



# Assessing Hospitality Training and Practices in Ghana

Noble Amoako Sarkodie  
Department of Hospitality and Tourism  
Sunyani Technical University, Ghana  
E-mail: noblesark@yahoo.com

## Abstract

The main aim of the study was to assess hospitality training and hospitality practices in Ghana. In terms of approach, the study adopted a survey methodology and the population of the study consisted of hospitality teachers and managers involved in the hospitality industry in Ghana. Questionnaires were the main instrument used to solicit data from the study's respondents. A sample size of 227 made up of 126 managers, and 101 teachers was used in the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages were used to illustrate the demographic profile of the participants and to answer the research questions in the study. The findings established the existence of a gap between the existing hospitality providers and expectations of practitioners in Ghana. However, the two parties do indeed also share some common views on the current important skills students need to possess as they enter the industry. The researcher recommended tighter collaboration between hospitality providers and hospitality practitioners to address the skill gaps as a matter of urgency.

**Keywords:** Hospitality trainers, Hospitality practitioners, sustainability, Ghana

## Introduction/Literature

The role of education cannot be underestimated in any sector and in view of this, academic institutions have been preparing students for future employment and strive to prepare them to excel in business and their chosen industry (Ogbeide, 2006). Therefore, employability skills are important for students, organisations, employers, and educational institutions alike. Additionally, the ultimate aim of every educational institution is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to achieve its set objectives. The quality of teaching and the worth of every school are, to a large extent, assessed on the basis of academic achievement and students' performance in the chosen field of work. Consequently, the academic achievement of students has been a matter of serious concern to the government of Ghana, as well as to the general public (Ankomah, 2010). In line with these arguments, successive governments in Ghana have made frantic efforts to improve teaching and learning processes in basic, secondary and tertiary institutions by introducing different intervention programmes such as education for all (EFA), free, compulsory and universal basic education (FCUBE), the payment of capitation grants, school feeding programmes, provision of free school uniforms, free sandals, free exercise books, free computers, Ghana Education Trust Fund scholarship for teachers, community day schools and other infrastructural developments. These well-intended programmes are meant to help learners at all levels to acquire the knowledge, skills, competencies and values cherished by the society (Ankomah, 2010).

In Ghana, despite all the interventions put in place by successive governments of the nation, several indicators have shown that recent developments in the job market reveal the need to have a further deeper look at strategies that would enhance the quality of tertiary graduates emanating from institutions of higher learning. The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI, 2007 as cited in Goski, 2009) had indicated that graduates produced in the country in recent times did not meet the varied expectations of industry. This need was affirmed in the theme of the 2008 New Year



School of the University of Ghana, 'Tertiary Education and National Development' (Institute of Adult Education Handbook, 2008). Furthermore, the University Students Association of Ghana (USAG) has called on the Ministry of Education (MOE) and other stakeholders in academia to revise the academic curricula offered at tertiary educational institutions in the country (Otu, 2015). This call was premised on the fact that the current tertiary education curricula, introduced about 30 years ago, consisted of modules that have no or little bearing on the practical and critical skills required to meet the job market needs (Otu, 2015).

In addition, speaking at an induction ceremony for one hundred trainees selected for a training programme in Accra, Stephen Adei, a former Rector of Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), underscored the need to train people who would fit into the job market (Adei, 2015). These stakeholders blamed the aforementioned problem on an apparent mismatch between what is studied in the classroom and what is required to be delivered in the job market. With regard to hospitality education, programmes were developed mainly to prepare students to work in the industry. This line of education conforms to previous studies that have found that the most common purpose of hospitality related programmes was to prepare students to work in the industry (Cooper, 2002 & Nelson, 2001). However, prior studies have identified that the hospitality industry does not generally appear to regard hospitality qualifications very highly. As a result, those who complete hospitality degrees are often disadvantaged when competing for jobs against those with industry experience, but without tertiary qualifications (Harkison, 2004; Jameson & Holden, 2000). Jameson and Holden (2000) found in their study, that industry values experienced employees over those with a degree, which is in contrast with the general expectation that degrees offer graduates an advantage in their chosen area of work. Literature also, attested that there are empirical inconsistencies in different countries with regard to hospitality training and hospitality practices in general (Nicolaidis, 2014). For instance, the following studies clearly show that there are differences between hospitality trainers and practitioners that needs to be addressed.

Wang (2008) set out to investigate the gap between tourism education provisions and tourism industry needs and expectations in Australia. Data was collected from the tourism academics and tourism practitioners. The study found considerable variance between the views of industry professionals and academic providers in Australia. Their views varied firstly on the relative value of tertiary degrees for tourism professionals; secondly, on the relative merits of skills and abilities needed to work in the tourism sector; and thirdly, on the relative merits of various subjects taught at universities. The study of Wang revealed that tourism academics highly valued strategic skills, such as decision making, management skills, leadership abilities, and problem-solving skills while tourism practitioners tend to value operational skills, such as confidence, attention to detail, practical skills, and adaptability at work. The findings of the study established the existence of a gap between the existing tourism curricula at university level, and the needs of the ever-changing tourism industry. The study of Wang provided additional insights into the literature with respect to the gap between tourism curricula and the needs of the tourism industry.

A study by Nicolaidis and Kearney (2012) ascertained that knowledge of legal issues, especially in food and beverage production is critical for future industry employees, and yet this important aspect is often neglected when it comes to hospitality law and often to the peril of hospitality and tourism businesses in general.

Zheng (2008) also set out to study the problems of current hospitality and tourism tertiary education for undergraduates in China. A survey was conducted in three universities offering undergraduate tourism and hospitality programmes in Beijing. A mixed method approach was used to gather data from students, teachers, and managers. The results indicated that tourism



and hospitality undergraduate education in China was ineffective in meeting the demands of the tourism and hospitality industry, given the inherent problems within the industry. However, the sample taken from three universities were relatively small to be considered representative of all China. The current study considered six Technical Universities in Ghana to enlarge the scope and hence results can be generalized.

In a related research, Subramanian (2008) set out to assess the gap between the competencies perceived to have been learnt through hospitality graduate studies against what the graduates really possessed when they began their career in the industry. A survey method was used to gather data from 125 fresh hospitality undergraduates in both private and public universities and 50 Malaysian hospitality managers. The findings showed a lower ranking by managers for 3 skill clusters out of 9 and 25 skill descriptors out of 52 than that of the graduates. This study considered six Technical Universities in Ghana and hospitality managers working between three to five star hotels in Ghana to enlarge the scope and hence results can be generalized.

Kleeman (2011) set out to explore employability skills expected of new graduates in the hospitality industry in United States. The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the employability skills of the new graduates of the University of Central Florida (UCF) Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM) and to determine if the graduates were prepared to meet the expectations of hospitality industry employers in the professional workplace. The objectives of the exercise were to (a) identify the employability skills employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry, (b) to establish employability skills competency levels employers expect for these positions, and (c) to garner employer perceptions of Rosen College of Hospitality Management interns' and new graduates' employability skills competencies for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry. Employers who recruited RCHM students for internships and new graduates for entry-level management/management-in-training positions were asked to identify skills important in the workplace and evaluate students' employability skills. The study used 441 employers and questionnaires were used for data gathering. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data of the study. The study discovered that, employers regarded communication and teamwork as most important employability skills; while leadership and learning theory and practice were the least important employability skills. The study of Kleeman disclosed that, new graduates were able to meet the employers' expectations. The shortcoming of Kleeman study was that, data were chosen from only one hotel chain, although the hospitality industry includes more than just one chain of hotels. As a result, the analysis may be limited and might offer biased results. The current study expanded the scope area to incorporate more managers who have worked between three to five star hotels in Ghana.

Asirifi, Doku, Morrison and Sackey, (2013) carried out a survey to investigate if hospitality graduates met the expectation of the industry as well as the cause of gaps that existed between training of students in hospitality and the expectations of the industry. The data for the study was collected from 50 hospitality graduates, 25 teaching staff, and 25 industry managers. The findings indicated that there were differences in what hospitality trainers provided and what practitioners demanded. The results also indicated that most of the courses being offered by the hospitality tertiary institutions were mostly theoretical. The study of Asirifi et al. (2013), adopted a case study approach, which was particularly vulnerable to subjective biases and interpretation of the outcomes (Kuranchie, 2016). The current study adopted survey as more samples were needed to gain a more precise view.

Jebril and Al-Hussen (2015) sought to study hospitality and non-hospitality graduates skills between education and industry. The objective of the study was to examine the skills needed for



hospitality graduates and non-hospitality graduates in the hotel industry. Quantitative approach and questionnaires were adopted for the study. A total number of 41 hotel executives were sampled from four to five star hotels in Jordan through convenience methods. The results revealed differences in a number of skills. Hotel executives believed that hospitality graduates had better communication, teamwork, situational analysis, operational skills, information search, critical thinking, initiative, organizing, and self-development skills than the non-hospitality graduate employees. Specifically, operations, information search, knowledge demonstration, and teamwork were considered by hotel executives as the best performed skills that distinguished hospitality graduates from non-hospitality graduates at work. Hotel executives stressed that more attention to employability skills had to be given by hospitality educators, mainly the skills of problem solving, technology, languages and culture knowledge, and leadership skills.

The foregoing review shows that different themes have been tackled in separate research by different researchers in different jurisdictions. However, there seems to be no reliable listing of current important skills provided by hospitality trainers and the needs of the practitioners known to exist in a developing country like Ghana. Hence, establishing agreement regarding these important needed skills would be helpful to both industry professionals and hospitality educators/trainers who are involved in the career training and development of hospitality industry and hospitality education respectively. This study therefore sought to assess current hospitality training and practices in Ghana so as to contribute to the body of literature on the subject and make recommendations to address the unresolved problem that seems to exist between the two parties.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study sought assess hospitality training and practices in Ghana. The specific objectives set for the study were:

1. To determine the current skills provided by hospitality trainers.
2. To examine the current skills demanded by hospitality practitioners.

The following research questions were set for the study:

1. What are the current skills provided by hospitality trainers?
2. What are the current skills demanded by hospitality practitioners?

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Practical Implications**

The study has potential to reveal information to assist students/graduates in making more successful transitions to the professional workplace. Thus, students/graduates aspiring to join the industry can make use of the present study by knowing the kind of practices that exist and the expectations of the industry relating to desired skills in new employees. It is thus expected that this study may be useful to assist educators and industry professionals in jointly planning and restructuring hospitality course curricula. The study will provide information and insight for industry professional about the current needs of educators/teachers so that professionals can better structure the industrial training in line with expected educational needs and requirements of the hospitality management educational programmes. Additionally, the study provides information and insight for hospitality educators, hospitality practitioners and career services on the skills



students should exhibit before entering the world of work and what current skills employers deem extremely important for students to possess before hiring them. It is additionally expected, that this study will provides needed information to policy makers in terms of updating and/or revising the curriculum for hospitality education related courses to meet the needs of the students going into a demanding industry.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study will hopefully help advance understanding of current needed skills required by hospitality students and add to the existing body of knowledge by pointing out recent potential skills needed by hospitality students in a developing country like Ghana. Hence, it addresses the paucity of literature in the study area of hospitality education with regard to current potential valued skills needed by hospitality students to acquire in order to make them more professional and valuable for their employers and all stakeholders.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

A survey design was employed for the study. The choice of this design was guided by the research objective which sought to assess hospitality training and practices. This therefore requires gathering information from respondents about their opinions, attitudes and perceptions.

#### **Population**

In this study, the population was comprised of hospitality teachers and hospitality managers working within three to five star hotels in Ghana. Teachers were sampled for this study since they were the people on the front line and deliver hospitality knowledge and skills to students. Managers were considered because they were the people who speak with greater authority, as to whether or not, a student pursuing hospitality education was suitable for the industry.

#### **Sampling Procedures**

In this study, 101 teachers who handled hospitality core related courses were purposely sampled to provide information about current important skills students needed. The researcher selected teachers who taught the related core subjects, since the core subjects were practically oriented and therefore, the data gathered would be a true reflection of what happens on the ground and hence be more applicable. In addition, 126 managers were purposively selected from three to five star hotels. This was because hotels in those categories normally offered full services and gathering data would be a truer reflection of reality.

#### **Instrumentation**

A questionnaire was the main instrument used to solicit primary data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of well structured (close ended) multiplies choices questions which just required ticking the right answers by the respondent. It also consisted of unstructured (open ended) questions which then also allowed respondents to answer to the questions in their own words and in a spirit of freedom to utter the truth as they see it. Additionally, the questionnaire covered the bio-data of respondents and a five- point Likert scale was used to the measure opinions of hospitality trainers and practitioners on a scale denoted as 'extremely important' to



'extremely unimportant'. Self-administered questionnaires were delivered to the teachers and managers at their work-places.

### Limitations

The study population came from only the practitioners working within 3 to 5 star hotels, hence the results could not be generalized to other hotels with different operational standards levels or needs.

### Ethical Consideration

In this study, written permission was obtained from each of the heads of department of hospitality and tourism in each of the participating Technical Universities requesting for permission for them to be used as the population of the study. After the heads of department had acquiesced to the request, the objectives of the study were communicated to the teachers. Also, a written permission request to conduct the research was submitted to managers in the hospitality industry (names withheld?) for their consent prior to commencement of the study. The rationale for the study was explained to respondents before the study commenced and they were anonymous throughout and were also free to withdraw from the study at any time.

### Data Analysis

In this study, descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages were used to illustrate the demographic profile of the participants and also used to answer the research question. Data were analysed with support of the Statistical Package for Service Solution version 20 and the results presented in frequencies and percentages.

### Results and Discussions

**Table 1: The Bio-data of Teachers (n=101)**

Variable	Sub-scales	Frequency (F)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	26	25.7
	Female	75	74.3
Age (in years)	21-30	19	18.8
	31 – 40	62	61.4
	41 – 50	14	13.9
	51 – 60	6	5.9
Educational qualification	HND	6	5.9
	Bachelor degree	17	16.8
	Master's degree	76	75.2
	PhD	2	2
	Others	-	-

**Source:** Field Data, 2017

From Table 1, it could be observed that, out of a total of 101 teachers sampled for the study, 25.7 percent were males, while 74.3 percent were females. This implies that most of the teachers who were sampled for the study were females. Thus, the females exceeded the males by 49.49 percent. It is thus obvious that females outnumber males by a large margin in the category of teaching staff. It can be stated that, the teachers in the hospitality /tourism education are dominated by females. It would therefore be appropriate for management to devise an appropriate strategy to bridge the gender gap. The age range of the respondents was elicited and beginning from 21 and using a range of 9, participants were asked to indicate the range in which their ages fell. It can be observed that, majority (61.4%) of the teachers were between the ages of 31 to 40



years. It must however be noted that 5.9 percent of the teachers were between 51 to 60 years. This implies that most of the teachers sampled for the study were very youthful, since 81 out of the 101 teachers were between 21 to 40 years. This seems to be a good observation since most of the teachers have a lot of teaching years ahead of them and would have the opportunity to impact positively on the students' life during their years of teaching. This advantage will be of enjoyed if management is able to implement policies which make this category of staff satisfied with their conditions of service and thus retain them. However, it must be said that, there is a worrying trend from the age distribution presented. This is because, there seems to be a negative relationship between the age of the teachers and the number of teachers available. This is evident from the fact that, the least number of teachers were those between 51 and 60.

The study also sought to find out the educational qualification of the teachers. Level of education is very essential in a study of this nature. This helps the researcher to determine whether the teachers possess the requisite qualification for the teaching job they are undertaking. It can be observed from Table 1 that, majority (75.2%) of the teachers had master's degree, 16.8 percent had Bachelor's degree and 5.9 percent indicated that they had Highest National Diploma (HND). However, 2.0 percent indicated that they had terminal degree. It must be stated that all the respondents used for the study possess the requisite qualification for the teaching job they are undertaking.

**Table 2: Bio-data of Managers**

Variable	Sub-scales	Frequency (F)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	102	95.2
	Female	24	4.8
Age (in years)	21-30	56	44.4
	31 – 40	47	37.3
	41 – 50	3	2.4
	51 – 60	10	7.9
	Above 60	10	7.9
Educational qualification	Secondary	27	21.4
	Diploma	37	29.4
	HND	44	34.9
	Bachelor degree	17	13.5
	Master's degree	1	0.8

**Source:** Field Data, 2017

The data gathered from the study's respondents (managers) showed that 95.2 percent of the managers sampled for the study were males, while 4.8 percent were females. It can be stated that, majority (95.2%) of the managers who participated in the study were males. This is in a sharp contrast to the teachers' gender distribution where the females exceeded the male by 49.49 percent.

From Table 2, it can be observed that out of the 126 managers used for the study, 44.4 percent were between 21 – 30, 37.3 percent indicated that they were between 31 – 40 and 7.9 percent each mentioned that they were between 51 – 60 and above 60 years respectively. It was also observed that 2.4 percent were between 41 – 50. This implies that most of the managers for the hospitality industry are within their youthful age ranging from 21 – 40 years. From Table 2, it can also be seen that, 34.9 percent of the respondents stated that they have a Higher National Diploma (HND), while 29.4 percent mentioned a Diploma as their educational qualification. Again, 21.4 percent indicated that they have a Secondary School Certificate, 13.5 percent said they have Bachelor's degree while 0.8 percent mentioned Master's degree. This means that the managers used for the study possesses varied educational qualifications.



	EXIMP		IMP		NEUT		UNIMP		EXUMP		Total	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	N	%
<b>Conceptual skills</b>												
Organisational skills	91	72.2	35	27.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Hospitality law and regulations	86	68.3	40	31.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Principles of marketing	56	44.4	40	31.7	30	23.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Human resource management	38	30.2	69	54.8	19	15.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Total quality management	64	58.8	50	39.7	12	9.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Interrelationships	89	70.6	37	29.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Strategic planning	61	48.4	55	43.7	10	7.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
<b>Administrative skills</b>												
Lodging administration	83	65.9	32	25.4	11	8.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Restaurant operational management	50	39.7	62	49.2	14	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Food and beverage management	64	50.8	42	33.3	20	15.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Hospitality facility planning and development	45	35.7	72	57.1	9	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Marketing in hospitality industry	54	42.9	69	54.8	3	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Hospitality Finance and accounting	46	36.5	50	39.7	30	23.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0

**Table 3: Hospitality Teachers' rating of current important skills required from Hospitality Students**

Source: Field Data, 2017

<b>HR skills (interpersonal skills)</b>												
Leadership skills	107	84.9	18	14.3	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Communicative skills	109	86.5	17	13.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Negotiation skills	69	54.8	51	40.5	6	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Team work skills	79	62.7	47	37.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Public relations skills	71	56.3	52	41.3	3	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Employee relationship skills	76	60.3	37	29.4	13	10.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Harmonious guest relationship	79	62.7	41	32.5	6	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
<b>Technical skills</b>												
Ability to identify tools	46	36.5	68	54.0	12	9.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Ability to use the tools	37	29.4	77	61.1	12	9.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Ability to maintain the tools	34	27.0	83	65.9	9	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Ability to perform front office operations	86	68.3	28	22.2	9	7.1	3	2.4	0	0.0	126	100.0
Ability to perform housekeeping operations	76	60.3	27	21.4	20	15.9	3	2.4	0	0.0	126	100.0
Ability to write business communications	49	38.9	58	46.0	5	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Ability to have knowledge of products	92	73.0	20	15.9	14	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Ability to sell	108	85.7	7	5.6	11	8.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0



Personal skills												
Critical thinking ability	76	60.3	50	39.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Multilingual skills	31	24.6	92	73.0	3	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Analytical skills	52	41.3	46	36.5	25	19.8	3	2.4	0	0.0	126	100.0
Decision making skills	72	57.1	48	38.1	3	2.4	3	2.4	0	0.0	126	100.0
Research skills	49	38.9	44	34.9	33	26.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Problem identification and solving skills	56	44.4	64	50.8	6	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Computer literacy/application	54	42.9	40	31.7	32	25.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0
Hands on experience	60	47.6	46	36.5	20	15.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	126	100.0

EXIMP = Extremely important  
 IMP = Important  
 NEUT = Neutral  
 UNIMP = Unimportant  
 EXUMP = Extremely unimportant  
*f* = Frequency  
 % = Percent  
 N = Total frequency

Table 3 illustrates how the Hospitality providers rated the current important skills needed by Hospitality students. As shown in Table 3, on the conceptual skills aspect, the majority (72.2%) of teachers rated organisational skills as being “extremely important”, while 27.8 percent of the teachers rated them as “important” skills required by Hospitality graduates. With regards to Hospitality law and regulations under conceptual skills, 68.3 percent of the respondents rated these as “extremely important”, while 31.7 percent of the respondents rated them as “important”. Although 23.8 percent, 15.1 percent, 9.5 percent and 7.9 percent of some teachers remained neutral on skills such as principles of marketing, human resource management, total quality management and strategic planning respectively, none of the teachers rated any of the skills as extremely “unimportant” or “unimportant”. These findings suggest that to the teachers, every single conceptual skill counts. This is so because most of the conceptual skills were rated by the majority of teachers as either “extremely important” or “important” skills needed. With respect to administrative skills, the results show that Lodging administration (65.9%) and Food and Beverage management (50.8%) were rated by the teachers as “extremely unimportant” in terms of highest percentages. On the other hand, the skills which has the highest percentage (57.1%) as rated by Hospitality teachers as “important” was skills in hospitality facility planning and development and marketing in hospitality industry (54.8%) respectively. It is further observed that some teachers remained neutral in rating some skills relating to administration. Thus, they neither considered them as neither important nor unimportant. Among such administrative skills which a significant number of Hospitality teachers were neutral about include: Hospitality Finance and accounting (23.8%), Food and Beverage management (15.9%) and Restaurant Operational management (11.1%). These findings indicate that the Hospitality teachers consider all the administrative skills to be very significant and must be possessed by Hospitality graduates who pass out to the industry from school.

Moreover, as presented in Table 3, the results show that in terms of human resources skills in the form of interpersonal skills, the majority (86.5%) of the respondents rated communicative skills as being “extremely important”, followed by leadership skills (84.9%). Meanwhile, .8 percent of the respondents neither rated communicative skills as “important”, nor as “unimportant”. The results under interpersonal skills shows a consistent trend. Thus from leadership skills (84.9%) down to the harmonious guest skills (62.7%), it is observed that the majority of the teachers considered human resource skills (interpersonal skills) as “extremely important”. These observations suggest that all human resource skills (interpersonal skills) are “extremely important” as far as the running



of Hospitality course is concerned. However, the rating of all the human resource skills by the Hospitality teachers shows that the topmost interpersonal skills required from Hospitality graduates in the Hospitality are communicative skills and leadership skills. Technical skills are another important skill required by Hospitality graduates. In assessing the various technical skills, it was observed that the majority of teachers rated the ability to sell (85.7%) as “extremely important” followed by an ability to have knowledge of products (73.0%). On the other hand, the ability to maintain tools (65.9%) was rated by the majority of the hospitality teachers as “important” followed by ability to use tools (61.1%). Although the ability to perform front office operations and ability to perform housekeeping operations were rated by the majority of hospitality teachers as “extremely important”, these two skills were respectively considered by 2.4 percent of teachers as “unimportant” skills needed by students to possess. Deductions could therefore be made from these findings that if technical universities’ in Ghana are able to produce graduates who are skillful in sales, having knowledge of products, as well as performing front office operations, it will bridge the gap between the skills possessed by graduates who are produced by the tertiary institutions in Ghana and the skills needed in the Hospitality industry. However, the ability to perform housekeeping operations and ability to perform front office operations should be restructured by the tertiary institutions since some, though an insignificant number (2.4%) of teachers, considered them to be unimportant.

Another critical skill that was assessed was personal skills. This was done to examine the alignment of an individual’s personality skills with other skills such as conceptual skills, administrative skills, interpersonal skills and technical skills. In rating the individual’s personality skills needed by students, the results showed that critical thinking ability was rated by the majority (60.3%) of the respondents as “extremely important” followed by decision making skills (57.7%). On the other hand, other key personal skills that were rated by majority of the respondents as “important” were: multilingual skills (73.0%), problem identification and solving skills (50.8%). As shown in Table 4.9, although a significant percentage of teachers were neutral on research skills (26.2%), computer literacy/application (25.4%) and analytical skills (19.8%), other respondents (2.4%) rated analytical and decision making skills as “unimportant”. However, most of skills under the personal skills were found to be either “extremely important” or “important”. These findings imply that all the personal skills are very important as far as the skills needed by Hospitality students are concerned. However, in terms of policy direction for respondents the focus should be on the critical thinking ability, multilingual skills and decision making skills. This is so because these three personal skills were rated “extremely important” by the majority of the teachers.

**Table 4: Hospitality Managers’ rating of current important skills required from Hospitality Students**

Source: Field Data, 2017

	EXIMP		IMP		NEUT		UNIMP		EXUMP		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	N	%
<b>Conceptual skills</b>												
Organisational skills	58	57.4	43	42.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Hospitality law and regulations	33	32.7	63	62.4	5	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Principles of marketing	23	22.8	53	52.5	25	24.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Human resource management	37	36.6	33	32.7	26	25.7	3	3.0	2	2.0	101	100.0
Total quality management	29	37.6	51	50.5	21	20.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Interrelationships	38	37.6	61	60.4	2	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Strategic planning	18	17.8	53	52.5	30	29.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
<b>Administrative skills</b>												
Lodging administration	52	51.5	43	42.6	6	5.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0



Restaurant operational management	38	37.6	51	50.5	12	11.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Food and beverage management	46	45.5	55	54.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Hospitality facility planning and development	35	34.7	59	58.4	7	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Marketing in hospitality industry	46	45.5	55	54.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Hospitality Finance/ accounting	35	34.7	55	54.5	9	8.9	0	0.0	2	2.0	101	100.0

<b>HR skills (interpersonal skills)</b>												
Leadership skills	53	52.5	36	35.6	6	5.9	6	5.6	0	0.0	101	100.0
Communicative skills	33	32.7	53	52.5	11	10.9	4	4.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Negotiation skills	72	71.3	25	24.8	4	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Team work skills	59	58.4	37	36.6	1	1.0	2	2.0	2	2.0	101	100.0
Public relations skills	46	45.5	48	47.5	5	5.0	0	0.0	2	2.0	101	100.0
Employee relationship skills	52	51.5	43	42.6	4	4.0	0	0.0	2	2.0	101	100.0
Harmonious guest relationship	61	60.4	27	26.7	6	5.9	7	6.9	0	0.0	101	100.0
<b>Technical skills</b>												
Ability to identify tools	49	48.5	48	47.5	4	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Ability to use the tools	68	67.3	24	23.8	7	6.9	2	2.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Ability to maintain the tools	47	46.5	46	45.5	8	7.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Ability to perform front office operations	45	44.6	54	53.5	0	0.0	2	2.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Ability to perform housekeeping operations	35	34.7	60	59.4	7	6.9	4	4.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Ability to write business communications	41	40.6	49	56.4	5	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Ability to have knowledge of products	39	41.6	57	56.4	5	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Ability to sell	42	41.6	59	58.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0

<b>Personal skills</b>												
Critical thinking ability	54	53.5	41	40.6	2	2.0	4	4.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Multilingual skills	33	32.7	68	67.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Analytical skills	33	32.7	34	33.7	34	33.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Decision making skills	50	49.5	49	48.5	2	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Research skills	41	40.6	37	36.6	23	22.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Problem identification and solving skills	34	33.7	64	63.4	3	3.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Computer literacy/application	45	44.6	47	46.5	9	8.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0
Hands on experience	32	31.7	58	57.4	11	10.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	101	100.0

EXIMP = Extremely important  
 IMP = Important  
 NEUT = Neutral  
 UNIMP = Unimportant  
 EXUMP = Extremely unimportant  
*f* = Frequency  
 % = Percent  
 N = Total frequency



Table 4 presents how the Hospitality practitioners rated the current important skills required to be possessed by Hospitality students. It may be observed from Table 4 that on the conceptual skills issue, the results show that out of 101 responses, the majority (57.4%) of the managers rated organisational skills as “extremely important” skills required from the Hospitality graduates, while 42.6 percent of the managers rated them as “important”. With respect to Hospitality Law and regulations under conceptual skills, 62.4 percent of the respondents rated them as “important”, while 32.3 percent of the respondents rated them as “extremely important”. Other ratings under conceptual skills included: human resource management having “extremely important” (36.6%), “important” (32.7%) and “extremely unimportant” (2.0%). As shown in Table 4, the findings suggest that with the exception of Human Resource Management and Finance and Accounting which some respondents (though insignificant) rated as “unimportant” and “extremely unimportant”, the rest of the skills are important and extremely important skills needed in the Hospitality industry. It is also observed that some respondents remained neutral in rating some skills. Thus, they neither considered them as important nor unimportant. Among such skills which a significant number of respondents were neutral about include: principles of marketing skills (25.7%), strategic planning skills (29.7%) and human resource management skills (24.8%)

With respect to administrative skills, the results show that the skills which have the highest percentage (51.5%) and rated by Hospitality managers as “extremely unimportant” are lodging administration skills, followed by skills in Food and Beverage management and Marketing in hospitality industry (45.5%). On the other hand, the skills which have the highest percentage (58.4%) as rated by Hospitality/Tourism managers as “unimportant” was skills in hospitality Facility Planning and Development, followed by Food and Beverage Management, Marketing in hospitality industry and hospitality Finance/Accounting (54.5%) respectively. These findings imply that according to the Hospitality managers, all the administrative skills presented in Table 4 are deemed to be vital and thus very significant and must be possessed by Hospitality graduates who pass from schools. However, in terms of the level of importance attached to the various administrative skills, Hospitality Finance and Accounting could be considered as less important since it was rated by 2 percent of the respondents as “extremely unimportant”.

The results presented in Table 4 further show that in terms of interpersonal skills, the larger majority (71.3%) of the respondents rated negotiation skills as “extremely important”, followed by harmonious guest relationships (60.4%). Meanwhile, 52.5 percent of the respondents rated communicative skills as “important”, followed by public relations skills (47.5%). On the contrary, 6.9 percent and 4.6 percent of the respondents respectively rated harmonious guest relationships and leadership skills as “unimportant”. These observation, as shown in Table 3, suggest that the key interpersonal skills required from Hospitality graduates are negotiation skills, harmonious guest relationships, teamwork skills and communicative skills.

With regards to technical skills required from Hospitality graduates, the managers in the industry rated the ability to use the tools (67.3%) as “extremely important” followed by an ability to identify tools (48.5%). On the other hand, the ability to perform housekeeping operations (59.4%) was rated by the majority of the hospitality practitioners as “important” followed by ability to sell (58.4%), ability to write business communications (56.4%) and ability to have knowledge of products (56.4%) respectively. Although the ability to perform housekeeping operations and ability to use the tools were rated by the majority of hospitality practitioners as “important”, 4 percent and 2 percent of the respondents respectively considered them as “unimportant” skills needed from Hospitality/Tourism graduates in the industry.

These findings suggest that the technical universities’ ability to produce graduates who are skillful in using appropriate tools, performing housekeeping operations, have knowledge of products and



selling products, as well as writing business communications will go a long way to feed the Hospitality industry with graduates who possess the needed skills in the industry. However, the ability to perform housekeeping operations and ability to use the tools should be redefined since some, though insignificant number of managers considered them as unimportant.

Another critical skill that was assessed was personal skills. This was done to align an individual's personality skills with other skills such as conceptual skills, administrative skills, interpersonal skills and technical skills. In rating the individual's personality skills needed in the Hospitality, the results show that a critical thinking ability was rated by the majority (53.5%) of the respondents as "extremely important" followed by decision making skills (49.5%). On the other hand, other key personal skills that were rated by majority of the respondents as "important" were: multilingual skills (67.3%), problem identification and problem solving skills (63.4%), and hands on experience (57.4%). It is important to emphasize that with the exception of critical thinking ability which was rated by 4 percent of the respondents as "unimportant", under the personal skills, the rest of the skills were found to be either "extremely important" or "important". This implies that personal skills are very important as far as the skills needed in the Hospitality industry are concerned. However, the key personal skills needed in the Hospitality industry, according to the lecturers who are in touch with realities, are: critical thinking ability, multilingual skills, decision making skills, problem identification and solving skills and hands on experience.

## Discussions

### Research Question 1: What are the current skills provided by hospitality trainers?

The findings of the study indicated that in the view of the teachers, hospitality operations are more important for students to possess. This means that hospitality trainers believe that operational skills make the student stand out and more able to adapt to any situation, at any given time within the industry. The study finding is consistent with Wang (2008) who found operational skills as extremely important for student to possess. The findings also revealed that, besides hospitality operations, human resource skills are considered to be equally important. According to the trainers, besides administrative skills students should also be knowledgeable in managing the human resource base of the industry. These findings confirm many previous studies that found human resource skills, such as leadership skills, communication skills, negotiation skills and public relations skills, as being important for student to possess (Wing, 2008; & Wood, 2003).

Additionally, as observed by Ghana's Ministry of Tourism (2013) in its annual report, there is a huge gap between the quality of human resource requirements and what is demanded for the Hospitality/Tourism industry in Ghana. This necessitated the setting up of the National Tourism Development Plan of Ghana (2013- 2027) to help bridge the gap in the near future. The comparative analyses in this study regarding the views of Hospitality/Tourism teachers (human resources providers) in the Technical Universities in Ghana, and the practitioners (employers) in the Hospitality/Tourism industry confirm the Ministry of Tourism's observations. More specifically, the findings of this study reveal that out of the thirty-six (36) different skills rated by both human resource providers (teachers) and practitioners (employers) in the Hospitality/Tourism industry, only four (4) skills (i.e. ability to perform front office operations, ability to perform housekeeping operations, analytical skills and decision making skills) were considered by some practitioners as "unimportant". On the other hand, as shown in Table 3, the human resources providers (teachers) considered ten (10) skills as "unimportant". In addition, the percentage difference between the number of practitioners and teachers who rated the various skills as being "extremely important" and "important" is very wide. This disparity between how the providers and the practitioners



perceive the various skills needed in the Hospitality/Tourism industry is likely to be a potential threat to the development of the industry (Nicolaidis, 2014).

These observations support Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest's (2004) view that being the supplier of a workforce for the industry, higher learning institutions are required to prepare the graduate for the field of work. This view is crucial because in his study, Walker (2012) also found that top level managers require more conceptual skills than human skills and technical skills in that order. On the other hand, middle level managers are said to require equal amounts of the three key skills whilst lower level managers are expected to require more of the technical skills to be efficient (Walker, 2012). In this regard, putting pragmatic measures in place by the stakeholders of Ghana's Hospitality/Tourism industry to fill the gaps identified in the industry must be given the necessary attention. This is so because according to the experimentalist philosophy of education, as cited by Millar, Mao and Moreo (2010), the world is dynamic and therefore competencies required by employers are likely to change over a period of time, and therefore, curricula must be adjusted to reflect these ever-changing needs. This call is consistent with Spowart (2011), Nicolaidis (2014) and Akyeampong (2007), who suggest the need for collaboration between Hospitality/Tourism industry and academia in turning out competent graduates for the industry.

### **Research Question 2: What are the current skills demanded by hospitality practitioners?**

The findings of the study indicate that in the view of hospitality practitioner's personal skills are rated extremely important relative to the other skills. Personal skills encompass the ability of the student to think critically, be more analytical, be able to identify problem and use personal initiatives to solve problems, and ability to speak more than one language and be computer literate with hands- on experience. This means that hospitality/tourism managers believe that these skills make the student stands out and be able to adapt to any situation in the industry. These findings confirm many previous studies in which they placed high value on personal skills (Bach & Milman, 1996, Kim, 2002, Ogbelide, 2006, Wang, 2008; Nicolaidis, 2014, and Jebriil & Al-Hussen, 2015).

In addition to personal skills, the findings suggested that hospitality/tourism operations were considered to be equally important. This means that a prospective employee in the hospitality and tourism industry should be able to understand lodging administration, has an idea about restaurant operational management, food and beverage management, marketing and accounting procedures in the hospitality industry. These skills are largely administrative and should be exhibited by the hospitality student since they are extremely important for the success of hospitality operations. This supports the findings of Wang (2008) and Nicolaidis (2014), who also considered hospitality operations skills to be equally important, and should thus be possessed by students embarking on industry development.

Furthermore, skills such as human relations, and conceptual, and technical skills were also considered as important according to the research findings. This means that, the respondents largely conscientiously selected these skills as important skills needed by the prospective employee in the hospitality and tourism industry. These findings support the studies of Finegold et al. (2000), Nicolaidis (2014) and Jauhari (2006) who noted that hotel managers are required to possess multiple technical skills.

Hospitality practitioners maintained that every single conceptual skill counts. This is so because most of the conceptual skills were rated by the majority of the practitioners as either "extremely important" or "important" skills needed in the Hospitality industry. In addition, Hospitality practitioners consider all the administrative skills to be very significant in the tourism industry, and in their view, must be possessed by hospitality graduates who passed out from school, college or university and aspire to be employed in the industry. Further observations from the study's



findings suggest that all human resource skills (interpersonal skills) are “extremely important” as far as the running of Hospitality/Tourism industry is concerned. However, the rating of all the human resource skills by the Hospitality/Tourism practitioners shows that the topmost interpersonal skills required from Hospitality/Tourism graduates in the Hospitality/Tourism are communicative skills and leadership skills. These findings are contrary to Nolan, Conway, Farrell and Monks (2010) who conducted a study in Ireland using a survey of 41 industry employers and graduates and their finding revealed that industry rated customer service and maintaining professional ethics and standards as critically important.

According to Sharon, Goziker and Shahrabani (2014) the skills and qualifications of front desk employees are very important, as these employees play a significant role in building and maintaining the hotel's image and reputation. Based on the views of the practitioners in the Hospitality/Tourism industry a logical conclusion can be made that if technical universities in Ghana are able to produce graduates who are skillful in sales, have knowledge of products, as well as performing front office operations and know about legal issues, this will bridge the gap between the skills possessed by graduates who are produced by the tertiary institutions in Ghana and the skills needed in the Hospitality/Tourism industry. However, the ability to perform housekeeping operations and ability to perform front office operations should be restructured by the tertiary institutions since some, though not a large number of managers considered them as unimportant. As observed by the Board of Studies (2013), employability skills are essential features of each of the qualifications available in every employment framework, and therefore, consideration must be given to the ways in which they can be addressed when designing learning activities and assessment instruments to prepare potential employees. These observations are in line with the study findings of Marhuenda, Strietska-Ilina and Zukersteinova (2005) which show that students and teachers are aware of the sectoral trends as perceived by managers and employees. Specifically, students and teachers are aware of working conditions in the tourism sector, which they have sometimes experienced, as this is also the experience of managers and all other workers (Marhuenda, Strietska-Ilina & Zukersteinova, 2005).

The findings of the study further bring to bear that personal skills are very important as far as skills needed in the Hospitality industry are concerned. However, in terms of policy direction for the practitioners in the Hospitality industry, the focus should be on the critical thinking ability, multilingual skills and decision making skills. This is so because these three personal skills were rated “extremely important” by the majority of the practitioners in the Hospitality industry. These findings are consistent with Nicolaidis (2014) and also Marhuenda, Martínez and Navas (2004) so that both employers and employees in the tourism sector largely agree that personnel with higher levels of qualification adapt more easily to changes and transformation in the market and especially to changes induced by new technologies.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The study found that females outnumber males by a large margin in the category of teaching staff. Thus, the teachers in the hospitality/tourism education arena are dominated by females. However, the majority (95.2%) of the managers of hotels who participated in the study were males. This is in a sharp contrast to the teachers' gender distribution where the females exceeded the male by 49.49 percent. The study also found that most of the teachers and managers sampled for the study are within an age range from 21 – 40 years. It must also be stated that all the respondents used for the study possess the requisite qualification for the teaching job they are undertaking. The findings established the existence of a gap between the existing hospitality trainers and the myriad of expectations of practitioners in Ghana. The study further found that the two parties share some common views on the skills current students need to possess. Based on the outcome



of the study, the researcher recommended collaboration between hospitality providers and hospitality practitioners to address the skill gaps as a matter of urgency.

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