decisive when working in the operation and go with what they think is right and stick to that'.
	Flexibility			
	Diligence			
<b><u>Teaching Strategies</u></b>	Traditional Lecture Form	My class sizes are small with twenty students being the maximum and consequently they are very much like tutorials	Using this method allows me to get through all the stuff I need to do with the students	The classroom setting is important to get the grounding right and cover all the issues and topics in the module, you know how have the theory and you learn the background as to why things are the way they are. You learn about the industry
		It's different if you're in a big lecture hall and you have a hundred students, there's no interaction, no interaction whatsoever. I don't just lecture, it would be very interactive and I try to make it fun y'know. We would tease out issue through examples	we would go through all of the classical theories of management , we would go through the theory and try to give them examples'.	
		'videos are embedded in PowerPoints, and other times students are allowed to use their phones and look up topics to explore'.	I always think how do we make sure that they're good communicators? I think in my module that the presentations the students do are good. If they do a very short presentation in first year, a little bit longer in second year, by third year they're a lot	

			more confident and I do think it helps their communications skills and confidence	
	Case Studies and Discussion Method	<p>I often use stuff from newspapers as they give them a feel for what's going on, that's a real practical application, it's giving them a feel for the real world and the opportunity to make decisions to address the problem'.</p> <p>'if they have group work to do, they're going to be dealing with different personalities and that can often test their temperaments.</p>	<p>so if you give them a case problem and put them into a team and try to solve it, they learn from each other and it helps them, rather than them sitting there on their own trying to solve it</p> <p>The group work we give them in a classroom setting is very good and breaks them up away from their friends and they can intermingle. So you start sitting with other cultures and you start to accept other cultures it helps break down barriers and get them ready for the international setting because that's the reality. It's about improving communications and they are going to be working as part of a team</p> <p>I chat to other lecturers to get ideas but there is no formal get-together to network and exchange ideas or learn how to do in-class activities such as group work. I think it's just expected that we know how to do this. Technology is talked about more and sometimes a demonstration will be given to show how something can be used</p>	<p>Using a case study will provide a bit of a distraction and if it's true to life you can use that to kind of give examples'.</p> <p>It's up to us what we decide to do. No one is coming to check or bother us. we are very much left on our own to decide how our classes run</p>
	Internships	They are well able to apply what they've learned in a practical way. They have to make decisions on the floor and solve all sorts of	They have more confidence for sure and are a lot more familiar with what's happening in the marketplace, current trends and all that. They	Internships really work as they have to learn how to deal with customers, deal with staff, even deal with stress and

		<p>day-to-day problems as they arise</p> <p>this all helps to develop their confidence and understanding of the business and helps them to understand how to be flexible and this is key in the operation.</p> <p>Tourism is growing so we need the industry to get involved and assist with giving structured placements to facilitate the students' careers and not just part-time seasonal jobs. We need a long term view</p>	<p>know better what they want from industry, an internship helps them make that decision so they usually want out of breakfast or out of night shifts</p>	<p>so it's confident boosting and I think it's good to have it'.</p>
	Technology Enabled Learning	<p>I don't do any blended learning, I don't do any podcasts, I don't do any quizzes so I don't really use much technology...I do use a discussion board'</p>	<p>I think they are very good at it [technology] but funny enough they're not very good at something like an excel sheet which is very important in the industry</p> <p>They're absolutely brilliant on social media</p>	<p>'I put all of my notes up on Moodle so they have access to them. I probably don't use it as much as I could'.</p> <p>I think some level of IT skill is necessary now especially with managers. You're doing a lot of reporting and a lot of it has to do with finance'</p> <p>!</p>

## APPENDIX 6

### Lecturer Semi Structured Interview Questions/Themes:

1. What do you believe are the important skills needed to work in management in the hospitality and tourism sector?

2. How important is education in providing these skills to the Industry?

- Teaching strategies you believe deliver these skills
- Skills and competencies students obtain from a hospitality education
- Growing demand for education going forward

3. How critical do you feel the following skills and competencies are in the hospitality and tourism industry at management level?

- Interpersonal
  - Communication – written and verbal
  - Presentation skills - expressing ideas
  - Telephone manner
  - Conflict management
  - Negotiation skills
  - Employee training
  - Work delegation
  - Goal setting
  - Handling complaints/Problem solving
  - Conducting disciplinary actions
- Leadership
  - Exhibits enthusiasm
  - Flexibility
  - Diligence
  - Trust
  - Commitment to a vision
  - Encourage and empower people to build a team
  - Influence other both inside and outside the immediate work group to win support for projects
- Administration
  - Personnel management – disciplinary actions
  - Financial management - budgeting and accounts
- Conceptual/creative
  - Company culture and strategy - vision
  - Ability to adapt to change - flexibility
  - Understanding the business – macro factors
  - planning
- Technical
  - Departmental work processes – SOP's

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practical training in Front Office/ Food and Beverage/ Health and Safety</li> <li>▪ ICT skills</li> <li>▪ Sales – upselling</li> <li>▪ Monitoring and reporting.</li> </ul>
<p>4. What teaching strategies or activities do you think can deliver these competencies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Case Studies</li> <li>▪ Traditional lectures</li> <li>▪ Field trips</li> <li>▪ Technology Enabled learning</li> <li>▪ Discussion/group work</li> <li>▪ Role play</li> <li>▪ Work placements/Internships</li> </ul>
<p>5. Which teaching strategies would you most commonly use in your class?</p>
<p>6. What do you believe are the crucial learning outcomes required from a hospitality programme?</p>

## APPENDIX 7

### Profile of Hotel Interviewees

1. How long (in years) have you been working in the hotel industry?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your current job title?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Your gender is:

Please tick one:

Male ☐

Female ☐

4. Your age range is:

24 years or less ☐

25-34 years ☐

35-44 years ☐

45-54 years ☐

55 years or more ☐

5. Have you a specific qualification in Hospitality/Tourism Management?

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. Are you currently a member of a Hospitality Management Association?

IHI \_\_\_\_\_ SITE \_\_\_\_\_

IHF \_\_\_\_\_ ITOA \_\_\_\_\_

HSMAI \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 8

### Personal Profile of Hospitality Lecturers

1. How long (in years) have you been lecturing in hospitality /tourism education?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you experience of working in the industry itself?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. If yes, how long (in years) did you work in the industry?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Your gender is:

Please tick one:

Male ☐

Female ☐

5. Your age range is:

24 years or less ☐

25-34 years ☐

35-44 years ☐

45-54 years ☐

55 years or more ☐

6. Have you a specific qualification in Hospitality/Tourism Management?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Are you currently a member of a Hospitality Management Association?

IHI \_\_\_\_\_ SITE \_\_\_\_\_

IHF \_\_\_\_\_ ITOA \_\_\_\_\_

HSMAI \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_