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Development Of Parameters For Incorporating Security Studies Into Hospitality Education

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DEVELOPMENT OF PARAMETERS FOR INCORPORATING SECURITY STUDIES INTO HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Worldwide concern with security issues and disaster management within the hospitality industry is creating opportunities for hospitality management education. This study investigated essential curriculum content, student characteristics, instructional modalities, and program competencies potentially important for hospitality industry based security studies programs. Findings indicate that such programs should have non-traditional, flexible structure as initial students will likely hold middle and upper management industry positions. Executive leadership, agencies involved in emergency preparedness, and integration of systems focused on security and disaster management, both as program content and resulting competencies are important program components.

Key Words: Security Studies, Disaster Management, Graduate Hospitality Education, Hospitality Management Programs

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is no longer the tranquil place that characterized much of the 1980s and 1990s. It has been forever changed by natural disasters and terrorist attacks that have occurred worldwide. These events have impacted all facets of the world economy, including the hospitality industry. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had worldwide financial impact (Eisendrath, et al., 2008); Hurricane Katrina shut down much of the hospitality and gaming industry along the United States (U.S.) gulf coast (Kendall, 2005); the tsunami in Southeast Asia created havoc with the Southeast Asian tourism industry (Jaiswal, 2005); and more recently the terrorism inflicted on the resort industry in Mumbai, India has caused damage to hotels and resorts in that region (Shah, 2008). In 2005, the Milken Institute predicted that the devastation from hurricane Katrina would cost insurance companies somewhere between $20 - $45 billion and that the federal government could end up spending as much as $150 billion on clean-up and support (Milken Institute, 2005).

As a result, not only is emergency management now found at every level of government in the U.S., but the private sector, as well, is engaged in business contingency and continuity planning, disaster preparedness training, and succession plans on a "what if" basis. Businesses, including those of the hospitality industry, realize today that they need to have advanced planning and expert assistance in dealing with not only the disaster situation, but the recovery process that follows such an event (Aber, Hoven, and Kolter, 2003).

Many facets of the hospitality industry represent attractive targets for terrorists because they are high profile events (i.e., the annual football Superbowl in the U.S.) or because there are large number of people in the location (i.e. theme parks, such as Disneyworld). Other facets are not only potential targets for terrorists, but are also vulnerable to natural disasters because of their locations on ocean front beaches, or in areas prone to earthquakes or other natural disasters. Thus, it is apparent that there is a growing need for expertise within the expanding organizational structure focused on hospitality industry security and emergency management.

As organizational structures are modified to address these new security needs, there is an increased requirement for leaders and managers with security expertise. Indeed, the current and projected demand for qualified security personnel with disaster management training continues to grow with the Department of Labor projecting that the job market will see a 28 % increase in emergency management specialists by the year 2012 (Marcus, 2005). According to Marks, 2002, there is a growing need for employees trained in the emergency management field, and business leaders are willing to supplement their employees' education by 1)[1] offering

promotion with educational consideration; 2) payment and/or reimbursement of educational expenses; 3) providing
incentives for going to school; and 4) offering schedule flexibility to attend school.

The "bottom line" is that employers have recognized the value of employees who bring knowledge, expertise, and skills in emergency management/disaster preparedness to their organizations, and these employers are willing to reward those skills with higher pay when persons complete formal educational programs in security studies and disaster management (Marks, 2005). Yet, the majority of the hospitality management educational programs do not adequately address security and disaster management in their curricula at either the undergraduate or graduate level. This void offers opportunities for curriculum development, particularly at the graduate level, as mid-level and senior level hospitality managers seek to improve their security and disaster management skills.

This study investigated what knowledge and skills were deemed to be the most critical areas to be incorporated in any developed security studies/disaster management curriculum (hereafter referred to as security studies) as well as what delivery mode seemed to be the most desirable for delivering graduate education in security studies. It also considered the competencies that students completing a security studies program should have attained, and the characteristics which might qualify students for such a program. It is anticipated that the results of this study could be utilized by hospitality management programs as the basis of incorporating security studies training into their graduate courses and/or for developing a graduate certification program in disaster management.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the Delphi method as the primary method of data collection and analysis. Since Delphi panel members respond to questions posed in writing, this method makes it possible to amass research panel members from a geographically dispersed, widely diverse population of individuals with expertise in any number of related fields that pertain to the question under investigation (Cline, 2000). To build consensus, the Delphi method uses the Hegelian dialectic process of theses (establishing an opinion or view), antithesis (conflicting opinion or view) and finally synthesis (a new agreement or consensus) with the synthesis becoming the new thesis. This methodology has been described as "a method for structuring a group communication process so that the end process is effective in allowing the "GROUP" (Individuals) to deal with complex problems from a position of autonomy" (Keeney, Hasson, & McKenna, 2000, p. 1012).

The Delphi method is sometimes criticized as there is the risk that the expert panel may not arrive at a consensus, but only provide fragmented bits of information that are useless for the researcher (Stuter, n.d.). A further criticism is that the anonymity associated with the technique lacks accountability as the responses of the panel members cannot be traced back to the individual (Stockman, 1975). Powell (2003) rejects the Delphi method as he perceives it as diluting the best opinion to a "lowest common denominator." Since this study strove to incorporate opinions from a large group of people widely dispersed throughout the U.S., the advantages offered by the Delphi method made this method appropriate for this study.

Experts from the fields of homeland security, crisis management, emergency management, and higher education were utilized as the survey population for the Delphi study panel. Panel members were selected for their knowledge of the field of disaster management and the educational needs of senior management personnel responsible for security management, as well as for their knowledge of instructional methods and alternatives for the delivery of educational courses. The study was conducted following the approval of the project by the University's Institutional Review Board.

The study focused on four primary areas of investigation: 1) program content; 2) qualifications of students; 3) instructional modalities; and 4) program competencies. The initial questionnaire was developed by the researcher following an extensive review of the relevant literature and discussions with leaders in the field disaster management and homeland security. This questionnaire was pilot tested first with a panel of faculty from the University; then by submission of the questionnaire to 50 persons who had been selected as members of the expert panel.

Following the pilot study iteration, a questionnaire containing both questions with Likert scale responses and open ended questions was sent to panel members over three iterations. Following the collection of each iteration's data, the frequencies of the Likert scale responses were analyzed utilizing SPSS-14 while the data from the open ended questions were analyzed for patterns and trends by the researcher and a faculty panel. The results of

the quantitative and the qualitative analyses were compared to further determine the developing patterns and trends.
After the analyses for each iteration were completed, the questionnaire was modified to reflect the developing patterns and trends and then again sent to the expert panel members. Persons returning unusable responses or for whom the questionnaire was returned unopened were eliminated from the next iteration. The data analyses following the final iteration resulted in the development of the consensus statements that were the outcome of this study.   The response rates for the several iterations were as follows: iteration one (pilot study) – 24% (12 usable responses out of 50); iteration two – 17% (34 out of 200); iteration three – 22.3% (37 out of 166); iteration four – 39.38 (67 out of 160).

RESULTS

The results from the pilot study (first iteration) were used to validate the content areas of the questionnaire. The questionnaire for the second iteration randomly listed a total of 63 different items to be considered for four content areas. These areas were: 1) essential subject areas, topics, or disciplines for a security studies program (32 items); 2) level of experience, type of position or type of background program applicants should have (11 items); 3) instructional modalities that would be most desirable (9 items); and 4) program competencies (11 items). The panel members could also comment about each of these content areas.

Based on the quantitative analysis, 22 of the 32 items listed under the first content area (subject matter content) were evaluated as either vitally important or very important by at least 50 % of the respondents, and six of these items were so rated by more than 75 % of the respondents. These six items were interaction with federal agencies, psychology of the terrorist - both foreign and domestic, collaborative leadership processes, crisis management, aviation facilities security, and cyber security. Two items were very highly rated under the second content area, program participants' qualifications. These items were having field experience and having experience in a decision making position.

The evaluations of the instructional modality items clearly indicated that students should be able to incorporate their program participation with their current position responsibilities.   More than 70% of the respondents indicated that having a program structure reflect a combination of resident and distance learning or having the program structured as a flexible modular program which would match the professional work commitment of the participants was either vitally important or very important. The respondents also emphasized the importance of practical learning as a component of the program.

All of the items listed under the fourth content area, program competencies, were evaluated as being either vitally important or very important by 50% or more of the respondents. Competencies associated with a knowledge of command and control systems, communications among agencies, and organizational skills such as implementing change and team building were especially highly evaluated.

For the third iteration, the questionnaire was restructured so that the items relating to a common theme were grouped together as opposed to just being randomly listed. The results of this iteration paralleled the results of the second iteration. Six of the items listed under the first content area, subject matter content, were evaluated as either vitally important or very important by more than 75% of the respondents.   Three of these items, communication, media relations and control of information; collaborative leadership process; and crisis management, crisis action plans, and exercise planning, development, and implementation were categorized under the theme of executive leadership. Two of these items, the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS), were categorized under the theme of systems. The remaining item, integration of local, state, and federal agencies in emergency preparedness, was categorized as a terrorism and natural disasters item.

 As was true for the first content area, the results for the second content area, program participant qualifications, paralleled the results of the second iteration. The respondents emphasized the importance of experience as a critical qualification for someone participating in a security studies program. Further, the respondents felt that it was very important for someone to have gained at least some of that experience by holding a leadership or upper management position. They also felt strongly that participants should have had supervisory and/or decision making responsibilities in the positions that they had held during their careers.

In regard to the instructional modalities content area, the non-traditional approach to the structuring of the

courses in the program was again emphasized. More than 75% of the respondents indicated that they considered on-line independent study courses and a flexible structure tailored to reflect the program participants' work commitments as either vitally important or very important as options for instructional modalities. Only 12.8% of the respondents highly evaluated the standard on-campus classroom delivery as a desirable instructional modality for a security studies program.

The third iteration questionnaire listed 15 competencies for the panel to evaluate. This competency listing was expanded from the listing on the questionnaire for the second iteration as a result of panel comments and suggestions.   All of the listed competencies were evaluated as highly important by the respondents. However, as a result of the analysis process, the 15 competencies were restructured and/or combined so that only eight competencies were listed on the questionnaire for the fourth iteration.

The results from the fourth iteration were utilized as the basis for the consensus statements that were the final outcome of this study. The results of the frequency analysis of the items listed for the first content area, essential program content, are shown in Table 1. Only items evaluated as either vitally important or very important by 50% or more of the panel members are listed in Table 1.

For executive leadership, the items that were perceived to have the highest priority included crisis management and the development and implementation of crisis action plans and exercise planning, collaborative leadership, communications, and information control.   In the systems category, only the item National Incident Management System was consistently considered to be a high priority item for program content. In the category of planning and policy analysis, two items received high priority rankings. These items were risk assessment and key indicators for terrorism awareness. In the terrorism and natural disasters category, only the item integration of local, state, and federal agencies in emergency preparedness was consistently highly ranked. In the final category, law, only the item the Patriot Act was consistently highly ranked by the respondents.

Table 1
Responses to Content Area One, Essential Program Content, Fourth Iteration of the Delphi Study

Item	Mean	SD	# of rankings[a]	% of rankings[a]
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP				
Crisis Management, Crisis Action Plans, and Exercise Planning Development and Implementation	1.6349	.70257	55	87.3
Communication and Media Relations and Control of Information	3.0000	.62217	51	81.0
Collaborative Leadership Processes	1.8889	1.04898	50	79.4
SYSTEMS				
National Incident Management System (NIMS)	1.8730	1.23774	49	77.8
PLANNING AND POLICY ANALYSIS				
Risk Assessment	1.9206	1.42898	49	77.8
Key Indicators for Terrorism Awareness	2.0000	1.01600	47	74.6
Economic Impact of Terrorism Beyond Ground Zero	3.4921	1.09062	35	55.6
TERRORISM AND NATURAL DISASTERS				
Integration of Local, State, and Federal Agencies in Emergency Preparedness	1.6349	1.12596	49	77.8
LAW				
Patriot Act	1.9524	.90569	47	74.6

Note: N = 63. [a]Combined # of rankings and % of total rankings = either 1 or 2, where 1 = vitally important and 2 = very important.

The results of the frequency analysis of the items listed for the second content area, the qualifications that participants in a security studies program should have, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Responses to Question Two, desirable qualifications for students, fourth iteration of the Delphi Study

Item	Mean	SD	# of rankings[a]	% of rankings[a]
3-5 Years Experience in Emergency Management, Homeland Security, or Security	1.7778	1.03868	42	66.7
Should be in a Supervisory Position or Decision Making Position	2.6508	1.09484	31	49.2
Upper Management-Leadership in Local-State-Federal Professionals or Strategic Planning Responsibility	2.8413	1.41657	29	46.0
Administration Experience (3-10 years)	3.1270	1.05482	23	36.5

Note: N = 63. [a]Combined # of rankings and % of total rankings = either 1 or 2, where 1 = vitally important and 2 = very important.

In regard to participant qualifications, 66.7% ranked three to five years of experience in emergency management, homeland security, or security as the highest priority qualification, while about half of the respondents felt that program participants should have held a supervisory or decision making position or a leadership position with strategic planning responsibility.

The results of the frequency analysis of the items listed for the instructional modality content area are shown in Table 3. More than 75% of the respondents ranked a flexible modular program to match the students' professional work commitments as their highest or second highest priority. The respondents' agreement on the need for flexibility in program structure was further indicated by 65% of the respondents prioritizing a combination of resident and distance education as a preferred program structure.

The results of the frequency analysis of the items listed for the fourth content area regarding program competencies are shown in Table 4. As can be seen, the respondents placed the highest priority on the competency of having an in-depth understanding of the interrelationship between city, state, and federal first responders to a terrorist attack. Competencies given low priority rankings included designing and planning security programs, knowledge of civil rights law and terrorism and civil liberties awareness and addressing the economic impact of a terrorist attack.

Table 3

Responses to Content Area Three, program structure, fourth iteration of the Delphi Study

Item	Mean	SD	# of rankings[a]	% of rankings[a]
Flexible Modular Program to Match Professional Work Commitments of the Students	1.9524	1.05385	49	77.8
Independent Study (On-Line Internet) Based with On-Line Chat Rooms for Group Discussion	4.7460	2.68189	16	25.4
Guest Lectures from the Array of Subject Matter Experts in the Field of Security-Terrorism	4.1270	1.63127	8	12.7
1-2 Weeks of On-Campus Instruction-Seminars	5.6190	1.87021	5	7.9
Both On and Off Campus Instruction	5.0000	1.78705	4	6.3
Table Top Exercises	4.9048	1.64331	3	4.8

Note: N = 63. [a]Combined # of rankings and % of total rankings = either 1 or 2, where 1 = vitally important and 2 = very important.

Table 4

Responses to Content Area Four, Program Competencies, fourth iteration of the Delphi Study

Item	Mean	SD	# of rankings[a]	% of rankings[a]
In-Depth Understanding of the Interrelationship Between City, State, and Federal First Responders to a Terrorist Attack	2.7778	2.30318	38	60.3
Understand the Interpretational/Inter-Agency Coordination	3.2222	1.73618	28	44.4

and Response Capabilities

Command, Control, and Communications in an Emergency Situation	3.8254	1.79191	15	23.8
Incident Command System (ICS) Understanding, Utilization, and Implementation	4.8571	2.58318	14	22.2
Leadership Development Within the Organization	5.2857	2.71453	13	20.6
How to Deal with the Media Relations	6.5873	2.5984	7	11.1
Design and Plan Security Programs	5.6667	2.14777	6	9.5
Civil Rights Law and Terrorism, Civil Liberties Awareness	6.4603	2.38155	6	9.5
Address the Economic Impact of a Terrorist Attack	6.2540	1.80437	0	0.0

Note: N = 63. [a]Combined # of rankings and % of total rankings = either 1 or 2, where 1 = vitally important and 2 = very important.

The final step in the data analysis was the development of the consensus statements that were derived from the integration of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the fourth iteration data. The following statements were developed for the first content area, essential program content.

1. Executive Leadership: The items crisis management, exercise planning development and implementation, communications and media relations, and collaborative leadership process are vitally important for inclusion in a security studies program curriculum.
2. Systems: Professional training/education is required in regard to the National Incident Command System (NIMS).
3. Planning and Policy Analysis: The items risk assessment and key indicators for terrorism awareness are high priority areas for inclusion in a security studies program curriculum.
4. Terrorism and Natural Disasters: The item, the integration of local, state, and federal agencies in emergency preparedness, is vitally important as a key item for inclusion in a security studies curriculum.
5. Law: Only one item, the Patriot Act, is a high priority for inclusion in a security studies program curriculum.

Two consensus statements were developed for content area two, student qualifications. These statements are as follows.

1. Persons who are likely to initially participate in a security studies program would be non-traditional students probably working in the fields of emergency management and security.
2. Three to five years experience in emergency management, homeland security, or other security would be the first priority as a qualification for a security studies program participant.

Two consensus statements were developed for content area three, the delivery modalities. These statements are as follows.

1. The non-traditional professional students who are most likely to be the initial participants in such a program would require a flexible, modular program that would allow them to pursue academic studies while also maintaining their current positions.
2. The program should be structured to provide both on-line instruction as well as on-campus, face-to-face meetings with faculty.

Finally, two consensus statements were developed for the fourth content area, program competencies. These statements are as follows.

1. The majority of the initial security studies program participants would return to their parent organizations to continue their careers in leadership positions.
2. Persons completing a security studies program would have an in-depth understanding of the interrelationship between city, state, and federal first responders to a terrorist attack. They would also have a clear understanding of inter-agency coordination and response capabilities.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The external environment is an important factor that supports the need for the development of disaster management/security studies content within graduate hospitality management programs and/or the development of a graduate certificate program. The media's continued focus on terrorist attacks and natural disasters worldwide and their emphasis on the loss of life associated with these incidents helps create public recognition of the need for qualified leadership to effectively manage these situations. The increased attention given to the impact that these incidents can have on the nation's economy has raised public awareness of the need for individuals in leadership positions within agencies or organizations responsible for crisis management and emergency services in terrorism or disaster situations to have an understanding of the overall impact of these incidents throughout society. This need is particularly acute for organizations within the hospitality industry as these organizations are often responsible for the welfare of large numbers of people, represent a significant proportion of the GNP for the U.S. and many other countries of the world, and often own and/or manage properties located in areas vulnerable to natural disasters.

The external environment is also encouraging and supporting educational institutions in their efforts to develop and/or incorporate security studies into graduate programs (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2007). Businesses are recognizing the need for advanced education regarding disaster management and security for individuals in key management positions. Thus, there are opportunities for hospitality management programs to develop and implement security studies programs which would meet the need of having trained personnel in leadership positions within hospitality organizations. This study is significant in that it identifies content areas essential for such programs as well as the educational modalities that seem to be best suited to encouraging program participation by middle and upper level management with leadership and decision making responsibilities within hospitality organizations. It also suggests that persons best suited for such programs, initially, are persons with management and leadership experience while also indicating key competencies that persons completing such programs should have when returning to their positions.

There are limitations to this study. It was conducted with limited financial support; therefore, the range of persons included as potential members of the expert panel cohorts was likely not as extensive as would be desirable. Thus, the applicability of the findings to all potential security studies programs that might be developed throughout the U.S. may be limited. Indeed, this current study is just a beginning in what is an unexplored field, but a field which offers new opportunities for hospitality management education, particularly education at the graduate level.

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