

*An Exploratory Study of the Cross-cultural Management Curricular in  
Hospitality and Tourism Education*

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The Asian Conference on the Social Sciences 2014  
Official Conference Proceedings  
0174

**Abstract**

In recent decades, the hospitality industry has faced intense competition, globalization and the explosion of technology; which gives businesses that have techniques of knowledge creation and innovation domination in competitive environments. The internationalization of business has led to a significant increase in the cross-cultural interactions of business people and firms. Cross-cultural International Human Resource Management has been growing importance, both in the field and in the academic literature (Adler, 1991; Blunt and Richard, 1993; Moran, Harris, & Moran, 2011). However, researches seeking to examine service-oriented human resources lies only with the hospitality organization, but little focus on the system of hospitality management education. Therefore, this study will investigate the cross-cultural management curricular of hospitality master education and reports the initial findings for a qualitative research project undertaken for an assessment of the master education system. The concept and the needs of hospitality cross-cultural management education are explored and their struggle for identity is described. Furthermore, the graduates' views on hospitality cross-cultural management education that they received will be examined through in-depth interviews. Finally, based on the research findings, a number of conclusions will be drawn and specific suggestions for the future of the cross-cultural hospitality management education are proposed.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Management, Hospitality and Tourism Education,  
Adult Learning, Curriculum Development

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## **Overview**

Within education and labor market policies, adult learning is becoming a priority for economic growth and social development in many countries (OECD, 2006); higher and changing skill requirements and a minimum of higher education are prerequisites to obtaining employment in many countries. The internationalization of business has led to a significant increase in the cross-cultural interactions of business people and firms. Cross-cultural International Human Resource Management has been growing importance, both in the field and in the academic literature (Adler, 1991; Blunt and Richard, 1993; Moran, Harris, & Moran, 2011). Service quality is a very important factor for achieving competitive advantages and efficiency. Consequently, organizations try to select and retain talented employees to compete in global market. Efforts are also made to create conditions in the organizations to achieve optimal production by the employees; yet researches seeking to examine service-oriented human resources lies only with the hospitality organization, but little focus on the system of hospitality management education.

## **Literature Review**

Hospitality industry is part of a multi-service industry. More than 205 million people work worldwide in the hospitality industry comprising 11% of total employment and representing 10.2 % of the Global National Product. This is the highest percentage of all service industries. To meet the market demand for the hospitality personnel, hospitality educational institutes in Taiwan has prospered in recent years. Up to 2005, there are 31 universities and colleges offering hospitality/tourism management programs throughout Taiwan (Hornig & Lu, 2006); and then there are more than 40 universities and colleges offering hospitality/tourism master/EMBA programs in Taiwan at 2012. To compete in today's marketplace, international hospitality organizations should be prepared to consider the opportunity of global service design and workforces. Hospitality master education can be perceived as a mixture of academic professional, attitude, and managerial skills to satisfying the needs for future hospitality CEOs. And there are indications that the variable of ethnicity is being taken with increasing seriousness in the area of cross-cultural adult learning. However, extremely little research studies have considered the hospitality master students perceptions of cross-cultural management curricular and to identify the relationship of the underlying cross-cultural management dimensions to hospitality master students occupational performance toward cross-cultural management competencies.

## **Adult Learning**

Adult learning may be defined as teaching model that incorporates strategies of student self-direction toward goals of practical relevance to the learner; and it generally incorporates problem or case-based learning, small group discussions, and multisensory delivery of instruction (Arnold, 2001). Ultimately, these learning levels are developed that based on degrees of difficulty and includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities, critical thinking, and managerial skills in master education. The four major areas of research adult learning are:

**Self-directed learning** - focuses on the process by which adults take control of their own learning, in particular how they set their own learning goals, locate appropriate resources, decide on which learning methods to use and evaluate their progress (Brookfield, 1992).

**Critical reflection** - focuses on three interrelated processes; (1) the process by which adults question and then replace or reframe an assumption that up to that point has been uncritically accepted as representing commonsense wisdom, (2) the process through which adults take alternative perspective on previously taken for granted ideas, actions, forms of reasoning and ideologies, and (3) the process by which adults come to recognize the hegemonic aspects of dominant cultural values and to understand how self-evident renderings of the 'natural' state of the world actually bolster the power and self-interest of unrepresentative minorities (Mezirow, 1991).

**Experiential learning** - emphasis on experience as a defining feature of adult learning, as well as a continuing process of evaluating experiences (Lindeman, 1926). The belief that adult teaching should be grounded in adults' experiences, and that these experiences represent a valuable resource, is currently cited as crucial by adult educators of every conceivable ideological hue. However, experience is culturally framed and shaped; therefore, experiences learning should be neither innocent nor free from the cultural contradictions that inform them

**Learning to learn** - to become skilled at learning in a range of different situations and through a range of different styles - has often been proposed as an overarching purpose for those educators who work with adults (Smith, 1990). Learning how to learn is much more frequently spoken of in studies of clearly defined skill development or knowledge acquisition, and much less frequently referred to in studies examining emotional learning or the development of emotional intelligence.

In the study of adult learning, one major trend emerged since 1990s' is cross-cultural dimensions of adult learning (Brookfield, 1992); and adult learning needs to be understood much more as a socially embedded and socially constructed phenomenon (Jarvis, 1987). There are also indications that the variable of ethnicity is being taken with increasing seriousness in the area of cross-cultural adult learning. One major challenge to hospitality master education is to develop the ability to use hospitality management knowledge; and the cross-cultural management skills can be a key learning device for the development of appropriate knowledge, understanding, values, and skills. Many more cross-cultural perspectives are needed, and it is suggested that the predominant focus in studies of adult learning on instrumental skill development needs widening to encompass work on spiritual and significant personal learning and to understand the interconnections between these domains Based on literature reviews, the cross-cultural management course should be in design with both cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies concepts. research on adult learning needs to be integrated much more strongly with research on adult development and adult cognition (Tennant, 1988; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Therefore, this study will analyzed and compared the cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies concepts that developed in Taiwan's

hospitality master curriculum.

### **Cross-Cultural Management Education**

Culture-based behavior shapes a nation's corporate social conduct (Katz, Swanson & Nelson, 2001); and the most common obstacles to global services are cross-cultural adaptation, different organizational or workforce values, differences in management style, and training programs (Marquardt & Engel, 1993). In recent decades, the hospitality industry has faced intense competition, globalization and the explosion of technology and cross-cultural issues; which give businesses that have techniques of knowledge creation and innovation domination in competitive environments. High service quality is a strategy that has been related to success especially during times of intense competition both domestically and internationally (Wong, Dean, & White, 1999).

Cross-cultural management is often regarded as a discipline of international management focusing on cultural encounters between what are perceived as well-defined and homogeneous entities, where organizations and educational institutes offering tools to handle cultural differences seen as sources of conflict or miscommunication. Ruben (1989) points out that there are three facet of intercultural competence: *building and maintaining relationships*, *transferring information* and *gaining compliance*. Thus, the main objective of cross-cultural training and education is to enable participants to learn both content and skills that will facilitate effective cross-cultural interaction by reducing misunderstanding and inappropriate behavior (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Richards, 2012). Furthermore, Black *et al.* (1991) identified major factors that determine interaction adjustment in cross-cultural management, which are:

***Self logical well-being*** – self efficacy and effective stress management to be maintained;

***Relationship skills*** – or relationship dimension, which are the skills necessary to further relationship with nationals from difference cultures; and

***Perceptual skills*** – or perception dimension, which encompass cognitive abilities that allow the environment to be correctly perceived and evaluated.

Increasing attention has begun to be paid by companies to developing cross-cultural and communication competencies; with transnational companies that face the challenges of the management of global knowledge networks and multicultural project teams, interacting and collaborating across boundaries using global communication technologies. So, the development of hospitality students' transferable skills and cross-cultural management techniques is considered to be of major importance. The main distinction between types of cross-cultural training/education programs is between culture-general and culture-specific courses (Hofstede, 1980). Generalizations about cultural differences are possible within such programs and such techniques have been adapted to give a more culture-general approach (Brislin *et al.*, 1986); on the other hand, culture-specific training/education may be preferable of cross-culture practices and techniques.

The cross-cultural management skills can be a key learning device for the development of appropriate knowledge, understanding, values, and skills. The course should be in design with both cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies concepts. Although there are often need supplementing with a culture-general approach; but many post-graduate training or MBA programs in international management usually have taken for culture-general approach (Richards, 2012). Hence, the master educational programs in Taiwan should also emphasize the need for an alternative approach which acknowledges that growing complexity of inter-organizational and intra-organization connections; and offers theoretical concepts in a globalizing education curricular context. Therefore, this study will investigate the cross-cultural management curricular of hospitality master education and reports the initial findings for a qualitative research project undertaken for an assessment of the master education system. The concept and the needs of hospitality cross-cultural management education is explored their struggle for identity is described.

### **Methodology**

As diverse workforce is becoming a major part of business practice, it is important to be able to measure and research its effectiveness. Based on literature review, there are evidence demonstrates that cross-cultural management skills shape employees' global occupational competency. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore and compare hospitality master students perceptions of cross-cultural management curricular. In addition, this study extended the scholarship in the area of further improve the psychometric qualities of the cross-cultural management especially for hospitality master education. Main research hypotheses of this study are proposed:

**Hypothesis 1:** The gap between the perceived Importance and Performance of cross-cultural management course attributes by various hospitality master students differs significantly.

**Hypothesis 2:** The perceived performance of cross-cultural management course attributes has a significant relationship with hospitality master students learning behavior.

**Hypothesis 3:** The perceived performance of cross-cultural management course attributes has significant relationship with hospitality master students demographic and occupational characteristics.

### **Research Design and Analysis of Data**

The purpose of this study is to explore and compare hospitality master students perceptions of cross-cultural management curricular and to identify the relationship of the underlying cross-cultural management dimensions to hospitality master students occupational performance toward cross-cultural management competencies. Calbert, Lin, and Martin (2005) reported that cultural factors, such as business etiquette, interpersonal communication, and intercultural communication, can affect the competitiveness of international organization. Thus, the research design for this study will be a cross-sectional descriptive research that

investigated the relationship between hospitality master students and cross-cultural management curricular. To learn more about cross-cultural management curricular of hospitality master education, a self-administered questionnaire will be designed to gather the specific cross-cultural management curricular and information regarding cross-cultural management attributes/competencies (Self logical well-being, Relationship skills, and Perceptual skills).

The structured measurement technique that relied on the Likert-type scale and itemized-rating scale that related components of cross-cultural management curricular attributes is adopted. The scales measurement techniques are utilized to capture the unique assessment of cross-cultural management dimension and hospitality master students perceptions regarding current hospitality cross-cultural management in master education. The end goal is to understand the current hospitality master education on cross-cultural management curricular design and development. Furthermore, this study will employ factor analysis so that can be used to analyze interrelationships among a large number of variables and their common underlying dimensions. In this study, exploratory factor analysis created correlated variable composites from cross-cultural management course attributes and subsequent dimensions to explore the impact of hospitality master students' occupational competency. With possible limited sample size, this study will adopts a non-parametric test when comparing hospitality master students from different Taiwan education institutes. Then Multivariate Analysis is another major statistical technique that will be used in this study. Based on the cross-cultural management course attributes and hospitality master students learning behavior characteristics derived from factor analysis in this study, the multivariate analysis could provide a better interpretation of the relationship among cross-cultural management course performance between dependent variables.

### **Expectancy of the Result**

For years, there has not yet been little study in the cross-cultural management and individual behavior characteristics that specifically focused on examining master education and curricular, or hospitality master students' cross-cultural management skills upon occupational performance. These issues associated with poor cross-cultural management skills and curricula design could cause major setbacks for hospitality managerial competency development that are trying to gain through diversified higher education systems. Many human resource management issues can be automated, but research is needed to identify the major cross-cultural management issues that hospitality managerial education development must be automated. There are 50 universities in Taiwan offer hospitality/tourism related graduated programs; and over 50 syllabus or required managerial courses were collected. Data collection stills an ongoing process in order to gather sufficient course information.

Research in developmental psychology, sociology and anthropology show that there are major differences among the cognitive processes of people from different cultures; it is suggested that cross-cultural management would greatly benefit from comparative studies considering the impact of the aspects of culture on managerial practice (Adler, Doktor, & Redding, 1986). Therefore, this study will investigate

the cross-cultural management curricular of hospitality master education and reports the initial findings for a qualitative research project undertaken for an assessment of the master education system.

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