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Key competencies of managerial level employees for sustainability in hospitality business

Abstract

This paper aims to develop a conceptual overview of key competencies framework needed by managers for achieving the sustainability and overall success in the hospitality business narrative. This overview provides a summary of the key sources and interpretation of the key concepts, granting hospitality educators and managers useful insights of competencies and skills required of future leaders and possibilities of exiting curriculum enhancement. The ever increasing and expanding needs of the hospitality industry are greatly reflected in expectancy of certain skills and competencies of managerial level employees. Industry professionals and educators should continuously cooperate to track and investigate emerging trends and competencies expected from the hospitality management graduates to possess in order to include them in the curriculum. The framework is developed from a review of literature that is focused largely on competencies of managerial level employees and national standards that are needed to develop a sustainable hospitality business.

Authors contribute by collecting different concepts for further developing of theoretical framework for academic and practical application. The paper provides a conceptual overview for educators wishing to conduct more detailed empirical research on the subject. The review is valuable to industry professionals and stakeholders for analysis of the required competencies list and to implementing appropriate continuous improvements in cooperation with educators.

Paper type: Conceptual overview paper.

Keywords

competencies, hospitality industry, hospitality management higher education, sustainability

1 Introduction

An ever-increasing number of destinations worldwide have opened up to, and invested in tourism, turning it into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of jobs and enterprises, export revenues, and infrastructure development (UNWTO, 2016). More than 366,000

people spent at least one night in Latvia's hotels during the first quarter of 2016, which was by 1.6% more than during the corresponding period of the previous year, according to information from the Latvian Central Statistical Board. As compared to Q1 2015, the number of foreign visitors rose by 2.5%, and the number of nights spent increased by 7.6%. The average duration of stay at hotels was

2.1 nights. The unfavourable geopolitical situation and recession of the Russian economy, worsening the material possibilities of its citizens to travel, have not yet changed the breakdown of tourism market by other countries. The largest number of visitors accommodated in tourist accommodation establishments is still from Russia (19%), Estonia (11.4%), Lithuania (11.3%), Germany (6.8%), the UK (6%), Norway (5.8%), Finland (4.5%) and Sweden (4%) (Latvian Central Statistical Board, 2016). Because of the steady and positive tourism sector growth displayed in the recent 5 years in Latvia, the whole hospitality industry and especially accommodation service businesses are in need of skilled and competent employees of all levels, and specifically employees of managerial levels, as these employees are the key figures in organizing sustainable and effective business environment. Hospitality industry businesses can barely benefit without efficient and effective employees that possess necessary competencies for performing up to par with nowadays industry standards and needs.

Human resource managers have been helped greatly by the introduction of new mindset of determining relevant competencies and skills in hiring process, which has also effected retention, development and career planning stages in the hospitality industry (Chung-Herrera, Enz & Lankau, 2003). One of the reasons why competencies-based hiring process is beneficial to the hospitality industry is because of the high employee transition and movement rate. For a longer time the hospitality industry strived for a solution to reduce the employee turnover rate, in order to combat challenges in the recruitment and retention of quality managerial level employees (Ghiselli, La Lopa & Bai, 2001). In addition to that, the hospitality leaders have long waited and expected the hospitality management higher education graduates to possess appropriate management skills and competencies required to achieve competitive and sustainable advantage (Chung-Herrera, Enz & Lankau, 2003). This once again proves the critical role of curriculum development in accordance with the industry current standards and needs in order to include key competencies for managerial level employees.

Sustainability is the main approach the tourism and hospitality management studies are generally utilising and inclusion of sustainability-related competencies has been a significant paradigm in the higher education (Herschovis & Herremans, 2006). United Nations has declared 2005- 2014 as UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, as education is a motor for change that can promote and develop a basis for a more sustainable societies (UN DESD, 2011). The paradigm is not ending in 2014, currently sustainability is finding its place within higher education curriculum in hospitality

management as an integral studies part, rather than being just an alternative (Boley, 2011). Sustainability competencies included in curriculum will provide hospitality management graduates with a better education and skills for the hospitality and tourism business sustainable development. Having sustainability as the end goal of hospitality and tourism will result in natural integration of sustainability into the curriculum because sustainability is the main context of interest of any business (Boley, 2011).

The research consists of the three phases, with current paper representing phase 1. The first phase offers the literature review of the current occupational standards and competencies required of managers in hospitality sector in the Republic of Latvia, overview of the current higher education curriculum requirements and competencies included in it, as well as core concepts of sustainability, common trends in hospitality education. Phase 2 will deploy research activities where the researchers will extract the results of surveys from industry professionals in order to determine the essential sustainability skills and competencies vital for the hospitality management graduates. In the phase 3 the researchers will conduct the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the theoretical framework, research data collected in the phases 1 and 2 and will determine whether differences exist between the essential compelling competencies of managers in hospitality and those included in the hospitality management higher education curriculum. The results will include the proposals of how the content and quality of the studies can be improved in order to ensure a more comprehensive competency-based education for managers in achieving sustainability for hospitality business.

2 Competencies key concepts definition

A comprehensive literature review of the related literature reports everything from seminal to current cutting-edge research on the selected topic. Important theories, methods and procedures, and results that have contributed to the related disciplines in hospitality management education comprise the literature review below.

Labour market in our century is characterized as more dynamic than before emphasising different skills and competencies (Dede, 2009). Thus, organizations are shifting from the focus on specific set of skills to the competency based approach (Chouhan, Srivastava, 2014) as human capital is defined as one of the most valuable resource (Brownell, 2007). In this context, individuals are required to go beyond narrowly defined skills of their work and to apply more complex concept – competency (OECD, 2005). As

for hospitality organizations human capital means the competitive advantage in the business (Brownell, 2007), the importance of this topic cannot be neglected.

In order to discuss the concept of competencies, it is important to understand its origin and meaning. English language offers two terms – “competence” and “competency”. Competence is skill-based and refers to the standard of performance while competency relates to the behaviour by which the standard is achieved (Sanghi, 2007). This paper discusses the concept of competency.

The origin of the term competency can be found in the Latin word “competentia” which means “is authorised to judge” and “has the right to speak” (Caupin et al., 2006). Although it was initially applied in the field of education (Chouhan, Srivastava, 2014), this term became widely known also in the field of business and management (Sanghi, 2007). David McClelland was the first author arguing that personal characteristics called “competencies” are better predictors for outstanding on-the-job performance than traditional academic aptitude. As his focus was on the educational sector, Richard Boyatzis (1982) with his book “The Competent Manager” introduced the business world with the term competency defining it as “an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/ or superior performance in a job.” Although competencies are field of interest for many scholars and researchers, no agreement has been reached in terms of its definition. After summarizing several definitions and debates of scholars, Chouhan and Srivastava (2014) conclude that competency is ability “of applying or using knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and personal characteristics to successfully perform critical work tasks, specific functions, or operate in a given role or position.” According to this definition, competencies are characteristics indicating how an individual behave and think across different situations. It goes in line with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2005) definition of competencies explaining it as ability to meet complex requirements through mobilisation of psychosocial resources in particular context.

As there is no commonly agreed definition on the term competency, there is also more than one approach on the classification. Generally, competencies can be classified as employee-level and organizational-level. Nevertheless, competencies of an organization such as resources and capabilities are connected with the employee level and thus, the aforementioned categories are interrelated (Cardy, Selvarajan, 2006). Katz and Kahn (1986) group competencies into four categories (technical or functional; managerial; human and conceptual) whereas Carrol and McCrackin (1988) suggest three

categories – core competencies, leadership and managerial and functional competencies. OECD has created a framework of key competencies for individuals. These competencies should not only allow persons to cope with the changing and demanding environment, but also help to influence it. According to OECD (2005), key competencies of an individual could be classified in three broad areas – a) use tools interactively, b) interact in heterogeneous groups and c) act autonomously.

As mentioned above, competencies are broad concept including several components such as skills, knowledge, behaviour, attitude, abilities etc. Nevertheless, competencies should be measurable and observable in order to ensure excellent performance. Chouhan and Srivastava (2014) define it as competency mapping and through this process, key competencies for an organization and job are determined. The outcome of this process is competency model including group of key competencies that are required of an individual for high performance. Although building a competency model is complex process requiring specific approaches (Chouhan, Srivastava, 2004), the outcome can be applied in several human resource management activities such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, coaching, counselling and mentoring, reward system, career development, succession planning, change management (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003).

Education organizations are the ones preparing students for the job market. Therefore, competency models are an important topic among industry managers and educators as competent employees relates to the firm’s competitiveness. The research of Sue et al. (2012) based on factor analysis indicated six dimensions of core competencies for managers in the hospitality industry – hospitality skills, interpersonal skills, supervisory skills, food and beverage management skills, leadership and communication skills. This goes in line with results of several previous research where employee centred leadership and interpersonal skills (Kay and Russette, 2000), oral communication (Gursoy and Swanger, 2005), teamwork, communication and guest service (Tesone and Ricci, 2005) have been specified as necessary competencies for hospitality managers. Nevertheless, previous studies have indicated different views on necessary core competencies between students and managers. According to Raybould and Wilkins (2006), interpersonal skills, problem solving and self-management skills are considered more important among managers than students. In contrast, information management, conceptual, analytical and oral communication skills were higher ranked among students.

Research results of Sue et al. (2012) indicate different views between managers and students on

interpersonal skills, leadership and food and beverage skills. Interpersonal skills and leadership were considered significantly more important of managers than students. However, food and beverage skills were ranked higher of students than managers. These results provide educators and managers with valuable information when planning study process and course curriculum.

For this paper, authors have chosen to analyse the current occupational standards and competencies required of managers in the hospitality sector in the Republic of Latvia. The professional standard of Hotel Service Organizer includes 24 competencies requiring various abilities (Latvian Qualifications Database, 2016). Therefore, the authors aim to explore whether these aforementioned competencies are essential for the work of manager in the hospitality and how to integrate them in the hospitality management higher education curriculum.

3 Hospitality management higher education and national standards

Hospitality management occupies one of the most important niches in the whole hospitality industry. The hospitality industry includes many different segments, but our attention mostly will be devoted to accommodation services, which is considered to be one of the bigger sectors, although all of them are closely related and work hand-in-hand (Brymer & Hashimoto, 2009). Despite the fact that the hospitality management educational programmes are considered to be relatively recent pursuit, the expansion of hospitality degree programmes has been observed due to the growth of the industry. The recent trends are suggesting to move away from subjects such as cooking and hotel operation to quality management and technological applications and to incorporate competencies-based approach in the curriculum (Schoffstall, 2013).

Hospitality management graduates are expected to possess a lot of common features and skills that they are sharing with managers from other industries, but there also are unique hospitality industry attributes. There has lately been a paradigm observed in terms of competencies required for hospitality management with the emphasis is now being put on leadership, emotional intelligence and the like (Management Studies, Tourism & Wilks D. & Hemsworth K., 2011). It is a very crucial thing to follow the hospitality industry needs, to include the latest trends into hospitality degree curriculum, and to integrate latest emerging competencies in accordance with employer expectations. All of the education establishments granting hospitality management degrees should have a responsibility in equipping the graduates with valid competencies, though previous studies have shown that there are

differences between educators and industry professionals in regards of the key competencies required by managerial level employees (Kay & Moncarz, 2013). This research is aimed at overviewing the current situation with national approved curriculum and vocational standards with the ultimate goal to provide suggestions of curriculum improvements in order to match the industry needs and higher education possibilities.

First, we will look briefly at the national vocational standards of the Republic of Latvia and namely at the competencies listed in the standard (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 579, 2014).

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations Nr. 579, the hotel service organization profession standard in total lists 24 competencies for hospitality higher education graduates to possess. The standard lists different abilities, such as ability to understand the structure and trends in hospitality, to describe and implement the goals and action plans, to identify marketing concepts, to understand human resource management functions, to evaluate the company business operations, to follow the current trends and latest technologies in hospitality and tourism industry and similar, that are allowing industry professionals to operate any hospitality business successfully, etc. (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations Nr. 579)

Sustainability and its aspects are mentioned very briefly in competency Nr. 21 - ability to provide management of the company resources, by ensuring environmentally sound and sustainable development of the company. The authors believe that sustainability continues to emerge as a key trend for all aspects of hospitality industry and in all types of organizations and should be a core concept that all competencies should be based around. Tourism and hospitality services are seen as a positive addition and business activities to the local communities, because of the job creating opportunities and connected area and culture development possibilities. New hospitality businesses are attracting growing incoming tourist flow as well as creating the demand for immigrating workers for the new jobs created. The combination of those two factors most definitely will increase resource depletion rate, the amount of produced waste and pollution, which may result in the local area degradation and welfare of the local population (Thanh & Bosch, 2010). In the latter scenario, the positive effect of incoming tourism and the sustainability of such tourism development should be questioned.

The authors strongly believe that developing a sustainable hospitality business is completely reliant on managerial level employees as these type of employees are the future leaders responsible of tackling the challenges that the industry currently faces and will face even more extensively in future. Sustainability competencies not only are maximizing benefits, but also can triple the bottom

line if environmental, societal and economic benefits are equally distributed (Alhaddi, 2015). Hence, the assertion, that sustainability concerns have to be represented more extensively in curriculum in hospitality management degree programmes and has to be made a prominent agenda in higher education.

The following discussion elaborates on some of the key sustainability core concepts and studies-related developments within hospitality management higher education.

4 Sustainability and sustainable development

According to Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability (HEPS) (2004), p.7, sustainable is equal to capacity to grow, development means path of human progress, where sustainable development stands for a path for human progress that has the capacity to continue into the long term. True sustainability can only be achieved when a balanced approach towards environmental, social and economic equity is adopted based on the pillars of the famous Elkington's Triple Bottom Line (TBL). (Chawla, G., Manhas, P. S., 2015, p.1)

Likewise, for understanding sustainable development and the benefits, HEPS (2004), p.11, outlines the Five Capital Model of the Economy by Forum for the Future where available to anyone resources are considered as capitals including natural, human, social, manufactured, and financial. For human capital, resources are knowledge, skills, health, motivation, spiritual ease while flow of benefits include happiness, creativity, innovation, work, energy, participation. For financial capital, resources are money, stocks, bonds, banknotes with such benefits as means of valuing, owning or exchanging other four capitals, where a sustainable society can live off the income generated by capitals (flows) rather than degrading the capitals (stocks). (HEPS, 2004, p. 11).

Brazdauskas, M., Gaigalaite, L. (2015), p.106, resume that implementation of sustainability initiatives in a hotel industry requires extensive expertise and know-how that lead to a growing demand for employees to stay up-to-date and qualified in order to take advantage of current sustainability trends and opportunities in the hospitality industry. Chawla, G., Manhas, P. S., (2015), p.19-21, refer to Deale et al. (2009), Jurowski & Liburd (2001) noting sustainability as a key business imperative for the hospitality industry's viability and continued growth where continued sustainability of the industry itself is dependent on qualified professionals who can accept sustainable development principles as part of their management values.

The UN System Task Team (2012), p.3, state that education, or the transmission, acquisition,

creation and adaptation of information, knowledge, skills and values, is a key lever of sustainable development. Brazdauskas, M., Gaigalaite, L. (2015), p.105, define sustainable organisations as learning organisations. However, according to Chawla, G., Manhas, P. S. (2015), p.23-24, sustainability should be the end result of hospitality education as well as sustainable management is the outcome of hospitality education and indicative of an emerging trend in the near future by Chawla, G., Manhas, P. S. (2015), p.34.

4.1 SUSTAINABILITY IN TRAINING AND EDUCATION

International Labour Office (ILO, 2010), p.22, stresses that it is essential to be able to anticipate skills needs and to align training provision with changing needs in the labour market. Withal, Chawla, Manhas (2015, p.22-23) noted that the basic purpose of higher education is to make a real difference and to act as agents for change with the responsibility to secure quality of life for future generations, and to educate future decision makers as admitted by Wright (2007) and Wade (1999).

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2014), p.5, defines Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as the process of equipping students with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations. Sustainability education (SE) is the other commonplace terminology used within this discipline (Chawla, G., Manhas, P. S., 2015, p.22-23). Detailing the meaning of ESD, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2014), p.5-7, outlines working with students to encourage them to consider the concept of global citizenship, environmental stewardship, issues of social justice, ethics and wellbeing, develop a future-facing outlook, think about the consequences of actions, and how systems and societies can be adapted to ensure sustainable futures. ESD encourages students to develop critical thinking and to take a wide-ranging, systemic and self-reflective approach, adapting to novel situations that can arise from complexity. An ability to anticipate and prepare for predictable outcomes and be ready to adapt to unexpected ones is an important goal. (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2014, p.7).

UNESCO has been promoting ESD since 1992 through the UN Decade for ESD from 2005 to 2014, now spearheading its follow-up, the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD indicating on systematic integrating of ESD into all levels and settings of education and training. (UNESCO, 2017. p.1, 2012, p.2). According to the new 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development education is formulated as a stand-alone goal – Sustainable Development Goal 4 where education is both a goal in itself and a means for attaining all the other SDGs. (UNESCO, 2012, p.5-6). Target 4.7 of the SDGs by United Nations (2015) is to ensure by 2030 that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. UNESCO (2017), p.7, also promotes Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as a complementary approach to ESD, and assists to integrate ESD in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC). (UNESCO, 2012, p. 8).

Anderson, E.L. (2015), p.7-8, refers to the statement by Barth et al (2007), p.418, that competencies are learnable but not teachable. Likewise, UNESCO (2017), p.7, points out that ESD requires a shift from teaching to learning, and asks for an action-oriented, transformative pedagogy, which supports self-directed learning, participation and collaboration, problem-orientation, inter- and transdisciplinarity and the linking of formal and informal learning. Withal Anderson, E.L. (2015) alludes to Wiek et al (2011) that before competencies can be developed; ESD and problem solving must be integrated into academia and curriculum development incorporating the methods, theories, and knowledge from a variety of disciplines. Around 400 universities worldwide have signed the Talloires declaration, a blueprint for incorporating sustainability in learning, teaching and operations. (Chawla, G., Manhas, P. S., 2015, p.22-23). According to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2014), p.7, learning for and about sustainable development may not involve additional content to a discipline, but it may involve minor adaptation.

Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory (PedRIO, 2015), p.31-32, provides an outline for QESD as the result of integrating Quality Education and ESD with a more holistic and comprehensive approach to education. The approach relates to 1) the content of what is to be learned; 2) the process of how to teach and learn, 3) the environment in which to learn and with whom to learn, and 4) in what socio-economic, cultural and political context to learn. QESD will also result in higher order learning and as a result provide the needed competencies. (PedRIO, 2015, p.31-32).

4.2 DETERMINING SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCIES

According to UNESCO (2017), p.10, there is general agreement that sustainability citizens need to have certain key competencies that allow them to

engage constructively and responsibly with today's world. Referring to Weinert (2001), UNESCO (2015) states that "competencies describe the specific attributes individuals need for action and self-organization in various complex contexts and situations. They include cognitive, affective, volitional and motivational elements; hence they are an interplay of knowledge, capacities and skills, motives and affective dispositions. Competencies cannot be taught, but have to be developed by the learners themselves. They are acquired during action, on the basis of experience and reflection.

Linking to Rychen (2003), Weinert (2001), UNESCO (2017), p.10, specifies that key competencies represent cross-cutting competencies necessary for all learners of all ages worldwide (developed at different age-appropriate levels). Key competencies can be understood as transversal, multifunctional and context-independent. They do not replace specific competencies necessary for successful action in certain situations and contexts, but they encompass these and are more broadly focused. (UNESCO, 2017, p.10). HEPS (2004, p.40), mentions two levels of competency: in relation to sustainable development and in relation to the learner's likely sphere of influence in the future. While the difference between the two is important, they should be considered in tandem (HEPS, 2004).

According to an integrated sustainability research and problem-solving framework by Wiek, Withycombe, & Redman (2011), presented by Anderson (2015, p.4-5), sustainability problems are first analyzed in their current state utilizing systems-thinking and normative competencies, then anticipatory and normative competencies facilitate the consideration of non-intervention scenarios and the creation of various sustainability visions. Strategic competence is essential to implement and test strategies that transform from the current state to a sustainable state while interpersonal competence is essential for all components of the research and problem-solving framework.

Anderson (2015, p.4-6) also invokes explanation by de Haan (2006, p. 22) that overall competence in sustainability research and problem-solving requires the development of each individual key competency as well as the ability to effectively combine competencies.

HEPS (2004, p.12) adapts the Five Capital Model framework for determining what competencies a student should acquire. These sustainability competencies are sufficient knowledge about sustainable development, leadership skills, an understanding of how society works, learning outcomes and assessment, delivery methods. Regarding study programmes the sustainability competencies are promoting the programme, reviewing and renewing the programme. (HEPS, 2004, p.14). To be competent

to offer leadership for sustainable development, graduates are expected to apply a holistic, up-to-date understanding of the concept of sustainable development, identify the opportunities and constraints for implementing sustainability solutions, and critically evaluate what constitutes best practice, use the tools and concepts for holistic thinking in their interpretation of their work and the workings of society. (HEPS, 2004, p. 14).

The College of Estate Management (2013, p.16) defines core sustainability competencies as knowledge and skills to achieve sustainability. The basic framework of core sustainability competencies consists of mindset, strategy and technical skills extended to sub-items discussed below.

According to HEPS (2004), p. 43, the next step after identified relevant competencies and learning outcomes, is to set out the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills to be covered for students to become sustainability literate. HEPS (2004, p.43) outlines the three groups: professional specific knowledge, understanding and skills; professional transferable knowledge, understanding and skills; personal transferable knowledge, understanding and skills.

ILO (2010), p. 22, admits that demand is growing for non-routine analytical skills involving creativity, problem-solving, communication, teamwork and entrepreneurship – all skills that help workers to maintain their employability and enterprises their resilience in the face of change; and decreasing for more routine skills in functions subject to automation, digitization and outsourcing.

The College of Estate Management (2013), p.4, defines the core knowledge and skills relevant to everyone seeking sustainability qualifications. These are three core skills: a flexible mindset and strategic and technical capabilities. Technical Level 1 sets out the general knowledge and skills needed to develop sustainable built environments. In Technical Level 2 the requisite skill sets are more focused and are tailored to a particular role or profession, such as a project manager, legal advisor or a managing agent. (The College of Estate Management, 2013, p. 4) These groupings are quite broad, interconnected and interdependent, can be broken down into the primary skills sets, but it is debatable which are more important, and understanding each one depends on having an understanding of the other skills.

According to The College of Estate Management (2013, p. 4) the primary skill set for mindset includes values, motivation and action, awareness of core principles and themes, communication and collaborative working, systems and future thinking, leadership.

Collaboration is about assembling the right players to deliver new, innovative solutions,

whatever the scale. It requires an understanding of how to get things done in the face of hidden agendas and unwritten rules, political coalitions and competing points of view. This will involve identifying, managing and working with stakeholders to form alliances and allegiances to overcome any barriers. (The College of Estate Management, 2013, p. 7-8).

Using 'systems thinking' is critical when working on complex, interconnected problem. On another level, systems thinking helps us to understand the organisational problems arising from business or management strategies and change management to frame problems holistically by building judgement and intuition into messy, unstructured situations. (The College of Estate Management, 2013, p. 8).

4.3 COMPETENCIES OF STRATEGY AND INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABILITY

According to the College of Estate Management (2013, p.12), the strategy is split into business case, change management and innovation. Strategy is situated in the core of nine-hub sustainability jigsaw puzzle by Weybrecht (2010) consisting of ethics, accounting, economics, finance, strategy, marketing, entrepreneurship, operations, organisational behaviour. The corner pieces of the puzzle are the four key areas: ethics, economics, entrepreneurship, and organisational behaviour, which an organisation should use as a basis from which to address sustainability, but the pieces in-between accounting, finance, marketing, operations help tie it all together. Central to the job of the sustainability professional is the need to understand the interrelationships between the nine areas, to communicate and collaborate with the people working in them, to engage them and to develop their sustainability literacy so that they can contribute to the debate. (The College of Estate Management, 2013, p. 12).

Business case is deployed as understanding sustainability risks and opportunities as a collective learning process including understanding of the role, responsibilities and purpose of business, of balancing financial and non-financial objectives, but change management requires an understanding of behaviour and attitudes. (The College of Estate Management, 2013, p. 13-14).

It is a skill in itself to set up effective innovation groups. Innovation requires a combination of three ingredients: understanding the nature of the problem; a willingness to seek answers; and having the time and resources to be able to consider solutions. (The College of Estate Management, 2013, p. 15). Schaltegger, S. Wagner, M., (2010), p.223-224., consider that market innovations driving sustainable development do not necessarily occur by

accident but can be created by leaders who put them into the core of their business activities: generate new products, services, techniques and organizational modes that substantially reduce environmental impacts and increase the quality of life.

A sustainability literate person by HEPS (2004), p.7, would be expected to: 1) understand the need for change to a sustainable way of doing things, individually and collectively; 2) have sufficient knowledge and skills to decide and act in a way that favours sustainable development; 3) be able to recognise and reward other people's decisions and actions that favour sustainable development. Different people will have different levels of literacy in sustainability including These differences in levels and content can be defined through learning outcomes related to specific roles or professions. (The College of Estate Management, 2013)

4.4 SUMMARY OF KEY SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCIES

Concise review demonstrates competencies as an interplay of knowledge, capacities and skills, motives and affective dispositions, which cannot be taught, but have to be developed by the learners themselves during action, on the basis of experience and reflection with the two levels in relation to sustainable development and in relation to the learner's likely sphere of influence in the future. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is defined as the process of equipping students with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work achieving sustainability.

Entrepreneurship and risk management skills are primarily defined as key competencies for transition to sustainability. The list is supplemented by systems thinking competency, anticipatory competency, normative competency, and strategic competency as well as interpersonal competence, collaboration competency, critical thinking competency, self-awareness competency, integrated problem-solving competency. Another framework demonstrates key sustainability competencies similarly but in other words as positive and flexible mindset, strategic skills and technical skills. Central to the job of the sustainability professional is the need to understand the interrelationships between business managing areas, to communicate and collaborate with the people working in them, to engage them and to develop their sustainability literacy. Conceptual review of sustainability competencies summarizes that hospitality and tourism professionals need to practice sustainability in financial operations; employee experiences; community action; facilities management; purchasing; food production, preparation, and service; planning and staging events and meetings;

and as part of overall business plans and processes.

It is essential to be able to anticipate skills needs and to align training provision with changing needs in the labour market with the basic purpose of higher education to act as agents for change with the responsibility to secure quality of life for future generations, and to educate future decision makers. The differences in levels and content of the key competencies can be defined through learning outcomes related to specific roles or professions of managerial level employees in the hospitality business.

5 Quality of studies

Webster dictionary defines quality as degree of excellence. In the context of education, there are many definitions of quality testifying to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. The terms efficiency, effectiveness, equity and quality have often been used synonymously (Adams, 1993). Considerable consensus exists around the basic dimensions of quality education today, however. Education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context also takes into account the global and international influences that propel the discussion of educational quality (Motala, 2000).

Continuous assessment and improvement can focus on any or all dimensions of system quality: learners, learning environments, content, process and outcomes. Establishing a contextualized understanding of quality means including relevant stakeholders. Key stakeholders often hold different views and meanings of educational quality (Motala, 2000; Benoliel, O'Gara & Miske, 1999). There are four groups of stakeholders that must be considered when defining quality: providers (e.g., funding bodies and the community, taxpayers); users of products (e.g., students); users of outputs (e.g., employers); and employees of the sector (e.g., academics and administrators; Shindler et al., 2015). Each group has a different perspective on quality. For example, students associate quality with the institution they attend, the program in which they enroll, and the course they complete. Conversely, employers are concerned with quality in terms of the final product, which can be demonstrated through a qualified employee pool (Harvey & Knight, 1996). Therefore, in order to define quality and attempt to establish a culture of quality in higher education, all stakeholders should be involved in the discussion to ensure that different perspectives and needs are incorporated (Bobby, 2014; Cullen et al., 2003).

The report of the UK Commission for Work and Skills "The Future of Work, Jobs and Skills in 2030" (2014) predicted the development of market-based and employer-focused education. As we move towards 2030 bearing in mind the Sustainable

Development Goals, we must address the challenges faced by education due to the fast changes in society, economy, and technologies.

The knowledge society will require a multitude of complementary 21st century skills, all of which express high expectations towards the future generation of competitive entrepreneurs, creative and communicative problem-solvers addressing present and future major global challenges. Quality content refers to the intended and taught curriculum of schools. National goals for education, and outcome statements that translate those goals into measurable objectives, should provide the starting point for the development and implementation of curriculum (UNICEF, 2000).

In general, curriculum should emphasize deep rather than broad coverage of important areas of knowledge, authentic and contextualized problems of study, and problem-solving that stresses skills development as well as knowledge acquisition. Curriculum should also provide for individual differences, closely coordinate and selectively integrate subject matter, and focus on results or standards and targets for student learning (Glatthorn & Jailall, 2000), i.e. curriculum should be based on clearly defined learning outcomes.

The European Commission "Future of Learning" online consultation on new skills for future jobs built a vision for education and training policy that would adequately prepare learners for life in the future society, envisaging which competences will be relevant and how these will be acquired in 2020-2030, in particular with the use of technologies. Furthermore, UNESCO together with UNICEF, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women and UNHCR organized the World Education Forum 2015 where 1,600 participants from 160 countries, including over 120 Ministers, heads and members of delegations, heads of agencies and officials of multilateral and bilateral organizations, and representatives of civil society, the teaching profession, youth and the private sector, adopted the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030, which sets out a new vision for education for the next fifteen years. Education is viewed as key to achieving full employment with the focus on access, equity and inclusion, quality and learning outcomes, within a lifelong learning approach. The emphasis is on to quality education and improving learning outcomes, which requires strengthening inputs, processes and evaluation of outcomes and mechanisms to measure progress. Teachers and educators must be empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems. Quality education should foster creativity and knowledge, ensure analytical, problem-solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It

should also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED)(UNESCO, 2015, p.8).

Systems and practices for assessment of quality learning that include evaluation of inputs, environments, processes and outcomes should be instituted or improved. Relevant learning outcomes must be well defined in cognitive and non-cognitive domains, and continually assessed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. (UNESCO, 2015, p.33). A focus on quality and innovation will also require strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics education. This requires the provision of multiple and flexible learning pathways through institutional strategies and policies, adequately resourced programmes, and robust partnerships at the local, regional, national and international levels, and recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education. Target 4.7 states that by 2030, ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015, p.48).

6 Discussion and research limitations

The research consists of the three phases. On phase 1 the current occupational standards and competencies required of managers in hospitality sector in the Republic of Latvia have been reviewed, the current higher education curriculum requirements and competencies included in it, as well as core concepts of sustainability and quality in education have been discussed.

Having also analysed the trends in hospitality education and taking into account current and emerging tendencies in the development of the society and economy, the next step will be surveying the opinions of key higher education stakeholders, which will reveal the visions and expectations of employers, students and educators with respect to the changes in the mission and functions of higher education institutions, modes of teaching, learning, pedagogical approaches, student-teacher relationships, the role of teachers, as well as the challenges and opportunities the hospitality industry faces in general, and the essential sustainability skills and competencies vital for the hospitality management graduates in particular.

Further on the researchers will conduct the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the theoretical framework, research data collected in the phases 1 and 2 and will determine whether differences exist between the essential compelling competencies of managers in hospitality and those included in the

hospitality management higher education curriculum. The results will include the proposals of how the content and quality of the studies can be improved in order to ensure a more comprehensive competency-based education for managers in achieving sustainability for hospitality business.

The research presented in this paper is located in the interpretive paradigm of analysis of literature.

Qualitative research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to numbers. The limitation of a literature review of this sort is a complete reliance on previously published research and the availability of these studies. Besides, the scope and depth of discussions in the paper is compromised in many levels. Therefore, integrating additional methods of data collection could have increased the scope and depth of analysis.

The research will help to get a better understanding of competency-based studies, expectations of the hospitality industry, competencies currently required on a job market, and possible discrepancies among the views of different stakeholders on this issue. The beneficiaries of this research will be industry professionals, educators, students and society in general as competencies-based approach seems to be vital for hospitality industry needs for achieving the sustainability, quality assurance.

7 Conclusions

An efficient system of interaction with transnational Overall, the conceptual literature review suggests that educators should pay close attention to the competencies considered to be essential in achieving sustainability in hospitality related enterprises; as well as to a hospitality

higher education studying programme curriculum that possibly should be augmented to be more competence-based. As this research represents phase 1, it is yet to be determined which skills and competencies are the more highly valued by the industry professionals and are essential to the hospitality management graduates.

The review has found that the competencies are frequently addressed in the field of hospitality management; the number of articles and other sources mentioning the importance and necessity of competency-based learning has been growing within the past five years and is trending upwards. Hospitality and tourism professionals need to practice sustainability in financial operations; employee experiences; community action; facilities management; purchasing; food production, preparation, and service; planning and staging events and meetings; and as part of overall business plans and processes.

The review also suggests that the competencies-based education and sustainability should be expanded and studied within the hospitality industry and perhaps across the industries to achieve a more broad knowledge and understanding of the concepts. The educators of hospitality management should be urged to develop, extend and implement various methods of competency based learning in order to enhance the quality of education for hospitality management graduates.

This review also calls for additional curriculum research ensuring that the needs of the hospitality industry are met by the ongoing competencies development of the future industry leaders. Industry professionals and educators may benefit from the insights gained in reviewing concepts of achieving sustainability in a hospitality related enterprise through competencies-based learning.

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