MATCHING THE COMPETENCIES OF HOSPITALITY GRADUATES WITH THE EXPECTATIONS FROM THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY

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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENT WORK

I, **Vida Commey (Mrs)**, ID number   and student number   , hereby declare that this research project submitted to the Central University of Technology, Free State, South Africa, for the degree DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MANAGEMENT SCIENCE (HOSPITALITY BUSINESS MANAGEMENT) is my own independent work and complies with the Code of Academic Integrity, as well as with other relevant policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the Central University of Technology, Free State, South Africa, and has not been submitted before to any institution by myself or any other person in fulfilment (or partial fulfilment) of the requirements for the attainment of any qualification.

_____   **11TH JUNE, 2021**

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT   **DATE**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband, Mr Abraham Commey, and my children, Esther Commey, David Commey, Eunice Commey, Daniel Commey and Lois Commey, and all my grandchildren. This work is also dedicated to my dad and mum, Mr and Mrs Opoku Ansah, who gave me a good foundation to build on, and to all my sisters and brothers.

SUMMARY

Employers in the hospitality industry worldwide are expecting graduates to be work-ready, possessing competencies that will assist them to achieve their ultimate goal of profit maximization. Universities therefore must assess the competency needs of specialized areas within the industry and incorporate them into their curriculum. The purpose of this study was to match the competencies of hospitality graduates with the expectations from industry in the Ghanaian context. The main aim of the study was to contribute both theoretically and empirically by addressing the challenges of training and developing suitably qualified hospitality graduates.

The data for this study were collected in two phases, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the quantitative phase, a structured questionnaire was administered to collect data from both university graduates and hospitality employers. In the qualitative phase, focus group interviews were conducted to collect data from stakeholders, including heads of hospitality departments and hospitality management lecturers of five selected technical universities in Ghana. In the quantitative phase, data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) version 23. In the qualitative phase, thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data.

The empirical results revealed that the key competencies expected of hospitality graduates were leadership skills, teamwork, communication skills, human relations/ interpersonal skills, operational skills, problem-solving skills, innovative abilities, right attitude towards work, and the ability to adapt to challenging circumstances. However, with regard to the extent to which hospitality graduates exhibit the required competencies, a Mann-Whitney U test indicated that, according to hospitality employers, none of the required competencies were exhibited by hospitality graduates. The findings thus revealed gaps between the competencies expected by the industry and the perceived competencies of hospitality graduate. These gaps can, in part, be attributed to current hospitality curricula being offered by Ghanaian universities.

Based on these gaps, the study proposed a framework for hospitality management programmes to address the shortcomings. The study further emphasized the need for universities that offer hospitality management programmes to assess the competencies desired by the tourism and hospitality industry to produce graduates who are able to meet the needs of the job market.

Keywords: Tourism and hospitality industry, hospitality graduates, hospitality industry employers, competencies, hospitality industry expectations, case study research, competency framework, Ghana, technical universities, industry expectation.

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GLOSSARY

bn	billion
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GES	Ghana Education Service
GIMPA	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
GTA	Ghana Tourism Authority
HCIM	Hotel Catering and Institutional Management
HCTTC	Hotel Catering and Tourism Training Centre
HE	Hospitality Education
HND	Higher National Diploma
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research
NAB	National Accreditation Board
NBPTE	National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TEU	Technical Examination Unit
tn	trillion
TVET	Technical/Vocational Training
UN	United Nation
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNWTO	United Nation World Tourism Organisation
USD	United States Dollar
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the study

The tourism and hospitality industry has over the past three decades received significant attention from governments, policymakers and researchers across the globe. The industry's global essence lies at the nexus of its contribution to socio-economic development and livelihood empowerment. When people travel for either leisure (e.g., vacation) or business (e.g., conferences), they contribute to the economic activities of the host region, community and destination by spending on food, transportation, accommodation, entertainment, etc. These activities integrate to create employment for residents of the host communities. The multidimensional nature of tourism and hospitality makes the industry one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries. The hospitality sector, as a major component of the tourism industry, is one of the largest contributors of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the global economy (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2017).

Before Covid-19, the direct economic contribution of the industry amounted to approximately USD2.31 trillion in 2016 (WTTC 2017), while international tourist arrivals has seen continuous growth in the last decade (WTTC 2018). The WTTC (2019) reported that the tourism and hospitality industry has generated direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of about USD8.9 trillion, which accounted for 10.3% of the global GDP in 2019. Furthermore, the tourism and hospitality industry accounted for 29% of the world's services exports and about 300 million jobs globally over the last decade (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2020). Clearly, the industry has a significant impact on livelihoods as it serves as a source of revenue and employment for many developed and developing countries.

While the WTTC (2017) has predicted significant growth in tourism and hospitality business, it is imperative to note that this industry is considered one of the more volatile industries with weak resistance to both internal and external shocks (WTTC 2017). Shocks can be attributed to the decline in tourism demands due to restrictions on mass

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mobility caused by natural disasters, global pandemics and terrorist attacks, among other things. A classic example is the recent Covid-19 global pandemic, which broke out in the latter parts of 2019 in China (WTTC 2020).

According to the United Nation's World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO 2014), tourism thrives when there is enhanced global mobility and increased surplus income to spend on needless products and services. A major disruption in these two elements suggests a major decline in tourism and hospitality demand. The sudden disruption of the global economy by Covid-19 means that international mass mobility has been curtailed and income-earning propensities of individuals have declined. In addition, people's intrinsic desire to travel for recreational activities has declined, since they have now become more concerned about their health. For the hospitality industry, this suggests major declines if sustainable operational mechanisms and strategies are not adopted by players within the industry (WTTC 2017).

The International Air Transport Association (IATA 2020) reports that the hospitality industry has been hit severely by the pandemic since international travels recorded zero patronage at the peak of the pandemic in early January to May 2020. According to the WTTC (2020), players within the industry can adopt innovative measures such as package redesigning and door-to-door services to limit the negative impact of the pandemic. The presence and socio-economic significance of the industry are usually discussed at global, regional, national and local levels.

According to Hilton report (2018), the tourism and hospitality industry, as one of the largest industries in the world, plays an important role in helping international communities to achieve the global sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015. Dube (2020) believes that although there has been an acknowledgement that the Agenda 2030 on SDGs does not put tourism and hospitality industry at the forefront of addressing the SDGs, the industry can help to address most if not all the SDGs. Furthermore, with the expanding scope and nature of the hospitality industry, the industry has a critical interest in attaining the SDGs as an environmentally sensitive industry. Therefore, for the industry to be effective in meeting the SDGs, Dube

(2020) highlighted collaborative approach involving stakeholders (including academia) as the issues of SDGs are mostly not well understood among industry stakeholders. In general, Jones and Comfort (2019) also suggest that the tourism and hospitality industry must focus more explicitly on the SDGs, embrace a more comprehensive approach in setting out priorities for the SDGs, and address the issues of independent external assurance, measurement and the tensions between business imperatives and sustainability.

Having discussed the global essence of tourism and hospitality above, this section shifts focus to the context of Africa as a tourism region and Ghana as a destination region. Africa's tourism and hospitality industry continued to record impressive growth before the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2017, the continent hit a 63 million high in international tourist arrivals as compared to 58 million in 2016, which represents a 9% increase (WTTC 2019). This, in general, represents an improvement above the global performance of a 7% rise in 2017, resulting in 1,323 million international tourist arrivals in Africa (WTTC 2019). Nevertheless, over the past two decades, the size of Sub-Saharan Africa's market of the export share of receipts (defined as spending by international incoming travellers, including payments to national carriers for international transport) from tourism has remained relatively stagnant (Signé 2018). Travel and tourism have contributed a total of 8.1% to Africa's GDP (USD177.6 bn) in 2017. This percentage was expected to rise by 3.7% (to reach 12%) in 2018. In 2019, the tourism and hospitality industry experienced a 3.5% growth (WTTC 2019). The direct contribution of tourism to Ghana's GDP in 2016 was USD2.7 bn, representing 3% of the total GDP. This figure was predicted to rise to 5.6% in 2017 (WTTC 2019). The industry also created approximately 288,000 direct jobs in 2016. The figure was predicted to see an appreciation of 4.7% in 2017 (WTTC 2019). These statistics indicates that the tourism industry is essential to Ghana's socio-economic development and livelihood empowerment.

While efforts are being made by the government of Ghana to progress tourism through infrastructural expansion, it is important to note that building an efficient, effective and robust human resource base is considered to be one of the key facets upon which the tourism and hospitality industry thrives. Tourists are more concerned about service

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quality, hence the need for suitably skilled staff. The tastes and preferences of guests and tourists keep evolving, and their needs and wants are becoming increasingly complex, which means that employees within the industry need to be continuously equipped with suitable competencies (IATA 2020).

The situation described above suggests that tourism and hospitality training institutions in Ghana should produce qualified human resources to meet the industry's demands for skilled labour (WTTC 2019). Cooper (2012) recommends that, while the tourism and hospitality industry is fast becoming dynamic and competitive, it is imperative that tourism educational institutions train the right caliber of employees to meet the changing demands of tourists and visitors. Education and training are therefore a requirement for the success of the travel and tourism industry. Many countries, upon seeing the significance of the tourism and hospitality industry to their national socio-economic development, have integrated formal education into the industry to resource the industry's human capital needs to full capacity.

This, in turn, would bring substantial growth in the industry through the rendering of quality services to tourists. Shariff (2013) considers tourism and hospitality education as the gateway to progressing the industry to optimum levels where greater socio-economic benefits can be achieved. Shariff (2013) discusses that, while there are some current complexities in the demand and supply trends of the industry, industry players must employ skillful and knowledgeable staff to improve the implementation of management strategies to sustain business operations in the changing environment. Wilks and Hemsworth (2012) continue that hospitality education, which is a specialized area of study, should be aimed at developing the skills of students to address the skilled human resource gap within the industry. Hospitality management involves unique attributes that require technical vocational instruction which has proliferated due to the rapid growth in the industry (Wilks and Hemsworth 2012; Barrows and Bosselman 2013).

The nexus between the expected and the actual is that, while the industry expects educational curricula to equip students with the necessary competencies to meet industry needs, students do not articulate the required competencies (Wong, Siu and Tsang 2005;

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Asirifi, Doku, Morrison and Sackey 2013; Avornyo 2013). Not surprisingly, several studies reveal that the tourism and hospitality industry is grappling with inadequately trained staff that often lack practical skills (Blomme, van Rheede and Tromp 2010; Asirifi *et al.* 2013; Brown, Arendt and Bosselman 2014; Pepra-Mensah, Adjei and Yeboah-Appiagyei 2015). This has created a gap between the human resource supply and the competencies required by the industry. Breakey and Craig-Smith (2007) indicated that hospitality education should move away from subjects such as cooking and hotel operation and focus on quality management and technological applications. This means that Ghanaian hospitality education has to revise its existing curriculum through research and constant curriculum development to suit the management and technological competencies that the industry currently requires.

1.2 Previous research

Studies on the competencies required of hospitality graduates have been conducted since the 1990s. These include studies that focused on hospitality (Zhang, Qu and Yang 2006; Alhelalat 2015a); the hospitality industry in general (Tas, LaBrecque and Clayton 1996; Siu 1998; Asirifi *et al.* 2013a; Subramanian and Shin 2013); and some special areas of hospitality (Millar, Mao and Moreo 2010; Kitterlin-Lynch, Williams and Zheng 2015; Shum, Gatling and Shoemaker 2018). The current study closely focused on the identification of the gap between tourism education and competencies expected by industry. Therefore, the investigation reviewed relevant empirical studies from the past two decades to identify the mismatch between the academic community and the industry.

Previous empirical studies have been conducted to assess the competencies of hospitality graduates and industry expectations across several parts of the world. Wang, Ayres and Huyton (2010) investigated the gap between tourism education provision and tourism industry needs and expectations in Australia. Data were collected from tourism academics and tourism practitioners. The study found considerable variance between the views of industry professionals and academic providers in Australia and identified three major mismatches between academia and the industry.

The first mismatch had to do with the relative value of tertiary degrees and the professional requirements of the hospitality industry. They found that more emphasis seemed to be placed on achieving academic excellence in students rather than building their professional competencies to meet industry demands.

The second mismatch related to a gap between the skill sets of graduates and the trends and developments in the industry. According to Wang *et al.* (2010), hospitality is increasingly becoming more dynamic, hence the need for industry players to employ graduates who have a better perspective of the current trends in industry. The authors concluded that academia was at least five years behind industry requirements – suggesting that the curriculum was not up to date. They recommended that hospitality curricula be redesigned through research to align with contemporary industry practices.

The third mismatch pertained to the relative value of the courses that were embedded in hospitality education at university level. The study revealed that about 45% of the courses had little relative importance towards building the core competencies of graduates required by the industry. The study showed that some of the courses were not tourism and hospitality related. Hence, the authors recommended that the courses be designed in such a manner that their relative importance must be assessed before they are approved to be part of hospitality offerings.

Zhang *et al.* (2006) studied the problems of current hospitality and tourism tertiary education for undergraduates in China. They conducted a survey in three universities that offer undergraduate hospitality programmes in Beijing. A mixed-method approach was followed to gather data from students, teachers and managers. The results showed a similar trend to that found by Wang *et al.* (2010), namely that most of the courses taught in tourism education were misaligned with the industry.

Zhang *et al.* (2006) also confirmed that most of the courses embedded in tourism education in China have little relevance to building the skills, competencies and abilities of graduates to fill the human resource gap in the tourism and hospitality industry in China.

The study revealed that a little above 20% of tourism and hospitality graduates in China found themselves in tourism- and hospitality-related careers and jobs, while more than 70% found themselves in careers and job unrelated to tourism and hospitality. Zhang *et al.* (2006) stated that enrolment in tourism and hospitality education was increasing in China, yet the industry still grappled with inadequately skilled human resources. The gap identified in this study was the clear misalignment of the courses embedded in tourism education with the competencies required by industry.

In related research, Subramanian and Shin (2013) assessed the gap between the competencies perceived to have been learnt through hospitality graduate studies and what the graduates actually possessed when they began their careers in the industry. A survey method was used to gather data from 125 hospitality undergraduates in both private and public universities and from 50 Malaysian hospitality managers. The findings showed that graduates were not equipped with the competencies to assume managerial roles within the industry.

Asirifi *et al.* (2013) investigated the extent to which hospitality graduates meet the expectations of industry, as well as the cause of the gaps between the training of students and industry expectations. Data were collected from 50 hospitality graduates, 25 teaching staff, and 25 industry managers. The findings revealed differences in what hospitality trainers provide and what practitioners demand, for example, most of the courses being offered by the universities were mostly theoretical. This emphasized the fact that most tourism and hospitality graduates lack the required skills to translate theoretical viewpoints of tourism and hospitality education into a practical context. Asirifi *et al.* (2013) attributed this to a lack of practical training for graduates through industry practical attachment. The authors posited that tourism and hospitality education must create synergy between the ideal and the real. To achieve this, graduates need to be strategically trained and have their abilities developed to translate what they have been taught in school to practical situations in the industry.

Alhelalat (2015) studied the skills of hospitality and non-hospitality graduates and compared them between education and industry. The objective was to examine the skills

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needed for hospitality graduates and non-hospitality graduates in the hotel industry. Following a qualitative approach, 41 hotel executives were sampled from four- to five-star hotels in Jordan through conventional methods. Similar to the findings of Asirifi *et al.* (2013), this study showed that first-time graduate employees of the hotels lacked the practical skills to translate what they have been taught into real industry situations. Alhelalat (2015) also attributed this to the little attention that is paid to industry practical attachment in tourism and hospitality education in Jordan.

Alhelalat's (2015) study also revealed that 55% of first-time graduate employees lacked Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills which have become an important component of the industry. As suggested by Kalargyrou and Woods (2011a), employers within the tourism and hospitality industry require graduates to have a better disposition of ICT usage to enhance efficiency in the industry. According to Andrews (2015) and Balakrishnan (2016), the integration of ICT-based infrastructure in tourism and hospitality business operations is gaining a great deal of attention (Walsh and Linton 2001; Chan and Coleman 2004; Jauhari 2006; Lee *et al.* 2006; Ricci 2010; Kalargyrou and Woods 2011a). According to Kalargyrou and Woods (2011a), travel and tourism firms such as airlines, hotels, tour operators and destination managers are constantly integrating and upgrading their ICT infrastructural base to enhance their competitiveness and efficiency. While this development is evident, a lack of ICT education in hospitality programmes implies that graduates lack the abilities to fill this gap.

Similarly, Chan and Coleman (2004) sought the views of human resource managers on the skills and competencies needed for the Hong Kong hospitality industry. They found that employees must be service minded and committed to the industry, with some degree of working experience, rather than just having a good educational background. The study revealed that graduates were not adequately exposed to the service part of the industry and that more attention was placed on developing managerial competencies as opposed to service delivery processes. The findings of Kay and Russette (2000) corroborate those of Chan and Coleman (2004) by concluding that the most essential skill set given to tourism and hospitality students was managerial leadership.

Some widely known studies (such as Tas *et al.* 1996); Siu 1998; Nelson and Dopson 2001; Baum 1991; Partlow 1990) had focused on hospitality graduates competencies include. These researchers surveyed hospitality managers on the essential competencies for hospitality business and found human relation skills, leadership skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills and conceptual skills to be essential to the industry. Shum *et al.* (2018) and Williams (2015) surveyed hospitality managers to ascertain their job-related skills and highlighted solving guest-related problems, ethical standards, good communication, good relationships with customers and employees, and maintaining a professional appearance as pertinent to the hospitality environment.

Chen and Hsu (2007) found that essential skills required of hospitality students are the ability to perform operational analysis, receive on-the-job training, negotiate, manage service encounters, manage change, and be creative. Baum (1991) concurs with these findings, while Partlow (1990) identified competencies which bachelor-degree hospitality students need to acquire. These include conceptualizing managerial responsibility, developing goals and objectives, developing procedures and policies, and developing standards.

Enz, Renaghan and Geller (1993) used a mail survey to sample the views of graduate students, faculty, and industry representatives on the competency requirements from the industry. Graduates ranked forecasting of future trends, managing and leading groups and identifying and solving problems as the most important competencies. Faculty, on the other hand, saw problem identification, conceptual thinking, and current industry knowledge as the most relevant set of competencies. Industry representatives rated ethical conduct and leadership and communication skills as the three most important competencies.

In a brainstorm session, Ashley *et al.* (1995) gathered from industry executives that people skills, communication skills, the ability to develop service orientation, and problem identification and solving skills were some of the competencies required by industry. Similarly, Tesone and Ricci (2006) found, through a personal intercept survey, that

hospitality managers stressed the development of teamwork skills and effective listening and communication skills as some of the vital management competencies for the industry.

Some studies have been undertaken on the competencies required by specialized areas in the industry. For example, Okeiyi, Finley and Postel (1994), as well as Jeou-Shyan and Lu (2006), focused on the food and beverage segment of the hospitality industry. Their studies ranked human relation skills as the number one competency needed for the food and beverage segment. Some studies compared the competency needs of specialized areas within the industry (Agut, Grau and Peiró 2003), while others looked at the competencies needed for club management and the culinary arts (see Perdue, Ninemeier and Woods 2007; Zopiatis 2010; Koenigsfeld *et al.* 2011; Riggs and Hughey 2011).

Millar *et al.* (2008) followed an exploratory qualitative approach to identify the competencies that students need to possess. They focused on educators and industry professionals in the lodging and food and beverage industry. Findings indicated the importance of administrative, conceptual, technical and leadership competencies. With regard to the lodging industry, educators and industry professionals differed on the competencies required. While industry placed a high premium on technical skills, educators emphasized conceptual competencies (Millar *et al.,* 2008).

A study by Nolan *et al.* (2010) in Ireland sought to determine whether there was agreement among hospitality management graduates and employers concerning the most crucial competencies required in the hospitality industry. Interpersonal skills and professional knowledge skills were rated as crucial. However, while employers regarded teamwork and cost control as important, graduates rated managing poor performing staff and identifying the training needs of staff as important.

Studies in the area of competencies required by the industry have recommended the importance of generic competencies. For example, Kalargyrou and Woods (2011a) conducted a study in Las Vegas and Nevada, USA, to ascertain the competencies that training professionals in the industry required for their jobs. According to them, teamwork, inspiration motivation, creativity, mentoring, active listening, staying healthy, training measurement, consistency, love and compassion for the profession were the

competencies required by training professionals for the 21st century. They recommended that these qualities serve as a basis for recruiting employees in the hospitality industry.

Alexakis and Jiang (2019) investigated hospitality managers' perceptions of the skills and knowledge of hospitality students and compared them to US hospitality undergraduate curriculum. They collected responses from 206 managers who rated 19 skill/knowledge items. The curriculum from 20 leading US hospitality programmes was selected and compared to the survey results. The findings indicated that all programmes primarily focused on teaching professional skills for various hospitality concentrations. The results suggested that essential competencies of communication skills and higher learning skills such as critical thinking and problem solving should remain (Alexakis and Jiang 2019).

Anthony (2015) and Anthony *et al*. (2019) studied the competency requirements expected of hospitality management graduates in Ghana. They found that both industry and academia agreed that students required conceptual, administrative, leadership and technical competencies to function effectively in the industry. However, they concluded that there were gaps in competency requirements between the hospitality industry and what was offered by academia. Anthony (2015) recommended the need for greater collaboration in producing competent graduates for the industry. These findings strongly support the need for collaboration between universities and industry in developing the right calibre of graduates. Hospitality education must be aligned to the needs of the industry to ensure its effective growth and development.

Asirifi and Doku (2013) researched the gaps between hospitality education and industry and recommended that hospitality education follow a well-structured curriculum that reflects industry needs. Further studies by Anthony (2015) reflected on the skill gap in the hospitality industry in Ghana and recommended better collaboration between industry and academia. This corresponds and is supported by the suggestions of Sarkodie and Adom (2015). However, none of these studies constructed a framework towards closing the gap between the competencies required by industry and academia, which was the main objective of this study.

1.3   Problem statement

The hospitality industry is concerned with providing tourists memorable experiences. This is increasingly challenging in a technology-driven world where tourists have needs and expectations that must be met and exceeded continuously. The emphasis thus remains on tourism and hospitality professionals to be adequately trained and prepared to meet the demands of industry stakeholders. From a global point of view, numerous authors (see Zhang *et al.* 2006; Wang *et al.* 2010; Alhelalat 2015) have confirmed a mismatch between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the expectations from industry. This mismatch was confirmed for the Ghanaian context, where nine out of 10 technical universities offer hospitality management programmes (Maher and Graves 2007; Government of Ghana 2013). In this regard, the National Tourism Development Plan of Ghana 2013-2027 (2016) pinpoints a huge gap between individuals' competencies and the human resource competencies expected by the tourism and hospitality industry in Ghana.

According to employers, the competencies of graduates and academic excellence or qualification do not guarantee a job offer (Yusuf, Samsura and Yuwono 2018). Therefore, entering the job market without the expected competencies would lead to limited promotional opportunities, job-hopping, underemployment, and unemployment (Kleeman 2011). In view of this, Cranmer (2006) and Kleeman (2011) mention the need for higher education institutions to integrate core, key, transferable and employability skills into the learning experience of graduates to match the competencies expected by industry. From the foregoing reviews, it is clear that, for employability in the hospitality industry, graduate competencies must be matched to the expectations from the hospitality industry, also in the Ghanaian context.

1.3.1   Main objective

The main objective of the study was to match the competencies of hospitality graduates with industry expectations in the Ghanaian context.

Subsidiary objectives

1. To determine the key competencies that the hospitality industry expects of hospitality graduates as expressed in relevant literature.

2. To examine the extent to which hospitality graduates exhibit the competencies expected of them by the hospitality industry.

3. To analyze the gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the competencies expected by the hospitality industry.

4. To develop a framework that matches the competencies of hospitality graduates with the competencies expected by the hospitality industry.

1.3.2 Research questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

Main research question:

How can the competencies of hospitality graduates be matched with the expectations from the hospitality industry in the Ghanaian context?

Specific research questions

1. What key competencies does the hospitality industry expect of hospitality graduates as expressed in relevant literature?

2. To what extent do hospitality graduates exhibit the competencies expected of them by the hospitality industry?

3. What are the gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the competency expectations from the hospitality industry?

4. What framework can be proposed to match the competencies of hospitality graduates with the competency expectations from the hospitality industry?

1.3.3 Main aim

The main aim of the study was to contribute both theoretically and empirically towards addressing the challenges of training and developing suitably qualified hospitality graduates.

1.4 Research philosophy

The understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of research is crucial since a study can be meaningfully illustrated only when there is clarity about the decisions taken that impact the outcomes of the research. Therefore, some of these decisions, according to Moon *et al.* (2019), should be based on the key philosophical stances, namely ontology and epistemology. They maintain that, in essence, philosophy in research demonstrates the general principles of theoretical thinking, cognitive methods, perspective and self-awareness that enable the researcher to acquire knowledge of reality and to conduct, design, analyze and interpret research as well as its outcomes (Moon *et al.* 2019).

According to Jupp (2011), ontology is concerned with the existence of, and the relationship between, different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures. Thus, ontological stances focus on the very nature of the social construct being investigated (Dieronitou 2014). Researchers' ontological stance enables them to be certain about the nature and existence of the objects they are researching (Moon and Blackman 2014), for instance, the "truth claims" a researcher makes about reality.

There are three main ontological stances: objectivism, constructivism and pragmatism. According to Bryman and Becker (2012), objectivism refers to an external objective reality independent of the researcher's awareness or experience, whereas in constructivism social entities are perceived as social constructions which are formed based on the beliefs or perceptions and actions of social actors. Finally, Leedy and Ormrod (2015: 388) define pragmatism as "a philosophical perspective based on the idea that absolute 'truths' about certain phenomena and people's constructed beliefs about those phenomena are both legitimate objects of study".

While ontology pertains to the nature of knowledge and reality, epistemology pertains to the very basis of knowledge, thus whether knowledge is real, hard, transmittable in a more solid form, or whether it is soft and subjective based on personal experience, beliefs and insight (Cohen *et al.* 2018). Therefore, epistemology is about the perception of the world and making sense of it (Al-Saadi 2014). Epistemology involves three positions, namely positivism, interpretivism and critical realism (Dieronitou 2014). Positivism takes into consideration objective reality. Thus, such a position "would enable the researcher to assume the role of an objective analyst, making detached interpretations about those data that have been collected in an apparently value-free manner" (Vosloo 2014: 302). Interpretivism assumes that human experiences are inherently subjective and determined by the context in which people live (Zikmund 1984; Neuman 2013). Lastly, critical realism, similar to the principles of positivism and interpretivism (Vosloo 2014), view "the world as stratified, drawing a distinction between the domains of the real, the actual and the empirical" (Scott 2014: 34).

Realists, in a further argument, acknowledge the claim that reality is independent of human beliefs and behaviour (Vosloo 2014). They accept that understanding people and their behaviour requires acknowledgement of the subjectivity inherent to humans (Vosloo 2014). In this regard, Ruslin (2019) maintains that the emphasis is to relate emerging truth and reality in social science research, because when it comes to epistemology, critical realists believe theories can be revised and the ability to know for certain what reality is may not exist without consistently researching and leaving our minds open to using recent methods of research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). The current study adhered to pragmatism (ontology) and critical realism (epistemology).

Pragmatists argue that it is not possible to arrive at truth using only one of the paradigms (Tashakkori, Teddlie and Johnson 2015). In this regard, Aliyu *et al.* (2014) argue that pragmatism involves the combination of positivism and interpretivism in a single study. Several studies have emphasized that pragmatism provides a philosophical justification for the mixed research approach. Similarly, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) emphasized that realism may use different types of research methods to triangulate results for more reliable outcomes. For instance, Denscombe (2008) and Maarouf (2019)

claim that pragmatism and realism are "the philosophical partner" of a mixed research approach since the underlying assumptions of both provide the essence for mixing research methods. In other words, pragmatism and critical realism as philosophies allow the mixing of paradigms, assumptions, approaches and methods of data collection and analysis (Saunders *et al.* 2009; Creswell 2014; Maarouf 2019).

The quantitative phase of the current study adhered to positivism because the study sought to recognize truth that is logical, based on evidence and scientifically verifiable. In positivism, the researcher views the social construct (reality) being studied as independent of the researcher. Thus, the elements engaged in the current study (hospitality graduates and technical university institutions) were seen as social constructs that exist independently from each other. The foregoing convictions, therefore, align with the goal of knowledge of research, the idea of truth and the possibility of objectivity (Dieronitou 2014). The researcher believed that this ontological stance would ensure consistency of the results obtained (reliability) and generalization or application of results to other contexts (external validity) (Moon *et al.* 2019).

In the qualitative phase, the study adhered to interpretivism because the investigation emphasized the meaning which people or actors in the study attributed to their experiences in social and cultural life. This assertion is corroborated by Vosloo (2014) and Saunders *et al.* (2019) who indicated that, in realist research, for a full understanding of events or phenomena, subjective individual interpretations of reality are crucial. Therefore, the task of the researcher is to work out a better and causally accurate, correct, or reliable explanation for patterns of events through the development of more adequate accounts of the entities, mechanisms and relations which had created them (Vincent and O'Mahoney 2015). In this regard, the researcher believed that meaning or "truth" emerges in and out of our interaction with the realities in the world, because reality does not pre-exist independently of human engagement (Moon *et al.* 2019).

Al-Saadi (2014) claims that, when researchers consider knowledge to be hard, objective and tangible, they take on an observatory role in the research, using the methods of natural sciences. This was the case in the current study where the Mann-Whitney U and

Shapiro-Wilk tests were applied, among other things. However, if knowledge is considered to be personal, unique and subjective, the researcher is limited with regard to utilizing methods from the natural sciences. In such instances, the researcher interprets the elements of the investigation, as they concentrate on the meaning which individuals attach to their experiences.

1.4.1 Research approach and design

Consistent with a pragmatic research philosophy, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted. According to Kothari (2004), the basic approaches to research is the quantitative and qualitative approaches, while Caruth (2013) highlights that the mixed-method approach is receiving increased attention from researchers. A mixed-method approach involves both a quantitative and qualitative approach. Saunders *et al.* (2003) explain that the use of mixed methods enables triangulation, which is an advantage because it enables the researcher to look at the problem from different views or standpoints (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2007). According to Yin (2009), research questionnaires are used as a primary strategy for data collection, in conjunction with participant observation, interviewing and document analysis, to gain insight into a phenomenon. This approach was followed in the study.

Quantitative research is underpinned by exact and objective knowledge and it requires methods such as experiments and surveys to describe and explain phenomena (Muthu 2007; Anderson 2010). Quantitative research emphasizes objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires and surveys, or through the manipulation of pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques (Pandey and Pandey 2015). Brynard and Hanekom (2006) discuss that quantitative research methods include techniques such as observation, pilot studies, quantitative analysis and questionnaires.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, is a systematic approach to describe life experiences by gaining an understanding of underlying opinions and motivations (Burns and Grove 2010). The intention of qualitative research is to uncover trends and aims to probe deeper into a particular problem. According to Oun and Bach (2014), the goal of a

qualitative researcher is to develop an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. Qualitative research, thus, examines and answers questions of how, where, what, when and why a person would act in a certain way towards a specific matter. Owing to the nature of the current investigation, a mixed-method approach was used in addressing the research question.

A research design is described as a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in the procedure (Kumar 2011). The researcher, through this arrangement of conditions, decides and communicates to others the proposed or intended design to be used for the study. The current study adopted a case study design. Robson (2002) states that the case study with an exploratory strategy is a valuable means of investigating a phenomenon. It seeks new insights, asks questions and assesses phenomena in a new light.

The relevance of the case study design for this research stemmed from the fact that a case study allows the researcher to embark on an in-depth investigation of a particular individual, programme or event within a defined period of time. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), a case study may be a single case or multiple cases, with the latter involving two or more cases to allow the researcher to draw comparisons, build a theory or propose generalizations. The case study method was adopted in an exploratory and descriptive manner as it targeted five selected technical universities in Ghana and hospitality employers across the country to explore and describe a phenomenon. The case study design was used to enable the researcher to investigate extensively and to draw clear conclusions about the phenomenon.

1.5   Ethical considerations

The main ethical challenge researchers face in the hospitality industry is practitioners' fear of losing their trade identity and trade secrets to competition. Thus, the researcher ensured the respondents that they would not be forced to release information of any sort. Also, the researcher ensured and maintained confidentiality.

Other ethical considerations for the investigation included:

- No harm was caused to research participants.

- Participants partook freely and voluntarily in the investigation based on informed consent.

- The research was designed, conducted and reported in accordance with recognized standards of scientific competence and ethical research.

- The possibility of producing misleading results was minimized and eliminated.

1.6   Significance and value of the study

Scientific outcomes: The scientific relevance of this research lies in the examination and compilation of the current competencies required for success in the hospitality business. This can form the basis for further studies and also enrich the Ghanaian hospitality education and industry. Moreover, the framework proposed in the study offers both a set of aspirations for the kind of future expected and support for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in the Ghanaian context. Thus, the outcome of the study proposes a greater emphasis on required competencies, as the study argues for greater consideration of personal skills, attributes and technical competencies in achieving sustainable development.

Social impact: The proposed framework seeks to provide guidance for training both the hospitality student and the industry employee on the job. It also provides a wealth of information to prepare students for the job market. The framework will be useful to researchers, practitioners, lecturers, as well as learners, to facilitate skill development, supervision and management in general. According to Giangrande *et al.* (2019), education can be described as a goal in its own right and a means by which other aspects of sustainable development can be achieved. In this regard, the suggested framework will help in promoting lifelong learning opportunities for learners and students. Again, the framework will ensure that learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be

employable. Furthermore, the framework will help them achieve liberal goals towards realizing their full potential as well as motivate individual and social change.

Innovations/patents: The suggested framework will be published and made available to all hospitality schools/educators and universities in Ghana. This will help to ensure equal access to resources and quality education for sustainable development.

1.7 Thematic overview

The study is organised into six chapters. **Chapter 1** discusses the study background, the research problem, research questions, research objectives, main aim of the study and the study outcomes. It also introduces a brief description of the research methodology adopted for the study and the organisation of the study.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review. The key concept of "competency" is defined and global, African and Ghanaian hospitality education is discussed. The chapter gives an overview of hospitality in Ghana in both education and industry, gaps in learning skills or competencies in Ghana, curriculum models in the hospitality sector and their relevance to the industry.

Chapter 3 discusses the hospitality industry in the global, African and Ghanaian contexts. It also highlights the competencies required by the hospitality industry, as well as the challenges faced in the industry. The chapter provides the reasons why graduates pursue careers in the hospitality industry, the competencies required by hospitality employers and the extent to which graduates exhibit these competencies. (Assessment on whether hospitality graduates possess the required competencies.) The chapter also discusses the theoretical framework, the theories related to the study and the conceptual framework.

Chapter 4 sets out the research methodology and the tools applied in the empirical part of the study. Topics discussed include the research philosophy, research approach and design, population, sampling and the data-gathering instruments.

Chapter 5 provides the data analysis, results and findings of the empirical investigation.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions drawn from the findings and the recommendations. Finally, the proposed framework is given based on the results from the investigation.

1.8   Summary

The chapter provided an overview of the study, including the background to the study, an empirical review of hospitality competencies, the problem statement, the main aim and objectives, and the research questions. The chapter alluded to the research philosophy, research approach and design, as well as the ethical considerations, applicable to the study. The next chapter provides the review of literature for the entire study.

CHAPTER 2: COMPETENCIES IN THE CONTEXT OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the pace for the discussion of related literature on the subjects raised in the study. The chapter defines the concepts of "competency" and "competency requirements" for hospitality education in global, African and Ghanaian universities. It discusses tertiary education with an emphasis on hospitality education in Ghana and reflects on gaps in learning skills or competencies in Ghana hospitality education. The chapter presents an overview of curriculum models and competency frameworks in the hospitality sector and their relevance to the industry. Lastly, it discusses literature on the competencies expected of hospitality graduates by industry.

2.2 Competency defined

The term "competency" has been defined differently by various authors and researchers. For example, Zegwaard, Coll and Hodges (2003) describe a competent person as an individual possessing skills and attributes relevant to the performance of a task. These skills, according to Hind, Moss and McKellen (2007), make the individual employable. Thus, "competency" can be called "employability skills". As stated by Wynne and Stringer (1997), competencies are the things people have to be (personality), know (knowledge) and do (skills) to achieve the outputs expected of their job.

Contrary to Wynne and Stringer (1997), Hodges and Burchell (2003) explain the term to refer more to individual characteristics and attribute competency to personality traits rather than skills. "Competence" is defined as:

a cluster of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that affects a major part of one's job (a role or responsibility), that correlates with performance on the job, that can be measured against well-accepted standards, and that can be improved via training and development. (Lucia and Lepsinger 1999)

One of the earliest studies on competencies was conducted by McClelland *et al.* (1998) who described the term as those personal characteristics which ensured superior

performance. A competency can be defined as the knowledge, skills and attributes and the connections between having these and being able to perform a task effectively (Quinn *et al.* 2000). Spencer, McClelland and Spencer (1994) add that competencies are the basic features of a person which is associated with superior performance in a situation. Seal *et al.* (2012) view competency as a capability or ability that leads to a successful outcome.

Millar *et al.* (2010) discuss that the exact definition and description of a competency will depend on the industry. The views of some researchers (McClelland *et al.* 1998; Hodges and Burchell 2003; Boyatzis and Boyatzis 2008) on the definition of competency might have been shaped by the school of thought purporting that "leaders are born and not made". This is likely to have influenced their view of competency as based purely on inborn traits.

Others also defined competency by relating it to the link between the learning environment and the working environment. For instance, Cha, Jun, Kwon, Kim, Kim, Kim, Kim, Han, Seo, Jun, Kim, and Lee (2011) defined competencies as the abilities and skills to integrate education and training, and aligning both the needs of the learning environment and the working environment. Millar *et al.* (2010) assert that the skills, abilities and knowledge are what the student is expected to learn in the classroom. Competency has been conceptualized for the study in figure 2.1.
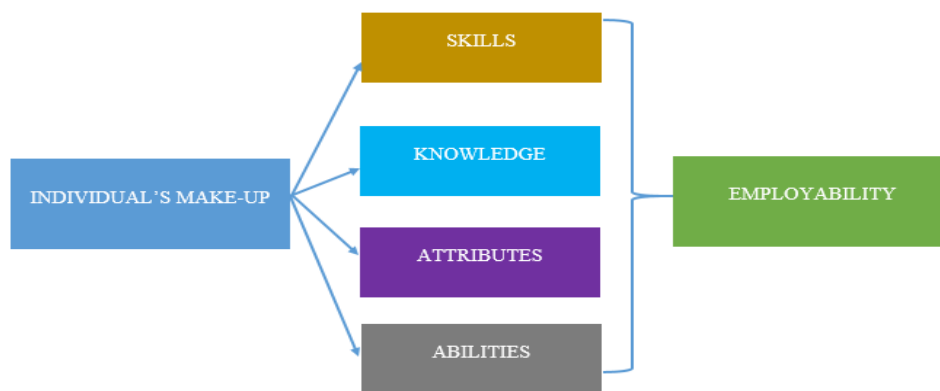
Figure 2.1: Conceptualization of competency

Source: Author's construct (2020)

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Kokt (2018) explains that competency comprises four main components, namely knowledge, skills, attributes and ability, which are discussed below:

1. **Knowledge** implies an understanding of facts, truths and principles which an individual has gained through formal training and experience.

2. **Skills** imply a developed proficiency (mentally or physically) that can be acquired through specialized training.

3. **Attributes** imply the characteristics and qualities which individuals possess. Individual attributes are a combination of genetics and experience gained. This component is often neglected by employers as it is the most subjective. The fact, however, remains that specific personality traits have been linked to individual performance.

4. **Ability** implies the aptitude to perform the mental and/or physical activities that are expected of individuals who want to work in a particular profession.

From the various definitions and descriptions, competencies can be said to be the knowledge, skills and attitude required for effective job performance. The description of Kokt and Dreyer (2018) thus serves as the conceptual guide for the study. It not only recognizes the value of knowledge, skills, personal attributes and characteristics, but also establishes the connections between having these and being able to perform effectively. These knowledge, skills and attitudes are acquired through prior training in a guided environment which ensures that the graduate is employable. Moreover, per the definitions, competencies may be acquired through education and training.

It is assumed that competencies can only be called so when they are positively related to the execution of a task by an individual. The factors that enable a person to be competent include knowledge, attitude and skills which are exhibited outwardly. If these competencies are not translated into behaviour, they remain innate and less valuable. However, all the definitions by the various authors tend to mention similar constructs (knowledge, skills and attitude) using different ways of expression. This makes the definitions of competency very much the same, the only difference being the factor(s)

responsible for the competencies (traits, or acquired skills and knowledge, or a combination).

2.3   Global perspectives on hospitality education

The study of hospitality education is considered important in the face of the global expansion of the hospitality industry (Altinay and Paraskevas 2007; Noe *et al.* 2017; Wood and Stierand 2017). As indicated earlier, the hospitality industry, as a major contributor to the world economy, continues to grow with regard to both complexity and sophistication (Hein and Riegel 2012). This growth demands the improvement of existing skills, abilities and knowledge to match the success of hospitality graduates in the line of duty (Hein and Riegel 2012). Hospitality education needs periodical reviews and an evaluation of the hospitality curriculum to update and prepare graduates for the increasing complexity of the industry (Available 2005).

Globalization has brought competitiveness to the hospitality and tourism industry, which calls for quality human capital (Chang and Hsu 2010). The development of human resources with the necessary knowledge, such as technical and human skills, has been a challenge for higher education (Chan 2011).

One of the major functions of education is to make individuals employable (Knight and Yorke 2004). According to the WTTC (2016), the hospitality industry was estimated to offer a total of 284 million jobs by 2017 and is one of the most robust industries in the world. Sisson and Adams (2013) acknowledge the rapid changes in the hospitality industry and suggest that, to meet the needs of the industry, educators must review and revise the curriculum regularly and identify which competencies are essential for graduates. According to Ruetzler *et al.* (2014), "the expansion of hospitality programs worldwide has resulted in wide modifications in program structures, curricular offerings, and course content, all of which have prompted researchers to examine essential competencies and industry needs to inform programmatic restructuring." Johanson *et al.* (2010) also indicate that the micro-environmental changes in the already competitive environment of business and education point to the need for curriculum reform in

hospitality management. This line of research helped to identify and prioritize the needs of the hospitality curriculum.

The development and standardization of hospitality curriculum are important in enabling graduates to possess the knowledge, skills and abilities demanded by industry (Sisson and Adams 2013). However, several factors affect the ability of hospitality courses to standardize these expectations. The continuing growth in the field of hospitality through the addition of a broad range of functional areas is a factor affecting curriculum development (Sisson and Adams 2013). Currently, hospitality education teaches not only the known, traditional areas, such as accommodation/lodging, and food and beverage, but also courses on meetings, events, conventions, festivals, recreation, gaming, cruise management, etc. Whitelaw *et al.* (2009) contend that the globalization of the market, recent growth in technology, and cultural diversity affect the industry's requirements of hospitality graduates.

Baum (2007) explains that a lack of technical, practical or job-specific skills, experience of the world of work, and oral communication remain commonly cited issues concerning hospitality graduates. Human labour is critical for successful hospitality service delivery, so it is imperative to develop students' ability to work in teams with people from diverse cultures and with different levels of communication skills (Yang, Cheung and Song 2016). Skill gaps may vary according to the region, size of the business, and type of market orientation (Khare 2014). For example, in this study, skill gaps may exist between big and small hotel chains.

Hospitality education (HE) inculcates transferable, critical thinking skills. However, many students seem unable to transfer their skills and knowledge to the field of work. This is a gap, embedded in curriculum development, needs to be researched to ensure that students are clear on how they can transfer their acquired skills from HE to work (Maher and Graves 2007). A lack of teamwork and the right qualifications for specific jobs, as well as skewed perceptions, are among the deficiencies found in new graduate recruits (Williams 2015).

The idea of collaboration in curriculum development between stakeholders is supported by both professionals and educators, the aim being to better comprehend the development of a curriculum that fulfils industry needs (Solnet 2009). Tesone and Ricci (2006) emphasize that educational institutions need to focus on the relationship between hospitality education and industry expectations in order to become realistic in providing good quality hospitality education that fulfils industry needs. Several studies have focused on the importance of the hospitality curriculum in enhancing employability skills (Ayoun *et al.* 2010; Hein and Riegel 2012; Mahachi 2012; Wang and Tsai 2014; Nachmias and Walmsley 2015).

Professional management skills were found to be lower than expected, especially in human resource management, administrative management, team building, persuasion and influence, and cost and finance management in the field of hospitality (Wang and Tsai 2014). According to a model developed by the Centre for Employability in the UK, the key factors of employability include self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem (Dacre Pool and Sewell 2007).

Confidence building was found to be important in interfacing with customers in the hospitality industry. For example, a study by Wang and Tsai (2014) on employability, education and industry perspectives reported a lack of confidence in most graduates regarding both their core and specific employability skills in their career planning and development.

Hospitality education should prepare graduates to assume management roles as well. Arguments are made that hospitality students are inadequately prepared in some of the managerial skills that are needed to succeed in the hospitality industry (Spowart 2011; Wang and Tsai 2014; Nachmias and Walmsley 2015). Furthermore, the hospitality curriculum should be designed to cater for the needs of industry (Baah-Boateng 2004; Solnet, Kandampully and Kralj 2010; Hein and Riegel 2012; Wang and Tsai 2014; Nachmias and Walmsley 2015). Growing demand for hospitality products and services is translated into a growing need for hospitality courses in order to sufficiently prepare personnel to meet the present and future demands of this vast industry; hence the

increasing need for hospitality education to provide sufficient manpower to cater for ever-changing and demanding industry (Shariff 2013; Yang *et al*. 2013).

The evaluation of curriculum, however, should not be carried out in isolation, but in conjunction with insights from professionals working in the industry (Shariff 2013). These remarks are highly relevant to Ghanaian hospitality education and provide justification for this study. Changes in the hospitality industry globally have transformed hospitality education, including educational curricula, learning materials, instructional practices and education stakeholders. Wang and Jing (2009) propose a restructuring of the learning process to reflect the use of information in the real world and changing the role of the educator from a presenter of pre-packaged facts to a facilitator of active learning and transformation. Thus, innovations that are experiential, student centered and focused on enabling graduates to successfully use ICT tools in learning and at work are essential (Ali, Murphy and Nadkarni 2014; Ali, Nair and Hussain 2016).

New technology and globalization, in addition to the cultural diversity of the hospitality market, have become critical factors affecting the needs of hospitality graduates (Noe *et al*. 2017). These issues call for concerted efforts by educators to update the competencies that are deemed essential by industry (Whitelaw *et al*. 2009; Ayoun *et al*. 2010). The complex hospitality market requires graduates to have a solid background in hospitality education in order to achieve success (Kalargyrou and Woods 2011a).

The broad range of functional areas in the hospitality industry and the continuous expansion of the field of hospitality are major factors affecting the development of hospitality curriculum (Sisson and Adams 2013). Curriculum review should be an ongoing process to adapt to the needs and trends of industry (Shariff 2013). This is well acknowledged in the literature. For example, Spowart (2011) argues that, when the trends change, curriculum should also be reviewed. This is vital for hospitality education in the Ghanaian context. Nelson and Dopson (2001) state that a tactical concern in hospitality education should be the relevance of the curriculum to industry needs. Curriculum should be revised to utilize technology to equip students success (Shariff 2013; Wang and Tsai

2014; Nachmias and Walmsley 2015). This is important for this study because the curriculum in Ghana is not reviewed regularly (Asirifi *et al.* 2013b; Deba *et al.* 2014).

2.4   Hospitality education: The Afrocentric approach

Hospitality education (HE) in Sub-Saharan Africa plays a vital part on the agenda for policy and sustainable development partners (Yizengaw 2008). In Sub-Saharan Africa, with its diverse socio-economic conditions, it is usually the government that has the required social and political capacity and legitimacy to bring together and coordinate the groups involved in tourism and hospitality activities (Akama and Kieti 2007). Figure 2.3 below illustrates hospitality education in Africa.
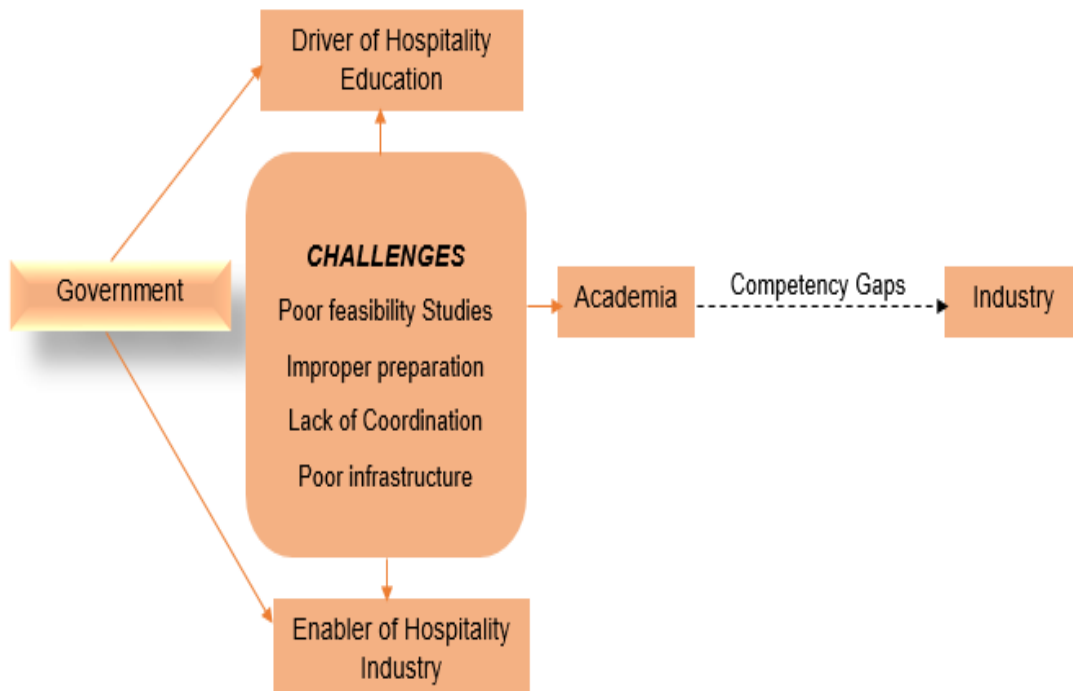
Figure 2.2: Illustration of HE in Africa

Source: Author's construct (2020)

Governments over the years have played a crucial role in the development of the industry and, consequently, the development of HE. It is state that takes the lead in the development of infrastructure for hospitality development. However, poor feasibility

studies and improper preparation bring about poor performance, both in the development of the hospitality industry and in HE (Akama and Kieti 2007).

Nicolaides (2008) identified Africa's major shortcomings as inadequate training facilities and a lack of human resources for delivering noticeable quality services to the international leisure industry. To move HE and industry forward, there is a need for coordinated efforts involving education and the private sector. Similarly, as Yizengaw (2008) maintains, African countries face many challenges regarding HE, such as limited capacity governance leadership and management; inadequate financial support, funding facilities and infrastructure; problems of quality and relevance of teaching and research; and inadequate knowledge generation, with certain sectors being prioritized over others.

This has been the situation for hospitality education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Mahachi (2012) mentions the existence of skill gaps in managerial competencies among hospitality students in Botswana, which is common in many Sub-Saharan African countries. He indicates that a major skill gap in the Botswanan hospitality industry is a lack of business and managerial capabilities. Four areas of gaps are management, leadership, personal skills, and attributes. He ascribes this to unstructured in-house training, a lack of confidence, and socio-cultural issues. He purports that it is worth investigating undergraduates' perceptions of the competencies needed to become effective leaders and managers.

Mahachi (2012) further refers to the limited literature available on the extent to which developed curriculum emphasize managerial competency skills for hospitality students. He indicates that most tourism and hospitality courses are silent regarding the skills with which they aim to equip students. This also applies to the Ghanaian context, as Botswana is a developing country. Ghana faces similar issues concerning hospitality education and graduate employability. Mahachi (2012), however, cautions that operational competencies should not be stressed more than other competencies. This can prevent hospitality graduates from developing the required managerial competencies, referring to a study by Jauhari (2006) on curriculum, which is mainly operations oriented.

Kenya has been identified as having one of the best-developed hospitality industries in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, Mayaka and Akama (2007) and Mzimela and Chikandiwa (2017) acknowledge that common deficiencies exist in training and education in hospitality across many African countries and other emerging destinations. They indicate that most developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, lack well-coordinated hospitality training strategies and educational institutions capable of providing the much-needed human resource training, especially at the supervisory and managerial level (Zwane, Lindie and Slabbirt 2014).

Similarly, on issues concerning leadership and management, Raybould and Wilkins (2006) contribute that the competition in and complexity of the hospitality industry necessitate these skills. Walo (2001) emphasizes the need for leadership skills. According to the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA 2014), hospitality industry is highly dynamic and competitive due to the emergence of international hotel chains in the country. This, in turn, requires graduates with employable skills to take advantage of the emerging markets and job opportunities (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015).

2.5   Overview of the tertiary education system in Ghana

Tertiary education in Ghana encompasses all public and private post-secondary institutions. These include universities, technical universities, colleges of education, as well as other specialized professional institutions, such as the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). The private tertiary education institutions are similarly classified into universities, university colleges, and colleges of education. The National Council for Tertiary Education Act of 1993, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX) are responsible for accrediting institutions offering degree-level courses and professional and technician examinations (Ministry of Education 2015a). Figure 2.3 illustrate tertiary education in Ghana.
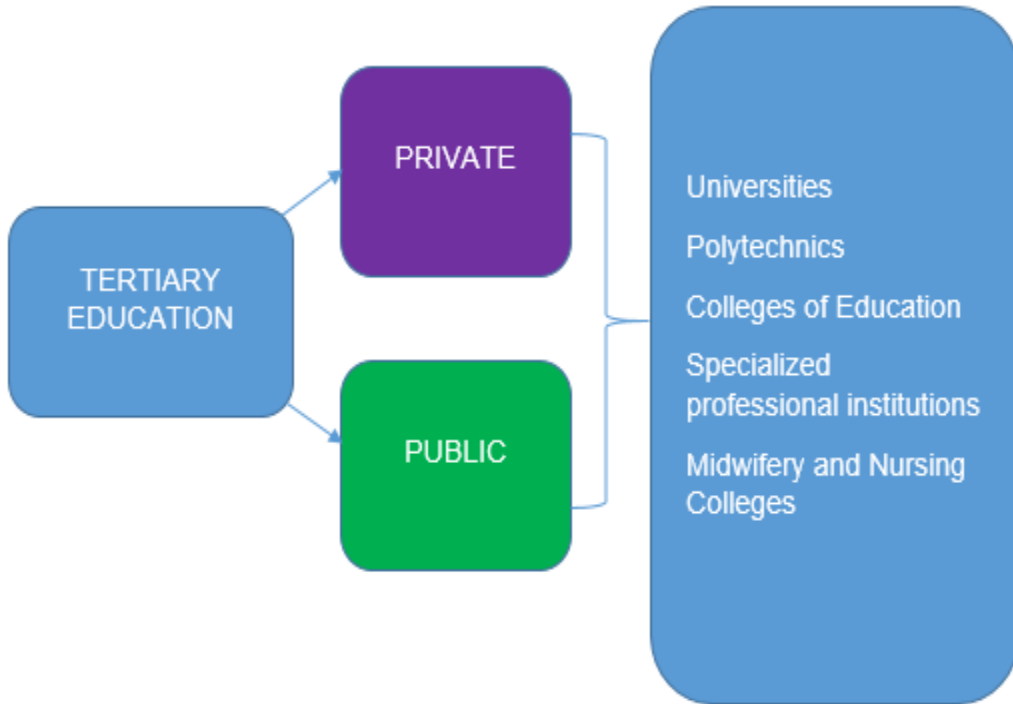
Figure 2.3: Tertiary education in Ghana

Source: Ministry of Education (2015a)

These three regulatory bodies were established as part of reforms in the early 1990s and are responsible for the accreditation of both public and private institutions regarding the content and standards of their courses and for ensuring high standards in Ghana. NABPTEX is the body solely responsible for formulating and administering examinations, evaluation, assessment and certification for professional bodies, non-university tertiary institutions and private tertiary education institutions in Ghana.

The Ghanaian government's policy on tertiary education is designed to facilitate access and foster the development of human resources with the aim of accelerating national development (Ministry of Education 2013). The overall strategic goal for tertiary education is to increase equitable access to high-quality tertiary education which provides relevant courses to young adults within colleges of education, polytechnics and universities, and for research and intellectual stimulus (Ministry of Education 2015b). As a result, the Technical Universities Act, 2016 (Act 922) was enacted to convert polytechnics to

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technical universities to facilitate higher education in science and technology-based disciplines, engineering, technical and vocational education and training, applied arts and other related disciplines. Following this Act 922, Cape Coast Polytechnic and Tamale Polytechnic have been given approval to be transformed into technical universities (Technical Universities Amendment Bill 2017).

The rapid expansion of Ghanaian tertiary education in recent years has produced an excess of graduates compared to demand. This problem has generated graduate unemployment as stated by the education sector performance report published by the Ghanaian Ministry of Education (2015a). According to the National Council for Tertiary Education (2013), enrolment in public tertiary education institutions increased from 52,712 in the 1999/2000 academic year to 283,506 in the 2012/2013 academic year.

According to the World Economic Forum (2020), Ghana's gross tertiary education enrolment rate was 12.1% in 2011/12 and remained unchanged by 2013/14. Enrolment in public universities and polytechnics in the 2007/2008 academic year was 93,973 and 34,448 respectively. In addition, about 20,000 students were enrolled in private universities between the 2001/2002 and 2007/2008 academic years, while enrolment in the public institutions doubled. In 2018 the number increased to 244,079; to 268,486 in 2019; and to 295,335 in 2020.

These figures are highly relevant to this research, as they include hospitality graduates. Despite the growth, little is being done to equip the vast number of unemployed graduates with the skills that will prepare them for the job market. In other words, these graduates lack the employable skills required by industry, which is compounding the issue of joblessness among graduates (Alexander *et al.* 2018).

Priority policy interventions to ease the problem include the development of human resources by HE with the skills that industry needs (Ministry of Education 2015a). According to the Ministry of Education (2015a), students need relevant education and skills that will enable them to acquire the specific skills needed by industry. However, several authors in Ghana (Appaw-Agbola, Afenyo-Dehlor and Agbola 2011; Asirifi *et al.* 2013b; Alhassan and Sakara 2014; Frimpong-Bonsu 2015; Sarkodie and Adom 2015)

claim that the syllabus used to train these graduates is outdated and irrelevant regarding contemporary industry requirements.

The importance of hospitality education has been acknowledged worldwide (Wood and Brotherton 2008; Kumar 2014; Ozgit and Caglar 2015; Stierand and Zizka 2015). Ayoun *et al.* (2010) indicate that the volatile competitive environment of the hospitality industry and the need for qualified managers require serious transformation. Ideally, the hospitality syllabus and courses must offer practical skills and "soft" people management skills (Shariff 2013). Therefore, the growth and the need for qualified human resources in the hospitality industry in Ghana have paved the way for the institution of higher learning, the University of Cape Coast (the first public university to offer a hospitality programme; currently almost all public universities do), some private universities, and polytechnics to launch hospitality management education.

In spite of the growing focus on hospitality courses, there has been a lack of review of whether the current hospitality education curriculum actually complies with industry expectations. According to Johanson *et al.* (2010), curriculum reform in hospitality education is necessary because of the significant changes that have occurred within the business environment and education, including the macro-environment, changes which determine the competencies and skill set required. The development of hospitality management in HE in Ghana aims to satisfy the needs of hospitality industry, which is expanding quickly. Hospitality education are regarded as having an impact on hospitality development (Bagri and Suresh Babu 2009).

According to Choudhury and McIntosh (2013), developing the right kind of manpower for the industry requires formal education in order to introduce professionalism to the industry. This calls for formal development of hospitality education globally to educate and train people with a professional touch for the management of the hospitality industry. Although hospitality education in Ghana is of recent origin, it has been evolutionary (Ministry of Education 2013). It was basically domestic science, then changed to home economics, then to the catering industry at craft level. The latter has metamorphosed into present-day hotel catering and institutional management education (HCIM) (Ministry of

Education 2013; Alhassan and Sakara 2014; Mensah-Ansah 2014; Frimpong-Bonsu 2015; Sarkodie and Adom 2015). Despite the upgrade of the HCIM course to tertiary status, the curriculum has not changed: it still includes catering/kitchen skills with little management skills (Asirifi *et al.* 2013b; Alhassan and Sakara 2014).

The government's awareness of the potential of tourism as the fourth foreign exchange earner for the economy gave credence to the expansion of the tourism and hospitality industry. This created the need for qualified human resources with the new skills required to service the hospitality industry, at both local and international levels (GTA 2014; Mensah-Ansah 2014). The over 6% GDP increase, which is attributed to tourism in Ghana, serves as a driving force for economic development. Tourism is thus a critical vehicle for the envisaged development and growth of the service sector, which, in turn, encouraged the expansion of hospitality education at tertiary level.

The existing diploma-level technical HCIM courses were subsequently upgraded in the universities and polytechnics. But empirical research to identify the needs of the industry remained absent; hence, the industry in general did not expect these institutions to produce skilled graduates (Appaw-Agbola *et al.* 2011; Asirifi *et al.* 2013b; Alhassan and Sakara 2014; Frimpong-Bonsu 2015; Sarkodie and Adom 2015).

According to the Ministry of Tourism (2014), before the promulgation of the Polytechnic Law, training in hospitality was undertaken by the State Hotels Corporation in the 1960s. This basically entailed on-the-job training in the hotel industry of people with very little educational background. This trend continued until the Hotel Catering and Tourism Training Centre (HOCATT) was established, which took the sole responsibility as training institute, offering courses for school leavers as apprentices in hotels and restaurants.

The implementation of the 1992 educational reforms upgraded all domestic science training in technical/vocational institutions to focus on the hospitality industry under one umbrella, and later to HCIM (Ministry of Education 2010). Training, however, continued to include the teaching of kitchen techniques, basic food and nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, soft furnishing, housewifery and cooking.

Similar courses for adults were offered via certain private initiatives, and the technical examination unit (TEU) was responsible for designing the course content, with less industry input (Ministry of Education 2010). The City and Guilds of London also propagated the training of hotel and catering students in the early 1960s (Ministry of Education 2010; GTA 2014). This continued until the late 1970s when technical institutes established under the Ghana Education Service (GES) introduced formal training for students in catering at craft level to fulfil the human resource needs of the hotel industry.

The polytechnics, now technical universities, were the sole institutions with the mandate to train students in HCIM formally and professionally. In 2007, the emphasis on science, mathematics, technology, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) increased the power of the polytechnics to equip graduates with employable skills with the aim to reduce the high unemployment rate in the country (Amankwah 2011; Kutsanedzie, Achio and Mensah 2014). This reform was repealed by the new Polytechnic Law 745 (2007), which granted autonomy to the polytechnics, mandating them to run Higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelor of Technology (BTech) courses (Appaw-Agbola *et al.* 2011; Ansah 2012; Alhassan and Sakara 2014; Frimpong-Bonsu 2015). Polytechnics, generally under the HE system in Ghana, became primarily responsible for TVET courses at tertiary level (Akomaning, Voogt and Pieters 2011). Their mandate was to train the career-focused personnel required for national development and to enhance socio-economic development (Ansah 2012; Honyenuga 2013; Alhassan and Sakara 2014).

Under the auspices of TVET, HCIM was recognized and reorganised as a discipline to accelerate the human resource needs of the hospitality industry in Ghana, which had begun to expand exponentially (GTA 2010) but remained fragmented mainly. In line with the Polytechnic Law, HCIM was upgraded to tertiary level (Ministry of Education 2010), which saw the development of hospitality management in tertiary institutions as higher vocational education in Ghana (Ministry of Education 2010, 2015a). The University of Cape Coast, in October 2008, carved out hospitality management from the Geography and Tourism Department to offer courses that reflected the trends in the hospitality industry, at both national and international levels, alongside the polytechnics. The

University of Cape Coast, among the public universities, was then the only university offering hospitality education.

The technical vocational system continued to undergo reform, building on the inherent strength of the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, these reforms did not change the hospitality management curriculum content extensively, as mentioned earlier (Ministry of Education 2010; Ansah 2012). Poor funding, inadequate tertiary education provision and the ineffectiveness of the institutions charged with overseeing and ensuring quality compounded the problem and defeated the essence of the reform (Ministry of Education 2010; Bawakyillenuo *et al.* 2013).

The above overview of the history of hospitality education in Ghana contextualizes the research. Over the years, the polytechnics and technical vocational schools have been providing students with an invaluable educational experience due to the combination of theoretical education and practical training. Although underdeveloped compared to its counterpart in developed countries such as the USA, UK, Switzerland and Australia, hospitality education is contributing to the human resource and economic development of Ghana.

According to Mensah-Ansah (2011), tourism include the pillars of Ghana's economy by being the third largest employer of labour. Interestingly, in Ghana, there is no demarcation between hospitality and tourism, and it is assumed that hospitality skills exist to service the tourism industry generally (Adam 2013; Asirifi *et al.* 2013b; GTA 2014; Ministry of Tourism 2014). Therefore, in this study, the researcher combined the tourism and hospitality aspects, without demarcating them, as may be the case in the UK, for example. However, the focus of the study was the hospitality aspect.

Local educational institutions in Ghana offering hospitality education contribute to the sustainability of the national economy, as well as the tourism industry, by educating the manpower who will control the industry as hospitality leaders. Most of the courses have been adopted directly from the English educational system, and no research has been carried out to identify the socio-economic and cultural differences between the two

countries, thereby compounding the problems faced by hospitality graduates in Ghana today.

Again, hospitality education in Ghana is perceived differently and described as vocational training which can be acquired through apprenticeships. Some institutions have developed an academic approach towards hospitality education, while the rest combine academic and vocational elements, which confuses the system (GTA 2014). As noted by Mensah-Ansah (2014), the hospitality industry in Ghana can curb the unemployment situation, as is projected to grow at 13.5%. This projected growth means that harmonization is needed in the industry to maintain competitiveness in both the national and international arena. Thus, the hospitality and tourism industry is so important to the economy of Ghana, and hospitality education seems to be a focal point for development by government, since it can provide limitless opportunities for the teeming youth (Mensah-Ansah 2014).

Also, Ghana stands to benefit from the increasing arrival of affluent international hotel chains. This has increased the demand for modern graduate skills and standards from the Ghanaian hospitality and tourism industry (GTA 2014) which, in turn, has led to a need for professionalism in the industry. It is therefore imperative to have an improved and effective hospitality education system in Ghana, which is becoming more important and more widely recognized. In light of this, the study aimed to identify educational and training strategies that will require staff knowledge and skills that have previously been given little consideration by stakeholders, employers, educational institutions and policymakers.

The hospitality industry in Ghana, with the arrival of multinational hospitality businesses, is characterized by a rapidly changing business environment. According to Sarkodie and Adom (2015), the industry is growing at an exponential rate as many young people are studying tourism and hospitality management at tertiary level. However, this all-important industry is fragmented, including hospitality education in Ghana, making it inconsistent with international standards (GTA 2014). The study took into consideration these

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perceived fragments, such as the skills and competencies needed in the hospitality industry and education system in Ghana.

The expectations of hospitality management graduates upon entering the industry fail to match reality. Consequently, many of them drop out of the industry altogether (Raybould and Wilkins 2005). By contrast, in Ghana's HE system, where universities' main mission is still limited to producing educated manpower for industry, traditional teaching and learning methods and a lack of connection between universities, polytechnics, research institutions and industry all hinder the efforts of the whole system to equip students with the skills and knowledge required by the contemporary labour market. It is thus vital to highlight the challenges and the need for a paradigm shift in hospitality and tourism curriculum design in order to produce competent human resources.

2.6   Overview of tourism and hospitality education in Ghana

Tourism and hospitality have become a major industry in Ghana. It is said to be the fastest-growing sector in the Ghanaian economy and the fourth major contributor, injecting over 6% of GDP (Mensah-Ansah, Martin and Egan 2011; Mensah and Dei Mensah 2013; Sarkodie and Adom 2015). Mensah-Ansah (2014) states that the tourism and hospitality also contribute to the Ghanaian economy by increasing the number of direct and indirect jobs. Over the past five years, one in four new jobs has been created by the sector, making tourism the best partner for governments to generate employment (WTTC 2019). The WTTC (2019) projects the impact of Covid-19 on tourism to be overwhelming. This projection is based on the fact that, without tourism, economies around the world face existential threat. Currently, there are no flights and cruise line movement, and income distribution in needed communities has come to a halt. This will have a dire effect on the hospitality business because local goods and services are not being consumed. No travel means no open hotels and, in turn, a worldwide escalation in the unemployment rate (WTTC 2019).

Mensah-Ansah (2014) further notes that the tourism and hospitality industry in Ghana can curb the unemployment situation in the country, as the sector is projected to grow by at

least 13.5%, as mentioned previously. This projection of positive growth rate is partly due to the tourism development plan initiated by the Ghanaian government, UNDP and WTO to promote the development and standardization of the tourism and hospitality industry in the country. The project included inspecting and monitoring facilities, service delivery and conditions of service in workplaces, with the main aim of ensuring that they meet the accepted standards of operation (ISSER 2009; Appaw-Agbola *et al.* 2011).

Despite the increasing demand for Ghanaian tourism products and services, more needs to be done with regard to manpower development to meet not only the labour demand, but also the customer and industry requirements regarding service delivery (GTA 2014; Sarkodie and Adom 2015). This means, among other things, the review and upgrade of the current hospitality curriculum in order to meet international standards and good practice.

In the Ghanaian context, evidence of globalization in the hospitality industry consists of the arrival of big multinational hotel chains including Novotel, Kempinski, Golden Tulip, Mövenpick Ambassador, African Regent, Best Western Premier and Holiday Inn, which require higher competency levels from employees. This study considered this influence on employability worthy of further investigation with the aim to identify the concomitant changes in competencies of hospitality students. There are, however, issues regarding the influences and new skills requirements which some graduates fail to meet. Also, the articulation of HE policy and documents sometimes look promising but are poorly implemented in the HE environment. Lastly, there is the obvious lack of employability skills among students (COTVET 2012).

Wilks and Hemsworth (2012) mention a paradigm shift regarding the competencies required for hospitality graduates, as the emphasis is now on leadership and emotional intelligence, for example. These aspects are currently not emphasized in Ghana, in the researcher's experience. Curriculum design should be modulated to meet industry needs (Wang and Tsai 2014). Hospitality education, therefore, should not simply focus on technical skills, but also reinforce competency development, professional management skills and self-efficacy (Mahachi 2012; Wang and Tsai 2014).

The hospitality industry requires work attitudes and personal attributes as basic competencies, according to Wang and Tsai (2014), which are similar in some respects. These authors suggest that hospitality education should emphasize the cultivation of the correct work attitude rather than the learning of skills to pass examinations. They add that both on- and off-campus internships should be provided. According to Wilks and Hemsworth (2012), hospitality is an old profession, but has had a short life within HE with its main objective of preparing students for careers in the industry. They further acknowledge that HE is a specialized area of study that unites vocational training and academic education.

Barrows and Walsh (2002) refer to the strong relationship between a professional career in the hospitality industry and hospitality education courses. As noted earlier, in order to respond to the needs of the hospitality industry, it is important to have a clear understanding of the industry and employer expectations regarding hospitality degree courses and the competencies that graduates should possess. Incorporating education and practical training has been a preoccupation within HE (Wilks and Hemsworth 2012).

Nelson and Dopson (2001) indicate that the need to supply competent managers has brought about hospitality education. Curriculum issues have been widely discussed and debated in the hospitality education literature, mainly because of the relative newness of the field within academia. Furthermore, some authors have discussed that the growing focus on hospitality courses lacks a review of whether the current hospitality education curriculum complies with industry expectations (Spowart 2011; Wang and Tsai 2014; Nachmias and Walmsley 2015).

The importance of hospitality education ultimately moved in line with the expansion of the hospitality industry (Shariff, Kayat and Abidin 2014; Wang and Tsai 2014). This is supported by Mowforth and Munt (2008), who maintain that the challenge of globalization emphasizes the creation of new approaches to hospitality education, the industry and its staff. The upgrading of human resources aims not only to achieve investment in human capital, but also to improve training and the competitiveness of hospitality staff. The researcher notes again that these statements support the case for a study such as the

current one to examine the changing skills requirements within the Ghanaian hospitality industry following the emergence of multinational hotel chains in the country.

Globally, higher education institutions are considering graduate attributes and competencies (Becket and Brookes 2012). The standardization of hospitality education has been an issue for industry professionals and educators. Sisson and Adams (2013) stress the need for the development of a standardized hospitality curriculum to ensure that graduates have the knowledge, skills and abilities that are required by industry. However, they assert that in order to meet this requirement, several variables need to be identified which impact the ability of hospitality courses to meet these expectations. The location of the course within the college/university is a challenge that militates against the standardization of the hospitality course. The location of the course within certain schools and faculties, such as business schools, reduces the flexibility of the hospitality courses that can be offered (Sisson and Adams 2013).

Another factor, observed by Sisson and Adams (2013), which affect the standardization of hospitality education is the expansion of the course to encompass wide functional areas such as meetings, events, conventions, festivals, recreation, gaming and cruise management, beyond the traditional areas of lodging, food and beverage. They indicated that this expansion demands an added area of study and a broader array of offerings within the curriculum. The development of managers is important for the growth of the hospitality sector which is increasingly being affected by trends in globalization and the pressure for competitiveness (Chang and Hsu 2010). More recently, the globalization of the market, growth in technology, and cultural diversity have become critical factors in affecting the needs of hospitality graduates (Whitelaw *et al.* 2009).

Several studies have paid attention to the importance of the hospitality curriculum (Nelson and Dopson 2001; Ayoun *et al.* 2010; Solnet *et al.* 2010; Hein and Riegel 2012; Ryan, Spencer and Bernhard 2012; Asirifi *et al.* 2013b; Wang and Tsai 2014; Nachmias and Walmsley 2015). According to Sisson and Adams (2013), the most successful approach to mastering soft competencies seems to be a combination of methods that introduce, explore and develop soft competencies in the classroom, with an opportunity to apply and

practice these competencies during supervised work experience. With regard to sustainable development, Wang and Jing (2009) cite green hospitality, labour costs, multicultural issues and HE as the top issues that will influence the global hospitality industry (Wang and Jing 2009). The hospitality industry will face challenges regarding operation, marketing, technology and the economy, especially amid the Covid-19 pandemic (WTTC 2019).

Wang and Jing (2009) identify rapid growth in vacation ownership, integration and globalization, and new management among the 10 key trends that will shape the hospitality industry. This will be challenging in an industry that is perceived as having low-skilled, low-paid employees with a high degree of cultural and behavioural diversity among them. The management of multicultural talent and the political landscape is among the new trends and issues affecting hospitality industry development. One of the main functions of large, international hospitality chains is to bring diverse world cultures together, which is central to their success (Wang and Jing 2009; Hobson 2010; Wang and Tsai 2014).

2.7   Bridging the competency gaps in Ghana

The reform of the Ghanaian education system suggests a complete redesign and delivery of the curriculum in polytechnics and universities in general in order to bridge the gaps in learning, skills and competencies (Ansah 2012). This is because some of the current curricula are regarded as outdated and unresponsive to the needs of trainees and demands of industry and the labour market. The disparity between institutional training and the needs of industry has implications for graduate employability (Ansah 2012; Asirifi *et al.* 2013) since graduates are underprepared for the world of work. The skills gap, as reported in the literature on hospitality education, includes leadership and managerial competencies, which are important for senior-level managers, relationship management, and change management in hospitality (Chung-Herrera, Enz and Lankau 2003; Suh, West and Shin 2012).

Sisson and Adams (2013) conducted a study on the gaps in the curriculum regarding the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) important to hospitality graduates. They found that, due to the wide range of positions open to hospitality graduates, it is difficult to determine not only those KSA which are important to all or most graduates, but also how these differ from the KSA taught in traditional business courses. They further stated that there is a problem with teaching core areas such as information technology (IT) due to the fast developments in the field, the non-standardization of technology, workforce, hospitality products, and the high cost of software.

Miller and Sheu (2008) concur by stating that technology is constantly changing and, as a result, competencies evolve. This view reinforces the aim of the current research, as gaps have been identified in Ghana regarding the education of hospitality graduates and industry professionals (Asirifi *et al*. 2013). From the experience of the researcher as a lecturer in hospitality management in Ghana, the emerging trend in the hospitality industry will not benefit graduates, unless the curriculum is redeveloped to include the required skills and competencies.

Hospitality graduates in Ghana have very little access to practical IT skills, and the few who do, use outdated software (Asirifi *et al*. 2013). Recommendations from the current and related studies will contribute towards rectifying this situation. A lack of teamwork, the right qualification for specific jobs, locations, and perceptions of the industry are issues found among new graduate recruits (Williams 2015). Elias and Purcell (2004) found a shortage of numeracy skills, as did Mason (2015).

2.8   Curriculum models applicable to the hospitality sector

This section explains the models of curriculum development in the hospitality sector and how they contributed to the research framework of the study. The section explicates the theoretical underpinnings that inform the research design.

The development and continuous refinement of hospitality curricula are imperative due to the complexity of the industry. The development of hospitality curriculum models is

influenced by many factors such as institutional culture, departmental culture, disciplinary culture, leadership, faculty background, and educational beliefs (Scotland 2006). The goal of curriculum development is to facilitate learning (Dopson and Tas 2004). These factors are shown in figure 2.4 below.
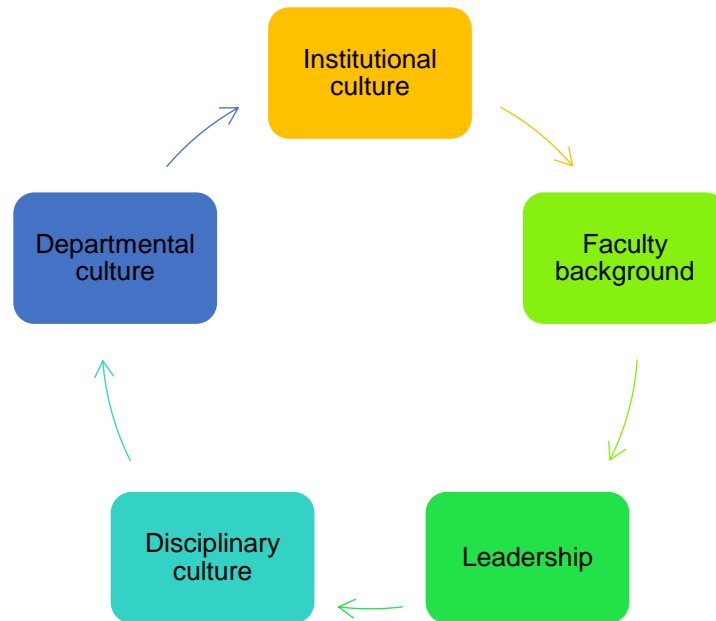
Figure 2.4: Factors influencing hospitality education curriculum development
Source: Scotland (2006)

Curriculum development is crucial in hospitality education in order for them to remain current with industry and educational trends (Dopson and Tas 2004). Globalization and technological developments regarding size and complexity, environmental changes, competition, demands from sophisticated customers, and expectations from investors impacted education and training in the hospitality industry (ILO 2012). These are crucial reforms taking place in the hospitality industry, leading to an upsurge in the number and types of hospitality programmes (Scotland 2006). This has led to higher education curricula coming under scrutiny from key stakeholders, educators, students and industry professionals (Scotland 2006). In turn, hospitality programme curricula have been examined continuously. Educators continue to redesign and improve core curricula to make sure that graduates are well trained to enter the industry (Alexakis and Jiang 2019). This increased attention might be ascribed to the need to satisfy institutional and industry demands.

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Curriculum revisions in the hospitality industry and reviews are imperative and should ideally be continuous in order to keep abreast with the growth of the industry. Curriculum planning serves various purposes and can target the teaching of specific units of content and particular courses, the devising of sequences of courses within a programme or department, or the development of curriculum plans for entire schools. Researchers contend that the challenges associated with hospitality education require fundamental changes in pedagogical processes and practices, subject areas, specializations, as well as content knowledge for hospitality education through curriculum innovation and development (Stark 2002; Fidgeon 2010; Sheldon, Fesenmaier and Tribe 2011). The responsibility of hospitality education is to combine industry priorities with the needs of students and make significant contributions to research (Kang *et al.* 2005).

There are several models of curriculum development in hospitality education, namely Chen and Groves' model (1999); Reigel and Dallas' model (1999); Ritchie's hybrid model of tourism/hospitality education (1995); Cornell University model; Koh's model (Scotland 2006); and Tyler's model (Dopson and Tas 2004). Chen and Groves' model (1999) suggests a consideration of philosophical differences, which they argue provide a philosophical foundation on which educational goals can be based (Scotland 2006). Reigel and Dallas' model (1999) identifies four main areas in hospitality programmes: the major, general education and advanced learning skills, electives, and workplace experience using approaches to group programmes with similar features.

Scotland (2006) highlighted five identified approaches of curriculum development which are used in hospitality and tourism education to design courses: craft/skill approaches, tourism approaches, food systems/home economics approaches, business administration approaches, and combined approaches. Similarly, Ritchie's hybrid model of tourism/hospitality education (1995) stresses the need to be sensitive to the needs of industry, while the Cornell University model is a hotel school model which focuses fully on preparing individuals for management roles in hotels and resorts. It consists of two main courses related to various parts of hotel management.

Dopson and Tas (2004) assert that Tyler's model has dominated hospitality curriculum development, while Fidgeon (2010) and Liu and Schänzel (2019) affirm the model's relevance for hospitality education in recent studies. Dopson and Tas (2004) stress that Tyler's model answers questions about developing educational purposes and objectives, as well as selecting, organizing and evaluating the effectiveness of learning experiences. Tyler's model is systematic and orderly, as it provides direction for design. The model also answers questions that enhance the development of the curriculum by outlining four basic principles that must be considered by educators when planning the curriculum. These principles include purposes of the instruction, the educational experiences related to the purposes, the organisation of these experiences, and the evaluation of the purposes (Dopson and Tas 2004). They suggest four questions on which appropriate curriculum development should be based: What is the objective of education? Which activities will allow the accomplishment of the objective? How will the activities be organized? and How will one tell that the activities have been achieved? Hospitality education needs to answer these four questions. The first question looks at the vital competencies and value of students.

In a study, it is important to gain a critical understanding of the concepts studied on a course for effective curriculum design. Therefore, this study critically reviewed the literature on employability concepts, skills and models. The research design emphasized the identification of gaps in the learning of these skills in Ghanaian hospitality education, as well as new approaches for enhancing the employability of hospitality graduates. These include new skills and competencies required by multinational hotel chains.

Dopson and Tas (2004) discuss that a designed curriculum would be more productive if it uses a model to give it direction. The model should be systematically planned to avoid accidental educational experiences. In this view, Ali *et al.* (2016) indicate that the curriculum and contents determine the success of any course. The growth of the hospitality industry and the rapid changes within it demand that the curriculum should move at the same pace to be in accordance with the needs of industry. They suggest that industry representatives be involved in developing the syllabus. Frequently updating the hospitality curriculum is vital for hospitality graduates to be relevant in the industry.

Education and training are interrelated and therefore play an important role in human resource development in the hospitality and tourism industry (Ali *et al.* 2016).

Biedenweg, Monroe and Oxarart (2013) maintain that, in developing a curriculum, one critical element is the knowledge that students are expected to learn, known as the learning outcomes. Dopson and Tas (2004) define a curriculum as "an organized set of experiences to which learners are subjected so that their behaviour will be modified in a desired and predetermined manner". These modifications are the learning outcomes. These authors view a curriculum is an instrument designed to change those to whom it applies. They further explain that "a curriculum provides students with organized experiences of the classroom that lead to change in a constructive way". In addition, the curriculum should be based on a planned strategy which cultivates an environment for course development, implementation and evaluation. They acknowledge the importance of a model being productive as it provides a direction for design.

Su (2012) states that curriculum entails the interplay of plans and experiences. Plans involves the planning of curriculum in advance, while experiences involve unplanned happenings in classrooms. Curriculum is explained as a broad concept encompassing content, goals, methods, assessment, extracurricular activities and learning environment. Dopson and Tas's (2004) study on the practical approach to curriculum development suggests that the development of a hospitality curriculum includes three major components: substantive knowledge, skills, and values. Kay and Russette (2007) also mention the importance of operational issues, such as a working knowledge of hospitality services.

Gursoy and Swanger (2005) maintain that effective hospitality curriculum needs to teach students crucial operational skills, along with the skills necessary to be successful managers. To accomplish this, it is necessary to incorporate the perspectives of the industry professionals into the hospitality curriculum. Gursoy, Rahman and Swanger (2012) indicate that there are several ways in which industry perspectives can be obtained. These include visits by industry professionals as guest lecturers or participation in executive education programmes as part of the curriculum review process.

Competency models can be developed from industry practitioners' ranking of the most important skills and content areas in the workplace. Educators can then incorporate them into the curriculum (Gursoy and Swanger 2005; Gursoy *et al.* 2012). These ideas informed the survey of hospitality employers in the research.

Gursoy and Swanger (2005) further posit that merely identifying the skills and competencies that graduates need to possess is not enough and does not complete the process of curriculum development. They acknowledge that skills and competencies need to be added and embedded into the curriculum. Therefore, important subject areas must be effectively incorporated into the curriculum to facilitate learning and preparation for future careers. They maintain that the industry-led and faculty-led process of curriculum development needs to incorporate the changing needs of the industry with the aim to nurture innovation.

Nelson and Dopson (2001b) suggest that hospitality educators need to identify clear goals and objectives for curriculum development by always incorporating the changing needs of the industry. In this way, the gap between what the students are taught and what the industry expects of graduates can be narrowed. Raybould and Wilkins (2005a) composed a generic skills framework for ranking the important skill areas of hospitality graduates from the perspectives of both employers and students. They confirmed that the nature of the hospitality workplace requires mastery of generic and hospitality-specific skill sets. In this sense, considering areas of hospitality subjects and course content provides an extensive representation of the competencies that graduates will require in the workplace.

2.9   Review of hospitality competency frameworks

A competency framework can be described as a set of knowledge, skills and attributes required to effectively perform job roles and other duties in an organisation (Razak, Shariff and Zainol 2014; Schley 2003; Dubois *et al.* 2004). Frameworks and models about competencies usually contain a list of skills and behavioural indicators that propel the competency framework into fruition within the context of organisations (Schley 2003). A competency framework must exhibit robustness, dynamism, fluidity and flexibility in order

to move with technological, social and economic changes, together with the ability to re-evaluate and refine the framework (Dubois 1993; Lucia and Lepsinger 1999; Razak, Shariff and Zainol 2014). One of the notable competency frameworks is the Competency Domain Model developed by Sandwith (1993) with its main aim of highlighting a hierarchy of competencies needed by managers to succeed at different levels in an organisation. These competencies are conceptual, leadership, interpersonal, administrative and technical. The model is displayed in figure 2.8.
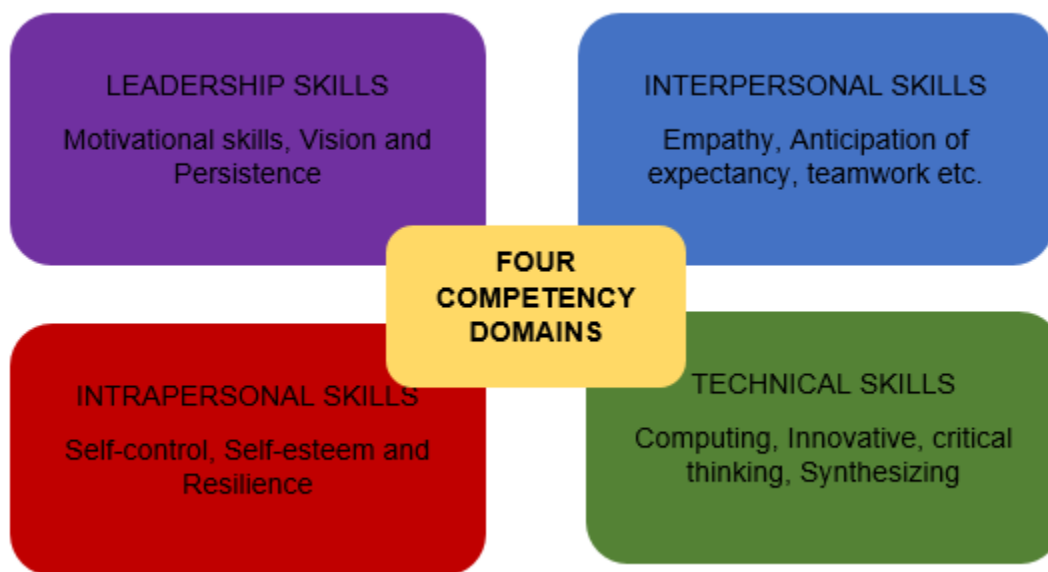
Figure 2.5: Four competency domains

Source: Sandwith (1993)

As graduates prepare for the globalized workforce, the essence of key competencies becomes crucial for employability and promotion (Okoro, Washington and Thomas 2017). Among these skills are those indicated in figure 2.5 above and which business organisations require. Leadership skills emphasize on essence and significance in the management of an organisation, which plays an imperative role in ensuring the efficiency of individual people, teams and organisations relating to high authority or duties (Jegelavičiūtė, Navickas and Navickas 2018). Therefore, as a leader, the individual should be able to influence the activities of an organized entity or group in its efforts towards goal setting and goal achievement (Jegelavičiūtė *et al.* 2018).

In their study, Jegelavičiūtė *et al.* (2018) argue that, to be a successful leader, an individual has to possess management skills, communication skills, and inter- and intrapersonal skills in order to function effectively in an organisation. Fay (2015: 42) contends the following:

it appears that leadership can be best characterized as a process through which a leader assesses an organisational element and employs skills, functions and processes; all of which can be measured, to effect organisational change toward a constructive goal. It, therefore, comprises a series of competencies, rather than existing as a single competency in and of itself. Hassanzadeh *et al.* (2015) assert that the abovementioned competencies are behavioural patterns which enable a leader to carry out a set of functions in an organisation.

Okoro *et al.* (2017) mention that studies have over the years elaborated on the importance of equipping graduates with the competencies required by industry for organisations to have a competitive advantage in the corporate environment. Among these competencies are inter- and intrapersonal skills required of graduates to remain key players in the industry. These crucial competencies relate to group writing, teamwork and presentations, group project management, negotiation skills, collaboration skills, self-direction adaptability, integrity, interest and curiosity, self-monitoring, work ethics, conscientiousness, and artistic and cultural appreciation to enhance the quality of graduates (Raybould and Wilkins 2005).

Pellegrino (2017) focuses on conscientiousness, describing it as the ability to be responsible, organized and hardworking, and notes that it is most highly correlated with desirable educational, career and health outcomes. In their study, Lindsey and Rice (2015) recommended educators to provide authentic practice in developing intra- and interpersonal skill sets utilizing current marketplace tools. They found that students benefit from trying different methods of learning to gain authentic practice and improve upon interpersonal skills (Lindsey and Rice 2015).

According to Jackson (2016) and Jackson and Chapman (2012), technical skills are acquired through practical engagements and applications. These authors assert that

technical skills encompass talent and expertise which the person possesses to perform a certain job or skill. In most cases, these sets of skills are unearthed by learners themselves and shaped by educators in academia. Technical skills, or "hard skills", as described by Nasir *et al.* (2011: 10), are "often associated with the use of tools, equipment related to work properly and efficiently, as well as all technical matters." Technical skills in the working environment normally refer to technical procedures or practical tasks that are typically easy to observe, quantify and measure (Nasir *et al.* 2011). This implicates that technical skills focus more on practice than theory.

Nasir *et al.* (2011) demonstrated that these types of skills can be acquired by means of formal or informal education, although technical skills are typically acquired from academia or institutions of higher learning. Fletcher and Tyson (2017) reported that industry stakeholders have expressed an urgent need for technical skills using appropriate tools and technologies. In this view, hospitality educators are to teach students technical skills by simulating the work environment in the real world, helping them value their abilities to transform classroom experience into tangible products (Fletcher and Tyson 2017).

Within the hospitality industry, a number of frameworks have been developed to analyze graduate and employee competencies from a number of angles and viewpoints. In this regard, Lowry and Flohr (2005) agree that a competency-based framework is vital for hospitality education in order to develop graduates who are able to meet the competency expectations within the industry. Therefore, it is important to continue to assess and refine the competency-based framework for teaching and learning, as well as ensure that the curriculum provides balance between sector-specific knowledge and general management skills.

Felisitas (2012) analyzed stakeholders' perceptions of competencies developed from the hospitality degree programmes in Zimbabwe and constructed a framework to fill the gaps in graduate competency in hospitality education. In Felisitas (2012), the main competencies illustrated in the dual conceptual competency framework relating to hospitality education and industry are professional knowledge, operational skills, critical

thinking, communication skills, ICT, human resources management, and business and entrepreneurial acumen. Industry stakeholders underline that gaps in these competencies must be filled via hospitality and tourism education to not only produce qualified graduates, but also decrease misconceptions regarding the expectations of stakeholders and, ultimately, increase the prospects of graduate employability.

Adeyinka-Ojo (2018) developed a strategic framework for analyzing employability skills in rural tourism destinations. The framework incorporated competencies and skills deficits and, thereby, identified that, for job-securing opportunities to be enhanced and valuable contributions to be made in the industry, hospitality graduates require both employability skills (hard and soft skills) and personal values (attributes and qualities). With these skills and values, graduates would be able to increase tourist arrivals and receipts, extend tourist stays, increase repeat visitations, and create positive word of mouth – all of which invariably lead to high yield rural destinations.

Srisangkaew (2018) performed a gap analysis of employability competency among Bangkok hotels from the perspective of hospitality industry stakeholders comprising hospitality managers, hospitality educators, and hospitality internship students. After identifying and analyzing the gaps between the perceived level of importance of the required competencies for success in the hospitality industry, Srisangkaew (2018) developed a framework by modifying Ennis (2008). The latter author emphasized competencies in personal effectiveness, foundational academic competencies, workplace competencies, industry-wide technical competencies, and industry-sector competencies. In applying the model, Srisangkaew (2018) proposed that strengthening the above skills and competencies of hospitality students will become a useful strategy to reduce the gaps among the various stakeholders. This, in turn, would improve the curriculum to better meet industry needs.

Chung-Herrera *et al.* (2003) also developed a competency model for grooming future hospitality leaders. Instead of assessing leadership based on personality traits and other unrelated qualities, the competency model itemizes the actions and behaviour needed to create successful leaders for the hospitality industry. The authors identified a list of 99

competencies grouped into eight overarching categories: self-management, strategic positioning, implementation, critical thinking, communication, interpersonal, leadership, and industry knowledge. Self-management, rated as the leading competency, consists of ethics and integrity, time management, flexibility and adaptability, and self-development. Chung-Herrera *et al.* (2003) therefore believed that hospitality graduates with strong competencies in these areas will help bridge the competency gap between theory and practice by becoming future leaders in the industry. They further elaborated that this competency model serves as both a roadmap and a prototype for achieving success in the hospitality industry.

In their study of the employability of hospitality graduates in Taiwan, Wang and Tsai (2014) developed a model which considers the skills requirements and career planning that comply with the demands of the hospitality industry's competitive environment. The model approaches employability from the competency perspective. Thus, within the model, employability depends on both personal competency and job competency. The former includes core skills and career planning and development skills, while the latter entails specific employability, such as fundamental competency, level-specific competency, and professional competency. Fundamental competency, which includes work attitude and personal attributes, is a key attribute for all employees. The various categories of the model highlight the perspectives of students and industry actors with the overall aim of bridging the gap between the skills of hospitality graduates and the expectations from the industry.

In a study of hospitality industry competencies and curriculum, Alexakis and Jiang (2019) developed a model which summarizes the skills/knowledge needed of hospitality students to function effectively in the hospitality industry, based on the perception of managers. The model explains the various skills/competencies, categorized as critical/reflective, professional/technical, communication/relational, and plasticity/erudition. In relation to these broad skills, competencies in communication and quality assurance remain paramount. The researchers concluded that, due to the changing preferences of industry, graduate competency training must constantly be reconciled between industry experts

and educators to produce graduates with the capabilities and potentialities to success not only in the industry, but also in life.

Abou-Shouk, Abdelhakim and Hewedi (2014) created a framework to evaluate the factors affecting the development of competencies among hospitality students in Egypt. They found eight educational processes that are crucial to the development of student competencies, namely rules and regulations, curriculum design, staff members, evaluation procedures, teaching methods, facilities and amenities, programmes offered, and training opportunities. The framework holds that, in order for hospitality education to produce graduates with needed competencies and who can secure jobs within the hospitality industry, it must harness these processes judiciously.

In Australia, Wang *et al.* (2010) conducted a study on whether hospitality education meets the needs of the tourism industry. They found considerable discrepancies between the views of industry professionals and hospitality educators on skill sets. Hospitality education seemed to focus on preparing graduates with competencies in marketing, research, hospitality management and employability. On the other hand, the hospitality industry rated skills in marketing, accounting finance and economics, employment, and business management as important towards making appreciable strides in the industry. They concluded that the gap between the education provided and the needs of industry can be bridged by establishing an industry–education cooperation curriculum framework to ensure a closer relationship between academia and industry.

Hussain, Syed and Bukhari (2017) analyzed gaps in hospitality education and industrial requirements in India. From this, they developed a framework which conceptualizes first the reasons behind the differences in competency requirements and secondly the factors that will bridge the gap. The framework indicates that the general teaching methods for hospitality students produce graduates with language skills, presentation skills and computer competencies, while hospitality practitioners prioritize operational skills, management skills and human relation skills. Hussain *et al.* (2017) recommended that, to address this gap, hospitality education must improve institutional infrastructure and organize field trips to expose students to industry trends. Also, there should be a close

link between educators and industry to identify the ideal competencies to make graduates function effectively in the hospitality industry. Table 2.1 presents a summary of the review of the frameworks of hospitality competencies.

Table 2.1: Review of frameworks of hospitality competencies

Authors	Title of article / Journal	Method	Respondents	Key competencies from the framework
Chung-Herrera, B.G., Enz, C.A., and Lankau, M.J. (2003)	Grooming future hospitality leaders: A competencies model. *Cornell Hotel And Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 44 (3), 17-25.	Survey	Industry leaders	To create successful leaders for the hospitality industry, 99 competencies grouped into eight categories were listed: self-management, strategic positioning, implementation, critical thinking, communication, interpersonal, leadership, and industry knowledge.
Lowry, L.L. and Flohr, J.K. (2005)	No student left behind: A longitudinal assessment of the competency-based framework used to facilitate learning in a capstone tourism course. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education,* Vol. 17 (4), 28-35.	Survey	Tourism students	In order to produce competent graduates to meet industry expectations, tourism education must focus on creating a balance between sector-specific knowledge and general management skills.
Wang, J., Ayres, H., and Huyton, J. (2010)	Is tourism education meeting the needs of the tourism industry? An Australian case study *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education,* Vol. 22 (1), 8-14.	Web-based question-naire surveys	Tourism educators and industry professionals	Findings showed that differences exist in skills preferences. Tourism education emphasizes competencies in marketing, research, tourism management and employability, whereas industry experts prioritize skills in marketing, accounting finance and economics, employment, and business management. Hence, the framework calls for an industry–education cooperation curriculum framework to help bridge the gap.

Authors	Title of article / Journal	Method	Respondents	Key competencies from the framework
Felisitas, C., Molline, M., and Clotildah, K. (2012)	The hospitality and tourism honours degree programme: Stakeholders' perceptions of competencies developed. *Journal of Hospitality Management And Tourism,* Vol. 3 (1), 12-22.	Survey	Hospitality and tourism industry stakeholders	The main competencies listed in the dual conceptual competency framework to fill gaps between hospitality education and industry are: professional knowledge, operational skills, critical thinking, communication skills, ICT, human resources management, and business and entrepreneurial acumen.
Millar, M., Mao, Z., and Moreo, P. (2013)	Tourism & hospitality educators vs. the industry: A competency assessment. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education,* Vol. 22 (2), 38-50.	Semi-structured and personal in-depth interviews	Hospitality educators and industry professionals	Key competencies for a successful career in the industry include interpersonal skills, decision-making skills, critical thinking skills, analytical skills and skills in general management operations.
Abou-Shouk, M.A., Abdelhakim, A.S., and Hewedi, M.M. (2014)	Factors affecting the development of target competencies among final-year tourism and hospitality students in Egypt. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education,* Vol. 26 (4), 178-187.	Question-naire	Senior hospitality and tourism students	Eight key educational processes crucial to the development of students' competencies were identified. These are rules and regulations, curriculum design, staff members, evaluation procedures, teaching methods, facilities and amenities, programmes offered, and training opportunities.
Wang, Y.F. and Tsai, C.T. (2014)	Employability of hospitality graduates: Student and industry perspectives. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education,* Vol. 26 (3), 125-135.	Question-naire	Senior hospitality students and industry managers	The framework approached graduate employability from the competency perspective: personal competency and job competency. The former includes core skills, career planning and development skills, while the latter includes fundamental competency and professional competency.

Authors	Title of article / Journal	Method	Respondents	Key competencies from the framework
Najar, A.H. and Bukhari, S.A.M. (2017)	Gap analysis in hospitality education and industrial requirements. *International Journal of Engineering and Management Research,* Vol. (4), 170-173.	Review of previous works	Not applicable	Findings revealed variance in skill set ratings. Hospitality education focuses on language skills, presentation skills and computer competencies, while hospitality practitioners emphasize operational skills, management skills and human relation skills. The framework highlights a close link between educators and industry, as well as the improvement of institutional infrastructure and organizing field trips to expose students to industry needs and trends.
Srisangkaew, K. (2018)	The gap analysis of employability competency in 4 to 5-star hotels, Bangkok, from the perspective of hospitality industry stakeholders. *Dusit Thani College Journal*, Vol. 12 (3), 166-184.	Survey	Hospitality educators, managers, and undergraduate intern students	For success in the hospitality industry, the framework emphasized competencies in personal effectiveness, foundational academic competencies, workplace competencies, industry-wide technical competencies, and industry-sector competencies.
Adeyinka-Ojo, S. (2018)	A strategic framework for analyzing employability skills deficits in rural hospitality and tourism destinations. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, Vol. 27, 47-54.	Critical review of literature	Not applicable	The developed framework looked at competencies and skills deficits to, thereby, enhance job-securing opportunities in rural hospitality and tourism. Hospitality graduates require employability skills (hard and soft skills) and personal values (attributes and qualities).

Authors	Title of article / Journal	Method	Respondents	Key competencies from the framework
Alexakis, G. and Jiang, L. (2019)	Industry competencies and the optimal hospitality management curriculum: An empirical study. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education,* Vol. 31 (4), 1-11.	Survey	Hospitality managers	Industry managers categorized key competencies as critical/reflective, professional/technical, communication/relational, and plasticity/erudition. In relation to these broad skills, competencies in communication and quality assurance are necessary.

Source: Author's construct (2020)

2.10   Competencies expected of hospitality graduates

The assessment of student learning, unsurprisingly, is becoming increasingly important on the national higher education agenda (Jiang and Alexakis 2017). In a number of important areas such as oral communication, written communication, critical thinking, and creativity, students seem more likely to think that they are being well prepared, while not knowing the actual requirements from industry (Jaschik 2015). The literature shows a worldwide trend in criticism of higher education learning outcomes in the management disciplines (Jackson and Chapman 2012). Human capital is undeniably a hospitality organisation's most valuable resource and potentially one of its most sustainable competitive advantages (Brownell 2010). Knowledge management continues to replace tangible resources (such as capital, land and labour) as the main source of competitive advantage (Okumus 2013; Espellita and Maravilla 2019).

Discussions on learning outcomes and knowledge management have particular importance in the hospitality industry that typically seeks work readiness among graduates in entry-level management positions (Wang 2013; Chillas, Marks and Galloway 2015). The complexity of the hospitality managers' forecasting and decision-making activities represents another distinguishing factor of this business discipline, as it necessitates specific requirements beyond those of general management in other business disciplines (Pirnar 2014).

Hospitality faculties presumably account for their own industry, consulting and educational experiences combined with the perspectives of other related constituents (e.g., administrators) before finalizing curricular decisions (Lashley 2015). Johanson *et al.* (2011) called for curriculum reform in hospitality education to address significant changes in the competitive environment of business and education, along with changes in the macro-environment. This call was predicated on the results of their study which reviewed competencies that had been emphasized by hospitality industry leaders for success in the field during the previous 25 years. According to Bennis and O'Toole (2005), business programmes had adopted an inappropriate academic model. The authors asserted, instead of assessing curriculum against the competence of their graduates, or by the extent their faculties understand important drivers of business performance, they assess curriculum almost solely by the rigour of their scientific research and actual business practices which inadequately inform the research (Kelly 2005; Espellita and Maravilla 2019).

According to the literature, employers' concern with graduate levels of key generic skills emphasize the need to strengthen competency development within undergraduate education in the business disciplines (Jiang and Alexakis 2017). The need to rebalance such curricula by periodically evaluating what programmes teach and what students learn has often been discussed among academics. For instance, in referring to the use of case studies, Clegg and Ross-Smith (2003) proposed, "in terms of pedagogy, we need to refocus the curriculum less around answers to apparent problems and more on questions that undercut the apparent problematics of the answers proposed".

Huang and Lin (2011) demonstrated that, in the often-discoursed gap between industry and academia concerning practical or operational skills and management knowledge (Cheung, Kong and Song 2014; Wang and Tsai 2014), there are significant gaps between industry expectations and academic perceptions regarding the skills that are most valuable to hospitality graduates. Tesone and Ricci (2006) recommend to create more realistic student expectations from the industry towards moderating the high incidence of employee turnover. Ghiselli, La Lopa and Bai (2001) similarly discovered high hospitality industry employee turnover rates among managers assuaged by appropriate skill and

knowledge levels. They revealed that over half of those who indicated an intent to leave were considering leaving the industry altogether.

The results of Huang and Lin (2011: 9–10) "strongly suggest that efforts are needed to broaden the perspective of scholars in the hospitality field and to design more effective courses in the field of hospitality management." Gross and Manoharan (2016) note that a well-rounded education for hospitality management graduates prepares them not only for entry-level positions, but also for subsequent positions in further career and life stages. Many researchers have established competencies that hospitality curriculum should teach to prepare students for successful industry careers. These studies focus on knowledge, skills and attitudes in areas such as written and oral communication, customer service, problem solving, and leadership (e.g., Yang *et al.* 2016). Industry managers also desire that students show a greater willingness to learn and that they have better interpersonal skills (Tesone and Ricci 2012; Lolli 2013; Jiang and Alexakis 2017).

Conversely, Kalargyrou and Woods (2011a) indicate that conceptual and technical skills are considered more important than interpersonal skills, in contrast to previous studies (i.e., Okeiyi *et al.* 1994; Tas, LaBrecque and Clayton 1996; Kay and Russette 2007). The findings of Kay and Moncarz (2004) suggest that industry should recruit entry-level managers who have graduated from hospitality programmes with a strong financial management curriculum to ensure their career success and the firm's long-term profitability and growth. Nonetheless, soft skills and interpersonal skills are widely accepted as the hallmark abilities of those working in the hospitality industry (Breiter and Hoart 2000; Christou 2002; Sigala and Baum 2003; Sigala *et al.* 2006; Weber *et al.* 2013; Wolfe, Phillips and Asperin 2014; Alhelalat 2015; Huang, Lalopa and Adler 2016).

Jiang and Alexakis (2017) note that, while hard competencies are still important for entry-level hospitality managers, the most essential competencies for hospitality graduates to possess are in the soft category. Huang and Lin (2011) found that both hospitality managers and scholars perceived the core management competency of communication skills to be one of the most important for hospitality management trainees. Every important managerial activity requires the use of communication skills (Shariff *et al.* 2014).

Oral communication is a frequently cited characteristic sought by employers in all the business disciplines (Jiang and Alexakis 2017).

Ruetzler *et al.* (2014) identify seven essential technical skills and found that professionals and faculty ranked grade point average lower in importance than other characteristics. The vital non-technical managerial skill sets broadly sought by hospitality employers leave little doubt as to the need to investigate the level of scrutiny of what is being taught and learned in the classroom. According to Yang *et al.* (2016) classroom discussions should be encouraged in a context that allows students to develop self-management skills such as treating others' opinions with respect and encourages critical thinking skills, including finding ways to solve problems or anticipating obstacles and developing contingency plans. Internships provide opportunities for hospitality students to "practice interpersonal communication skills with co-workers and supervisors" (Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2016).

One study demonstrated that students not only desire more work or internship experience, but that practical work experience can significantly benefit students (Hertzman, Moreo and Wiener 2015). Such experiences can transform students into better candidates for recruitment after graduation. In addition, through continued and enhanced presence at career fairs, companies can aid students through repeated interaction with hospitality professionals. Such interaction, in turn, would lead to higher levels of confidence in students' communication abilities and, possibly, to actual skill, as the more one practices, the better one becomes (Hertzman *et al.* 2015). It has always been in the best interest of all stakeholders – students, educators and industry – that these three constituencies continue and enhance their cooperation in the education and training of the next generation of hospitality graduates (Hertzman *et al.* 2015).

Finally, a study by Sisson and Adams (2013) found little difference between the competencies needed by entry-level managers in the three functional work areas of lodging, food service, and meeting and event management. The outcome of the varying research results led to varied curricula among undergraduate hospitality programmes, which created challenges for recruiters seeking qualified applicants (Tesone and Ricci

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2012). Roberts (2009) determined that, like any other service, the quality of hospitality management education relies on the quality of the curriculum, the quality of the delivery, and the perceived value of the qualification by key stakeholders. Stakeholders such as accrediting bodies also drive proficiencies for developing work readiness in hospitality graduates (Jiang and Alexakis 2017). Continuous improvement towards reducing quality gaps and the efficient and effective use of all available resources can differentiate a particular hospitality programme from others (Johanson *et al.* 2010; Espellita and Maravilla 2019).

Nelson and Dopson (2001) conclude that faculty must continuously review and revise curricula, and watch for signs of change in the industry, student population, graduates, and economy in the never-ending pursuit of the most suitable hospitality management curriculum. They reported:

The ambition for identifying an optimal curriculum motivated our study, which seeks to understand the question: What skills, knowledge, and abilities do employers want (and students think employers want) upon graduation? With the understanding that our curricular target necessarily is in constant flux, the next section informed our research design to produce results toward our quest for the ideal undergraduate hospitality management curriculum. (Nelson and Dopson 2001:58–67)

2.11   Competencies and quality of service in the hospitality industry

The importance of managers with suitable competencies throughout the business disciplines pertains to the nature of the service product. Service is based on communication between employees and customers. Interaction, coupled with the intensive use of technology, has resulted in the hospitality industry's quickly becoming knowledge intensive (Hallin and Marnburg 2008). Consequently, customers' perceptions of service quality are dependent on hospitality employees' ability and skills in meeting customers' needs (Hallin and Marnburg 2008). The system loops back to the competence of the manager, who sets the tone of the workplace (by leading, training, developing, etc.) and drives the service culture.

An often-cited study conducted by Kay and Russette (2007) determined a number of essential hospitality management competencies, including leadership, interpersonal, conceptual-creative, administrative, and technical competencies. The study indicated that hospitality managers are not only cognizant of essential competencies, but are also "viewed by their superiors as performing adequately in each competency and domain area considered essential for managerial success" (Kay and Russette 2007: 61).

Kay and Russette (2007) found that the leadership domain represented the majority of skill sets designated as essential competencies by the managers whom they surveyed. However, leadership and interpersonal competencies were usually identified as being essential to more than one functional area and management level. These results are consistent with prior research showing that those same two competencies represent critical competencies for managerial success.

McKercher *et al.* (2014) identified, analyzed and described perceived hospitality curriculum competencies and cited importance of 24 knowledge skill areas. From their data they identified a lack of training in certain skills and they concluded that post-secondary hospitality education needs to develop curricula that will standardize and upgrade effectiveness, particularly in the area of management quality. Christou (2002), as well as Breiter and Hoart's (2000) seminal article, suggests six ways to enhance hospitality curricula through emphasis on leadership, human resource management, services marketing, financial analysis, total quality management, and communication skills.

In their landmark study, Gursoy *et al.* (2012) revealed that hospitality professionals deem the 10 most important course content areas for success in the industry to be oral communication skills, leadership skills, understanding of profit and loss statements, good work habits, customer service skills, development of personal and professional ethics, written communication skills, team-building skills, conflict/dispute resolution skills, and setting goals/objectives. Their results also suggested that, although most hospitality curriculum content areas are course specific, some topics need to be covered and reinforced in all courses.

Brinkman-Staneva (2015) recommends a uniform delineation of hospitality professional qualifications that integrates learning outcomes from international, national and industry profiles. In studying highly ranked hospitality programmes, Chang (2013) found that tourism and food and beverage represent a major part of the hospitality field, even though there is less of an emphasis on tourism in most US hospitality programmes compared with those of other countries. Though hospitality programmes' curricular structures reflect a lack of standardization among various schools, "most tend to offer business-related courses such as accounting/finance, laws [sic], marketing, human resources, and management" (Chang 2013: 9). Chang (2013: 9) concluded that, "despite there not being a clear indication of what courses should be required it is obvious that hospitality programs need to consider offering more courses which are related to food and beverage, tourism, accounting and finance, along with leadership". However, Chang (2013: 7) cautioned that "some large hospitality programs may just have higher visibility than other small programs; however, size and visibility may have no correlation with graduate success, industry contributions, faculty quality or whatever metric one chooses".

Sisson and Adams (2013) indicate that the most essential competencies for hospitality graduates to possess are in the soft category although hard competencies are still important. Several studies, both past (including Okeiyi *et al.* 1994; Tas *et al.* 1996; Kay and Russette 2000) and present (such as Huang and Lin 2011; Lolli 2013; Sisson and Adams 2013; Weber *et al.* 2013; Tesone, Ricci and Ricci 2015; Waqanimaravu and Arasanmi 2020; Yang *et al.* 2016), have identified knowledge, skills and attitudes in areas such as written and oral communication, customer service, problem solving, and leadership as the most essential competencies. In the Raybould and Wilkins (2005) study, hospitality employers rated skills associated with problem-solving, interpersonal, and self-management domains as most important.

Similarly, Huang and Lin (2011) found no distinction between hospitality leaders' and hospitality academics' view on communication skills as important for hospitality management trainees. Lolli's (2013) revealed entry-level hospitality leaders to be wanting as interpersonal communicators with their direct reports and called for the opportunity for students to practice relational communication skills in the classroom and receive

feedback. Relating to crucial non-technical managerial competencies sought by hospitality employers, Jiang and Alexakis (2017) compel researchers to investigate what is being taught and learned in hospitality programmes. Sisson and Adams (2013) advocated for more research on how well hospitality programmes are succeeding in teaching soft skills and the most effective methods to use in teaching these skills. Shariff *et al.* (2014) asserted that every important managerial activity requires the use of communication skills.

2.12   Competencies expected by the hospitality industry

Many universities do offer hospitality programmes that include competencies focused on the industry. What is particularly important for these tertiary educational institutions is to assess the competencies that the industry desire so as to produce graduates fit for the job market. This is pertinent for providing students with the necessary competencies and being able to combine teaching and skill acquisition with fulfilling the needs of the industry stakeholders (Raybould and Wilkins 2006).

Previous studies have indicated that the needs of the hospitality industry have not always been met by educational institutions, for various reasons. For example, Enz, Renaghan, and Geller (2007) found that the hospitality industry wanted interpersonal, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership competencies. In contrast, the educational institution in their study believed that competencies such as analytical skills, conceptual thinking and literature knowledge were more important for the hospitality industry (Enz *et al.* 2007).

Van Hoof (1991) found that the industry wanted maturity and experience in candidates. The author explained that these competencies or attributes cannot be taught but acquired through experience. Some of the most cited articles on the topic of hospitality competencies expressed that continuous research and investigation are absolutely necessary. This will result in an updated and relevant understanding and knowledge of the competencies which the hospitality industry believes to be desirable at the present time (Tas *et al.* 1996; Baum 2006; Spowart 2011; Sisson and Adams 2013; Wessels, du Plessis and Slabbert 2017). For instance, Okeiyi *et al.* (1994) demonstrated the

importance of this fact by highlighting the following: "Hospitality educators and students must keep abreast of industry expectations and incorporate them into hospitality management curricula."

Wessels *et al.* (2017) assert that future managers need to be equipped with the necessary competencies to function better as trainers. In addition, this can ease the recruitment process for both students and the industry and, finally, make the future managers more efficient in their future roles (Wessels *et al.* 2017). Millar *et al.* (2010) reason that, to provide students with these desirable competencies, hospitality educators and hospitality managers must work together. This could have other positive effects, such as reducing turnover numbers, improving the hiring process, and producing future managers who are better equipped with the right competencies (Chung-Herrera *et al.* 2003; Kay and Russette 2007).

The consequence of not assessing the necessary competencies has been set out in a recent doctoral dissertation by Åberg (2017). The author studied the presence and requirements of formal education in the tourism and hospitality industry and found that students were not seen as having the desirable competencies according to the industry. The results demonstrated that the graduates often left the industry altogether. This led the author to conclude that the specific tourism and hospitality knowledge possessed by the graduates was not being utilized in the industry. In other words, their unique competencies were not contributing to the development of the tourism and hospitality industry (Åberg 2017).

Ghiselli *et al.* (2001) reported that the hospitality industry, in particular the lodging and foodservice sectors, suffered from high employee turnover. Educators, human resource professionals and operations managers strive to reduce turnover numbers by identifying valid job competencies in future managers, improving hiring practices, and recruiting from educational programmes known for producing future lodging managers with strong industry success potential (Chung-Herrera *et al.* 2003; Milman and Ricci 2004; Kay and Russette 2007).

In general, employers expect students in the hospitality industry to be work-ready, possessing competencies such as interpersonal, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills to make them employable (Andrews 2015; Balakrishnan 2016). Abas and Imam (2016) explain that success from the employers' perspective depends on the extent to which employees are able to apply their knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance customer satisfaction and achieve organisational profitability. In the hospitality industry, employing the right calibre of worker is critical to organisational success.

Industry professionals seek to match work attributes to competencies for critical success. The industry expects staff to be qualified and able to cope with the challenges faced by the industry (Kokt and Strydom 2014). Nduro *et al.* (2015) highlight that a greater part of the skill set required for the hospitality industry can be gained through hands-on training. As such, it is imperative for students pursuing programmes in hospitality management to undertake regular industry attachments to equip them with the competencies expected by the industry (Nduro *et al.* 2015).

Since the 1920s, hospitality educators have leaned on industry leaders for guidance regarding the essential competencies that graduates need for professional success (Kay and Russette 2007). In Ghana, hospitality education, particularly at tertiary level, faces great challenges in the development of human capital for the industry. Even though the main purpose of the hospitality programme is to equip students with knowledge and skills to meet industry needs, graduates are not able to articulate the skills they have been taught in the workplace. According to Asirifi *et al.* (2013) and Avornyo (2013), the collaboration between university and industry is critical in developing a knowledge-based economy and creating sustainable competitive advantage. Few Ghanaian writers have commented on the gap between what universities offer and what the industry requires. General suggestions have been to interact with industry partners in an attempt to bridge the gap (Asirifi *et al.* 2013; Nduro *et al.* 2015).

According to Kagaari (2007), employers are not highly enthused about the quality of skills of graduates produced by higher educational institutions for the labour market. The blame is consequently placed on academic institutions and their nature of programmes (Jamali

2005). Blom and Saeki (2011), supporting this argument, believe the problem is caused by the insufficient supply of quality skills in contemporary industries. Effah *et al.* (2014), in a related study, pointed out that most developed countries have achieved this as a result of establishing institutions with the sole aim of giving their students technical and technological training. The objective, according to them, is to take care of unemployment and human resource challenges by churning out students with the required quality skills to enhance the productivity and development of their economy (Nduro *et al.* 2015).

Nduro *et al.* (2015) explain that competencies are not ordinary skills that can simply be acquired in a period of time, but are unique to a particular industry and give the organisation a competitive advantage. The current study was based on this definition and was aligned with the theoretical basis of competency-based education (CBE) which is a concept that technical universities seek to adopt and use as a systematic approach to curriculum development. The CBE concept is rooted in the ideology of social efficacy and advocates for the link between employable skills where programmes and curricula meet the needs of the workforce (Hsu 2016).

2.13   Summary

The chapter explained the term "competency" and extensively focused on hospitality competencies, as well as competencies in the context of hospitality education. The chapter presented a global perspective on hospitality education, in the African and specifically Ghanaian contexts. The chapter also reviewed existing curriculum models and competency frameworks. Lastly, the literature on competencies expected of hospitality graduates and industry, and competencies expected by the hospitality industry were reviewed.

CHAPTER 3: PROFILING THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter focuses on the hospitality industry from the global, African and Ghanaian point of view. The chapter is dedicated first to the challenges of working in the hospitality industry and, secondly, to the theoretical framework applying to the study which consists of curriculum and human capital theories. Lastly, the chapter provides a conceptual framework for the study.

3.2   The global hospitality industry

The tourism, which comprises travel and tourism, accommodation, food and beverage, and recreation, developed into one of the largest industries in the world. Bozdaglar and Kilili (2015) contend that the tourism in the last few years has emerged as the fastest growing industry in the world with no signs of abatement, especially in the 21st century. The industry is instrumental to the global economy and accounts for more than one-third of the total global services trade (UNWTO 2014). In addition, before the Covid-19 pandemic, the sector was responsible for 10.4% of all economic activities globally and accounted for one-tenth of all jobs on the global scale (Lock 2019).

The 2019 Edition of the International Tourism Highlights reports that global tourism outperforms the global economy, and both developing and advanced economies are benefiting from income generated from the sector. For seven years in succession, tourism exports have generated more revenue than merchandise exports, which has led several countries to reduce trade deficits. The report ascribes this growth mostly to the growing middle class in emerging markets, technological advancements and discounted travel costs. Moreover, tourism has become a catalyst for economic growth and development, as well as the driving force for innovation and small-scale businesses (Gössling, Scott and Hall 2020). Other researchers before Covid-19 also noted that the rapid development of global tourism is based on technical innovations, IT, quality of the education of hospitality personnel, and improvement in approaches to business administration (Kostin 2018).

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Across the world, the regional performances from the World Travel & Tourism Economic Impact (WTTC 2019) showed that tourism has generated USD2.2 tn in economic output and 9.7% to the GDP of Europe, whereas the sector's contribution in North America was USD1.9 tn in revenue and 8.2% to GDP. In North-Eastern Asia, tourism contributed revenue totalling USD2.1 tn and 9.6% to the region's GDP, while the figure for Latin America was USD336 bn in revenue and 8.7% to GDP. For the Oceania region, travel and tourism generated USD206 bn in economic activity and 12.2% to GDP, whereas, in the Caribbean, the contribution of the sector was USD62 bn and 15.5% towards GDP (WTTC 2019).

According to these figures, the biggest revenue from tourism is generated in Europe, while the region with the highest contribution to GDP is the Caribbean. Thus, although the Caribbean region generates the least revenue from tourism (USD62 bn), the sector is fundamental to the region's economy since it contributes a massive 15.5% to GDP.

Contemporary trends that impact the hospitality industry globally include globalization, diversity, innovation, service experience and sustainability. The UNWTO (Gössling *et al.* 2020) maintains that the modern-day hospitality industry is shaped by digitalization, innovation, greater accessibility, and societal changes. Also, issues such as value creation and local adaptation cannot be overlooked in order to remain competitive within the industry. Tourism is also a holistic means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and create a pleasant future for tourism stakeholders. Dzhandzhugazova *et al.* (2016) contend that the development and application of a variety of innovations have become a core trend within the global hospitality industry. Innovation is basically a means to improve efficiency and enhance image and reputation in a highly competitive environment.

In spite of the growth and development in hospitality over the past few years, the sector is not devoid of difficulties and challenges. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNWTO 2014), the threats and issues that challenge the hospitality sector across the world regions include security and peace, economic instability, climate change, waste management, technology, and biodiversity loss. Katz and Withiam (2012) explain

that, although each region and nation face peculiar challenges, the general difficulties that confront hospitality at the global level include economic turbulence, political upheavals, a lack of competent workforce, and the rise of the real estate sector. Similarly, Costa, Montenegro and Gomes (2018) identify the major challenges faced by the global hospitality industry to be political tensions, safety and security issues, the growing middle class, technological setbacks, and a decline in customer loyalty. To this list, Kumar (2014) adds accessibility problems, inadequate infrastructure, heavy taxation, and financial inadequacies.

These challenges do, however, bring about opportunities and prospects for the global hospitality industry. The International Labour Organisation (ILO 2010) noted that, in response to the challenges faced by the hospitality industry worldwide, attention must be turned towards sustainable tourism, job security, stakeholder collaboration, and human resource development. Also, the industry has prospects for the future, which include job creation, export promotion, economic growth and development, climate change mitigation, and being a vehicle for poverty reduction. Kumar (2014) further mentions infrastructural development, government support, reduction in taxation, technological advancement and accessibility improvements as measures to address the challenges within the industry.

The continuous growth of the global hospitality industry necessitates improvements in the capabilities of hospitality workforce. This would ensure the effective management of the needs and requirements of demanding customers and enhance the competitive positioning and sustainability of hospitality establishments. Thus, the need for competent and skillful employees to manage the ever-growing industry has become indispensable.

3.3   The hospitality industry in Africa

The African hospitality industry has made huge strides in the last few years despite the challenges that beset the industry. For example, the large number of international tourist arrivals to the region has generated receipts of USD38 bn to the continents' economy. The region's growth is led by North Africa which has shown resilience and the ability to

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bounce back from security shocks. In Sub-Saharan Africa, positive results have been recorded in Kenya due to improved security and air connectivity, as well as on the island destinations of Reunion, Cape Verde, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles (Christie *et al.* 2014).

The hospitality industry in Africa is generally characterized by several small lodging facilities and unbranded guest houses or lodges, few international chain hotels, tour operators, transportation, food services, and rental services, among other things. The most mature hospitality and travel destinations, as well as emerging markets with the greatest potential internationally, include South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Botswana and Angola (Christie *et al.* 2014).

In assessing Africa's hospitality industry, Christie *et al.* (2014) remark that the sector is a powerful development tool which stimulates the economic transformation of African countries with notable benefits ranging from livelihood enhancement to export diversification. Similarly, Okello and Novelli (2014) assert that the hospitality industry within the East African Community (EAC) is a fundamental pillar for national development and a tool for generating foreign exchange earnings, alleviating poverty and conserving wildlife.

However, the problems faced by the African hospitality sector are myriad. Christie *et al.* (2014) refer to safety and security, expensive accommodation costs, limited connectivity and infrastructural challenges, all of which have major implications for the competitiveness of African hospitality operators compared to other destinations around the world. Rogerson and Visser (2020) concur by stating that, even though Africa was the world's fastest-growing tourism market in 2017, with a 7.8% surge in tourist numbers, it still had minimum share globally since the continent attracted only 5% of global tourist arrivals and received just 3% of global tourism revenue. Okello and Novelli (2014) found that the challenges to the growth of hospitality and tourism in East Africa include political instability, deficits in infrastructure, poor service standards, and a lack of human capacity. Similarly, Jackson (2017) attributed inadequate infrastructure, management lapses, a

lack of ICT, high interest rates and erratic power supply as leading challenges encountered within the hospitality industry in Malawi.

Despite the abovementioned problems, the hospitality industry in Africa holds enormous promise, especially regarding revenue generation for African governments and employment opportunities for the teeming population. As a result, African governments must channel resources to continue the development of the industry, especially with regard to adequate infrastructure, enforcement of legislation, and creating an enabling environment in which hospitality operations could thrive. This would, in turn, foster development within the region, as Omodero (2019) recently concluded that the hospitality and tourism industry has a significant and positive impact on Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP).

3.4   The hospitality industry in Ghana

The situation within the hospitality industry in Ghana is very similar to that on the African continent and globally. In general, the hospitality industry in Ghana consists of travel and tourism, food and beverage, and hotels and other accommodation facilities. In Ghana, hospitality and tourism is a principal driver of economic growth and development, since it generates foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities, and stimulates growth in other sectors of the economy (Ministry of Tourism 2014).

According to Frimpong-Bonsu (2015), the period between 2005 and 2014 witnessed substantial development and changes in the size and composition of Ghana's tourism market. This period saw the growth and proliferation of hotels and lodging facilities, travel and tour operators, ecotourism sites, restaurants, and recreational centres. Hiamey (2012) points to the fact that the progress in the Ghanaian tourism industry in the past decade has particularly manifested in the rapid development of hotels within the country. Hiamey and Amenumey (2013) explain that the liberalization of the Ghanaian economy in the 1980s, together with the emerging middle class and growth of the mining sector, facilitated the upsurge and demand for hotel and tourism services in Ghana. Regarding facilities, Adu-Ampong (2019) reported that Ghana has 3,247 formal accommodation

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establishments comprising 706 star-rated hotels, 167 guesthouses and 2,374 budget hotels.

Globalization and the growth of the Ghanaian tourism industry have brought several multinational hotel chains and food services into the country. According to the National Tourism Development Plan (2016), hotel investment in Ghana has been buoyant as hotels in major cities have reported annual average occupancy rates of 75%. This indicates the vibrant demand and commercial profitability of the hospitality industry, particularly those establishments operating at international standards. In view of this, Sarkodie and Adom (2015) contend that, irrespective of the upsurge and demand for hospitality and tourism products and services in Ghana, there is a pressing need for manpower and capacity development to meet the demands and requirements from both the industry and customers to ensure improvements in service delivery within the industry. Clearly, this necessitates the review and upgrade of existing hospitality education programmes in Ghana to correspond to international standards and best practice.

In a bid to strengthen the systems within the hospitality industry in Ghana, the country recently adopted the 15 year National Tourism Development Plan (2016). This plan seeks to promote the development and standardization of the tourism in Ghana. Also, the plan aims to consolidate and develop existing tourism resources and advance strategies to market Ghanaian tourism in targeted international markets (Ministry of Tourism 2014). In terms of institutional frameworks and standardization within the industry, the leading public sector tourism institutions in Ghana are the Ministry of Tourism: Arts and Culture (MOTAC); Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA); Ghana Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC); Hotel, Catering and Tourism Training Institute (HOTCATT); and Food and Drugs Authority (FDA). Several private sector associations also play various roles within the industry, but these are jointly represented by the Ghana Tourism Federation (GHATOF) (see Ministry of Tourism 2014; Frimpong-Bonsu 2015).

Despite the mandated duties which the above institutions perform in streamlining and sensitizing hospitality and tourism operations, the industry in Ghana is fraught with multiple challenges. These include insufficient investment in the tourism and hospitality

industry, poor infrastructure, a lack of professionalism and service quality, and the high cost of tourism in Ghana (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015). For instance, Ghana is seen as an expensive tourist destination because of the high cost of lodging and air transport. In 2011, the daily rate for a room in a four-star hotel in Ghana averaged USD315, whereas rates in Kenya and USA were USD208 and USD165 respectively. Moreover, Frimpong-Bonsu (2015) states that the hospitality industry in Ghana suffers from high employee turnover due to job dissatisfaction and workplace stress. Similarly, Commey, Sarkodie and Frimpong (2016) maintain that a lack of skilled employees, especially within small hotels, continues to be a challenge for the hospitality and tourism industry in Ghana.

To address these challenges, several initiatives have been implemented by relevant stakeholders. These include the establishment of the National Tourism Development Plan and the Tourism Development Fund, the provision of incentives, and skills development (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015). The identified challenges signify that the sector requires measures such as improving employee satisfaction through better compensation packages, opportunities for career development, and flexible work schedules. More importantly, there is a need to improve the capacity of hospitality employees to occupy vital positions within the industry to enhance competitive positioning and improve quality service delivery and guest satisfaction. In so doing, the hospitality industry in Ghana can become more competitive within the sub-region by enhancing image and increasing competitiveness and profitability.

3.5   Challenges of working in the hospitality industry

As beneficial as it is to the different stakeholders, the hospitality industry is confronted with several challenges that negatively affect its performance (Salleh 2010). Some of these challenges relate to operational issues such as the long working hours of employees which has been found to impact negatively on their mental, emotional and physical health (Salleh 2010).

Jin-Zhao and Jing (2009) mention poor human resource management strategies as another challenge in the hospitality industry that leads to high employee turnover. Globally, there is a lack of skilled workers and a continuous concern in organisations to source suitably skilled employees. This naturally extends to the hospitality industry (Wang and Jing 2009). The situation is, however, aggravated by relatively low levels of employee motivation which may negatively affect service quality and customer satisfaction, again, resulting in high employee turnover (Salleh 2010).

3.6   Theories underpinning the study

Competency-based education in hospitality management is necessary to prepare graduates for working in the industry. Since theory and practice are inseparable, a review of relevant theories towards competency-based hospitality education is necessary. As the study aimed to address both curriculum and human development issues, both the curriculum theory and the human capital theory applied. They are explained below.

3.6.1 Curriculum theory

Curriculum theory is a set of related educational concepts that allow a systematic and illuminating perspective of curricula phenomena (Glatthorn *et al*. 2015). The argument is that the concept of "curriculum" is hardly new; however, the way it is comprehended and theorized by scholars has over the years altered. The way the curriculum is discussed is dependent on the situation prevailing at the theorizer's history, time and place. For Peterson and Kliebard (2010), this might be the reason for the different definitions of the term. They also suggest that developing a curriculum should illustrate the step-by-step answers to the questions of what should be taught, why and how.

Literature on curriculum theory (see Dewey 2001; Villegas and Lucas 2002; Kridel and Kridel 2012) points out the differing views of how curricula should be planned, developed, implemented and evaluated. For instance, Dewey (2001) centres his theory of curriculum on the learner in a democratic environment. Villegas and Lucas (2002) advocate for a curriculum that is culturally and ethnically diverse in nature. Boyd (2003) and Tyler (1949, in Dopson and Tas 2004) assert that curriculum is meant to guide and help educators to

make appropriate choices. According to them, educational experiences should meet the goals of the chosen educational system. Tyler further proposed that the curricula should be revised from time to time in order to keep in tune with society. This suggests that designing curricula is a cyclical approach of developing, implementing, monitoring, and carefully observing outcomes. Data available from the outcomes are then used to refine the curricula.

Curriculum theory has the ultimate goal of preparing the student for life in the best possible way. As put by Boyd (2003) and cited in Millar *et al.* (2008):

> The central theory of curriculum is simple. Human life however is varied and consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities. This requires only that one goes into the world of affairs and discovers the particulars of which their affairs consist. This will show the abilities, attitudes, habits, applications and forms of knowledge that men need (Millar *et al.* 2008 pp.38-50).

One major purpose of higher education is to prepare students for the field of work (Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest 2004). Curriculum, therefore, links institutions and industries to ensure that what is required of hospitality graduates is in fact taught to them. Simply put, the hospitality educator should prepare students for work in the hospitality industry by equipping them with the competencies expected of them in the field of work.

3.6.2 The human capital theory

Human capital includes the skills, knowledge, capabilities, and social and personal attributes embodied in people that can be translated into organisational productivity (Abel and Gabe 2011; Fulmer and Ployhart 2014). Some authors, such as Protogerou, Kontolaimou and Caloghirou (2017) and Teixeira and Tavares-Lehmann (2014), claim that human capital is crucial to industry's capacity to absorb and organize knowledge and to continuously innovate their business processes and offerings. Human capital is an important component for organisations to produce economic value and sustainability. In this sense, the human capital theory argues that individuals are capable of achieving self-

development and career advancement through investment in education, competence development and job experience (Berntson, Sverke and Marklund 2006).

If human capital is not adequately prepared for the jobs that they need to perform, a mismatch might occur between the competencies of employees and those expected by employers. This can have far-reaching consequences for organisations and industries. Because it supports investment in individuals and organisations with the aim to increase productivity through education, the human capital theory directly links to the objective of this study. Since the study sought to improve the development of human resources in hospitality, the human capital theory was relevant to the study.

The curriculum theory is also of relevance to the current study since the curriculum for technical universities serves as the benchmark for educating and training tertiary students as front office staff, housekeeping staff, food and beverage staff, and travel and tourism staff. In this regard, and in agreement with Caire and Becker (2006), the curriculum approach to training tertiary students in technical universities in Ghana is a specific human capital strategy aimed at providing expert knowledge in hospitality management. The two theories suggest collaboration between university and industry to determine the needs of hospitality students. This can be done by considering the competencies industry requires and those exhibited by graduates, which will lead to the industry requirements, as shown in figure 3.1. If curriculum developers and reviewers adhere to this, the required human capital would be produced for the industry.

It is clear from the review of existing frameworks on graduate competencies in the hospitality industry that, despite attempts by researchers to provide solutions to the competency gap indicated by hospitality educators and industry practitioners, no consensus has been reached yet. As a result, this study constructed a framework which consolidates the crucial competencies and gaps, as highlighted by previous studies, and empirical data collected from hospitality educators and industry experts. This framework is expected to serve as a guide for developing graduate competencies in hospitality education within the Ghanaian context in order to help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

3.7 Conceptual framework of the study

In their quest to supply industry with suitably trained graduates, tertiary institutions need to ensure that their curricula address the concerns from industry (Starkey *et al.* 2004). In achieving this in the Ghanaian context, figure 3.1 relates the main constructs of the study and presents the conceptual framework for the study.
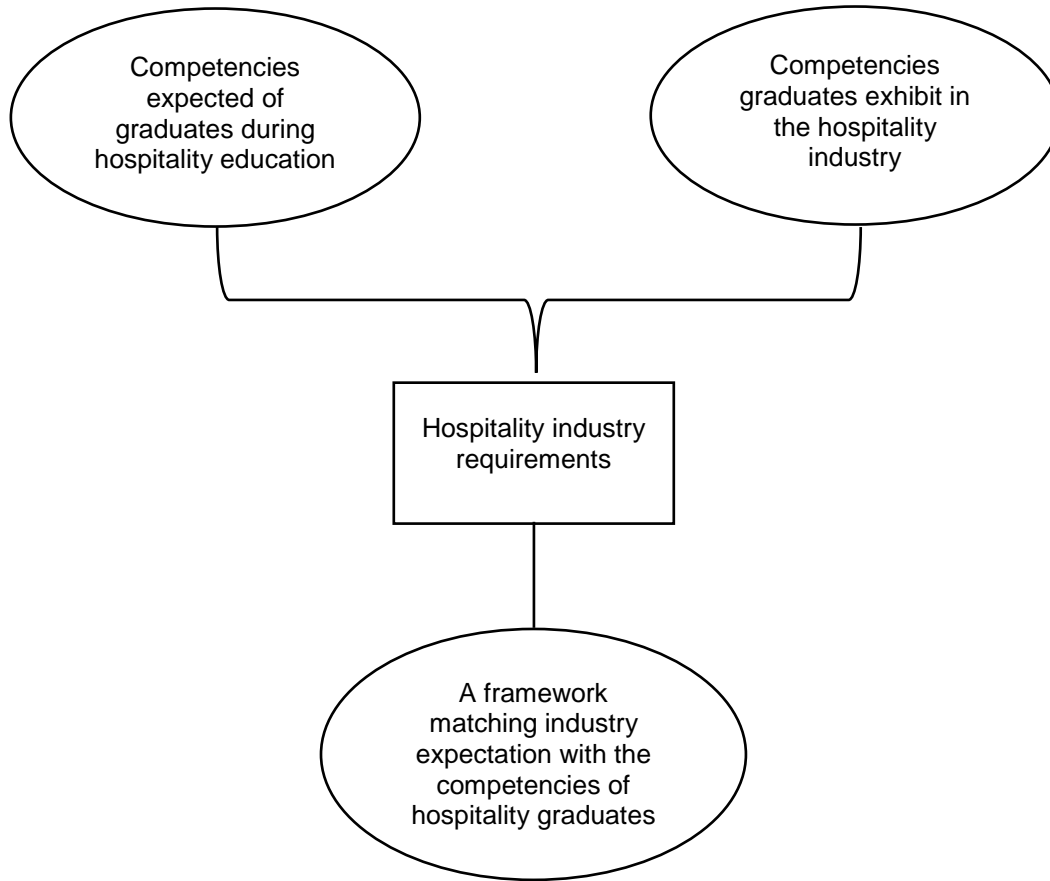
Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework of the study

Source: Author's construct (2020)

The competencies expected of hospitality graduates not only needed to be determined (both from the literature and industry itself), but the extent to which graduates exhibit these competencies also had to be measured. This informed the gaps between what curricula teach students and what industry expects from them. Thus, the gaps identified informed the framework so that the curriculum offerings could be matched with industry expectations.

3.8   Summary

This chapter discussed the hospitality industry from the global, African and Ghanaian perspective. It elaborated on the challenges of working in the hospitality industry and discussed the theories underpinning the study, namely curriculum theory and the human capital theory. Lastly, the chapter presented the conceptual framework for the study.

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CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

Research involves a series of steps in a process through which new knowledge is discovered. These steps are designed and executed with a goal of finding answers to issues that are of concern to the researcher and/or society at large (Bougie and Sekaran 1993). According to Saunder *et al.* (2019), the term "methods" refer to the techniques and procedures used to obtain and analyze data, while "methodology" refers to the theory of how research should be undertaken. Therefore, research methodology can be explained as a guide for conducting research which involves the various systematic techniques adopted in a research study. According to Kothari (2004: 8), "research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. In it, we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them".

The chapter discusses the methodological approach adopted for this study. It describes the research philosophy and provides a detailed explanation of the research approach and design used for the study. The chapter justifies the population and sampling procedures alongside the measuring instrument employed for the study. The chapter further outlines the process involved in conducting the pilot study for the quantitative part of the study, as well as the data collection analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary of the discussions.

4.2   Research philosophy/paradigm

As alluded to in chapter 1, the study adhered to pragmatism as an ontological stance and critical realism as epistemology. Creswell (2014), Hall (2013), Shannon-Baker (2016), and Maarouf (2019) emphasize that pragmatism mainly focuses on providing solutions to practical problems in the physical world instead of assumptions relating to the nature of knowledge. In the same vein, Vosloo (2014) states that the core objective of realism is to proceed beyond the portraiture of relationships to uncover how such relationships emerged. In this regard, realists are of the opinion that the social world has to be

understood in its totality. As such, Vosloo (2014) recommends the adoption of in-depth interviews or focus groups to obtain reliable and valid data for a study situated in the realism paradigm. As mentioned in chapter 1, the study envisaged the use of pragmatism and critical realism since it sought to apply both positivism and interpretivism in the investigation so as to make the findings robust and overcome the weaknesses of each stance.

4.3   Research approach and design

As indicated in chapter 1, the main research approach employed for the study was a mixed approach. According to Cohen *et al.* (2018), a mixed-methods approach involves the application of quantitative and qualitative research methods to solve pertinent problems. Quantitative research methods were employed in the study as they are used to create meaning and new knowledge by quantifying data. Such research is highly objective and uses statistical tools to analyze and interpret the results of the data. The intent is to establish, confirm or validate the relationships and develop generalizations that contribute to theory (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007).

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative methods are useful for investigating a variety of problems, including assessment of attitudes, opinion, conditions and procedures. Bryman and Becker (2012) assert that qualitative research methods emphasize words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data. In view of this, Kaplan and Maxwell (2005) explain that the goal of understanding a phenomenon from participants' point of view in its particular social and institutional context is largely lost when textual data are quantified.

Using mixed methods allowed the researcher to follow rigorous procedures in collecting and analyzing data appropriate to each method tradition, such as ensuring the appropriate sample size for quantitative and qualitative analysis. Mixed methods also helped the researcher to ensure that the study findings are grounded in participants' experience. According to Vosloo (2014: 316), "research design is viewed as the functional plan in which certain research methods and procedures are linked together to acquire a reliable and valid body of data for empirically grounded analyses, conclusions and theory

formulation". To this end, the study employed the case study design because, as Saunders *et al.* (2016) explained, this design is used when the researcher wants to find out the solution of a little known situation, a specific activity or event. Techniques employed may include interviews, observation, documentary analysis and discussion with on-site people related to that particular case (Saunders *et al.* 2016).

A case study offers verifiable data from direct observations of the individual entity involved. These observations provide information about input processes and can show the path taken to uncover the results. The observations allow others, in similar circumstances, to potentially replicate the results. According to Kumar (2011: 123), "in a case study design the 'case' you select becomes the basis of a thorough, holistic and in-depth exploration of the aspect(s) that you want to find out about". The case study strategy was appropriate since the researcher wished to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the phenomenon being considered, namely how the competencies of hospitality graduates can be matched with the expectations from the hospitality industry in the Ghanaian context.

4.4   Population

"Population" refers to the entire group of people, events or objects that the researcher intends to study. Vinsi (2014) describes the population of a study as the entire set of events, elements or cases that the study investigates. As this study utilized a mixed-methods approach, it involved a population for the qualitative and quantitative phase. This is discussed as follows:

4.4.1   Quantitative phase

The population for the quantitative part of the study consisted of both hospitality graduates and industry employers. Hospitality graduates from five technical universities were targeted. The selections of the graduates from the five technical universities were informed by the geographical locations of these institutions across the country. All graduates had completed their higher national diploma (HND). This group was indefinite or unknown and included all graduates who had worked in the industry as interns for two

long vacations in two years as the university curriculum demanded. Using the list from the industrial liaison's offices of the universities, a target population of 589 graduates was identified from the five technical universities that formed part of the study.

Table 4.1 below shows the participating five technical universities with their respective population and sample for the study. The figures were provided by the universities' industrial liaison's offices.

Table 4.1: Sample sizes for the study

Target Population (HND Hospitality graduates)	Total Population	Sample Size
Accra Technical University	261	157
Cape Coast Technical University	90	73
Kumasi Technical University	88	72
Takoradi Technical University	90	73
Tamale Technical University	60	52
Totals: Graduate students	**589**	**238**

Source: Author's construct (2019)

For the industry employers, the population consisted of all three-star and four-star hotel managers in Ghana. The rationale for this selection was based on the fact that the adherence to standards and best practices of higher-rated hotels are higher than that of low-rated hotels. Overall, 70 hotel managers (employers) in the Ghanaian hospitality industry were targeted for the study.

4.4.2   Qualitative phase

For the qualitative part of the study, the population consisted of all hospitality lecturers and heads of departments of the five technical universities selected for the study. This included five heads of departments and 35 lecturers, totaling 40 individuals.

4.5   Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting the best representative element from the population, enabling the researcher to collect data from a sub-group rather than from all possible cases or elements (Catterall 2000). Due to the nature of the population in this study, non-

probability sampling techniques were used to select the samples. According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), non-probability sampling techniques are non-random in nature and provide a range of alternative techniques to select samples, the majority of which include an element of subjective judgement.

The process of selecting a sample from a population in qualitative and quantitative research is guided by two opposing philosophies (Kumar 2011). Kumar (2011) maintains that, from a quantitative perspective, the sample for a study is selected in such a way that it is unbiased and reflects the population from which it was selected. However, in a qualitative study, it is argued that, in accessing the potential study participants, the researcher's perception that a participant has adequate knowledge about a phenomenon, episode, or event of interest may influence the sample size or selection of sample size for the study. The sampling for the two phases of the study is explained below.

4.5.1 Quantitative phase

In the quantitative study, the essence of sampling was to make inferences from the target group or population from which the researcher selected the sample. In the quantitative phase, the purposive sampling technique was used to sample hospitality graduates. This is because Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) assert that there is an assumption that a researcher's knowledge about the population and its elements is used to hand picks those deemed appropriate and, provides additional advantage of facilitating the selection of respondents whose qualities and experiences are required for the study (Bradshaw, Atkinson and Doody 2017). This helped the researcher to engage with a large number of graduates who were appropriate, available and ready to be study participants. From a total population of 589, a sample size of 238 was projected to participate in the study. Ultimately, the response rate was 91%, which is 216 participated in the online survey. This sample was arrived at by using Yamane formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}, where \ n = the \ sample \ size, N = population \ size, e = level \ of \ precision$$

$$n = \frac{589}{1 + 589(0.05)^2} = 238$$

The calculation of the sample sizes (for hospitality students and hospitality employers) was based on the calculation of 30% of the population. Cohen and Manion (1980) assert that, for quality research, 30% of the study population is a fair representation for an acceptable accuracy of results. In this study, 30% of the drawn population (589) was 177 approximately.

Starting with a few contact numbers, the researcher was given contact numbers of other hospitality graduates working in the industry. The researcher had to call to discuss the online survey and asked their permission before the survey was sent to them. Moreover, hospitality employers were purposively and conveniently contacted to participate in the study. A pool of contacts of hospitality industry employers were collected from their hospitality association president and was contacted one by one to invite them to respond to the questionnaire. In all, 70 employers were contacted of which 43 responded – this yielded a response rate of 61%.

4.5.2 Qualitative phase

According to Kumar (2011), sampling in qualitative research involves gaining in-depth knowledge about a phenomenon as seen through the eyes of individuals. It assumes that individuals are typical of the group and will, therefore, provide insight into the group's perspective on the phenomenon. In the qualitative phase, heads of departments and lecturers from the five technical universities in Ghana were purposively and conveniently invited to a forum to discuss the outcomes of the study and the proposed framework. The researcher selected at least two representatives from each technical university. A 30% calculation of the population, as suggested by Cohen and Manion, was used, which was 30% of 40 lecturers. Thus, 12 lecturers were selected for the study. This group consisted of five heads of departments and seven lecturers from the sampled universities (at least one lecturer from each university).

4.6 Measuring instrument

The data for the study were collected in two phases. The first phase involved quantitative data collection where two questionnaires were administered to hospitality graduates and hospitality industry employers respectively. The second phase involved interviews with

hospitality management lecturers, consisting of heads of departments and lecturers. The data-gathering instruments for each phase are explained below.

4.6.1   Quantitative phase

The quantitative data were gathered using two structured questionnaires: one was administered to hospitality graduates (see annexure A) and the other to hospitality industry employers (see annexure B). The questionnaires were informed by extensive previous research on the topic (see Walsh and Linton 2001; Chan and Coleman 2004; Jauhari 2006; Lee *et al*. 2006; Ricci 2010; Kalargyrou and Woods 2011b; Kokt and Strydom 2014; Andrews 2015; Balakrishnan 2016) and consisted of the following sections:

The *hospitality graduate questionnaire* (based on Kokt and Strydom 2014) consisted of:

- **Section A:** Demographic profile of respondents

- **Section B:** Hospitality graduates' self-assessment of their competencies

The *hospitality employers questionnaire* (based on Kokt and Strydom 2014) consisted of:

- **Section A:** The competencies that employers require of hospitality graduates

- **Section B:** Competencies expected from hospitality graduates

Section A questions sought to obtain biographical information from the respondents (age, gender, highest academic qualification and position).

Both Section B questionnaires used a six-point Likert-type scale to extract scores of either low or high values. The rationale for using a six-point scale was to eliminate an easy (neutral) response category in case of time constraints or laziness (Kokt and Palmer 2018). The questionnaires were developed into an online survey using Google Forms. Cronbach's alpha was used to gauge the reliability of the survey instruments (Taber 2018). A pilot study preceded the main data-gathering phase for both questionnaires

(Fraenkel and Wallen 2012). They were pretested for purposes of comprehension, readability, and easiness of administration.

Pilot study

The pretesting of a research instrument is considered to be a method of examining whether or not the questions prepared for the study will be understood by the targeted population. It also helps in minimizing sampling error and increasing questionnaire response rates (Ikart 2019). Geisen and Murphy (2020) and Cyr (2019) suggest that the normal flow of the survey instrument should be pretested to ensure that the results of the sample are representative of the actual survey target population. For this study, to avoid inconsistencies in the data results and ensure that all possible anomalies can be corrected, all data collection instruments to be used were pretested.

The pilot study for this research was carried out in the last week of January 2020 and the first week of February 2020. Due to financial and time constraints, 30 graduate respondents were selected to take part in the pretesting. These respondents were contacted through mobile phone calls and the researcher had to meet them on the campus of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Accra Institute of Distance Learning. They were hospitality graduates from the various technical universities who are working in the industry and have come for further studies on a part-time basis. After all the respondents had completed their sessions, the major problems were identified and addressed. The survey questionnaire and the focus group interview questions were reviewed by the researcher in light of the objectives of the study.

The results obtained from the pilot study showed that out of the 30 respondents sampled for the test, only two, which represented 6.6% of the graduates, were unable to provide the expected answers to the questions that sought to elicit their views on questions structured to address the study's research problems. Such questions were therefore modified to the students' level of understanding.

4.6.2 Qualitative phase

Related to the qualitative part of the study, focus group interviews were scheduled with heads of hospitality management departments and hospitality lecturers of the five selected technical universities. As it is imperative that qualitative research be conducted in a rigorous and methodical manner to produce meaningful and useful results, the validity and reliability (thus the trustworthiness) of qualitative research are important. The following principles were considered:

Credibility is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. The current investigation ensured credibility by following a rigorous research procedure that allowed for the gathering of sufficient and credible data from participants. The researcher ensured the credibility of the study by drawing on the suggestions and approval from experts in the area of study, especially the promoters. Recommendations obtained helped to improve the structure and suitability of the tools used, such as the questionnaire and focus group interview guide.

Transferability relates to the transfer of findings to other contexts. The current investigation ensured transferability by examining the findings of similar studies. These also informed the focus group interview guide. In turn, the quantitative results of the study informed the focus group interview guide.

Dependability entails ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable and clearly documented. Dependability was ensured in this investigation by adopting a systematic research methodology and meticulously documenting and transcribing all interviews. All the focus group interviews were recorded.

Conformability implies that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data and that the researcher demonstrates how conclusions and interpretations have been reached. Confirmability was ensured in this study by developing objective interview questions based on the research objectives and meticulously documenting the entire process. When credibility, transferability and dependability have all been achieved, confirmability has been established (Baker 2004; Nowell *et al.* 2017).

4.7   Data collection

All participants were contacted beforehand to secure their participation in the study. They were informed that participation is voluntary and anonymous. Depending on their availability, hospitality graduates and employers were either requested to complete online Google Form questionnaires on WhatsApp or via email. Lecturers also participated in Zoom interviews in groups of two or three to allow for interactive discussion between participants (thus focus groups) (Saunders *et al.* 2007). All the focus group discussions via Zoom were recorded to enable the researcher to listen to the deliberations again. Detailed notes were also taken during focus group interviews.

4.8   Data analysis

For the quantitative study, descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to the data. Descriptive methods included graphs and tables which were generated by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) version 23. Inferential methods included the Shapiro Wilk test to determine whether the variables were normally distributed. The p-value of the Shapiro Wilk test was less than 0.05, meaning that the variables were not normally distributed; therefore, the test could not be used. The Mann-Whitney U test was thus used to compare the self-assessment ratings of the hospitality industry and those of the hospitality industry employers.

Regarding qualitative data, Saunders *et al.* (2007: 478) state that there is no standardized approach to their analysis. Qualitative researchers use inductive reasoning, make observations and then draw inferences about larger and more general phenomena. In the current investigation, the researcher used thematic content analysis to analyze the data. Thematic content analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights. A major advantage of thematic content analysis is the flexibility it affords the researcher. It can also be modified according to the needs of different studies, providing rich and detailed data (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:2). In this regard, sub-themes were

generated, where necessary, due to the nature of the qualitative investigation, namely discussions.

To perform the thematic content analysis, the researcher followed the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006, in Maguire and Delahunt 2017: 3354) as set out below:

1. **Become familiar with the data:** The interview data were transcribed and the researcher scrutinized the recordings and transcripts several times to form initial ideas.

2. **Generate initial codes:** The data were organized in a meaningful and systematic way. Through coding, the data were reduced to smaller chunks.

3. **Search for themes:** At this stage, the codes were organized into potential themes, along with the data relevant to each theme.

4. **Review themes:** The themes identified in step 3 were reviewed, modified and developed further.

5. **Define themes:** The themes were named, and definitions were provided for each theme.
6. **Write-up:** Quotations from the data were selected to provide evidence of the identified themes.

4.9   Summary

The chapter extensively dealt with the methodological approach adopted for this study. It described the research philosophy, approach and design. The chapter detailed the population and sampling procedures, data-gathering instrument, data collection and data analysis. It concluded by presented the chapter summary. Overall, the chapter outlined the tools and procedures applied to the planning and organisation conducted to achieve the study aim and objectives.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion and analysis of the findings of the data collected. As alluded to before, for the quantitative study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to interpret and analyze the data. Google Forms was used to gather the data from respondents, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) version 23 was employed to generate both the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics for the quantitative analysis.

In the qualitative phase, all recorded data from the interviews and discussions were fully transcribed. The qualitative content analysis method was used to summarize the informational content of the data. Themes and categories were formed after the first two interviews. Information that was subsequently gathered was fitted into the categories and some new categories were formed. This was to inform each following interview and detect whether any new themes were emerging.

5.2 Quantitative research results

The section below details the results from the quantitative part of the study which included the questionnaires administered to hospitality graduates and hospitality industry employers. Descriptive statistics uses data to provide descriptions of a population sample through numerical calculation presented by frequency tables, graphs or pie charts. In this study, tables, graphs and pie charts were used to describe the data by highlighting the frequencies, percentages and the mean.

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5.2.1 Hospitality graduates' questionnaire

Section A: Demographic profile of hospitality graduates

This section describes the demographic variables of hospitality graduates. The demographic data comprised gender, age, highest qualification and current position.

In question 1, hospitality graduates had to indicate their gender. As indicated in figure 5.1 below, there were 44 male and 173 female respondents, representing 20% and 80% of the total number of 216 respondents respectively. This dispersion could be attributed to the sampling technique adopted for the study.
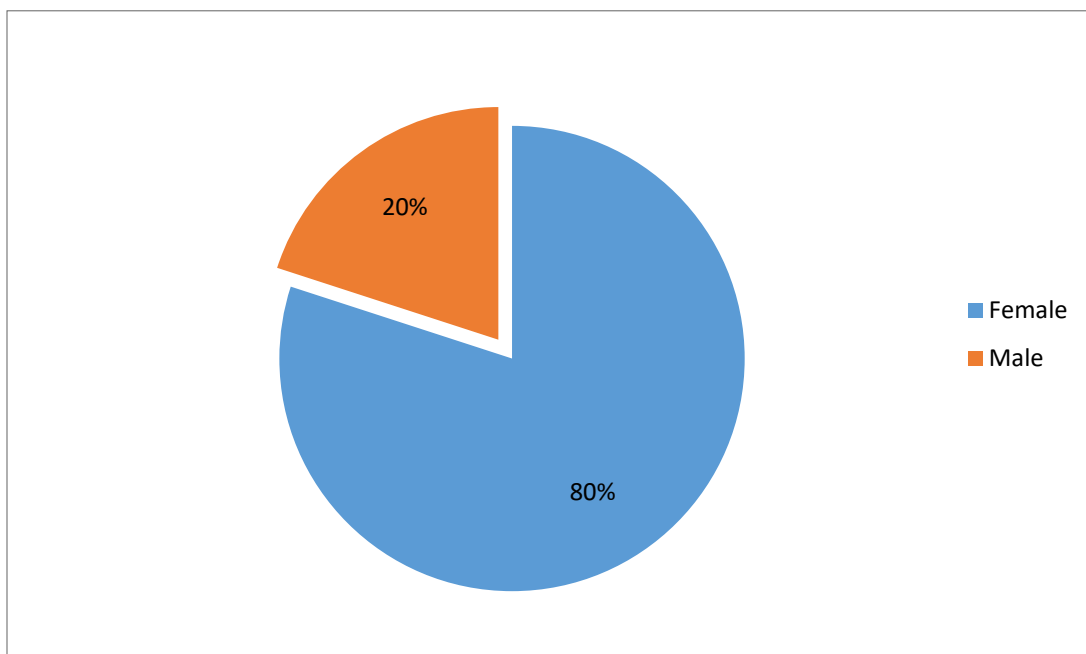
Figure 5.1: Gender of hospitality graduates

In question 2, hospitality graduates had to indicate their age. As depicted in figure 5.2 below, the majority of the respondents were aged between 20 and 30 years (72%), followed by respondents aged between 31 and 40 years (22%). Also, 5% of respondents were aged between 41 and 50 years, while only 1% were aged between 51 and 60 years. This distribution connotes that overall sample taken is quite youthful and consistent with the age structure of the 2010 Ghanaian population (Population and Housing Census, 2010).

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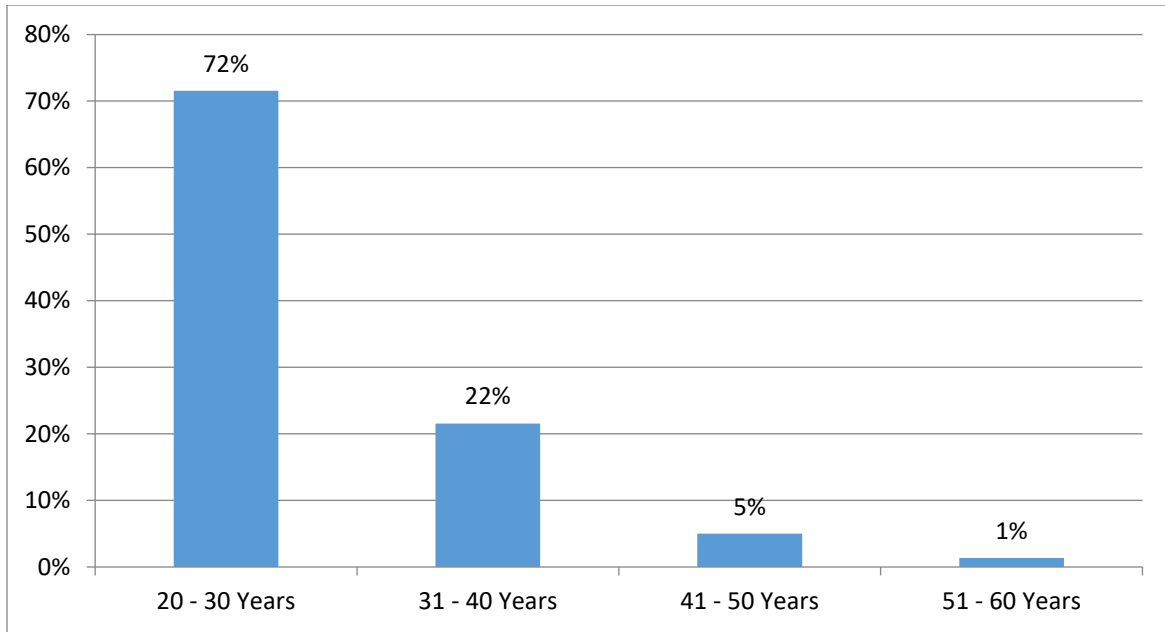
Figure 5.2: Age of hospitality graduates

In question 3, hospitality graduates were required to indicate their highest qualifications. As shown in figure 5.3 below, out of 216 respondents, the majority had obtained an advanced diploma (35%), whereas 24% indicated a BTech/honours degree. A total of 17% had obtained a diploma, while 12% had obtained a post graduate diploma. Only 11% of the respondents were master's degree holders, whereas 1% held a PhD. This distribution validates the effectiveness of data collected. In view of this, Massing and Schneider (2017) demonstrated that educational qualifications and graduates' competency are highly related because the more opportunities for knowledge acquisition are provided to and used by graduates, the higher the level of formal education and basic competencies attained to remain integral in the society.

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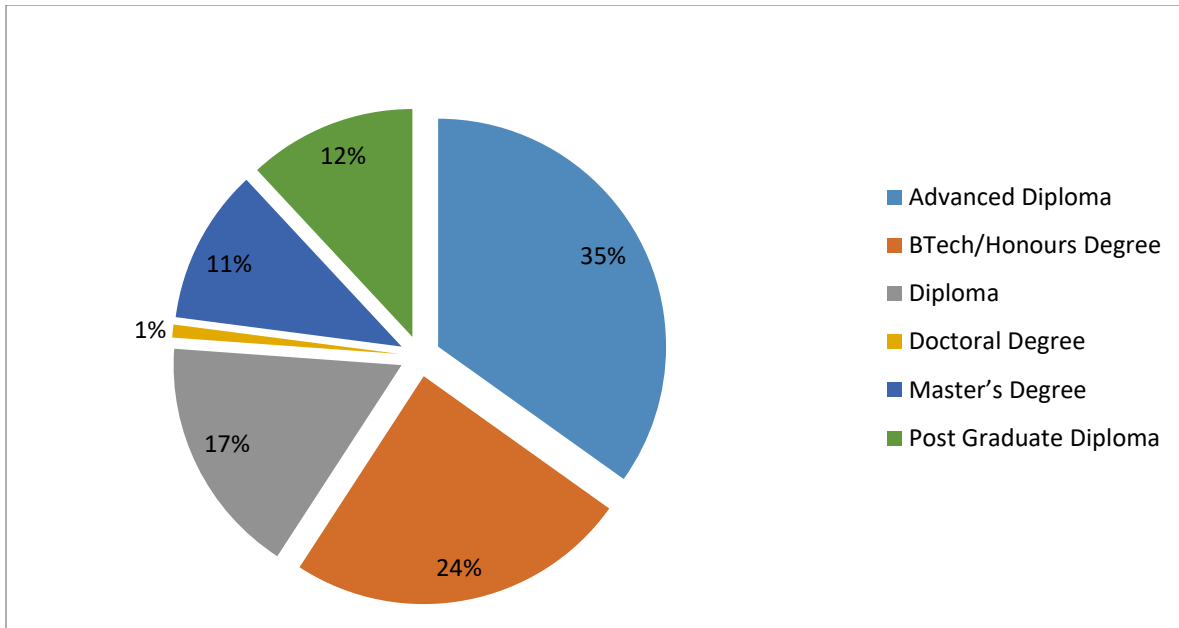
Figure 5.3: Highest qualification of hospitality graduates

Question 4 required hospitality graduates to indicate their current position in the workplace. As illustrated in figure 5.4 below, out of 216 respondents, a large number (40%) were students / interns, while 12% were chefs / cooks. A total of 10% worked as front office executives, whereas 9% held the position of admin / operations manager. Six per cent each were lecturers / teachers, food and beverage supervisors, and housekeepers, while 4% each were either hotel / guest house managers or self-employed. Only 2% held the position of sales / marketing officers, whereas 1% had no job (unemployed). Massing and Schneider (2017) explain that current job position impacts competency formation among graduates. This finding also justifies the sampling procedure adopted in recruiting respondents for the study.
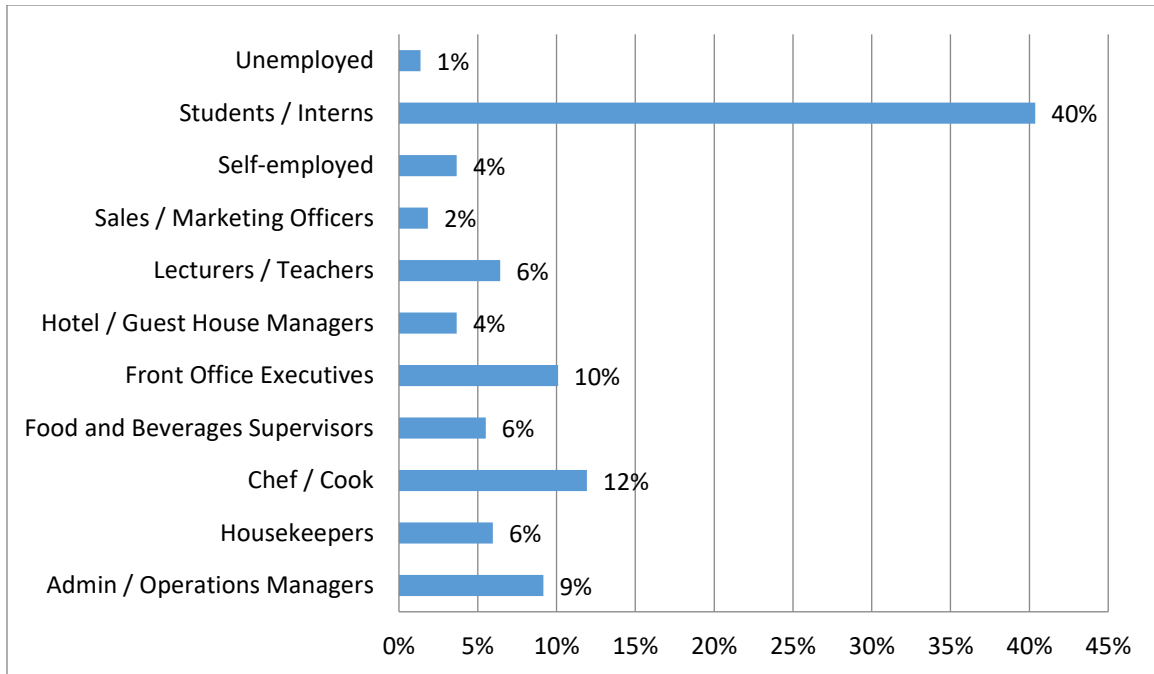
Figure 5.4: Current position of hospitality graduates

Section B: Hospitality graduates' self-assessment of their competencies

a. Knowledge required from hospitality graduates

This section deals with the perception of hospitality graduates about the knowledge required from them in order to succeed in the hospitality industry. The perceptions regarding the knowledge required from hospitality graduates are presented in table 5.1 which highlights the various frequencies.

Table 5.1: Knowledge required from hospitality graduates

Q		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	N
5.1	I know the laws that govern hospitality establishments	4.10%	1.40%	4.10%	11.00%	44.50%	34.90%	216
5.2	I know the basic principles of hospitality marketing	4.10%	0.50%	5.00%	10.10%	44.50%	35.80%	216
5.3	I have sufficient knowledge of finance and accounting	5.50%	4.10%	3.20%	25.70%	45.40%	16.10%	216
5.4	I know how the various hospitality divisions operate, e.g. room division, front office, etc.	4.60%	-	1.40%	10.10%	26.60%	57.30%	216
5.5	I know how to utilize the various types of utensils, tools and equipment	4.10%	-	2.20%	10.60%	29.40%	53.70%	216

5.6	I know how to maintain the various utensils, tools and equipment	5.00%	0.50%	2.20%	10.60%	30.30%	51.40%	**216**

From table 5.1, it can be observed that 44.5% of hospitality graduates (questions 5.1 and 5.2) agreed that they know the laws that govern hospitality establishments and that they are aware of the basic principles of hospitality marketing. Out of the 216 respondents, 45.4% (question 5.3) indicated that they have sufficient knowledge of finance and accounting. A total of 57.3% (question 5.4) strongly agreed that they know how the various hospitality divisions operate, e.g., room division, front office, etc. Out of the 216 hospitality graduates, 53.7% (question 5.5) strongly held the opinion that they know how to utilize the various types of utensils, tools and equipment. Similarly, 51.4% of hospitality graduates strongly indicated their knowledge of maintaining the various utensils, tools and equipment (question 5.6).

b. Skills required from hospitality graduates

This section deals with the perception of hospitality graduates about the skills required of them in order to succeed in the hospitality industry. The perceptions regarding the skills required of hospitality graduates are presented in table 5.2 which depicts the various frequencies.

Table 5.2: Skills required from hospitality graduates

Q		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	N
6.1	I possess adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills	5.50%	1.40%	6.00%	7.30%	43.60%	36.20%	**216**
6.2	I have good communication skills	5.50%	-	3.20%	4.60%	31.20%	55.50%	**216**
6.3	I possess good interpersonal skills	6.00%	-	2.30%	3.20%	33.00%	55.50%	**216**
6.4	I possess good digital skills	3.70%	2.30%	4.60%	16.50%	47.20%	25.70%	**216**
6.5	I have good decision-making skills	5.50%	0.50%	1.80%	5.00%	42.70%	44.50%	**216**
6.6	I have adequate problem-solving skills	5.50%	4.10%	3.70%	6.40%	45.40%	34.90%	**216**

According to table 5.2, 43.6% of hospitality graduates (question 6.1) stated that they possess adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills. Of the respondents, 55.5% (questions 6.2 and 6.3) strongly concurred that they have good communication skills as well as good interpersonal skills. According to 47.2% of respondents, they possess good digital skills (question 6.4), while 44.5% strongly believed they have good decision-making skills (question 6.5). Furthermore, out of the 216 respondents, 45.4% (question 6.6) mentioned that they have adequate problem-solving skills.

c. Attributes and abilities required from hospitality graduates

This section focuses on the perception of hospitality graduates about the attributes and abilities required of them in order to grow and succeed in the hospitality industry. The perceptions regarding the attributes and abilities required of hospitality graduates are presented in table 5.3 which shows the various frequencies.

Table 5.3: Attributes and abilities required from hospitality graduates

Q		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	N
7.1	I am friendly and approachable	5.00%	1.40%	1.80%	3.70%	20.20%	67.90%	216
7.2	I am customer oriented	5.00%	0.90%	2.80%	2.30%	28.40%	60.60%	216
7.3	I am a good team player	5.50%	-	4.10%	1.80%	26.60%	62.00%	216
7.4	I am generally self-motivated	5.00%	0.90%	2.30%	2.80%	37.20%	51.80%	216
7.5	I have critical thinking ability	5.00%	1.40%	4.10%	8.30%	38.10%	43.10%	216
7.6	I am able to adapt to environmental change	5.50%	0.90%	1.80%	5.00%	35.00%	51.80%	216
7.7	I maintain professional standards	4.60%	2.30%	2.30%	6.00%	27.90%	56.90%	216
7.8	I am innovative and can think of new ways of doing things	5.00%	1.40%	2.30%	8.20%	31.70%	51.40%	216
7.9	I possess the ability to write business communications	6.00%	4.10%	6.40%	17.90%	35.80%	29.80%	216

According to table 5.3, 67.9% of hospitality graduates (question 7.1) strongly agreed that they are friendly and approachable, whereas 60.6% (question 7.2) strongly agreed that they are customer oriented. Likewise, 62% of respondents (question 7.3) revealed that they are good team players, while 51.8% (question 7.4) firmly agreed that they are generally self-motivated. Less than half, namely 43.1%, of respondents (question 7.5),

strongly agreed that they have critical thinking abilities, whereas 51.8% (question 7.6) keenly stated that they are able to adapt to environmental change. In addition, 56.9% of respondents (question 7.7) strongly stated that they are able to maintain professional standards, while 51.4% (question 7.8) firmly agreed that they are innovative and have the ability to think of new ways of doing things. Out of the 216 respondents, 35.8% (question 7.9) agreed that they possess the ability to write business communications.

5.2.2 Hospitality Industry Employers Questionnaire
Section A: Demographic profile of hospitality industry employers

This section describes the demographic variables of hospitality industry employers. The demographic data comprised gender, age, highest qualification and current position.

In question 1, hospitality industry employers had to indicate their gender. As indicated in figure 5.5 below, there were 19 male and 24 female respondents, representing 44% and 56% of the total number of 43 respondents respectively.
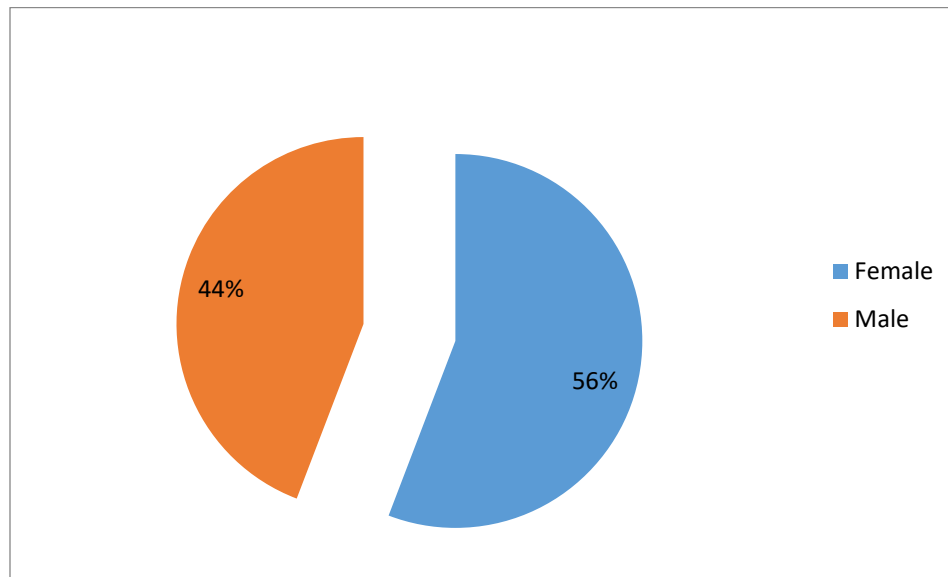
Figure 5.5: Gender of hospitality industry employers

In question 2, hospitality industry employers had to indicate their age. As shown in figure 5.6 below, the majority of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years (44%) followed by respondents aged between 41 and 50 years (21%). A total of 19% were aged between 20 and 30 years, while only 16% were above 50 years.
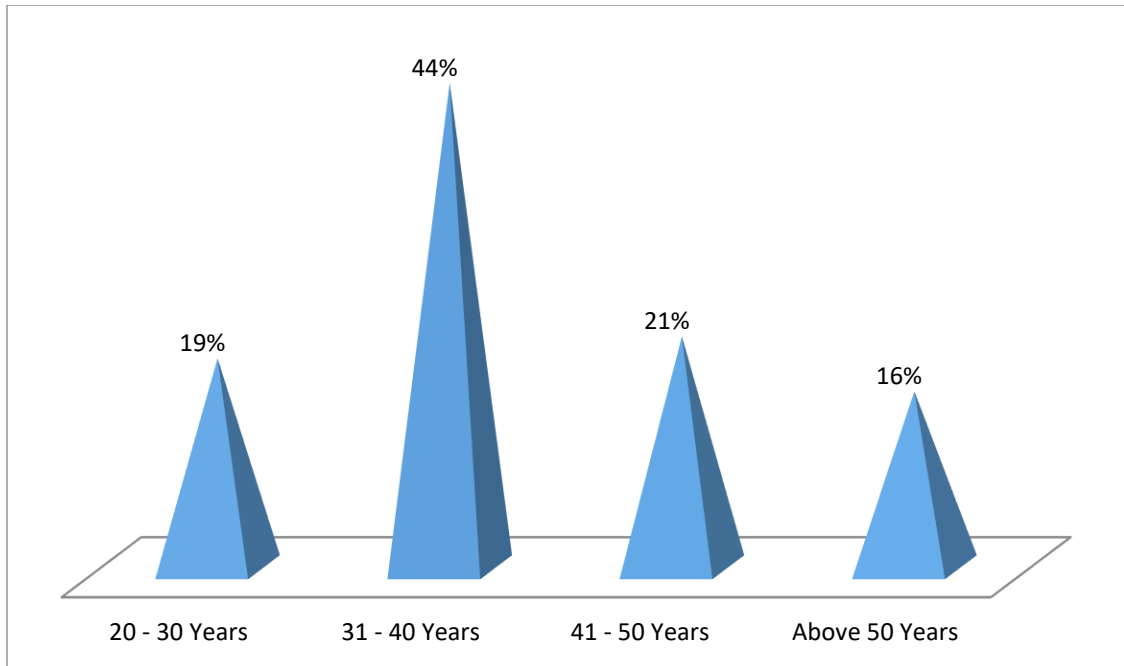
Figure 5.6: Age of hospitality industry employers

In question 3, hospitality industry employers were required to indicate their highest qualifications. As shown in figure 5.7 below, out of the 43 respondents, the majority had obtained a master's degree (40%), followed by BTech/honours degree holders (28%). Nine per cent each of respondents had acquired an advanced diploma, diploma and post graduate diploma. Only 5% held a doctoral degree.
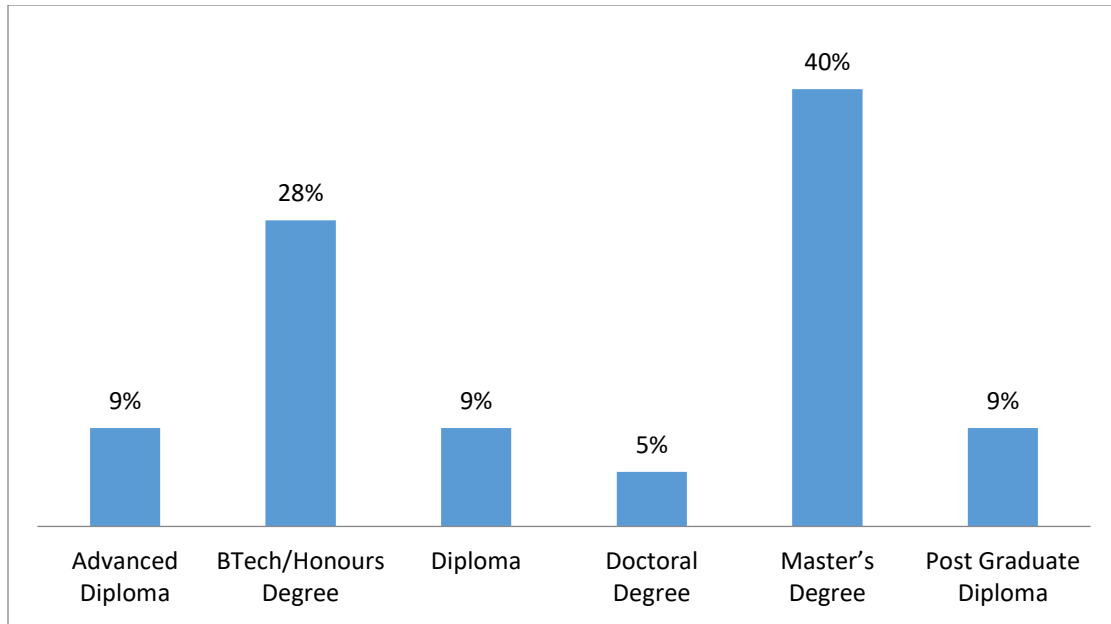
Figure 5.7: Highest qualification of hospitality industry employers

Questions 4 required hospitality industry employers to indicate their current position at the workplace. As illustrated in figure 5.8 below, out of the 43 respondents, the majority (37%) were managers / supervisors at their departments, while 19% were lecturers at educational institutions. A total of 16% of respondents were hotel / general managers, whereas 12% were entrepreneurs within the industry. Nine per cent worked as chefs / food and beverage managers, while 5% were administrators at their various establishments. Only 2% of respondents indicated to have retired from their employment or working in the hospitality industry.
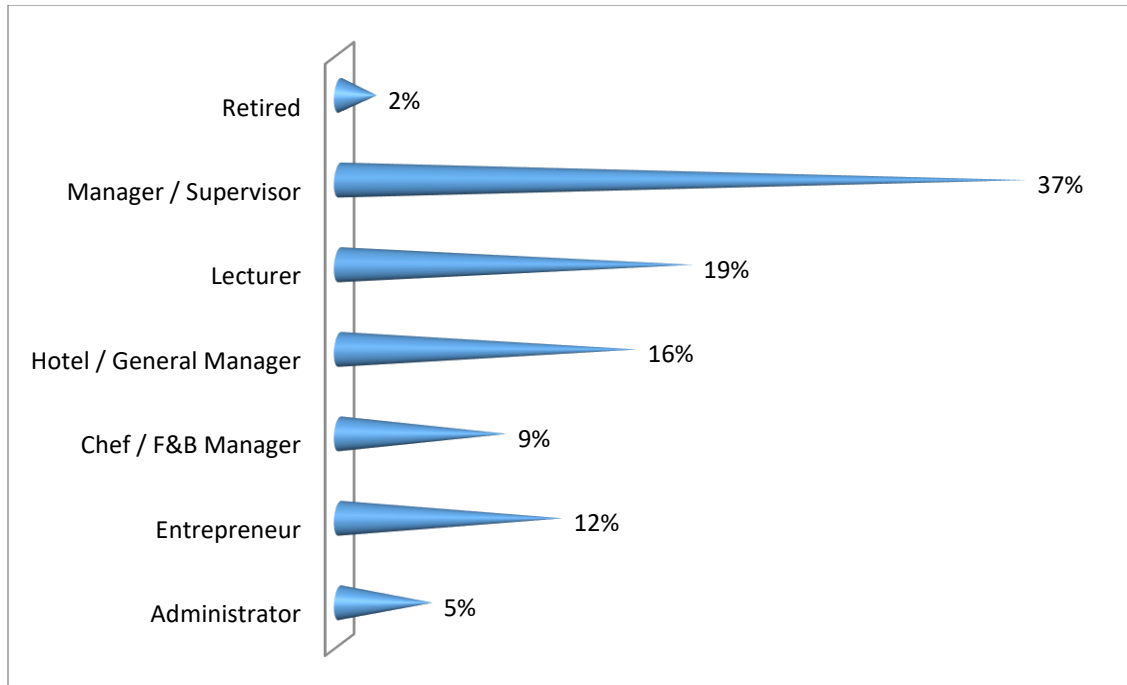
Figure 5.8: Current position of hospitality industry employers

Overall, the demographic characteristics of the hospitality employers indicate the effectiveness of the data collected for the study as well as the sampling procedure adopted as indicated in the methodology chapter.

Section B: The competencies that employers require of hospitality graduates
a. Knowledge required of hospitality graduates from the perspective of industry employers

This section deals with the perception of hospitality industry employers about the knowledge required of hospitality graduates in order to succeed in the hospitality industry. The perceptions regarding the knowledge required of hospitality graduates from industry employers are presented in table 5.4 which highlights the various frequencies.

Table 5.4: Knowledge required from hospitality graduates by industry employers

Q		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	N
5.1	Hospitality graduates know the laws that govern hospitality establishments	4.60%	9.30%	16.30%	18.60%	25.60%	25.60%	43
5.2	Hospitality graduates have a basic understanding of hospitality marketing	9.30%	4.70%	11.60%	11.60%	37.20%	25.60%	43
5.3	Hospitality graduates have sufficient knowledge of finance and accounting	-	16.30%	9.30%	23.20%	44.20%	7.00%	43
5.4	Hospitality graduates know how the various hospitality divisions operate, e.g., room division, front office, etc.	4.60%	2.30%	7.00%	14.00%	34.90%	37.20%	43
5.5	Hospitality graduates know how to utilize the various types of utensils, tools and equipment	4.70%	9.30%	4.70%	20.90%	37.20%	23.20%	43
5.6	Hospitality graduates know how to maintain the various utensils, tools and equipment	2.30%	11.60%	16.30%	14.00%	30.20%	25.60%	43

From table 5.4, it can be observed that 25.6% of hospitality industry employers (question 5.1) agreed and strongly agreed that hospitality graduates know the laws that govern hospitality establishments. Also, 37.2% of respondents (question 5.2) indicated that hospitality graduates have a basic understanding of hospitality marketing, while 44.2% (question 5.3) stated that hospitality graduates have sufficient knowledge of finance and accounting. Of the respondents, 37.2% (question 5.4) keenly affirmed that hospitality graduates are familiar with operations of various hospitality divisions, e.g., room division, front office, etc., whereas another 37.2% (question 5.5) revealed that hospitality graduates know how to utilize the various types of utensils, tools and equipment. Out of the 43 respondents, 30.2% (question 5.6) agreed that hospitality graduates have knowledge of maintaining the various utensils, tools and equipment.

b. Skills required of hospitality graduates by the perspective of industry employers

This section deals with the perception of hospitality industry employers about the skills required of hospitality graduates in order to succeed in the hospitality industry. The perceptions regarding the skills required of hospitality graduates by industry employers are presented in table 5.5 which depicts the various frequencies.

Table 5.5: Skills required of hospitality graduates by industry employers

Q		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	N
6.1	Hospitality graduates possess adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills	2.30%	14.00%	9.30%	23.30%	30.20%	20.90%	**43**
6.2	Hospitality graduates have good communication skills	9.30%	7.00%	7.00%	18.60%	32.50%	25.60%	**43**
6.3	Hospitality graduates have good inter-personal skills	9.30%	4.70%	13.90%	16.30%	32.50%	23.30%	**43**
6.4	Hospitality graduates possess good digital skills	4.70%	16.30%	13.90%	30.20%	30.20%	4.70%	**43**
6.5	Hospitality graduates have good decision-making skills	4.70%	11.60%	9.30%	18.60%	34.90%	20.90%	**43**
6.6	Hospitality graduates have good problem-solving skills	4.70%	16.30%	6.90%	27.90%	27.90%	16.30%	**43**

According to table 5.5, 30.2% of hospitality industry employers (question 6.1) stated that hospitality graduates possess adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills. A total of 32.5% of respondents (questions 6.2 and 6.3) concurred that hospitality graduates have good communication skills as well as good interpersonal skills. In addition, 30.2% of respondents (question 6.4) slightly agreed or agreed that hospitality graduates possess good digital skills, while 34.9% (question 6.5) indicated that hospitality graduates have good decision-making skills. Out of the 43 respondents, 27.9% (question 6.6) agreed or somewhat agreed that hospitality graduates have good problem-solving skills.

c. Attributes and abilities required of hospitality graduates from the perspective of industry employers

This section focuses on the perception of hospitality industry employers about the attributes and abilities required of hospitality graduates in order to grow and succeed in the hospitality industry. The perceptions regarding the attributes and abilities required of hospitality graduates by industry employers are presented in table 5.6 which depicts the various frequencies.

Table 5.6: Attributes and abilities required of hospitality graduates by industry employers

Q		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	N
7.1	Hospitality graduates are friendly and approachable	11.60%	4.70%	9.30%	11.60%	39.50%	23.30%	**43**
7.2	Hospitality graduates are customer oriented	7.00%	11.60%	7.00%	9.30%	37.20%	27.90%	**43**
7.3	Hospitality graduates are good team players	4.70%	6.90%	11.60%	16.30%	37.20%	23.30%	**43**
7.4	Hospitality graduates are generally self-motivated	9.30%	9.30%	11.60%	23.30%	32.60%	13.90%	**43**
7.5	Hospitality graduates have critical thinking abilities	2.30%	14.00%	20.90%	18.60%	27.90%	16.30%	**43**
7.6	Hospitality graduates are able to adapt to environmental change	4.60%	14.00%	7.00%	11.60%	48.80%	14.00%	**43**
7.7	Hospitality graduates have the ability to maintain professional standards	7.00%	11.60%	7.00%	4.60%	41.90%	27.90%	**43**
7.8	Hospitality graduates are innovative and can think of new ways of doing things	4.60%	16.30%	4.60%	16.30%	32.60%	25.60%	**43**
7.9	Hospitality graduates possess the ability to write business communications	14.00%	14.00%	11.60%	20.90%	23.30%	16.20%	**43**

According to table 5.6 above, 39.5% of hospitality industry employers (question 7.1) agreed that hospitality graduates are friendly and approachable. A total of 37.2% of respondents (questions 7.2 and 7.3) held the view that hospitality graduates are customer oriented as well as good team players. A total of 32.6% (question 7.4) affirmed that hospitality graduates were generally self-motivated, while 27.9% agreed that hospitality graduates have critical thinking abilities (question 7.5). Similarly, 48.8% of respondents (question 7.6) stated that hospitality graduates are able to adapt to environmental change, whereas 41.9% indicated that hospitality graduates possess the ability to maintain professional standards (question 7.7). A total of 32.6% (question 7.8) agreed that hospitality graduates are innovative and have the ability to think of new ways of doing things, while 23.3% mentioned that hospitality graduates possess the ability to write business communications (question 7.9).

5.2.1 Inferential statistics

This section presents the inferential statistics of the data and pertains to the second research question of the study, namely: To what extent do hospitality graduates exhibit the competencies expected of them by the hospitality industry? To answer this question, it was necessary to test whether there was a statistically significant difference between the self-assessment ratings of graduates and the ratings given by hospitality industry employers. In this regard, "to a large extent" indicates that competencies ratings of graduates correspond with that of industry employers. "To a small extent" means that competencies exhibited by hospitality graduates were below expectations from hospitality employers. "To a medium extent" implies that competencies of graduates considerably or on average correspond with the expectations from hospitality industry employers. To test the differences between the various competency variables, the Shapiro-Wilk test was performed. This test specifically determines whether these variables are normally distributed. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test are shown in table 5.7.

Table 5.7: Shapiro-Wilk test of competency variables

	Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	P-value
Attributes and abilities: Friendly and approachable	Hospitality Graduates	0.557	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.824	43	< 0.001
Attributes and abilities: Customer oriented	Hospitality Graduates	0.589	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.827	43	< 0.001
Attributes and abilities: Good team player	Hospitality Graduates	0.590	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.868	43	< 0.001
Attributes and abilities: Self-motivated	Hospitality Graduates	0.626	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.893	43	0.001
Attributes and abilities: Critical thinking ability	Hospitality Graduates	0.719	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.918	43	0.005
Attributes and abilities: Adapt to environmental change	Hospitality Graduates	0.642	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.825	43	< 0.001
Attributes and abilities: Maintaining professional standards	Hospitality Graduates	0.648	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.801	43	< 0.001
Attributes and abilities: Innovative and can think of new ways of doing things	Hospitality Graduates	0.678	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.856	43	< 0.001

Attributes and abilities: Ability to write business communications	Hospitality Graduates	0.825	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.903	43	< 0.001
Knowledge regarding laws that govern hospitality establishments	Hospitality Graduates	0.749	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.898	43	0.001
Knowledge regarding basic principles of hospitality marketing	Hospitality Graduates	0.745	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.838	43	< 0.001
Knowledge regarding finance and accounting	Hospitality Graduates	0.808	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.844	43	< 0.001
Knowledge regarding how the various hospitality divisions operate, e.g., room division, front office, etc.	Hospitality Graduates	0.641	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.798	43	< 0.001
Knowledge regarding utilization of the various types of utensils, tools and equipment	Hospitality Graduates	0.676	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.852	43	< 0.001
Knowledge regarding maintenance of the various utensils, tools and equipment	Hospitality Graduates	0.686	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.886	43	< 0.001
Adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills	Hospitality Graduates	0.739	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.895	43	0.001
Communication skills	Hospitality Graduates	0.629	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.849	43	< 0.001
Good interpersonal skills	Hospitality Graduates	0.609	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.869	43	< 0.001
Good digital skills	Hospitality Graduates	0.793	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.908	43	0.002
Good decision-making skills	Hospitality Graduates	0.653	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.879	43	< 0.001
Adequate problem-solving skills	Hospitality Graduates	0.731	216	< 0.001
	Hospitality Employers	0.901	43	0.001

As mentioned previously, if the p-value of the Shapiro-Wilk test (shown in the last column of table 5.7) is less than 0.05, it means that the variable is not normally distributed. Table 5.7 shows all p-values are less than 0.05, meaning that none of the variables were normally distributed, which excluded the use of t-tests. The non-parametric equivalent test for the t-test, namely the Mann-Whitney U test, was therefore used to compare the self-assessment ratings of graduates with the competency ratings provided by hospitality industry employers.

The Mann-Whitney U test can be interpreted as follows: If the p-value of the Mann-Whitney U test is <0.05 it means there is a statistically significant difference between the competency ratings provided by hospitality industry employers compared with those provided by the hospitality graduates. A Mann-Whitney U test is also used when variables are measured on an ordinal scale, which was the case with all competency variables in the study. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test for each competency variable are discussed below.

Attributes and abilities

This part of the study presents the findings from the Mann-Whitney U test for the attributes and skills as obtained from the self-assessment ratings of the graduates and the ratings that were given by the hospitality industry employers.

a. Friendly and approachable

According to tables 5.8 and 5.9, the mean rank (140.05) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Friendly and approachable' attribute was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (79.50) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 2472.5, z = -5.523, p<0.001.

Table 5.8: Mean rank and median for 'Friendly and approachable'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	140.05	6
Hospitality Employers	43	79.50	5
Total	259		

Table 5.9: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Friendly and approachable'

Mann-Whitney U	2472.5
Wilcoxon W	3418.5
Z	-5.523
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

From tables 5.8 and 5.9 above, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the self-assessment ratings given by hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Friendly and approachable'. Thus, hospitality graduates are friendly and approachable according to themselves, but not according to industry employers.

b. Customer oriented

According to tables 5.10 and 5.11, the mean rank (138.19) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Customer oriented' attribute was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (88.85) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 2874.5$, $z = -4.403$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 5.10: Mean rank and median for 'Customer oriented'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	138.19	6
Hospitality Employers	43	88.85	5
Total	259		

Table 5.11: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Customer oriented'

Mann-Whitney U	2874.5
Wilcoxon W	3820.5
Z	-4.403
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

As revealed in tables 5.10 and 5.11 above, the Mann-Whitney U test indicates that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for the 'Customer oriented' attribute. Thus, hospitality graduates are customer oriented according to themselves, while industry employers do not share the same view.

c. Good team player

According to tables 5.12 and 5.13, the mean rank (139.23) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Good team player' attribute was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (83.64) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 2650.5$, $z = -4.944$, $p<0.001$.

Table 5.12: Mean rank and median for 'Good team player'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	139.23	6
Hospitality Employers	43	83.64	5
Total	259		

Table 5.13: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Good team player'

Mann-Whitney U	2650.5
Wilcoxon W	3596.5
Z	-4.944
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

Tables 5.12 and 5.13 above show that the Mann-Whitney U test results for the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for the 'Good team player' attribute. Thus, hospitality graduates are good team players according to themselves, but not according to the industry employers.

d. Self-motivated

According to tables 5.14 and 5.15, the mean rank (141.21) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Self-motivated' attribute were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (73.71) and median (4) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 2223.5$, $z = -5.825$, $p<0.001$.

Table 5.14: Mean rank and median for 'Self-motivated'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	141.21	6
Hospitality Employers	43	73.71	4
Total	259		

Table 5.15: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Self-motivated'

Mann-Whitney U	2223.5
Wilcoxon W	3169.5
Z	-5.825
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.14 and 5.15 above describe that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for the 'Self-motivated' attribute. Thus, hospitality graduates are self-motivated according to themselves, but not according to the industry employers.

e. Critical thinking

According to tables 5.16 and 5.17, the mean rank (139.08) and median (5) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Critical thinking' ability was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (84.40) and median (4) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 2683$, $z = -4.625$, $p<0.001$.

Table 5.16: Mean rank and median for 'Critical thinking'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	139.08	5
Hospitality Employers	43	84.40	4
Total	259		

Table 5.17: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Critical thinking'

Mann-Whitney U	2683
Wilcoxon W	3629
Z	-4.625
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.16 and 5.17 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for the 'Critical thinking' ability. Thus, hospitality graduates perceive themselves to possess critical thinking, but this is not the view of industry employers.

f. Adapt to environmental change

According to tables 5.18 and 5.19, the mean rank (139.34) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Adapt to environmental change' attribute was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (83.06) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 2625.5, z = -4.867, p<0.001.

Table 5.18: Mean rank and median for 'Adapt to environmental change'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	139.34	6
Hospitality Employers	43	83.06	5
Total	259		

Table 5.19: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Adapt to environmental change'

Mann-Whitney U	2625.5
Wilcoxon W	3571.5
Z	-4.867
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.18 and 5.19 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by

hospitality industry employers for the 'Adapt to environmental change' attribute. Thus, according to hospitality graduates, they have the ability to adapt to environmental change. However, this view is not supported by industry employers.

g. Maintaining professional standards

According to tables 5.20 and 5.21, the mean rank (136.75) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Maintaining professional standards' attribute were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (93.09) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 3186, z = -3.562, p<0.001.

Table 5.20: Mean rank and median for 'Maintaining professional standards'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	136.75	6
Hospitality Employers	43	96.09	5
Total	259		

Table 5.21: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Maintaining professional standards'

Mann-Whitney U	3186
Wilcoxon W	4132
Z	-3.562
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.20 and 5.21 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for the 'Maintaining professional standards' attribute. Thus, hospitality graduates claim that they are able to maintain professional standards. However, industry employers do not support this view.

h. Innovative and can think of new ways of doing things

According to tables 5.22 and 5.23, the mean rank (137.15) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Innovative and can think of new ways of doing things' attribute were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (94.08) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 3099.5, z = -3.704, p<0.001.

Table 5.22: Mean rank and median for 'Innovative etc.'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	137.15	6
Hospitality Employers	43	94.08	5
Total	259		

Table 5.23: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Innovative etc.'

Mann-Whitney U	3099.5
Wilcoxon W	4045.5
Z	-3.704
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.22 and 5.23 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for the 'Innovative and can think of new ways of doing things' attribute. This implies that hospitality graduates think they are innovative and can think of new ways of doing things, while industry employers do not agree.

i. Ability to write business communications

According to tables 5.24 and 5.25, the mean rank (136.59) and median (5) score of hospitality graduates for the 'Ability to write business communications' attribute were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (96.88) and median (4) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 3220, z = -3.285, p = 0.001.

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Table 5.24: Mean rank and median for 'Ability to write business communications'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	136.59	5
Hospitality Employers	43	96.88	4
Total	259		

Table 5.25: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Ability to write business communications'

Mann-Whitney U	3220
Wilcoxon W	4166
Z	-3.285
p-value (2-tailed)	0.001

Tables 5.24 and 5.25 above show that the Mann-Whitney U test results for the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for the 'Ability to write business communications' attribute. Thus, hospitality graduates think they have the ability to write business communications, which is not supported by industry employers.

Knowledge required

This sub-section presents the Mann-Whitney U test results for the difference between the self-assessment ratings on the knowledge required of graduates and the ratings given by hospitality industry employers.

a. Knowledge regarding laws that govern hospitality establishments

According to tables 5.26 and 5.27, the mean rank (135.63) score of hospitality graduates for 'Knowledge regarding laws that govern hospitality establishments' was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (101.72) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 3428$, $z = -2.873$, $p = 0.004$, despite the fact that the median scores were the same (5).

Table 5.26: Mean rank and median for 'Knowledge regarding the laws that govern hospitality establishments'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	135.63	5
Hospitality Employers	43	101.72	5
Total	259		

Table 5.27: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Knowledge regarding the laws that govern hospitality establishments'

Mann-Whitney U	3428
Wilcoxon W	4374
Z	-2.873
p-value (2-tailed)	0.004

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.26 and 5.27 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Knowledge regarding laws that govern hospitality establishments. This indicates that hospitality graduates think they possess knowledge regarding laws that govern hospitality establishments, while industry employers do not agree.

b. Knowledge regarding basic principles of hospitality marketing

According to tables 5.28 and 5.29, the mean rank (134.51) score of hospitality graduates for 'Knowledge regarding basic principles of hospitality marketing' was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (107.34) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 3669.5$, $z = -2.317$, $p = 0.021$, despite the fact that the median scores were the same (5).

Table 5.28: Mean rank and median for 'Knowledge regarding basic principles of hospitality marketing'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	134.51	5
Hospitality Employers	43	107.34	5
Total	259		

Table 5.29: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Knowledge regarding basic principles of hospitality marketing'

Mann-Whitney U	3669.5
Wilcoxon W	4615.5
Z	-2.317
p-value (2-tailed)	0.021

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.28 and 5.29 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Knowledge regarding basic principles of hospitality marketing'. Thus, hospitality graduates think they possess knowledge regarding basic principles of hospitality marketing, a notion not supported by industry employers.

c. Knowledge regarding finance and accounting

According to tables 5.30 and 5.31, the mean rank (133.42) and median (5) score of hospitality graduates for 'Knowledge regarding finance and accounting' were *not* statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (112.90) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 3908.5$, $z = -1.742$, $p = 0.082$.

Table 5.30: Mean rank and median for 'Knowledge regarding finance and accounting'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	133.41	5
Hospitality Employers	43	112.90	5
Total	259		

Table 5.31: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Knowledge regarding finance and accounting'

Mann-Whitney U	3908.5
Wilcoxon W	4854.5
Z	-1.742
p-value (2-tailed)	0.082

Tables 5.30 and 5.31 above show that the Mann-Whitney U test results for the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were not significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Knowledge regarding finance and accounting'. In this regard, both hospitality graduates and industry employers agree that graduates possess knowledge regarding finance and accounting.

d. Knowledge regarding how the various hospitality divisions operate, e.g., room division, front office, etc.

Tables 5.32 and 5.33 show the mean rank (134.84) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for 'Knowledge regarding how the various hospitality divisions operate' were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (105.71) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 3599.5$, $z = -2.576$, $p = 0.001$

Table 5.32: Mean rank and median for 'Knowledge regarding hospitality operations'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	134.84	6
Hospitality Employers	43	105.71	5
Total	259		

Table 5.33: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Knowledge regarding hospitality operations'

Mann-Whitney U	3599.5
Wilcoxon W	4545.5
Z	-2.576
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

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The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.32 and 5.33 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Knowledge regarding how the various hospitality divisions operate'. Thus, hospitality graduates think they have knowledge regarding how the various hospitality divisions operate, but this is not supported by the responses from industry employers.

e. Knowledge regarding utilization of the various types of utensils, tools and equipment

According to tables 5.34 and 5.35, the mean rank (137.67) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for 'Knowledge regarding utilization of the various types of utensils, tools and equipment' were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (91.45) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 3932.5, z = -3.993, p<0.001.

Table 5.34: Mean rank and median for 'Knowledge regarding use of utensils etc.'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	137.67	6
Hospitality Employers	43	91.45	5
Total	259		

Table 5.35: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Knowledge regarding use of utensils etc.'

Mann-Whitney U	2986.5
Wilcoxon W	3932.5
Z	-3.993
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.34 and 5.35 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Knowledge regarding utilization of the various types of utensils, tools and equipment'. Thus, hospitality graduates' rate themselves as having

knowledge regarding the utilization of the various types of utensils, tools and equipment, a view which is not supported by industry employers.

f. Knowledge regarding maintenance of the various utensils, tools and equipment

According to tables 5.36 and 5.37, the mean rank (137.35) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for 'Knowledge regarding maintenance of the various utensils, tools and equipment' were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (93.06) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 3055.5$, $z = -3.801$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 5.36: Mean rank and median for 'Knowledge regarding maintenance of utensils etc.'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	137.35	6
Hospitality Employers	43	93.06	5
Total	259		

Table 5.37: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Knowledge regarding maintenance of utensils etc.'

Mann-Whitney U	3055.5
Wilcoxon W	4001.5
Z	-3.801
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

As presented in tables 5.36 and 5.37 above, the Mann-Whitney U results show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Knowledge regarding maintenance of the various utensils, tools and equipment'. Thus, according to hospitality graduates, they possess knowledge on the maintenance of the various utensils, tools and equipment. However, industry employers do not agree.

Skills required

This sub-section presents the Mann-Whitney U test results for the difference between the self-assessment ratings on skills required of graduates and the ratings that were given by hospitality industry employers.

a. Adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills

It is clear from tables 5.38 and 5.39 that the mean rank (136.13) score of hospitality graduates for 'Adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills' was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (99.21) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 3320$, $z = -3.129$, $p = 0.002$, despite the median scores' being the same (5).

Table 5.38: Mean rank and median for 'Adequate organisational skills'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	136.13	5
Hospitality Employers	43	99.21	5
Total	259		

Table 5.39: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Adequate organisational skills'

Mann-Whitney U	3320
Wilcoxon W	4266
Z	-3.129
p-value (2-tailed)	0.002

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.38 and 5.39 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills'. Thus, hospitality graduates regard themselves as having adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills, a notion not supported by industry employers.

b. Communication skills

According to tables 5.40 and 5.41, the mean rank (138.18) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for 'Communication skills' were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (88.91) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 2977$, $z = -4.304$, $p<0.001$.

Table 5.40: Mean rank and median for 'Communication skills'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	138.18	6
Hospitality Employers	43	88.91	5
Total	259		

Table 5.41: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Communication skills'

Mann-Whitney U	2877
Wilcoxon W	3823
Z	-4.304
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.40 and 5.41 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Communication skills'. Thus, hospitality graduates' rate themselves as having adequate communication skills, while industry employers do not agree.

c. Good interpersonal skills

According to tables 5.42 and 5.43, the mean rank (138.93) and median (6) score of hospitality graduates for 'Good interpersonal skills' were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (85.13) and median (5) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 2714.5$, $z = -4.695$, $p<0.001$.

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Table 5.42: Mean rank and median for 'Good interpersonal skills'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	138.93	6
Hospitality Employers	43	85.13	5
Total	259		

Table 5.43: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Good interpersonal skills'

Mann-Whitney U	2714.5
Wilcoxon W	3660.5
Z	-4.695
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.42 and 5.43 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Good interpersonal skills'. Thus, hospitality graduates regard themselves as having good interpersonal skills, but not according to industry employers.

d. Good digital skills

As can be seen from tables 5.44 and 5.45, the mean rank (139.82) and median (5) score of hospitality graduates for 'Good digital skills' were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (80.65) and median (4) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 2522, z = -4.996, p<0.001.

Table 5.44: Mean rank and median for 'Good digital skills'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	139.82	5
Hospitality Employers	43	80.65	4
Total	259		

Table 5.45: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Good digital skills'

Mann-Whitney U	2522
Wilcoxon W	3468
Z	-4.996
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.44 and 5.45 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for Good digital skills. Thus, hospitality graduates assess themselves as having good digital skills, while this is not supported by industry employers.

e. Good decision-making skills

According to tables 5.46 and 5.47, the mean rank (137.85) score of hospitality graduates for 'Good decision-making skills' was statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (90.57) score of hospitality industry employers, $U = 2948.5$, $z = -4.070$, $p<0.001$, despite the fact that the median scores were the same (5).

Table 5.46: Mean rank and median for 'Good decision-making skills'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	137.85	5
Hospitality Employers	43	90.57	5
Total	259		

Table 5.47: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Good decision-making skills'

Mann-Whitney U	2948.5
Wilcoxon W	3894.5
Z	-4.07
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.46 and 5.47 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Good decision-making skills'. Thus, hospitality

graduates regard themselves as having good decision-making skills, but not according to industry employers.

f. Adequate problem-solving skills

According to tables 5.48 and 5.49, the mean rank (137.62) and median (5) score of hospitality graduates for 'Adequate problem-solving skills' were statistically significantly higher than the mean rank (91.71) and median (4) score of hospitality industry employers, U = 2997.5, z = -3.892, p<0.001.

Table 5.48: Mean rank and median for 'Adequate problem-solving skills'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Median
Hospitality Graduates	216	137.62	5
Hospitality Employers	43	91.71	4
Total	259		

Table 5.49: Mann-Whitney U test results for 'Adequate problem-solving skills'

Mann-Whitney U	2997.5
Wilcoxon W	3943.5
Z	-3.892
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001

The Mann-Whitney U results in tables 5.48 and 5.49 above show that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for 'Adequate problem-solving skills'. Thus, hospitality graduates assess themselves as having adequate problem-solving skills, which is not supported by industry employers.

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5.3 Qualitative research analysis

This section presents and analyses the focus group interviews conducted with hospitality lecturers in academia.

Overall, 12 participants (hospitality lecturers) from five technical universities across Ghana were conveniently involved in a focus group interview as indicated in the methodology (section 4.5.2). Findings are presented below:

5.3.1 Demographic characteristics of hospitality lecturers

This section presents the demographic characteristics of hospitality lecturers who participated in the qualitative study (see annexure C) via Zoom.

Question 1 requested participants to indicate their institutional affiliation. The results from this inquiry are presented in table 5.50 below.

Table 5.50: Institutional background of lecturers

Institution	Number of lecturers
Accra Technical University	2
Cape Coast Technical University	2
Kumasi Technical University	2
Takoradi Technical University	4
Tamale Technical University	2
Total	**12**

As indicated in table 5.50 above, four, were lecturers from Takoradi Technical University. Two lecturers were interviewed from each of the following technical universities: Accra Technical University, Kumasi Technical University, Cape Coast Technical University and Tamale Technical University.

Question 2 captured the working or teaching experience of lecturers in their establishment. Responses are indicated in table 5.51 below.

Table 5.51: Work experience of lecturers

Range	Number of lecturers
1 to 10 years	5
More than 10 years	7
Total	**12**

From table 5.51 above, most lecturers (seven) have worked for more than 10 years whereas five lecturers have working experience ranging from one to 10 years.

Question 3 requested hospitality lecturers to indicate their current positions in their various institutions. The findings are shown in table 5.52.

Table 5.52: Lecturers' positions in institution

Position in institution	Number of lecturers
Head of department	5
Lecturer	7
Total	**12**

The table 5.52 indicates that most participants (seven) were lecturers, while a few were heads of departments (five).

Question 4 addressed the challenges that lecturers encounter in training students in hospitality institutions in Ghana. Consistent with the thematic approach to analyzing qualitative data by Braun and Clarke (2006), the recorded focus group interviews were reviewed to enable the researcher to generate themes. The following themes were identified, as shown in table 5.53 below.

Table 5.53: Challenges of hospitality education

Themes
1. Inadequate hospitality resources
2. Poor technical/practical skills
3. Lack of passion for hospitality programmes
4. Issue of specialization
5. Large class size

Table 5.53 above shows the challenges encountered in training students as identified in the study. They included limited/inadequate hospitality resources, poor technical/practical skills, a lack of passion for hospitality programmes, issue of specialization, and large class size. The major concern that emerged from the focus group interviews was inadequate resources in various hospitality departments, which compromises practical activities in academia. One participant (J) indicated that:

Availability of modern basic tools and equipment is a challenge in hospitality education. Currently, my institution still uses outmoded (traditional tools) during practical or demonstration … and because the industry is dynamic, students become handicapped as they are faced with modern tools and equipment in the industry. So, I believe that we train the students with outmoded tools and equipment in Academia whereas the hospitality industry is installed with modern tools. I think this poses challenge to graduates as they face the industry. (Participant J)

Similarly, two other participants (D and E) explained that:

[i]nadequate resources in hospitality department such as teaching and learning materials, infrastructures are a major challenge. Because these resources are inadequate, students are unable to experiment or

demonstrate and as a result it becomes new to graduates when they find themselves in industry setting. (Participant D)

because the departments are not well equipped with modern basic tools and equipment, lecturers have to mostly improvise to ensure continuous teaching and learning. (Participant E)

Another concern that emerged was a lack of interest in hospitality programmes/courses, as two participants (B and C) explained:

I think most students are not motivated in reading hospitality programmes and as such has reflected in their output … so I believe maybe in the final year students having passion for a particular course should be allowed to specialize. In this way, students will focus on a particular area of interest. (Participants B and C)

The purpose of higher education is to prepare students for the field of work. However, the identified challenges and remarks by participants in the study affirmed the disruption in smooth training and development of students in academia.

Key competencies expected of hospitality graduates by academia
Question 5: Indicate which competencies are crucial for students to acquire at university

Lecturers in academia expect graduates to be work-ready, possessing competencies that will assist them to fit into and remain key players in the hospitality industry. Therefore, the focus of this section was to determine the key competencies required from hospitality graduates by academia. In question 5 of the focus group interview guide, participants were asked to indicate which competencies are crucial for graduate students to acquire at the university. The majority of the respondents revealed that knowledge of hospitality operations was crucial. These included technical skills, management skills, organisational skills, analytical skills, personal skills, administrative skills, human resource management

skills, innovativeness, and communication skills. The following indicates some of the assertions by participants on the key competencies expected by academia:

> *Majority of hospitality students lack the competence to identify a problem and solving it with a firm decision … moreover, relating to multilingual competence, the level of proficiency and ability to speak different languages is still a problem. So, we expect hospitality graduates to have good communication skills, and being able to speak different languages in the industry will be an advantage. (Participant J)*

Similarly, participants A and G revealed that:

> *[s]ince we are training students to fit in the industry, I think knowledge of operations of basic hospitality divisions is crucial for graduates as they face the industry. I believe hospitality students need more practical/technical skills to match up the theory being taught in technical university. (Participants A and G)*

However, another participant was of the view that:

> *[m]ost hospitality students are practically good but theoretical handicapped. This reflects in their assessment as most students perform better in practical but worse in theory to the extent that some cannot construct simple sentences. (Participant F)*

The above submissions clearly indicate that the identified competencies are crucial for hospitality graduates to remain key players in the hospitality industry.

Competency-based curriculum

The literature (see paragraph 10 of section 2.8) revealed that curriculum development should be a planned strategy that incorporates an environment for course development, implementation and evaluation. In view of this, the hospitality education curriculum should be designed to cater for the needs of the industry. The scope of the curriculum according to the literature includes sets of knowledge, skills and attributes (such as conceptual skills,

management skills, administrative skills, technical skills, personal skills, human resource management skills) required to effectively perform job roles and other duties in an organisation. In the focus group interviews participants were asked (question 6-11) to indicate whether the content of the curriculum covers the organized experiences required in the hospitality industry. All the respondents indicated yes.

Findings from the investigation established that the scope of the curriculum covers the identified skills required in the hospitality industry, namely conceptual skills, management skills, administrative skills, technical skills, human resource management skills and personal skills. Below are some of the views expressed.

In relation to conceptual skills, participant A opined that:

> *[y]es, the curriculum covers conceptual skills because right from the first-year students are taught basic knowledge on operations of the hospitality industry in various disciplines undertaken. For instance, knowledge on organisational skills, hospitality laws, principles of marketing and accounting are incorporated in their three-year programmes in the hospitality department. Moreover, within a particular academic year, students are trained on how to assume managerial roles, collaborative skills, leadership skills, employee relation skills etc. (Participant A)*

The scope of the curriculum on human resource management skills required by the industry was elaborated on by participant D:

> *Hospitality graduates are trained to be managers, thus to manage resources in the industry. So, they are exposed to human resource management competence such as employee relation, project management skills, software operation skills as well as collaboration skills. Therefore, I believe that the curriculum covers the knowledge on human resource skill as required by the industry. (Participant D)*

In relation to technical and personal skills, participants G and H explained that:

> [f]irst of all, I will say that the hospitality industry is like a motorcycle which uses its hands when operating. In the same vein, the technical skills (practical skills) are very crucial in academia and hospitality industry. Therefore, there is a practical aspect to every theory we teach in academia ... moreover personal skills such as critical thinking skills, creativity skills, multilingual skills and ability to maintain professional standards are all incorporated in the syllabus. (Participants G and F)

It is evident from the above descriptions that the scope of the curriculum provides students with organized experiences that lead to change in a constructive way.

Bridging the gaps between the industry and academia
Question 12: How can the gaps between industry and academia be bridged?
This section considers the gaps that exist between the hospitality industry and academia. Having identified the gaps that existed between the industry and academia, answers were sought to question 12 in the focus group interview guide in search for measures that can be put into place to bridge the gaps. This analysis was based on the thematic approach, and as a result, the findings were categorized under main themes and their related sub-themes (see methodology, section 4.8). The themes related to this question are presented in table 5.54 below.

Table 5.54: Bridging the gaps between the industry and academia

Main Theme	Sub-Theme
Stakeholder consultation	a. Invitation of industry experts to partake in hospitality education b. Invitation of industry experts to partake in curriculum building c. Workshop/seminars
Student-related measures	a. Student orientation b. Specialization
Technical/Practical education	a. School training centres (hotels and guesthouses) b. Industry setting in academia c. Weekly industry practice d. Extension/longer periods of industry attachment e. Effective supervision during industry attachment
Lecturers-related measures	a. Lecturers must be encouraged to research b. Lecturers must be encouraged to have industry experience

Stakeholder consultation

In finding measures to bridge the gap, 7 out of the 12 respondents pronounced relating to stakeholder consultation in hospitality education. The analyses are as follows:

a. Invitation of industry experts to partake in hospitality education

Since the performance of the hospitality graduates does not meet the expectations of industry, participants recommended that experts from the industry should make visits to the schools to demonstrate or teach skills expected of students. The perception is that, with industry involvement in the training process, academia could partake in the industry. Some respondents expressed their thoughts with regard to industry inclusion. One participant stated:

> *Someone from the industry must come and demonstrate a skill to know the reality they want to see. (Participant K)*

It was further revealed that approaches or methods used sometimes vary between the industry and academia. As a result, the participants suggested that stakeholders from the industry should be invited to teach certain topics in academia to ensure that the required

knowledge is imparted. This could take the form of direct classroom lecturing. Again, the perception was that lecturers would, in this way, receive training from industry experts to broaden their knowledge in certain areas in the hospitality industry. A lecturer mentioned that:

> [c]ertain topics can also be delivered by the industry experts for the students to understand better. (Participant G)

b. **Invitation of industry experts to partake in curriculum building**

Since the industry expects graduates to exhibit some level of competencies, its opinions are imperative during curriculum development. This will enable graduates to acquaint themselves with the competencies expected by the industry. According to one lecturer:

> [W]hen upgrading the curriculum, the industry must be invited to make input. (Participant L)

Another participant also maintained that:

> [t]he industry must be part of the training. For that matter, when planning or developing the curriculum, they should be part to give us the current trends and what they expect from us. (Participant I)

Going forward, it was again made clear that:

> [l]ecturers sit in their corner and then develop their syllabus or curricula, and they expect the industry to just absorb any product. That is what is happening now. But I believe that if we bring industry right from the development of the curriculum, then industries will be able to feed us with their standards, what they expect the students to know or what they expect the products to be like. Then those of us in academia will be able to design the curriculum in such a way to meet the industrial standards. (Participant D)

Finally, one participant reiterated that:

> [t]he only means by which this can happen, is for industries themselves to design a tailor-made curriculum, give it to academia, this is what we want, and this is the group of people we have brought them to you, train them with this curriculum and bring them back to us. (Participant F)

From the foregoing, it is evident that, with the inclusion of the industry in curriculum development, students will be equipped with the right knowledge expected by the industry.

d. Workshops/seminars

The hospitality industry is dynamic and, as a result, new approaches to doing things evolve daily. Therefore, it is crucial for academia to keep the graduates (employees) abreast of changes in the industry. It was stated that industry experts must organize workshops and seminars to acquaint the students with emerging trends in the hospitality industry.

Student-related measures

As part of bridging the gaps between industry and academia, participants suggested measures relating to students.

a. Student orientation

To ensure a high level of performance, students in the hospitality industry must not be limited. The view was expressed that hospitality students in academia should be oriented and given the opportunity to explore. This will enable them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and build on these. It was also reported that academia should endeavour to orient students on the opportunities about the hospitality programmes offered in universities. This will help prepare hospitality graduates physically and psychologically as they enter the industry or corporate world.

b. Specialization

The ability to do one thing and doing it right ensures high output. As revealed in the study, students are therefore encouraged to specialize in an area of interest and in which they excel. They should not attempt be masters of all trades. Focusing on and mastering one area in hospitality will ensure higher performance or output at all times.

Technical/practical education

Becoming acquainted with basic tools and gaining industry experience while studying give students an upper hand in the field of work. In an attempt to bridge the gap between industry and academia, seven of the respondents made recommendations with regard to offering adequate practical on-campus education. The suggestions included the following:

a. School training centres

Putting in place measures to establish training centres by schools will give students the opportunity to gain adequate practical experience, which will aid in bridging the gap between industry and academia in the long run. Such centres may include hotels or guest houses, and restaurants. Moreover, practical rooms must be in a good shape to enable students to practice what they learn. In relation to this, one participant stated:

> *It is imperative for the schools to have a dedicated facility where the students could go during their practical hours. (Participant E)*

b. Industry setting in academia

Laboratories in schools must be furnished with industry tools that students can practice with. An industry setting in schools will have a positive impact on the learning experience of students by giving them industry experience in school before proceeding to the field of work. One participant explained:

> *The institution must get touch screen terminal, tools display, digital room keys, kiosk self-check-in, facial technology, etc. If the institution is not having a training centre (2-star hotel, or guest house), then it means that they always have to go out. And when they go out, they don't get information*

about those things they learn in school. Because they limit them in what they can do. (Participant B)

c. Weekly industry visit

Regular practice of what is taught ensures perfection or near perfection. The study found that regular visits to a nearby restaurant or hotel to practice is a step to maintaining and ensuring high standards in performance.

d. Extension/longer periods of industry attachment

Regular practice over longer periods ensures adequate experience. The investigation documented that opportunity to work in the industry for a longer period is a step to perfection as students are able to familiarize themselves with the industry setting. Extending the duration of internship programmes will help ensure that students get ample time to practice what they have been taught in theory.

e. Effective supervision during industry attachment

In all hospitality institutions in academia, it has become an annual tradition to send final-year students out for industry attachment. However, in cases of flexible or low supervision, students tend to learn little or have a poor learning experience. The study suggests that lecturers pay unannounced visits to places where students are located for effective supervision to ensure proper adherence to what has been taught and to professional standards in the industry. Unannounced supervision will enable supervisors to know whether the students are truly performing. Participants in the study held the view that effective supervision ensures high output.

Lecturer-related measures

In bridging the gap between industry and academia, lecturers also play vital roles. Findings from the study recommend that lecturers should be skilled enough to be able to offer the required training to students. Participants in this study indicated the measures below.

a. Lecturers must be encouraged to research

Continuous research is significant in academic work. The ability of lecturers to impart current trends in education revolves around continuous research. The investigation highlighted that lecturers must be well motivated to embark on research. In this regard, academic knowledge acquired through research will be successfully imparted to students through teaching and learning.

b. Lecturers must be encouraged to gain industry experience

Knowing which services are rendered and how they are rendered will provide lecturers with adequate information to transfer to students. Participants in the study emphasized the need for lecturers to visit the hospitality industry to gain updated experience of operations in the industry.

Question 13: What are the challenges that militate against the teaching and learning of these competencies?

There are several factors that act as hindrances to the teaching and learning of competencies in technical universities in Ghana. To seek answers to question 13 of the focus group interview guide, several opinions were gathered. The themes that emerged are presented in table 5.55 below.

Table 5.55: The challenges militating against the teaching and learning of required competencies

Main Theme	Sub-Theme
Resources	a. Inadequate basic tools and equipment b. Nature of infrastructure c. Inadequate funds
Student-related factors	a. Lack of prerequisite knowledge b. Lack of interest c. Student attitude
Lecturer-related factors	a. Inability to research b. Unskilled staff

Resources

The issue of resources was emphasized by the majority of the participants. Hospitality, being a discipline on its own, requires the availability of adequate resources with which teaching and learning of the required competencies can take place. Below are the discussed challenges regarding resources.

a. Inadequate basic tools and equipment

As hospitality is mostly practical, there is a need for the continuous availability of basic tools and equipment with which practical sessions can be conducted. However, several instances were mentioned of inadequate basic tools and equipment in technical institutions offering hospitality programmes. The discussions revealed that there are inadequate tools for students to familiarize themselves with industry and for lecturers to teach students. Inadequacy of teaching and learning materials in academia is perceived as a challenge in the development of competencies of students, as they are unable to experiment. One respondent pointed out that:

> [i]f all these technical tools are not available in the university for lecturers to teach them with, students after graduating become handicapped in the industry. All they know is the theoretical aspect of the discipline. In this case, when they go out there, the establishment sees them as nonperforming graduates. (Participant J)

b. Nature of facilities/infrastructures

Facilities are sometimes available, but their nature impedes proper teaching and learning of skills. In addition to the limited number of facilities, some practical rooms are small in size and unable to accommodate students during practical sessions. Concerning the nature of the facilities, one participant asserted that:

> [s]tudent numbers are increasing, but the same practical room/laboratory is being used, no expansion. This makes it difficult to teach a skill in the academia. (Participant C)

c. Inadequate funds

From the discussions, it was indicated that periodical innovation is seen as a catalyst for ensuring that students in the hospitality programme become acquainted with the required and current skills. However, there is a lack of funds for acquiring the necessary resources such as laboratories and other training facilities.

Student-related factors

For successful teaching and learning of competencies, students also play a vital role regarding relevant knowledge, interest, and the right attitude. Participants in the study expressed concern in relation to the background of hospitality students.

a. Lack of prerequisite knowledge

Having a fair knowledge of hospitality is essential in ensuring the ease and success in the teaching and learning of the competencies. However, it emerged that some students lack knowledge of hospitality, and thus find it very difficult to grasp concepts. According to one respondent:

> *When they come, they do not have any prerequisite information or background with hospitality. They did science, they did general arts, visual arts, business, but they did not get their choice of programme they wanted, so they need to come and do hospitality, and you will see that the students are totally at lost (Participant G)*

In this case, students find it very difficult to cooperate as they show poor interest in the course.

b. Lack of interest

In this section, it was revealed that some of the students are enrolled in the hospitality department, not by choice, but because they had no alternative. Thus, students who could not enroll in the programme of their choice opted for hospitality as last resort. Others applied because of pressure from their parents. When students lack interest in the programme, they hardly cooperate, and struggle to grasp concepts and skills.

c. Student attitude

Negative attitude such as laziness, carelessness and irresponsibility among students is an impediment towards the ability to learn skills and competencies. Some hospitality students seem to lack the right attitude towards the programme and, as a result, perform poorly. One participant explained:

> *Some of them do not really know what they want. It looks as if they were forced to do the hospitality programme, so they are not really committed to what they are studying even on campus, and they take the same attitude to the industry. (Participant D)*

Lecturer-related issues

Problems with lecturers also mitigate against the teaching and learning of the required competencies. Participants mentioned lecturer-related problems that serve as a barrier.

a. Inability to research

Academic research provides access to current trends in the hospitality industry and upgrades the knowledge of lecturers. However, since they hardly embark on research, they hold on to previous knowledge and skills which might have become irrelevant in the meantime.

b. Unskilled staff

The adage "you cannot give what you do not have" still holds true. Having adequate and relevant training is the first step in the ability to teach competencies. In academia, as found in the study, some lecturers lack the required training and skills to teach students the knowledge they need to acquire. This becomes a problem and hinders the teaching and learning of the required competencies.

The extent to which students' exposure to industry prepare them for the world of work

Question 14: To what extent can industry exposure to students prepare them for the world of work?

Hospitality students go on industry attachment and internship during their studies. They are required to gain on-the-job experience from hospitality industries such as hotels, restaurants and guest houses. These off-campus activities in one way or another have a positive impact on the students. The themes that emerged from responses to question 14 are presented in table 5.56.

Table 5.56: The extent to which industry exposure to students prepare them for the world of work

Main Theme	Sub-theme
Knowledge	a. Provides students with a broad idea of the world of work b. Helps them acquire new ideas
Practicality	a. Gives them access to tools b. Gives them access to new software c. Prepares them for work d. Gives them the opportunity to practice what they have learnt
Job opportunities	a. Gives them employment opportunities
Self-realization	
Research	

Table 5.57 above shows the main themes and sub-themes identified in the qualitative study.

Knowledge

Knowledge acquired from off-campus activities is an advantage as opposed to that gained from classroom activities. Students gain knowledge in various practical activities, either more of what they already know, or in new areas. In the discussions, the following benefits emerged regarding knowledge.

a. Broad idea of the world of work

The off-campus activities in the industry provide students with knowledge of the world of work. They are given a real-life experience of how organisations operate. Knowledge gained in the classroom about the world of work is different to that gained in the field. Students' exposure gives them the opportunity to gather enough knowledge on how corporations function. It gives them an idea of the services that organisations render.

b. Acquisition of new ideas

During students' off-campus activities, they acquire different knowledge competencies. Thus, they are exposed to different ways of doing things. From the discussions, it seemed that students are provided with many ideas of how different organisations work, for instance, how to prepare modern dishes, and so on. They are also exposed to new trends in customer satisfaction. Industry exposure enables them to get new ideas through collaboration in the industry. One participant asserted that:

> [i]ndustry to a very large extent helps the students to get the foot to the new trends and it prepares them, especially those who want to work in the industry. (Participant C)

Practicality

Learning and practising what you have learnt is a means to sharpen skills or improve on individual strengths. Industry exposure offers students practical experience in the real world. The following themes were discussed.

a. Access to tools

The discussions revealed that schools do not usually have all the tools to train students. They mostly teach with videos and pictures, since they lack access to appropriate tools. Industry exposure enables students to gain access to and operate some of those tools. This provides them with on-the-job experience. According to one participant:

> They will be prepared to face the reality. Because the essence of what they are taught in theory is to match up with the practicals. (Participant I)

b. Access to new software

Students are exposed to some software in school which may be quite common. When they visit industry, they may chance upon different software, which will broaden their experience.

c. Preparation for work

Industry experience provides students with skills and a broad idea of hospitality work. It equips them with practical abilities since they have to work just the way they would when employed. They become acquainted with new trends and different approaches to work. As emphasized by one participant:

> Industry to a very large extent helps students to get the foot to the new trends and it prepares them, especially those who want to work in the industry. (Participant L)

d. Opportunity to practise what they have learnt

After students are taught, they are required to practise or perform what they have been taught in order to sharpen their experience. Industry exposure enables them to reform what has been learnt in the classroom. A skill taught in the class is practised during an attachment or industry visit.

Job opportunities

Having the opportunity to serve and learn in the hospitality industry paves the way for gaining permanent employment, as stated by one respondent. Below are the benefits.

a. Employment opportunities

Being exposed to the hospitality industry is in itself a way of creating job opportunities for students. Oftentimes, when students go on industry attachment, they find job opportunities based on their performance on the field. Students who are able to prove a level of competency and professionalism are reserved a seat for employment. In cases where there is no vacancy in the organisation, they are sometimes recommended to other organisations.

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Self-realization

In the discussions, participants stressed the benefits related to self-realization that come from industry experience. Being exposed to the industry has a way of creating an opportunity for trainees to realize themselves. Having enough exposure and practice is a tool to realizing one-self. This, in turn, enables students to unearth their strengths. Also, students with exposure to industry are able to identify the areas they best fit in.

Research

Industry exposure gives insight into many areas of hospitality and broadens students' thinking and research abilities. Conducting research comes with formulating a researchable topic. Students on internship are able to identify a problem in the industry which could serve as a researchable topic in academia. Industry exposure enables them to come up with topics through experience gained in the field.

5.4   Summary

As was seen in section 2, the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were statistically significantly higher than the ratings given by hospitality industry employers for all attributes and abilities, as well as the required knowledge and skills competencies. Only for 'Knowledge regarding finance and accounting' was no statistically significant difference found. This indicates that there are various gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the competency expectations from the hospitality industry, as evidenced by the Mann-Whitney tests discussed in section 2. Findings from the qualitative study were also presented. These included proposed measures to bridge the gaps that exist between the industry and academia.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   Introduction

This chapter deals with the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings from the research.

6.2   Conclusions

This section concludes on the findings from the quantitative and qualitative studies. The conclusions are drawn from the key findings that emerged from the results and data analysis. Thus, the implications of the research results which were uncovered are related to the existing literature and theoretical concepts. The conclusions are linked to the research questions as indicated in chapter 1. The main and specific research questions are presented below:

Main research question

How can the competencies of hospitality graduates be matched with the expectations from the hospitality industry in the Ghanaian context?

Specific research questions

1. What key competencies does the hospitality industry expect of hospitality graduates as expressed in relevant literature?
2. To what extent do hospitality graduates exhibit the competencies expected of them by the hospitality industry?
3. What are the gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the competency expectations from the hospitality industry?
4. What framework can be proposed to match the competencies of hospitality graduates with the competency expectations from the hospitality industry?

The section below details the conclusions of the study by considering the above research questions.

RQ1: What key competencies does the hospitality industry expect of hospitality graduates as expressed in relevant literature?

The success of hospitality graduates in the industry mostly relies on the acquisition and demonstration of required competencies to function effectively in diverse roles. In view of this, hospitality experts and practitioners generally expect hospitality graduates to possess competencies that help in solving job-related problems and ensuring that customers are kept satisfied. Therefore, hospitality industry employers require hospitality graduates to possess practical and technical competencies to meet these needs. This notion is supported by existing literature (see Okeiyi *et al.* 1994; Raybould and Wilkins 2005; Kay and Russette 2007; Lolli 2013; Weber *et al.* 2013; Tesone *et al.* 2015; Balakrishnan 2016; Yang *et al.* 2016).

The findings of the study revealed that the key competencies expected of hospitality graduates are leadership skills, teamwork, communication skills, human relations/ interpersonal skills, operational skills, problem-solving skills, innovative abilities, right attitude towards work, and the ability to adapt to challenging circumstances (see table 5.6). These competencies imply that hospitality industry employers expect hospitality graduates to possess applied and business-like competencies, while paying less attention to theoretical and conceptual capabilities of hospitality graduates.

It was found that, due to the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry and the changing needs of guests, continuous research is needed to keep abreast of current expectations in hospitality. This is consistent with previous studies which have identified continuous research and investigation as crucial. Researchers such as Baum (2006), Spowart (2011), Sisson and Adams (2013), and Wessels *et al.* (2017) concluded that constant research is required to provide an updated and relevant understanding and knowledge of the competencies which the hospitality industry experts believe are desirable in the present time.

Another finding indicated that hospitality industry professionals and employers seek to relate work attributes to competencies for success in the industry. This is in line with Kokt and Strydom (2014) who stated that industry practitioners expect hospitality graduates to be qualified and be able to cope with the challenges they encounter. Nduro *et al.* (2015) emphasized that the greater part of the skill set required for the hospitality industry can be gained through hands-on training. Hence, it is fundamental for hospitality education to create more opportunities for students to pursue programmes in hospitality management and to undertake industry-related experience like internships to equip them with the competencies expected by industry.

The above findings have implications for curriculum and human development within hospitality education. The purpose of the curriculum used in training hospitality students is to produce graduates who are prepared and equipped with the required skills and competencies to make an impact within the hospitality industry. This assertion is buttressed by Starkey *et al.* (2004) who affirmed that a key aim of higher education is to prepare students for the world of work. In this regard, the curriculum links institutions of higher learning and industry to ensure that hospitality graduates are adequately trained. Thus, hospitality education curriculum should prepare students for work in the hospitality industry.

In view of this, the research findings revealed that hospitality industry practitioners and employers expect hospitality graduates to possess practical, technical, result-oriented and business-like competencies, while placing less emphasis on the theoretical competencies of graduates. Hence, the curriculum must endeavour to focus on equipping graduates with these competencies in order for them to thrive in the hospitality industry.

Improvements in the curriculum towards equipping graduates with industry-related competencies are related to the development of human capital. According to researchers, such as Abel and Gabe (2011) and Fulmer and Ployhart (2014), human capital includes the skills, knowledge, capabilities, social and personality attributes embodied in people

that can be translated into organisational productivity. This signifies that curriculum modifications will help transform human capital, specifically the knowledge, skills and attributes of hospitality graduates, towards taking up myriad responsibilities to make a meaningful impact within the hospitality industry in various capacities.

RQ2: To what extent do hospitality graduates exhibit the competencies expected of them by the hospitality industry?

The Mann-Whitney U test results revealed that the self-assessment ratings from hospitality graduates were significantly higher than the ratings provided by hospitality industry employers for all components measured, e.g., knowledge, skills, attributes and abilities. Only for 'Knowledge regarding finance and accounting' was no statistically significant difference found (see table 5.8). The findings revealed gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the competency expectations from the hospitality industry.

Regarding the extent to which hospitality graduates exhibit required competencies, the Mann-Whitney U test further revealed that none of the required competencies expected from hospitality graduates were in fact exhibited by them to a large extent. "To a large extent" implies that the competencies of graduates correspond with expectations of industry employers. The majority of the competencies were exhibited to a small extent, while some were exhibited to a medium extent (see table 5.8). Thus, to a small extent, competencies exhibited by hospitality graduates were below expectations from hospitality employers. "To a medium extent" connotes that competencies of graduates considerably or on average correspond with what hospitality industry employers expect of them. For the knowledge competency, hospitality graduates only exhibited the required knowledge expected of them by the hospitality industry to a small extent (all r-values were below 0.3).

Again, relating to the skills dimension, hospitality graduates hardly exhibited the required skills expected of them by the hospitality industry since they only showed these skills to a small extent (r-values below 0.3). Only digital skills were exhibited to a medium extent

(r = 0.31). Regarding attributes and abilities, hospitality graduates exhibited four variables to a medium extent, namely 'Friendly and approachable' (r = 0.34), 'Good team players' (r = 0.31), 'Self-motivated' (r = 0.36) and 'Adapting to environmental change' (r = 0.30). Five variables were exhibited by hospitality graduates to a small extent (all r-values were below 0.3), namely 'Customer oriented', 'Critical thinking ability', 'Maintaining professional standards', 'Ability to write business communications', and 'Innovation and the ability to think of new ways of doing things'.

The existence of gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the competency expectations from the hospitality industry, as well as the failure of hospitality graduates to exhibit the required competencies to a large extent is consistent with previous studies. First, the study findings corroborate the work of Anthony (2015) on the competency requirements of hospitality management graduates in Ghana. This study compared industry and academia perspectives and concluded that there were gaps in competency requirements between the hospitality industry and what was offered by academia. In view of this, greater collaboration between industry and academia is needed to produce competent graduates for the industry.

The findings from the current study are also in line with those of Abas and Imam (2016). They asserted that the success of the hospitality industry depends on the extent to which employees are able to apply their knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance customer satisfaction and achieve organisational profitability. However, most graduates and employees struggle to show true worth; therefore, employing the right caliber of staff is critical to organisational success.

The findings are further similar to those of Alexander *et al.* (2018), namely that, despite the upsurge in enrolment of students in tertiary institutions pursuing a variety of programmes including hospitality management, little has been done to equip the vast number of graduates with the required skills that prepare them for the job market. This implies that graduates lack employability skills, compounding the issue of joblessness among graduates. Similarly, the study findings relate to Wang and Tsai (2014) who found

that, since hospitality graduates fail to exhibit professional management and development skills, they lack confidence in their employability and career planning.

Prior research further confirms the results of this study by affirming that, in spite of the fact that the curriculum offered in hospitality programmes is expected to equip students with the knowledge and skills to meet industry needs, graduates are often not able to articulate their skills (Wong *et al.* 1999; Asirifi *et al.* 2013a; Avornyo 2013). It is not surprising, therefore, that other studies also reveal that the hospitality industry is fraught with poorly trained staff that often lack practical skills (Blomme *et al.* 2010; Brown *et al.* 2014; Pepra-Mensah *et al.* 2015).

The evidenced inability of hospitality graduates to adequately exhibit required competencies suggests that there is a gap between the human resource supply from hospitality education and competencies required by the industry. Consequently, the findings have direct implications for curriculum and human capital development in the training of hospitality graduates. Hospitality programmes need to serve as the yardstick for educating and training tertiary students in areas such as front office, housekeeping, food and beverages, and travel and tourism.

Since the study found that hospitality graduates were unable to exhibit required competencies to a large extent, it calls for the revision of the curriculum used in hospitality programmes. This is supported by Boyd (2003) who acknowledged that, since the curriculum is meant to guide and help lecturers make appropriate choices, it should be revised occasionally to keep in tune with societal and industry-related needs and requirements. Although researchers on curriculum, such as Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Kridel and Kridel (2012), point out differing views of how the curriculum should be planned, developed, implemented and evaluated, they admit that curriculum requires periodic review to improve the content and reflect present prerequisites of industry. Therefore, the revision of the hospitality curriculum must focus on competency-based education to prepare graduates for working in the hospitality industry.

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Possession of the competencies expected by the hospitality industry invariably leads graduates towards self-confidence and personal development which, in turn, promotes the development of human capital. This stance is supported by proponents of human capital, like Berntson *et al.* (2006), who stressed that individuals are capable of achieving self-development and career advancement through investment in education, competence development, and job experience. Similarly, Caire and Becker (2006) claim that human capital is crucial for organisational success because it is closely related to human resource management and provides the foundation for understanding human resource development, which is paramount for the hospitality industry.

It is significant to note that, if hospitality graduates (human capital) are not adequately prepared for the jobs they need to perform, a mismatch will continue to exist between their competencies and those expected by employers. This can have far-reaching consequences for organisations within the industry. The fact that human capital supports investment in individuals and organisations towards increasing productivity through education directly affirms the findings of this study. Therefore, in agreement with Caire and Becker (2006), the curriculum approach (via modifications) to training tertiary students in technical universities in Ghana can be a viable human capital strategy that is aimed at providing expert knowledge in hospitality management and improvement in graduate competencies.

RQ3: What are the gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the competency expectations from the hospitality industry?

Following the Mann-Whitney U test, which analyzed the self-assessment ratings of hospitality graduates and the ratings given by hospitality industry employers, the gaps that exist between hospitality graduate competencies and industry expectations were identified. With regard to knowledge required, hospitality graduates categorized the following as important: knowledge of the use of various types of utensils, tools and equipment (mean rank = 137.67), knowledge of the maintenance of the various utensils, tools and equipment (mean rank = 137.35), and familiarity with the laws that govern hospitality establishments (mean rank = 135.63). Hospitality employers, however,

identified the following knowledge in graduates as the most crucial: knowledge of basic principles of hospitality marketing (mean rank = 107.34), knowledge of operations of various hospitality divisions, e.g., room division, front office, etc. (mean rank = 105.71), and knowledge of the laws that govern hospitality establishments (mean rank = 101.72) (see table 5.27).

Under skills required, hospitality graduates highly rated the following: digital skills (mean rank = 139.82), interpersonal skills (mean rank = 138.93), and communication skills (mean rank = 138.18). In contrast, hospitality employers emphasized the following: organisational skills, like event planning skills (mean rank = 99.21), problem-solving skills (mean rank = 91.71), and decision-making skills (mean rank = 90.57) (see table 5.47).

In the analysis of attributes and abilities, hospitality graduates prioritized self-motivation (mean rank = 141.21), being friendly and approachable (mean rank = 140.05), and the ability to adapt to environmental changes (mean rank = 139.34). Hospitality employers identified the ability to write business communications (mean rank = 96.88), maintaining professional standards (mean rank = 96.09), and innovativeness (mean rank = 94.08) (see table 5.37) as crucial competencies.

The differences in competency ratings point to gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and the expectations from industry. This research finding is confirmed by previous research, for example, Mahachi (2012) who reported a skills gap in managerial competencies among tourism and hospitality students in Botswana. The major gap identified was the lack of business and managerial capabilities, whereas the four areas of gaps included management, leadership, personal skills and attributes.

Similar findings were reported by Jiang and Alexakis (2017) when they compared the perceptions of students and managers regarding essential entry-level management competencies in the hospitality industry. They concluded that, while managers rated willingness to learn and teamwork skills of high importance, hospitality students regarded time management skills and knowledge of the hospitality industry as most crucial.

Similarly, Kim *et al.* (2017) found that hospitality students and industry managers perceived attitude, communication ability, integrated thinking ability and language skills as vital competencies. While industry employers rated job-specific competencies as essential, students regarded competencies such as foreign language skills as important. Also, the results are in line with those of Subramanian and Shin (2013). Their assessment of gaps between hospitality graduates and industry expectations showed a lower ranking by managers for three skill clusters out of nine and 25 skill descriptors out of 52 than the ranking given by graduates.

Furthermore, the current findings are comparable to previous research that investigated the views of hospitality lecturers and hospitality industry practitioners. For example, Asirifi *et al.* (2013a) concluded that there were differences in what hospitality trainers provided and what industry practitioners demanded. The authors indicated that most of the courses being offered by tertiary institutions were theoretical. Likewise, Wang *et al.* (2010) found that hospitality academics value strategic skills, such as decision making, management skills, leadership abilities, and problem-solving skills, while hospitality practitioners valued operational skills, such as confidence, attention to detail, practical skills, and adaptability at work. Enz *et al.* (2007) revealed that, although the hospitality industry requires interpersonal skills, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership competencies, hospitality educational institutions believed that competencies such as analytical skills, conceptual thinking and literature knowledge were more important for the hospitality education.

The existence of gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and industry expectations further has a bearing on curriculum and human capital. Thus, once there is no conformity between the essential competencies according to hospitality graduates and lecturers on the one hand, and industry experts on the other, the curriculum needs to be scrutinized urgently. The goal of the curriculum is to prepare students to excel professionally and possibly influence the world of work in a profound manner. This means that the curriculum has to train graduates to match the expectations of the industry with regard to capabilities and competencies. Yet, this study found that there were disparities

between these capabilities and competencies of graduates and the expectations from the industry.

The development and continuous refinement of hospitality management curriculum are therefore imperative due to the complexity of the industry. Moreover, the call for curriculum changes to suit industry requirements has been confirmed by others. Alexakis and Jiang (2019) affirmed that hospitality and tourism lecturers continue to redesign and improve core curricula to make sure that graduates are well trained to enter the industry. Curriculum revision and development are important in hospitality management programmes in order to remain current with industry trends and demands. Fidgeon (2010) and Sheldon *et al.* (2011) also posited that the challenges associated with hospitality and tourism education require fundamental changes in instructive processes and practices, subject areas and specializations through curriculum innovation and development.

This suggests that the responsibility lies with hospitality management lecturers to combine industry priorities with the needs of students to develop competent graduates. This position is shared by Ali *et al.* (2016) who indicated that the growth of the hospitality industry and the rapid changes associated with it have created a demand for hospitality curriculum to evolve in alignment with the needs of industry. Periodic updating of the hospitality curriculum is vital for hospitality graduates to be relevant to the industry. Since education and training are interrelated, they play an important role in human resource development in the tourism and hospitality sector.

The periodic revision of hospitality curriculum to reflect the needs of industry can be achieved by involving industry representatives and perspectives in the process of curriculum development. Gursoy *et al.* (2012) reiterate this stance by stating that industry perspectives can be obtained via continuous dialogue, visits by industry professionals as guest lecturers or participation as key actors in the curriculum review process. Also, industry practitioners can rank the skills and content areas that are most relevant in the workplace so that hospitality lecturers can evaluate and incorporate them into the curriculum (Gursoy and Swanger 2005; Gursoy *et al.* 2012).

The industry- and faculty-led process of curriculum revision and development is imperative because it incorporates the changing needs of industry and nurtures innovation. The preparation of competent graduates for future careers and innovation is linked to human capital. This is buttressed by Protogerou *et al.* (2017) who described human capital as crucial to a firm's capacity to absorb and organize knowledge from competent staff for the purposes of productivity enhancement and innovation. Human capital is therefore a pertinent competency for organisations to achieve economic value and sustainability.

RQ4: What framework can be proposed to match the competencies of hospitality graduates with the competency expectations from the hospitality industry?

In recent times, challenges of hospitality education have been based on literature and informed theoretical critique (Lugosi and Jameson 2017). According to Chan (2011), human resource development regarding the necessary knowledge, such as technical and human skills, has been a challenge for higher education. Similarly, the current study found that limited/inadequate hospitality resources, poor technical/practical skills, a lack of passion for hospitality programmes, issues of specialization, and challenges related to large classes are some of the perceived problems in the training of hospitality graduates in academia. More importantly, the study emphasized that inadequate resources in various hospitality departments compromise practical activities in academia. Baum (2007) corroborated that technical, practical or job-specific skills, experience of the world of work, and oral communication remain commonly cited issues with regard to hospitality graduates.

The study also explored the viewpoints of hospitality lecturers on the competencies expected of hospitality graduates by academia. A review of the literature established that the key competencies expected by academia of hospitality graduates in the industry include good interpersonal skills, leadership and problem-solving skills, teamwork, the ability to use technology, good decision-making skills, and good communication skills (Enz *et al.* 2007; Anthony 2015; Kim *et al.* 2017; Anthony *et al.* 2019). Similarly, the current

study indicated that the crucial competencies required of hospitality graduates by academia in Ghana are knowledge on operations of hospitality divisions (technical skills/practical skills), managerial skills, organisational skills, analytical skills, personal skills, administrative skills, human resource management skills, innovativeness, and communication skills.

These findings resonate with those of Anthony (2015) and Razak *et al.* (2018). Anthony (2015) found that conceptual, leadership, administrative and technical competencies are highly rated by academia, while Razak *et al.* (2018) identified communication skills, interpersonal skills, management skills and knowledge on general hotel operations as integral competencies in the hospitality industry. Similarly, Najar and Bukhari (2017) found that operational skills, management skills, personal skills relating to human relations, communications skills, and human resource management skills are some of the key competencies which stakeholders in academia expect to be imparted to hospitality graduates.

With regard to competency requirements, hospitality education focuses mainly on conceptual abilities, as the ability to think, reason and critically analyze situations have always been one of the main focus areas of higher education. In light of the dynamic nature of the industry, Sisson and Adams (2013) suggest that, to meet the needs of this industry, lecturers must review and revise the curriculum regularly and identify which competencies are essential for graduates.

Moreover, findings on the scope of the curriculum demonstrate that the identified skills required from the hospitality industry, namely conceptual skills, management skills, administrative skills, technical skills, human resource management skills and personal skills, are covered in the curriculum used in higher education. Therefore, stakeholders in higher education institutions must integrate these into the learning experience of graduates as expected by the hospitality industry. Sisson and Adams (2013) emphasized the vital role that the development and standardization of the hospitality management curriculum play in enabling graduates to possess the knowledge, skills and abilities

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demanded by industry. Anthony (2015) echoed this stance by recommending greater collaboration between the hospitality industry and academia in producing competent graduates for the hospitality industry in Ghana.

With respect to measures to bridge the gap between academia and industry, interviewees from academia indicated broader stakeholder consultation, student-related measures such as student orientation and specialization, technical/practical education, and lecture-related measures such as encouraging lecturers to gain industry experience and do research. Broader stakeholder consultation implies that the industry be invited on issues relating to the development of students' skills and competencies. This can include inviting industry experts to partake in curriculum building and attending workshops and/or seminars. Establishing these measures will go a long way to ensure that the students are provided with the competencies expected by the industry.

These findings were in line with those of Asirifi *et al.* (2013b), Sarkodie and Adom (2015), and Najar and Bukhari (2017). Asirifi *et al.* (2013b) and Sarkodie and Adom (2015) suggested that there should be a collaboration between the hospitality industry and academia. In a similar vein, Najar and Bukhari (2017) recommended persistent interaction between students and industry experts during which knowledge should be imparted of current trends within industry. Again, these authors contended that there must be frequent interaction to ensure an informed competency development measure. They suggested that it is worth having regular workshops and seminars with the sharing of ideas as the objective. In this way, both students and lecturers will be well informed. Student-related measures imply that students be given the opportunity to explore and become deeply acquainted with an area they are well skilled in. In other words, students are to be oriented and encouraged to specialize. In exploring the industry setting students are enabled to discover more, while specialization ensures that students gain experience in a particular area.

Many graduates find working in the hospitality industry tedious, which stems from the fact that most of what they are taught is theoretical (Asirifi *et al.* 2013). This reinforces the

need for practical education to complement theory. Therefore, the success of technical or practical education demands available school training centres (such as hotels and guest houses), and industry-relevant settings created by academia, such as role-plays, case studies, practical training, continuous interaction with industry partners, work-integrated learning (where students work in the industry as part of their graduate programme) and securing industry participation and willingness to supervise students.

These findings were in line with those of Asirifi *et al.* (2013b), Sarkodie and Adom (2015), Najar and Bukhari (2017), and Adiza (2017). According to Asirifi *et al.* (2013b), lecturers ought to place emphasis on practical needs as required by the industry. Sarkodie and Adom (2015) and Adiza (2017) proposed that there should be an extension in the period of internship to ensure that students acquire skills in all areas, and they should be supervised. Adiza (2017) mentioned a need for academia to establish guest houses where these experiences and competencies will be gained. Najar and Bukhari (2017) also advocated for constant interaction between students and hospitality lecturers to help transfer skills and knowledge about current trends and expectations from the industry.

Lecturer-related measures also ensure that lecturers have the required skills to be able to teach students successfully. For instance, some lecturers may lack the required training, which makes the imparting of knowledge difficult (Adiza 2017). Even in situations where there are resources, some lecturers find it difficult to use them to teach. Adiza (2017) concurs by stating that some lecturers lack adequate training to work efficiently which, in turn, can impede the transfer of required skills to students. Lecturers must thus be encouraged to gain industry-related experience and engage in continuous research. These actions are likely to help lecturing staff keep up with current trends and needs. This also validates the findings of Asirifi *et al.* (2013a) and Najar and Bukhari (2017) who emphasized the importance of motivating faculty to undertake research and embark on training and development activities such as job training and refreshment programmes for hospitality lecturers. Undertaking these measures would enable lecturers to become aware of current problems in the industry.

Considering the factors that militate against the teaching and learning of competencies, such as inadequate resources, class size, student background, and lecturer-related problems, categories were set for the problems revealed. Problems with resources included inadequate basic tools and equipment, the nature of infrastructure, and inadequate funds. These problems make it difficult for trainees to get the required experience and skills. This finding confirms that of Adiza (2017). She stated that there is an abject lack of resources as well as a lack of funds to put up resources such as laboratories.

To this end, the study demonstrated that human capital can be improved within hospitality education. This can be achieved by promoting capacity building, improving competencies and developing human resources through avenues such as internships, field studies, industrial attachments, etc. – with the aim to equip graduates with the competencies expected by the industry. The focus on these facets of human capital development could yield crucial results with the potential to spur improvements in the competencies of hospitality graduates from technical universities in Ghana and other parts of the world. In this way, the gaps between the competencies of hospitality graduates and industry expectations will greatly be narrowed.

6.3   Contribution

In light of the gaps that exist between the competencies of hospitality graduates and industry expectation, it is imperative that universities offering hospitality management programmes assess the competencies desired by the industry to produce graduates fit for the job market. Therefore, academia must be familiar with industry expectations and incorporate them into hospitality management training and curriculum.

The study thus contributes both theoretically and empirically by addressing the challenges of training and developing suitably qualified hospitality graduates. In this view, the proposed measures will serve as a framework for training both hospitality students and industry employees (hospitality graduates) on the job. The proposed measures will contribute to the wealth of information to assess and prepare students for the job market.

The framework thus contributes to skill development, supervision and management in both the industry and academia (hospitality education institutions). Moreover, the proposed framework will be published and made available to various hospitality institutions and lecturers for educational purposes in Ghana.

6.4   Limitations

It is argued that no research is absolute, therefore the current study had some limitations. First, the study was limited to the hospitality industry in Ghana; therefore, findings from the study cannot be generalized to other hospitality contexts. Moreover, there was a challenge in accessing some participants engaged in the study due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This motivated the researcher to resort to an online survey using Google Forms.

6.5   Recommendations

In relation to the findings and review of related literature, the study suggests a framework that can be implemented by hospitality lecturers in Ghana to match the competencies of hospitality graduates with those required by industry. Refer to figure 6.1.
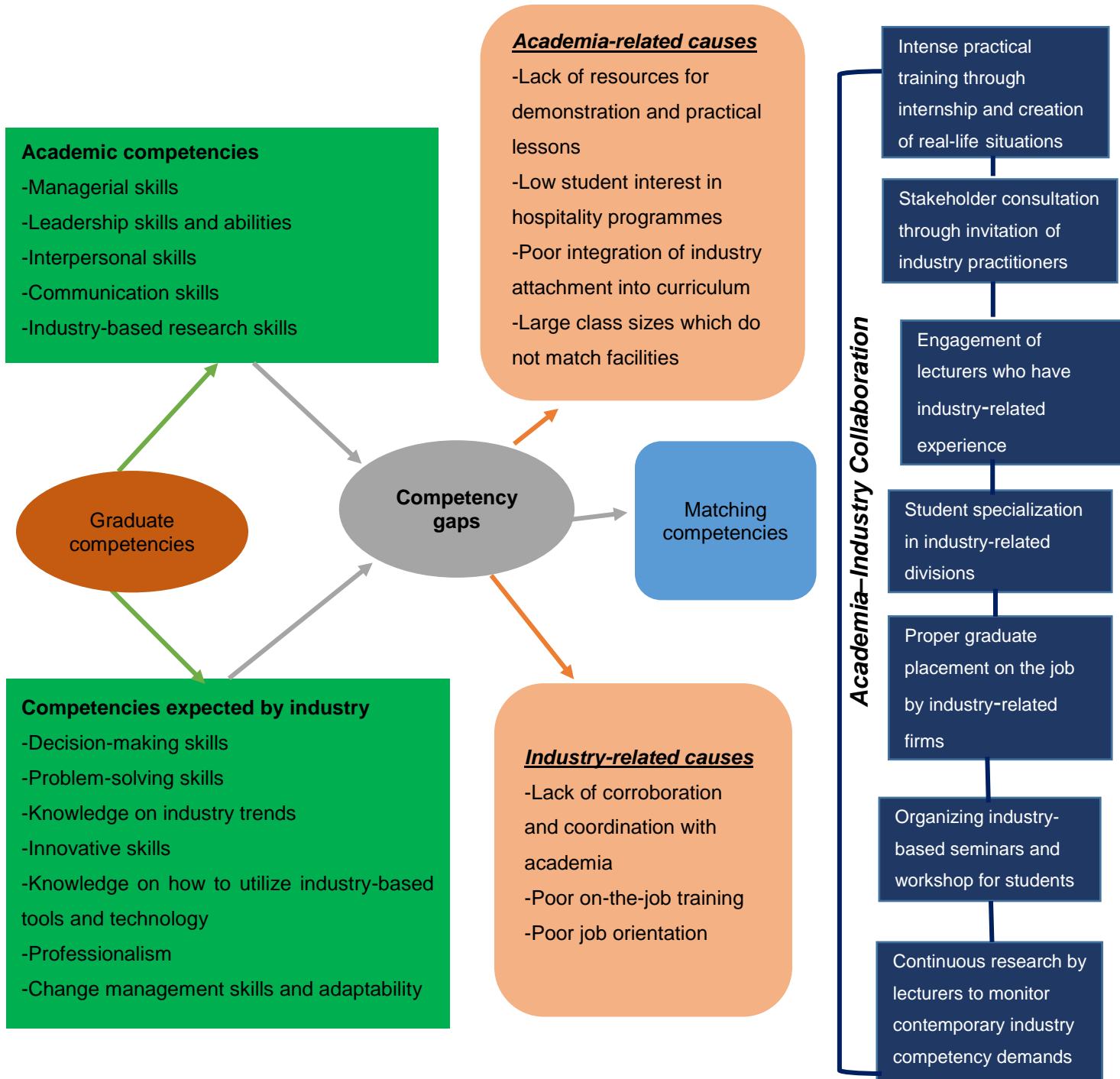
Figure 6.1: Framework to match hospitality graduates' and industry competencies

Source: Author's construct (2021)

The various components of the suggested framework are explained below.

Industry expectations: These are the competencies that the hospitality industry expects graduates to possess in order to succeed in the hospitality industry. The findings from the research showed (as discussed in section 6.2) that the leading expected competencies are knowledge of operations of hospitality divisions (e.g., front office), organisational skills (e.g., event planning skills), problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, ability to write business communications, innovativeness, and the ability to maintain professional standards.

Competencies of hospitality graduates: These are the competencies that are actually possessed or exhibited by hospitality graduates. These competencies are basically acquired through hospitality education. The research findings proved (as discussed in section 6.2) that the actual competencies are knowledge of use and maintenance of tools and equipment, digital skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, self-motivation, and friendliness and approachability.

Bridging the competency gap: The differences that exist between the expected competencies and actual competencies indicate that there is a competency gap that needs to be addressed. In view of this, and from further discussions with lecturers, the study recommends the competencies and measures that will serve as a means to help bridge the identified competency gap. Industry experts must be brought on board to partake in curriculum building. Their input will ensure that the curriculum covers new trends in the field to enable students to obtain the knowledge and skills require to fit well into the dynamic world of work.

Stakeholder consultation highlights the collaboration between key players from academia and industry in developing student competencies. This includes engaging industry via guest lectures, curriculum building and workshop/seminars, among other things. As revealed in the study, the expected and actual competencies uncovered a lack of synergy between proactivity and creativity among hospitality graduates and industry.

Therefore, hospitality lecturers and industry should cooperate to provide avenues for students through practical sessions and internship opportunities to promote proactive and creative attributes.

The focus on proactivity and creativity in hospitality education will ensure that hospitality graduates become innovative in order to tackle real-life circumstances encountered in the world of work. In this way, graduates are likely to develop problem-solving skills in the industry since collaboration between the industry and academia will help graduates to develop the skills needed to solve industry problems. Thus, nurturing problem-solving skills among hospitality graduates in real-life situations will help solve hospitality business problems. This stance resonates with that of Srisangkaew (2018) who intimated that stakeholders' cooperation among hospitality employers and lecturers should occur frequently to resolve problems that exist in the training of graduates. These competencies can be developed among graduates by exposing them to industry through industry collaboration and interactions.

Student-related measures: These include aspects such as having self-orientation and a sense of professionalism, being ethically responsible, taking initiative, being decisive, being a team player, having interactive/collaborative skills, and displaying leadership and communication skills.

These qualities are critical for professional development in the industry. However, according to Lindsey and Rice (2015) and Bedwell, Fiore and Salas (2014), there is growing awareness of the skills gap, indicating that graduates in the industry lack the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills needed for success in today's market place. This stance is bolstered by the current study which exposed the gap between industry expectations and actual graduate competencies, for instance, in relation to the demonstration of communication skills and effective attributes with regard to decision making. In view of this, it is proposed that hospitability abilities and attributes be harnessed among hospitality graduates to further enhance fruitful hospitality encounters.

The ability to be hospitable will ensure that hospitality graduates become more accommodating and exhibit cordiality, tolerance and broadmindedness to deal passionately with the grievances of various stakeholders in the hospitality industry. In this regard, the curriculum should be structured in a manner that will equip hospitality graduates with interactive and decision-making skills. It is therefore recommended that hospitality education nurture the interactive, relational and decision-making competencies of graduates to enable them to take critical decisions and relate effectively with various stakeholders in the industry.

Again, the current study identified a gap between industry expectation and actual graduate competency in relation to problem-solving, decision-making and analytical skills. This aspect of the framework emphasizes graduates' ability to identify, define and analyze real-life problems, provide solutions and assess them, and select the best solution for a particular context. Finally, lecturers should also focus more on specialization, discussions, presentations, and simulation of real-life circumstances with the sole aim of developing the intra- and interpersonal competencies of hospitality graduates.

Technical/practical education: This refers to the aspects required to develop the competency needs of graduates in order for them to perform effectively specific job roles within the industry. Thus, technical education, including digital skills, revenue management and event planning, should feature prominently in the competency training process of hospitality graduates for future success in the industry.

Moreover, practical education should incorporate the organisation of live events as this is vital in the technical skills development of hospitality students. The demonstration of technical skills/practical education is crucial in the hospitality industry (Alexakis and Jiang 2019). However, this skill is not well developed among Ghanaian hospitality graduates as found in this study. Hence, it is suggested that hospitality education emphasizes the teaching and development of technical skills among students. This framework is achievable, as revealed in the study, through the construction of new resource centres (such as hotels, guest houses and practical laboratories) to augment existing ones. Other

measures to achieve the above include the creation of industry settings in academia that will offer hospitality students opportunity to practice theoretical knowledge discussed in classroom. Weekly industrial practice or visits are essential in cases where there is no industry setting in a school. In such instances, the curriculum should be planned to meet student needs through industry attachment. This intervention should, however, be extensive and effective as well.

It is recommended that hospitality education train students to obtain high-level understanding and alertness regarding operations and procedures in the industry as a whole. This will enable graduates to have a firm awareness of developments in the various sub-divisions as well as logistics management in the sector. This can be achieved by linking curriculum and lectures to actual industry operations.

The above discussion is supported by Shariff (2013) who maintained that reforms in the curriculum will help to produce skilful and knowledgeable graduates and help management implement strategies to sustain business operations in the changing environment. To achieve all of the above, it is highly recommended that educational institutions possess and operate a hospitality facility, preferably a star hotel, to be used for training students in hospitality operations.

Lecturer-related measures: This aspect emphasizes the encouragement of lecturers to gain industrial experience and research. According to Meerah *et al.* (2011: 632), research abilities/skills require "imaginative and innovative thinking to find new ways to approach a problem, analytical skills to examine the consequences of a particular solution, and reasoning skills to weigh one solution against another". The study therefore advocates for lecturers to gain adequate industry experience and research abilities to help impart new knowledge to students in order to keep them up to date with current trends in the industry.

Framework for hospitality competency development: In the end, it is expected that the suggested framework is likely to yield the required results which, in turn, would help

improve the competencies of hospitality graduates to meet industry expectations. Thus, the eventual demonstration of these competencies will enhance the employability of hospitality graduates, as well as help them build successful careers in the hospitality industry. The proposed recommendations can effectively be realized through operational collaboration between academia and industry in order to achieve desired results.

6.6   Further research

The current study employed a mixed-method approach and was limited to the technical universities in Ghana; however, the traditional universities also offer tourism and hospitality management programmes. Therefore, the study recommends in-depth studies in traditional universities to explore the varying opinions of graduates and lecturers on the competency requirements from the hospitality industry. Again, since a general conclusion cannot be made based on the results of this study, it is recommended that a similar study be conducted in different countries or organisations for consistency.

6.7   Summary

This chapter presented conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study. The chapter discussed both the quantitative and qualitative results in the conclusion section. The contributions and limitations of the study were submitted. The proposed framework was discussed in the recommendations section. Lastly, the study suggested further research to be conducted based on the limitations of the study.

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Annexure A: Self-assessment competency questionnaire for hostitality graduates

Dear hospitality graduates,

This questionnaire requires you to assess your own competencies for working in the hospitality industry. The completion of the questionnaire is anonymous and your willingness to assist is highly appreciated.

Section A: Demographic profile of respondents

Please indicate your response by making a circle around the appropriate number.

1. Please indicate your gender.

1.	Male
2.	Female

2. Please indicate your age in years_____

3. Indicate your highest qualification.

1.	Diploma
2.	Advanced diploma
3.	Post graduate diploma
4.	BTech/honours degree
5.	Master's degree
6.	Doctoral degree

4. Indicate your current position _____

5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking [√] the appropriate block.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Knowledge required from hospitality graduates						
5.1	I know the laws that govern hospitality establishments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.2	I know the basic principles of hospitality marketing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.3	I have sufficient knowledge of finance and accounting.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.4	I know how the various hospitality divisions operate, e.g. room division, front office, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.5	I know how to utilise the various types of utensils, tools and equipment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.6	I know how to maintain the various utensils, tools and equipment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Skills required from hospitality graduates						
5.7	I possess adequate organisational skills, like event planning skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.8	I have good communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6

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		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.9	I possess good inter-personal skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.10	I possess good digital skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.11	I have good decision-making skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.12	I have adequate problem-solving skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Attributes and abilities required from hospitality graduates	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.13	I am friendly and approachable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.14	I am customer oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.15	I am a good team player.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.16	I am generally self-motivated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.17	I have critical thinking ability.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.18	I am able to adapt to environmental change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.19	I maintain professional standards.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.20	I am innovative and can think of new ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.21	I possess the ability to write business communications.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Annexure B: Questionnaire on the industry competencies expected from hospitality graduates

Dear hospitality industry employers,

This questionnaire relates to the required competencies you expect from hospitality graduates. The completion of the questionnaire is anonymous and your willingness to assist is highly appreciated.

Section A: Demographic profile of respondents

Please indicate your response by making a circle around the appropriate number.

1. Please indicate your gender.

1.	Male
2.	Female

2. Please indicate your age in years_____

3. Indicate your highest qualification.

1.	Diploma
2.	Advanced diploma
3.	Post graduate diploma
4.	BTech/honours degree
5.	Master's degree
6.	Doctoral degree

4. Indicate your current position _____

5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking [√] the appropriate block.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Knowledge required from hospitality graduates						
5.1	Hospitality graduates know the laws that govern hospitality establishments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.2	Hospitality graduates generally have a basic understanding of hospitality marketing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.3	Hospitality graduates have sufficient knowledge of finance and accounting.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.4	Hospitality graduates possess knowledge of how the various hospitality divisions operate, e.g. room division, front office, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.5	Hospitality graduates know how to utilise the various types of utensils, tools and equipment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.6	Hospitality graduates know how to maintain the various utensils, tools and equipment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Skills required from hospitality graduates						
5.7	Hospitality graduates possess organisational skills, like event planning skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.8	Hospitality graduates generally possess good communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.9	Hospitality graduates generally have good inter-personal skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.10	Hospitality graduates generally have good digital skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.11	Hospitality graduates generally possess good decision-making skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.12	Hospitality graduates generally have good problem-solving skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Attributes and abilities required from hospitality graduates						
5.13	Hospitality graduates are generally speaking friendly and approachable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.14	Hospitality graduates are customer oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.15	Hospitality graduates are good team players.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.16	Hospitality graduates are generally speaking self-motivated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.17	Hospitality graduates possess critical thinking ability.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.18	Hospitality graduates are able to adapt to environmental change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.19	Hospitality graduates possess the ability to maintain professional standards.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.20	Hospitality graduates are generally speaking innovative and able to think of new ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.21	Hospitality graduates possess the ability to write business communications.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Annexure C: Focus group interview guide for hospitality lecturers

1. What is the name of your institution?
2. How long have you been teaching in the Hospitality Department?
3. What is your position in the institution?
4. What are the challenges you encounter in training students?
5. Indicate which competencies are crucial for students to acquire at university.
6. Does the content of your curriculum cover conceptual skills required in the industry?
7. Does the content of your curriculum cover the management skills required in the industry?
8. Does the content of your curriculum cover the administrative skills required in the industry?
9. Does the content of your curriculum cover technical skills required in the industry?
10. Does the content of your curriculum cover the human resource management skills required in the industry?
11. Does the content of your curriculum cover personal skills required in the industry?
12. How can the gaps between industry and academia be bridged?
13. What are the challenges that militate against the teaching and learning of these competencies?
14. To what extent can industry exposure for students prepare them for the world of work?