

## Culinary and hospitality teaching as a research-based profession

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This is not just an academic paper, it is a resource. It addresses the topic of how hospitality and tourism education is likely to change in 5, 10 and 15 years' time. The principal function of a hospitality academy is to design, plan, prepare and deliver a programme of learning in ways that foster and support student learning. It is also an important point of entry for enquiry into the nature of hospitality professionalism, including public acknowledgement that what is taught and learnt is professional within a recognised "profession". What then are the implications for the future of hospitality education and training, for industry, and for the community, of the development of a hospitality education research base?

**Keywords:** research; vocationalism; professionalism; scholarship; collaboration

### Introduction

Culinary and hospitality teaching is henceforth referred to by the inclusive term hospitality. Hospitality is not currently a research-based profession. If it were, I have no doubt that culinary and hospitality teaching would be more effective and much more satisfying for both teachers and students, and be acknowledged by industry. The aim of enhancing the effectiveness and satisfaction can be achieved by a combination of several means, of which a sufficiently adequate research-base is but one.

My own view is that this is a singularly important ingredient which deserves to be given priority. However, I shall argue here that providing a hospitality education research base requires a radical change both in the kind of research done in hospitality education, and in the way in which it is organised. To make my point, I look inside the hospitality education profession and the education research community to examine what is being done. Also, I shall look at another profession to explore what lessons may be learned about developing hospitality into a genuinely research-based profession.

However, there is a caveat, Hargreaves (1996) noted that much of the money spent on education research annually gave poor value for money in terms of improving the quality of education provided. He concluded that in fundamental respects the teaching profession has been inadequately served by education researchers, but he concluded that "it need not be so". My own view is that hospitality education research is at a very early stage and that the difficulties envisaged by Hargreaves can be avoided. This calls for a form of hospitality educational science, which is not research *about* hospitality education but research *for* hospitality education. Thus, a critical educational science aims at transforming hospitality education; it is directed at educational change. Hospitality educational researchers left to themselves will not adopt the necessary radical reforms. They need others, especially practising hospitality professional practitioners and college

lecturers to motivate and direct the work of the research, and to participate actively in the necessary research.

There is currently a gap in the influences that shape hospitality teachers' performance. The solution is rarely to be found in current research studies, policy reform proposals or institutional mission statements. They are more likely to be found in the complex web of formative experiences. Most of us remember teachers who positively impressed us and some who did the opposite; we tend to imitate those we admired.

Rarely have hospitality teachers looked at other professional fields to examine whether they might learn from their structures and cultures. Although unsubstantiated, comparisons have been made, for example, to medicine over many, many years. An article on "Our Profession" in the *The Hotel World*, February, 1897 was as extravagant in tone and aspiration as the mutterings of Phileas Gilbert a contributor to *L'Art Culinaire* for fifteen years. "A profession", declared the anonymous author, "is distinguished from a trade or occupation by the fact that to be recognised a member of it, the member must have passed certain examinations, and experienced certain technical training which pre-supposed her/him to be a person fully qualified to profess and execute the duties incumbent on those who devote themselves to its practice". And on those grounds, "our profession" stood comparison with the most respected and longest established, for it demands more technical knowledge, more study of detail and more exertion of the intellect than all the so-called professions of War, Church, and Law combined, and even the Medical diploma. Such comparison may not be as strange as it first appears.

The medical profession has gained in public prestige concurrently with the growth of its research. The hospitality practice/teaching profession has not. We need to investigate why this is so, and what can be done to change it. My own observation is that hospitality and medicine are basically people-centred professions. Neither believes that helping people is a matter of simple technical application, but rather a highly

skilled process in which a sophisticated judgement matches a professional decision to respond to the unique needs of each client. Yet the two professions see the role of the systematic pursuit of (scientific) knowledge in informing professional practice in very different ways. The kind of science, and thus the kind of research, involved in each profession is very different. The academic infrastructure of medicine is rooted in the natural sciences (anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, etc.). No doctor denies that medical competence requires a grasp of this infrastructure. Doctors draw on this knowledge-base for the technical language of the profession.

There is no agreed formal knowledge base for hospitality teachers, so they lack a shared technical language. It was once hoped that the so-called foundation disciplines of hospitality education (see Hegarty, 2004, p. 102–105) would provide a knowledge-base and were given a degree of importance in the curriculum for hospitality teacher training, but to my knowledge no such programmes currently exist. Therefore, very few practicing hospitality teachers have such a knowledge base or think it important for professional practice. It remains true that many hospitality teachers are able to be effective in their work in almost total ignorance of this infrastructure.

In medicine, as in natural sciences, research has a broadly cumulative character. Research projects seek explicitly to build on earlier research – by challenging, confirming or refuting it, by extending or refining it, by replacing it with better evidence or theory.

Hospitality education research where it exists is in contrast non-cumulative, in part because few hospitality education researchers engage with the creation of a corpus of knowledge which is then tested, extended or replaced in some systematic way. My argument here is that the hospitality education profession needs to engage in research but it must be the kind of research that is able to positively influence hospitality education and practice.

A more striking difference between these two professions is the identity of the people who actually do the research. In medicine, it is possible to draw on the basic sciences which are not in themselves (*sui generis*) specifically medical – genetics, biochemistry, neuro-physiology, where developments and discoveries are potentially relevant to medical advance. In the same way hospitality teachers can draw on other basic sciences where there is potential for both hospitality and educational application.

There is however, a very distinct difference in the way each of these professions approaches applied research. Much medical research is not in itself basic research (which is left to the basic sciences or medical scientists drawing on such work) but a type of applied research about what works in what circumstances. It is a search for more accurate means of diagnosing medical problems; better ways of managing the patient; the determination of more effective treatments. The people better placed to do this work are not basic scientists or a special category of medical researchers, but actual medical practitioners. A sizeable proportion of the articles and papers in refereed medical as well as popular journals and on the Internet are contributed by practitioners in hospitals and in general practice.

A minuscule proportion of hospitality education research – carried out by proper research procedures and the made public knowledge through publication – is undertaken by practising

hospitality teachers: whatever such research is carried out is done by university/college based academics involved in teacher education, who do not teach in hospitality schools.

In medicine, there is little discernible difference between researchers and users: all are practitioners. In hospitality education, by contrast, researchers are rarely users and this gives rise to major problems of communication. This may be seen in the way research is written up and disseminated by the two professions. In medicine there are more than 2000 journals (e.g., *The Lancet*, *BMJ*, *JAMA*) published since the late 1800s and others which aim to communicate to the whole profession on general as well as specialist advances in medicine. In hospitality education the only regular journals which potentially reach some hospitality teachers include the outputs of Cornell, (*Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*) and similar institutions such as the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE), the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* and the *Journal of Culinary Science and Technology*. The latter is approaching only its tenth year of publication and there is little space devoted to hospitality education research. There is not a scrap of evidence that hospitality teachers complain about their lack of access to the findings of applied hospitality education research.

It is this gap between researchers and practitioners which betrays the fatal flaw in hospitality research. For neither the researchers nor the practitioners determine the agenda for hospitality education research. If, for example, practising doctors, especially those in hospitals stopped doing research and left it almost entirely to a special group of people called “medical researchers” who were mainly university academics without patients, then the activity would go the same way as educational research – an elite, private, esoteric activity seen as irrelevant by most practitioners.

Hospitality education research is caught between two stools, that of basic vocational task-based craft training and that of educating professional practitioners in hospitality schools. Hospitality education researchers have become adept at falling off both stools, achieving neither prestige from professional practitioners in the industry, nor gratitude from hospitality teachers in the classroom, despite the claim that “hospitality professionals are no different from other professions such as doctors” (Clancy, 2012). Where is the evidence for such a claim?

How different it is for doctors! The spread of evidence-based medicine is rooting much medical research firmly in the day-to-day professional practices of doctors. In the past, a surgeon who asked why he was treating a patient by means of a particular operation, or why he was using one operating technique rather than another, would often refer back to his/her training. Today, doctors are relying less heavily on the clinical practices in which they were trained and more on an evidence-based approach, in which research into the effects of treatment is used, both by trainers and trainees, as the basis for justification for a particular treatment. In short, some of the most important research in medicine, conducted by practitioners, aims to evaluate the effects of one treatment or one technique rather than another. Because evidence-based medicine, though not infallible, has direct and often immediate relevance to the improvement of their practice and to the benefit of the patient, doctors have huge incentives to keep up to date. Hospitality practitioners do not have such incentives.

Hospitality teaching has not been subjected to the sustained, empirical and practice-oriented inquiry into problems and alternatives which we find in university-based professions. It has been permitted to remain hidden from the light of scrutiny; there is no equivalent to the detailed recording found in medical cases, law cases, or in the physical models of engineering and architectural achievement. Such records, coupled with commentaries, notes and critiques of highly trained and educated professors, allow new generations to pick up where earlier ones finished. To an amazing degree the beginner hospitality teacher or practitioner must start afresh, uninformed about prior solutions and alternative approaches to recurring practical problems. What hospitality teachers learn about teaching is intuitive and imitative (sitting by Nellie), rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual learning rather than pedagogical principles. One's personal predispositions and predilections are not only relevant but in fact stand at the core of becoming a hospitality teacher, as evidenced by the phrase "when I was in the industry". A hospitality teacher can be considered "outstanding" by those who are familiar with his/her work without being thought to have made a single contribution to knowledge of either hospitality or teaching: the ablest people in the occupation are not expected to add to the shared knowledge of the profession's "scholarly community". There is, in short, no tradition honouring the contributions to the craft. In hospitality education there is not enough evidence on the effects and effectiveness of what teachers do in classrooms to provide an evidence-based corpus of knowledge. Hospitality teachers have to discover or adapt most of their professional practices from personal preference, guided neither by the accumulated wisdom of seniors nor by practitioner-relevant research. They see no need to keep abreast of research developments, and regard research journals as not being directed at them. Hospitality teachers rely heavily on what they learn from their own experience in industry, and from trial and error. For a hospitality teacher to quote research in a staff room conversation about a student would almost certainly indicate that he or she was reading a book, studying for a part-time higher degree in education or rehearsing for a review or validation event. S/he would be regarded by most colleagues as "showing off".

The significant difference between the professions, however, is that, whereas doctors are demanding and getting more evidence-based research, hospitality teachers are not even seeing their severe lack of evidence-based research as a problem in urgent need of remedy.

My Ed.D. study of the curriculum development in culinary arts and gastronomy, the *raison d'être* of a higher education institute, for the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Culinary Arts and Culinary Innovation and their delivery began with the recognition that the curriculum is constructed for a number of purposes including an innate desire for ordered knowledge (Hegarty, 2004). Such a curriculum should embrace the application of science and technology, the ability to make things (meals/experiences), incorporate an understanding of the industry context and lead to the validation of the programme. Also, it examined the contribution of the curriculum development process to the professionalisation of the discipline and to establishing the educational and cultural capital necessary to develop hospitality arts as a subject

suitable for scholarship in higher education (Fine, 1996, p. 45–53; 240–242, Chivers, 1972, p. 9–19, 60–77).

In order to draw attention to these features of curriculum research, it is possible, according to Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 29–34), to set out five different views of what the professional competence of teachers involves.

#### ***The common-sense view***

This refers to all those approaches which seek to ground research knowledge in practical common-sense experience rather than theory and which are therefore confined to codifying knowledge of existing educational ideas and practices. In this view, the task of the researcher is to facilitate the successful conformity of teachers to traditional patterns of conduct. Professional development simply requires an increasingly skilful use of an existing stock of pedagogical knowledge, of which many hospitality educators are alas as unfamiliar as those who would seek to evaluate their teaching practice.

#### ***The philosophical view***

This refers to all those approaches which stress the need for teachers to adopt a reflective stance towards the fundamental assumptions and ideals on which their "philosophy of education" depends. The purpose of research, therefore, is to provide teachers with the sort of concepts and insights that are required to formulate a coherent understanding of the nature and the purpose of the educator's role. Teaching is a professional occupation, in this view, because it is guided by a self-conscious understanding of the basic educational principles, rather than by any narrow concern with instrumental or utilitarian goals and motives. Professional competence is therefore a matter of making judgements in accordance with fully articulated principles, values and ideas.

#### ***The applied science view***

Those who regard research as an applied science take the view that the task of the researcher is to produce scientifically verified knowledge that can be used to ensure that pre-established educational goals are achieved by the most effective means. According to the "applied science" view, the professional expertise of hospitality teachers does not derive from an overriding concern with educational values and goals. Rather, it stems from the possession of the technical skills required to apply scientific theories and principles to educational situations. The professional development of hospitality teachers, in this view, requires teachers to adopt a technical approach to their work, seeking to optimise the efficacy of learning by utilising scientific knowledge. Professional competence, therefore, is judged not by reference to the way in which teachers formulate their aims, but to the effectiveness of their practice in achieving whatever aims are being pursued.

#### ***The practical approach***

This view, like the "philosophical" view, sees curriculum research as a form of enquiry which is reflective and deliberate and which results not in the production of theoretical knowledge, but in morally defensible decisions about practice. The role of the researcher is not that of an external investigator providing solutions to educational problems but that of a consultant whose task is to assist teachers to arrive at sound

practical judgements. The distinctive professionalism of the teacher, therefore, does not stem from skilful mastery of existing practical knowledge or an ability to apply scientifically accredited technical rules. Rather, it emerges out of the fact that hospitality teachers, like members of other professions, profess an ethic. As with the “philosophical” view, it is recognised that teaching is a professional activity because it involves the pursuit of essentially moral purposes and goals. However, while the “philosophical” view tends to view questions about these moral purposes as somehow separate from questions about their realisation, the “practical” view emphasises how they are realised not *by* teaching but *in and through* teaching. Professional competence, therefore, is to be judged not by the ability to articulate and defend moral principles, nor as a matter of traditional conformity or technical accountability. Rather, it is assessed in terms of moral and prudential ability for practical judgements actually made within the context of existing educational institutions. It is a matter of wise and prudent deliberation, not conformity to general traditions or narrowly specified prescriptions for practice.

### **The critical view**

Those who subscribe to this view accept much of the thinking that informs the “practical” view. Both, for example, accept that individual practitioners must be committed to self-critical reflection on their educational aims and values. Where they differ is in the additional claim of the “critical” view that the formulation of these additional aims may be distorted by ideological forces and constraints and their realisation may be impeded by institutional structures. In the critical view educational problems and issues may arise not only as individual matters requiring collective or common action if they are to be satisfactorily resolved. The outcome of critical research, therefore, is not just the formulation of informed practical judgement, but theoretical accounts which provide a basis for analysing systematically distorted decisions and practices, and suggesting the kinds of social and educational action by which these distortions may be removed. Furthermore, while these theories may be made available by the researcher, they are not offered as “externally given” and “scientifically verified” propositions. Rather, they are offered as interpretations which can be validated only in and by the *self-understandings* of practitioners under conditions of *free and open dialogue*. Hence, professional development, in this view, is a matter of teachers becoming more enlightened about the ways in which their own self-understandings may prevent them being properly aware of the economic, social and political mechanisms which operate to distort or limit the proper conduct of hospitality education in society. Professional competence, therefore, requires a capacity for continuous deliberation and critical discussion, by the teaching profession as a whole, of the way in which political and social structures relate to and influence educational aims and practices. This professional discussion must also relate to a wider social debate about the role of hospitality education in society. In this context, I believe a convincing case can be made for the development of the Professional Doctorate in Hospitality Studies, and that it has a clearly defined place in the hierarchy of global higher education degrees/ It should be perceived as differing from, but not as a substitute for the research doctorate; there is an obvious need to create capacity to

educate professional hospitality practitioners and those who are primarily educating practitioners;

No sophisticated theory of hospitality education can ignore its contribution to economic development (Durkheim, 1977, Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Indeed, throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, the relationship between education and the economy has constantly assumed greater significance. This is due not only to the increasing importance attached to knowledge as a condition for wealth creation, but because of the economic theory of human capital developed since the 1960s (Schultz, 1961, Becker, 1964). The attraction of human-capital theory is that investments in education and training are viewed as profitable for both the individual and for society (Marginson, 1993).

Hospitality education research, where it exists, has little impact on the improvement of hospitality practice either in the property or in the hospitality classroom. Some researchers dying to get their teeth into some serious research projects feel stifled by the lack of support or resources available. They blame themselves for not disseminating their results; they blame their funders for not funding dissemination; and they blame hospitality teachers and practitioners for ignoring the research findings, and failing to act on them. Some of my correspondents have told me that there have been days when they felt they were “banging their heads against a wall with frustration, but they know that this is feature of the culture fostered universally in Hospitality Institutions ...” (C. Gilsenen, personal communication, 2011).

Claiming dissemination as a problem assumes that there is something worthwhile to be disseminated. It also assumes that there is a process of commissioning research and that the research is itself in good shape: they claim that all would be well if the dissemination of the sparse results could simply be improved. In this view these conclusions are for the most part off target. There is no vast body of hospitality education research which, if only it was disseminated and acted upon by hospitality teachers, and industry professionals would yield great benefits in the quality of teaching and learning. The questions that must be asked are: how much research is there in hospitality education which (1) demonstrates conclusively that if hospitality teachers/lecturers change their practices from x to y there will be significant and enduring improvement in teaching and learning and (2) has developed an effective method of convincing these teachers of the benefits of changing from x to y?

We do not have an abundance of evidence about effective professional practice, whether in the education situation or professional practical situation. This lack indicates that perhaps the problem is not with the dissemination end of the process, but with how the research is initiated, how it is commissioned and set in train. Hospitality education research has not to date had a sufficient allocation of funds, nor does it have a community of researchers who could advise through peer review on the allocation of funds in commissioning research. Hospitality education research is not in a healthy state, that is to say it is not having adequate influence on the improvement of practice, therefore it cannot be considered value for money. The result is that hospitality education researchers continue to work on their own self-validating terms; they remain accountable only to themselves, so there appears to be no good reason why they should change. Hospitality

education research lacks the “pull” of industry or the “push” of an academic/national qualification body which ensures the application of hospitality research. The key omission is the lack of involvement of “users”, that is, practitioners and policy makers. It is this exclusion which prevents the re-direction of hospitality research towards the improvement of practice.

Therefore, it is necessary to examine the research agenda and the research process and where necessary change it. This means adopting, as an essential prerequisite for improvement, the involvement of user communities, policy makers and practitioners in all aspects of the research process, from the creation of strategic research plans, the selection of research priorities and the funding of projects from the beginning to the dissemination and implementation of policies and practices arising from the research findings. This requires a collegiate approach. College in this sense is understood as a group of equals who entrust their power to their leader. It is a stable group whose structure and authority derive from their pursuit of knowledge in establishing a “community of hospitality scholars” with established “rules and values” fulfilling four essential criteria by which a profession may be recognised. (Hegarty, 2004, p. 31). At the heart of this development it is necessary to forge a new partnership between researchers and practitioners prior to the creation of a seamless merger between the two. Success here will help to address and solve many other problems. Partnerships do currently exist, but are usually at the level of the individual researcher or institution’s research project. All this is positive, as is the pressure that funding bodies place on researchers to demonstrate consultation with, engagement, and involvement of users as a condition for getting a research grant.

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