

# An evaluation of the link between subjects studied in hospitality courses in Cyprus and career success

## Perceptions of industry professionals

Stelios Marneros

*Department of Management and Marketing, European University of Cyprus,  
Nicosia, Cyprus, and*

Paul Gibbs

*School of Health and Education, Middlesex University, London, UK*

### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper, unprecedented in Cyprus in its scope and approach, is to investigate the importance level of the courses currently taught in hospitality programs of the country, as perceived by industry professionals.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The research population included individuals currently holding full-time managerial positions in hotel establishments of Cyprus. In total, 500 questionnaires were administered to individuals working in 158 hotel establishments currently operating in the country. The surveys were personalized and addressed to each hotel's general manager and two departmental heads. Descriptive and inferential statistics, namely frequencies, one-way analysis of variance with *post-hoc* multiple comparison test (Tukey honesty significant difference) and multiple regression analysis, were utilized to analyze the data and answer the formulated research questions.

**Findings** – For the purposes of the study, modules offered by local tertiary institutions fall into four broad categories: general education, languages, professional modules and business modules. Findings revealed that professional modules were ranked first, followed by business modules, languages and general education modules. The respondents' gender, age, years of employment and functional area are the demographic characteristics that most significantly influence their perception regarding the importance of required competencies. Moreover, findings suggest that professional modules and languages are perceived by industry professionals as very important elements for career success in the hotel industry.

**Originality/value** – Findings of this study may assist industry stakeholders in re-structuring the hospitality management curriculum, in an attempt to provide a more realistic and pedagogically sound learning experience to students which reflects the modern realities of the profession. Moreover, new knowledge created may inspire academic scholars to further investigate this topic from an array of different perspectives.

**Keywords** Career success, Cyprus, Curriculum, Hospitality and tourism education

**Paper type** Research paper

### Introduction

For the last 30 years numerous scholars (i.e. Tas, 1988; Casado, 1991; Bardi, 2006) have provided suggestions for the ideal construct of the hospitality curriculum. The objective for academia is to provide a pedagogically sound learning experience which includes all essential subject modules to properly and adequately prepare the next generation of hospitality (hotel) professionals. Reflecting business realities, scholars (Chung, 2000; Kay and Russette, 2000; Jauhari, 2006) attempt to clarify the industry's "success" competencies. Despite the plethora of competency-related studies, Zopiatis (2010, p. 460) argues that such



findings should be viewed with caution since “[...] there appears to be an inconsistency as to the methodologies utilized, the competencies under consideration and the actual competencies revealed as most and least important.”

Hospitality education is a topical issue. To develop or change the existing programs, research needs to be conducted to determine the important competencies that professionals expect from students. In terms of current and future interests, this project is important to understand industry skills and competencies in relation to the training and education (competencies) offered in universities and colleges in Cyprus. To keep up with the changes in the hospitality industry (internationalization, migration) and to continue to provide students with the required skills and competencies, it is critical to examine the important competencies needed from hospitality professionals and also to scrutinize which competencies within hotel management programs ensure graduates’ success in the industry. During the 1990s, competencies “exploration” took center stage in scholarly activities, yet only a few studies investigated which are the most important courses to be included in the hospitality curriculum. This study aims to fill this gap by contributing to the existing body of knowledge. In addition, this paper utilizes a quantitative methodology, investigates the perceptions of industry professionals on hospitality modules imparted in Cyprus toward career success and ascertains their attributed level of importance. Moreover, this study examines whether the attributed importance to the specific modules differs according to the respondents’ gender, age, years of professional experience and functional area.

### Literature review

During the 1970s, several hospitality schools reduced their vocational hotel and restaurant administration modules by replacing them with general education modules in order to maintain a balance between liberal arts and specialized education (Casado, 1991). Advocates of the movement emphasize the possibility of the “dangerous” phenomenon of creating specialists with limited industrial potential because they focussed only on, for example, quick-service or casino management (Riegel, 1990). Responding to this claim, Pavesic (1991) argues that a university education should provide a general curriculum, thus enabling graduates to change their career focus, if desired, after leaving school. Moreover, Powers (1980) suggests that the development of problem-solving abilities distinguishes higher education from vocational training. He continues by advocating that complex hospitality operations could not be managed with technical skills alone but, rather, demand also the possession of the necessary conceptual skills which would enable new employees to cope with demands and challenges of the industry. Finally, Faiola (1994) advocates the need for a balance between technical and conceptual courses which could ensure that students do not miss on the liberal components of their education.

Bach and Milman (1996) suggest the development of the hospitality management curriculum based on four distinctive areas. The first aims at enhancing skills related to hospitality functions, such as food service, and organization of conventions and conference. The second includes subject courses that aim to improve skills related to the industry’s business functional areas such as marketing, accounting and finance. The third category includes courses related to nurturing essential personality skills and traits and the fourth one consists of modules aiming to improve students’ analytical skills and their ability to utilize various types of information through computer literacy and research.

Numerous scholars have attempted to clarify which subject modules are essential for the hospitality management curriculum. Traditionally, hospitality programs comprise two main components: courses related to various operational aspects of hotel operations, such as front desk and housekeeping operations, food and beverage

management, etc.; and courses related to various management aspects of running a hotel, such as sales and marketing management, financial management, human resource management, hospitality accounting and hotel management information system. In his seminal work, Tas (1988) argues that courses such as hospitality law, food sanitation, management of areas, such as front office, hotel and restaurant operations, food and beverage and finance are crucial for any hospitality curriculum development. Moreover, Hegarty (1992) proposes the inclusion of philosophy and ethics modules in an attempt to address tourism and hospitality development issues philosophically, whereas, Jones (1996) advocates for a curriculum that combines natural and social sciences in an attempt to educate students regarding physiological and social needs of customers. A study conducted by Schrock and Schrock (1991) determined what computer courses were required in hospitality programs to fulfill current industry needs, whereas Umbreit (1992) promotes the inclusion of modules related to financial analysis, human resource management, leadership, service marketing, total quality management and written and oral communication skills.

After surveying industry professionals, hospitality faculty members and administrators, Lonam (1999) concludes that hospitality curricula should not overlook modules relevant to liberal or general education, sales and marketing, principles of management and foreign (second) languages. The results of this study show an increased emphasis on general business courses and internships vs hospitality-specific courses as the most likely components of a future hospitality curriculum. Similarly, in her doctoral dissertation, Su (1996) explores the perceptions of hospitality professionals and administrators toward 13 specific subject areas traditionally found in hospitality management curricula. Interpersonal communication, marketing, human resource management, information systems and financial management surfaced as the most important modules. Jauhari (2006) reiterates the necessity for future hotel managers to understand spreadsheets, psychographics and strategic planning. Along the same lines, recently conducted studies (Chung-Herrera *et al.*, 2003; Kay and Moncarz, 2004) have shown a diminished level of importance of industry-related technical competencies, while stressing the significance of generic management competencies.

The main objective of management education is to provide industry with high caliber graduates equipped with the most relevant management competencies (Hansson, 2001; Christou, 2002). A review of the literature indicates that generic and transferable skills including leadership, communication, critical thinking and human resource management are essential to career success (Tas *et al.*, 1996; Christou and Karamanides, 1999; Kay and Russette, 2000; Gustin, 2001). Also Gustin (2001) found in the USA that encouraging and teaching critical thinking skills resulted in students being better prepared to meet the demands of an ill-defined business environment. In Australia, Moscardo (1997) claimed that developing problem-solving skills, creative and flexible-thinking competencies is critical in building management competencies for tourism students.

Such findings are of interest to hospitality stakeholders and may indicate a paradigm shift in the overall philosophy of developing hotel management programs.

### **Hospitality education in Cyprus**

Cyprus, one of the newest members of the European Union and member of the Euro Zone, depends heavily on its tourism industry which in 2009 accounted for 13 percent of the country's GDP. According to the Statistical Services of the Republic

of Cyprus (2009a, b) 2.2 million tourists visited the island in 2009, with tourism revenue reaching 1.493 billion euros (Statistical Services of the Republic of Cyprus, 2009b). The industry provides employment to 34,000 people (Statistical Services of the Republic of Cyprus, 2009a), while the UK market is the largest contributor (49.9 percent) of the tourist arrivals, followed by Russia (6.9 percent), Greece (6.2 percent) and Germany (6.1 percent).

According to Zopiatis and Constanti (2007), hospitality and tourism education is well developed in Cyprus. Local public and private educational institutions offer programs to Cypriot and international students which aim at educating the next generation of the industry's leaders. All of these programs have been developed based on the American (USA) or British educational models and include an experiential learning component, an internship, as an integral element of the learning experience offered to students (Zopiatis, 2007). According to Zopiatis, approximately 1,200 students currently pursue an accredited hospitality and tourism degree in the country.

There is excellent cooperation between educational institutions and the private as well as public sector. The academic instructors have developed good working relationships with hotels, restaurants and travel agencies in Cyprus. The links with the industry provide the academic instructors opportunities to establish employment options for the students and the regular communication can result in creating new approaches to the content, and teaching and learning of the curriculum (Reeve and Gallacher, 2003).

Higher education institutions are under increasing pressure to prepare their graduates for the world of work by including a component of work-integrated learning to achieve these expectations (Spowart, 2006). In more recent times higher education has seen changes taking place from the on-campus learning approach to the student off-site in the workplace (Davis and Chisholm, 2003).

Workplace learning is an essential motive for competency development as it gives the students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom. In addition, through work-based learning students acquire knowledge and skills related to employment.

### Research methodology

The primary purpose of this research study, unprecedented in Cyprus in its scope and approach, is to investigate the importance level of the modules currently taught in hospitality programs of the country, as perceived by industry professionals. Moreover, the study sets out to explore the association of these modules with career success. In addition, the authors believe that it is necessary to examine the differences in attributed importance according to the respondents' gender, age, years of employment and functional areas. These demographic characteristics can influence their perception regarding the importance of required hotel management modules. Moreover, it would be crucial to identify the perceptions of hospitality professionals of hotel management courses found in most (European University, Cyprus University of Technology, University of Nicosia, Frederic University, College of Tourism and Americanos College) hotel management programs. If differences exist, then educational institutions and the hotel industry could be informed and appropriate adjustments may be considered. To deliver high-quality, industry-relevant hospitality education, educators must continually identify and investigate those courses that are recognized by industry as being essential for successful managers. Reflecting the primary purpose of the study, the following three research questions were formulated:

*RQ1.* Which are the most important modules included in hotel management programs in Cyprus?

RQ2. Does the respondents' level of attributed importance to the specific modules differ according to the variables of gender, age, years of professional experience and functional area?

RQ3. Which of these modules are perceived to be significantly associated with career success in the hotel industry?

Following a comprehensive review of existing literature, a quantitative survey was developed in order to address the postulated research questions. Prior to the survey's development, the author(s) thoroughly investigated the hospitality curricula of all educational institutions offering such programs in the country in order to identify their academic requirements in terms of mandatory and elective modules. In total, 52 modules, separated into four broad categories, were selected for the purposes of the study. Moreover, the survey includes numerous demographic and other background questions that will enable the researcher(s) to further explore the topic.

The research involved input by individuals currently holding full-time managerial positions in hotel establishments in Cyprus, based on 474 survey questionnaires administered in 158 hotel establishments currently operating in the country. The surveys were personalized, addressed to each hotel's general manager and two departmental heads. Mindful of the typical low response rate in hospitality-related studies in Cyprus, a mixed approach was utilized to increase response rate and included mail followed by a telephone reminder and direct individual survey distribution.

The questionnaires were pilot-tested for reliability with the utilization of the test re-test method and for validity with a panel of experts prior to their administration, culminating in data analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 17). Descriptive statistics were primarily utilized to analyze the data, whereas inferential statistics, namely independent sample *t*-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with *post-hoc* multiple comparison test (Tukey honest significant difference (HSD)) and multiple regression analysis, were utilized to further analyze the data and address the research questions. It is important to note that all surveys were administered in English since the study's population language skills were deemed appropriate for such a task.

Finally, the authors acknowledge that the homogeneity of the sample – all full-time hospitality (hotel) managers working in Cyprus – may not allow for or limit attempted generalization of the research findings in other hospitality environments.

### Research findings

The questionnaires were administered involving a total of 474 individuals, both Cypriots and non-Cypriots, currently holding full-time managerial positions in hotels in Cyprus. In total, 190 questionnaires were completed and returned to the researchers. Of those, four were incomplete, thus, excluded from the study, reducing the number of usable surveys to 186 (response rate = 38.75 percent). The overall response rate was viewed satisfactory considering low response rates experienced by similar hospitality studies previously conducted in Cyprus. The following Table I shows the demographic profile of the respondents regarding the variables of gender, age, years of employment and functional areas.

One of the primary objectives of the conducted research activity was to investigate the importance level of courses currently offered by tertiary educational institutions in Cyprus leading to hotel management degrees. For the purpose of the study, modules offered fall into four broad categories: general education (i.e. maths, psychology, sociology, etc.), languages (i.e. English, foreign languages), professional modules (i.e. directly related to

**Table I.**  
Demographic profile  
of the respondents

	Frequency	Valid %
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	42	22.6
Male	144	77.4
<i>Age</i>		
18-30 years old	24	12.9
31-40 years old	93	50.0
41-50 years old	42	22.6
Over 50 years old	27	14.5
<i>Years of employment in the hospitality industry</i>		
Less than five years	18	9.7
5-10 years	42	22.6
11-20 years	75	40.3
More than 20 years	51	27.4
<i>Functional areas</i>		
Upper management/top administration	70	37.6
Food and beverage	72	38.7
Rooms division	29	15.6
Other	15	8.1

**Note:**  $n = 186$

hotel management, such as food and beverage management, front office, etc.) and business modules (i.e. marketing, finance, management, etc.).

As shown in Table II, professional modules were ranked as most important, followed by business modules, languages and general education modules. As regards individual courses, some noteworthy findings need to be pointed out. Courses in hygiene, nutrition and HACCP principles, English communication and English writing were ranked as the most important by the respondents. In contrast, a course which traditionally embodies hospitality education, industrial placement, was ranked 38th by the respondents. Another important finding is the high ranking of food and beverage-related modules. Modules such as food and beverage management, food and beverage cost control and food and beverage service were all ranked in the top ten positions.

Another postulated question was to investigate whether statistically significant differences in the perceived level of module importance exist in the functional areas, as perceived by the respondents. In order to address this issue, a number of ANOVA tests were conducted. Once the ANOVA revealed existing differences among the means of the groups, *post-hoc* multiple comparison tests were utilized to determine which means differ. The Tukey HSD test was used, as it is a very conservative pairwise comparison test which minimizes the possibility for Type I errors (a Type I error occurs when a true null hypothesis is rejected by a statistical test).

Findings, presented in Table III, suggest that differences among the respondents exist in the professional, business and language modules. In particular, respondents working in upper-level managerial positions attribute more importance to the three module categories in comparison with their colleagues working in food and beverage, rooms division and other departments. It is interesting to note that food and beverage professionals did not attribute more importance to professional modules related to their field of expertise compared to their colleagues working in upper management, rooms division and other departments.

Courses	Mean	SD	Rank module	Overall rank	Overall mean	Overall rank
<i>General education</i>					3.62	4
Principles of statistics	3.81	0.802	2	42		
Mathematics	3.66	0.844	6	46		
Economics	3.94	0.717	3	39		
Intercultural communication	4.18	0.622	1	33		
History	3.26	0.804	7	48		
Psychology	3.90	0.858	4	40		
Sociology	3.69	0.980	5	45		
Philosophy	3.10	0.877	9	51		
Political science	3.13	0.961	8	50		
<i>Languages</i>					4.01	3
Business English	4.65	0.572	3	4		
English communication	4.74	0.507	1	2		
English writing	4.73	0.447	2	3		
French language	3.24	0.858	6	49		
German language	3.65	0.827	5	47		
Greek language	4.40	0.753	4	15		
Italian language	2.68	1.047	7	52		
<i>Professional modules</i>					4.38	1
Introduction to hotel management	4.53	0.590	4	7		
Introduction to travel and tourism	4.35	0.676	13	21		
Front office management	4.42	0.612	10	13		
Housekeeping operations	4.34	0.672	14	22		
Property management systems	4.19	0.822	20	31		
Convention management	3.98	0.731	21	37		
Food and beverage management	4.60	0.636	3	5		
Food production and management	4.47	0.642	8	11		
Hygiene, nutrition and HACCP principles	4.77	0.456	1	1		
Safety, first aid and fire prevention	4.60	0.610	2	6		
Bar and beverage management	4.40	0.685	11	14		
Food and beverage cost control	4.52	0.668	5	8		
Food and beverage service	4.48	0.643	7	10		
Food service layout and design	4.26	0.719	18	24		
Hospitality marketing	4.45	0.641	9	12		
Hospitality accounting	4.31	0.639	15	24		
Hospitality personnel management	4.37	0.604	12	17		
International hospitality management	4.24	0.690	19	30		
Service quality management	4.50	0.617	6	9		
Hospitality information systems	4.29	0.580	16	26		
Industrial placement	3.97	0.784	22	38		
Ethics in hospitality industry	4.27	0.724	17	28		
<i>Business modules</i>					4.16	2
Principles of management	4.35	0.600	4	20		
Introduction to business	4.11	0.676	10	35		
Introduction to marketing	4.11	0.676	9	34		
Financial accounting	4.00	0.785	11	36		
Introduction to computers	4.37	0.604	3	19		
Human resources management	4.29	0.683	6	25		

**Table II.**  
Perceived level of importance of hotel management modules offered in Cyprus

(continued)

Table II.

Courses	Mean	SD	Rank module	Overall rank	Overall mean	Overall rank
Financial analysis management	4.19	0.822	8	32		
Public relations	4.37	0.655	1	16		
Strategic management	4.37	0.679	2	18		
Strategic marketing	4.29	0.729	7	27		
Organizational behavior	4.31	0.711	5	23		
International business	3.77	0.814	14	44		
Business law	3.82	0.927	12	41		
Senior project	3.81	0.933	13	43		

Notes:  $n = 186$ . Scale: 1, very unimportant; 2, unimportant; 3, somewhat important; 4, important; 5, very important

Source	df	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	$F$ ratio	$F$ probab. (Sig.)	Mean functional areas	<i>Post-hoc</i> analysis (Tukey HSD)			
							UM	F&B	RD	OT
<i>General education</i>										
Between groups	3	1,774	0.591	1.94	0.124	UM: 3.63				
Within groups	182	55,333	0.304			F&B: 3.53				
Total	185	57,107				RD: 3.74				
						OT: 3.84				
<i>Languages</i>										
Between groups	3	2,505	0.835	4.83	0.003	UM: 4.14		*	*	
Within groups	182	31,450	0.173			F&B: 3.95	*			
Total	185	33,955				RD: 3.81	*			
						OT: 4.02				
<i>Professional modules</i>										
Between groups	3	6,355	2,118	13.12	0.000	UM: 4.58		*	*	
Within groups	182	29,370	0.161			F&B: 4.25	*			
Total	185	35,724				RD: 4.11	*			*
						OT: 4.50				*
<i>Business modules</i>										
Between groups	3	2,859	0.953	3.70	0.013	UM: 4.29		*		
Within groups	182	46,871	0.258			F&B: 4.01	*			
Total	185	49,730				RD: 4.13				
						OT: 4.22				

Notes: UM, Upper management ( $n = 70$ ); F&B, food and beverage management ( $n = 72$ ); RD, rooms division ( $n = 29$ ); OT, other ( $n = 15$ ). \*Significant difference between hospitality professionals according to their functional area. *Post-hoc* analysis (Tukey HSD): significance level ( $p < 0.05$ )

Table III.  
Differences according to professionals' functional areas: one-way ANOVA and *post-hoc* multiple comparison tests (Tukey HSD)

Moreover, the research team has investigated whether statistically significant differences exist among the respondents according to variables such as gender, years of professional experience in the industry and age. As regards gender, via the utilization of the independent sample *t*-test, statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) were revealed in terms of the perceived level of importance attributed to language modules ( $t = 2.514$ ;  $p = 0.013$ ) and the professional modules ( $t = 2.684$ ;  $p = 0.008$ ). In both cases, men attribute more importance to



these particular modules than female respondents do. When investigating differences related to years of professional experience (ANOVA), respondents with less than five years of experience attribute more importance ( $f = 3.795$ ;  $p = 0.011$ ) to general education courses, compared to their colleagues with 11-20 years of experience.

Statistically significant differences were revealed in all four module categories when investigating the age variable. As shown in Table IV, statistically significant differences in terms of the attributed level of importance between 18-30 and 31-40 age groups exist in general education, languages and professional modules. In all cases, junior respondents attribute more importance to these particular modules. Differences also exist between the over-50 age group and the other cohorts in the languages and business modules. Overall, respondents belonging to the over-50 age group attribute less importance to language courses and more importance to business modules.

The third postulated research question investigates the association between the four specific modules and career success. As shown in Table V, findings revealed statistically significant positive associations between languages and professional modules and career success (model significant  $p < 0.001$ ; explaining a total of 18.8 percent of the variance). Findings suggest that the respondents consider language and professional modules as career success predictors, whereas no association was revealed between business modules and career success. It is important to note that both the level of multicollinearity – which

Source	df	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	F ratio	F probab. (Sig.)	Years of age	Post-hoc analysis (Tukey HSD)			
							18-30	31-40	41-50	> 50
<i>General education</i>										
Between groups	3	2,444	0.815	2,713	0.046	18-30 = 3.91		*		
Within groups	182	54,663	0.300			31-40 = 3.56	*			
Total	185	57,107				41-50 = 3.62				
						> 50 = 3.63				
<i>Languages</i>										
Between groups	3	1,618	0.539	3,036	0.030	18-30 = 4.16		*		*
Within groups	182	32,337	0.178			31-40 = 3.94	*			
Total	185	33,955				41-50 = 4.11				
						> 50 = 3.94	*			
<i>Professional modules</i>										
Between groups	3	2,202	0.734	3,985	0.009	18-30 = 4.59		*		
Within groups	182	33,523	0.184			31-40 = 4.29	*			
Total	185	35,724				41-50 = 4.36				
						> 50 = 4.52				
<i>Business modules</i>										
Between groups	3	3,706	1,235	4,885	0.003	18-30 = 4.29				
Within groups	182	46,024	0.253			31-40 = 4.07				*
Total	185	49,730				41-50 = 4.08				*
						> 50 = 4.45		*	*	

**Table IV.** Differences according to professional's age: one-way ANOVA and *post-hoc* multiple comparison tests (Tukey HSD)

**Notes:** 20-30,  $n = 24$ ; 31-40,  $n = 93$ ; 41-50,  $n = 42$ ; over 50,  $n = 27$ . \*Significant difference between hospitality professionals according to their age. *Post-hoc* analysis (Tukey HSD): significance level ( $p < 0.05$ )

refers to the excessive correlation of the predictor variables – and the Durbin-Watson test were examined and both were found to be in acceptable ranges (multicollinearity VIF less than 4; Durbin-Watson between 1 and 3) (Field, 2009).

The following section of the paper provides a brief discussion of the research findings, including the likely implications of the findings for the industry’s major stakeholders.

### Discussion, implications and conclusions

Utilizing numerous methodologies, scholars (Tas, 1988; Okeiyi *et al.*, 1994; Tas *et al.*, 1996; Kay and Russette, 2000; Christou, 2002; Testa and Sipe, 2011) have attempted to clarify the required “success” competencies for the hospitality industry. Recent studies (Chung-Herrera *et al.*, 2003; Kay and Moncarz, 2004) reveal diminished levels of importance placed on industry/technical competencies, while generic competencies of business management, such as marketing and financial management, have come to be viewed as more important. Such findings may suggest a paradigm shift with numerous implications for the development and delivery of hospitality curricula.

In an attempt to explore these implications further, and with the aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, this study takes a different route and investigates the level of importance attributed by industry professionals to courses currently included in hotel management curricula offered by tertiary educational institutions in Cyprus, and the association of these modules with career success. Findings revealed that professional modules were perceived by respondents as the most important, and, along with language modules, as significant predictors of career success.

Echoing the findings of a recently conducted research activity (Zopiatis, 2010), our findings do not support conclusions reached by Chung-Herrera *et al.* (2003) and Kay and Moncarz (2004) as regards the diminished level of importance of industry/technical competencies, since professional modules nurturing these competencies were ranked by our respondents considerably higher than business modules. Moreover, the significant positive association between professional modules and career success – in contrast to no association between business modules and career success – reiterates the vital importance that hospitality professionals attribute to such courses.

It is apparent that local hospitality stakeholders perceive business-related modules as less essential compared to professional courses. A plausible explanation is the fact that many of the respondents were educated in educational systems, either in Cyprus or abroad, that advocated practice over theory, in other words, the vocational element of the hospitality professions. Not having been directly exposed to such courses in a controlled

Independent variables	Career success (dependent variable)	
	Beta ( $\beta$ )	<i>t</i>
General education modules	-0.028	-0.348
Language modules	0.260	3.363***
Professional modules	0.291	3.229***
Business modules	-0.026	-0.269
$R^2$	0.205	
Adjusted $R^2$	0.188	
$F_{(4,181)}$	11.693	
Significance <i>p</i> -value	0.000***	

**Notes:**  $\beta$ , standardized  $\beta$  weights. \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Table V.**  
Multiple regression  
analysis examining  
whether course  
modules predict  
career success

academic environment might have influenced their overall perception; nevertheless, it is important to note that business courses have started to gain attention, especially by those working in upper-management-level positions.

The majority of responding professionals 144 (77.4 percent) were male and 42 (22.6 percent) were female. Findings revealed that male respondents perceived “professional modules” and “languages” as more important than female respondents did, because more male respondents occupied managerial positions within the hospitality industry, compared to the female respondents. In this study there are 55 male and 15 female respondents in upper management, 66 male and six female respondents in food and beverage management and 17 male and 12 female respondents in front office management.

A current study by Zhong and Couch (2007), revealed that male and female students viewed equity-related factors as the biggest constraints to women’s advancement, whereas male students rated family issues highest. Researchers have assessed the underrepresentation of women managers and gender discrimination issues in the workplace (Woods and Kavanaugh, 1994). Some have suggested that women and men with similar educational backgrounds and performance have different work-related experiences (Gregg and Johnson, 1990; Melamed, 1995). Recent studies have shown that males and females have achieved even distribution in hotel management, however, most female managers in the lodging industry work in sales, housekeeping, personnel and catering positions, which are less likely to lead to the general manager position (Woods and Viehland, 2000).

In addition, respondents with less than five years of experience attribute more importance to general education modules, compared to their colleagues with 11-20 years of experience. The researchers believe that professional respondents with few years of employment, just coming out of the educational institutions, consider the above competency dimensions more important than respondents with many years of employment in the industry. Young entry-level managers give more emphasis to general education modules such as intercultural communication, psychology, economics, statistics, mathematics, etc.

Professional respondents who were at the age of 18-30 years old perceived the modules of general education, languages and professional modules as more important than respondents at the age of 31-40 years old. Similarly, young professionals just coming out of colleges and universities perceived the above-mentioned modules as more important because they have recently graduated from universities. In addition, young professionals attributed more importance to these modules because they are needed for entry-level and middle-management positions (operational aspects). On the other hand, respondents belonging to the over-50 age group attribute less importance to language modules and more importance to business modules because mainly at the age of 50 and above respondents hold a general manager position and they have greater need for business modules (management aspects) like strategic management, strategic marketing, financial analysis management, financial accounting, international business, etc.

Industry stakeholders must define the characteristics of the “ideal” hospitality curriculum that will best serve the individual student in terms of future employability and the local and/or international industry. An overly theoretical, business-focussed curriculum might produce ill-prepared individuals who will master theories but will miserably fail in operational praxis[1]. In contrast, an overly “vocational” curriculum might be deemed inefficient in preparing the next generation of professionals to overcome the challenges associated with managing a modern hospitality establishment of the twenty-first century. Balance between the two should be the “ideal” condition and essential prerequisite in the development of either local or international hospitality curricula.

Hansson (2001) and Christou (2002) argue that the primary objective of education is to provide the industry with high-quality individuals, able to meet the demands and challenges relevant to their specific career choice. Nurturing the “right” competencies in the academic environment is imperative in this effort. Findings of this study may assist in the re-structuring of hospitality curriculum to provide a more realistic and pedagogically sound learning experience which will reflect the modern realities of the profession, in Cyprus specifically. The Academia should be able to foresee changes in the hospitality environment and proactively initiate the necessary measures that will align its curriculum offerings with industry demands.

The findings of this study may serve as a guide to other scholars outside the Cyprus-specific environment who wish to investigate the topic further within their own country-specific hospitality environments. It is suggested that future scholars investigate whether the distinct characteristics and complexities of the national hospitality industry should override international educational norms as those relate to curriculum development. Scholars may also investigate the input of local industry stakeholders in the development or revision of the curriculum under the broader perspective of the hospitality industry-education relationship.

The specific study will enhance the relationship between the academic institutions and the hospitality industry in Cyprus by finding the hotel management courses needed for both the educational institutions and professionals. In addition, the study will build trust between the stakeholders and enhance their understanding of the role, responsibilities and expectations of one another. Education must be thought of as a journey, not a destination. One’s education is never complete, regardless of how much can be self-taught, but the highly complex and competitive nature of the hospitality industry no longer permits the luxury of trial-and-error learning. “A successful future for hospitality students means a successful future for the hospitality industry” (Martin, 1998). A good understanding of the changing needs of the industry and students is essential for international hospitality educators.

#### Note

1. Praxis is derived from the ancient Greek word *πράξις*. The Greek philosopher Aristotle defines praxis as the practical knowledge to which the end goal is action.

#### References

- Bach, S.A. and Milman, A. (1996), “A novel technique for reviewing a hospitality management curriculum”, *Hospitality and Tourism Educator*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 37-40.
- Bardi, J.A. (2006), *Hotel Front Office Management*, 4th ed., Wiley and Sons, New Jersey, NJ.
- Casado, M.A. (1991), “Perceptions of corporate recruiters, alumni and educators toward critical factors of hotel/restaurant management programme: a comparative study”, *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 52, p. 10A.
- Christou, E. (2002), “Revisiting competencies for hospitality management: contemporary views of the stakeholders”, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 25-32.
- Christou, E. and Karamanidis, I. (1999), “Hospitality management competencies revisited: industry and graduates contemporary perspectives”, paper presented at the Euro CHRIE Annual Conference, Vol. 1, University of Surrey, Surrey, pp. 25-32.
- Chung, K.Y. (2000), “Hotel management curriculum reform based on required competencies of hotel employees and career success in the hotel industry”, *Tourism Management*, Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 473-487.

- Chung-Herrera, B.G., Enz, C.A. and Lankau, M.J. (2003), "Grooming future hospitality leaders: a competencies model", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 44 No. 3, pp. 17-25.
- Davis, M. and Chisholm, C. (2003), "Factors relating to accreditation of total life-place learning", paper presented at the Conference, Experiential Community, Work-Based Research in Learning Outside the Academy, Glasgow, June 27-29.
- Faiola, N.A. (1994), "Job competencies expected of entry-level foodservice managers: implication of curriculum development", *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 56, p. 03A.
- Field, A.P. (2009), *Discovering Statistics using SPSS*, 3rd ed., Sage Publications, London.
- Gregg, J.B. and Johnson, P.M. (1990), "Perceptions of discrimination among women as managers in hospitality organisations", *F.I.U. Hospitality Review*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 10-22.
- Gustin, M. (2001), "Think for yourself: bringing critical thinking skills to the classroom", *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 41-47.
- Hansson, B. (2001), "Competency models: are self perceptions accurate enough?", *Journal of European Industrial Training*, Vol. 25 No. 9, pp. 428-441.
- Hegarty, J. (1992), "Towards establishing a new paradigm for tourism and hospitality development", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 309-317.
- Jauhari, V. (2006), "Competencies for a career in the hospitality industry: and Indian perspective", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 123-134.
- Jones, P. (1996), "The hospitality industry", in Jones, P. (Ed.), *Introduction to Hospitality Operations*, Cassell, London, pp. 1-20.
- Kay, C. and Moncarz, E. (2004), "Knowledge, skills, and abilities for lodging management success", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 45 No. 3, pp. 285-298.
- Kay, C. and Russette, J. (2000), "Hospitality-management competencies: identifying managers' essential skills", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 52-63.
- Lonam, M.W. (1999), "Hospitality education 2010: a delphi study", *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 33, p. 01A.
- Martin, L.J. (1998), "Integrating ethics into hospitality curriculum", *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 22-25.
- Melamed, T. (1995), "Barriers to women's career success: human capital, career choices, structural determinants, or simply sex discrimination", *International Association of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 44 No. 4, pp. 295-314.
- Moscardo, G. (1997), "Making mindful managers: evaluating methods for teaching problem solving skills for tourism management", *Journal of Tourism Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 16-23.
- Okeiyi, E., Finley, D. and Postel, R.T. (1994), "Food and beverage management competencies: educators, industry and student perspectives", *Hospitality and Tourism Educator*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 37-40.
- Pavesic, D. (1991), "Hospitality education 2005: curricula and programmatic trends", *Hospitality Research Journal*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 285-294.
- Power, T. (1980), "Hospitality management development for the 1980s", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 39-47.
- Reeve, F. and Gallacher, J. (2003), "Are employer-university 'partnerships' problematic within work-based learning programs?", *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 219-233.
- Riegel, C.D. (1990), "Purpose, perspective and definition: toward an encompassing view of HRI education", *Hospitality and Tourism Educator*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 18-19.

- Schrock, J.R. and Schrock, J.M. (1991), "Computer use in hospitality education", *Hospitality and Tourism Educator*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 20-24.
- Spowart, J. (2006), "Hotel school students' views of their preparation for work-intergrated learning: an exploratory study", *Asia-Pasific Journal of Cooperative Education*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 10-15.
- Statistical Services of the Republic of Cyprus (2009a), "Labour statistics 2009", available at: [www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/45093BCB88A1C158C2257712003F5524/\\$file/LABOUR\\_STATISTICS-2009.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/45093BCB88A1C158C2257712003F5524/$file/LABOUR_STATISTICS-2009.pdf?OpenElement) (accessed March 10, 2011).
- Statistical Services of the Republic of Cyprus (2009b), "Tourism statistics 2009", available at: [www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/EEEEAF251A96D6635C2257712003E8CD2/\\$file/TOURIST\\_%20STATISTICS-2009-030211.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/EEEEAF251A96D6635C2257712003E8CD2/$file/TOURIST_%20STATISTICS-2009-030211.pdf?OpenElement) (accessed March 10, 2011).
- Su, Y.L. (1996), "An evaluation of accreditation curriculum standards for four year undergraduate hospitality programs", *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 57, p. 11A.
- Tas, F.R., LaBrecque, V.S. and Clayton, R.H. (1996), "Property-management competencies for management trainees", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 90-96.
- Tas, R.F. (1988), "Teaching future managers", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 41-43.
- Testa, M.R. and Sipe, L. (2011), "Service-leadership competencies for hospitality and tourism management", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 648-658.
- Umbreit, W.T. (1992), "In search of hospitality curriculum relevance for the 1990s", *Hospitality and Tourism Educator*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 71-74.
- Woods, R.H. and Kavanaugh, R.R. (1994), "Gender discrimination and sexual harassment as experienced by hospitality industry managers", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 16-22.
- Woods, R.H. and Viehland, D. (2000), "Women in hotel management", *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 41 No. 5, pp. 51-54.
- Zhong, Y. and Couch, S. (2007), "Hospitality students' perceptions of facilitators and constraints affecting women's career advancement in the hospitality industry", *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 4, pp. 357-373.
- Zopiatis, A. (2007), "Hospitality internships in Cyprus: a genuine academic experience or a continuing frustration?", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 65-77.
- Zopiatis, A. (2010), "Is it art or science? Chef's competencies for success", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 459-466.
- Zopiatis, A. and Constanti, P. (2007), "'And never the twain shall meet'. Investigating the hospitality industry-education relationship in Cyprus", *Education and Training*, Vol. 49 No. 5, pp. 391-407.

### Further reading

- Connolly, P. and McGing, G. (2006), "Graduate education and hospitality management in Ireland", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 50-59.

### Corresponding author

Dr Stelios Marneros can be contacted at: [s.marneros@euc.ac.cy](mailto:s.marneros@euc.ac.cy)

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

[www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm](http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm)

Or contact us for further details: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.