



## **WORK RELATED LEARNING: AN INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY FOR STUDENT CENTRIC LEARNING**

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### **Abstract:**

*Hospitality management competencies: do faculties and students concur on employability skills. Through this paper, the author wants to establish, what competencies the various stakeholders such as students, industry mentors and faculty think or the ideal competencies needed by employees in the hospitality field in places such as hotels, food service providers, restaurants and lodges, compared to those actually displayed by hospitality management students. This particular paper reports on a comparison drawn between what the faculty and students believe or the ideal competencies compared to those that they actually have on completion of their academic studies, prior to the students engaging in their semester of work integrated learning (WIL). The results would be used by the faculty to focus on ensuring students are aware of the employability and management competencies they need (Hind, Moss and McKellan, 2007) in order to conduct themselves in the business world of hospitality with confidence and competently. To get this, the author wants to implement engaged pedagogy to achieve the work integrated learning.*

**Index Terms:** Competencies, Hospitality, Soft Skills & Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

### **Introduction:**

In a developing country like India, where the jobless rate is 3% in urban and 2% in rural, i.e., 10.8 million [National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and Central Statistics Office (CSO) Economic census, 2014]. It is expected that a university graduate should be able to find employment but there are many who do not. The labour market oscillates between the skills shortage on one hand and the number of graduates who are without work on the other. It seems paradoxical that a country with a high unemployment rates, has graduates without work and the professionals need to be improved or lured to the country. The situation may arise from the fact that students lack employability skills. Behavioral (Soft) skills such as those gained through curricula that embed critical outcomes such as analytical skills, teamwork, organizing and managing one self, usually deliver more competent and employable graduates (Coll & Zegaard, 2006)

Employers have indicated that students are often not prepared for the workplace and call on universities to produce more employable graduates (Barrie, 2006; Kember & Leung, 2005) by providing transferrable skills that can be taken into the workplace (Smith, Clegg, Lawrence & Todd, 2007). Students subjects matter knowledge is usually satisfactory (Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick & Cragnolini, 2004; Hind, Moss & McKellan, 2007) but by improving and developing their competencies such as interpersonal skills, teamwork, communication and problem solving skills, value will be added to their intellectual capabilities making them more employable (Hind et al, 2007; Maher & Graves, 2007). Employers are expecting graduates to be work-ready and demanding a range of competencies and qualities of them (Yorke & Harvey, 2005). Educational institutions should be critical in offering programme and questions so as whether they are nurturing the appropriate competencies to consider their development (Kember & Leung, 2005).

Competencies (the term which will be used in the paper for skills such as soft skills, behavioral skills, generic attributes), that are necessary in any field of work,

should be an important element in undergraduate programme (Bath, Smith, Stein & Swann, 2004) are the responsibilities of higher educationists to incorporate as part of their teaching and learning (Hind et al., 2007). According to Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell & Lay (2002), the literature suggests that there is an insufficient importance placed on the development of soft skills by many higher education institutions. It is not advised that competencies be taught as a form of checklist but be integrated and contextualized into the curriculum (Bath, et al., 2004). Employability skills need to be embedded not only in any one module but must be throughout the curriculum at all levels (Hind et al., 2007). But faculty need to be mindful that attempts to introduce attributes into the curricula have generally been unsuccessful (Barrie, 2006). There are varieties of interpretations of the term competency. It can be viewed as a characteristic of an individual (Zegward & Hodges, 2003) and related to personal attributes rather than technical skills (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Coll, Zegward & Hodges (2002) define a competent individual as "one who has skills and attributes related to task undertaken". They used Birkett's distinction between "cognitive skills which are the technical knowledge, skills and abilities, whilst behavioral skills and personal skills such as principles, attitudes, values and motives". These terms could also be related to employability skills (Hind et al, 2007).

Work integrated programmes have the purpose of preparing students for the work-place by identifying and developing the important competencies that are believed to be needed by the employer (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Although institutions may have advisory committees involving industry representatives to establish the current curricula, discussions are usually about technical skills that should be an outcome of the curricula and not the competencies that students should demonstrate. So it is often not clear what types of students employers expected higher education to produce (Maharasoia & Hay, 2001)

The vocational nature of hospitality management is ideal to utilize work integrated learning as a method of transferring classroom activities to the work place. Higher education institutions offering such programmes have the infrastructure of physical facilities that allows for the teaching of technical skills such as reception proficiency, culinary methods and service to the customers, which student will need in the work- place environment. These technical skills are then transferred to the real work environment by the students having a compulsory semester of work integrated learning (Crebert et al., 2004; Fleming & Eames, 2005). The time spent in the real life situation gives students the opportunity to apply abstract concepts learnt in the classroom. The soft skills are handled in realistic manner rather than trying to stimulate opportunities by carrying out role play or similar teaching methods in the classroom experience (Tovey, 2001; Waryszak, 1999)

Faculty are depended upon quality graduates they produce and send into the world of work. There view on what generic competencies such as analytical thinking, abilities and willingness to learn, self confidence, relationship building was sought in order to compare these with the students views. Faculty do interact with mentors whilst visiting students in the workplace for WIL assessments and have an indication of what employer expects from the graduates. The results from this research would enable faculty to ensure inclusion of these competencies whilst teaching and assessing students. The challenge is to make students realise to important it is to have generic competencies, how these improve their employability in a highly competitive market and that they should take ownership of these (Maher & Graves, 2007). They should also be aware of the needs and be able to relate their abilities to those required by

employers (Yorke & Harvey 2005). If students do not see the need or importance, the likelihood of higher education institutions managing to convince students to in still these will be difficult (Coll & Zegward, 2002).

**Back Ground:**

Work integrated learning is considered an educational strategy where learning in the classroom alternates with learning in the workplace (Jones & Quick, 2007) to allow the competencies of the students to be developed and nurtured by the mentors.

**Research Objectives:**

The aim of the study is to implement the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) through engaged pedagogy, expecting the students to learn the traits of hospitality such as ability and willingness to learn, customer service, concern for order, quality and accuracy, teamwork, cooperation and self control and organizational commitment. Faculty should believe that students demonstrate the following top seven competencies, i.e., customer service, ability and willingness to learn, teamwork and cooperation, flexibility, organizational awareness, initiative, interpersonal understanding and information seeking. To inculcate these qualities among students, engaged pedagogy is perfect method to teach and reach the students before they go for industrial training.

**Engaged Pedagogy:**

Engaged pedagogy refers to using teaching approaches that encourage student-student interactions. Often, the instructor takes on the role of facilitator as opposed to lecturer in these approaches. Typically student learning is higher using these methods and students use more high-order thinking skills while learning material in-depth. The approaches for teaching are presented in following 5 categories: Engaged pedagogy, visualizations, field-based instruction, classroom labs, and problem-solving

- ✓ Using media to enhance teaching and learning can engage students and produce more meaningful and deep learning experiences by using films, television shows, literature, documentaries and videos from sources such as You Tube. Compiled by G. Dirk Mateer, Penn State University with help from Linda S. Ghent, Eastern Illinois University, Tod Porter, Youngstown State University and Ray Purdom, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
- ✓ Undergraduate research provides opportunities for students to collaborate with faculty on actual research products, learning about both a particular topic in a field and the research process in general. Compiled by Elizabeth Perry Size-more Randolph College with assistance from George Alter, Mary Borg, Steve DeLoach, Steeve Greenlaw, Kim Marie McGoldrick, Sheila Kennison, Mark Maier and Scott Simkins.
- ✓ Socratic questioning turns a lecture into a guided discussion. Compiled by Dorothy Merritts and Robert Walter at Franklin & Marshall College.
- ✓ Interactive lecture demonstrations engage students in activities that confront their prior understanding of a core concept. The activity can be a classroom experiment, a survey, a simulation or an analysis of secondary data. Compiled by Dorothy Merritts and Robert Walter, Franklin & Marshall College, and Bob MacKay Clark college, Enhanced by Mark Maier with assistance from Rochelle Ruffer, Sue Stockly & Ronald Thornton.
- ✓ Cooperative learning involves students working in groups to accomplish learning goals. Compiled by Rebecca Teed and John McDaris, SERC at Carleton College and Cary Roseth, University of Minnesota

**Visualisations:**

- ✓ Direct measurement videos are short, high quality videos of real events that allow students to easily and quantitatively explore physical phenomena.(Peter Bohacek, Henry Sibley High School and Matthew Vonk, University of Wisconsin – River Falls
- ✓ Conceptual models are qualitative models that help highlight important connections in real world systems and processes. Compiled by Bob MacKay Clark College.
- ✓ Teaching with Google earth provides detailed instruction for bringing rich imagery and interactive information into the classroom. Glen A Richard, Mineral physics institute, Stony Brook University.
- ✓ Teaching with simulation uses a model of behavior to gain a better understanding of that behavior. Compiled by Betty Blecha, San Francisco State University and refined and enhanced by Mark McBride, Teresa Riley, Katherine Rowell, Kim Marie McGoldrick, Mark Maier, and Scott Simkins.

**Field Based Instruction:**

- ✓ Campus living laboratory uses the campus environment itself as a teaching tool. Compiled by Suzanne Savanick at SERC, Carleton College.
- ✓ Experience based environmental projects get students involved in their own learning. Compiled by Karin Kirk at Montana State University.
- ✓ Service learning offers the opportunity to link academic learning with community service. Compiled by Suzanne Savanick at SERC, Carleton College and enhanced first by Ed Laine, Bowdoin College and then by Andrea Ziegert, Denison University with assistance from Nancy Brooks, Emily Janke and Mary Lopez.
- ✓ Undergraduate research provides opportunities for the students to collaborate with faculty on actual research projects, learning about both a particular topic and the research process in general. Compiled by Elizabeth Perry Sizemore, Randolph College with assistance from George Alter, Mary Borg, Steve DeLoach, Steve Greenlaw, Kim Marie McGoldrick, Sheila Kennison, Mark Maier and Scott Simkins.

**Classroom Labs:**

- ✓ Indoor labs provide students with the opportunities for structured investigations and experiments of materials, models and other equipment. Compiled by Mary Savina, Carleton College.
- ✓ Classroom experiments are activities where any number of students work in groups on carefully designed guided inquiry questions. Compiled by Sheryl Ball, Virginia Tech with assistance from Tisha Emerson, Jennifer Lewis and J. Todd Swarthout.

**Problem Solving:**

- ✓ Coached problem solving is a class format in which professors provide a structured guided context for students working collaboratively to solve problems. Compiled by Debby Walser-Kuntz, Sarah Deel and Susan Singer, Carleton College.
- ✓ Documented problem solving is an active learning assessment technique in which students become more aware about their learning and about their problem solving, resulting in transition from the “steps used to solve a problem” to the application of analytical and critical thinking skills. Compiled by Linda Wilson, University of Texas at Arlington, with the help from Amber Casolari,

Riverside City College, Katie Town-send Merino, Palomar College and Todd Easton, University of Portland

- ✓ Guided discovery problems offer intriguing puzzles to solve, structured hands-on activities, carefully worded leading questions, crucial hints and just-in-time presentations of information in order to escort students step-by-step through the process of scientific discovery. Compiled by Ann Bykerk-Kauffman, California State University, Chico.
- ✓ Investigative case-based learning involves students in addressing real world problems. Compiled by Ethel Stanley, Bio Quest, Beloit College and Margaret Waterman, Southeast Missouri State University.
- ✓ Process-Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) is a research-based learning environment where students are actively engaged in mastering course content and in developing essential skills by working in self-managed teams on guided inquiry activities. Compiled by Rick Moog, James Spencer, Frank Creegan, Troy Wolfskill, David Hanson, Andrei Stroumanis, Diane Bunce and Jennifer Lewis
- ✓ Teaching with case method combines two methods: the case itself and the discussion of that case. Teaching cases provide information, but neither analysis nor conclusions. The analytical work of explaining the relationships among events in the case, identifying options, evaluating choices and predicting the effects of actions is the work done by students during the classroom discussion. Compiled by Ann Velenchik, Wellesley College.

#### **Implementation/Follow-Up:**

Faculty coordinators should focus on work-integrated learning and emphasize the importance of soft skills during academic and skills training classes and include these in their assessment in order to make students realize their significance for their success for employability.

The one competency that is common to all findings is that of ability and willingness to learn. Given that the workplace and technology are constantly changing, it is important that future employees are able to adapt their actions and thinking to the situation they find themselves in. In a technology driven work environment, students will have to adapt rapidly and be eager to do so. Flexibility is also an important thing for the hospitality students. The faculty must regularly remind the students that if they are flexible in their attitude and abilities, it will assist in their ability to adapt to change. The student must realize that customer service is important. Given that the hospitality sector is customer-service driven and both believe that students do demonstrate this competency. The students are assessed in the restaurants during training. They are observed how they interact with the customer. Teamwork and cooperation is rated high. For example, in a busy kitchen or restaurant, it is imperative that staff work together to ensure that customers receive value for money and an exceptional experience. Self-control is an important quality for anyone who works in an environment when working with people and even more so with the public such as customers.

#### **Conclusion:**

The importance of work integrated learning being a part of a curriculum in a field such as hospitality management should be overemphasized. Students gain valuable experience by way of applying their practical learning in the workplace, developing their skills in interacting with fellow workers, customers and management and discover the direction in which they would like to steer their career (McGlothlin Jr. 2003). Work integrated learning has been shown in other research to be of benefit to the students by

way of their learning being developed in both technical and competency skills (Fleming & Eames, 2005) and that work integrated learning has enhanced the development of competencies.

Hospitality faculty must prepare their students for a highly labor intensive, customer focused, service industry. The competencies such as customer service, flexibility, concern for order, quality and accuracy, teamwork and cooperation as well as self-control will allow students to understand how to operate efficiently and professionally in the demanding environment of hospitality. The importance of work-related learning experience cannot be denied as students will be exposed to realities and the competencies that they require in the workplace (Rainsbury., et al, 2002). Curricula need to be evaluated for the outcomes to be achieved in WIL and faculty need to be mindful of the competencies that are required when preparing students for the workplace and their employability on completion of their qualification. By enhancing their skills, competencies, personal attributes enthusiasm, self confidence and knowledge that are needed in the work place; the graduates become more employable and successful in their chosen career, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

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