DO HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT CURRICULA AT PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA COMPLY WITH THE STANDARDS SUGGESTED BY A RESEARCH-BASED COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK?

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Abstract

The employability demands of hospitality employers, combined with the requirements of the 2013 Higher Education (HE) Qualifications Sub-Framework, necessitated a thorough evaluation of the current hospitality management curricula at public HE institutions in South Africa. The evaluation described in this article was based on a comprehensive competence framework developed in a broader study that was aimed at enhancing the employability of hospitality management graduates in South Africa. The outcomes in existing curricula were compared with 127 essential competences in the framework. Hospitality management curricula at public higher education institutions in South Africa do not comply with all the standards suggested by the mentioned research-based competence framework. The key weaknesses identified relate to 36 competences in the framework, which are either not reflected or wrongly represented in the curricula. Arguments for improvement are substantiated by the results of an extensive Delphi evaluation of the competences in the framework by 38 experts in the field.

Keywords: hospitality management, curriculum, South Africa, higher education, employability, competence(s)

1. INTRODUCTION

There are signs that the world economic environment is beginning to improve after the global financial crisis hit South Africa in 2008. South Africa with its rich history, world-class tourist attractions and wide range of hospitality offerings were able to take advantage of the improving economic conditions. This is, for example, evident in an increase of 428 326 foreign visitors to South Africa in 2013 when compared to 2012 (South African Tourism 2014) and a growth of 50% in overall room revenue from 2006 to 2012. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that the total room revenue in South Africa could grow at a compound annual rate of 9.2% by 2017 (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2013: 3).

The increase in international tourists creates new job opportunities within the South African hospitality industry. The industry employs about 290 000 employees and it can be expected that the growth in the tourism and hospitality industries will aggravate the serious skills shortage that has been experienced since 2007 in the industries.

The main reasons for this shortage relate to candidates' lack of experience and suitable qualifications; low levels of motivation and interest in the available positions and the absence of a customer care focus (Grant Thornton 2007).

Higher education (HE) could play an important role in addressing the skills shortage by providing qualified hospitality management graduates who are ready for the world of work. Although the hospitality industry is characterised by low levels of education (Grant Thornton 2007: 35), the value of formal education cannot be ignored. Turkson and Riley (2008: 590) found that young hospitality managers with university qualifications demonstrated a better sense of the "complete picture" when compared to managers in the same age group without a university education. The knowledge they had gained at university made them confident to face an unknown situation. Academic qualifications in hospitality management are furthermore becoming increasingly important for career advancement in the hospitality industry (Chi & Gursoy 2009: 310). Obtaining a university qualification is also in line with one of the aims of the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) that strives towards excellent people development within the tourism and hospitality industries (RSA DoT 2011: 66). The NTSS regards excellent people development as one of the critical factors to inspire and accelerate responsible tourism growth in South Africa.

Despite the important role that HE can play in providing suitably qualified graduates, international (Connolly & McGing 2006: 55; Watson 2008: 421; Munar & Montaño 2009: 78) and national employers often criticise hospitality management graduates for not being able to make a smooth transition from the classroom to the world of work. South African providers are accused of emphasising pass rates and employment as measures of success and not employability (Grant Thornton 2007: 13). In addition, a lack of congruency exists between what education institutions offer and what the industry requires (CATHSSETA 2013).

In order to meet the employability demands of employers, continuous review of the curriculum is vital (Breakey & Craig-Smith 2007: 117; Swanger & Gursoy 2007: 14). Curriculum review is, however, not an easy task. Turkson and Riley (2008:585) and Swanger and Gursoy (2007: 14) describe it as one of the biggest challenges facing hospitality management education. Despite the importance of constant review, the curricula of the National Diploma in Hospitality Management (NDip) and Bachelor of Technology in Hospitality Management (BTech) that are offered by six public higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa, were revised more than ten years ago and scientific procedures were not followed when the curricula were designed. In addition, the above-mentioned qualifications are not aligned to the Higher Education Qualifications Framework of 2008 (RSA 2008b) and Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) of 2013 (CHE 2013). Review of the hospitality management curricula has therefore become imperative.

It is the purpose of this article to describe and reflect on the results of an evaluation of the existing NDip and BTech curricula against a research-based competence framework in order to propose specific areas for improvement. This competence framework was developed in a comprehensive study (Moolman 2012) that took into account international perspectives and trends as well as the specific characteristics and challenges faced by HE and the hospitality industry in South Africa. The article should therefore be regarded as an application of the competence framework that was developed in the broader study. The arguments and suggestions for improvements in existing curricula are substantiated by the results of the extensive Delphi evaluation of the (proposed) competence framework by 38 experts in the field that formed part of the broader study.

The article commences with a brief background of the NDip and BTech curricula. An exposition is provided of the mixed-methods research design and methodology used to (i) propose a comprehensive competence framework and (ii) apply the framework in an evaluation of the identified curricula. The key weaknesses in the curricula are discussed and the article concludes with specific recommendations that could be taken into account when developing a curriculum for a new bachelor's degree in hospitality management.

2.   BACKGROUND TO THE N.DIP AND B.TECH CURRICULA

In order to present an HE hospitality management qualification in South Africa, an institution needs to be registered with the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). It should be accredited and quality assured by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) or the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) and needs to present South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) accredited hospitality management related qualifications on at least Level five of the 2013 HEQSF.

The original National Qualifications Framework (NQF) provided for an eight-level framework and was introduced in South Africa in 1995 (RSA 1995). In terms of this framework, the NDip and BTech qualifications were mapped at NQF Levels six and seven. Technikons (now known as Universities of Technology) developed the curricula of the qualifications. The so-called convenor system was applied until 2003 and all Technikons presented the same curricula. The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), formerly known as the Technikon Free State, acted as the Convenor Technikon for the qualifications and followed the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC) procedure to develop and have the curriculum approved. Consultations were held with representatives of the Technikons, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority (now known as Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority) and leaders from the hospitality industry for this purpose.

Students have to complete a three-year NDip in Hospitality Management, followed by a one-year BTech degree in order to be awarded the BTech qualification. It is the purpose of the NDip to prepare students for positions as assistant managers, while the BTech degree focuses on the development of graduates for middle management positions within the hospitality industry (SAQA 2014). Consequently, both qualifications require of graduates to exhibit managerial skills. In order to obtain a BTech degree, a student should have mastered the following core/compulsory subjects/modules of both the NDip and BTech curricula:

- Accommodation Management I
- Culinary Studies and Nutrition I and II
- Food and Beverage Studies I and II
- Hospitality Communication I and II
- Hospitality Financial Management I to IV
- Hospitality Health and Safety I
- Hospitality Information Systems I and II
- Hospitality Law I to III
- Hospitality Management I to IV
- Research Methodology IV
- Service Excellence I

In addition, students have to choose one of the following electives in the second year of study:

- Accommodation Management II
- Food and Beverage Operations II
- Professional Cookery II

Students also have to choose two of the following electives in the third year of study:

- Accommodation Management III
- Food and Beverage Operations III
- Professional Cookery III
- Events Management III

In terms of a ministerial notice in October 2003, certain Technikons were given the status of University of Technology (UoT), whilst others merged with universities to form Comprehensive Universities. Although the convenor system no longer applies to these HEIs, the institutions continued to present the existing NDip and BTech curricula.

The 2008 NQF was promulgated on 5 October 2007. The 2008 NQF increased the original eight levels to ten levels (RSA 2008b), of which levels five to ten are presented by HEIs, but does not make provision for NDip and BTech qualifications.

HEIs were afforded an opportunity to re-curriculate and align their qualifications with the 2008 NQF before the transitional period for compliance ended on 31 December 2014 (CHE 2011b: 3).

Although the 2008 NQF does not provide for an NDip qualification, it makes provision for a Diploma at NQF Level Six. Aligning the NDip (Level Six on the 1995 NQF) with the Diploma (Level Six of the 2008 NQF) did not pose serious problems. However, the HEIs that presented the BTech degree were reluctant to align the qualification with the 2008 NQF. In 2011, some institutions submitted proposals for a variant of the BTech degree that would enable students to articulate from a diploma into a professional bachelor's variant (CHE 2011a: 5). The proposal was, however, not accepted, since bachelor's degrees ought to be designed as complete qualifications and not as top-up one-year qualifications that build on a diploma (CHE 2011a: 17). Therefore, HEIs wishing to offer a baccalaureate degree in hospitality management now have the option to present a general bachelor's degree either on Level Seven (360 credits over three years) or a professional bachelor's degree on Level Eight (480 credits over four years) of the 2013 HEQSF.

The researched-based competence framework that was developed in the broader study can be applied in two ways to develop a bachelor's degree in hospitality management. On the one hand, the competences in the framework can be used to design a brand new curriculum. On the other hand, it can be applied as an evaluation tool in terms of which existing outcomes in the NDip and BTech curricula are compared with the competences in the developed framework. Specific key problems or areas of improvement can then be identified, which could ultimately lead to an improved curriculum. This article focuses specifically on the latter use/application of the competence framework in curriculum development. Although it is not the focus of this study to report on the development and nature of the research-based competence framework, some understanding of its development and nature is required.

3.   DEVELOPMENT AND NATURE OF THE RESEARCH-BASED COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

A mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007) was adopted and 2 544 competences were identified by means of a qualitative content analysis of (i) 21 generic skills frameworks of Australia, USA, UK and South Africa, (ii) 17 carefully selected hospitality-related research articles and (iii) six hospitality management curricula. The curricula included two South African curricula and four curricula of the five best hospitality management schools in the world, as identified by Taylor Nelson Sofres Travel and Tourism (2010). These competences were reduced to 220 competence statements and, based on the experience and expertise of the researcher (the first author) in the field, seven competences were added.

The 227 competence statements were categorised within 25 competence domains and 3 competence clusters and were incorporated in a draft competence framework (Moolman 2012: 169-237).

The competences were used to develop a quantitative questionnaire for the Delphi technique that was used to evaluate the importance of these competences towards the enhancement of the employability of hospitality management graduates in South Africa (Moolman 2012). The Delphi technique can be described as a valid and very reliable technique that has the overall aim of reaching consensus and stability in a carefully selected panel of experts (Mitroff & Turoff 2002: 22). It usually involves a series of questionnaires administered to individual experts that are interspersed with controlled opinion feedback (Dalkey & Helmer 1963: 458). The results of the preceding rounds are fed back to panellists until stability in responses or consensus on a specific issue has been reached through iteration (Van Zolingen & Klaassen 2003: 327). Some degree of anonymity is maintained among panellists, while the researcher usually knows the identity of the participants.

The following scale was used in the evaluation: 1=Unnecessary, 2=Useful, and 3=Essential (Linstone & Turoff 2002). Respondents were further requested to provide, as far as possible, comments next to each of the competence statements and they could add additional competences at the end of the questionnaire. Qualitative data was thus also generated. Thirty-nine purposefully selected experts participated in the Delphi evaluation and were made up of hospitality industry professionals (n=14); hospitality management academics (n=15) from six different HEIs in South Africa; and hospitality management alumni (n=10) from four different HEIs. Only eight panellists dropped out during the course of the Delphi evaluation.

The number of Delphi rounds was determined by applying three stopping criteria. Firstly, the Delphi evaluation of a specific competence was stopped when 75% or more of the panellists agreed on the importance of a competence. Secondly, the Delphi process was stopped when stability in the distribution of the group's responses was obtained (Linstone & Turoff 2002). Fisher's exact test was used and a significant difference in the responses of Delphi panellists ($p<0.05$) indicated that stability in responses had not been reached. Thirdly, the Delphi process would stop after the fourth and final round, the traditional number of rounds for a Delphi technique. The median score and qualitative data obtained from panellists were used to categorise those competences that obtained stability in Round Three and those that were not categorised by employing consensus in Round Four.

The electronic distribution and collection of questionnaires took place over three months. Median scores and the distribution of the group's response over the three important categories were calculated by means of an Excel spreadsheet. The descriptive statistics and qualitative comments provided by experts were recorded and provided to panellists in the next round.

At the end of Round Four, a comprehensive framework was proposed that consisted of 194 competences that were categorised as essential in the Delphi evaluation. The competences were categorised within three main clusters and 22 competence domains. The first cluster includes 38 competences that are categorised within six vocational/hospitality competence domains (hospitality industry orientation and knowledge, tourism, rooms division, culinary, food and beverage, and event management). The second cluster consists of 68 competences that are categorised into nine management related competence domains (management and leadership, marketing, accounting and financial management, human resources, entrepreneurship, law, customer satisfaction, environmental protection and sustainability, and health and safety). The third cluster makes provision for 88 generic graduate attributes that are categorised into seven competence domains (communication, technological, meta-competencies, emotional and social intelligence competencies, attitudes, values, and other generic).

4.   METHODS USED TO EVALUATE THE CURRICULA

The research-based competence framework was then applied in an evaluation of the NDip and BTech curricula. Sixty-five attitudes, values, meta-competencies, and emotional and social intelligence competencies of the framework were not considered in the evaluation process. These attributes are regarded as generic, transferable or non-contextualised and could be required of all graduates and not only hospitality management graduates. Each of the outcomes in the curricula was compared with the remaining 127 essential competences in the framework. In an interpretative but largely deductive process, the comparison was aided by the use of Excel. The ultimate goal was to identify discrepancies and key shortcomings in the current curricula.

5.   FINDINGS

The evaluation of the learning outcomes of the NDip and BTech curricula against the essential competences in the comprehensive framework revealed the following main differences:

(i)   twenty essential competences in the framework were not reflected in the outcomes of the curricula
(ii)   seven essential competences in the framework were reflected in the outcomes of elective modules of the NDip curriculum; and
(iii)   nine competences were not categorised as essential in the Delphi evaluation, but were presented as outcomes in compulsory modules of the curricula.

5.1 Essential competences of the framework not reflected in the compulsory modules of the curricula

The comprehensive framework only included competences that were perceived as essential by Delphi panellists for enhancing the employability of hospitality management graduates in South Africa. Therefore, in an ideal scenario, all the competences in the framework had to be included in the compulsory modules of the curricula. However, this was not the case and competences related to tourism, environmental protection and sustainability, law, health and safety, accounting and financial management, management and leadership, and accommodation management were not evident in the learning outcomes of the curricula. These competences (n=20) are reflected in table 1. On the table, the necessity for the inclusion of these competences is reflected in the ratings of the experts in the Delphi evaluation.

Table 1: Essential competences not reflected in the curricula

Code	Outcome	M	Delphi: Responses of experts			Round
			Unnecessary	Useful	Essential	
TOU01	Knowledge of the tourism industry	3	3%	21%	76%	2
TOU02	Knowledge of tourism demand and supply	3	0%	21%	79%	2
ENV01	Responsibility towards the environment	3	3%	18%	79%	1
ENV02	Knowledge of environmental protection and sustainability practices	3	3%	34%	63%	3
LAW01	Understand how consumer protection laws are applied in the hospitality industry	3	0%	24%	76%	3
HEA01	Knowledge of security procedures	3	0%	24%	76%	2
HEA02	The ability to manage wellness in the workplace	3	6%	19%	75%	3
HEA03	Knowledge of significant diseases and the prevention thereof	3	6%	36%	58%	4
FIM01	Management reporting skills	3	3%	15%	82%	1
FIM02	Understand the time value of money	3	3%	10%	87%	1
FIM03	Cash flow management skills	3	0%	10%	90%	1
FIM04	The ability to manage financial strategies and policies	3	9%	16%	75%	3
MAN01	Understand the ethical issues facing hospitality managers	3	0%	18%	82%	1
MAN02	Diversity management skills	3	0%	23%	77%	1
MAN03	Networking skills	3	3%	20%	77%	1
MAN04	Knowledge of management skills	3	3%	15%	82%	1
MAN05	Time management skills	3	0%	8%	92%	1
ACC01	The ability to use a property information management system	3	3%	15%	82%	1
ACC02	Knowledge of hospitality facilities	3	0%	13%	87%	1
ACC03	The ability to manage hospitality facilities	3	0%	15%	85%	1

Arguments for inclusion of the competences reflected in table 1 in a revised curriculum are further substantiated by the results of the Delphi evaluation in the sections that follow.

5.1.1 Tourism

Although hospitality forms part of the tourism industry (Grant Thrornton 2007), the curricula does not make provision for any tourism related outcomes. More than 75% of the panellists rated the tourism outcomes (TOU) reflected in table 1 as essential in round two and a median score (M) of 3.0 was calculated. These competences were evident in three of the four international curricula reviewed for content analysis purposes in the broader study. Having knowledge about the tourism industry (TOU01) and a clear understanding of the demand and supply side of tourism (TOU02) can enable graduates to see "the bigger picture" and to understand the specific role of hospitality in tourism. Hospitality forms part of the supply side of tourism by providing accommodation, food and beverage and sometimes transportation services to tourists. Developing graduates with the identified tourism competences could ultimately contribute towards realising the vision of the NTSS, namely to have South Africa regarded as one of the top twenty tourism destinations in the world by 2020 (RSA DoT 2011: 11).

5.1.2 Environmental protection and sustainability

There is severe pressure from customers, employees, government, investors and environmental groups on hospitality enterprises to reduce the impact of their operations on the environment (Sloan, Legrand & Chen 2009). Despite the importance of environmental protection and sustainability practices (and the inclusion of related competences in all four international curricula investigated), these were not evident in the NDip and BTech Hospitality Management curricula. Table 1 reflects that in round one, 79% of panellists agreed that graduates need to show responsibility towards the environment (ENV01) and stability in the responses of panellists (p=0.0820) was obtained in round three for ENV02. The endorsement by CATHSSETA (2012: 23) of the National Green Economy Accord of 2011 and the endeavour of the NTSS to strive towards environmental protection and sustainability practices (RSA DoT 2011: 46) supports the categorisation of the outcome as essential.

5.1.3 Law

Although the NDip and BTech curricula make provision for a range of law outcomes, an understanding of how consumer protection laws are applied in the hospitality industry, was not addressed by the curricula. This competence (LAW01), as reflected in table 1, was categorised as essential in round two applying consensus as a stopping criterion. The promulgation of the Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008 (RSA 2008a) requires of hospitality enterprises to transform the way in which they interact with customers and aims to ensure that all their dealings with consumers are fair, reasonable and honest. The Act has, for example, significant restrictions on cancellation fees and penalty clauses, the practice of overbooking by accommodation establishments and the quoting of different rates to customers.

5.1.4 Health and safety

Three health and safety outcomes (HEA01 to HEA03) that were not evident in the curricula were categorised as essential in the Delphi evaluation (see table 1). Knowledge of security procedures (HEA01) and the ability to manage wellness in the workplace (HEA02) were categorised as essential by employing consensus as a stopping criterion in rounds two and three respectively. Safety and security is a major concern in hotels (Barrows, Powers & Reynolds 2012: 328-239) and managing the wellness of employees is not only beneficial towards the health of employees, but can also contribute towards the financial health of the organisation (Brady & Carter-Ward 2007: 9).

Table 1 shows that only 58% of panellists rated knowledge of significant diseases and the prevention thereof at the end of round four as essential. The qualitative feedback from panellists supported the categorisation of the outcome as essential. Three Delphi panellists mentioned, for example, that certain diseases pose a serious hazard to clients and employees of the hospitality enterprise. This is especially the case in the Kitchen and Food and Beverage Department. Graduates therefore need to be aware of the risk involved in these diseases. In addition, a Delphi panellist referred to HIV and AIDS and stated that graduates need to have knowledge about these diseases that have a major impact on the hospitality industry.

5.1.5 Accounting and financial management

The Delphi evaluation confirmed the importance of all the accounting and financial management outcomes in the NDip and BTech curricula. Four outcomes (FIM01 to FIM04) evident in the curricula of the leading international hospitality schools, but not in the NDip and BTech curricula, were categorised as essential in rounds one and three (see table 1). Management reporting skills (FIM01) are, for example, essential, since hospitality managers are frequently required to compile, read and interpret daily revenue reports, rooms' revenue forecast and food and beverage menu abstracts (DeFranco & Lattin 2007).

5.1.6 Management and leadership competences

Five management and leadership outcomes (MAN01 to MAN05) that were absent in the NDip and BTech curricula, but identified by the content analysis process, were categorised as essential in round one. The categorisation of these outcomes (see table 1) made sense. For example, hospitality managers are confronted with ethical issues on a daily basis and Boella and Goss-Turner (2005: 318-320) suggest that managers should constantly ask themselves questions such as: Are our prices misleading, with hidden extras? Are we exploiting our customers' ignorance about their rights? Should we offer our customers food products that are obtained using very cruel methods?

Are the cleaning materials that we use environmentally friendly? Knowledge of the ethical issues facing the hospitality industry (MAN01) is essential – it can enable hospitality managers to avoid legal liability and run responsible and profitable hospitality enterprises (Barth 2008: 9-10). The diverse workforce of the hospitality industry in terms of age; gender; education levels; multiculturalism and part- and full-time employment (Grant Thornton 2007) supports the importance of diversity management (MAN02).

5.1.7   Accommodation management

Table 1 shows that more than 81% of panellists regarded the three accommodation competences (ACC01 to ACC03) as essential in round one. Although a property information management system for both back- and front-office operations (ACC01) has become the standard in many lodging establishments (Walker 2009: 137-138), no learning outcome in the NDip and BTech curricula explicitly addressed this aspect. It is furthermore interesting to note that none of the investigated international curricula explicitly addressed ACC01. Two of the international curricula covered competences ACC02 and ACC03.

5.2   Essential competences of the framework reflected in elective modules of the NDip curriculum

The NDip curriculum provides for three elective modules in the second year of study and four elective modules in the third year of study (see section 2). In a perfect alignment, the learning outcomes of these elective modules would not have been reflected in the competence model and would have been categorised as useful by the Delphi evaluation. This was, however, not the case for the outcomes in the Accommodation Management modules. All the outcomes of these modules (ACC04 to ACC10) were categorised as essential (see table 2). An overwhelming 82% or more of panellists agreed on the importance of all the competences as essential in rounds one and three. It is therefore obvious to consider changing the status of the two Accommodation elective modules to compulsory in a new curriculum.

Table 2: Essential competences presented in elective modules of the NDip curriculum

Code	Outcome	M	Delphi: Responses of experts			Round
			Unnecessary	Useful	Essential	
ACC04	Rooms Division knowledge	3	0%	15%	85%	1
ACC05	Front office skills	3	0%	15%	85%	1
ACC06	Guest reservation skills	3	0%	18%	82%	1
ACC07	Housekeeping skills	3	0%	9%	91%	3
ACC08	Rooms Division management skills	3	5%	13%	82%	1
ACC09	Yield and revenue management knowledge	3	0%	13%	87%	1
ACC10	Yield and revenue management skills	3	0%	18%	82%	1

The categorisation of the accommodation outcomes as essential is supported by the important role that accommodation plays in the South African economy. Rooms Division is regarded as one of the most profitable functional areas of some hospitality enterprises, such as hotels. A typical Rooms Division yields a profit of approximately 70% after the deduction of direct costs, while such a profit amounts to only ten to 15% for a Food and Beverage Department (Barrows et al. 2012: 314).

5.3   Useful competences of the framework presented as learning outcomes in compulsory modules of the curricula

At the end of the evaluation process, the researchers identified nine outcomes related to economics (ECO), research (RES), law (LAW) and culinary studies and nutrition (CUL) that were present in compulsory modules of the curricula, but absent in the competence framework. These competences are reflected in table 3.

Table 3: Useful competences of the framework presented in compulsory modules of the curricula

Code	Outcome	M	Delphi: Responses of experts			Round
			Unnecessary	Useful	Essential	
ECO01	Knowledge of micro-economics and macro-economics	2	3%	91%	6%	1
ECO02	Ability to apply economic concepts in hospitality business management	3	0%	38%	62%	3
RES01	Research knowledge	2	6%	75%	19%	3
RES02	Research report writing skills	2	9%	75%	16%	3
RES03	The ability to execute a hospitality management research project	2	0%	77%	23%	4
LAW02	Understand how the law of business entities is applied in the hospitality industry	2	6%	75%	19%	3
LAW03	Understand how the law of delict is applied in the hospitality industry	2	6%	66%	28%	3
LAW04	Understand how health and safety laws are applied in the hospitality industry	2	0%	61%	39	4
CUL01	Skills to develop, modify and improve food recipes	1.5	13%	75%	12%	3
CUL02	Intermediate food preparation skills	2	10%	35%	55%	4

Further investigation showed that the competences related to these outcomes that were categorised as useful in the Delphi process, were absent from the framework.

The sections that follow highlight the categorisation of the competences as useful during the Delphi evaluation.

5.3.1   Economics

The economic outcomes in the module Hospitality Management III, as reflected in table 3, were merely categorised as useful. More than 90% of panellists agreed that economic knowledge (ECO01) was only useful to graduates and stability in responses of panellists (p=0.2488) was calculated for the ability to apply economic concepts in hospitality business management (ECO02). The median score (M=3) calculated for ECO02 suggested an importance rating of essential. However, in round one, more than 90% of the Delphi panellists agreed that knowledge of micro- and macro-economics was merely useful. The researchers are of the opinion that graduates will find it difficult to show competence in ECO02 if they do not possess the necessary knowledge to apply economic concepts. Corresponding with the important categorisation of competence statement ECO01, competence statement ECO02 was therefore also categorised as merely useful.

5.3.2   Research

Although research can be regarded as the prefect platform to display that graduates have acquired the higher order thinking skills that were developed during their studies (Altinay & Paraskevas 2008: 4), the research outcomes of the BTech curriculum (RES01 TO RES03) were categorised as merely useful by employing consensus as a stopping criterion in rounds three and four (see table 3). It should, however, be noted that a bachelor's degree on Level Seven of the 2013 HEQSF should prepare students to undertake a master's level qualification. Students should therefore be capacitated in the methodology and research techniques that are applied in hospitality management research (CHE 2013: 32).

5.3.3   Law

Despite Hospitality Law being presented as compulsory modules in the second to fourth years of the NDip and BTech curricula, three outcomes (LAW02 to LAW04) of these modules were categorised as merely useful. Consensus was reached on the categorisation of LAW02 as useful, stability in the responses of panellists (p=0.1025) was calculated for LAW03 and no consensus was reached on LAW03 at the end of round four. LAW03 and LAW04 were categorised as useful based on the median score of two and the responses of panellists that related to the perception that the outcomes require specialised knowledge and that "attorneys usually perform these tasks".

5.3.4 Culinary studies

Most of the outcomes of the compulsory Culinary Studies and Nutrition II module were categorised as useful and not as essential. Skills to develop, modify and improve food recipes (CUL01) was categorised as useful in round three when 75% of the panellists agreed on its importance (see table 3). Panellists did not reach consensus on the importance of intermediate culinary skills (CUL02) at the end of round four. The median score of two suggested a possible importance categorisation of useful. A panellist mentioned in her feedback in round three that the competence "can only be regarded as essential for those graduates who wish to pursue careers as chefs" and another reported that HEIs should "develop hospitality managers and not chefs". A useful importance categorisation was also suggested by the curricula of the international hospitality schools.

6.   CONCLUSION

The answer to the question whether hospitality management curricula at public higher education institutions in South Africa comply with the standards of a research-based competence framework, is negative. The current curricula are not preparing students optimally for the highly competitive and challenging environment of the South African hospitality industry.

The evaluation of the learning outcomes of the curricula against the competences of the comprehensive framework revealed three key limitations in the current curricula. These limitations are: (i) twenty essential competences are not reflected in the outcomes of the curricula; (ii) seven essential competences are reflected in the outcomes of elective modules and not in compulsory modules and (iii) nine outcomes are presented in compulsory modules instead of elective modules.

Considering that the purpose statements of both the NDip and BTech focus on the development of managerial competence, the absence or elective nature of 12 competences related to managerial functions (HEA02; FIM03, FIM04, MAN01 to MAN05, ACC03, and ACC08 to ACC10) should be a matter of concern. On the one hand, twenty essential competences (see table 1) are not instilled in students, yet, on the other hand, students are overburdened with the development of eight competences related to economics, research, law and culinary skills (see table 3).

Based on the identified limitations in the existing curricula, three routes towards improvement can be considered. Firstly, curriculum developers can consider including in the curriculum of a new bachelor's degree the twenty identified competences that were not reflected in the identified curricula. However, it is acknowledged that some of these competences might already be embedded in the outcomes of the existing curricula.

In those instances curriculum developers can consider making the competences more explicit in a new curriculum. Secondly, curriculum developers can consider including the identified seven competences related to accommodation management in compulsory module(s) of the new curriculum. This can ensure that all students master the essential competences and not only a handful of students who choose Accommodation Management II to IV as elective modules. Thirdly, in the light of the already heavily loaded curriculum, the identified nine useful outcomes in elective modules of a new bachelor's degree curriculum should rather be omitted or reflected in elective modules.

The number, extent and nature of the competences that are required from hospitality management graduates clearly suggest that the duration of the three-year bachelor's degree on HEQSF Level Seven will be inadequate for the development of the expected competences in graduates. Although a four-year HEQSF Level Eight bachelor's degree qualification will offer students more time to acquire the expected competences, a progression route seems to be a more viable option. The limitations evident in the current NDip and BTech curricula could be addressed in newly developed curricula for a Diploma in Hospitality Management (HEQSF Level 6), followed by an Advanced Diploma (HEQSF Level Seven) and Postgraduate Diploma (HEQSF Level Eight). Further research needs to be conducted in order to determine how the competences of the research framework could be mapped across the mentioned qualifications and years of study.

The research-based framework that was developed in the broader study proved to be a very useful tool in an evaluation of the identified hospitality management curricula that were traditionally presented by Universities of Technology. As such, the study can make a much needed and constructive contribution towards the second strategic objective of the NTSS that deals with the provision of excellent people development within the tourism industry. It can be concluded that Pavesic's (1991: 49) statement about the hospitality curriculum in the 1990s still seems to be highly relevant today: "the perfect curriculum has not yet been designed". Hospitality management curriculum development should be seen as an ongoing process, since the relevancy of the curriculum to the student, academic and hospitality employer changes on a continuous basis; forces constantly shape it in a future we cannot accurately predict.

7.   REFERENCES

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