HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN GHANA: PRACTITIONERS' AND EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This paper assessed industry practitioners' and educators' views on the competencies required by the hospitality industry in Ghana. Data was collected through a survey of 111 respondents. Means were used to rank the competencies, whilst T- test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to explore the differences in competencies perceived to be required by the industry practitioners and educators. It was found out in terms of importance that practitioners preferred leadership, administrative, conceptual and technical competencies whilst educators favoured conceptual, leadership, administrative and technical competencies. Except for ability to maintain hygiene standards and ability to develop contingency plans, there were generally no statistically significant differences between the views of practitioners and educators with regards to competencies required by the industry. It is recommended that there should be more collaboration between hospitality practitioners and educators in Ghana.

Key words: Hospitality, competencies, practitioners, educators, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is one of the largest and fastest growing industries that provides employment, revenue and makes substantial contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many countries (Ottenbacher, Harrington & Persa, 2009). The industry is estimated to employ about 10% of the global work force both directly and indirectly (British Hospitality Report, 2013, Wold Tourism and Travel Council, 2018). In Ghana, the tourism and hospitality sector is seen as an engine of growth and development. The industry is said to have employed 340,000 people in 2011 (Ministry of Tourism [MoT], 2013).

In spite of its importance, the industry has difficulty in attracting and maintaining well motivated, trained and qualified employees (Khan & Krishanamurthy, 2016; Ottenbacher, Gnoth & Jones, 2006). This is because the industry is perceived to be unattractive as workers are confronted with a lot of challenges. These include poor image and remuneration, improper placement in the organizational structure, lack of career progression and growth as well as odd working hours (Jones, 2002; Wan, Wong and Kong, 2014). To provide qualified employees for the industry, a number of tertiary educational institutions have introduced a number of programmes and courses in hospitality and tourism management (Brotherton & Woods, 2008). People trained by these institutions are expected to have the right competencies so as to be able to occupy management and supervisory positions in the hospitality industry (Ezeuduji, Chibe & Nyathela, 2017; Starkey, Hactchuel, & Tempest, 2004).

In Ghana, the training of students for the hospitality industry was initially done by vocational institutions such as the Hotel, Tourism & Catering Training Institute (HOTCATT), with the aim of improving the skills of workers in the hospitality industry. The Polytechnics in 1992 were upgraded to the status of tertiary institutions which enabled them to award Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) in Hotel Catering and Institutional Management (HCIM). In 1996, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) was the first to begin a B.Sc.

Tourism degree programme under the erstwhile Department of Geography and Tourism. UCC now has a Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management which provides both Tourism and Hospitality Management programmes from the undergraduate to the Ph.D. levels. Also, a number of private and public universities and some polytechnics have degree programmes in tourism management and hospitality management at the HND and bachelor's degree levels. These developments have led to an improved supply of qualified human resources to the hospitality industry in Ghana. Yet the question as to whether graduates of these institutions possess the right competencies required by the hospitality industry remains a contested issue especially among practitioners and educators.

Central and Western Regions of Ghana are two neighbouring regions. The Central Region, with Cape Coast as the regional capital, has eight per cent of accommodation distribution in the country (GTA, 2016). The Region also has 23 star- rated hotels and 17 graded restaurants as well as numerous guest houses and budget hotels (GTA, 2016). The Central Region has some of Ghana's most popular tourist attractions including the Kakum National Park and the Elmina Castle. It is also known as the citadel of education in Ghana as it has some of the best secondary schools in Ghana. The region also has two public universities and a polytechnic; University of Cape Coast (UCC) which is a pioneer in higher education in tourism and hospitality and University of Education, Winneba (UEW) as well as the Cape Coast Polytechnic. Currently UCC runs hospitality management programmes from the bachelor degree level to doctorate level whiles Cape Coast Polytechnic runs a Higher National Diploma in Hospitality Management.

Western Region is located on the western boundary of the Central Region. It has Sekondi-Takoradi, a twin city as its capital. There are 59 star-rated hotels and 24 graded restaurants in the region as well as numerous guest houses and budget hotels (GTA, 2016). There are also has tertiary institutions which run tourism and hospitality management programmes. These are Takoradi Polytechnic, Ghana Institute of Management

and Public Administration (GIMPA) and Ghana Technology University College (GTUC). The Region has experienced a significant growth in the hospitality industry as a result of increased business and leisure activities resulting from the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the region. The Western Region has pristine beaches, many large rivers and the famous Nzulezu Stilts village. Central and Western Regions were chosen for this study because, Central Region has a university, which is a pioneer in hospitality management training in the country whilst the Western Region has a full-fledged hospitality industry which employs a number of graduates with hospitality and tourism management degrees and Higher National Diplomas from the training institutions in both the Central and Western Regions.

The importance of quality human resources in the hospitality industry cannot be over emphasized. The right human resource gives an organization a competitive edge over its competitors. In all service industries, the human resource is one of the most highly-rated assets (Lee, Khan & Ko, 2008). To this end, tertiary institutions in Ghana are running programmes in hospitality and tourism management in order to meet the human resource needs of the industry. In spite of this, the National Tourism Development Plan of Ghana (2013- 2027), highlights a huge gap between the quality of human resource requirements of the industry and the human resources available in Ghana. The low quality of human resource has been identified as one of the factors responsible for the non-attainment of high professional standards by the hospitality and tourism industry in the country. It is therefore imperative to assess the views of educators (who are the suppliers) and practitioners (who are on the demand side) of what competencies are required for the industry.

Most studies on competency requirements of the industry have focussed on those of the hotel segment (Baum, 1990; Chung-Herrera, Enz & Laukau, 2003; Hsu and Gregory, 1995; Kay & Russette, 2000; Lin, 2002; Nelson & Dopson 2001; Siu 1998; Tas 1988, Tas, LaBrecque & Clayton, 1996; Tsai, Goh, Huffman & Wu,

2006). The relatively few studies that looked at the hospitality industry in general, focussed on the general competencies for the industry to the neglect of the specific competencies needed by specific segments of the industry (Ashley et al., 1995; Breiter & Clements, 1996; Enz et al., 1993; Kriegl, 2000; Su et al., 1997; Tesone & Ricci, 2006). Okeiyi et al. (1994) and Horng and Lu (2006) are the few that focussed solely on the food and beverage segment solely. These studies were mostly conducted in other jurisdictions other than Ghana. This study therefore seeks to fill the gap of competencies required for both the hotel and restaurant segments of the industry, particularly in the Ghanaian context.

Also, it is important a curricula are reviewed from time to time to reflect new trends in the industry (Bharwani & Juahari, 2017; Koenigsfeld et al., 2011). This will ensure that, students are given training that reflect contemporary trends, to prepare them adequately for the constantly changing industry. However, some of the courses taught in some tertiary institutions may not match the needs of industry. This situation is likely to result in a mismatch between labour demand and supply in the hospitality industry. It is therefore important to investigate hospitality management competencies from the perspectives of both practitioners and educators in order to identify the gaps between the demand and supply of labour with the requisite competencies. How well the curriculum meets the expectations of students and industry on the required set of competencies needed in the work place is of paramount importance to business performance (Starkey et al., 2004). Both industry and academia have significant roles to play in developing the competencies of students. This is because for students to develop competencies, they must acquire knowledge and also have the opportunity to put the knowledge to practice (Quinn et al., 1996).

It is also imperative to assess the views of academia and industry, in an attempt to bridge the competencies gap. This is because academia is expected to produce the right calibre of human resource for the hospitality industry (Koenigsfeld, Perdue, Young & Woods 2011). The 2013-2027 National Tourism Development Plan for Ghana recommends that studies should be conducted on the required human resource needs of the industry by academia to bridge the gap in the human resource needs of the industry. This study therefore seeks to assess the hospitality management competencies that are required by the hospitality industry in Ghana from the perspectives of both practitioners and educators with particular emphasis on the hotel and restaurant segments of the industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Theoretical Underpinning - Experimentalism

Authors basically categorise philosophies of education into perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, reconstructionism and experimentalism. Perennialism is an inflexible philosophy of education. Training in this case is rigid in structure. The curriculum is made up of courses like history, logic, foreign language, moral development among others.

The essentialist education philosophy on the other hand places emphasis on traditional education, mind development and core curriculum by defining reality based on the physical world. Existentialism, advocates for a personal interpretation of the world, where the definition of reality is independent on the individual. Therefore, learners are helped to know themselves and their place in society. Progressivists build on the previous philosophy of existentialism and believe education should focus on the whole learner, rather than content or educator. In their view, the curriculum content should be drawn from questions and interests of the student. Contrary to this view is the reconstructionist, who propose that education should be revolutionary in nature. It argues that education is expected to create a new order. Students are therefore trained to spearhead this new social order.

Turning out students to perfectly fit into the field of work and society is related to the experimentalist philosophy of education. Experimentalism is an educational philosophy that stresses on the achievement of specific results. This philosophy supports the assertion that the world is dynamic and therefore competencies required

by workers are likely to change over a period of time. Curriculum therefore must be adjusted to reflect these changing needs (Klingstedt; 1972 in Millar et al., 2010). Moreover, experimentalists believe that the truth is what works right now and proposes curriculum improvement by constantly researching to evaluate the requirement of the world from the student. The educator is expected to encourage learners to participate in discovering and experiencing the world in which they live (Erkilic, 2008).

Hospitality Management Competencies

Competency has been defined as the knowledge, skills, and attributes as well as the connections between having these and being able to perform a task effectively (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson & McGrath, 1996). Wynne and Stringer (1997), explained this further by indicating that competency are the things that people 'have to be' (personality), 'know' (knowledge) and 'do' (skills) to achieve the expected outputs from their jobs. These skills make the individual employable (Hind, Moss & McKellan, 2007). One school of thought is that competency is an individual concept. Hodges & Burchell (2003) argue that, competency is more of an individual characteristic rather than an acquired skill. Similarly, some of the earliest studies by Boyatzis (1982) and McClelland (1973), described a competent person as an individual possessing personal attributes which ensures superior performance. In the view of Spencer & Spencer (1993), competency is the basic feature of an individual which relates positively to a superior performance.

Others have also defined competency by relating it to the learning and working environment. In the views of Delamarc & Winterton (2005), cited in Kim, Seo & Hyun, 2011), 'competencies are the abilities and skills to integrate education and training and align both the needs of labour and promote mobility for individuals. Also, Millar et al. (2010) argues that, the skills, abilities and knowledge is what the student is expected to acquire from the classroom. However, an exact description of what constitutes competency depends on the specific industry involved as asserted by Millar, Mao & Moreo (2010). Thus

every industry including hospitality has specific competency requirements.

Practitioners' Perspective on Hospitality Management Competency Requirements

There have been a number of studies to assess competencies required by the hospitality industry from the perspective of practitioners. Nolan et al. (2010) found out that in Ireland, industry practitioner rated customer service, cost control and teamwork as well as maintenance of professional ethics and standards as critically important. Among other things industry practitioners endorsed teamwork and cooperation as an important ingredient for graduates to be successful in the industry (Pang, Wong, Leung & Coombes 2018). Okeiyi et. al (1994) also reported that acting in an ethical manner, taking leadership positions and supervision are vital skills. In another study by Tas (1988), 75 top US hotel managers ranked problem solving skills, ethical standards, professional appearances, communication skills, good customer relation skills and ability to establish and maintain a working relationship with employees as crucial. In Korea, Kim, Park & Choi, (2017) reported that industry practitioners stress on communication ability as an essential competency for the tourism and hospitality industry. Although these studies were conducted on different segments of the industry and at different places, there seem to be an agreement among practitioners with regard to ethical competency and communication skills.

In a related study, by Baum (1990), hotel managers identified skills for solving guest problems, hygiene and safety compliance, communication skills, good working relationship with employees, professional appearance, customer relations, and employee motivation as essential competencies of a hotel manager. Enz et al. (1993) also reported that taking leadership positions and communicating with clients were important capabilities for the hospitality industry. Ashley et al. (1994) used a brainstorming session involving industry executives to unearth competencies vital for the industry found out that people skills, creative thinking ability, financial skills, communication skills, service orientation,

problem identification and problem–solving skills were some qualities associated with competency. The findings by Ashley et al. (1994), Baum (1990) and Enz et al. (1993), on the relevance of communication skills also coincide with the findings of Ruetzler, Baker, Reynolds, Taylor & Allen (2014). Breiter and Clements (1996) and Hsu and Gregory (1995) who also highlighted human-relations and communication skills as being unique for the hospitality industry. Human relations skills run through the results of all the studies because the hospitality industry is a people-centred industry and hence the need for such competencies.

One of the few studies that highlighted conceptual competency from industry was Tas et al. (1996). Using Sandwith's (1993) competency model, interpersonal, leadership and conceptual skills were reported by hotel managers as essential to the industry. However, in a study on the competencies of Chefs in Greece, Zopiatis (2010) found technical competencies to be the most important. Kay and Russette (2000) employing a mixed methods and also adapting Sandwith's (1993) competency model, found leadership, technical and interpersonal competencies to be highly required by the hospitality industry. In Spain, Agut et al. (2003) sampled the views of hotel and restaurant managers. Both categories of respondents stressed on technical management competencies for their respective segments. Also, industry practitioner rated communication skills, emotional intelligence, guest request management, good customer relations and diverse cultural knowledge as essential competencies for the industry (Tsai et al., 2006). The study by Tsai et al. (2006), was one of the earliest studies that brought emotional intelligence to the fore despite this competency being associated with successful performance in the competency literature in general (Boyatzis, 2008; Boyatzis & Ratti, 2009; Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012). Also, a review of competency literature by Bharwani & Juahari (2017) highlighted the need for "hospitality intelligence" of which emotional intelligence is an integral component for the industry. In agreement with Bharwani & Juahari (2017), Gibbs & Slevitch (2018) have strongly advocated for the inclusion of emotional competence in the hospitality curriculum.

Educators' Perspective of Hospitality Management Competency Requirements

Studies on the views of academia on competency requirement issues are quite limited (Enz et al., 1993; Millar et al., 2010; Okeiyi et al., 1994; Ruetzler et al., 2014; Tsai et al., 2006; Yuan, Chung & Gregory, 2017). This might be so because, the views of industry practitioners is thought to be more relevant. However, the views of educators are also important since they "produce" the required human resource for the industry.

In a study by Enz et al. (1993), educators identified problem identification, conceptual thinking and current industry knowledge as the requisite competencies for the industry. Okeiyi et al. (1994) reported in their study that educators perceived human relations, customer relations, leadership skills and supervision as the competencies for the food and beverage segment of the industry. However, this study distinguished human relations competency from customer relations competency even though in practice human relations competencies encompass customer relations competencies as well.

Using a web survey, Tsai et al. (2006) reported communication (oral and written) skills, relationship with other departments, emotional intelligence, new staff orientation, employee motivation, contingency decision plan, health and safety regulations implementation, personal policies and management procedures as some of the competencies required for the successful operation of hotel businesses from the perspective of academia. Millar et al. (2010) employing an exploratory qualitative research technique reported that, educators in food and beverage highlighted conceptual and technical skills which was in agreement with that of industry. However, they differed on interpersonal competency domain. Findings in other studies have shown educators rating competencies higher than industry practitioners (Ruetzler et al., 2014). Generally, similarities and differences have been reported in the views of academia and industry with respect

to competencies required for the industry with Jiang & Alexakis (2017) and Yuan, Chung & Gregory (2017) being some of the recent ones.

METHODOLOGY

To arrive at a sample size for the study, a list of all registered hotels and restaurants in the Central and Western Regions was obtained from the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA). For hotels, human resource managers or general managers of star rated hotels and graded restaurants were purposively selected. General Managers were selected through simple random sampling. As shown in Table 1, there were four and five 3-star hotels in the Central and Western Regions respectively and all were selected for the study because of the limited number. For those hotels in the 2-star category, there were seven in the Central Region and 16 in the Western Region. All seven in the Central Region were selected and half the numbers of those in the Western

Region were selected. For hotels in the 1-star category, half and a quarter were selected from the Central and Western Regions respectively. For the restaurant segment, all grade 1 and 2 restaurants in the study area were selected with half the numbers in the grade 3 category being sampled for the study. In all, 17 hotels and 10 restaurants were selected from the Central Region. For the Western Region, 26 hotels and 17 restaurants were selected.

Educators on the other hand were sampled from the higher learning institutions offering hospitality management programmes in the Central and Western Regions. There were two institutions in the Central Region and three in the Western Region. Due to the relatively smaller numbers of educators, a census of all instructors/lecturers of the institutions comprising 19 in the Central Region and 45 in the Western Region were used for the study.

Table 1: Sample Selection for Hotels and Restaurants

Types of Hospitality establishment	Total number of establishments		Number of establishments and respondents selected	
Hotel category	Central	Western	Central	Western
3-star	4	5	4	5
2-star	7	16	7	8
1-star	12	38	6	13
Restaurant category				
Grade 1	1	2	1	2
Grade 2	2	7	2	7
Grade 3	14	15	7	8
Total	40	83	27	43

Source: GTA, 2016

In all, there were a total of 111 respondents out of the estimated sample size of 134. Educators were made up of 47 hospitality lecturers whilst practitioners comprised of 64 managers comprising of 43 from hotels and 21 from restaurants as six of the restaurant managers did not respond to the questionnaires.

The questionnaire for industry practitioners was divided into three parts. Part

A required managers to show the extent to which they agreed that the listed competencies were vital for managerial positions in the hospitality industry on a five-point Likert scale. The background characteristics of managers were in part B and Part C which required them to respond to questions on the characteristics of their establishments. For educators, the questionnaire was in two parts. Part A sought their level of

agreement to listed competencies with regards to how important they are to the hospitality industry on a five-point Likert scale. Part B solicited responses on their background characteristics. The questionnaire was designed along the competency domains proposed by Sandwith (1993) which are conceptual, interpersonal, leadership, administrative and technical competencies. For this study, interpersonal and leadership competency domains were joined together. This was because the researchers believed that leadership competencies required some form of interpersonal competencies.

The advantage of Sandwith (1993) competency scale over others is the ease with which various knowledge, skills and attitudes can be put under each domain. An extensive review of the competency literature of including Koenigsfeld et al. (2011), Millar et al. (2010) and Okeiyi et al. (1994) helped in identifying the various competencies that were used. These competencies were then placed under each domain for respondents to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement regarding their importance to managerial and supervisory positions in the hospitality industry. The technical, leadership, conceptual and administrative domains were made up of seven, five, four and five items respectively. In all, 21 competency items were presented.

In order to test the validity of the research instrument, the field work was preceded by a pre-testing of the research instruments in two higher learning institutions comprising six hotels and four restaurants in the Accra Metropolis. In all, twenty questionnaires were distributed, collected and analysed. Pre-testing offered the researcher the opportunity to modify some of the questions before actual fieldwork. The actual fieldwork took five weeks to complete. The questionnaires were self-administered. In all, 111 of the completed questionnaires were found to be useful for analysis, representing a response rate of 82.8%. The data collected was coded entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The averages of respondents' rating of the competencies were ranked. Also, T- test was employed to analyse variations in the responses of academia and industry on the competency requirements for the industry.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents
Most of the respondents (92.1%) were working on a full time basis. Although the hospitality industry is said to have a lot of casual staff, this is usually not the case with managers as evident from Table 2. Also, more than half (59.4%) of the respondents were males. This finding however, is in agreement with the findings of Mensah and Blankson (2014) which reported more male managers than females in hotels in Accra. With regard to level of education, more than half (55.0%) had obtained diplomas, 36.7% were first degree holders, with only 8.3% being post graduates. On the academic qualification of educators almost all (97.9%) were Postgraduates and this is to be expected as higher academic qualification is an important requirement for employment in academia. From Table 2, there were slightly more females (53.2%) in academia than males (46.8%) with most of them within the ages of 30-39 years. Also, 95.7% of the educators were working on full-time basis.

Competency Requirements of the Hospitality Industry by Practitioners and Educators
The findings showed that managers ranked leadership competencies higher than the other competency domains (Table 3). Leadership domain (Domain mean= 4.53), was followed by administrative (Domain mean= 4.47), conceptual (Domain mean=4.36) and technical (Domain mean= 4.29) competency domains respectively. Within the technical competency domain, the highest ranked competency was the ability to handle emergency situations (Mean=4.50) whiles networking with people was the least rated (Mean=4.19) by industry practitioners. With regard to the competencies within the leadership domain, practitioners ranked the ability to motivate others (Mean=4.74) above all others.

Educators on the other hand favoured conceptual competency domain (mean = 4.54) followed closely by leadership domain (mean = 4.53). Within the conceptual domain, creative thinking (mean = 4.68) was the most important competency

to educators. Also, ability to develop contingency plans (mean = 4.60) was also considered highly by educators.

Moreover, teamwork ability (mean = 4.72) was the most important competency within the leadership domain with appreciation of individual of individual differences (mean = 4.20) being the least required competency. Safeguarding confidential information (4.68) and maintaining of hygiene standards (mean = 4.58) within the administrative and technical domains respectively were the most preferred specific competencies.

Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-demographic Variable	Practitioners		Educators	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender				
Male	38	59.4	22	59.4
Female	26	40.6	25	40.6
Marital status				
Married	42	65.6	39	65.6
Unmarried	22	34.4	8	34.4
Age				
Below 30	20	31.3	2	31.3
30-39	18	28.1	22	28.1
40-49	15	23.4	14	23.4
>50	11	17.2	9	17.2
Work status				
Full time	58	92.1	45	92.1
Part time	5	7.9	2	7.9
Diploma	33	55.0	-	55.0
First degree	22	36.7	1	36.7
Post-graduate	5	8.3	46	8.3

Generally, educators rated competencies higher than practitioners. However, the differences in their rating were not statistically significant as all competency domains showed no significant differences at the $P \leq 0.05$ significance level. Although maintaining hygiene standards, ability to develop contingency plans within the technical and conceptual domains respectively showed significant differences.

Ranking of Competencies in order of Importance by Practitioners and Educators

Teamwork was ranked 1st by educators but 7th by practitioners. Also maintenance of hygiene standards was ranked 7th by educators but 17th by practitioners. Moreover, knowledge

Table 3: Difference in Competency Requirements of the Hospitality Industry by Practitioners and Educators

Competencies	Practitioners			Educators			Mean Diff.	Test statistics	
	Mean	Std Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank		t-value	p-value
Technical domain									
Abreast with Trends	4.20	0.96	20	4.30	0.71	19	0.10	0.39	0.69
Able to prepare rota	4.27	0.90	13	4.39	0.57	16	0.12	0.26	0.79
Maintains hygiene standards	4.25	0.85	17	4.58	0.48	7	0.33	2.32	0.02*
Product knowledge	4.38	0.74	10	4.43	0.53	14	0.05	0.71	0.49
Good customer Service orientation	4.22	0.89	19	4.38	0.58	17	0.16	0.58	0.53
Handles emergency situations	4.50	0.83	8	4.48	0.50	12	0.02	1.22	0.21
Network with people	4.20	0.85	21	4.36	0.59	18	0.16	1.05	0.29
Category mean	*4.29*	*0.56*	*4*	*4.41*	*0.56*	*4*	*0.12*	*0.93*	*0.43*
Leadership domain									
Appreciate individual differences	4.26	0.71	15	4.29	0.85	20	0.03	0.31	0.74
Maintain good relationship with Employees	4.65	0.53	2	4.55	0.65	8	0.10	1.05	0.31
Control emotions	4.48	0.71	9	4.48	0.71	11	0.00	0.35	0.76
Motivate others	4.74	0.48	1	4.63	0.64	4	0.11	0.82	0.39
Team work	4.51	0.70	7	4.72	0.49	1	0.21	1.26	0.20
Category mean	*4.53*	*0.66*	*1*	*4.53*	*0.66*	*2*	*0.00*	*0.75*	*0.48*
Conceptual domain									
Develop contingency Plans	4.36	0.78	11	4.61	0.57	5	0.25	2.02	0.03*
Adapt to changing circumstances	4.26	0.90	16	4.48	0.74	10	0.22	1.22	0.23
Creative thinking	4.58	0.62	5	4.68	0.59	2	0.10	0.47	0.63
Sets measurable action steps that supports Organizational strategy	4.23	0.95	18	4.40	0.71	15	0.17	1.07	0.30
Category mean	*4.36*	*0.65*	*3*	*4.54*	*0.65*	*1*	*0.18*	*1.19*	*0.30*
Administrative domain									
Safeguards confidential information	4.64	0.52	3	4.68	0.55	3	0.04	0.21	0.83
Knowledgeable in organizational policies	4.58	0.57	4	4.61	0.57	6	0.03	0.72	0.94
Utilizes operating budget	4.35	0.80	12	4.46	0.62	13	0.11	0.57	0.58
Cost control	4.53	0.64	6	4.55	0.54	9	0.02	0.61	0.55
Knowledgeable in financial accounting	4.27	0.75	14	4.00	1.00	21	0.27	1.35	0.16
Category mean	*4.47*	*0.65*	*2*	*4.46*	*0.63*	*3*	*0.01*	*0.69*	*0.61*
Overall mean	4.43	0.63		4.49	0.63		0.07	0.89	0.46

Scale: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree

in financial accounting was the least ranked competency (21st) by educators but (14th) by practitioners. However, practitioners and educators ranked being able to safeguard confidential information as the 3rd highest required competency for the industry. Also, being abreast with industry trends and ability to utilise an operating budget showed closer ranking from practitioners and educators (20th and 19th; 12th and 13th respectively). Ability to develop contingency plans was ranked 5th by educators but practitioners ranked it as the 11th. On the contrary, ability to adapt to changing circumstances was the 16th most important competency for practitioners but 10th for educators. Practitioners also ranked maintenance of good working relationship with employees highly than educators (2nd and 8th respectively).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study showed that there were differences in the views of practitioners and educators on competencies required for the hospitality industry and this coincides with the findings of Enz et al. (1993), Okyeiyi et al. (1994), Tsai et al. (2006); and Yuan, Chung & Gregory (2017). In order of importance, practitioners preferred leadership, administrative, conceptual and technical competencies whilst educators favoured conceptual, leadership, administrative and technical competencies by the industry. Thus while practitioners perceived leadership competencies to be the most important management competencies for the hospitality industry, their counterparts in academia thought it was rather conceptual competencies. However, both practitioners and educators placed technical competencies as the lowest of all the competencies.

Though in general terms, educators rated most of the competencies higher than practitioners; as was the case in a study by Ruetzler et al., (2014). However, the differences were not statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$ except for ability to maintain hygiene standards under the technical domain and ability to develop contingency plans under the conceptual domain. The lack of significant differences in the perceptions of practitioners and educators could be attributed to the fact that

70.2% of educators had some form of industry experience and were therefore cognisant of the practical realities of the industry just like their industry counterparts.

Both educators and practitioners were of the view that the technical domain was the least required of all the competencies. However, Tas et al., (1996) and Zopiatis (2010), stressed the importance of this competency for the industry above others. However, the less importance attached to this domain may be due to the fact that managers do not often handle 'hands-on' (technical) duties. What they need is to know and understand how these technical activities are performed, so as to provide guidance to technical staff (Walker, 2012). In reality such skills are needed more by the operations staff. Also, practitioners in this study may have rated the ability to motivate others within the leadership domain highest because of the positive relationship between motivation and performance. Well-motivated staff tends to perform better than a less-motivated one.

Also, practitioners' preference for graduates with the ability to safeguard confidential information within the administrative domain may be attributed to the fact that hospitality businesses usually handle a lot of private and personal information of guests. Such information is expected to be kept confidential. Furthermore, within the administrative domain, being knowledgeable in organisational policies and ability to control cost were competencies that practitioners considered to be important for the hospitality industry. This coincides with the findings of Nelson & Dopson (2001) and Nolan et al. (2010) who also found out that hotel and restaurant managers consider these competencies as necessary for the industry.

Within the conceptual domain, creative thinking was one competency that practitioners valued the most. This can be attributed to the constant changing nature of the hospitality business which calls for managers who are creative in order for them to keep up with the pace of changes within the industry as asserted by Bareham & Jones in Chen & Hsu (2007). Creativity is an indispensable competency because it helps managers to come up with innovative products

and services and thereby remain competitive. The fact that educators rated conceptual competencies higher than the other competencies is not surprising as the stability of the mind to critically analyse conceptual issues is one of the focus of higher learning. This finding also supports that of Millar et al. (2010) who also found out that educators placed more emphasis on conceptual competency requirements for the industry.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, there were differences in the views of educators and practitioners with respect to competency requirements for the industry, but most of the differences were not statistically significant. This may be attributed to the relatively high numbers of educators who have had some form of industry experience participating in this study. However, whilst practitioners rated people-skills (leadership skills) as the most important competency required by the hospitality industry from managers, educators stressed on conceptual competencies as the most essential requirements of the industry. Moreover, technical competencies were the least favoured by both practitioners and educators; though was considered important.

It is important for students aspiring to work in the industry to endeavour to acquaint themselves with these competencies because the industry requires these knowledge, skills and attitudes. This will enable students to fit well into the industry. Also, educators should expose students to these required competencies for the industry through the taught and experienced curriculum.

It is recommended that there should be more collaboration between practitioners and educators through constant interactions mainly through training workshops and other platforms to enable the exchange of ideas from both stakeholders. This constant interaction is important so as to keep educators abreast with the constant changes in the hospitality industry as rooted in the experimentalist view of education. More so, educators should endeavour to take up internship programmes and part-time employment in the industry so as to acquaint themselves with the changing demands of the operations of the hospitality industry as well as offering industry experience opportunities to educators.

The study sampled mangers from hotel and restaurants within the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. The views of these industry practitioners may have been influenced by sub-cultural factors within their location. There is therefore the need for similar studies in other regions of the country to provide a basis for comparison. Again, the findings of the study showed more agreement between practitioners and educators with reference to competencies required for the industry. It is therefore important to find out from educators whether the current curriculum allows for the required competencies to be taught. Finally, the view of hospitality students on required competencies for the industry is also needed, because they hold an important stake in the hospitality industry of Ghana.

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