



Escaping the Tyranny of Relevance: Some Reflections on Hospitality Management Education

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ABSTRACT

Higher education provision to meet the needs of management within the hospitality industry is now well established in most English speaking countries. In the UK the first degree programmes appeared in the late 1960s and burgeoned alongside the general expansion of higher education in the 1990s. This paper draws on recent reports on higher education for the hospitality industry, and on recent academic research into the nature of hospitality to suggest that higher education programmes would better serve both students and industry if they reflected more social science underpinnings. Paradoxically, an overly managerial focus in content is not always consistent with the needs of manager education. Various studies suggest that reflective practitioners are needed for a turbulent and changing hospitality industry. The development of analytical and critical thinking skills are essential for managers who are increasingly being asked to 'think outside the box'. This paper argues that these skills are best developed in a framework of critical education which is as concerned with the study of hospitality management as it is with the study for hospitality management.

KEYWORDS

Hospitality management, Education for hospitality, Hospitality studies, Reflective practitioner

Studying Hospitality: Some Reflections on Hospitality Management Education

In the United Kingdom students from hotel and catering management degree programmes began to enter the labour market in the early 1970s, and by the late 1990s there were more than 8000 students enrolled on 79 courses in 27 institutions (Airey & Tribe, 2000). The total number of graduates and diplomates in the subject was estimated to be between 2,000-3,000 per year (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1998). The early degree programmes frequently emerged from technician level National Diplomas in Catering and Hotel Keeping, and as a consequence provision is concerned with developing vocational skills and is largely located in the post 1992 'new' universities created from former polytechnics.

Almost from the onset industry commentators have been critical of degree provision. For example Miles Quest, a former editor of the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* wrote several editorials, and addressed the 1988 HM Inspector's conference, criticising the need for degree level provision. In more recent years Gary Hawkes (2003) and Paul Slattery (2002) have been critical of hospitality management education provision though for different reasons. Certainly the atmosphere created by a trickle of industry sniping of higher education led the Higher Education Funding Council – England to undertake two pieces of research that will be referred to in detail later in this paper. Certainly the Review of Hospitality Management (HEFCE, 1998) and *Getting Ahead: graduate careers in hospitality management* (HEFCE,

2001) represent the most systematic attempts to understand the nature of higher education and the impact this has within the firms actually employing graduates in industry.

The paper explores some of the issues arising from these reports and from other work undertaken by the author on the nature of management in hospitality businesses. The paper also suggests that recent work exploring the nature of hospitality from an array of social science perspectives provides opportunities to support the development of those being prepared **for** management in the hospitality industry by encouraging the study **of** hospitality and management through critical and theoretical perspectives. It advocates that the hospitality field of study needs to refocus so as to reflect these so-

cial science perspectives and suggests that Hospitality Studies as a title for the field provides an opportunity to encompass the study of and the study for hospitality.

Hospitality Management Education

The Review of Hospitality Management (HEFCE, 1998) defined hospitality management as "having a core which addresses the management of food, and/or drink, and or accommodation in a service context" (p2). When all these activities are taken into account, hospitality activities employ approximately 2 million people in Britain (HtF, 2002) and the Henley Centre (1996:15) suggested that for each hospitality job a further 1.3 jobs are created in support services in the wider economy. The report acknowledged that the industry is complex, covering different sectors, hotels, restaurants, pubs and bars, contract catering as well as provision in the welfare sector and some leisure units where hospitality services are a subset of the operation. Small firms dominate commercial sectors of the industry. Some 99% of hospitality firms in these sectors employ fewer than 50 people, yet these firms account for only 45% of total sales and 50% of employment (Thomas, Lashley, Rowson, Guozhong, Jameson, Eaglen, Lincoln, & Parsons, 2000). At the other end of the scale, in each of these commercial sectors a small number of branded businesses own and manage hundreds or thousands of units. These businesses offer management careers in multi-layered organisations at individual unit, multi-unit, middle, and senior management positions.

The report confirmed that courses were designed to match these occupations incorporating a mixture of operational management subjects together with topics that supported the development of management competences in people management, marketing, finance, business strategy, small firms and entrepreneurship. It was recognised that programmes showed some variations between institutions but much of the provision had common content and objectives.

The report was undertaken at a time when the Higher Education Funding Council – England was considering the introduction of a revised mechanism for funding courses which potentially would have placed hospitality management programmes in the lowest funding band along with programmes that are solely classroom based. In fact the report showed that all courses included some element of 'laboratory' time in kitchens, bars, restaurants, reception, and accommodation

suites. Litteljohn and Morrison (1997) estimated that on average 23% of students' contact hours at university or college were spent in laboratory situations and 64% of this in food and beverage activities. In addition, most courses incorporated a one-year work placement as part of the programme.

Although there were estimated to be 2,000-3,000 graduates in the late 1990s, numbers on hospitality management programmes have reduced in the last few years, as new competing programmes in 'licensed retail management', 'event management' and 'leisure management', together with the impacts of the introduction of student fees and changes in university management structures have reduced student enrolments even at a time of increased participation in university education. The number of graduates entering the labour market in 2002 was closer to 2000 than the higher figure shown above. Given an estimated 250,000 managers employed in accommodation, bars and restaurants services alone (Hospitality Training Foundation, 2000) it is still true to say that, "there is no question of graduates flooding the market" (HEFCE 98:15, 1998: 8). Commenting on graduate entry into the industry, the same report stated that, "initially, 80% went into work connected with the industry" (p7). Though most educators are also aware of the strong competition for hospitality graduates from traditional high street retailers who like the array of skills they possess.

The report acknowledged a failure in communication with industry at large that has sometimes resulted in comments from practitioners that educators produce too many graduates, and not enough graduates go into the industry. The somewhat contradictory nature of these comments is in part a reflection of these communications failures but also a reflection of the relatively low level of graduates working in the industry. This stands at just 5.5% of all employees and employers, compared with 17.9% across all industries (HtF, 2000). It is estimated that 20-30% of managers in the hospitality industry are graduates hence some seven or eight out of ten practicing managers are not graduates and have no higher education.

Whilst acknowledging these communications difficulties with the industry at large, Airey & Tribe (2000) describe hospitality courses as being prominently influenced by industry. "The emphasis on practical and industry-oriented content is clear from module titles, such as food preparation techniques." The Council for National Academic Awards (1992:7) suggested that these programmes "combined a range of business studies components" as well as more generic management studies and "these are combined with specific hotel and catering studies which invariably include a science element" (Council for National Academic Awards, 1992:7). Airey and Tribe note that over recent years course titles have shifted from hotel and catering management to include hospitality, and whilst they recognise the change in title opens up a wider conceptual framework, "at the same time it is clear that the vocational orientation remains at the core of the curriculum" (2000:282). In fact they go on to establish these programmes as located in the **vocational action** quadrant when higher education provision in general is mapped against two continua – stance as reflection/action, and ends as liberal/vocational. This is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The use of curriculum space

Stance	Ends	Reflection	Action
Liberal		Reflective liberal	Liberal action
Vocational		Reflective vocational	Vocational action

Source: Airey & Tribe, 2000

They suggest that whilst this meets the needs of industry and employers, these programmes can be criticised as being

"dominated by the tyranny of relevance" (2000:290). The study of hospitality in its broadest sense provides opportunities to locate the subject in the wider social sciences, and provide a more reflective agenda for educators. Certainly the link with industry and the vocational aims of these programmes locates them within one of several potential positions in higher education provision.

These potential positions will be discussed in more detail but the tyranny of relevance is further compounded by the learning style preferences of students entering hospitality management programmes. There is now a weight of research in the UK and internationally (Lashley, 1999; Lashley & Shaw, 2002; Baron & Arcadia, 2002; Lashley and Barron, 2003; Charlesworth, 2003) showing that hospitality management has a predominant preference for Activist learning styles (Honey & Mumford, 1986).

Honey and Mumford point out that Activist learners are at an advantage when they are in contexts where they are working with other people and through talking with other people. They enjoy contexts where there is a great deal of variety and situations are difficult to predict. Many aspects of the hospitality working environment could be said to match these requirements. Often demand is difficult to predict precisely. Unusual customer requests, or customer complaints require quick responses, and the work usually involves immediate contact with other employees and customers. Hospitality

management university programmes prepare graduates for specific occupations and Activist learning styles could be seen as compatible with this type of programme.

Honey and Mumford (2000) however also identify some drawbacks to the Activist learning style. They suggest that activist learners tend to rush into things, they avoid planning work in advance and tend to neglect subjects in which they are uninterested. Often they leave things to the last minute and have difficulty on deciding priorities. Frequently they have poor time management skills, and can't be bothered with details. As both students and managers these disadvantages to Activist approaches can lead to poor performance. Furthermore, substantial numbers of UK and Australian students register low or very low preferences for Reflector and Theorist styles, which presents added difficulties when research from both industry and academia suggest 'reflective practitioners' are required for effective performance (Lashley, 1999; Lashley & Barron, 2003). Certainly educators need to adopt strategies that challenge both the 'tyranny of relevance' and the reluctance of many students on hospitality management programmes to reflect and theorise. The pleasure in action and reluctance to reflect are implicit in a number of research projects exploring current management practice and in some of the comments referred to earlier. A recent study of employment practice in hospitality firms in Manchester's tourism sector (Lashley, Thomas, & Rowson, 2002) and an earlier study of staff turnover in the pub sector (Lashley & Rowson, 2000) suggest many managers are prepared to put up with staff retention difficulties without reflecting on why staff are leaving. In one extreme case, a manager interviewee reported recruiting 286 employees for a normal establishment of 50 job roles. There appeared to be little reflection in this practitioner's performance (Lashley & Rowson, 2000).

Several reports and academic studies about hospitality management programmes in the UK show, 'widespread and mature links with industry' (HEFCE 98:15, 1998:15). The link to tightly defined occupations does bring with it problems, because there can be a tendency to make programmes overly pragmatic and reinforce student tendencies to avoid reflection and theorising. Although it is possible to address these problems within the current programme structures and subject titles (Lashley, 1999), this paper suggests there is a strong case to broaden the curriculum so as to embed reflective practice in the student's development. This view is supported by a recent report on graduate careers in hospitality management.

Hospitality Management Careers

The applied nature of the programme content and the relevance of content to careers in hospitality management were confirmed by a follow-up report commissioned by the HEFCE. *Getting Ahead: Graduate careers in hospitality management* (HEFCE, 2001) was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council – England to explore some of the concerns raised by industry commentators. One of the key aims of the research was to explore management careers in the hospitality industry with specific reference to the impact that higher education qualifications have on management careers. The research also aimed to explore the nature of work and skills required of managers in the industry with a view to exploring the relevance of the current curriculum and educational practice in higher education to the needs of managers, and the value of a higher education to stakeholders.

The research team adopted a sector-based approach to the analysis of management career paths and the contribution that qualifications make to careers. This involved the production of six detailed sector reports and also a final report that combines the analysis from all the sectors studied and reaches overall conclusions. The sector reports covered licensed retail, hotels, restaurants, contract catering, welfare catering and leisure. All these reports are available through the HEFCE's web site (www.hefce.ac.uk)

Using a case study methodology, each sector report was based on the detailed study of key hospitality organisations identified as representing different operations typical of that sector. The individual organisation studies included in-depth interviews with key senior personnel, life histories from managers in representative positions, and questionnaire results from a range of managers. Reports from each sector study therefore include data from all of these sources.

The research gathered detailed data about management careers in the six sectors through thirty cases study organisations and approximately 150 interviews with managers at key positions within the management hierarchy. In addition the report gathered information about management career training and development from 1396 small firms through a postal survey integrated into the small firms survey undertaken by Leeds Metropolitan University (Thomas, et al, 2000).

The report confirmed that the education background of the managers being interviewed strongly influenced their perception of graduates and their potential contribution to the organisation. The report quotes several cases where senior executives who were graduates themselves, employed graduates in large numbers. The report quotes one CEO as saying, (2001:20) "changes in the last few years require us to be more qualified. In the business world a degree is recognition that someone can think outside of a square and can write and add up with dexterity". This firm had a better qualified management structure than in many other firms in the survey. The report also noted that the small firms survey showed that graduate owner managers were more than twice as likely to employ graduates themselves. Further, owner managers with a degree were more likely to employ graduates in managerial rather than operational roles.

Managers who had been promoted through experience did not value graduates or the skills they might contribute. In several cases, managers interviewed reported that graduates were treated with suspicion and were dismissive of the benefits a higher education might provide. The report went on to say, "Non-graduates knew almost nothing about hospitality degrees and tended to overplay the aspirations of graduates believing they would only want high level jobs and would not want to get their hands dirty." Several managers in the sample believed that graduates 'expected too much too early' (p20). Several interviewees commented on graduates being 'too intellectual' or being unwilling 'to roll their sleeves up' (p20). In some cases interviewers were told that non-qualified managers liked to 'expose inexperienced graduates' (p20).

Managers without qualifications were also more likely to accuse graduates of wanting to be promoted too quickly and of being unwilling to learn the business. In fact interviews with graduates themselves were reported as confirming, "most of them were realistic about what was required of them. They realised that their degrees were not a passport to anything and once in their first job would be judged on their performance." (p. 20).

Interviews with senior managers in large organisations, and from the questionnaire data from small firms suggested that those actually employing graduates are highly satisfied with graduates. Hospitality graduates were frequently favoured over other disciplines mainly because hospitality graduates 'understood the industry' and 'were more likely to stay the course' (p18). A principal officer in social services said "I recently conducted interviews for a management post and one of the ladies I interviewed had a degree in hospitality management. I noticed that she was much more confident and had more transferable skills than some of the other candidates and this made her the best candidate for the post" (p18). One hotel manager spoke of hospitality graduates' 'passion' (p18) about the hotel industry. Commitment from hospitality graduates was seen as very important and one hotel manager who was interviewed said that this gave hospitality graduates 'the edge' (p18). Even the owners of small firms employing graduates expressed high levels of satisfaction with the graduates in their employ. When small firm owners employing graduates were given a series of positive and negative comments about graduates over 90 per cent agreed with positive statements and substantial minorities disagreed with the negative statements.

The report confirmed that qualifications have a large impact on careers in hospitality management, though this varied between sectors. It was clear that in the larger organisation there were points in the hierarchy that could not be passed without a degree qualification. Increasingly the most senior managers were expected to have MBAs or some other post-graduate qualification. The importance of a degree at unit management level was an issue where there was some variation between organisations. "Interviewees were unanimous in recognising the key importance of management skills at unit management level" (p15). Many organisations were requiring unit managers to be 'more entrepreneurial' and recognised that unit managers were often running substantial businesses in their own right. In these cases, they recognised the qualities that a graduate could bring to unit

management. In other cases, graduates were expected to undertake unit management though they might ultimately be destined for more senior management positions. The report stated, "As the industry continues to develop and managerial roles and companies become more complex, the nature of the unit management role will also increasingly require the skills and knowledge that graduates bring". This observation is interesting considering Paul Slattery's recent criticism of hospitality educators at the Council for Hospitality Management Education's recent conference (May, 2003). His other criticism that there is an over concern for operational issues in these courses is also not supported by the evidence from these interviews.

One of the key areas for criticism by self appointed critics of higher education provision is that it is not providing the food and beverage skills that the industry requires. The point was frequently made by Gary Hawkes and a string of others. The report observed, "It would appear from this research that these accusations are groundless and that current higher education practice of moving away from developing technical skills to a detailed appreciation of operating systems and concepts is actually what the vast majority of the industry now requires of its managers." (p7). Managers are much more likely to need to consider the changes in customer eating fashions and their impact on popular restaurants than how to butcher a side of beef, or knock out frangipani. Managers in the early stages of their careers need to be able to cope with the tech-

nical operational complexity of hospitality operations, "but it is only at the extremes of the industry that high level technical knowledge and skills are really required" (p7). That said, it is highly unlikely that managers are required to regularly step into an operational role to replace a member of staff, and if they are there are considerable opportunity costs because managers are not doing important tasks.

The report commented on supposed skill deficiencies of graduate, "In fact there is no evidence to suggest that graduates from hospitality management programmes are demonstrably deficient in any of the skill areas identified by industry as important in line managers" (p6). The report confirmed that people management skills were very important in the industry and the graduates were given a good grounding in this, but recognised that these skills were ultimately developed with experience. Whilst the report acknowledge the criticism that higher education was overly academic and limited in its concern for developing practical skills the research found that, "The clear message from all industry sectors, both public and private, was that business acumen and commercial awareness is fundamental to the future success of managers at all levels and to the success of the industry as a whole" (p6). Again the evidence from these interviews is that graduates are well prepared in business skills and commercial acumen.

The report also pointed to the transferable skills elements of programmes. The ability to communicate effectively in a variety of forms was seen as important skills developed in higher education. Whether preparing a formal report for senior executives or presenting a team briefing to service staff just before opening, graduates stand out as offering a range of skills that others may not have developed. As industry moves to a more devolved pattern of management, all managers need to be able to tackle and resolve day to day operational problems as well as those of a more tactical and strategic nature. Again graduates are seen as offering competence in this area.

The industry continues to change rapidly and the role of managers along with it. Part of this change signals a move to empowered and participative forms of management. Although some companies, particularly in the hotel sector strongly favour graduates from the more controlled regime of the 'hotel school' many others are looking for people who can think 'outside the box' (p5). The interviewees from across all six sectors confirmed the view that they were looking for people who are flexible and are able apply a range of skills to complex and changing situations. Specific technical skills and knowledge were much less important than a ability to analyse and resolve problems or unexpected situations as they arose. Recent events such as the foot and mouth, and BSE crises, and the downturn in tourism following high profile terrorist attacks confirm just how important these skills can be when events in the environment result in sudden shifts in consumer demand.

When managers were questioned on the advantages of employing a graduate they focused on features that are best described as the qualities of gradueness, such as intellectual ability, powers of analysis, speed of thinking, the application of a range of ideas and concepts, and the 'fresh eye' that graduates could bring. One manager in the restaurant sector believed that graduates brought a 'wider vision' to the company. The report observed, "hospitality graduates themselves had different views of the usefulness of their degrees. They valued the general transferable skills which a degree had provided, and specifically mentioned the work placement experience. Graduates believed that they were more 'prone to think before acting' compared to their non-graduate colleagues. Some of them also believed that having a degree improved their speed of progress and ability to do a job effectively." (p20) .

Some graduates commented that a degree formed the basis for learning by subsequent experience. Specific skills that graduates believed they had acquired on their degrees includ-

ed writing skills, presentation skills and time management skills. In general, graduates thought that having a degree had taught them to be more self-disciplined and had increased their self-confidence and motivation. Most graduates felt that their degree had helped with career progression and had acted as a stepping stone into their first managerial job.

Although there were some criticism of higher education's tendency to focus on hotels at the expense of other sectors, the main report and the six sector reports suggests a positive match between higher education provision and careers in hospitality management. Indeed, some might conclude that as these programmes are meeting industry needs they do not need changing. 'If it ain't broke don't fix it', to use the well known American phrase. Unfortunately, there are sound academic and educational issues which now need to be addressed. Both industry practitioners and graduates themselves value intellectual skills and qualities of the reflective practitioner. Award titles need to reflect a curriculum that is more concerned with developing theories and laying down understanding of scientific principles. The subject of hospitality needs to be studied as a social phenomenon so as to better understand its commercial context. For some the subject is now at a crossroads (Botterill, 2000; Brotherton & Woods, 2000; Morrison, 2002) and that there is a need to break out from the vocational action domain (Airey and Tribe, 2000).

Hospitality Studies

The model developed by Airey & Tribe (2000) and displayed in Figure 1 suggests several potential directions for future development. Clearly the development of 'reflective practitioners' is consistent with the 'reflective vocational' dimension of the Airey and Tribe model. One option is to develop a study programme that increases the theoretical and conceptual underpinning of hospitality activities. Fundamentally, however, hospitality educators need to develop the academic study of hospitality as a way of better informing the management of hospitality (Brotherton & Wood, 2000; Morrison 2002). Morrison (2002:163) says, "If hospitality management research is to progress, those associated with it must reflect more deeply over its essential nature and practical manifestations", and Brotherton and Wood (2000) argue that there is an urgent need for both researchers and practitioners to challenge complacency and unquestioning mindsets. Morrison (2002:163) goes on to say that as an academic discipline hospitality, "... may benefit from introspection in the sense that its very epistemological basis and the conceptualisation of its nature, incidence and forms... to liberate it from current functionalism." Whilst this paper is largely concerned with programmes of study, the nature of the academic field of hospitality is at the heart of programmes of study. Fundamentally, hospitality must be established on a sound social science base. The current preoccupation with management and relevance to industry is an intellectual cul de sac, or as Botterill (2000:193) describes it, "a closed expert system in which experts speak to experts in an ever decreasing circle, defending conventional ways of gaining knowledge."

In Search of Hospitality: theoretical perspectives and debates (Lashley & Morrison, 2000) opened some avenues of study linking back into social sciences. Hospitality and hospitable behaviour are a key aspect of human society and as a consequence, a broad array of social sciences can contribute to our understanding of the subject. Though some find the line of enquiry somewhat arcane (Slattery,

2002) the study of hospitality from the social and private domains, does have relevance to commercial practice and hospitality management. Warde and Martins (2000) show that consumers are often evaluating commercial hospitality settings against expectations gained from private settings, and they suggest hospitality in the private domain is seen as more authentic. Another recent study of the emotions of hospitality through special meal occasions (Lashley, Morrison, & Randall, 2003) suggests that the relationship is more complex. Findings show that the language of private hospitality is used to eval-

uate feelings in commercial hospitality, being made 'to feel at home', 'the host made us feel welcome' and 'there was a homely feeling to the setting.' However, people will choose either private or commercial settings for their special meal occasions depending on what they want from the occasion. Lynch and McWhannel's (2000) excellent work on 'commercial homes', also provides some interesting insights into the relationship between commercial and private hospitality within this under researched but highly significant sector. Bed and breakfast and guest house settings embrace the commercial, the private and social domains of hospitality and include some important tensions that need to be understood in this important segment of tourism provision. The study of hospitality in its various domains (Lashley, 2000) has direct relevance to the commercial provision in the hospitality industry, and social scientist provide valuable insights as ways of thinking about and analysing the world.

Selwyn (2000), for example, gives some valuable insights into the anthropology of hospitality. This allows future managers to appreciate the different cultural perspectives on hospitality and the social significance accorded to hospitality and hospitality in different societies and at different times. Similarly Telfer's (2000) work on the 'philosophy of hospitality' provides valuable perspectives on the topic and also on how philosophers develop ideas that can improve reflection amongst practitioners. Walton's (2000) *The British Seaside: Holidays And Resorts In The Twentieth Century* presents another example of an insightful account of the social, political, economic, and technical influences that led to the growth and decline of British seaside holiday resorts. Managers of the future need this sense of history and the forces at work in society that a social historian engages.

These are just some of the avenues opened up in the book providing opportunities for educators to build a more analytical framework from which to study the management of hospitality operations. So if hospitality education is to be located in the more 'reflective vocational' domain of the Airey & Tribe (2000) model, there is ample material to draw upon. The work of sociologists, social historians, anthropologists, philosophers, social psychologist, and organisational behaviourists all have contributions to make that enhance our understanding of the concepts and theories that influence both hospitality organisations and the contexts in which they operate. Theory aids reflection and informs practice (Kolb, 1983), thereby reinforcing the development of the reflective practitioner and providing the flexible mindset capable of reading and responding quickly to change in the environment.

In fact we could go further, Tribe (2002) suggests that tourism educators need to go beyond the concept of the reflective practitioner so as to develop 'philosophical practitioners'. Using the two continua supporting the model in Figure 1, Tribe argues that there is a need to engage reflection and action, as well as vocation and liberal dimensions in education programmes. This approach has the virtue of producing more rounded graduates. It suggests a powerful means of releasing hospitality educators from the tyranny of relevance.

Educators should not be afraid to follow studies that may not appear directly relevant to the subject specialism. Nor should they be afraid to describe themselves as intellectuals. Their duty is to develop in students a strong spirit of enquiry that will support a commitment to life long learning. If this goal is achieved, graduates continue to develop, learn and adapt to changing circumstances throughout their lives. This point is fundamental to the purpose of education and the educator's duty to students. Most educators enter the profession because they have a commitment to knowledge and want to pass on this enthusiasm to others. Although preparing people for particular occupations educators should not forget their duty to students as individuals. The tyrants of the relevant should not be allowed to deflect them from responsibilities to empower students through education and the pursuit of knowledge.

Similarly educators need not be afraid to express professional judgements about the nature of the curriculum and the sort of people required for the hospitality industry. The tyrants of the relevant want hospitality education to be tied to 'benchmark statements' (QAA, 2000) and other supposed predictors of the knowledge and skills possessed by hospitality graduates, as though they were 'cup-a-soup' mangers, instantly industry-ready on graduation. They see higher education as just another supplier, requiring product specifications so that employers know what they are getting. The problem with this view is twofold. Firstly, judgements are always historical and usually influenced by the commentators own working context. So the fact that Hawkes and Slattery criticise higher education for quite different reasons is a product of their mutual inability to see the bigger picture and the array of interests that educators service. Hawkes criticises higher education for too little attention to operational and technical skill development, whilst Slattery's concern is that there is too much and not enough preparation for the boardroom.

The second problem is that tyrants of the relevant do not always know what it is that they do not know. Their perceptions of the skills needed and the qualities required of managers are limited by the boundaries of their own knowledge. A recent research project exploring skill shortages and skill gaps in Manchester's tourism sector (Lashley, Thomas & Rowson, 2002) identified a number of undeclared and latent skill gaps amongst hospitality managers facing recruitment and retention problems. Not one of the interviewees recognised their own skill deficiencies in labour management practices or in the skills needed to develop Manchester as a quality tourism destination. Rowley et al, (DfEE, 2000) make a similar point in their study of hospitality skills. They suggest that there was no evidence of a deliberate reluctance or unwillingness to report skill deficiencies, rather they were a result of managers' own limited perceptions. They went on to say, "We found few managers who thought outside the traditional modes of operating, or anticipated how new technology could and would impact on their business in the medium-to-long term. There was a widespread failure to appreciate the importance of foreign language skills in this tourist related industry. All of these deficiencies reflect the most fundamental deficiency of all: managerial skills at all levels." (DfEE, 2000: 12)

In these circumstances educators need to take the lead and make some judgements about the curriculum, skills and mindsets that they are trying to develop based on professional judgement and research. They have to resist being entrapped by the overly slavish commitment to the relevant, and develop approaches that are required by graduates as citizens, empowered individuals, and as employees and employers in hospitality management roles.

Tribe's notion of the 'philosophical practitioner' is an extremely attractive one. It suggests an attention to the personal needs of individuals and the development of the qualities of gradateness that industry will need in the future. Tribe's concern is for the development of tourism practitioners who will make up a "creative and reflective workforce to further the debate about the destiny of the tourism world, and an active workforce to create a tourism society that has been deeply thought through." (2002:354). These words might easily be adapted to express ambitions for hospitality graduates. They act as an alternative strategy to the tyranny of relevance and imply educators might advocate a "critical social science whose aim is to transform" (Botterill, 2000: 194).

The study of philosophy, sociology and social psychology are topics that need to be included in hospitality management education. Philosophy teaches individuals various ways of thinking and analysing situations. Sociology develops an understanding of society and the social forces that shape events and social psychology helps explain behaviour of individuals, groups and organisations. A similar case could be made for teaching art and drama to those destined to hospitality occupations. That said, the key point is the need to focus on the

education of rounded flexible, intellectual young men and women who will bring both critical thinking and a life long commitment to learning to their working lives. Ultimately it is these qualities of gradueness that are required by all involved.

This section has suggested a number of possible ways that hospitality education can escape from the tyranny of relevance. An essential first step is to move away from hospitality management as a title

for these awards, sections, departments, and professional bodies. 'Hospitality studies' allows a more rounded study *of* hospitality and thereby better informs the study *for* hospitality. This title suggests a more all embracing definition if we allow 'of and for' dimensions. It resolves the somewhat false dichotomy of hospitality management or hospitality studies (Taylor and Edgar, 1996), because the study of hospitality allows for a general broad spectrum of enquiry and the study *for* allows studies that support the management of hospitality. A comparison with 'business studies' reveals a similar approach in the provision. Some content develops critical and analytical skills whilst other elements deal with the more pragmatic topics concerned with managing businesses.

Conclusion

It is not surprising that hospitality management education has been 'a contested terrain'. Its origins in a diverse yet rather under-educated industry has meant that a number of self appointed commentators have called for higher education for the hospitality industry to be carved in their own image, and many have remained suspicious of graduates and theorising in general. The consequence is that courses in hospitality management tend to be ruled by a sort of crass pragmatism summed up Airey and Tribe's phrase. Paradoxically, this somewhat slavish concern for industry relevance is neither in the long-term interest of the industry nor of the graduates as future managers and citizens.

Two recent reports provide a systematic understanding of the current features of hospitality management education and the impact of a higher education on careers. The first report describes programmes that are in effect applied management studies with a significant proportion of laboratory work performed in specialist areas through which students develop technical and operation skills. This report also showed that programmes involve a high degree of contact with industry through formal work placements, and through informal student experiences in part-time and holiday employment. The second report looked at management careers and the impact

of a higher education on careers. It revealed increasingly sophisticated management structures within the industry with growing use of graduates at all levels of the organisation. It also showed the key benefits of employing graduates were in the ways of thinking and the transferable skills they brought with them. Most importantly, many interviewees commented on the need for future managers to be flexible and able to 'think out of the box'. Both reports do however confirm that hospitality management programmes are locked in culture of pragmatism that creates an inadequate base for the academic development of hospitality as a field of study.

This paper argues that hospitality educators need to develop courses that move away from the somewhat restricted programmes concerned almost exclusively with subjects deemed to be relevant to hospitality management. A more explicit concern with developing students' intellectual abilities will better serve both the industry and them as individuals. Whether educators choose to articulate this through the metaphor of the 'reflective practitioner' or the 'philosophical practitioner' a change of title to hospitality studies allows the study of hospitality that better informs the study for hospitality. Fundamentally, engagement with the study of hospitality through an array of social science disciplines will secure a more substantial foundation on which to study for hospitality management.

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