

## Why do we teach what we teach? Perspectives from Asia's hospitality and tourism program directors

This study investigates the forces shaping curriculum design of hospitality and tourism undergraduate programs in South East and East Asia. The topic has received little attention in the past. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 hospitality and tourism program directors from eight regions in South East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines) and East Asia (China, Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea). The results indicated that the industry as one major stakeholder has strong influences on curriculum in multiple ways. This can be seen in the way industry commentary shapes the objectives of the programs, graduate competencies and the subject material favoring employability for the hospitality and tourism industry. Accreditation was viewed as more essential in designing a curriculum for the higher institutions in the South East Asia compared to East Asia. The availability and expertise of staff were viewed as the least important forces in shaping the curriculum.

Keywords: curriculum design; hospitality and tourism; international contrast; program directors; Asia

### Introduction

This study is triggered by a question: why do we teach our hospitality and tourism students the subjects that we do? Therefore, the aim of the present analysis is to examine the curriculum of hospitality and tourism courses in Asia and to understand the forces shaping the curriculum design and development.

Ornstein and Hunkins (2014) assert that curriculum design and development are vital for any text in the domains of curriculum knowledge. The examination includes the people, processes and procedures involved in establishing the curriculum. How

curriculum is planned and developed, implemented and evaluated are reviewed. Morris & Adamson (2010) maintain that the most basic questions in constructing a curriculum concerns the most valuable knowledge and why it should be taught. Ring, Dickinger and Wober (2009) argue that curriculum design is affected by the complex construct of stakeholder influences (e.g. students, industry, association, non-governmental organizations, government funding agencies), and involves many decisions about what should be included and excluded.

Within hospitality and tourism, little agreement on what constitutes a curriculum exists due to the complexity of the field, the variety of the programs, and various approaches to teaching (Bouck, 2008; Chon & Maier, 2010; Cooper, Shepherd, & Westlake, 1996; Cooper & Westlake, 1989; Williams, 2005). Aspects of the curriculum (e.g. the content, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach, academic and vocational focus) are the common issues that are still widely debated and discussed (Belhassen & Caton, 2011; Dredge et al., 2012b; Inui, Wheeler & Lankford, 2006; Jennings, 2010). The complications facing hospitality and tourism education create difficulty for hospitality and tourism educators in developing a curriculum (Cooper, 2002). It is therefore, necessary to understand the factors that influence a curriculum design and development. Understanding the influencing external factors for tourism, hospitality and event, as outlined by Dredge et al. (2012a), is an imperative step in recognizing the availability of choices and approaches to address the needs of society and industry as well as in learning organization.

The big question for hospitality and tourism education is how leaders and stakeholders make the decisions which result in a curriculum and what forces shape these choices. This is the topic and aim of the paper. Information regarding the program objectives, graduates' competencies and curriculum structure were sought to explore the

process of deciding on the curriculum. In-depth semi structured interviews were conducted to gain perspectives from 11 hospitality and tourism program directors in four countries in South East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines) and four locations in East Asia (China, Hong Kong SAR, Macao, South Korea).

## **Literature review**

Several definitions of the term curriculum can be found in the literature. The word curriculum or course of study (dictionary term), is derived from the Latin word *currere* (to run) and refers to “chariot race-course” or “a running track” (Hussain, Dogar, Azeem, & Shakoor, 2011; Morris & Adamson, 2010; Marsh & Willis, 2003). One small connotation which persists from this etymology is the idea that curriculum spans a period of time and builds a pathway or trajectory for learning. Tribe (2005, p. 48) stated that curriculum is “A whole programme of educational experiences that is packaged as a degree programme”. According to Cooper (2002, p. 21), curriculum can be seen as “a set of practical educational proposals”. Marsh and Willis (2003) reviewed various definitions of curriculum and then proposed a description of curriculum as an “interrelated set of plans and experience that a student undertakes under the guidance of the school” (p. 13). The curriculum has been described as generally influenced by various factors such cultural views, social forces, economic needs, politics, technology, and environmental settings (Wattanacharoensil, 2014).

## ***Curriculum design and development***

Curriculum design is a key and critical factor for the quality assurance of programs offered by higher educational institutions (Dehghani, Pakmehr, & Jafarisani, 2011). The

curriculum reflects the academic plans and activities of the institution and assists students to achieve valued goals (Bouck, 2008 as cited from Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000). Curriculum design and development are influenced by a selection and use of curriculum's sources, which Tyler defined as knowledge/subject matter, society, and the learner (Klein, 1991; Oliva, 2005; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014; Tyler, 1949). The knowledge or subject matter as a source relates to a discipline and subjects that are believed can serve and contribute to education. Students or learners as a data source concern the students' needs, interests, abilities and experiences. This may embrace certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to meet the needs. Society as a data source in a curriculum decision emphasizes human relations and social skills as well as problem-solving process, and the content focuses on the activities of social life. Such social forces relate to information about the present status and condition, needs and issues within a group, a community or a region (Klein, 1991, Tyler, 1949). These curriculum sources serve as the base for defining the general objectives or the school's purposes. The objectives then are filtered using the school's philosophy and psychology of learning to produce more specific objectives (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). Posner (2004) maintains that curriculum construction should be understood in the context of its history, that is, who develops the curriculum? What is the emphasis of the curriculum development? What situation is the curriculum addressing and responding?

Dredge et al. (2012a) identify four sets of influences and drivers shaping the tourism, hospitality and event curriculum. They comprise context-specific factors (e.g. the position of tourism, hospitality and event within the higher education system), the local, national and international influences (social, cultural, political and economy), the managerial values, ideas and philosophies, and the influence of philosophy on tourism, hospitality and event higher education.

### *Curriculum in hospitality and tourism higher institutions*

The standardization of curriculum in hospitality and tourism education is a challenge for hospitality and tourism educators since the educational approaches of this field of study are based on various models (Cooper et al., 1996; Williams, 2005). Some emphasize the academic approach, some focus on purely vocational training, some develop culinary schools, others tend to combine the academic and the vocational elements, or simply view the topics as an enrichment of traditional subject areas (Cooper et al., 1996; Cooper & Westlake, 1989; Lewis, 1993; Williams, 2005). Tribe (2015) contends that tourism curriculum, either by design or accident, can be classified into vocational/commercial and non-vocational/non-commercial curriculum. The former focuses on employability, operational competencies, and academic business subjects, whereas the latter stresses the academic subjects and critical analysis.

Another issue in hospitality and tourism programs concerns the home base or location of the programs. It appears that hospitality and tourism programs can be found in numerous “homes” such as business studies, economics, social sciences, geography, anthropology, leisure, recreation and sports, and hotel and restaurant administration (Fenich, 1999; Olsson & Martinsson, 2007; Smith & Cooper, 2000). [It can be argued that the location of the hospitality and tourism programs will affect the curriculum content. Tourism courses which are primarily located in the business and management areas \(Airey 2004 as cited from Gunn & Johnson, 1998\) perhaps have stimulated tourism study to focus on the economic aspects \(Olsson & Martinsson, 2007\).](#)

Perspectives on what should be included in the hospitality and tourism curriculum has a long history of discussion. In the early formulation of ideas, McIntosh (1983) suggested eleven broad division as components of a tourism curriculum; arts and letters (humanities studies, English), communication arts (business writing and

communication), natural science, social sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, economics), business core courses (mathematics, statistics, accounting and finance, quantitative research and operations research), planning and design, marketing, management business law, foreign language, and tourism courses/ specialization. A later study conducted by Ring, et al. (2009) identified that internship, foreign language, management subjects, generic skills, economics and laws, capstone elements, methodology, and tourism domain are important subject areas in hospitality and tourism education.

Ring et al.'s study found that the internship was often viewed as the most critical attribute. The role of industrial work placement or internship as an integral part in a hospitality and tourism degree program has also been stated by various scholars (e.g. Dopson & Nelson, 2003; Felisitas, Molline & Clotildah, 2012; Gursoy, Rahman & Swanger, 2012). Smith and Cooper (2000) pointed out that the hospitality-specific knowledge and general managerial competencies should cover the food service and hotel operations, creative thinking, problem identification and solving, interpersonal communication skills, teamwork, adaptability to change, quality service attitude, and computer and telecommunication skills.

Other essentials factor affecting a curriculum should also be taken into consideration: the prevailing state of the industry and the current social, political and environmental concerns of their location. As those factors continue to change and evolve, it is important for hospitality and tourism higher education to understand the effects of the changes on what we are teaching and re-evaluate and develop the programs (Barrows, 1999; Christou, 2002). Government power and its influence on curriculum is an example of an issue that needs to be considered by the hospitality and tourism educators (Wattanacharoensil, 2014).

The importance of meeting the industry's needs and demand in the curriculum design has been widely agreed upon by many scholars (e.g. Felisitas et al., 2012; Jayawardena, 2001). Consultation with the industry's stakeholders about the curriculum can be commonly found in literature (Bovill, Morss, & Bulley, 2008). There have been some arguments that curriculum should be directed towards the current and future needs and demands of the industry since the important goal of hospitality programs (in particular) is to prepare students for professional careers in the hotel, restaurant and service sector (Jayawardena, 2001; Mills, Eschenfelder, & Rudd, 2009; Williams, 2005). A study conducted by Gursoy et al. (2012) ranked 33 important subject matters from the hospitality professionals' point of view. Their studies revealed that leadership, internship, preparation for employment, ethics, overview of hospitality industry, food service operations and controls, and computer knowledge were viewed as highly essential subject areas. They further suggested that educational institutions should develop a course that enables students to enhance their leadership skills and competencies, as well as to prepare students for industry employment. Many industry practitioners stress the importance of acquiring skills and competencies that enable students to work in a wide range of environments and perform their duties proficiently (Raybould et al., 2005 as cited in Felisitas et al., 2012). They include communication and writing skills, presentation skills, accounting and financial management skills, computer literacy, tourism knowledge, language skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, problem solving and decision making, negotiation skills, flexibility, openness and cultural awareness (Christou, 2000; Cooper & Westlake, 1989; Jayawardena, 2001; McIntosh, 1983).

Another vital aspect for hospitality and tourism education lies in addressing issues of the quality assurance. Quality is not only essential for an educational

institution, but also for its stakeholders such as employers, students, potential students, government, and public (Robbins, 2005). Quality in hospitality and tourism education, however, is quite intricate due to the complex nature of the educational products (Becket & Brookes, 2008). Fenich (1999) pointed out two key influencing factors in quality: organization structure (e.g. curriculum, governance structure, prestige, and student organizations) and resources (e.g. human, physical, learning, and financial). Several methods can be employed to ensure the quality of a program. Students' evaluation, annual program monitoring, and periodic review are the common tools for the internal methods of quality assurance. Accreditation, certification, outside peer reviews, and industry reviews are the common external methods (Fenich, 1999; Robbins, 2005).

Although several accreditation schemes have emerged in tourism such as UNWTO.TedQual (certification issued by the World Tourism Organization of United Nations), THE-ICE (International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education), The Institute of Hospitality, and the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (ACPHA), unlike other professional degrees, hospitality and tourism higher education has “never been subject to the demand of a single unifying accrediting body or professional association, and a broadly accepted scheme has, as yet, failed to fully emerge” (Dredge et al., 2013 p. 96). Moreover, Dredge et al. (2013) stated that the diverse interests of stakeholders require a development of a set of standard and accreditation to assess the performance of hospitality and tourism higher education in meeting their objectives.

It can be noted that various factors influence the planning and the construct of hospitality and tourism curriculum. This study [specifically seeks to uncover](#) the forces



shaping curriculum design of the hospitality and tourism undergraduate programs in the Asian context.

## **Methodology**

### ***Data collection***

Eleven hospitality and tourism higher institutions from eight locations in South East Asia and East Asia were observed for this study. It covers three institutions from Thailand, two from Indonesia, and one each from Malaysia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macao, China, and South Korea. These eight sites were known for their tourism. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents and the higher institutions based on the level of programs being offered (bachelor degree level), as well as program's the reputation and feasibility of access (Maxwell, 2013). All the institutions have an international program or programs that are delivered in English. They are indeed the leading hospitality and tourism institutions in their respective countries.

Data were obtained through primary sources (in-depth semi structured interview) and secondary sources (online journals, schools' websites, and other online materials related to the study). The purpose of the interview was to understand the perspective of the respondents (Maxwell, 2013). Interviews also enabled the researcher to use probe questions (Millar, Mao, & Moreo, 2010). The advantages of semi structured interviews are the flexibility in ordering the questions to suit the participants and amend the interview guide (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Information obtained from the interview involved the top management level of each institution (e.g. Dean, Head of Program, President and Vice President). The choice of the respondents was made considering the respondents involvement in the curriculum design and the extent of

their participation in the decision making. They were considered as experienced and knowledgeable in the curriculum development. The respondents were invited to participate in the study by an e-mail.

In total, eleven respondents holding senior executive managerial positions and professorships were interviewed. Six of the participants were female, and five were male. Table 1 shows the profile of respondents.

*Insert Table 1 here*

The interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the participants. Eight interviews were conducted by telephone and Skype calls, two were face-to-face, and one was an e-mail interview as per request from the participant. The interviews took place between March 21 and April 25, 2014. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted for 35 to 40 minutes per interview. Only one institution located in Indonesia did not require an interview since data were obtained based on the experience of one author when working in the institution as well as from the institution's website. Twelve questions were asked, comprising the programs' objectives, graduates competencies, curriculum content/structure, the people (who involve in the curriculum design), the processes, the factors influencing the curriculum construction (i.e. industry, accreditation, faculty members), and curriculum evaluation. Additionally, the participants' demographic profile was collected by asking questions about their job position in the institution and their gender. The interview questionnaires were designed by the authors with feedback from international scholars. The questions were tested for clarity by two faculty members of an international hospitality and tourism institution.

Before the interview took place, the initial step was to contact the potential participants by e-mail. The rationale of the study was explained to them in writing and

the reasons for their selection outlined. Prior to the interview, the researcher again explained the purpose and importance of the study to the respondents and stressed the value of their opinions. The anonymity of the participants' personal information was also assured. The researcher used a list of questions as a guideline in administering the interviews. The nature of a semi structured interview allows the researcher to ask questions to the participants by not following a particular sequence.

It can be noted that conducting an in-depth interview is not a simple conversational interaction. Developing a good rapport with the respondents is important as individuals are usually more willing to participate in a study and provide information if they know and trust the interviewer (Darlington & Scott, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In effect, conversations with the respondents before and after the interview helped the researcher to establish mutual trust and build a positive relationship. The researchers used network recommendations and connections to share information with the participants about some relevant work experiences. This approach is viewed as suitable in building trust (cf. Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

### ***Data analysis***

The interviews were noted, recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the researcher. Content analysis was employed to analyze data with the aid of Excel program. Content analysis has been widely employed in numerous studies such as psychology, sociology, education, business, and journalism (Berg, 2007). It can be defined as a technique for making interpretations of particular messages, as well as for identifying patterns, themes, and meanings of the various forms of text data such as printing, interviews recording, survey questions, observations, focus groups, manuals,

books, photographs, articles, and video (Berg, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Patton, 2002).

Content analysis can be described as a flexible method for data collection as there are no systematic rules applied in data analysis. The main proposition of this type of analysis is to classify words of text into a number of content categories (Darlington & Scott, 2002; Elo & Kyngas, 2008 as cited from Weber, 1990 and Burnard, 1996). Following Elo et al. (2014) and Elo and Kyngas (2008), the analysis of data was specified into three stages: a preparation stage, an organization stage, and a reporting stage. The preparation stage involved transcription of the interviews and summarizing the interview content such as information about the participants' names and coding number, gender, institutions where the participants work, their position, their personal contact, and time and duration of the interviews. The organization stage concerns reading data thoroughly to build the codes by highlighting the words that capture the key concepts. The codes were then sorted into categories to form an abstraction. For example, the subjects of Hotel Operations and Management and Restaurant Operations (sub-category) created a main category of Hospitality Management that finally led to the abstraction of common subjects offered in hospitality and tourism to inform the curriculum content. Codes were derived from the data and determined during the analysis related to the purpose of study and questions (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). Coding the interviews involved a process of ordering, organizing and categorizing data to retrieve information provided by the respondents about the identified concepts and themes (Brotherton, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Four main themes were established. They comprised program objectives of hospitality and tourism education, graduate competencies, curriculum content/structure, and determinant factors in a curriculum design. Curriculum documents of the observed hospitality and tourism

institutions were examined as the secondary resource and categorized to identify the common subjects offered by the institutions as well as their distinct subjects. Reporting stage relates to explanation of results and links the results to the literature/theory.

To promote trustworthiness, several approaches were taken to provide credibility and validity of this study. Credibility for the study was built in a number of ways. Triangulation of data sources was employed and involved the use of interview transcript documents, researchers' notes and curriculum of the selected and observed hospitality and tourism institutions. Site triangulation involved the selection of various hospitality and tourism institutions in South East Asia and East Asia. Data sources triangulation is seen as beneficial to minimize the level of subjectivity (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Referring to Maxwell (2013) and Shenton (2004), the credibility of this study was also built by developing early familiarity with the participants through conversations, discussions, and e-mail correspondence to establish trust, providing clear information about the aims of the study, using probes and rephrased questions and participants' responses during interviews for clarity, and verifying information given by the participants during and after the interviews. Descriptive validity was gained through recording and transcribing the interviews accurately to enhance data accuracy. Interpretation validity was applied to obtain full perspectives and ideas of the participants by listening more to what the participants said and taking care not to lead the participants, and by allowing participants to elaborate their answers with the use of open-ended questions (Elo et al., 2014; Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

## **Results**

### *The programs' objectives*

Review of the courses (Table 2) found that eight out of 11 institutions offered Tourism/Travel Management courses. This was followed by Hotel Management program and Hospitality Management program. The latter appeared to be more popular in the South East Asia countries.

*Insert Table 2 here*

Concerning the programs' objectives, the majority of the respondents agreed that the programs should produce employable graduates who will become leaders and hold managerial positions in the industry, possess hospitality and tourism management knowledge and communication skills, as well as the ability to work in a diverse environment. [This can be seen in the following excerpt:](#)

*Our objective is to produce the graduate for the industry who is able to work in the industry and develop into a future manager (R3).*

*To educate the young people to become professional managers and we want them to work in the industry after graduating (R7).*

[The participants' opinions were also aligned with the objectives stated in the institutions' profile/curriculum.](#)

### ***The graduate competencies***

The respondents also believe that the requisite competencies of the graduates are analytical thinking, problem solving, decision making, computer/ information technology skills, communication skills, English or foreign language proficiency, leadership skills, conceptual skills, entrepreneurship skills, ethical, responsible, innovative and creative, and good teamwork. Referring to Millar et al. (2010), those competencies can be classified in several domains, namely conceptual, interpersonal,

technical, and leadership (Table 3). Relevant comments are provided in the following remarks:

*The most important thing... the students should have better English proficiency, computer literacy (R1).*

*For graduate competencies, students should have knowledge in analytical skills and problem solving (R4).*

*Insert Table 3 here*

### ***Curriculum content/structure***

Review of the course structure identified that the curricula commonly comprise general education, core courses/ major required courses, specialization/ elective courses, internships and thesis. Based on the curriculum document examination, the hospitality and tourism subjects offered by 11 institutions in this study can be categorized into five types: general, hospitality management, tourism management, event management, and culinary (Table 4). Table 4 shows the common subjects include accounting and finance, computer studies, English, foreign language, research methods, business and law, science and social science studies, culture and communication, human resources and organizational behavior, entrepreneurship, marketing, projects or theses and internship. In the area of hospitality, the most taught subjects are lodging/ accommodation, food and beverage service, and rooms division. The tourism management studies generally offer subjects in recreation and leisure, attraction management, destination management, tourism/ travel geography, heritage, tourism planning and development, tourism economics, tourism marketing, special interest tourism, and tour, travel/ airline management. Event management subjects are broadly on event planning, event/ project management, event risk management, festivals and events, exhibition management, and

MICE. The culinary subjects are mainly focus on the food service, gastronomy, food production/ kitchen, patisserie, food safety, sanitation, and nutrition. Internship or co-operative education appears in all institutions as one of the required/ compulsory subjects.

*Insert Table 4 here*

Despite some similarities in the subject matter, some uniqueness was found in each institution. For example, the institution in Hong Kong offers unique specializations/tracks in China Tourism, Urban Tourism, and Wine Studies and Oenology. It also delivers courses [about](#) tourism China and the world. The institution in Macao delivers programs in Heritage Management and Tourism Retail and Marketing Management, which include principles of conservation and documentation of cultural heritage subjects. The Bachelor in Culinology which focuses on the culinary arts and food science and technology can be found in the institution in Malaysia. Its subjects include digital media for tourism, psycho-sociology of food and eating habits, professional food writing, and introduction to Halal food product development. Bachelor in Cruise Line Operations (hotel services or culinary arts) is obtainable in the institution in the Philippines. An institution in Thailand offers particular specializations in Spa Management, Culture-Based Tourism, Nature-Based Tourism and Tourism Transportation. Some of the tourism subjects include religious tourism, museum tourism, ASEAN studies for tourism, ethnic tourism, tourism management for “peranakan”, and rail excursion management. Courses in casino and gaming are only offered in two institutions located in Hong Kong and South Korea. Other distinct subjects include cross-border management and new venture creations (the Chinese



institution), sound and speech and taxation (a Thai institution), art wine and coffee, fund raising and sponsorship, and show business and entertainment (an Indonesian institution). This study also found that hospitality and tourism institutions in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and China provide general studies as authorized by the Ministry of Education of the respective countries.

### *Determinant factors in a curriculum design*

The results of interviews indicated that the curriculum is commonly designed by a committee that primarily consists of internal and external parties. The internal parties include top management levels of the higher institutions (e.g. President of the University, Dean, Associate Dean, Head of Program, Program Director, Campus Manager) and lecturers or faculty members. The external parties consist of industry practitioners/ industry advisory board, experts/ specialists, association, alumni, and government board. Some of the institutions invite educators from other higher institutions and seek students' point of view. Although industry practitioners are commonly invited to provide their opinion, they are not part of the committee members. The expertise, seniority or professorships are the ground for selecting faculty members. For the industry participants, those who hold quite senior management positions are the preferred stakeholders.

In designing a curriculum, most of the respondents asserted that they would consider the job markets and employability as a priority. Attention was also given to internationalization, program missions, government regulations, institutional strengths, and stakeholders' needs. *A couple of respondents argued that the curriculum should not be driven solely by the job market and employability. It should accommodate both the industry requirement/job market and the program's future direction and institution's*

[strengths](#). In selecting the subject matter therefore, factors such as employability, industry feedback, industry trends, program objectives, government policies and qualification frameworks need to be taken into account. In addition, references from other universities (local or overseas), culture, the housing of the program (e.g. under faculty of business or other faculties), and opinion from a well-known scholar/ expert can also be an influencing factor in choosing a subject.

Concerning the influence of the industry, it was believed that the industry's involvement aids in the development of a curriculum to create uniqueness and employability for students, and to provide information about the industry trends. Some comments indicated that the industry's involvement is quite desirable to provide ideas and feedback about the demands, needs and trends of the industry. [Industry as an important source for curriculum design is described in the following excerpt:](#)

*It's significant because automatically our graduates have to work in the industry so what we do is we try to develop networks through membership in professional organizations, so that we know what they need. This will be reflected in our syllabi (R6).*

In the context of accreditation, all respondents from the institutions in South East Asia agreed that the influence of an accreditation, either from the government or an accreditation agency was quite significant. They asserted that accreditation will enhance the level of quality standards. Therefore, the mandatory subjects or core subjects should be constructed based on the accreditation criteria. [The views from participants in South East Asian institutions are presented in the following examples:](#)

*For the government, it's mandatory that you comply to that... we have to make sure that the programs that we offer meet the quality standards by accreditation agency (R6).*

*All of our programs must be approved by the government. It has to go to the university and the university will send it to the ministry of education for approval (R3).*

The respondents' views from the institutions in East Asia were quite different than those from the South East Asia. Although accreditation is viewed as necessary, it is regarded as a means to ensure quality for the input process, resources, and the output. Moreover, hospitality and tourism accreditation is viewed as not very rigid and quite broad.

Curriculum is only part of the criteria in an accreditation. One respondent stated that they just follow the accreditation set up by the school where the program is housed.

Some of the participants' remarks are presented in the following statement:

*Accreditation is to seek justification in the input process (how we gather intelligence, information and opinions from stakeholders) of our curriculum design, the resources (faculty, external parties, learning resources, facilities) we have to support the curriculum, and the quality of the output (graduates). This system helps us ensure we have reviewed all the above elements in the process of curriculum design (R9).*

*Not much influence, because for the hotel and tourism disciplines, accreditation system is not very strong, not very rigid, not like Engineering... for hotel and tourism accreditation, they look at a number of things and curriculum is one of them (R11).*

The majority of the respondents stated the availability of staff was not a determinant factor in a curriculum design or subject matter selection. The curriculum should be designed based on the industry's needs and trends. In the case where there are inadequate numbers of lecturers to teach the subjects, new lecturers should then be recruited. Another point of view was to set out a lecturers' development program for the existing lecturers to increase their competencies.

In addition to the curriculum design, the respondents were also asked about curriculum updates or revisions. Generally, major revision or evaluation of a curriculum was conducted every three to five years. The evaluation was typically based on the government policy, the industry trends or the institutions' policies. However, minor revision (e.g. changes in one or two subjects) was more flexible. It was carried out every year, every semester, or whenever there was a need. Few institutions claimed that

they do not have a specific policy on curriculum amendment. To ensure whether the curriculum is aligned with the objectives and learning outcomes, many respondents seek feedback or responses from the industry and alumni. High demand from the industry for students is also one of the indicators that the curriculum has met the objectives/ outcomes. Other indicators can also be seen from assessments or examinations, quality assurance audits, industry advisory boards, and winning competitions.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The results of this study suggested that the industry has a quite significant influence in the hospitality and tourism curriculum in the Asian context. Meeting the needs of the industry is still a predominant factor and the basis of curriculum design. The findings are aligned with the previous studies such as Assante, Huffman, and Harp (2010), Gursoy et al. (2012), Ring et al. (2009), and Smith and Cooper (2000). As stated by Assante et al. (2010), “having an insight into what industry considers being the most important courses for students is a necessary component in quality curriculum development and assessment” (p. 166). In the hospitality and tourism institutions in South East Asia, however, accreditation bodies/the national quality assurance agencies are also viewed as influential in curriculum design and for development of basic knowledge and skills (Dredge et al., 2013). As shown in Figure 1, the programs’ objectives are **primarily** directed towards graduates employability and becoming leaders in the global and diverse hospitality and tourism industry. It appears that preparing students for managerial positions is a focus of many four-year programs (undergraduate degree) (Barrows, 1999). Educating and training students as successful professionals can be defined as one of the indicators of quality hospitality education (Assante et al.,

2010). This industry driven findings is probably due to the emergence of hospitality and tourism education as a response to the demand for competent managers (Nelson & Dopson, 2001).

To meet the programs' objectives, it was believed that students should be equipped with key competencies or specific skills, set knowledge, established abilities, and effective behaviours as their currency for employability (Millar et al., 2010). Their attributes include analytical and problem solving skills, communication skills, foreign language proficiency, leadership skills, and other conceptual, interpersonal and technical skills. The results of the interviews comply with previous studies that communication skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, decision making, leadership skills, multiple language skills, creativity and ability to synthesize information and ability to adapt easily to change are critical to prepare students for senior positions in the industry (e.g. Gursoy & Swanger, 2005; Lewis, 1993; Felisitas et al., 2012; Millar et al., 2010; Oktadiana & Chon, 2017; Tesone & Ricci, 2006). Lewis (1993) argued that educational institutions ought to develop students' communication and analytical skills, encourage creativity, enhance the ability to evaluate, and synthesize information to stay attune with the future. Ability to speak a foreign language, stated Pavesic (1993), is one of the essential skills for working in a culturally diverse and global economic environment.

The evidence from this Asian focused study suggested that curriculum content comprised a combination of managerial, conceptual and practical subjects which is built upon the epistemology of business interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary [views](#). Many hospitality and tourism subjects are developed from the multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and business interdisciplinarity epistemologies such as tourism law, tourism geography, tourism economic, tourism planning and

development, event management, and tourism marketing (Tribe, 1997). It is common to find that management/business studies dominate the undergraduate tourism programs (Caton, 2015). It can be argued that there are some agreements among hospitality and tourism educational institutions to include certain common studies in their curriculum, such as economics, business studies, law, marketing, accounting and finance, human resources management and behavioral studies, foreign language, and information technology/computer studies (Cooper et al., 1996, Oktadiana & Chon, 2017). The incorporation of business subjects and hospitality and tourism subjects supports the view of Chang and Tse (2015) who contend that such integration is essential to prepare students for the future career in the hospitality industry. Working experience or internship in the hospitality and tourism programs was viewed as a critical element to increase graduates' competitiveness in the job market as well as to encourage the development of work-related competencies (Chang & Tse, 2015; Felisitas et al., 2012).

Referring to Tyler's model on the sources of curriculum as indicated in Klein (1991) and Ornstein and Hunkins (2014), it can be argued that the three curriculum sources, subject matters/content, society and learners were all oriented towards industry career/employment which underpinned the general objectives of the selected hospitality and tourism programs in this study. The subject matter or content reflected multi- and inter- disciplinary views from business and management with a hospitality and tourism flavor. The society as a curriculum source shaped the knowledge and skills necessary for working in the diverse environment of hospitality and tourism industry as well as to meet the market demand. The learner as the source influences the competencies of the graduates (what they should have and be able to do) for their career in the industry. Morris & Adamson (2010) assert that the most basic questions in constructing a curriculum relate to the knowledge that is worth most and why it should be taught.

Here, it appeared that the most valuable knowledge that should be possessed by hospitality and tourism students/graduates comprised management/business, reinforced by the practical and specific subjects in hospitality and tourism and the internship. Clearly, those subjects should be taught to meet the main general objectives of the programs for employment and an industry career.

In the view of curriculum's historical context (Posner, 2004), the curriculum design and development has favored employability/industry career as a response to the industry/market demands. Curriculum construction involved not only the academic but also the industry people. Indeed the industry has played quite an important role in the design and development of hospitality and tourism curriculum. Following Dredge et al. (2012a), it was apparent that that the curriculum content of hospitality and tourism education has been strongly influenced by the business and management disciplines. In South East Asia, the roles of the government policy and accreditation bodies have been powerful. Such influences can also be seen in the curriculum evaluation and revision processes.

Figure 1 shows the commonalities and differences of hospitality and tourism curriculum amongst the institutions in South East Asia and East Asia under study.

*Insert Figure 1 here*

This study provides an insight of a current practice in a curriculum design of hospitality and tourism undergraduate programs in Asia; how the external parties such as industry, government policy and accreditation bodies influence a hospitality and tourism curriculum. It appears that the curricula tend to have a commercial/vocational orientation, emphasizing on employability, academic business subjects and operational

competencies (Busby & Fiedel, 2001; Tribe, 2015). Although meeting the industry's needs and demands have been widely acknowledged in hospitality and tourism education, it is suggested that there should be a balance between satisfying the industry and the wider tourism world (Dredge et al., 2012b). Tribe's (2002) philosophic practitioner curriculum proposed a curriculum which promotes a balance between employment and understanding the tourism phenomenon and demonstrating the stewardship role. Oktadiana's study (2016) suggested that the main aims of hospitality and tourism higher education can be categorized into two to add a balance to the development of hospitality and tourism education. The first one is to promote tourism stewardship and tourism knowledge and the second one is to endorse essential knowledge and skills for employment. The former emphasizes planning, concept, and strategy for hospitality and tourism development in the long run, and the latter focuses on serving and managing the industry.

The study's limitation was in the sample size where only voices from the senior educators/executives were sought. It is valuable however to stress that the views observed are from the powerful leaders in the academic world and therefore depict the prevailing decisions. As perception may change from time to time according to the individuals (Felisitas et al., 2012), future research could include perspectives from faculty members, alumni, industry, and other relevant stakeholders. This study can also be expanded using a survey to involve more participants as well as to include the other Asian countries. A comparison with hospitality and tourism institutions in the Western countries is implicit in the work, but a direct comparison study is another future research possibility.

Moreover, five areas for future studies can be identified. The first aspect is to examine the institution's philosophy and psychology of learning as a filter in defining



specific objectives. Such questions may examine whether the school should educate students to fit into the society/community or to improve or develop the society/community. Another related direction is to seek what kind of learning conditions and experiences students should have (Tyler, 1949). The second point is to explore the nature and justification underpinning the existence of distinct subjects in the curriculum between higher institutions in the South East Asia and East Asia. The third aspect is to investigate whether the main purpose of the curriculum is actually viable. That is, the sustainability of the offering in most context is worth investigating. This should ideally involve alumni and the industry in partnership with educators. The fourth aspect is to further analyze the influence of institutional resources and strengths as well as external influences (e.g. other institutions, social, cultural, economy and political pressures). The fifth issue is to further examine the roles of the industry in curriculum construction and the extent of their power in influencing the curriculum. Ideally, there should be mutual benefits between the industry and the educational institutions (Busby & Fiedel, 2001). However, Busby and Fiedel (2001) pointed out that industry-education partnerships have focused more on the influence of the industry on education, rather than the academic world influencing action.

Curriculum design and development is such an intricate process. Therefore, it is important for those involved in the curriculum construction to consider multiple factors. Ideally, hospitality and tourism courses and curricula either in developed and developing countries should differ, stressing the distinctiveness of the host community and be aligned to the needs of society (Howell & Uysal, 1987; UNESCO, 1998). If such an emphasis is missing, multiple other forms take over - what Tribe (2015) described as 12Ps: power, pals, patronage, precedent, pragmatism, pleading, parochialism, parsimony, prospects, popularity, politicians, and path dependency.

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## Tables

**Table 1.** Respondents' profile

| Respondent | Position   | Country         |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| R1         | Director, International Program in Hotel and Tourism Management  | Thailand        |
| R2         | Executive Director for Planning and Development and Project Director on Tourism and Hospitality Education programs, <b>Executive member</b> in various international tourism organizations | The Philippines |
| R3         | Dean, Hospitality and Tourism Faculty  | Thailand        |
| R4         | Vice President of Academic Affairs, Tourism Institution  | Indonesia       |
| R5         | Chairman and Program Director, Tourism and Hospitality Management  | Thailand        |
| R6         | Chair of Learning and Teaching Committee and Professor, Hotel and Tourism  | Hong Kong       |
| R7         | Dean, College of Hospitality and Tourism Management  | South Korea     |
| R8         | Associate Dean, School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts   | Malaysia        |
| R9         | President of the Tourism School  | Macao           |
| R10        | Management Representative, Hospitality and Service Management  | China           |
| R11        | Quality Audit Coordinator and Hospitality and Tourism Professor, former Vice Dean  | Hong Kong       |

**Table 2.** Courses offered

| Institution | Country/Region  | Hospitality & Tourism | Hospitality Management | Tourism/ Travel Management | Hotel Management | Culinary |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------|
| A           | Indonesia       | √                     |                        |                            | √                |          |
| B           | Indonesia       |                       |                        | √                          | √                |          |
| C           | Malaysia        |                       | √                      | √                          |                  | √        |
| D           | Thailand        |                       | √                      |                            |                  |          |
| E           | Thailand        |                       | √                      | √                          |                  |          |
| F           | Thailand *      |                       |                        | -----√-----                |                  |          |
| G           | The Philippines |                       | √                      | √                          | √                |          |
| H           | China           |                       |                        | √                          |                  |          |
| I           | Hong Kong       |                       |                        | √                          | √                |          |
| J           | Macao           |                       |                        | √                          | √                | √        |
| K           | South Korea     | √                     |                        |                            |                  | √        |

\*The institution delivers a course in Hotel & Tourism Management

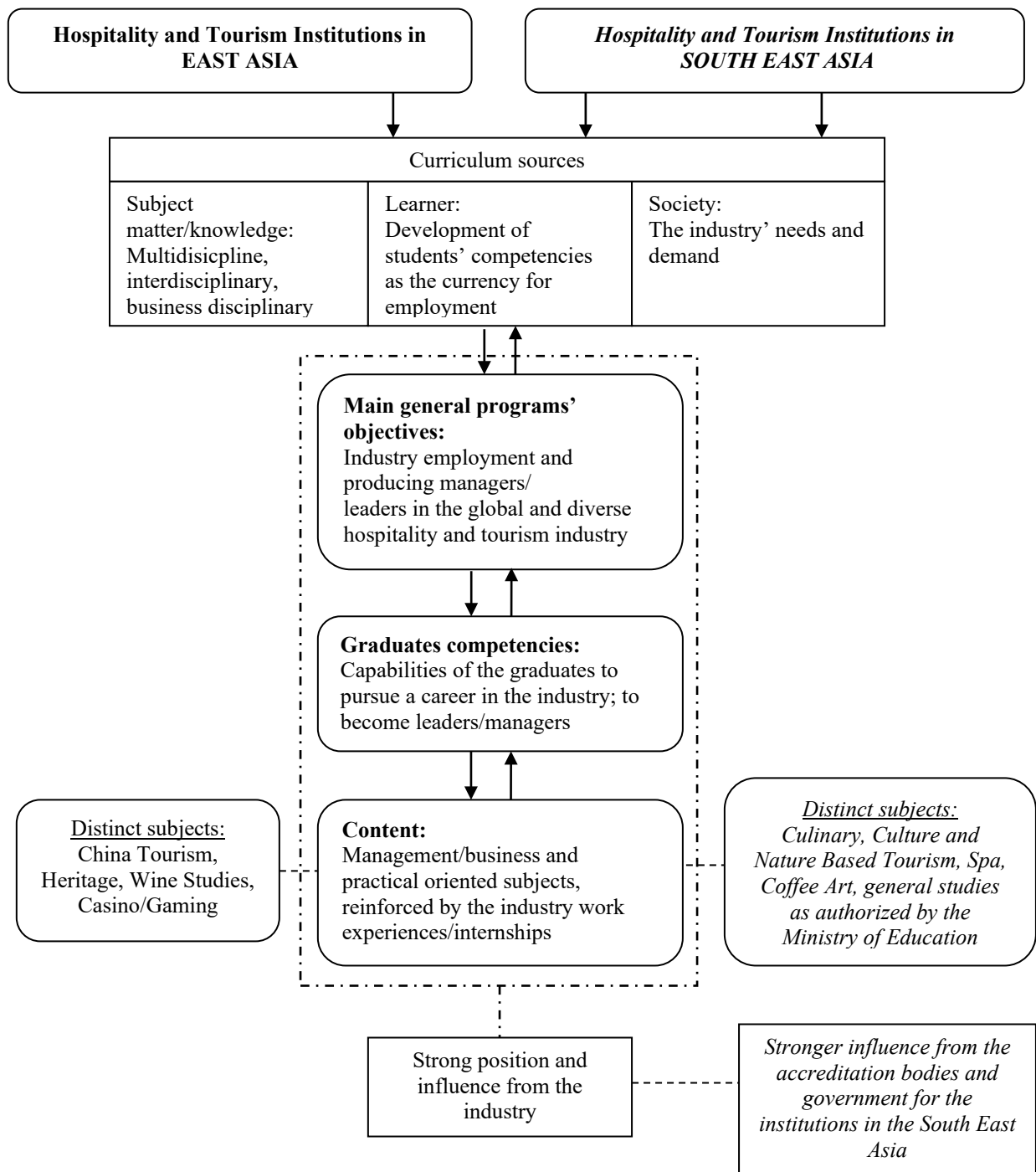
**Table 3.** Program objectives and graduates competencies of undergraduate programs

| Key Elements of Program Objectives  | Graduate Competencies   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employable graduates</li> <li>- Produce future leader and top level managers</li> <li>- Possess hospitality and tourism management knowledge and communication skills</li> <li>- Ability to work in a diverse environment</li> </ul> | <p><b>Conceptual:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analytical thinking</li> <li>- Problem solving</li> <li>- Decision making</li> <li>- Conceptual skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Interpersonal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication skills</li> <li>- English or foreign language proficiency</li> <li>- Responsible</li> <li>- Innovative and creative</li> <li>- Teamwork</li> <li>- Leadership skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Technical:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Computer/ information technology skills</li> <li>- Entrepreneurship skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Leadership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethics</li> </ul> |

**Table 4.** Common subjects offered in hospitality and tourism undergraduate programs

| General   | Hospitality Management   | Tourism Management  | Event Management  | Culinary  |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Science and Social Science Studies (e.g. Mathematics, Statistics, and Economic)</li> <li>- Management and Business Studies (e.g. Accounting and Finance, Human Resources, Marketing, Business Law and Ethics, Entrepreneurship)</li> <li>- Computer Studies</li> <li>- Language and Communication (e.g. English, Mandarin/ Chinese, Japanese, French, Culture &amp; Communication)</li> <li>- Research Methods</li> <li>- Projects/ Theses</li> <li>- Internship or cooperative education</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lodging/ Accommodation</li> <li>- Hotel operations and Management</li> <li>- Restaurant Operation/</li> <li>- Food and Beverage Service</li> <li>- Rooms Division (Front Office; Housekeeping)</li> <li>- Environmental Management</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recreation and Leisure</li> <li>- Attraction Management</li> <li>- Destination Management</li> <li>- Tourism Geography</li> <li>- Tourism Planning and Development</li> <li>- Environmental Management</li> <li>- Tourism Sustainability</li> <li>- Tourism Economics</li> <li>- Tourism Marketing</li> <li>- Special Interest Tourism</li> <li>- Tour, Travel, Airline</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Event Planning</li> <li>- Event/ Project Management</li> <li>- Event Risk Management</li> <li>- Festivals and Events</li> <li>- Exhibition Management</li> <li>- MICE</li> <li>- Convention</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food Service</li> <li>- Gastronomy</li> <li>- Cuisine</li> <li>- Food Production/ Kitchen</li> <li>- Patisserie</li> <li>- Food Safety</li> <li>- Sanitation</li> <li>- Nutrition</li> </ul> |

**Figure**



**Figure 1.** Commonalities and differences in hospitality and tourism curriculum: The Asian case