
Hospitality ethics curriculum: an industry perspective

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Keywords

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Abstract

In curriculum design, it is important to solicit the industry's views to ensure its relevancy to industry needs. Therefore, this study conducted a questionnaire survey with 308 hospitality employees who helped in identifying the importance of 39 ethical issues in the hospitality industry. It is assumed that the more important an issue is rated, the more important it is to include its discussion in the curriculum. The two most important issues were found to be "Theft of company property by employees" and "Sexual harassment on the job". When factor analysis was adopted, eight factors were identified which include, in descending order of importance, "environmental protection", "social conscience and employee integrity", "social justice", "consumer protection", "business fraud", "employee equity", "privacy of employees" and finally "personal advantage". It is recommended that developers of hospitality curricula should consider the inclusion of these ethical issues in their programs.

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Introduction

With the increasing complexity and sophistication of the workplace, educators should realize that they are not only responsible for teaching technical skills and knowledge, it is also important to instill ethics in their students. It is essential to increase the ethical awareness of students when moral responsibility is called for.

As Cheung (1996, cited in Cheung, 1998) has said, ethics education should be included in curricula to help students to think not only beyond self interest in decision-making, but also to consider the interests of society. It has been said that although many of today's leaders have outstanding aptitudes and capabilities, only those with strong values in ethics will ultimately succeed (Butcher, 1997).

Because of the unique nature of the hospitality industry, there are more opportunities than in any other industry when ethics becomes an issue at stake (Stevens and Fleckenstein, 1999). Therefore, there is strong support for the need of ethical leaders. However, most past studies (Damitio *et al.*, 1992; Enghagen, 1990; Stevens, 1997) on hospitality ethics are based on qualitative studies on specific issues such as the codes, the orientation and the problems in ethics education. At present, only a limited number of studies have used quantitative tools to determine the degree of importance of various ethical issues in the industry. One such study (Vallen and Casado, 2000) identified leadership, accountability and commitment to excellence as the three most important ethical principles in the successful operation of a hotel. In another study, Weaver *et al.* (1997) reported that hospitality students ranked conditions of employment, solid waste disposal and sexual harassment as the three most important ethical issues.

In spite of these concerted efforts of study, the basic question here was how to develop an appropriate ethics curriculum for hospitality industry. The issue of selecting the content is discussed by many researchers (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Schubert, 1986). However, the major problem lies with the difficulty that there is always more to learn than any student could learn. As a result, there are always disagreements over the selection of the subject matter. It is common that the selection is based on the interest of the teachers and that it is sometimes incompatible with society's needs. Thus, Kanji and Tambi (1999) emphasized that curriculum design requires input from different stakeholders including students, funding bodies and employers. Conaway and Fernandez (2000) stressed the importance of the



views of industry; in their opinion, when educators develop specific structures and methods to teach ethics they seldom take into account the views and the perspectives of the industry. Marsh (1997) also pointed out that teachers do not have all the knowledge and skills required to prepare their students in the work environment and therefore, input from the industry should play a key role in designing the curriculum. It is vital to obtain feedback from industry practitioners relating to what they perceive to be the important knowledge and skills students should learn. It is only through understanding their views that educators can prepare students whose quality will exceed the expectations of the industry practitioners.

In view of this, as a critical step in preparing an ethics curriculum for hospitality training, this paper presents a study using surveys and statistical tools with the aim of providing a more comprehensive analysis incorporating greater industry participation. The study attempts to determine the importance of various ethical issues in the hospitality sector from an industry perspective. It recognizes that the more important an issue is, the more vital it is to include the topics in the curriculum. It aims to identify areas that are indeed significant or meaningful to the subject taught. It is believed that in a rapidly changing society, constant participation from the industry should be incorporated to form an integral part of curriculum design. The findings of this study would help educators to prioritize topics and issues of ethics to be discussed in a hospitality ethics course in accordance with their degree of importance in the industry.

The study made use of a questionnaire survey based on the ethical issues rating scale developed by DuFrene *et al.*, in 1990. The sampling frame included 78 member hotels of the Hong Kong Hotels Association. The questionnaire contained 39 ethics related issues and the respondents were asked to indicate the degree of importance they perceived regarding each issue in their industry.

Review of literature

Industry participation in curriculum design

The education sector has begun implementing quality initiatives since the early 1990s (Karathanos, 1999). However, those educational efforts were fragmented with no clear direction, and there is a widening gap between the needs of the industry and the education provided. This mismatch between society's needs and the university curriculum is highly unacceptable,

especially to those who are providing funding to the institutions in question (Chaffee and Sherr, 1992). It is further evidenced in the results of a survey conducted of 3,000 business companies by the US Census Bureau. It was indicated that cooperation between companies and schools was insufficient (Caster, 1995). Consequently, there is a strong lobby for improving education by urging academia to go to their customers and survey what issues are important to them in order to meet the customers' needs and exceed their expectations.

As a result, many researchers have started to look into the relationship between institutions and the employers (Craft, 1992; Hillman and Albert, 1999; Pearce, 1995; Tam, 1999; Tuttle, 1994, cited in Tam, 1988). Higher education institutions today are facing enormous pressure from their external customers for people are losing confidence in the "ivory tower" image. Employers would like to see good quality education that is value for money. Subsequently, many studies have confirmed the importance of industry's views and their general consensus is that having the inputs from industry and knowing their expectation are essential steps in curriculum design (Conaway and Fernandez, 2000; Kanji and Tambi, 1999; Marsh, 1997).

Hospitality ethics issues

While there are many textbooks written on business ethics (Boatright, 2000; De George, 1999; Donaldson *et al.*, 2002; Velasquez, 1998), very few textbooks on hospitality ethics could be found. One such book is by Hall (1992) entitled *Ethics in Hospitality Management*. In such cases, individual studies on determining important ethical issues become important tools to decide what to be included in a hospitality ethics course. Enghagen and Hott (1992) suggest that important and influential ethical issues must be identified so that students can discuss relevant issues in the industry. It is necessary that the content of the course is closely linked to real-world situations. That is the main reason why this study emphasizes seeking the industry's input in designing the content for a hospitality ethics course.

Among the few studies done in the USA, Enghagen and Hott (1992) concluded that hospitality students perceived pollution (air/water), solid waste disposal, conditions of employment, non-specific employment discrimination, race discrimination, employee theft and sex discrimination as the most compelling ethical issues in the industry. Subsequently, Weaver *et al.* (1997) conducted a similar research that also asked students to rank 24

ethical issues in accordance with their degree of importance in the industry. The results of the study have noticed similar findings. The students expressed condition of employment, solid waste disposal, pollution, sexual harassment and employee theft as the five most important issues.

Apart from soliciting views from the hospitality students, Vallen and Casado (2000) conducted a questionnaire survey with 45 hotel general managers. Respondents were asked to rank 12 ethical characteristics in terms of the importance they perceive such ethical characteristics have on the successful operation of their hotel. The findings reported that leadership is ranked the most important ethical characteristic, followed in descending order by accountability, commitment to excellence, integrity, honesty, fairness, law abiding, respect for others, promise keeping and trustworthiness, reputation and morale, loyalty and finally, concern for others.

It is evident that the few studies so far on discussing the importance of various ethical issues involved mainly the participation of hospitality students and general managers. It is apparent that there is a general lack of research that attempts to solicit views from staff members of different organizational levels in the industry. They are the ones who are involved in the day-to-day operation of the industry and are able to provide a wider spectrum of perspective and insights on the issue.

Methodology

This study used a self-administered and undisguised questionnaire, containing two sections, as the research instrument. The first section consisted of 39 ethical issues originating from the ethical issues rating scale developed by DuFrene *et al.* (1990). The original scale had short descriptions of 52 business issues of significance in business ethics. To ensure that the issues were relevant to the hospitality industry, a questionnaire with 55 issues (the 52 original issues plus three issues added by the researcher) was given to 20 academic staff of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University for review and comments. They were asked to answer either "yes" or "no" for each issue; a "yes" answer indicated that the issue was applicable to the industry and should be included. If the percentage of affirmative answers was less than 50 percent, the issue would be deleted. Using this dichotomous selection test, a total of 16 issues were excluded, and only 39 issues remained in the questionnaire.

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance they perceived of each issue using a five-point scale, ranging from "1" for extremely unimportant to "5" for extremely important. As suggested by DeFrene *et al.* (1990) and Thomas *et al.* (1984), if an ethical issue is judged to be "important", it can be included as a study unit of a course. In this way, it was hoped that the study would be useful in shaping the ethics curriculum in hospitality.

The second section of the questionnaire collected demographic information about the respondents, such as gender, age, years of work experience, organizational level as well as the department of the respondent.

Since the objective of the study was to collect views from industry practitioners, in January 2001, ten questionnaires were sent to each human resources manager or group director of 78 hotel companies in Hong Kong which represent all 91 member hotels of the Hong Kong Hotels Association. Each manager or director was requested to distribute the questionnaires to their staff for completion. Only 180 questionnaires were returned. Owing to the low response rate, reminder letters were sent to the hotels and follow-up calls were made. An additional 128 questionnaires were received by the end of June 2001.

Initial analysis of the raw data included a summary of means and standard deviations of the demographic information of the respondents and results of the survey of the 39 ethical issues. The mean scores were used to calculate the central tendency measure of the degree of importance of the statements and the standard deviations to explain the dispersal of scores around them. Factor analysis was adopted to define a set of common underlying dimensions among the 39 issues. Factors were formed to maximize their explanation of the entire variable (Hair *et al.*, 1995).

Results

Respondents' profile

Out of the 780 questionnaires distributed, 308 questionnaires were returned and this represents a response rate of 40 percent. Table I shows the characteristics of the respondents; 41 percent were male and 59 percent female. Among these, 31 percent were aged 21 or less, while 45.2 percent were between the ages of 22 and 30; the age group of 31 and above represented 23.8 percent of the respondents. As for organizational level, 7.7 percent of the respondents belonged to senior

Table I Respondents' profile ($n = 308$)

Demographic variable	Valid percentage
Gender	
Male	41.0
Female	59.0
Age group	
Below 18	6.6
18-21	24.4
22-25	22.4
26-30	22.8
31-35	14.9
36 or above	8.9
Years of work experience	
Less than 1	28.1
1 to less than 3	14.4
3 to less than 5	15.2
5 to less than 10	19.5
10 or more	22.8
Department	
Rooms division	20.7
Food and beverage	61.0
Administration	13.3
Others	5.0
Organizational level	
Executive committee member	1.7
Department head A	6.0
Department head B	7.6
Supervisor	24.6
Operative	60.1

management, i.e. executive committee members and department head (e.g. chief engineer, director of sales and marketing and front office manager), department head Bs (e.g. telephone manager, chief concierge, assistant housekeeping manager) represented 7.6 percent of the respondents, while supervisory and operative grades accounted for 84.7 percent of the respondents. In terms of working departments, 20.7 percent of the respondents worked in the rooms division, while 61 and 13 percent worked in the food and beverage and administrative departments respectively (food and beverage departments included both service and production departments as well as banquet offices, while administrative departments included sales and marketing, human resources, accounts, engineering and managers' offices).

Approximately 42.5 percent of the respondents had work experience of less than three years, while 34.7 percent had three to ten years of experience; only 22.8 percent of respondents had ten or more years of experience.

Mean scores and standard deviations for the 39 ethical issues

As Table II shows, each of the 39 issues received a mean score of more than 3 with an average mean

score of 3.98. These results indicate that they are all perceived to be important in the hospitality industry from the industry's perspective. The four issues that received the highest mean scores were "theft of company property by employees" (4.48), "sexual harassment on the job" (4.45), "disposal of hazardous waste" (4.43) and "acceptance of bribes or gifts by employees" (4.40). At the same time, the four issues that received the lowest mean scores were "solicitation of tips from guests" (3.36), "hiring practices based on personal connections and favors" (3.63), "use of electronic tracking devices to monitor computer use by employees" (3.65) and "provide free/discount services to friends/relatives without the company's knowledge" (3.70).

Factor analysis

As shown in Table III, this study adopted factor analysis to consolidate the 39 ethical issues into a set of underlying dimensions reflecting the perceptions of the industry of the various issues of ethics. For the purposes of quality control of the factors, the data were first tested using Barlett's test of sphericity, a statistical test for the overall significance of the correlations within a correlation matrix. The result of the Barlett's test was 4,064 (sufficiently high) with a significant level of 0.00. This indicates that factor analysis could be performed to further analyze the data. The final test conducted was the test of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), which is a measure of sampling adequacy. Hair *et al.* (1995) have claimed that data are valid if the value for the KMO test is found to be greater than 0.5. Since the value of KMO for the data in this study was found to be 0.866, it is concluded that factor analysis was valid in this study.

According to Hair *et al.* (1995), only those factors with eigenvalues or latent roots greater than 1 can be considered significant; all factors with values of less than 1 can be considered insignificant and should be discarded. This assumes that any individual factor should account for the variance of at least a single statement if it is to be retained for interpretation. The factor analysis used principal components with Varimax rotation and the eigenvalues for the eight factors in the data from this study, as indicated in the lower part of Table III, were all found to be greater than 1 and together they explained 50.48 percent of the cumulative variance. However, seven issues were deleted because their factor loadings were less than 0.5 and another three issues were discarded because there was only one issue in the factor (see notes of Table III).

Table II Mean scores and standard deviation of all issues ($n = 308$)

Issues	Mean score	SD
1 Theft of company property by employees	4.48	0.87
2 Sexual harassment on the job	4.45	0.86
3 Disposal of hazardous waste	4.43	0.87
4 Acceptance of bribes or gifts by employees	4.40	0.94
5 Provide fail-safe quality products/services	4.37	3.04
6 Pollution of air and water	4.32	0.89
7 Communication to public of sensitive information, e.g. bomb threats or product contamination	4.25	0.94
8 Remove a product from market due to potential health or safety risks	4.23	0.93
9 Obligation of employees to give full effort to job	4.23	0.86
10 Employees disclosing company information or trade secrets	4.21	0.97
11 Honesty in advertising and labeling of products/services	4.16	0.86
12 Communication to media of true and complete information	4.10	3.03
13 Protection of natural resources	4.04	0.83
14 Gather excessive information on clients, customers, or employees	4.03	3.02
15 Restrict dissatisfied consumers in taking legal actions against company	4.03	3.02
16 Export of products that do not meet safety and/or quality standards	4.02	1.00
17 Use insider business information for personal profit	4.01	1.02
18 File overstated or false insurance claims	3.98	1.96
19 Fair and complete media coverage of business issues	3.95	2.49
20 Use computers for illegal purposes, e.g. sabotage, unauthorized access	3.94	1.10
21 Use investment capital from unknown or questionable sources	3.94	1.04
22 Disposal of solid waste	3.93	0.86
23 Protection of specified groups by equal employment law	3.92	0.85
24 Illegal copying of registered software	3.91	1.07
25 Equal pay for comparable jobs	3.90	0.91
26 Employee abuse of company benefits, privileges, facilities	3.89	0.92
27 Company loyalty versus public responsibility	3.86	0.91
28 Use hormones to enhance food production	3.86	1.07
29 Use of electronic devices to monitor employee activity on job	3.79	1.20
30 Sell products/services that have potential to save lives or reduce suffering but are likely to be unprofitable	3.78	0.98
31 Rights of employees to include funded child care, parental leave and elder care leave	3.77	0.84
32 Disregard home country trade sanctions in the sale of goods, services and technology to foreign countries	3.77	1.03
33 Use low paid foreign labor	3.77	1.12
34 Use in foreign countries of advertising and promotional techniques that are illegal in the home country	3.73	2.46
35 Balance of management's responsibility between company and stockholders	3.70	0.96
36 Provide free/discount services to friends/relatives without the company's knowledge	3.70	1.14
37 Use of electronic tracking devices to monitor computer use by employees	3.65	0.97
38 Hiring practices based on personal connections and favors	3.63	1.09
39 Solicitation of tips from guests	3.36	1.39
Overall mean scores	3.98	0.52

Notes: Mean value of 1 = "extremely unimportant"; mean value of 5 = "extremely important"

Factor 1: business fraud

The first factor identified was named "business fraud" as five out of the seven issues in this dimension are related to criminal activities committed by employees. These issues include "use computers for illegal purposes" (3.94), "use investment capital from unknown or questionable sources" (3.94), "use insider business information for personal profit" (4.01), "disregard home country trade sanctions in the sale of goods, services and technology to foreign countries" (3.77) and "file overstated or false insurance claims" (3.98). These were all considered to be deliberate, illegal, law-breaking acts. An offence

involving one of these issues would result in punishment by law.

Factor 2: social conscience and employee integrity

The second factor consists of seven issues, three of which were grouped under the heading "social conscience" as they deal with the value judgment as part of the policy and strategy of the company. However, erroneous decisions made on these issues do not necessarily constitute an offence against the law. These issues include "export of products that do not meet home country safety and/or quality standards" (4.02), "communication to public of sensitive information, e.g. bomb

Table III Results of factor analysis

Factor names and issues	Eigenvalue	Cumulative variance explained (percent)	Factor loading	Factor mean	Cronbach's α
Factor 1: business fraud	9.20	9.90			
Use computers for illegal purposes, e.g. sabotage, unauthorized access			0.54	3.90	0.87
Use investment capital from unknown or questionable sources			0.61		
Use insider business information for personal profit			0.67		
Disregard home country trade sanctions in the sale of goods, services and technology to foreign countries			0.69		
File overstated or false insurance claims			0.53		
Sell products/services that have the potential to save lives or reduce suffering but are likely to be unprofitable			0.62		
Employee abuse of company benefits, privileges, facilities			0.54		
Factor 2: social conscience and employee integrity	2.34	19.74			
Theft of company property by employees			0.77	4.21	0.82
Acceptance of bribes or gifts by employees			0.63		
Export of products that do not meet home country safety and/or quality standards			0.58		
Illegal copying of registered software			0.57		
Employees disclosing company information or trade secrets			0.53		
Communication to public of sensitive information, e.g. bomb threats or product contamination			0.56		
Remove a product from market due to potential health or safety risks			0.52		
Factor 3: environmental protection	1.94	26.31			
Protection of natural resources			0.55	4.41	0.67
Disposal of hazardous waste			0.58		
Pollution of air and water			0.69		
Factor 4: personal advantage	1.67	31.88			
Solicitation of tips from guests			0.74	3.56	0.72
Provide free/discount services to friends/relatives without the company's knowledge			0.71		
Hiring practices based on personal connections and favors			0.67		
Factor 5: consumer protection	1.41	37.00			
Provide fail-safe quality products/services			0.96	4.15	0.95
Fair and complete media coverage of business issues			0.96		
Factor 6: privacy of employees	1.34	41.84			
Use of electronic devices to monitor employee activity on job			0.71	3.72	0.54
Use of electronic tracking devices to monitor computer use by employees			0.68		
Factor 7: employee equity	1.30	46.22			
Protection of specified groups by equal employment law			0.51	3.86	0.58
Rights of employees to include funded child care, parental leave and elder care leave			0.67		
Equal pay for comparable jobs			0.77		
Factor 8: social justice	1.02	50.48			
Obligation of employees to give full efforts to job			0.54	4.20	0.46
Honesty in advertising and labeling of products/services			0.74		

Notes: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy: 0.866; Barlett's test of sphericity: 4,064; significance level: 0.00; seven issues were deleted because their factor loadings are less than 0.5: "Balance of management's responsibility to both the business organization and to its stockholders" (factor loading = 0.38); "sexual harassment on the job" (factor loading = 0.46); "gathering of excessive information about guests or employees by company" (factor loading = 0.40); "the issue of company loyalty versus public responsibility" (factor loading = 0.48); "disposal of solid waste" (factor loading = 0.48); "use in foreign countries of advertising and promotional techniques that are illegal in the home country" (factor loading = 0.16); "use of low-paid foreign labor" (factor loading = 0.45). Three issues were deleted because there was only one issue in the factor: "restrictions on legal actions against company by damaged or dissatisfied consumers"; "communication by company to the media of true and complete information"; and "use of hormones to enhance food production"

threats or product contamination” (4.25) and “remove a product from market due to potential health or safety risks” (4.23). Since the rest of the issues in this dimension are concerned with honesty and virtue of employees, they were categorized under the heading of “employee integrity”. They include “theft of company property by employees” (4.48), “acceptance of bribes or gifts by employees” (4.40), “illegal copying of registered software” (3.91) and “employees disclosing company information or trade secrets” (4.21). A factor mean of 4.21, the second highest among the eight factors, suggests that the industry perceives this factor as a relatively important dimension of the hospitality industry.

Factor 3: environmental protection

Factor 3 comprises three issues that are closely related to the protection and enhancement of the environment and the community as a whole and was thus labeled as “environmental protection”. The three issues in this dimension include “protection of natural resources” (4.04), “disposal of hazardous waste” (4.43) and “pollution of air and water” (4.32). This dimension recorded the highest factor mean of 4.41, reflecting the highest level of concern of the respondents about the impact of their industry on the ecological environment of society.

Factor 4: personal advantage

The fourth factor, “personal advantage”, comprises three issues linked directly to people who take advantage of their positions in the company. The three issues in this dimension include “solicitation of tips from guests” (3.36), “provide free/discount services to friends/relatives without the company’s knowledge” (3.69) and “hiring practices based on personal connections and favors” (3.63). The factor had the lowest mean of 3.56, indicating that it was perceived to be the least important factor. The result is possibly due to the fact that it does not have much impact on society and the company.

Factor 5: consumer protection

Factor 5 consists of two issues, “provide fail-safe quality products/services” (4.37) and “fair and complete media coverage of business issues” (3.92). This factor is concerned with the ultimate responsibility of the company to provide their customers with products and services that meet quality standards, and the fact that all consumers should have the right to be provided with complete information on products and companies so that they can make informed judgment prior to purchase or consumption of goods. A factor mean of 4.15, the fourth highest factor of the eight,

evidently shows that this factor was fairly important.

Factor 6: privacy of employees

The two issues included in factor 6, “use of electronic devices to monitor employee activity on job” (3.79) and “use of electronic tracking devices to monitor computer use by employees” (3.65) refer to the invasion of employee privacy by a company and was therefore labeled as “privacy of employees”. The factor has the second lowest mean of 3.72, indicating that comparatively it was not ranked very important among the eight factors.

Factor 7: employee equity

The three issues included in factor 7 relate to fairness in employment and compensation and benefits and could be appropriately named as “employee equity”. These issues, “protection of specified groups by equal employment law” (3.92), “rights of employees to include funded child care, parental leave and elder care leave” (3.77) and “equal pay for comparable jobs” (3.90), state that it is a basic human right that everyone, regardless of color, race, religion or ethnic background, should be treated in the same manner and that all employees should be remunerated equitably in both compensation and benefits in accordance with their comparable worth. The factor mean was 3.86, the third lowest mean score among the eight factors, and it indicates that relatively speaking, it is not as important to the respondents.

Factor 8: social justice

The last factor “social justice” includes two issues, “obligation of employees to give full efforts to job” (4.23) and “honesty in the advertising and labeling of products/services” (4.16). This factor deals with proper conduct, integrity and fairness as employees of the company. A factor mean of 4.20 was found, the third highest mean score, and these issues were considered to be relatively important in the industry.

Ranking of the eight factors

Table IV shows in descending order how the respondents ranked the degree of importance of the factors – “environmental protection” (4.41), “social conscience and employee integrity” (4.21), “social justice” (4.20), “consumer protection” (4.15), “business fraud” (3.90), “employee equity” (3.86), “privacy of employees” (3.72) and finally “personal advantage” (3.56).

Table IV Ranking of the factors

Ranking	Factors	Factor mean
1	Environmental protection	4.41
2	Social conscience and employee integrity	4.21
3	Social justice	4.20
4	Consumer protection	4.15
5	Business fraud	3.90
6	Employee equity	3.86
7	Privacy of employees	3.72
8	Personal advantage	3.56

Notes: Mean value of 1 = "extremely unimportant"; Mean value of 5 = "extremely important"

The top three most important factors could be appropriately grouped together and renamed "accountability to society". Similarly, since the fourth and fifth most important factors are related to the moral ethics responsibility of an establishment to its consumers and guests, they could be considered together and renamed "accountability to external customers". The last three factors that were perceived to be relatively less important could be grouped under the heading "accountability to internal customers" as they were issues concerning individual employees. From the rankings determined by the factor mean analysis, it was concluded that industry practitioners consider ethics concerning accountability to society as the most important, followed closely by accountability to external customers and finally accountability to internal customers.

Discussion and conclusion

Although the 39 ethical issues examined in this study did not constitute by any means an exhaustive list of concerns in the hospitality industry, the study helps to identify the importance of each issue within the parameters given. This information is useful as a basis to develop a hospitality ethics curriculum. It is recommended that developers of hospitality curricula should consider the inclusion of these ethical issues in their programs. For example, "theft of company property by employees" (4.48), "sexual harassment on the job" (4.45) and "disposal of hazardous waste" (4.43), "acceptance of bribes or gifts by employee" (4.40) and "provide fail-safe quality product/services" (4.37), the five most important issues identified, should receive priority in the curriculum, while other issues can be arranged and discussed sequentially in accordance with their importance to the industry. According to

Taba (1962), the selection of content should meet the criteria of significance. It links to the matter of breadth and depth in the curriculum. From time to time, people find it difficult to maintain a suitable balance between the two, as there is always insufficient time. Thus, the identification of important issues in this study will help to form the basis of a hospitality ethics course. It represents a number of carefully selected topics that are significant to the subject being taught.

In the study of Yeung (2002), who surveyed the hospitality students in Hong Kong on the same 39 ethical issues similar results were found. The hospitality students rated "disposal of hazardous waste", "acceptance of bribes or gifts by employees", "sexual harassment on the job", "employees disclose corporate information or trade secrets" and "theft of company property by employees" as the top five most important issues. One point of caution is that the overall mean score of the 39 issues rated by the hospitality students is 3.82 when compared to 3.98 of the hospitality practitioners. It can probably be interpreted as a stronger ethical awareness among the practitioners as they perceive most issues as relatively more important to the successful operation of the industry.

As a matter of fact, the findings of this study also appear to corroborate the findings of some previous studies done in the USA (Enghagen and Holt, 1992; Weaver *et al.*, 1997), in which "conditions of employment", "solid waste disposal", "sexual harassment", "employee theft" and "pollution of air and water" are found to be the important ethical issues.

Apart from looking at individual issues, the curriculum design could be based on the results of the factor analysis. In the analysis, the industry ranked "accountability to society" as the most important factor, followed by "accountability to external customers" and finally "accountability to internal customers"; hospitality educators could set the syllabus content with reference to these findings. There is also a strong correlation between the results of the factor analysis in this study and the categorization of Epstein (1989), who divided the analysis of ethics into four levels. The first level of analysis is macro-ethics pertaining to norms and values of the total political-economic system and encompasses issues such as environmental protection, social conscience and social justice, all of which were identified in this study. Epstein's second and third levels of analysis deal with the ethical conduct of an industry and of a firm towards its consumers and correspond to the fourth and fifth most important factors in the study, namely "consumer protection" and

“business fraud”; both issues mainly relate to the ethical responsibility of an industry or a firm to its consumers. Finally, the last three factors in this study, “employee equity”, “privacy of employees” and “personal advantage” can be equated to Epstein’s final category, which addresses ethics of the individual.

In conclusion, with the help of industry’s participation, this study has been able to identify the different degrees of importance of various ethical issues. This result is an important step for hospitality educators to formulate a quality curriculum to meet the industry’s expectation and enhance customer satisfaction. Using the collected data, issues and areas of primary and secondary importance have been identified and it provides a useful tool to develop the curriculum. This would help alleviate the problem of lack of subject and teaching materials that is often cited as the major constraint in teaching ethics (Gunz and McCutcheon, 1998; Mintz, 1990). The primary objective of discussing those identified important issues in the ethics class is to allow students to incorporate their moral values into the decision-making process. In other words, students are encouraged to be more perceptive to ethics and to scrutinize complex business moral issues, and in turn, the public will reap the benefits (Bok, 1990, cited in Menzel, 1997) of their value judgment.

However, the process of collecting the views from other stakeholders such as teaching staff and program administrators should continue. It is only when a diversity of views from various stakeholders are consolidated that the hospitality ethics curriculum can be made relevant, practical and up-to-date.

For further research, it would be interesting to use qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews with various stakeholders to seek answers to the questions of why they perceive some issues as more important than the others. This would provide useful insights in understanding this complex phenomenon in the industry. In addition, future analysis can be conducted to determine if there are significant differences between the practitioners’ and students’ perception towards the importance of the 39 ethical issues. This will further enhance our knowledge on the differences of ethical belief and orientation of the two groups.

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