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ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Ongoing research into the needs of tourism and hospitality industries with respect to competencies required of graduates is crucial to ensure curricula are relevant and up to date. Additionally, as student internships are common components of tertiary education in tourism and hospitality management, studies investigating the role internship plays in developing tourism students' management competencies are essential. This paper reports on a longitudinal study that explores management competencies of Australian tourism and hospitality students in a 3 year Bachelor of Business in Tourism program. This investigation assessed students' perceptions of their level of management competence, developed during the first, second and third years of their degree program. A self-assessment instrument that measures perceived competence in 24 generic management competencies and 8 management roles within the Competing Values Framework (CVF) (Quinn, Thompson, Faerman & McGrath, 1996) was used. The key findings of this investigation imply that tertiary education in tourism and hospitality studies has proved effective in contributing towards the development of management competencies in this cohort of students, particularly in the mentor role. This study also highlights the importance of offering a curriculum in tourism and hospitality management that incorporates a blend of learning experiences that will develop students' level of management competence, thereby preparing them for future management roles.

Key words: Management competencies, self-assessment, tourism and hospitality.

Introduction

Tourism and hospitality university courses aim to meet demands of a volatile and changing world (Umbreit, 1993). Many attempt to prepare students by developing and enhancing management competencies and skills that are needed to operate successfully. Travel and tourism industries generate employment for approximately 250 million people or one in every eleven jobs (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2002). In Australia, employment in tourism is 540,700 persons up 1.3% from 2001-02 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004) yet there is a lack of appropriately skilled human resources. Tourism and hospitality employers have concerns regarding the scarcity of suitably qualified, competent staff, particularly staff with managerial potential (Goodman & Sprague, 1991). The School of Tourism and Hospitality Management delivers the Bachelor of Business in Tourism at Southern Cross University. This degree course involves five semesters of on-campus study covering a range of disciplines aimed at preparing students for management careers in tourism and hospitality. Additionally students are required to take a six-month compulsory internship in an industry setting as the final component of their degree. To consider student perceptions of management skills and competencies developed throughout the course

duration, the researchers under took a longitudinal study to measure changes in perceived competence.

Literature Review

The main objective of management education is to provide industry with high calibre graduates equipped with 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, Labreque & Clayton, 1996; Kay & Russette, 2000). Also, Gustin (2001) found in USA that encouraging and teaching critical thinking skills resulted in students better prepared to meet demands of an ill defined business environment. In Australia, Moscardo (1997) claims that developing problem solving skills, creative and flexible-thinking competencies is critical in building management competencies for tourism students.

A definition of competency that recognizes the importance of skills, knowledge and personal characteristics and the linkages between possessing these and performing certain tasks or roles is one developed by Quinn *et al.* (1996). A competency "suggests both the possession of knowledge and the behavioural capacity to act appropriately. To develop competencies you must both be introduced to knowledge and have the opportunity to practice your skills" Quinn *et al.* (1996: 14).

Employers require graduates with transferable skills including strong written and oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and problem solving skills (DEETYA, 1998). While tourism and hospitality employers anticipate that graduates possess transferable generic skills in areas of leadership, communication, strategic thinking and decision-making (Buergermeister, 1983; Goodman and Sprague, 1991; Cichy, Sciarini & Patton, 1992; Williams and DeMicco 1998).

Cyclical economic conditions and demands for high quality tourism and hospitality services, coupled with fluctuating unemployment rates challenge managers to achieve competence in their leadership. Competent leadership qualities are needed to determine strategic directions for an organisation to take (Scheule & Sneed, 2001) and to creatively solve business problems. Skills must accommodate internal organisation flexibility and an ambiguous external environment. This type of environment demands innovative managers to broker their organisation through unsettled external times (Quinn *et al*, 1996).

Tourism and hospitality industries are often regarded as 'people industries' and effective human resource management is critical. Many tourism and hospitality researchers maintain that 'soft' human relation skills including oral and written communication and interpersonal communication are essential for graduates and trainees to possess (Baum, 1991; Okeiyi, Finley & Postel, 1994; Tas, LaBrecque & Clayton, 1996; Maes, Weldy & Icenogle, 1997; Christou & Karamanidis, 1999; Walo 2000). Tait, Richins & Hanlon (1993) studied managers and decision-makers within three industry sectors: tourism, sport and recreation. Their results confirm that communication ability and interpersonal skills were rated most important competencies by all three sectors (Tait, *et al.,* 1993).

In addition to the traditional classroom learning, there is substantial agreement between, employers, educators and students that practical work experience is vital for the future success of tourism and hospitality management graduates. Internships aim to enhance students' practical skills and management competencies (Knight, 1984; LeBruto & Murray, 1994; Mariampolski, Spears & Vaden, 1980; Tas, 1988, Walo 2000) while providing an important link between classroom theory and workplace practice (Cuneen & Sidwell 1994). Students through internship can reportedly develop competence in several generic areas of management, including leadership, human resources, oral and written communication, interpersonal communication, problem solving,

teamwork, planning and decision-making (Bell & Schmidt, 1996; LeBruto & Murray, 1994; McMullin, 1998).

Limited empirical evidence has been completed to assess change in students' management competencies (Hart *et al*.,1999). To address this gap, Walo (2000) and Dimmock, Breen and Walo (2003) studied Australian tourism and hospitality students whose perceived level of competence increased while studying management in the classroom as well as during their practical internship program.

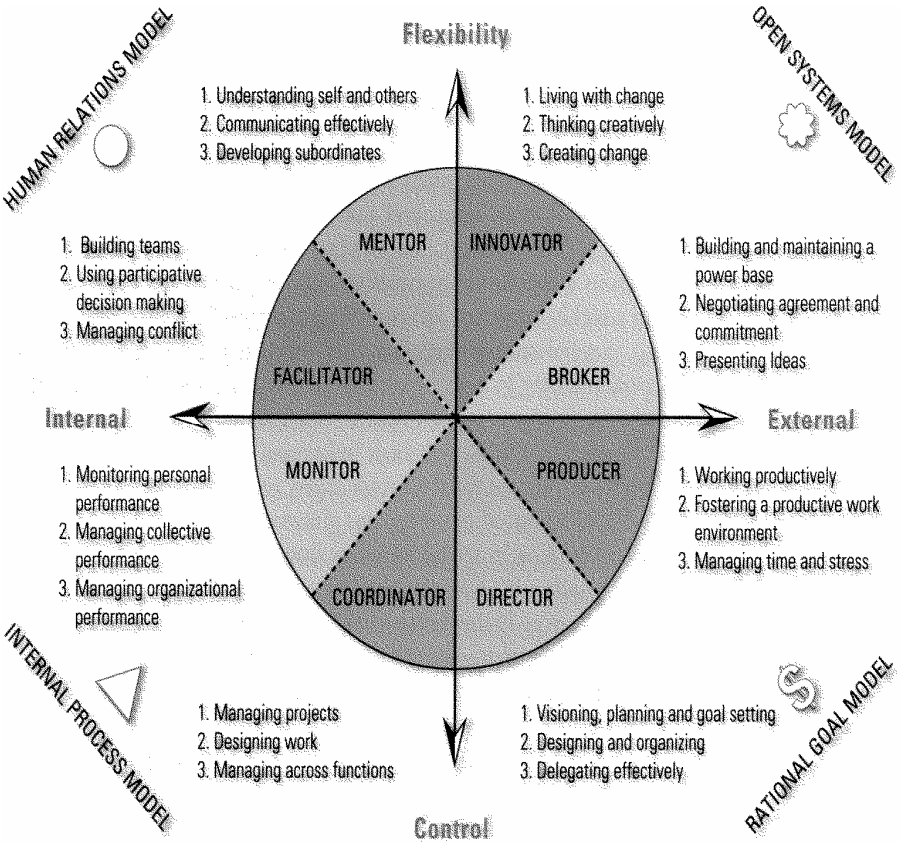
The aim of this present research was to investigate the management competencies of a cohort of tourism students at three stages during their management studies:
1st stage; during the 1st semester of study,
2nd stage: during the final year of study before internship,
3rd stage: at the completion of their degree.
Specifically, the investigation sought to compare and analyse outcomes of each stage to identify students' perceived management competency development.

The Competing Values Framework

As industry and graduates need transferable generic competencies applicable to local, national and international organisation settings, a generic framework of management competencies was determined appropriate for the empirical stages of this research. Therefore, this study draws upon Quinn, Thompson, Faerman and McGrath's (1996) 'Competing Values Framework' (CVF). This model has a sound theoretical and research base and offers an opportunity to examine key managerial skills and competencies based on organisational theory. Furthermore, Australian researchers (Dimmock, 1999; Colyer, 2000; Walo, 2000; Dimmock, Breen and Walo, 2003) have utilised the values and principles of the CVF (Quinn et al., 1996). All these studies are significant in that they demonstrate the application and acceptance of the CVF (Quinn et al., 1996) in the Australian context. The CVF also takes a more general approach to management competencies and skills necessary for managers to be effective, giving it the versatility to be applied to all industry sectors.

The intention of Quinn *et al.'s* (1996) CVF, shown in Figure 1, is to provide a comprehensive model that reflects the values and characteristics of four historic models of organisational theory - the Rational Goal Model, Internal Process Model, Human Relations Model and Open Systems Model (Quinn *et al.,* 1996).

Figure 1. The Competing Values Framework



Source: Quinn *et al*., 1996:16

Each quadrant of the framework makes up the larger construct of organisational and managerial effectiveness (Quinn *et al.,* 1996). The authors (Quinn *et al.,* 1996) state that many managers pursue a single personal style and employ similar strategies over a wide range of differing situations. They suggest a manager's world keeps changing and therefore strategies effective in one situation may not be effective in another. The CVF enables managers opportunity to increase effectiveness by developing and utilising a range of often competing competencies, depending on the situation (Quinn *et al.*, 1996). As shown in Figure 1, there are two management roles associated with each of the four management models within the CVF (Quinn *et al*., 1996). Each role complements the adjacent role and contrasts with that opposite. Another feature of the model is that it describes three specific competencies essential for performance in each of the eight management roles, for a total of 24 competencies in all.

Methodology

The developers of the CVF (Quinn *et al*., 1996) designed a valid and reliable survey instrument that assesses an individual's competence in relation to the three competencies associated with each of the eight roles, for a total of 24 competencies. In this study the Self-Assessment of Managerial Skills (S.A.M.S.) (DiPadova, 1990) was used to measure students' perceived management competency.

While there are concerns about using self-assessment, such as the potential for students to over-report their level of management competence, there is evidence to suggest its value as an evaluation tool (Walo, 2000). Several researchers suggest, to determine their management competencies, students can use self-assessment methods successfully, (Cochrane & Spears 1980; Sim 1994). These findings have particular relevance to the present study in terms of the method used for assessing students' management competencies. Cochrane & Spears (1980) found undergraduates in food service management and dietetics demonstrated high ability to self-assess their performance, and that these assessments provided effective evaluation of programs and student development.

Similarly, Wood and Locke (1987) found that college undergraduate students' perceived self - efficacy was significantly related to academic performance in seven task areas of a management course.

The Self Assessment of Managerial Skills instrument (DiPadova, 1996) comprises 117 statements describing a variety of skills associated with managerial work. For example statements include:
I continually seek feedback on my performance.
Each day I have a well defined plan.
I feel comfortable acting as an advisor to people.
I adjust well to changing conditions.
I am an unusually hard worker (Di Padova, 1996).

Each statement is linked to one of the 24 competencies in the CVF (Quinn *et al.,* 1996). These 24 competencies were deemed most important of the original 250 competencies linked to the 8 manager roles in the CVF (Quinn *et al.,* 2003). The 8 roles emphasise the spectrum of manager responsibilities (Quinn *et al.,* 2003). Respondents circle between 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) for each statement indicating level of agreement with that statement. On completion, questionnaires are collected, scores computed and averaged to result in 117 figures for each respondent, indicating perceived competence with each of the elements of the CVF (Quinn *et al.,* 1996).

Sample

The study's selection process was based on purposive sampling. Sarantakos (1995:158) confirms with this sampling technique, researchers intentionally choose subjects relevant to the research topic. Indeed, the study was designed to explore perceived management competency development of students within a selected university program. Clearly limitations exist as a result of the sampling technique. These limitations will exist in generalising the study findings to the broader population (Jennings, 2001).

The preliminary questionnaire was distributed personally to all first year Bachelor of Business in Tourism students during their 1st semester of study in 2000 (1st stage). It was administered in a controlled environment, during a core lecture under the supervision of two of the principal researchers. Of the 100 surveys distributed, in this first round, 58 surveys were returned giving a response rate of 58%.

A similar procedure was followed again in 2002 for the second stage of the investigation for students in their final semester of study before undertaking the 6 month internship component of their degree. Of the 80 surveys distributed, 66 surveys were returned, giving a response rate of 80%.

For the final and third stage of the investigation, the questionnaire was distributed by mail to all 72 3rd year Bachelor of Business in Tourism students towards the completion of their internship. Of the 72 surveys distributed, 45 surveys were returned, giving a response rate of 62.5%. Using student identification numbers, an exact match was found for 30 student responses in the 1st , 2nd and 3rd stages of the research. These 30 responses were the sample used in this study.

Analysis

Composite mean scores for the total student sample for all three stages were calculated for each of the 117 skills linked to the 24 competencies and 8 roles. These scores identified changes in the students' management competence. Paired sample t-tests were then performed on students' 1st and 2nd stage, 2nd and 3rd stage and 1st and 3rd stage mean scores for the 24 competencies and 8 roles using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Due to the large number of comparisons to be

conducted (24 tests) the Bonferroni Inequality (level of significance of .002), a control measure that adjusts for multiple comparisons, was applied (School of Behavioral Sciences, 1987).

Sample Demographics

Approximately 77.0% of the study sample were female and 23.0% were male. Of these approximately 80.0% were recent school leavers and 20.0% were mature age (over 21 years). The majority of respondents (87.0%) held a Higher School Certificate or equivalent as their highest educational qualification, while 10.0% had attained a TAFE (certificate or diploma) qualification and the remaining 3.0% had only attained their School Certificate. These findings are broadly consistent with the distribution of males to females enrolled each year in the Bachelor of Business in Tourism at Southern Cross University.

In terms of previous experience, over two thirds (66.5%) of the students had been employed prior to enrolling in their degree programme while 33.5% had no previous experience. Of those who had previously been employed, almost half (45.0%) had held supervisory positions. The majority of students in this sample had some experience in the workplace, prior to commencing their degree. This factor may have some influence on the level of students' management competencies in all three stages of this study.

Findings

Students' Level of Managerial Competence at the 1st stage.

Table 1 below shows students' 1st stage management competency scores ranging from 3.94 to 5.25. The competencies where students perceived most competence were Understanding Self and Others (5.25) and Communicating Effectively (5.25). Least competence was perceived in Managing Across Functions (3.94) and Managing Projects (4.07). When linked to the 8 roles in the CVF Framework, students perceived most competence in the Mentor Role (5.07) and least competence in the Coordinator role (4.17).

Table 1: Comparison of Students' 1st and 2nd Stage Managerial Competence

	Management Competency/Role	**1st stage**	**2nd stage**	**t value**	**Sig. 2 tailed**
	Director Role	**4.49**	**4.97**	**-3.530**	**.001****
1	Designing and Organising	4.38	4.67	-1.343	.190
2	Visioning, Planning and Goal Setting	4.26	4.94	-3.499	.002**
3	Delegating Effectively	4.85	5.28	-2.841	.008*
	Producer Role	**4.39**	**4.81**	**-2.047**	**.050***
4	Working Productively	4.48	5.22	-4.006	.000**
5	Fostering a Productive Work Environment	4.62	4.68	-.131	.896
6	Managing Time and Stress	4.09	4.52	-2.217	.035*
	Co-ordinator Role	**4.17**	**4.73**	**-3.688**	**.001****
7	Managing Projects	4.07	4.66	-3.713	.001**
8	Designing Work	4.49	5.02	-3.470	.002**
9	Managing Across Functions	3.94	4.52	-2.764	.010*
	Monitor Role	**4.35**	**4.79**	**-3.195**	**.003***

10	Monitoring Personal Performance	4.63	4.95	-2.239	.033*
11	Managing Collective Performance	4.15	4.47	-1.841	.076
12	Managing Organsational Performance	4.26	4.95	-3.336	.002**
	Mentor Role	**5.07**	**5.49**	**-2.293**	**.029***
13	Understanding Self and Others	5.25	6.00	-1.776	.086
14	Communicating Effectively	5.25	5.42	-1.231	.228
15	Developing Subordinates	4.63	5.06	-2.296	.029*
	Facilitator Role	**4.63**	**4.96**	**-2.577**	**.015***
16	Building Teams	4.43	4.85	-2.033	.051
17	Using Participative Decision Making	5.01	5.31	-2.295	.029*
18	Managing Conflict	4.40	4.71	-2.135	.041*
	Innovator Role	**4.64**	**5.00**	**-2.443**	**.021***
19	Living with Change	4.99	5.36	-1.886	.069
20	Thinking Creatively	4.77	5.08	-2.099	.045*
21	Creating Change	4.15	4.57	-2.187	.037*
	Broker Role	**4.47**	**4.94**	**-3.939**	**.000****
22	Building and Maintaining a Power Base	4.50	5.00	-3.056	.002**
23	Negotiating Agreement and Commitment	4.48	4.94	-3.489	.002**
24	Presenting Ideas Effectively	4.42	4.88	-2.660	.013*

* Significance at the $p \leq .05$ level
** Significance at the $p \leq .002$ level

Students' Level of Managerial Competence at the 2nd stage

Table 1 also shows students' 2nd stage management competency scores ranging from 4.47 to 6.00. The competencies where students perceived most competence were Understanding Self and Others (6.00) and Communicating Effectively (5.42). Least competence was perceived in Managing Collective Performance (4.47) and Managing Across Functions (4.52). When linked to the 8 roles in the CVF Framework, students perceived most competence in the Mentor Role (5.00) and least competence in the Coordinator Role (4.73).

Students' Level of Managerial Competence at the 3rd stage

From Table 2 below, students perceived they had acquired a reasonable level of competence for the 24 management competencies in the 3rd stage, with mean scores ranging from 4.73 to 5.77. At the completion of their degree, students perceived most competence in Communication Effectively (5.77) and Understanding Self and Others (5.76). Students perceived least competence with Creating Change (4.73) and Managing Across Functions (4.83). When linked to the 8 roles in the CVF, students perceived most competence in the Mentor Role (5.65) and least competence in the Coordinator Role (4.17).

Table 2: Comparison of Students' 2nd and 3rd Stage Managerial Competence

	Management Competency/Role	**2nd stage**	**3rd stage**	**t value**	**Sig. 2 tailed**
	Director Role	**4.97**	**5.08**	**-.992**	**.329**
1	Designing and Organising	4.67	4.85	-1.161	.255

2	Visioning, Planning and Goal Setting	4.94	5.04	-.627	.536
3	Delegating Effectively	5.28	5.35	-.429	.671
	Producer Role	**4.81**	**5.18**	**-3.046**	**.005***
4	Working Productively	5.22	5.54	-1.684	.103
5	Fostering a Productive Work Environment	4.68	5.02	-2.242	.033*
6	Managing Time and Stress	4.52	4.97	-2.380	.024*
	Co-ordinator Role	**4.73**	**4.97**	**-2.108**	**.044***
7	Managing Projects	4.66	5.01	-2.525	.017*
8	Designing Work	5.02	5.06	-.296	.769
9	Managing Across Functions	4.52	4.83	-2.514	.018*
	Monitor Role	**4.79**	**5.18**	**-4.202**	**.000****
10	Monitoring Personal Performance	4.95	5.30	-2.878	.007*
11	Managing Collective Performance	4.47	4.89	-2.636	.013*
12	Managing Organsational Performance	4.95	5.36	-3.157	.004*
	Mentor Role	**5.49**	**5.65**	**-.900**	**.376**
13	Understanding Self and Others	6.00	5.76	.582	.565
14	Communicating Effectively	5.42	5.77	-2.746	.010*
15	Developing Subordinates	5.06	5.41	-2.167	.039*
	Facilitator Role	**4.96**	**5.14**	**-1.673**	**.105**
16	Building Teams	4.85	4.97	-.851	.402
17	Using Participative Decision Making	5.31	5.47	-1.310	.201
18	Managing Conflict	4.71	4.97	-1.861	.073
	Innovator Role	**5.00**	**5.14**	**-1.429**	**.164**
19	Living with Change	5.36	5.41	-.331	.743
20	Thinking Creatively	5.08	5.29	-1.406	.170
21	Creating Change	4.57	4.73	-1.095	.283
	Broker Role	**4.94**	**5.09**	**-1.330**	**.194**
22	Building and Maintaining a Power Base	5.00	5.15	-1.316	.198
23	Negotiating Agreement and Commitment	4.94	5.02	-.576	.569
24	Presenting Ideas Effectively	4.88	5.10	-1.104	.279

* Significance at the $p \leq .05$ level
** Significance at the $p \leq .002$ level

It is important to note that students' mean scores progressively improved over each of the three stages for 23 of the 24 management competencies. The exception was for the mean score for Understanding Self and Others which students perceived less competence at the completion of their degree, between stages 2 and 3. The experience of practical internship in the tourism and hospitality workplace has obviously caused these students to reassess their competencies in this area.

It is interesting that students perceived most competence with the Mentor Role and least competence with the Co-ordinator role at all three stages of the research. Cheetham and Chivers

(1998) cite Schon (1983) when they posit that managers use tacit knowledge in going about their work and develop 'repertoires' of solutions to their role. It is suggested that such processes have commenced for the respondents to the current study as they progress through the developmental stages of building competence.

Students' confidence to perform in the Mentor role is supported by the literature. DiPadova (1990) suggests that students can relate strongly to the Mentor associated competencies. In particular, interpersonal communication skills are viewed as necessary life competencies, regardless of an individual's career level or status. Whereas the challenges of the Co-ordinator role include the efficient flow of work and information as well as an articulated way of organising work to achieve continuity and stability (Quinn *et al.,* 2003). It is reasonable to expect that life experience for these students has not yet developed their competence and perception of such competence sufficiently in these areas.

Comparison of outcomes from 1st 2nd and 3rd stages

T-tests between 1st and 2nd stage

Table 1 above shows that students' 2nd stage mean scores were significantly higher than their 1st stage mean scores at the $p \leq .002$ level, for 6 of the 24 competencies. These were: Visioning planning and goal setting, Working productively, Building and maintaining a powerbase, Managing organisational performance, Managing projects and Designing Work.

These results reflect students' ability to develop in ways that include the challenges of setting goals, taking initiative, dealing with culturally diverse situations and lateral thinking (Di Padova, 1996). In their discussion of student and employer perceptions of competence development within retail education and industries, Hart, Harrington, Arnold and Loan-Clarke (1999) used the term 'meta-competencies' to refer to competence with managing people, working with others, organisational ability and creative thinking. Students within the current study have indicated perceived development with all elements of the CVF and meta competencies (Hart *et al.,* 1999). Additionally the study found significant differences exhibited at the $p \leq .002$ level for 3 of the 8 roles in the CVF (Quinn *et al.,* 1996). These were the Co-ordinator, Director and Broker Roles. The Co-ordinator role focuses on internal organisation operations, while Director and Broker roles focus on the external organisation operations (Quinn *et al.,* 2003). Developing competence with these contrasting and competing roles indicates that in the 2 years between both stages of the research students have grasped some of the paradoxes inherent in aspects of managerial life.

T-tests between 2nd and 3rd stage

As shown in Table 2 above, while students' 3rd stage mean scores were generally higher than their 2nd stage mean scores, there were no significant differences exhibited by any competencies at the $p \leq .002$ level. The study found a significant difference exhibited at the $p \leq .002$ level for one of the 8 roles in the CVF (Quinn *et al.,* 1996). This was for the Monitor Role.

Tourism and hospitality educators strongly argue that some form of practical training is a critical component of the curriculum (Casado, 1991; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998) and suggest some form of 'on the job' training is necessary to develop students' managerial traits and skills (Knight, 1984; Tas, 1988). Furthermore, industry recruiters agree that these experiences should provide students the opportunity to develop important leadership, problem solving and customer relation skills (Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998).

Within the industry there is a wide held view that a hands-on approach to educating hospitality managers not only supports management principles learnt in theory but also provides students with the opportunity to practice and review their competence and skills within a real world environment

(DiMicelli, 1998). The ability to learn these competencies will depend to some extent on a number of factors such as the type of placement, level of work experience and the quality of supervision in place. Consequently, a more structured internship will greatly facilitate students development of primary competencies (Tas, 1988). Thus, while the sample of students used in this present research perceived different levels of improvement at different stages of their development, results may be different for another cohort of students.

In general prior research indicates that students have the opportunity to develop a range of management competencies. Research similar to this study, published within the tourism and hospitality field is limited. However, Walo's (2000) research found that students' post-internship mean scores were significantly higher than their pre-internship mean scores at the $p \leq .002$ level, for six of the 24 competencies and three roles the Co-ordinator, Monitor and Broker Roles. Walo concluded that while some of the students' management competencies exhibited greater development than others, the internship component of a student's tourism and hospitality education holds real educational benefits in preparing them for future management roles (Walo, 2000). Similarly in this present investigation the Monitor Role was found to improve significantly. While there was no significant difference in the 24 management competencies, internship gave students the opportunity to apply and deepen the competencies acquired or developed during the earlier stages.

T-tests between 1st and 3rd stage

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the management competencies of a cohort of tourism and hospitality students at three stages of their management development. As seen above students' exhibited improvement in their level of managerial competence between stage one and two and between stage two and three. However, more importantly is to examine how student's perecived management competence overall, from their 1st year through to when they are ready to graduate.

Table 3 below shows that students' 3rd stage mean scores were significantly higher than their 1st. stage mean scores at the $p \leq .002$ level, for 13 of the 24 competencies. In terms of roles, significant differences were exhibited at the $p \leq .002$ level for all the eight managerial roles. At the 95% competence level of $p \leq .05$ a further 10 competencies were significant between the 1st and 3rd stages of the study.

Table 3: Comparison of Students' 1st and 3rd Stage Managerial Competence

	Management Competency/Role	**1st stage**	**3rd stage**	**t value**	**Sig. 2 tailed**
	Director Role	**4.49**	**5.08**	**-3.865**	**.001****
1	Designing and Organising	4.38	4.85	-2.140	.041*
2	Visioning, Planning and Goal Setting	4.26	5.04	-4.685	.000**
3	Delegating Effectively	4.85	5.35	-2.153	.040*
	Producer Role	**4.39**	**5.18**	**-3.532**	**.001****
4	Working Productively	4.48	5.54	-5.233	.000**
5	Fostering a Productive Work Environment	4.62	5.02	-.822	.418
6	Managing Time and Stress	4.09	4.97	-3.988	.000**
	Co-ordinator Role	**4.17**	**4.97**	**-5.311**	**.000****
7	Managing Projects	4.07	5.01	-5.878	.000**

8	Designing Work	4.49	5.06	-3.556	.001**
9	Managing Across Functions	3.94	4.83	-3.842	.001**
	Monitor Role	**4.35**	**5.18**	**-5.555**	**.000****
10	Monitoring Personal Performance	4.63	5.30	-4.094	.000**
11	Managing Collective Performance	4.15	4.89	-4.193	.000**
12	Managing Organsational Performance	4.26	5.36	-5.942	.000**
	Mentor Role	**5.07**	**5.65**	**-4.671**	**.000****
13	Understanding Self and Others	5.25	5.76	-2.923	.007*
14	Communicating Effectively	5.25	5.77	-3.699	.001**
15	Developing Subordinates	4.63	5.41	-3.450	.002**
	Facilitator Role	**4.63**	**5.14**	**-2.997**	**.000****
16	Building Teams	4.43	4.97	-2.217	.035*
17	Using Participative Decision Making	5.01	5.47	-2.924	.007*
18	Managing Conflict	4.40	4.97	-3.298	.003*
	Innovator Role	**4.64**	**5.14**	**-3.488**	**.002****
19	Living with Change	4.99	5.41	-2.600	.015*
20	Thinking Creatively	4.77	5.29	-2.880	.007*
21	Creating Change	4.15	4.73	-3.135	.004*
	Broker Role	**4.47**	**5.09**	**-4.410**	**.000****
22	Building and Maintaining a Power Base	4.50	5.15	-3.839	.001**
23	Negotiating Agreement and Commitment	4.48	5.02	-3.636	.001**
24	Presenting Ideas Effectively	4.42	5.10	-2.970	.006*

* Significance at the $p \leq .05$ level
** Significance at the $p \leq .002$ level

Such results highlight that students perceive development with a majority (23) of the competencies considered in the study. From an education perspective the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management is better informed of the progress that student competency development is taking, as well as being in a position to secure the alignment of specific competency development with specific aspects of the curriculum. These outcomes can further align employment requirements to satisfy both graduate and industry needs (Messenger, 1992).

Discussion

In the culturally diverse workplace of the 21st century, skills acquired in the Mentor Role will help prepare managers to meet the challenging composition of the workforce and to deal with international markets (DiPadova, 1996). According to DEETYA (1998) employers actively seek graduates with well developed 'team skills' and demonstrated ability to work and communicate with people at all levels. The industry maintains that communication ability and interpersonal skills are important competencies in tourism, sport and recreation sectors (Tait *et al,* 1993). Furthermore, students realise that strong communication skills and ability to manage people are critical competencies to possess (Knutson and Patton, 1992; Burbidge, 1994).

Students in this study perceived they were most competent in the Mentor Role, in all stages of the research. These results concur with research by Walo (2000) and Dimmock, Breen and Walo

(2003). In the Mentor Role, a manager is involved with human relations in the work environment (Quinn *et al.,* 1996) especially if they are front-line managers. Effective mentors understand themselves, show concern and provide support for others. Findings align with the work of others (see for example, Baum, 1991; Okeiyi, Finley & Postel, 1994; Tas, LaBrecque & Clayton, 1996; Maes, Weldy & Icenogle, 1997; Christou & Karamanidis, 1999) that human relations competencies are beneficial to developing successful tourism and hospitality managers.

In all stages of this research, students perceive least competence with the Co-ordinator role. The Co-ordinator and associated competencies of Managing Projects, Designing Work and Managing Across Functions are viewed as some of the basic functions of management. Leiper (1995) considers co-ordination as the keystone role of all management and occurs at two levels: co-ordination of organisational resources and co-ordination of managerial work. Leiper states that, in combination, these two levels of co-ordination are crucial for successful management and permeate all other managerial activities (Leiper, 1995). The Co-ordinator is associated with attention to detail and with tracking activity and performance. Tourism and hospitality students recognize that co-ordination skill is needed in management, including purchasing and room management (Li & Kivela, 1998). From this current study perceived development with all Co-ordinator competencies was not registered by this sample yet their mean scores showed improvement throughout each stage. One posits that certain technical elements inherent within co-ordinator competencies may take longer to achieve than the experience base currently achieved within this sample group. From an education perspective there is opportunity to highlight this outcome and to introduce teaching strategies that focus on building competence in managing a variety of tasks and designing work into the curriculum.

While the students in this study demonstrated slightly more confidence in one or two management roles, this was not to the detriment of any other role within the framework and there appears to be a balance in the roles overall. Given that students at the completion of the internship period are ready to graduate, these results provide valuable insight into how close the students are to meeting industry expectations as they commence their careers within tourism and hospitality industries. It is argued that, as entry level graduates, this cohort of students have the ability to demonstrate competence over a range of transferable generic management competencies. Also, due to the generic nature of these competencies and their recognised importance by tourism and hospitality managers in the literature, this cohort of Bachelor of Business in Tourism graduates should be effectively equipped to undertake a range of managerial opportunities that may be presented to them.

Conclusions

The findings of this investigation have implications for employers, educators and students. Tourism and hospitality employers are encouraged to structure the induction and training of new graduates to take advantage of their strong mentor competencies and to further develop co-ordinator competencies through job work experience. This would build further depth in perceived managerial strength in managing people and reduce perceived managerial weaknesses in managing and designing work.

It is important for tourism and hospitality educators to incorporate a wide range of learning experiences that contribute to developing students' competencies. They should give serious consideration to incorporating a practical component such as internship or alternatively some form of specialised workplace training that will provide similar outcomes in terms of developing students' management competencies.

Tourism and hospitality students can be made aware that developing their level of competence has application to a wide range of situations. This can occur in non-academic pursuits such as casual

employment, sporting endeavours and broader life experiences. A further stage for this research is to follow this cohort throughout their careers, to examine further management competency development.

There is a need for ongoing evaluation by tourism and hospitality educators of student competency development so that a closer fit between student development and industry needs (Hansson, 2001) remains a priority. This research suggests the ongoing use of self-assessment tools to strengthen the debate for the role of perceived competence in the competency building process. Perceived competence can be followed by relative competence which relates to what is required for the specific job (Cheetham and Chivers, 1998).

This research project was designed to investigate perceived competency development by a group of undergraduate students studying for a tourism and hospitality management degree. The project was motivated by the lack of research that informs the literature or educators on competency development within tertiary students (Walo, 2000). Students' perceive significant development in 23 of the 24 competencies assessed in this investigation between the 1st and 3rd stage of the project. Students believed that they were most competent as mentors and least competent as coordinators. This current study shows that competence building and development has commenced for these students. The work is an opportunity for education providers to revisit teaching and learning strategies to better meet industry and graduate needs.

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