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**Achieving Excellence through Organisation Learning:  
Developing The Capabilities of a  
Hospitality Educational Institution**

A project submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the degree of  
**Doctor of Professional Studies**

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June 2006

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## **List of Abbreviations**

### **A**

AL - Action Learning

AR - Action Research

### **C**

CS - Customer Satisfaction

### **F**

FG - Focus Groups

### **G**

GNP - Gross National Product

GDP - Gross Depreciated Product

### **H**

HACCP - Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points

HHIC - Higher Hotel Institute Cyprus

### **I**

ISO - International Standards Organisation

### **K**

KM - Knowledge Management

### **O**

OSU - Oregon State University

### **S**

SQ - Service Quality

ServQual - Service Quality Tool

## **T**

TedQual - Tourism Education Quality, i.e. Certification System for Tourism Education

TQ - Total Quality

TQM - Total Quality Management

## **W**

WTO - World Tourism Organisation

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Managing for quality is one of the most important challenges that educational institutions, such as schools, colleges, and universities, face in today's competitive environment. The quest for quality is apparent in most educational reforms undertaken in different countries throughout the world. A number of successful stories about incorporating total quality management (TQM) principles in the educational setting have been reported (*Dobyns and Crawford-Mason, 1991; Coate, 1994*). For example, one of the most publicized TQM success stories is that of Oregon State University (OSU) (*Coate, 1990*) where TQM was successfully applied to a number of different processes within OSU.

However, although the improvement of quality in the educational setting has received much attention, no formal approach exists on how to actually apply the TQM principles and concepts to improve the quality of the services of educational institutions. In this project, the focus is on hospitality education institutions. Such institutions deserve further attention as they provide the staff for the hospitality industry, which is currently considered as the world's largest industry, currently accounting for 12 percent of global consumer spending. In many countries, such as, for example, in the Mediterranean area, where this research is focused, the hospitality industry consists of a great proportion of the GNP.

One of the core principles of TQM is the customer focus which emphasizes the service relationship between an organisation/institution and its customers. Research and literature assign customers a decisive role in evaluating service quality of any organisation (*Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994; Parasuraman, 1995*). This is one point highlighted by most quality gurus, such as Deming and Juran, in their philosophies. The importance of the customer is also stressed in the Malcolm Baldrige Award criteria where most points a firm can receive are based on business results, which also include customer satisfaction.

Issues of service quality (SQ) and customer satisfaction (CS) received considerable attention in the marketing literature (*Oliver, 1980; Parasuraman et al., 1998; Parasuraman, 1995*) as an important driver of performance. The causal relationship

between SQ, CS and repurchase intentions also formed the basis of extensive research (*Cronin and Taylor, 1992. etc*). *Clautier and Richards (1994)* examine customer satisfaction issues in a school environment. They take a more holistic approach to CS and identify the necessity to serve the needs and concerns of all customers of the education system. The identification of such needs implies a number of operational adjustments which, when implemented, can lead to higher levels of service quality.

A TQM approach for hospitality education is followed by TedQual, a certification system for Tourism Education, developed by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO).

This project presents the research approach towards **developing a learning model for quality in hospitality education with special reference to the Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus (HHIC)**. Three main categories of customers have been involved in the research process: (a) Students, (b) Faculty and (c) Employers (hospitality professionals).

### **1.1 The Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus (HHIC)**

In 1965, the first hotel training programmes were established at the Hotel and Catering Institute, the predecessor of the HHIC. The major goal of the Institute originally was to meet the demand of the rapidly expanding hotel industry for staff at the technical level. At that time, the courses which the Institute used to offer covered the fields of cookery, pastry, food and beverage service, front office and housekeeping.

In order to keep pace with the constantly increasing demand and the qualitative requirements of the rapidly growing tourism industry, the Institute reorganizes from time to time its education programmes on a sounder basis.

The educational programmes currently offered by the HHIC are as follows:

- Hotel and Catering Management (three years)
- Culinary Arts (three years)

- Front Office (one year)
- Housekeeping (one year)

Parallel to the full time programmes of study that the Institute runs, special emphasis is given to Continuing Education with the aim to continually help individuals and businesses alike to strive for excellence. This is accomplished by upgrading the knowledge and skills of hospitality industry professionals, as well as by providing skills to employees in other sectors of the economy who show an interest in diverting to the Hospitality Industry. The Institute runs a multitude of both intensive ab-initio training courses and professional upgrading courses, which are designed to meet the specific and ever changing needs of the industry.

The major goal, and at the same time the major challenges for the HHIC today, is to offer hospitality educational programmes of high quality, and prepare students to be employable by the hospitality industry after graduation. This challenge becomes imperative particularly after the liberalization of hospitality education in Cyprus and the upgrading of the Institute's programmes from the craft level to the supervisory and managerial level. In the last few years, HHIC has become the major provider of educated staff for the hospitality industry in Cyprus, the primary sector of Cyprus economy.

More than 25 percent of the economically-active population are employed in the hospitality industry, which also accounts for more than 20 percent of the country's GDP. Tourist arrivals in 2003 were 2 416 454.

## **1.2 Customer Identification**

*Zeithaml et al. (1990)* suggest that:

*"...the only criteria that count in evaluating service quality are defined by customers. Only customers judge quality; all other judgements are essentially irrelevant. Specifically, service-quality perceptions stem from how well a provider performs vis-à-vis customers expectations about how the provider should perform."* (p.16)



Thus, organisations – teaching institutions or not – must define who their customers are in order to orientate their strategic planning towards meeting the expectations of these customers.

Most of the contemporary researchers and writers in the field of quality in education (*Siegel and Byrne, 1994; Langford and Clearly, 1995; Sallis, 1993*) assign the role of external customers to students, employers and the society as a whole. Any person next in line within the organisation in reference who adds value to the educational service, i.e. teaching and support staff, is assigned the role of internal customer. *Sallis (1993)* specifically defines internal customers as the teachers and support staff, while he classifies external customers into three levels:

- Primary external customers, i.e. the learners;
- Secondary external customers, i.e. the parents, the governors and employers;
- Tertiary external customers, i.e. the labour market, the government and society.

Adopting the above school of thought regarding the presence of two distinct types of customers – internal and external – the researcher focused, for the purpose of this project, on two groups of external customers, and one group of internal customers.

The two groups of external customers include the institute's students and the employers, i.e. managers in the hospitality industry, while the teaching staff formed the group of internal customers.

### **1.3 Competitive Environment**

Nicosia (Lefkosia), where the HHIC is located is the capital of Cyprus. It lies roughly at the centre of the Island. Nicosia is today a contemporary and cosmopolitan business and cultural centre with a population of 300.000. Cyprus has a population of nearly 800,000. 37% of the Island is under occupation since the Turkish invasion in 1974.

The Higher Education environment in Cyprus comprises of both public and private institutions. Within the sphere of Hospitality, Hotel, Catering and Tourism related fields of study the HHIC is the only public provider. Subsequently, on the basis of a law provision this makes the Institute, “the point of reference” for all Hospitality related programmes in Cyprus. On the other hand there are numerous colleges operating in the private sector, offering a multitude of courses in Hospitality related studies.

This projects aims at developing a quality model for hospitality education in Cyprus, which can prove useful for both the HHIC and any other hospitality educational setting.

#### ***1.4 The Structure of the Project***

Chapter 2 presents a Total Quality approach in tourism education through the TedQual system developed by the World Tourism Organisation. The acronym used refers to the concepts **T**ourism, **E**ducation and **Q**uality. This model suggests a high level of competitiveness in hospitality education, which serves competitiveness in the tourism sector. To this effect six main processes have to be examined with the primary concern of customer satisfaction as follows:

- a) The Employers (Society and Industry)
- b) The Student
- c) The Curriculum
- d) The Faculty
- e) The Infrastructure
- f) The Management

Chapter 3 presents the Baldrige Quality Programme and the Education Criteria to manage educational institutions for quality. The education criteria are based on core values and concepts which can play a role of a yardstick for high performance. These core values and concepts are briefly described in this chapter, and aligned to seven

categories of requirements defined by the Baldrige Programme in a systems perspective.

Chapter 4 looks at Knowledge Management (KM) as a vehicle for improving performance. The literature review in this chapter focuses on “How people learn”, adult learning and experiential learning, defining KM, it goes through functions of KM, links KM and learning within organisations and examines Knowledge as intellectual asset, which has to be managed for performance of high quality.

Chapter 5 as a consequent chapter of the previous one defines Learning Organisations as models for quality performance with special reference to educational institutions as Learning Organisations.

Chapter 6 presents Action Learning (AL) as the process of Learning whilst doing, and the symbiotic relationship between learning and action. Although AL has not been used for the purpose of research within this project, it is presented here as a method for learning on which learning organisations, i.e. educational institutions can capitalize to improve their performance in striving for quality. Furthermore, AL is proposed as a tool for quality performance in a separate part of the Quality Manual produced as the final outcome of the project.

Chapter 7 describes in detail the methodology used for this project. Two instruments, namely Focus Groups and Long Interviews are presented, in both their underlying theories, and practical application within the qualitative approach followed for the purpose of this project.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 present data analysis, findings and lessons derived from the research as such for the three primary groups of customers of hospitality education, namely Faculty, Students, and Employers, respectively.

On the basis of literature review and primary research, as they are presented in the 10 chapters, a manual has been developed which provides a quality assurance system for hospitality education. This system refers to a specific educational environment, that of the Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus, but it remains valid for other educational settings within the sphere of tourism and hospitality.

## **2 TOWARDS COMPETITIVENESS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY: QUALITY IN TOURISM EDUCATION IS THE DRIVING FORCE**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

Based on international statistics, mainly from the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) the tourism industry has a leading role in the economy and a unique capacity to generate employment. International tourism arrivals worldwide will rise from 637 million in 1998 to 1561 million in 2020, and tourism receipts will increase from 407 billion USD in 1995 to 2,000 billion USD forecast for 2020. (*World Tourism Organisation 1998*)

Undoubtedly, well trained human resource acquires a significant role in meeting the intense needs of the tourism industry.

The trend for massive production of rigid tourism packages and the production model for achieving economies of scale led to a faulty attitude towards labour in the tourism and hospitality industry. The tourism industry until recently used to consider labour more as a cost rather than a differentiated factor which can generate added value to the tourism experience.

This trend and the dominating mass tourism production model and the rapid growth in tourism demand led to human resource needs being covered by workers from other sectors. with no specific training in tourism.

As a result, training for the tourism sector has been focused mainly on vocational skills and limited to on-the-job training. However new trends, such as increasing complexity of demand, markets globalization and new technologies have drastically altered the fordian business paradigm of tourism, prevailing for the last four decades. (*World Tourism Organisation, TedQual Certification System*)

A high level of competitiveness is required for the future success of the tourism sector, and tourism destinations have to invest in training human resource if they want to achieve competitiveness and increase their capacity to generate income and employment, to protect the physical and cultural environment, the well being of those involved in tourism development and generally the sustainability of tourism.

In such a context human resource development acquires a decisive role and education and training is essential in achieving competitiveness in tourism enterprises and the tourism sector as such.

Education and training institutions anticipate strong pressure from the environment where they operate in to meet the needs of the industry for *quality*. To this effect educational institutions have to identify the needs and expectations of industry, students, educators and other stakeholders and then to evaluate their own efficiency in meeting those needs. Such an evaluation refers to the issue of validity of the education content and the processes adopted. In sum, education for competitiveness and competitiveness in education go together.

Supporting professional careers in tourism is a challenge educational institutions face today under new circumstances in tourism industry that raise questions as to the validity of proliferated courses in different areas of tourism, that emerged to face the demands of current tourism markets. However, many tourism education and training systems remain rigid and static as they continue to respond to past principles or borrow generic knowledge from other economic activities. Different educational programmes in different areas of tourism, at different academic levels, offered by a diversity of entities and organisations, have a limited capacity to deal with essential strategic issues. Training supply is fragmented and there is no standardization of qualifications as a result of lack of uniform accreditation process.

## ***2.2 The TedQual Quality Assurance System***

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) being aware of the problems of validity of tourism and hospitality educational programmes and the problems of standardization of the different qualifications, has developed, through its Themis Foundation, the

TedQual Certification System with the aim to contribute to the quality and efficiency of tourism education. (*WTO 1997* pp. 5-8)

Specifically, the TedQual aims at establishing a quality assurance model through voluntary standardization of tourism education and training systems, and facilitating the way towards greater pedagogic productivity and efficiency in tourism. (The acronym used to refer to the concepts **T**ourism, **E**ducation and **Q**uality)

The TedQual system is based on specific concepts and methodology that incorporates tourism education in the wider framework of tourism industry, economy and society.

### ***2.3 The Total Quality (TQ) Concept in Tourism Education and Training as a Methodology for TedQual***

The starting point for TedQual is the mere concept that quality in education is the degree to which the perceptions of users concur with their previous expectations. The smaller the gap between expectations and perceptions, the higher the level of quality been achieved (see figure 2-1).

Eliminating existing gaps between previous expectations of the users and their perceptions is the major task of TQ. However, T.Q. is based on the assumption that, whenever possible, gaps should be prevented before they occur. Thus, the ultimate task of TQ is to establish preventive, or better, assurance systems to eliminate the possibility of error (the do things right the first time around concept).

This is a notion that expectations and critical elements which influence the final quality perception of the user have to be identified. This notion suggests that a quality system has to take into account that the two aspects of the service process, namely the internal and external aspect are part and parcel of the same intention, that is to meet expectations of the final consumer: Nevertheless, service providers are consumers as well of the part of service they receive from their co-workers, and they add on it their own input before passing it on to a third co-worker or to the final consumer.

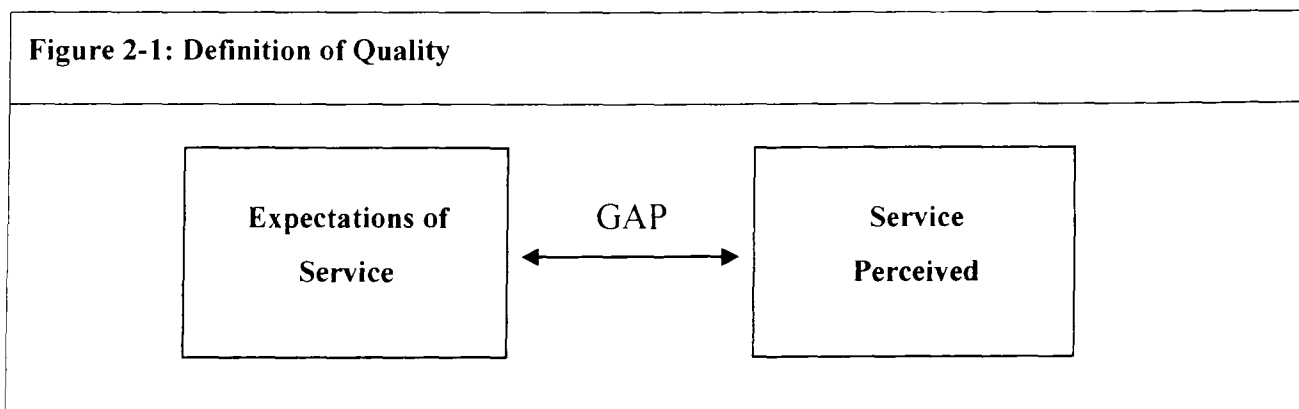
In an Education/Training system many of the players involved are both customers and providers in the process of educational service, which is the case of the student.

In a participative learning process the student in his quest for knowledge is a customer of the teacher. At the same time he/she is a provider of input and feedback to the teacher and the co-learners. Nevertheless, by developing the skills acquired by the tourism industry the student becomes a service provider to the tourism employer (see figure 2-2).

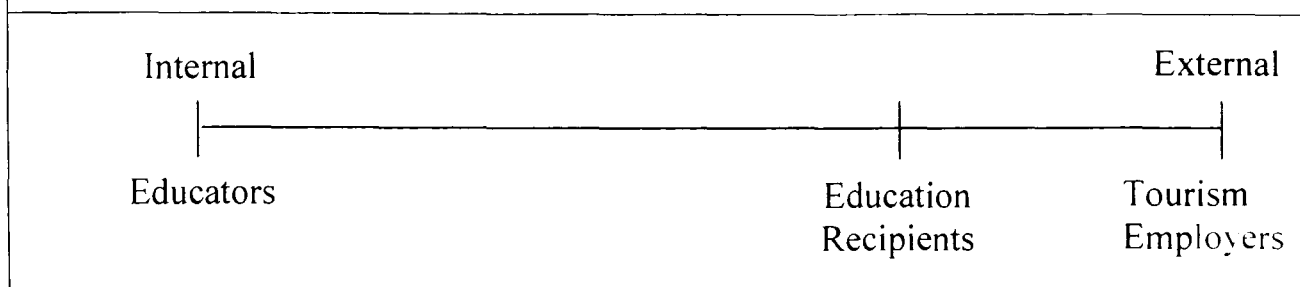
Existing interests of several players involved in the system create a chain, which has to operate in an unbroken way, if the needs and expectations of all players involved are to be satisfactorily met. Such expectations are those of students/future employees, who are the immediate consumers of training supply, those of the tourism sector employers, who are the consumers of the skills of the students, and those of the educational professionals, who play an essential role in the educational process.

However, the quality of educational service is actually measured at the “moment of truth”, which is the final stage of the chain, namely the interaction between the organisation/process and the tourist or hospitality consumer. (*Norman, 1984*)

In this context an education/training system achieves Total Quality if no rupture is detected in the quality chain. That is the output if each player in the chain meets the expectations of the subsequent consumer in the chain.



**Figure 2-2: Continuum of Consumers in Tourism Training Using The Total Quality Approach**



Source: WTO, An Introduction to TEDQUAL (1997) p.31.

By using the T.Q. approach, TedQual aims to contribute to the definition of tourism training needs. (WTO, 1997 p.32). To this effect the following premise is taken as the starting point.

$$PQ = F1 (HRD) = F2 (E1 + E2)$$

Where:

PQ = Quality of the tourism products and services in subjective terms of consumer satisfaction

F1 = Quality function

HRD = Development of human resources

F2 = Training function

E1 = Employers

E2 = Employees

## **2.4 Objectives of a Quality Policy in an Educational Institution**

The expectation of the public to which the educational service is addressed is the driving force that defines the strategic aims of a quality system. Such a system has to develop the mechanism for constant adjustment to the reality of its socio-economic environment.

This objective has a two-fold internal focus and refers to (i) the institution itself, as an organisation which develops and manages different processes, which serve the



mission of the Institution, and (ii) the human resources of the Institution, which should capitalize on the Quality System in order to facilitate their roles towards the achievement of educational service of high quality.

In establishing a Quality System educational institutions should define or facilitate the creation of some instrumental objectives as follows: (*WTO. Manual of Concepts. pp 14-15*)

- The different processes and sub processes which constitute the production of the educational service
- The organisational culture towards a uniform and reliable service
- The idea that all members of the Institution play an important role in achieving the final objective
- The improvement in management efficiency, with the student being the key point of reference
- The upgrading of internal communication between the different levels of the Institution
- The fostering of excellent working environment, so that the people involved in the educational process gain satisfaction and enjoy trust and pride in their work
- The efficient integration of new people joining the Institution
- The establishment of a mechanism to assist continuously the improvement of processes

## **2.5 Six processes in Pursuing Excellence in Education**

The TedQual system defines process as the whole structure of activities or tasks which creates added value for the customer and greater efficiency in the management of education. In this context six fundamental processes have been defined as follows:

- The Employers (Society and Industry)
- The Student
- The Curriculum
- The Faculty
- The Infrastructure
- The Management.

(*W.T.O., Manual of Procedures. pp. 1-142*)

## **2.5.1 The Employers (Society and Industry)**

This process describes the correlation between the educational programmes the employers and the socio-economic environment. That means that the educational programme fully responds to the needs and expectations of employers within the socioeconomic environment in which the programme is developed. Within this process three sub-processes have been defined as the areas for review of the System:

### **2.5.1.1 Corporate Mission**

Educational institutions have to verify that the corporate mission exists as a logical result of a formulation process, is well known and is recognized by all the agents involved. The TedQual System requires also that a mechanism has to be established for a regular review of the mission.

### **2.5.1.2 Strategies**

With regard to this sub process the educational institution has to adopt adequate strategies, which serve the corporate mission and suit to the socio-economic environment. Strategies have to be developed with the participation of tourism industry on the basis of external and internal analysis. External analysis regularly obtains information on the economic environment, the current state of the tourism sector, and the trends in tourism education. Internal analysis provides the educational institution with quantitative and qualitative information on the educational service provided by the institution based on the captured perceptions of faculty/staff, students and tourism industry.

### **2.5.1.3 Action Plan**

This sub process suggests that the educational institution has to develop a well thought-out action plan, which can serve the strategies developed and the objectives defined through the educational programmes.

To this effect the objectives for competitive strategies has to be defined in terms of targeted segments, present market share in each targeted segment, student satisfaction

indicators, and proportion of graduates who enter the tourism labour market. Furthermore a resources planning is required on the basis of efficiency criteria in terms of equipment and technology, human resources, and budgetary planning. Action plan has to provide also for capturing student satisfaction, industry satisfaction and faculty and support staff satisfaction.

## **2.5.2 The Student**

Given the fact that student is the reason for existence of the educational institution, the student process is assigned a fundamental role in the TedQual System. Thus, the educational institution has to verify that a strategic approach has been adopted to meet the needs and expectations of the direct consumer of the educational service, namely the student.

The following sub processes should be reviewed within the framework of the student process.

### **2.5.2.1 Attractiveness of the Educational Programmes for Candidate Students**

For this sub process verification is required that recruitment procedures are clearly defined and carried out efficiently and that candidate students are well informed of all the rights and obligations they will assume. Within this sub process the system requires that potential students have access to clear and detailed information on the educational programmes, the admission procedures, and financial conditions.

A communication and promotion plan is also required for the projection of the image of the educational programmes and the periodic evaluation of that image.

### **2.5.2.2 Relationship with the Student**

In the pursuit of an excellent relationship with the student a Manual has to be developed with a clear strategic approach, which should include all admissions criteria and details as well as academic and administrative arrangements having to do with personal attention to student, financial and administrative matters, and complementary services.

### **2.5.2.3 Assessment of Student**

This sub process requires that the output of educational programmes full responds to the needs of both internal and external customers, namely students and tourism employers respectively. To this effect an efficient system has to be established for measuring student satisfaction, the acceptability of graduates by the industry, their employability and prospects to climb the career ladder.

### **2.5.3 Curriculum (Pedagogic System)**

The TedQual System considers that an educational programme can be competitive if it assigns attention to both appropriate curricular content and the pedagogic methodology.

#### **2.5.3.1 Contents**

For the development of curricular contents of an educational programme, coherent internal criteria appropriate for both the set mission and objectives and the needs of the tourism industry is required to be followed.

To this effect the study plan should take into account all existing legal requirements, requirements established by the tourism industry and the mission and objectives of the educational programme. Both national and international standards have to be followed, and logical sequence, and optimum balance between practical and theoretical content, are required. Also, the workload has to be in proportion to the length of each of the courses, and a follow up procedure is required to guarantee the acquisition of knowledge within the anticipated timeframe.

#### **2.5.3.2 Pedagogic Methodology**

Pedagogic methodology has to be appropriate for the achievement of the set objectives of the educational programme. To this effect both pedagogic and professional criteria from the industry have to be met, so that students can develop attitudes and aptitudes necessary for working in the tourism industry.

### **2.5.3.3 Pedagogic Resources**

Pedagogic resources comprise pedagogic equipment and services and pedagogic infrastructure. Pedagogic equipment and services include specialized bookstore and documentation system, specialized journals and magazines, computer equipment with access to internet and data bases. and permanent support service to assist students in having access to and handling all available resources.

Pedagogic infrastructure has to adhere to specific requirements in terms of minimum ratio of square meters per student in the classrooms, maximum of students per teaching machine/instrument, control of temperature, sound and light.

### **2.5.4 The Faculty**

When establishing an educational programme faculty of high quality is of vital importance. Quality of faculty refers to technical knowledge on subjects studied and communication and teaching skills.

To guarantee that the educational programme will properly develop in both content and teaching method, pertinent criteria should be applied in terms of the following sub processes.

#### **2.5.4.1 Teaching Organisation**

This sub process requires a uniformity of the final output achieved for each subject. To this effect faculty selection should be based on certain academic requirements and taking into consideration suitable psycho-professional profiles for the teaching activity, and the industry standards.

A coordination mechanism is also required which provides for specified subject area roles, the material covered and the evaluation process. coordination and follow up of faculty activities and evaluation of objectives achievement. which includes student and faculty input.

In order to foster full involvement and participation of the faculty in the corporate mission and objectives of the educational institution teaching and working conditions have to serve the needs of the faculty in terms of communication, motivation and

professional advancement and autonomy in teaching. Nevertheless, any autonomy should be pursued within the methodological framework set by the curricular contents and the area coordinator.

#### **2.5.4.2 Continuous Updating, Research and Development**

For the optimal development of the established educational programmes and methodologies a permanent effort is required by the faculty to be up-to-date in both pedagogic and professional knowledge. To this effect an annual plan is required for retraining and participation in complementary activities in cooperation with the local tourism sector. Such activities can include training in pedagogic and communication techniques, attendance of events organized by the tourism sectors, i.e. professional bodies or employers associations, and placements in the tourism industry.

A research plan is also required to be established to foster the faculty in acquiring research experience in their respective areas. To this effect special agreements with enterprises specialized in the technological area and the setting up of specific joint research programmes with the industry can prove very helpful.

#### **2.5.5 The Infrastructure**

This process refers to the identification and analysis of all physical elements, namely physical infrastructure, equipment and supplies, which support the operation of educational programmes. All physical facilities should serve the needs of the learning process within the framework of the specific educational programme.

All constituents of physical facilities must be in compliance with legislative requirements and meet functional, aesthetic and cost benefit criteria. Arrangements have also to be defined for persons(s) responsible for provisions, quality guidelines, order systems and security issues.

#### **2.5.6 The Management**

The Management process should be considered successful if the prior five processes have been properly implemented. This process requires that all information generated through the other processes, after due analysis and study facilitate decision

making. The overall management process, which is a synthesis of all other processes, has to serve the mission and objectives of the educational institution and its programmes. Within the Management process the following sub-processes should be reviewed.

#### **2.5.6.1 Information and Analysis**

This sub process requires that the Management determines the information necessary to supervise the processes and to guarantee the transmission of strategies.

#### **2.5.6.2 Structuring**

This sub process requires that a structured model of available resources enabling the educational institution to fulfil the mission and objectives has to be in place. The model has to organize human resources with functions, responsibilities, and roles clearly defined and transmitted to all parties involved. The role of Management in this connection is to define and communicate the basic elements constituting the organisation charts, as well as the basic guidelines of its human resource management at its different levels.

#### **2.5.6.3 Quality System**

The Management of the educational institution has to define and establish the basic quality elements, which are essential for efficient management. Quality objectives have to be defined and commitment to them has to be declared and communicated to all levels of the organisation. To this effect a series of quality instruments and indicators have to be established, so that information on the main aspects of the management of educational programmes can be obtained as an input towards improving their competitive position.

## **3 THE BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY PROGRAM**

### ***3.1 Introduction***

In today's competitive environment educational institutions face a major challenge, that of managing for quality.

The Baldrige National Quality Programme, through its Education Criteria<sup>1</sup>, provides educational institutions the framework to respond to the challenge of quality. This challenge comprises the response to the diverse needs of students, and industry, the need for enhanced curriculum and education delivery methods, and the fulfilment of changing regulatory, and accreditation, requirements.

The framework provided through the Baldrige Education Criteria is a valuable tool for both sizeable and large institutions to assess performance on specific key indicators: student learning, student and stakeholder satisfaction, education design and delivery, financial, faculty and staff development and well being.

Educational organisations need to describe their organisational profile. Defining the organisational environment i.e. their educational programmes, content, culture, vision, mission and values, their faculty profile, their infrastructure and the organisational relationships is one of the major preparatory steps to apply Educational Criteria for Performance Excellence. The second step is to describe the competitive environment, the key strategic challenges and their system for performance improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> The Baldrige National Quality Program, 2002 Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, National Institute of Technology, [www.quality.nist.gov](http://www.quality.nist.gov)



### **3.2 The Scope**

The Education Criteria are the basis for organisational self assessment and taking action for self improvement.

The main scope of the education criteria is:

- To help organisations in improving their performance practices, capabilities and results.
- To facilitate communication and sharing of best practices from within the organisation and from outside resources.
- To serve as a working tool for understanding and improving performance and for guiding planning and opportunities for learning.
- To facilitate organisational and personal learning.

### **3.3 The Core Values and Concepts**

The following set of interrelated Core Values and Concepts constitute the basis for the criteria.

High-performing organisations are characterized by embedded beliefs and behaviours, which coincide with these Values and Concepts described below. Within a result-oriented framework they integrate all requirements for continuous action and feedback.

#### **3.3.1 Visionary Leadership**

The role of senior leaders is to set directions and facilitate creating a student-focused, learning-oriented climate, clear and visible values, and high expectations. Directions, values and expectations should meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Senior Leaders should also ensure the creation of strategies, systems and methods for achieving excellence, stimulating innovation and building knowledge capabilities. Values and strategies should serve as guides of all activities and decisions of the organisation.

Senior leaders should serve as role models through their ethical behaviour and their personal involvement in planning, communications, coaching, development of future leaders, review of organisational performance, and faculty and staff recognition.

Furthermore, building community support and aligning community and business leaders and community services is a vehicle which must be used by educational leaders to reinforce the learning environment.

### **3.3.2 Learning – Centred Education**

Learning-Centred Education is a strategic concept: It requires constant sensitivity to changing requirements of students, stakeholders, and market, and to the factors that drive student learning, satisfaction and persistence. Such sensitivity can help in anticipating changes in the education environment, and flexible response to student, stakeholder and market needs. The key characteristics of Learning-Centred Education are as follows:

- High development expectations and standards are set for all students.
- Given that students have their own learning styles and rates, emphasis is given on a constant search for alternative ways to enhance learning and develop actionable information on individual students that bears upon their learning.
- A primary emphasis is given on active learning. Therefore, the use of various techniques, materials and experiences to engage student interest is required. Techniques, materials and experiences can be drawn from both internal and external resources.
- Formative assessment is used to measure learning early in the learning process and to tailor learning experiences to individual needs and learning styles.
- Summative assessment is used to measure progress against key, relevant external standards and norms regarding what students should know and should be able to do.

- Students and families are assisted in using self assessment to chart progress and to clarify goals and gaps.
- Emphasis is given on key transitions such as school-to-school and school-to-work.

### **3.3.3 Organisational and Personal Learning**

Organisational and personal learning is the driving force for achieving high levels of performance.

Organisational learning includes both continuous improvement of existing approaches and adaptation to change, leading to new goals and/or approaches.

Learning should be the core element of the way the organisation operates. This means that learning:

- (i) Is a regular part of the day-to-day work of students, faculty, and staff
- (ii) Is practiced at personal, department, and organisational level
- (iii) Results in problem solving at their source
- (iv) Is focused on sharing knowledge throughout the organisation
- (v) Is driven by opportunities to do better and effect significant change.

Sources for organisational learning include faculty and staff ideas, research findings, student and stakeholder input, best practice sharing, and benchmarking.

Improvement in education requires a strong emphasis on effective design of educational programmes, curricula, and learning environments.

Effective design includes clear learning objectives, address of individual students' needs, effective students' assessment and assessment of strategy.

Personal learning depends on opportunities: faculty and staff have for practicing new skills and updating their knowledge.

Therefore, the organisation should invest in personal learning.

Personal learning results in staff loyalty, organisational cross-functional learning, and improved environment for innovation.

Learning, both organisational and personal, constitutes the driving force for being more responsive, adaptive and flexible to the needs of students, stakeholders, and the market.

### **3.3.4 Valuing Faculty, Staff and Partners**

Knowledge, skills, innovative creativity, and motivation of faculty, staff and partners are very important requirements for the success of an educational organisation.

Valuing faculty and staff means committing to their satisfaction, development, and well being. Faculty development is directly related to building discipline knowledge, knowledge of students' learning styles, methodology, and of assessment methods.

In valuing faculty, their contribution to the organisation's policy, team spirit in developing and implementing programmes and curricula, and student focused should be taken into account.

On the job training, job rotation, and pay for demonstration skills constitute techniques for staff development.

The following areas constitute major challenges in the field of valuing faculty and staff.

- Demonstrating leaders' commitment to the success of faculty and staff.
- Recognition going beyond regular compensation system.
- Development and progression within the organisation.
- Sharing knowledge to the benefit of better educational service.
- Creating an environment that encourages creativity.

Educational organisations need to develop internal and external partnership to better accomplish overall goals and develop long-term objectives.

Internal partnerships include cooperation among leadership, faculty and staff, and student unions. Such network relationships improve flexibility, responsiveness, and knowledge sharing.

External partnerships can be developed with other schools, suppliers, business, business associations, and community and social service organisations.

### **3.3.5 Agility**

Agility is an increasingly important indicator of organisational effectiveness. It requires a capability for fast and flexible responsiveness to the needs of students and stakeholders. Time improvements result in improvements in organisation, quality, and cost.

### **3.3.6 Focus on the Future**

Focus on the future requires understanding the short- and long-term factors that affect the organisation and the education market.

Many factors affect educational excellence. Such factors include changes in educational requirements, instructional approaches, resource availability, student and stakeholders expectations, new partnership opportunities, technological developments including internet environment, new student market segments, demographics, societal expectations, and strategic changes by comparable organisations.

Creating a mission oriented assessment system focused on learning is the primary tool to achieve excellence.

Focus on the future includes also involvement in research and being familiar with research findings and practical applications of assessment methods and learning styles, faculty development, and undertaking public responsibilities.

### **3.3.7 Managing for Innovation**

Innovation should become part of the culture of the organisation and be integrated into the daily work.

Inventing methods and making changes to improve programmes, services, and processes create new value for the organisation.

### **3.3.8 Management by Fact**

Effective Management requires measurement and analysis of performance. Such measurements should rely on the organisations strategy and they should provide critical data about key processes and results with main focus on student learning.

A critical selection of measures and indicators has to be made, that represent factors leading to improvement of student, operational and financial performance.

### **3.3.9 Public Responsibility and Citizenship**

Leaders of the organisation should cultivate consciousness about responsibilities to the public and the need to practice good citizenship.

Leaders should make proper use of public and private funds, and should capitalize on locus and regulatory requirements as opportunities for improvement “beyond mere compliance”.

Practicing good citizenship refers to leadership and support from both internal and external partners towards quality and excellence of the community.

### **3.3.10 Focus on Results and Creating Value**

Measurement of organisation’s performance should focus on key results and creating value added for students and stakeholders. The critical issue at stake for decision makers is to make strategic decisions balancing the requirements of several stakeholders.

### **3.3.11 Systems Perspective**

Successful management of overall performance requires organisation – specific synthesis and alignment.

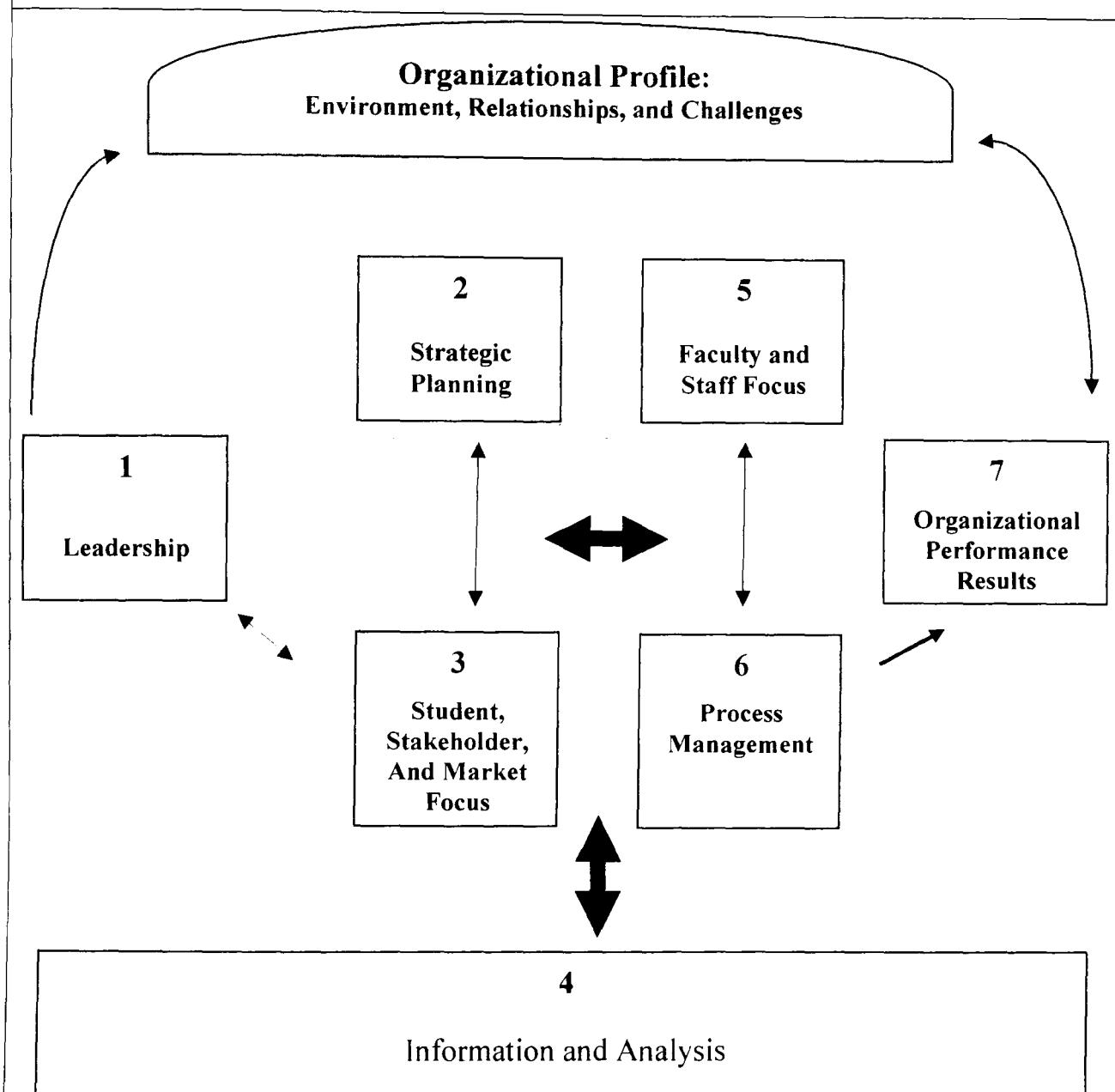
Synthesis means anticipating the organisation as a whole and building upon key educational requirements.

Alignment means using the key linkages among requirements, including the key measures / indicators. Senior leaders should focus on strategic directions, students and stakeholders. That is monitoring, response and managing performance on key results.

### ***3.4 Alignment of Core Values with the Seven Categories of Baldrige Requirements***

Managing for success requires alignment towards a system. Core values and concepts are embedded in seven categories of requirements which constitute an integrated framework as follows:

**Figure 3-1** Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence Framework: A Systems Perspective



Source: The Baldrige National Quality Program, 2002 Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, National Institute of Technology, [www.quality.nist.gov](http://www.quality.nist.gov).

This framework suggests that educational managers have to anticipate their organisation as a system if they are to manage for quality and performance excellence. All seven categories of requirements constitute critical factors for success which affect each other and have to be studied in relation with each other.



## **4 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

Learning is a basic human need, and learning process is an experience that occurs to most human beings during their life. Learning is the means which can help people in developing themselves and achieving their goals in the society.

People actively participate in the learning process all their life through. Not only because they have been born in a continuously changing society, but due to the mere fact that they have parted themselves of the changing process. The fact that people as individuals and as members of several groups have to adapt to the changing needs of the society enforce them to become lifelong learners.

Nowadays lifelong learning is gradually considered to be as one of the basic human rights. Modern societies adopt institutions and pass legislation which aim at providing their citizens, not only youngsters but adults as well, all relevant opportunities and facilities to meet their learning needs, so that they can achieve their personal and societal goals.

Civilized societies have already a long tradition in child education, based on both theories developed and strategic plans and programmes for the education of new generations.

Over the last decades a big emphasis is being given to adults learning as a means to reinforce lifelong learning.

Furthermore, organisations and strategic planners give much more emphasis on organisational learning as a means to achieve competitive edge.

Whatever the level of learning is, individually – (i.e. child or adult learning) or organisational, knowledge, which is the fruit of the learning process, is an invaluable asset, and as such has to be managed.

## **4.2 How People Learn**

*Gagne (1997)* suggests that learning is not just the acquisition of information, but the activation of learner's capabilities. The traditional system of formal education which assigns the teacher the role of transforming teaching into learning, cannot serve the needs of the meta-industrial epoch. The learner is assigned today at least equal responsibility with the teacher as far as the learning process is concerned. The more mature the learner is the higher the level of responsibility is assigned to the learner.

### **4.2.1 Adult Learning**

Adults differentiate themselves in terms of traditional methods used to teach children in our school system. Indeed, they are not willing to attend all-day lectures or to be involved in repetitive exercises. Nor do they have the time and patience to attend a structured system of classes as it is provided through a specific timetable. Adult learning has drawn the attention of authors and psychologists the last two decades.

*Freire (1989)* suggests that education is not a neutral procedure but a well designed process which can facilitate freedom for each individual. For Freire teachers have to foster experience, which can be turned into part of the learning process. Consequently, the dialogue between teacher and pupil/student is of major importance, so that teacher can play the role of facilitator, who can instigate and foster learning process, rather than the provider of "correct" knowledge (*Jarvis P. 1999, p.85*).

This doubt expressed in *Freire's* work is directly related to the critical question: which knowledge is useful for an individual to help him/her in achieving his/her personal and development goals and whose job is to identify this useful knowledge?

According to *Gagne* adults' education is differentiated from child education, due to the fact that the level of basic knowledge in the several learning processes is different. New knowledge is built on the sum of previous experience of individual (*Kassotacis and Flouris 2002*).

*Gagne* suggests problem solving as a tool of learning and teaching for adults. In this process adults have to recall previous knowledge on which they can base the solution of the problem. The role of teacher in this case is to help adult to recall previous knowledge.

The work of *Knowles (1980, 1984)* on andragogy, helped in establishing the idea that adults are active learners and in this sense have to be anticipated in the learning process. As a result many adults' educators suggested learning contracts between teacher and learner as the framework for the learning process.

*Knowles* theory is based on the following attributes of adults, which make the difference between adult and child learning:

- Adults need to be self-directed.
- Adults as matures have already quite enough experience, which can be valuable source for further learning.
- Adults want to know and they experience the need for further learning.
- Adults are problem solving oriented.
- Adults learn best when they actively participate in learning.

*Mezirow* like many other authors considers learning as the result of experience. He suggests that learning is the process of concepts' formation based on previous knowledge and a new interpretation of experience (*Jarvis P. 1999*).

*Rogers (1969)* is of the opinion that all people are inclined to learn, and the role of teacher is to facilitate learning. For adults the learning process is successful when:

- It is related with their needs and interests.
- It has clear objectives.
- It is pursued in a relaxed and supportive environment.
- It fosters self-directed learning.
- It assigns respect to learner's time and effort.

Human Resource in any organisation consists of adults and consequently organisations have to capitalize on adult learning if they want to maximize human resource performance. Although adult learning is only a dimension of Knowledge Management, it is a core guideline for organisations in their efforts to improve the knowledge-based capabilities of their workforce and utilize knowledge effectively in the pursuit of competitive advantage.

#### **4.2.2 Experiential Learning**

*Chris Argyris* is one of the pioneers of experiential learning, a concept which focuses on experience as a tool for learning rather than teaching.

*Argyris (1985)* argued that no one can develop anyone else except himself, and he predicted a move from management development programmes that teach managers how they ought to think and behave to programmes with the objective of helping managers to learn from experience.

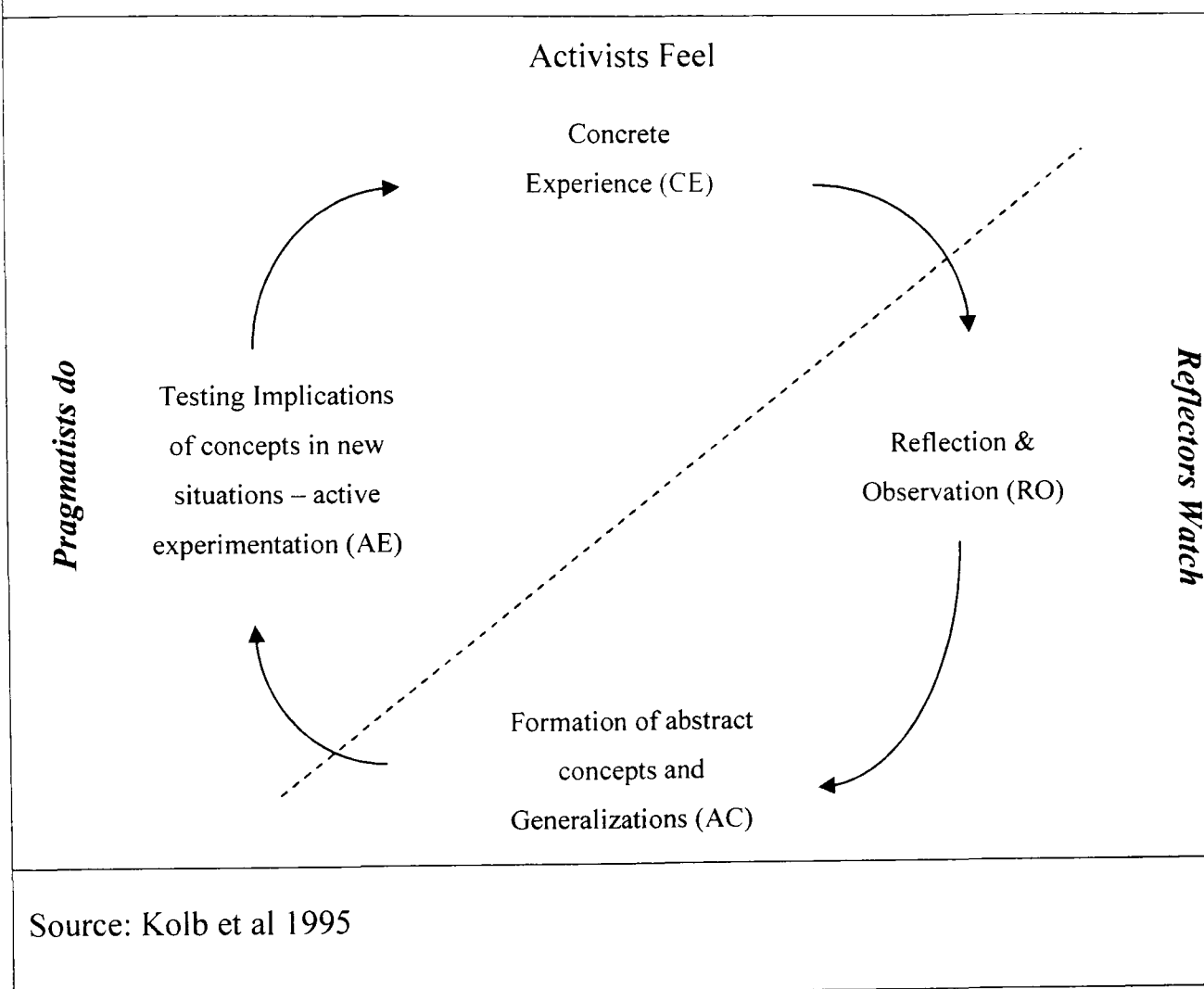
Furthermore, he suggests that emphasis should be given on developing learning managers rather than learned managers.

Some subsequent questions arise about experiential learning, the answer of which can help organisations in designing their strategy in knowledge management:

- How can experiential learning be put into practice?
- Is just exposure to different experience adequate for learning?
- To what extent understanding the mechanics of learning can help individuals and/or organisations achieve high levels of learning?

*Kolb (1995)* suggests a learning model of a four-phase cycle and four modes of learning, namely activists, reflectors, theorists and pragmatists.

Figure 4-1: Kolb's Learning Mode



Each individual has his/her own learning style, which is a mix of the four modes. The dividing line in Figure 4.1 can help in understanding the mixed up nature of one's learning style. More specifically, an individual's learning style is a combination of AC-CE balance, that is how much he/she is inclined towards the abstract or concrete, and AE-RO balance that is how much he/she is inclined towards active experimentation or reflective behaviour.

What *Kolb* stressed in the interpretation of his model is to avoid stereotyping one's learning style, since each person's learning style is not necessarily fixed.

According to *Kolb and Fry (1975)* the learning process can start at any one of the four faces of the learning cycle, which should be approached as a continuous spiral. However, the most common starting point is the exposure to a certain experience through carrying out a particular action, and then observing the effect of that action within the specific situation. The second step is to understand the effects of the action in the particular instance, so that the results of the action can be anticipated, if the same action is to be taken in the same circumstances. Understanding the general principle under which the particular instance falls is the third step of the learning cycle. After the general principle is being understood, it can be applied through a new action in a new circumstance within the range of generalization. This is the last step of the learning cycle.

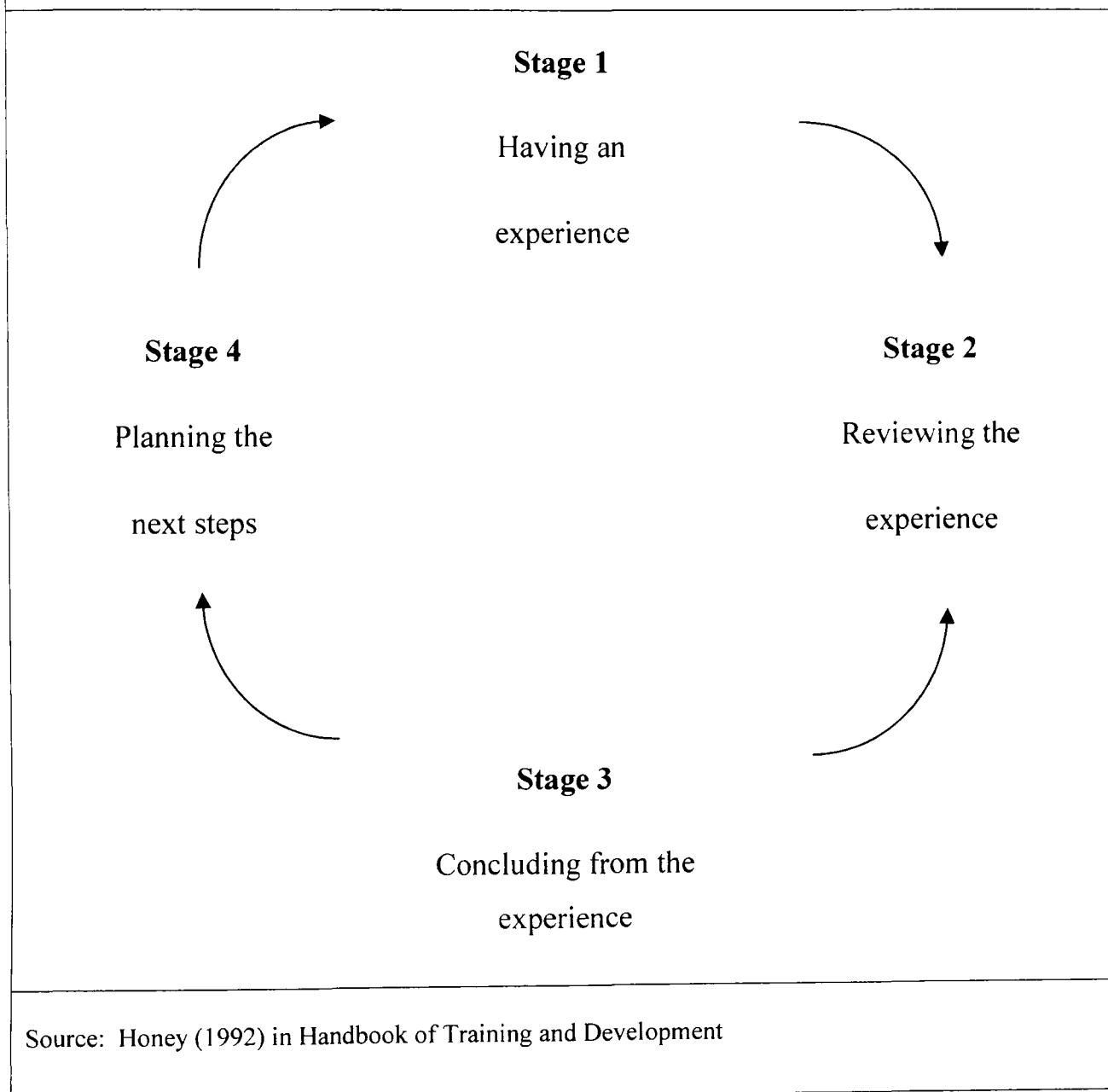
In reality, learning is the result of the overall process, which brings all four steps together into a spiral effect.

*Kolb's* model is a refinement of *Merizow's*, *Freire's* and others' position in early 1980's that the heart of all learning lies in the way we process experience. Nevertheless, it entails certain limitations. *Rogers (1996)*, for example points out that "learning includes goals, purposes, intentions, choice and decision-making, and it is not at all clear where these elements fit into the learning cycle" (*p.108*).

I think that individuals, and even more, organisations can capitalize on these elements to upgrade individual and organisational learning.

*Honey and Mumford (1992)* developed a simplified version of *Kolb's* model as it is presented in Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4-2: A Simplified Version of Kolb's Model**



They focus on how managers learn and note that managers rarely follow consciously all four stages of the learning cycle. Depending on their learning styles managers are likely to take a number of liberties with the learning process. Such liberties according to *Honey and Mumford* include:

- (a) Indulging at stage 1, which means having lots of experience, assuming that this is enough for learning, and never bothering for reviewing, concluding or planning.
- (b) Limiting stage 1 by repeating familiar experiences.

- (c) Avoiding stage 1 by learning from other people's experiences.
- (d) Avoiding stage 2 by having an inventory of conclusions and forcing experiences to fit their existing conclusions.
- (e) Limiting stages 2 and 3 by using techniques of "how to do it" and avoiding discovering their own ways that is avoiding hard work.

Such liberties in the learning process constitute short cuts that tend to erode the learning benefits from experience.

Based on the research of *Honey and Mumford* managers fall into four categories in terms of learning style:

- Activist's style, which equips managers for stage 1 of the learning cycle.
- Reflector's style, which equips managers for stage 2.
- Theorist's style, which equips managers for stage 3.
- Pragmatist's style, which equips managers for stage 4.

Although each individual is inclined to a certain learning style, most people can develop their learning styles. The ideal situation leads to all-round learners or integrated learners, who base their learning on a full utilization of all four-steps of the learning cycle.

The challenge for managers is to develop their learning styles, and help their people in developing their own styles, so that the maximum outcome of learning can come out for their organisation.



Honey, in the conclusion of his article “*How people learn*” makes the following proposals to help managers with learning, and suggests that any respectable management development programme should provide help with the following things:

1. Helping managers to know the stages in the process of learning from experience and how their learning style preferences help and hinder them with parts of this process.
2. Helping managers to work out how to develop an underdeveloped learning style, so that they can aim to become better ‘all-round’ learners.
3. Providing managers with a safe haven, where they can practice developing an underdeveloped style and help learning from experience to be a deliberate, conscious process.
4. Helping managers to identify learning opportunities in their current jobs and plan how to utilize them.

I could add to the above list the obligation of managers to help other people in their organisations to develop their own learning styles, towards integrated learning and planning and pursuing their own learning.

### **4.3 Definition of Knowledge Management**

For a while now, the term “Knowledge Management” (KM) is buzzing around and many organisations have become more conscious in introducing knowledge-management programmes, in their efforts to achieve competitive edge.

In *Harvard Management Update (1999)* Knowledge Management is defined as “*a formal, directed process of figuring out what information a company has that could benefit others in the company, then devising ways of making it easily available*”.

Steps involved in organisations' practices in terms of KM include among others:

- creating repositories of information about best practices
- setting up networks for transferring information between employees who interact with customers and those who create the product
- creating formal procedures to ensure that lessons learned in the course of a project are passed along to others doing similar tasks

*McFerrin Peters (2000)* suggests that Knowledge Management must enable the organisation to cultivate and share new ideas, and it must focus the organisations' brainpower on what's really important. Furthermore, she recommends the following four practical steps to start practicing Knowledge Management:

- (a) Create a setting for sharing knowledge. The best technique is to ensure that everyone has access to knowledge and everyone's involved in breeding knowledge.
- (b) Eliminate communication "filters". Going outside the channels, by allowing people to skip levels, leads to more ideas on how to do things better.
- (c) Prioritize the tasks. If senior leaders get together to assess and rank vital activities, barriers can be overcome, knowledge is shared and commitment to priority is established.
- (d) Keep time budgets. Ask people to keep a log of their activities. Evaluate the aggregate results and try to see whether day-to-day activities reflect your strategic priorities.

In synopsis, effective KM according to McFerrin Peters rejects boundaries around knowledge and requires people to spend time in developing, applying and sharing ideas.

*Cyril Brooks* describes Knowledge Management as "*making the most effective use of the intellectual capital of a business. It involves wiring together the brains of*

*appropriate people so that sharing, reasoning, and collaboration become almost instinctive and a part of everyday work”.*

Knowledge Management means a complete overhaul in traditional management principles such as planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, directing, controlling and evaluating. The last two provide a notion for challenging established approaches such as return on capital and budgetary control.

*Stewart (1994) notes in this respect that, “what’s at stake is nothing less than learning how to operate and evaluate a business when knowledge is its chief resource and result”.*

#### **4.4 Function of Knowledge Management**

*Kannan (2003) defines Knowledge Management as*

*“... the systematic process of finding, selecting, organizing distilling and presenting information in a way that improves an employee’s comprehension in a specific area of interest. It is based on the recognition that knowledge is a primary resource for successful operations and achievement of business goals and proceeding to capture valuable knowledge into an organized base, preserving and updating the same from time to time and retrieving and sharing the contents with beneficial results supporting the objectives or goals of the entity holding the same”*

There is no universally accepted definition of Knowledge Management as there is no consensus on what constitutes knowledge as such. What is commonly accepted is that Knowledge Management is about building the capability to create value based on the intangible assets of the organisation.

To this effect organisations have to be in a position to give their people the organisational knowledge they need at the point and time needed.

Knowledge Management should be a longitudinal process for identifying, coding, storing, updating, disseminating, and all important for the organisation knowledge. This process should serve not only the organisational goals but the individual ones as

well. The underlying rationale behind that is the nature of knowledge being multiplied very fast, and becoming obsolete if got stale. Therefore, Knowledge Management systems should serve adaptability and updating.

In brief Knowledge Management:

- Facilitates organisational ability to anticipate change, and create change
- Creates value from intellectual and knowledge based assets
- Upgrades human resource's competencies
- Provides increased value for organisation's customers
- Serves learning faster than competitors
- Provides competitive edge

#### **4.5 Managing Knowledge and Learning**

*Hope and Hope (1997)* identify two schools of thought for Knowledge Management. On the one hand is the information school, which believes that knowledge is comprised of objects that can be identified within information systems; on the other hand is the behavioural school, which sees knowledge management as a dynamic process within which skills and know – how are constantly changing.

For the information school computing, artificial intelligence, systems management and reengineering are the roots, whereas knowledge-based systems are the ultimate answer.

Understanding human behaviour and winning the hearts and minds of key people is the answer for behavioural school. The critical question for Managing Knowledge is: How do people learn within multi-level and complex organisations? The roots of behavioural school are in sociology, anthropology, psychology and organisational behaviour.

### **(a) The Information School**

Advocates of the information school suggest that objective and explicit analysis of existing knowledge can create useful knowledge. This knowledge has to be captured, analyzed, coded and deployed for competitive advantage. They emphasize system design and knowledge accessibility to increase benefits to knowledge users.

*Quinn, Anderson, and Finkelstein (1997)*, note that Information School considers knowledge sharing as critical to success and relate value increase of intellectual assets, unlike physical assets, with their use. The Information School

*“...believe in a sort of trickle-down theory of knowledge sharing and learning. In other words, if they pour enough information in at the top level (i.e., into their knowledge-based systems) enough sharing and learning will eventually pervade the lower organisational levels. Indeed, properly stimulated knowledge and intellect grow exponentially when shared. If two people exchange knowledge with each other, both gain information and experience linear growth. But if both then share their new knowledge with others – each of whom feeds back questions, amplifications, and modifications – the benefits become exponential”. (in Hope and Hope p.75)*

Sharing knowledge is a component of Japanese management as well. Japanese egalitarian culture allows knowledge to be disseminated to as many people within the organisation as possible, irrespective of their own level of authority.

Whatever the culture is, it remains of great importance not only installation of networked information systems, but organizing valuable information into easily accessible clusters of relevant knowledge as well.

Processing more and more information cannot be the ultimate task of the organisation. According to Professor *Baumard* of the University of Paris, the development of intelligence capabilities should aim at developing interpretational and sense making skills rather than pursuing the utopia and ambiguity of knowledge sees

as a commodity. In *Baumard's* view “*Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity*”.

### **(b) The Behavioural School**

*Schein of the MIT centre* identified three wide and distinct subcultures running through organisations. Each subculture has its own assumptions and values about the role of people within the organisation:

- “The operator culture”, which anticipates people as the most important asset of the organisation, assigns teamwork a more effective role than individuals
- “The engineering culture”, consider people as obstacles and source of errors, who impede managerial procedures and elegant solutions
- “The executive culture” which sees people as a source of financial cost, and managerial focus should be on minimizing such costs

Understanding of different subcultures within the organisation is crucial for any knowledge sharing. Unless new ideas and/or knowledge is embedded in the specific subculture, no learning has been occurred. The key for success is to achieve cross-cultural commitment to the implementation of any new idea or initiative. To this effect each Knowledge Management system should take into account tacit assumptions, values, perceptions and attitudes of each subculture group about what is right or wrong, important or irrelevant.

Subcultures are seen as communities of practice as well (*Stewart 1996*).

*Brown and Gray* relate learning with work, and they suggest that “*learning is about work, work is about learning, and both are social. This is probably the most important lesson from the behavioural school of thought*”.

Furthermore, they identify participation and commitment as the core elements for the successful organisation:

*“Organisations are webs of participation. Change the patterns of participation, and you change the organisation .... At the heart of participation is the mind and spirit of the knowledge worker. Put simply, you cannot compel enthusiasm and commitment from knowledge workers. Only workers who choose to opt in – who voluntarily make a commitment to their colleagues – can create a winning company”.*

Learning takes place in communities of practice. As *Stucky* points out, communities of practice are not necessarily good. They are merely recognition of how things work in organisations, not how we would like them to work.

A lesson derived from the behavioural approach to Knowledge Management is that people do not resist change so much as they resist being changed. The challenge is not to change people, but to help people change their attitudes towards learning.

#### **4.6 Knowledge as Intellectual Assets**

According to *Webster’s Dictionary (1992)* the fact of knowing something is gained through experience or association.

*Kannan (2003)* suggests that knowledge may be described as a set of models that describe various properties and behaviours within a domain and that knowledge can be recorded in an individual brain or stored in organisational processes, products, facilities, systems and documents, namely “databases”.

Knowledge is used for the achievement of organisational goals.

In the website of the University of Texas knowledge is defined as the full utilization of data, coupled with the potential of people’s skills, competencies, ideas, intuitions, commitments and motivations used to take effective action to achieve the entity’s goals.

Knowledge is directly related to the sustainability of the organisation. However it remains the most neglected asset. While capital, labour and land are considered as

the traditional assets for a business, knowledge is the more relevant asset which provides the ability for innovation.

If organisations want to capitalize on the individual and collective knowledge of their people, they have to develop a system to manage individual and collective knowledge. The function of such a system is to identify the organisation's knowledge assets and facilitate maximum return on them.

*Hope and Hope (1997)* identify two types of knowledge: explicit knowledge, that is skills and facts that can be written down and taught to others, and tacit knowledge, namely skills, judgment and intuition that people have but cannot easily describe. Tacit knowledge is contained in people's heads. The challenge for any organisation is to figure out how to recognize, generate, share and manage tacit knowledge.

While information technology can help in disseminating tacit knowledge, identifying tacit knowledge in the first place remains a complicated problem for many organisations.

*Quinn, Anderson, and Finkelstein (1992)* identify four levels of knowledge: (1) Cognitive knowledge, that is the "know-what", which comes from basic training and certification; (2) advanced skill, that is the "know-how", which can transfer learning from books into effective application; (3) systems understanding, that is "know-why", which capitalizes on "know-what" and "know-how" and leads to highly trained intuition that helps in evaluating insight dimensions of projects and systems; (4) self-motivated activity, that is "care-why", which drives creative groups to outperform communities. This level of knowledge can derive from the organisation's culture, whereas the first three levels can be found in the organisation's systems, data bases and or operating technologies.

The Swedish practitioner *Karl-Erik Sveiby (1986)* identified the inadequacy of traditional measures of corporate assets. In this connection he recognized the importance of "intellectual capital" and its measurement. This can be defined as the starting point for the development of Knowledge Management as a new discipline began to take shape in the late 1980s.



After Sveiby several scholars and practitioners formed a group called “the Intellectual Capital Movement Group” (Talysayon 2002). They hold that intangible knowledge assets must be given the proper attention, measured and managed to create value.

Among the members of the Intellectual Capital Movement are:

- Leif Edvinsson, Associate Professor of Intellectual Capital, University of Lund, Sweden, and Director of Intellectual Capital of Skandia.
- David Teece, Professor of International Business and Finance, University of California Berkeley, and author of the book “Managing Intellectual Capital” (Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Hubert St. Onge, CEO of Konverge Digital Solutions, who first introduced the concept of “customer capital” as a component of intellectual capital.
- Patrick Sullivan, the author of “Value-Driven Intellectual Capital: How to Convert Intangible Corporate Assets into Market Value”, (John Wiley, 2000).
- Thomas Stewart, a member of the Board of Editors of Fortune magazine, and author of the book “Intellectual Capital: The New Wealth of Organisations” (Doubleday, 1997).

The formers of Intellectual Capital Movement Group base their arguments on the fact that human creativity produces innovation which can create value when commercialized. They defined customer capital (others call it “stakeholder capital” or “external capital” (or relationship capital) human capital and structural capital as the three components of intellectual capital. Customer capital is defined as “The depth (penetration), width (coverage) and profitability of the organisation’s franchise”. Human capital is defined as “the capabilities of the individuals in an organisation to provide solutions to customers”. Structural capital is defined as the “organisational capabilities necessary to meet market requirements”. An optimum interaction between these three components can create value (Kannan 2003).

To this effect a balanced strategic focus on all three components of intellectual capital and the fostering of an organisational culture that promotes creativity and innovation at all levels of the organisation is required.

Today's organisations have to create their "Knowledge Base" to organize the information available and store their intelligence in order to be retrieved in support of the knowledge management process. This way individual knowledge fosters organisational knowledge and vice versa. New-age corporate bodies depend much more on information technology and "knowledge capital" rather than on tangible assets.

Consequently, a new branch of management study referred to as "Knowledge Management" has come into prominence as a result of such developments.

A quite similar approach to managing is suggested by *Kaplan's and Norton's Balanced Scorecard (2001)*. Their framework provides four dimensions to create value through the organisation's strategy: financial, customer, internal business process, and learning and growth. It is quite evident that great emphasis is given on intangible assets, namely intellectual capital.

Although knowledge seems to be a fuzzy concept concerned with human cognition and awareness, it has to be distinguished from learning, which concerns how organisations and individuals acquire, disseminate and deploy knowledge, and how cultural and technological forces can help or impede this process.

## 5 LEARNING ORGANISATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The significance of adjusting to continuous change and the pertinent needs of each epoch was underlined first by the ancient Greek pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, some 25 centuries ago. His ever lasting saying “*Ta panta rei*”, meaning that “*Everything is flowing*” and nothing is constant, reassures nowadays the imperative need for constant attention of rapid changes in every aspect of human life and activity and the necessity of utilization of the ever increasing knowledge.

Today answers to problems of yesterday cannot constitute any answer for problems of today. In the past the world of work was typically and in terms of time separated from learning, and that was very difficult to change. Any innovation, although useful for human life, it was the result of a radical change.

Today work and learning go together and constitute synergies to one another, since any work experience and problem solving constitute a unique opportunity for learning. At the same time learning can improve the quality of work and life.

Organisations of today face a major challenge: to learn fast, renew their methods of work and increase their efficiency in an environment of continuous change.

Changes of today cannot be measured in terms of years anymore but in terms of months. Any reengineering of organisations and any restructuring of the methods of work in general have to focus on fast communication of knowledge and the best utilization of the capabilities of organisations and their people to learn and work under team spirit and critical thinking. To this effect organisations should adopt the lesson derived from Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, who declared self awareness as the basis for learning as a lifelong process.

## **5.2 Historical Background**

The first efforts to approach learning through the world of work in a systematic way were made in the decade of 1950s via the concept of Systems Thinking. *Kreutzer (1994)* defines Systems Thinking as the framework for seeing relationship rather than the objects: Seeing the forest and not only single trees.

Systemic thinking constitutes the first attempt for considering individual needs and objectives of workers in defining the strategic policy of organisations.

The needs of human resource are equally important with the needs of the organisation. Consequently, one of the most important interests of managers is to become acquainted with both the needs of the organisation and the individual needs of the human resource.

One of the approaches applied within the framework of Systemic Thinking is the so called “Decision Support Systems” which aim at helping executive managers in decision making. Such systems helped managers in selecting the best solution among various alternatives.

One of the benefits derived through “Decision Support Systems” was the divulgence of knowledge as the means to improve communication and decision making within the organisation.

In the decade of 1970s this concept was renamed to “Organisational Learning”. One of the pioneer researchers in the field is the Harvard Professor *Chris Argyris (1974) (1978)*.

In the decade of 1980s particular emphasis started to be given to the factor “time” as a source of comparative advantage for organisations. This brought to light the need to consider the capabilities of human resource as a means to anticipate increasing competition. One of these capabilities is the competence to learn.

One of the contemporary gurus of Organisational Learning is *Peter Senge*. His book "*The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*" (1994) opened a new pace in the field of developing human competency in learning through learning communities.

*Senge* in an interview given in the Greek Newspaper *Vima* (the floor) suggests that learning is a natural process, which can proceed on the basis of existence of the right institutions. People gradually decrease their learning efforts due to the type of the organisation or the Institution in which they live and work.

The school, for example, is an institution, however, that promotes learning. The fact however, that school exerts control on learners creates constraints and reduce the power of learner to develop his/her competencies through the learning process. Such institutions exist in the world of work and in the society in general.

Furthermore, *Senge* underlines the importance of radical changes that should be made in organisations in terms of the learning process: Managers should get rid of understanding that their role is the one of "teacher" and giving orders, reprimanding and blaming workers, who undertakes the role of executing orders. In the contrary all people of the organisation should participate in the learning process, through exchanging ideas, since no one is the bearer of the whole truth on the mere fact that he/she possesses a particular position.

Many organisations adopted *Senge's* ideas and try to turn into Learning Organisations. A decisive factor to this effect is the organisational environment, both internally and externally. A convenient environment requires an optimum balance between changing forces and stability forces, between "the new" and "the old".

### **5.3 The Essence of the Learning Organisation**

*Senge (1994)* defined five disciplines as the core of learning organisation work:

Personal Mastery: This refers to learning that helps in expanding personal capacity to create desirable results, for all members of the organisation, and develop themselves toward the goals and purpose they choose.

Mental Models: Each person creates internal pictures of the world, which shape their actions and decisions. Reflecting upon mental models, continually clarifying and improving internal pictures contributes in personal and organisational learning and performance.

Shared Vision: Developing shared images of the future, and defining the principles and guiding practices by which we can achieve established goals creates group and organisational commitment.

Team Learning: It is the process of transforming conversational and collective thinking to intelligence greater than the sum of individual members' talents.

Systems Thinking: This is a way of thinking about and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the behaviour of systems. This discipline helps in seeing how to change the systems more effectively within the framework of the natural and economic world.

In a learning organisation a deep learning cycle is created. Team members develop new skills and capabilities which alter what they can do and understand. Skills and capabilities lead to awareness and sensibilities that lead to new attitudes and beliefs. Thus, an enduring change is occurred.

*Senge* suggests that learning is the result of continuous testing of experience, and the transformation of that experience into knowledge – accessible to the whole organisation, and relevant to its core purpose.

Based on how other people envisioned the Learning Organisation, the essence of Learning Organisation is heavily attributed on how people feel and act:

*a. People feel they are doing something that matters – to them personally and to the larger world.*

*b. Every individual in the organisation is somehow stretching, growing, or enhancing his capacity to create.*

- c. *People are more intelligent together than they are apart. If you want something really creative done, you ask a team to do it – instead of sending one person off to do it on his or her own.*
- d. *The organisation continually becomes more aware of its underlying knowledge base – particularly the store of tacit, unarticulated knowledge in the hearts and minds of employees.*
- e. *Visions of the direction of the enterprise emerge from all levels. The responsibility of top management is to manage the process whereby new emerging visions become shared visions.*
- f. *Employees are invited to learn what is going on at every level of the organisation, so they can understand how their actions influence others.*
- g. *People feel free to inquire about each others' (and their own) assumptions and biases. There are few (if any) sacred cows or undiscussable subjects.*
- h. *People treat each other as colleagues. There's a mutual respect and trust in the way they talk to each other, and work together, no matter what their positions may be.*
- i. *People feel free to try experiments, take risks, and openly assess the results. No one is killed for making a mistake.” ( p.51)*

Both hospitality schools and hospitality enterprises provide the framework for developing into learning organisations. It is the belief of the researcher that these organisations can capitalize on the concepts developed around the “Learning Organisation” since they are human intensive and human centred organisations. Therefore, such concepts, i.e. Knowledge Management, Knowledge Sharing, Systemic Thinking, have been utilized in the design and implementation of the research for all three groups involved, namely Faculty, Students, and Employers.

#### **5.4 Educational Institutions as Learning Organisations**

Educational Institutions provide a convenient framework for learning organisations to thrive, if all stakeholders consciously consider the educational setting as a system for learning how to learn and not for mere teaching.

In a learning institution all members see their roles as part of a system of a learning community, beyond the transaction between faculty and students, and feel committed to finding optimum solutions for today's problems and effective pathways into the future.

While there are a variety of issues and different interpretations of the role of a Learning Organisation, there is a consensus that economic, social and labour needs constitute the driving forces for new learning approaches, challenges, and adaptability to the changing needs of work.

The world of work is rapidly changing and employers become more and more demanding. They need to have graduates with flexibility, adaptability to the ever changing environment, with wider knowledge and higher level of skills and team spirit and ready to contribute to the corporate mission of their organisation.

The changing needs of the world of work provide the bedding soil for a variety of responses by educational institutions to take root in. Emphasis on individual learning styles, managing by facts and learning outcomes, curriculum reviews, revision of assessment methods, focus on the future, are within the sphere of rethinking the educational process. *Duckett (2002)* identifies two models of what constitutes a Learning Organisation. The first one is what *Hayes and Hillman (1995)* proposed in their National Commission Briefing Paper. This model suggests that learning organisations:

- anticipate future problems
- pay attention to the external environment;



- continuously seek improvement;
- approach problem solving through conceptual analysis and on an organisation – wide basis;
- reward initiative and creativity;
- define jobs to encourage risk-taking, exploration, initiative and knowledge sharing

The second model is proposed under the Investors in People (IiP, 1997), which is more functional and mechanistic and gives emphasis on “commitment, planning, action, and valuation”.

Learning organisations develop in social and economic contexts and set their priorities on the basis of networks required by the service societies. Such priorities aim at maximizing individual and collective capacity of staff, sharing knowledge and increase collective intelligence, mitigating boundaries and flattening structures, utilizing IT critically and learning how to learn.

Nevertheless, one of the most powerful tools of learning organisation is the dialogue.

Educational institutions capitalize on the above attributes of learning organisations. However, the most powerful instrument for educational institutions to become learning organisations is probably their research capacity. *Young (1996)* suggests that educational institutions have to incorporate research as a strategic part of their development.

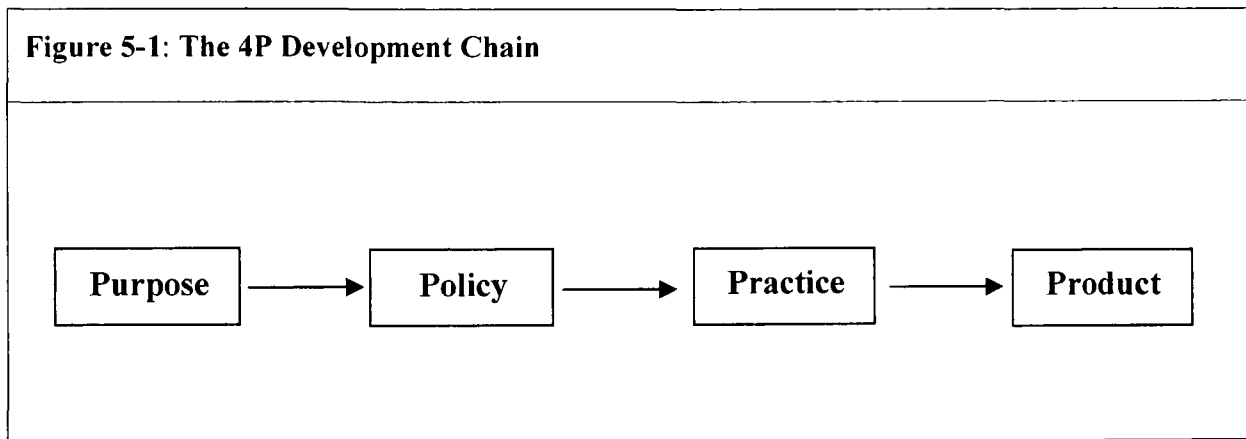
A high level of research capacity can serve as a catalyst towards problem solving, as a means for learning and sharing knowledge, participative decision making, and shifting emphasis from appraisal at the individual level to monitoring at the organisational level.

Appraisal systems play an important role in colleges as Learning Organisations as well. *Duckett (2002)* suggests that:

*“Each appraisal scheme should be tailored to suit both individual and institutional needs. Strategic planning, quality assurance and control*

*mechanisms, including course review and evaluation all need to have clearly defined relationships with the appraisal scheme.” (p.68)*

*Whitaker, (1998) suggests a 4P development chain as a driving force for learning organisations. (See figure 5.1)*



This chain is applicable in learning schools, where there is:

- *a preoccupation with purpose, with the forging of a deep understanding about why we do things. A strong sense of purpose is a prerequisite for any worthwhile activity*
- *a determination to articulate clear, ambitious but realistic policies that declare intentions and which make firm commitments to action*
- *a deep curiosity about practice with no methodology or technique being taken for granted. Teachers and pupils alike are constantly questioning the means by which the learning process is conducted and striving to gain insights and understandings about its elusive complexities*
- *a driving ambition about ends and about the nature and quality of the success and achievements of all. The outcomes of learning are seen not only as ends in themselves, but as significant staging posts in a much longer and more varied adventure.”*

*(Whitaker p.178)*

A learning school has to be geared to change and prepare people, both students and staff for the future. To this effect collaborative enquiry and reflective practice can help toward personal development and accomplishment of organisational goals.

## **6 ACTION LEARNING**

### **6.1 Introduction**

As the term suggests Action Learning is the process of learning whilst doing.

*Scowcroft (2001)* denotes that *Reginald Revans* is one of the pioneers of Action Learning. He considered that the practice of taught learning can be combined with real life experience and insights of people in their workplace. He believed that people have the innate power to solve their own problems, but common organisational cultures tended to label problem solving as the area of competence for managers or external consultants. He claimed via specific examples of solutions found by people facing the same problems, that such generated solutions not only were more practical than any previously offered by the formal decision makers, but that they possessed much higher levels of staff ownership and commitment.

In his development of Action Learning *Revans* confirms the theory developed through the Hawthorne experiments, which indicate the relationship between management's recognition of staff and subsequent productivity.

### **6.2 The Underpinning Theory**

*Revans (1998)* pointed out that, without learning there was no effective action and without action there was no effective learning.

The same symbiotic relationship between learning and action can be identified in *Kolb's* learning cycle. According to *Kolb* learning is a cyclical process which involves personal experience, reflection, theorizing or contextualising, and implementation leading back to experience.

*Revans* developed further the active dimension of the learning process, but not at the expense of what he described as programmed learning.

His formula  $[L = P + Q]$ , where L is learning, P is programmed input and Q is questioning, integrates two principal learning outcomes:

- (i) participants learn more about the issue at hand
- (ii) they learn about the process of learning

Such a learning process requires that people are actively engaged by asking questions of colleagues, developing and challenging ideas, trying out those ideas before returning to evaluate them.

The same approach is followed by *Argyris and Schon (1996)* in what they call “double loop learning”. Double-loop learning means learning that results in a change in the values of theory-in-use, as well as in its strategies and assumptions, whereas single-loop learning means instrumental learning that changes strategies of action or assumptions underlying strategies in ways that leave the values of theories of action unchanged.

They suggest that values may have been included in the organisation’s espoused theory of action but not in its theory-in use. Plans for increasing organisational effectiveness unavoidably have critical effect on double-loop changes in core values that govern theory-in-use for the conduct of organisational inquiry. Double-loop learning in organisational inquiry calls for additional steps questioning the reasons and motives behind facts, which means questioning one’s own assumptions and behaviour.

Distinguishing double-loop learning for organisational theory-in-use and double-loop learning in processes of organisational inquiry match the distinction between first – and second – order errors.

First-order errors are illustrated by excessive costs whereas second-order errors, such as failure to question existing practices, allow first-order errors to arise and persist.

Double-loop learning, in organisational inquiry consists of questioning, gathering information and reflection, that leads to identification of second-order errors. Such an approach leads to Active Learning that means change of values for inquiry.

The community of inquiry is the primary requirement for organisational learning.

*Dewey (1938) saw organisational inquiry*

*“When individuals inquire on behalf of the organisation, within a community of inquiry governed, formally or informally, by the roles and rules of the organisation”*

More than 24 centuries ago, *Plato* defined in his “*Symposion*” questioning as a tool for Active Learning.

He suggested that questioning aims at revealing the actual “*Morphe*” of objects.

Through dialogue, groups of people can identify the essence of objects, and consent on a common basis, that can aggregate all personal understandings in a hyper-ego sphere. Learning through dialogue becomes the common ownership and the binding link for an ideal “*Politeia*” (i.e. society).

### **6.3 The Basics for Action Learning**

*Scowcroft (2001)* identifies four basic requirements for the *Revan*’s theory for Action Learning:

- (a) More than one person with an interest in resolving an issue.
- (b) An issue (or issues) that had so far eluded swift resolution.
- (c) A commitment to the time and process.
- (d) Opportunities for implementation and review.

#### **6.3.1 The People**

Since dialogue and questioning are the tools that reveal underlying situations and provide fresh insight, is difficult for one person to engage in Action Learning in their own. Action Learning is the result of a conscious effort of a group of people having some common bond, i.e. job type, membership of a programme, facing similar scenarios and challenges etc.

### 6.3.2 The Issue(s)

Not any issue can be considered as suitable for Action Learning. The primary motivation for people to be involved in any process is to develop thinking and resolve the issue at stake. To the effect of Action Learning the problem has to be real, and not made for the sake of contributing, of concern to all members of the group, and of present hurting. The existing situation has to be of not a palatable option, and participants have to be encouraged to try new ideas in their workplace.

### 6.3.3 Time and Process

Active Learning is a time consuming process.

Bringing a problem to a group, explaining it to the members of the group, understanding the issue at stake, allowing questioning and reflection, exploring new ideas and reaching consensus requires time. The fact that time consumption for problem solving seems to be at the expense of working time and does not match the perceptions prevailing in the work environment tends to jeopardize the learning process. The most common error is to try to accelerate the process that means mitigating the benefits of Dialogue for Active Learning.

Dialogue has its origin in the Greek ancient philosophy of *Plato* and *Socrates*, namely “*dia-logos*” meaning “to hang from” whereas debate means “to beat down”. Dialogue is very crucial for Action Learning, since it gives the opportunity to respect, weigh up, question, and apply different contributions by allowing them to hang.

*Isaacs (1998)* suggests that:

*“Dialogue is not merely a set of techniques for improving organisations, enhancing communications, building consensus, or solving problems. It is based on the principle that conception and implementation are intimately linked, with a core of common meaning. During the dialogue process, people learn how to think together – not just in the sense of analyzing a shared problem or creating new pieces of shared knowledge, but in the sense of occupying a collective sensibility, in which the thoughts, emotions, and*

*resulting actions belong not to the individual, but to all of them together.”*  
*(In Senge p.358)*

The challenge for an Action Learning process is to allow dialogue to prevail and give time to the process to be fulfilled.

### **6.3.4 Opportunities for Implementation and Review**

Considering an issue is not enough for Action Learning. New insights and approaches gained from the dialogue have to be tried out, and the experiences have to be brought back to the group for review.

## **6.4 Key Features of Action Learning**

All definitions of Action Learning assign a vital role to the process of group tackling real work challenges, learning from experience through reflection, generating new ideas and creating new insights.

The Learning Equation of Revans  $L = P + Q$  is very suggestive in searching the unfamiliar in conditions of ignorance, risk, and confusion besides the Programmed Learning which is the stuff of traditional instruction.

*Revans (1998)* defines twenty inalienable assumptions of Action Learning programmes, which are set below:

(i) **Learning is Cradled in the Task**

While managers make up their minds about what to do and settle for doing it Action Learning is cradled in the very task itself. It is achieved by “asking whether that task can be done so that, merely by reflecting upon how it currently seems to be done, the very doing of it supplies the learning generally offered far from the scenes of managerial activity”.

(ii) **Formal Instruction is not Sufficient**

Action Learning does not neglect formal instruction (P). Such instruction aims at imparting existing knowledge and examining, through formal

examination, how much has been imparted. Programmed instruction cannot itself stimulate questioning the unknown. This gap is filled by insightful questions (Q) “in other fields’ altogether, of which some may be so ill-defined as to suggest, at the outset, no branch of programmed knowledge worth exploring.

Insight is the indispensable supplement of programmed knowledge, which cannot be applied until insightful questions can fulfil it.

(iii) **Problems Require Insightful Questions**

Traditional instruction (P) prepares for known solutions even it is difficult to find them. Action Learning on the other hand deals with the resolution of problems and capitalizes on new opportunities, about which no single code of programmed instruction can suggest specific course of action. Therefore exploratory insight is required; whatever the way managers tackle the problem.

(iv) **Learning Involves Doing**

Getting something done is different from talking about getting it done. Very often this difference is overlooked. Specifying the solution is not enough. The ability to carry out solutions of specific problems is a prerequisite for managerial learning.

Talking about solutions i.e. issuing instructions, agreement on specific ways of action, approval of measures, interim proposals and so forth, is not enough. Managers must be able to effectuate ways of resolving difficulties.

(v) **Learning is Voluntary**

Any person, whatever the position they possess in an organisation cannot learn unless they wish to do so. The best motivation for any employee is whether they are interested in doing a specific job.



Therefore, assigning the right job to the right person is a real challenge for managers, who must base their learning policy on a volunteer fellowship approach. In case some members of the organisation do not share vision and learning philosophy, the best way to help them in changing their attitude is not to establish regulations, but to create “beacons” that can attract them.

(vi) **Urgent Problems or Enticing Opportunities Provide the Spur for Learning**

Urgent problems and/or enticing situations can create challenges for Active Learning. The menace for losing control or the temptation of being pioneer can create an inquiry spirit, which leads to learning.

(vii) **Action and Feedback**

In learning new behaviours problems have to be tackled and actions have to be taken. In any system, learning can be achieved if feedback is received for the result or consequences of action taken.

(viii) **The Risk Imperative**

Tackling problems or exploring opportunities carry significant risk of penalty for failure. Failure as such is a penalty for the one who have failed. Nevertheless, failure can contribute in Learning, if the “Whys” of failure can be investigated.

(ix) **Learning as Re-Interpreting Past Experience**

New knowledge cannot contribute in lasting behavioural change. Reinterpreting past experience can help in changing behaviour that means: Learning.

(x) **The Contribution of Peers**

Active Learning is achieved through team work. Managers prefer to review and reinterpreted experience through exchanges with other

managers. This is due to the fact that managers feel that other managers are exposed to real risk as they do in responsible action.

(xi) **Sets are of Central Importance**

During execution of real life activities managers learn to give and accept from other manager's criticism, advice and support. Set's role remain important for reporting, analyzing and planning of real time. Action is taken by participants and a set has a role if discussions are based on the verifiable evidence of deliberated achievement.

(xii) **The Source of Expertise**

Expertise in Action Learning is sought from other participants. Such expert advice represents programmed knowledge (P). However, the participants who provide (P) are primarily interested to develop their own questioning insight (Q). This way (exchange P and Q among the participants) excludes external expertise, which is ambiguous, opinionative and reactionary.

(xiii) **The Role of Management Teachers**

The responsibility of management teachers in the development of Action Learning is to contrive with managers and co-workers of managers the conditions in which they can learn through the exchange of (P) and (Q). Participating in Action Learning sets is the mere way for Management Teachers to contribute in the development of Action Learning.

(xiv) **Learning With and From Each Other**

By tackling the design, introduction, conduct and review of Action Learning programmes, and by regular participation in Action Learning sets, management teachers can learn together with managers or other teachers. This is an Action Learning of the second order that is to improve Action Learning.

(xv) **The Role of Facilitator**

The Facilitator of the Action Learning set should form some supernumerary to speed the integration of the set and achieve independence of them. Substantive members of the set should discuss with supernumerary ways to contrive independence.

(xvi) **Learning is Measured by the Results of Action**

Only continuous comparison of expectations or prediction of outcomes with actual results can help participants of sets in identifying the nature of their learning.

(xvii) **Fresh Questions**

The essence of Action Learning is to pose increasingly insightful questions from an origin of ignorance, risk, and confusion. This is encouraged by the mere fact that no one member of the set can have a preconceived line to tackle the problem.

(xviii) **The Cycle of Action Learning and Research**

Action Learning consists of three stages: (a) deciding, (b) learning, and (c) advising. All three are aspects of the same essential and logical process, which coincides with the scientific method (observation, provisional hypothesis, trial, audit and review).

“Decision” comprises survey, first decision, pilot run, evaluation and final decision.

“Learning” comprises awareness of ignorance, new idea, taking a chance, watching effect, remembering for next time.

“Advising” comprises admission of need, choice of counsel, test of confidence by action, estimate of outcome, confirmation or rejection of counsel.

The above cyclical nature of Action Learning and Research shows the coexistence of the two: “There can be no action without learning and no learning without action.

(xix) **The Multiplier Effect**

Action learning programmes causes not only the set members to learn but also those in the fields of the projects upon which the substantive members are engaged.

(xx) **The objectives of Action Learning**

Action Learning has three major objectives as follows:

1. To tackle problems of the real world.
2. To give managers and other people of the organisation sustain scope to learn for themselves how best to approach ill-structured challenges to which nobody can, at the outset, suggest any satisfactory response.
3. To encourage teachers and others in management development to perceive their mission afresh.

Each one of the objectives of Action Learning is an indispensable supplement of its two counterparts.

The three objectives are to Action Learning what the three sides are to a triangle:

*“Essential to its character and incompatible with the suggestion that any one of them can be greater than the sum of the other two”*

As mentioned before (point xviii, the Cycle of Action Learning and Research), learning, advising and deciding, the three components of Action Learning, are assimilating the so called scientific method.

Action Learning is the model in which three levels of action are involved, which corresponds to first, second and third person (in the grammatical sense):

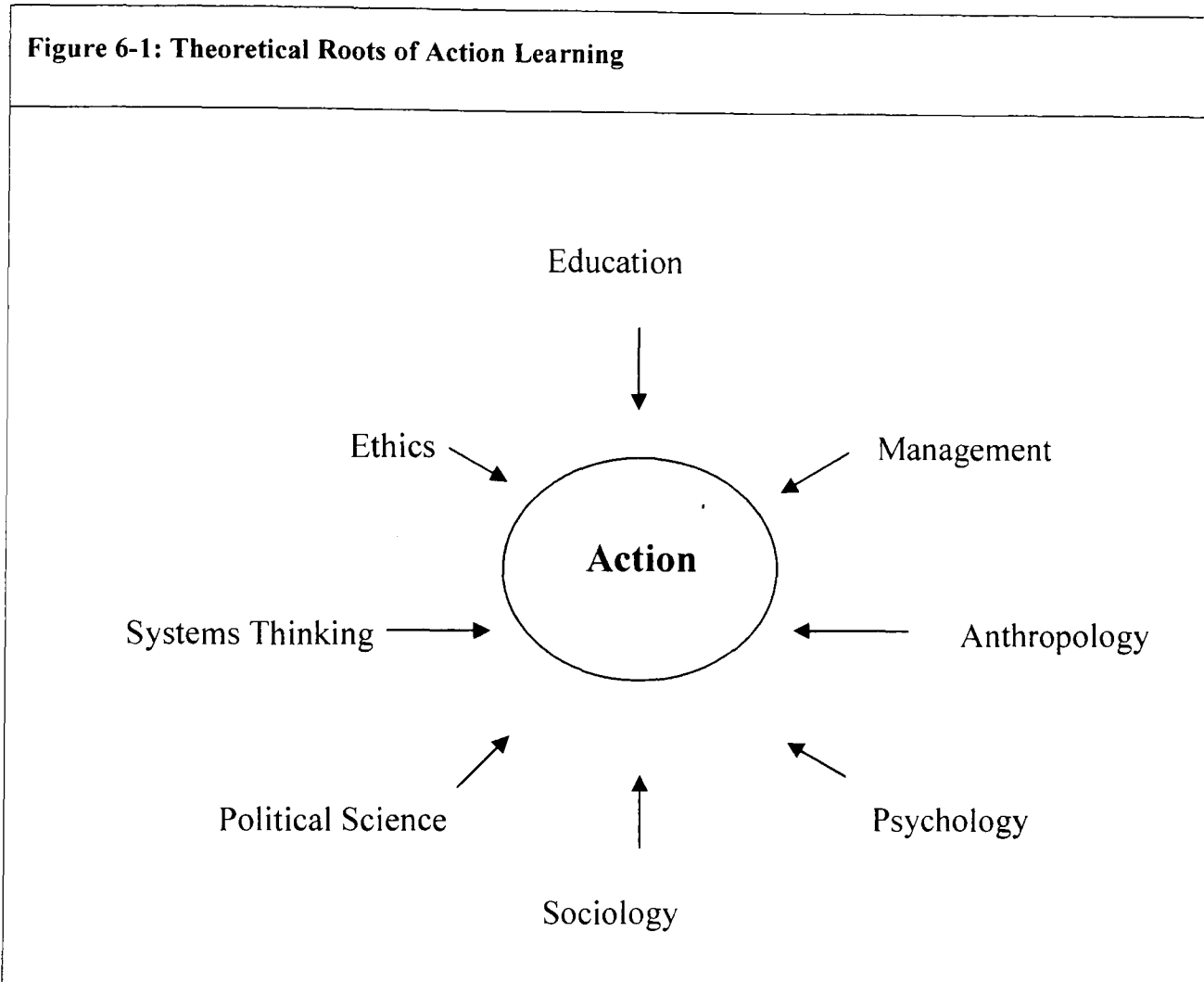
- Person(s) speaking
- Person(s) spoken to, and
- Person(s) or thing(s) spoken about

This model of self awareness, (first person), awareness of companions (second person) and awareness of third parties or external world (third person) can be used as a tool for Learning and Influence.

### ***6.5 Why Organisations Use Action Learning***

The great power of Action Learning is attributed to its ability to integrate theories and practices of several disciplines such as Education, Psychology, Management, Systems Thinking, Political Sciences, Ethics, Anthropology and Sociology.

*Marquardt (1999)* presents this integrating power of Action Learning in Figure 6.1



Action Learning is a key that helps both individuals and organisations to anticipate change and survive.

*Williams (2002)* identifies a series of nine benefits for the individual and a series of eight benefits for the organisation.

### 6.5.1 Benefits for the Individual

- Greater breadth in understanding the organisation as a basis for building relationships across the organisation or department and taking action
- More ability to analyse ambiguous data and solve complex problems
- Enhanced capacity to understand and initiate organisational changes

- Increased focus on what makes a difference in a situation
- Being more action focused and proactive in delivering results
- Greater effectiveness in communicating proposals to senior managers
- Enhanced self awareness and appreciation of personal impact on others, contributing to improved ability to work with others in teams
- Developed flexibility in responding to changing situations and adapting a more flexible range of behaviour
- Shared knowledge and learning from wider range of colleagues.

### **6.5.2 Benefits for the Organisation**

The main outcomes of action learning from an organisational perspective are:

- Action learning offers an integrated path to personal and organisational learning at as fast a rate as the changes in the outside world
- Enables effective action to be taken to creatively resolve difficult problems, to do things differently and continuously improve
- Enables senior managers to delegate problems to sets and to offer feedback or even to mentor set members
- Encourages effective teamwork and inter departmental co-operation
- Develops leaders with a flexible, entrepreneurial approach
- Focuses the energies and sustains the motivation of committed people
- Links learning with work-related issues and complements coaching, skills workshops and other developmental approaches
- Improves moral via participation in resolving organisational issues.

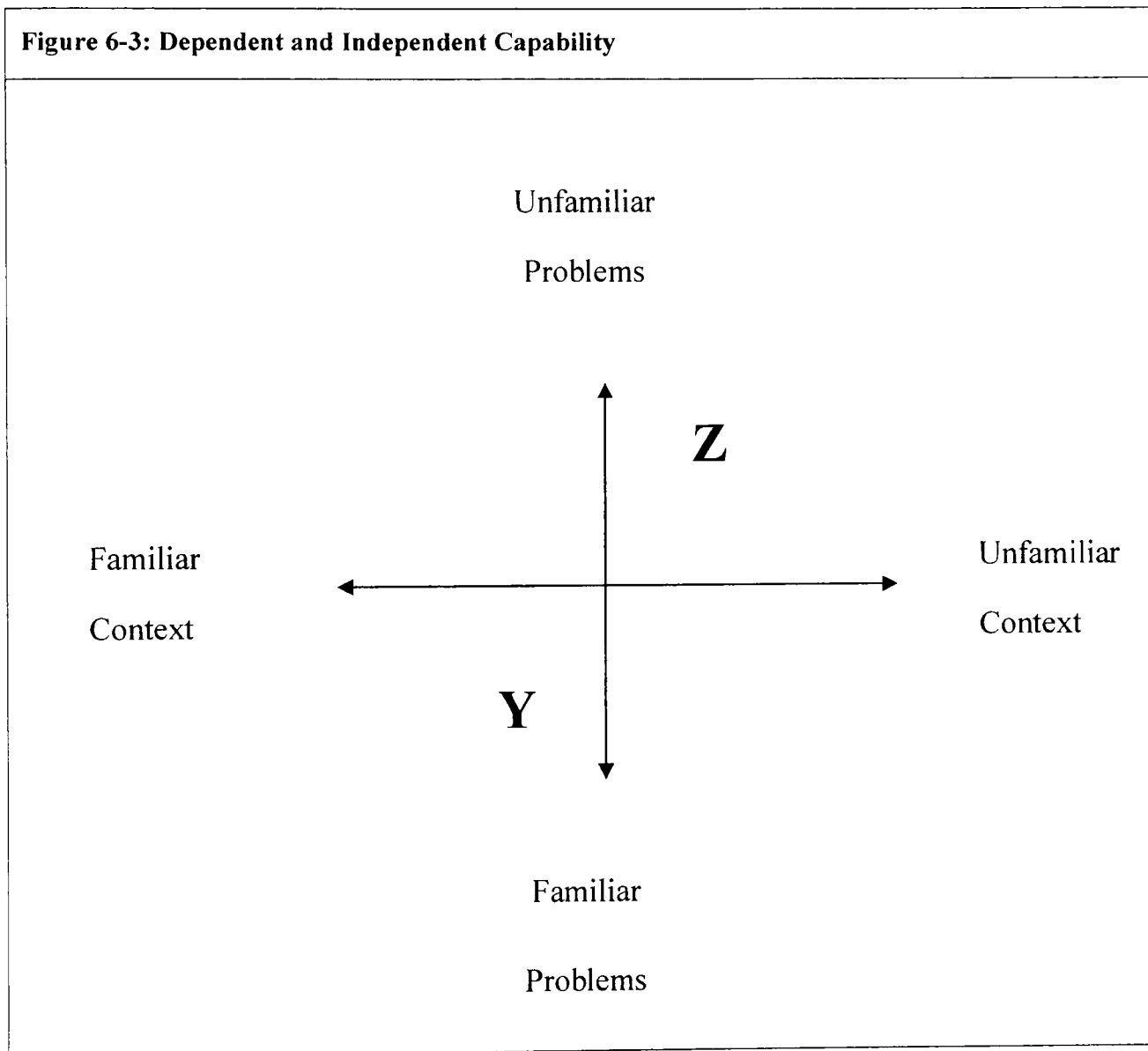
Organisations use Action Learning mostly to solve problems in a familiar work environment.

*Marquardt (1999)* defines four quadrants and suggests that in each one of them Action Learning can be employed and operate. (Figure 6.2)

		<b>SETTING</b>	
		<b>Familiar</b>	<b>Unfamiliar</b>
<b>PROBLEM</b>	<b>Familiar</b>	<b>1</b> Example: Own job	<b>3</b> Example: London hospitals
	<b>Unfamiliar</b>	<b>2</b> Example: New job in own organisation	<b>4</b> Example: Belgium program GE leadership



*Stephenson and Yorke (1998)* suggest a similar figure with four different situations in which four different degrees of independence can be identified in terms of behaviour in a changing environment. (Figure 6.3)



Most people, for much of their time operate in position Y with familiar problems in a familiar context, which result in familiar solutions. In position Z there is less familiarity with the context and no previous experience with the faced problems. In position Z much more responsibility has to be undertaken, much more synergies have to be developed and much more Active Learning can be achieved.

## **7 METHODOLOGY**

### ***7.1 Aims and Objectives***

**The aim of the project is the development of a learning model for quality in hospitality education with special reference to the Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus (HHIC).** Such a model would help HHIC to develop the capabilities of a learning organisation and provide quality educational services through continuous learning evaluation.

In the light of the previous chapters, the objectives of the methodology are formulated as follows:

- (a) Provide a model that is able to: Continuously seek improvement
- (b) Encourage systemic thinking within an amalgamated external and internal environment
- (c) Encourage knowledge sharing within the organisation and between the organisation and the hospitality industry
- (d) Anticipate present and future problems
- (e) Approach problem solving through conceptual analysis on an organisation – wide basis

These objectives have been pursued in the light of the decision to employ an entirely qualitative paradigm.

### ***7.2 The Research Framework***

#### **7.2.1 Introduction**

The research question emanated out of the general case of quality movement in education and the challenges that educational institutions, such as schools, colleges, and universities, face in today's competitive environment. (See Chapter 1)

In this respect, the starting point was the general view that hospitality education is a field which deserves further attention as it provides the staff for the hospitality industry, currently accounting for 12% of global consumer spending. In many countries, such as for example in the Mediterranean area, where this research is focused hospitality industry contributes a great proportion to the GNP.

The major task of the research is to identify as many parameters as possible which affect the quality of educational services. In addition, the study seeks to capture the perceptions of three main stake-holders of hospitality education, namely students, faculty, and employers on the educational services provided by the Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus, and identify areas for improvement. Finally, the methodology aims at identifying those parameters which can be incorporated in a conceptual model for a longitudinal quality assurance for hospitality education.

## **7.2.2 Development of the Research Instrument**

### **7.2.2.1 A Critical Analysis of the Literature, with Particular Reference to Application in an Educational Context.**

With the aim of summarizing the existing body of knowledge in the field, a literature review was carried out. The focus of the literature review was on four broad areas as follows: (i) Quality movement in Education (see Chapters 2 and 3), (ii) Knowledge Management (see Chapter 4), (iii) Learning organisations (see Chapter 5) and (iv) Action Learning (see Chapter 6).

The principal task of the literature review, presented earlier in Chapters 2 through 6, was to provide the reader with basic information on the quality movement in education as a type of service and the application of concepts developed in the private sector with special reference to hospitality education. Furthermore, the literature review aimed at bringing to the attention of the reader, literature on Learning Organisations and Action Learning as two correlated but distinguished methods of longitudinal management for quality. In addition to the general literature review, descriptive information and secondary data were gathered to help the reader to grasp the existing situation in the hospitality industry and hospitality education in Cyprus.

The four areas for literature review have been selected on the assumption that the theory developed in the field and the prevailing values can provide creative thinking for the development of the research tools, and the pursuance of the research. The rationale for the literature review also relates to the objectives of the project. (See Paragraph 7.1 in Chapter 7. Methodology).

Although the improvement of quality in the educational setting has received much attention, no formal approach exists on how to actually apply the TQM principles and concepts to improve the quality of services of educational institutions.

Among the main objectives of the researcher was the quest for established instruments for applying TQM in education.

**The TedQual Certification System (WTO 1997) and Baldrige Education Criteria (The Baldrige National Quality Program 2002) are successful tools that provide a structured framework for Total Quality Management and improving quality in educational settings.**

Given the fact that the aim of the project is the development of a learning model for quality in hospitality education, a thorough study of the TedQual Certification System provided detailed information on how the concepts of quality management, such as customer satisfaction and competitiveness can be applied in tourism and hospitality education as such.

The TedQual was developed by the World Tourism Organisation in 1997 with the aim of establishing a quality assurance model through voluntary standardization of tourism education and training systems, and facilitating the way towards greater pedagogic productivity and efficiency in tourism. **Although it is a relatively new model the TedQual is gradually being applied by several educational institutions all over the world, since it is based on specific concepts and methodology that incorporates tourism education in the wider framework of the tourism industry, economy and society.** This system provides a preventive mechanism to eliminate the possibility of error, since it takes into account both the internal and external aspect of the service process with the aim of meeting the expectations of the final consumer.

**The rationale for examining the TedQual system is based on the instrumental objectives facilitated through the model such as:**

- The analysis of different processes that constitute the production of the educational service.
- The creation of culture towards a uniform and reliable service.
- The common understanding that all members of the educational institution play an important role in achieving final results.
- The improvement of management efficiency, with the student being the key point of reference.
- The upgrading of internal communication between the different levels of the Institution.
- The fostering of excellent working environment, so that people involved in the educational process gain satisfaction and enjoy trust and pride in their work.
- The efficient integration of new people joining the educational institution.
- The establishment of a mechanism to assist continuously the improvement of relevant processes.

**All the above mentioned instrumental objectives provided through the TedQual system serve the aim and objectives of the project as they are presented in Chapter 7, paragraph 7.1.**

**The same objectives of the project are served through the enlightenment provided by the Baldrige Education Criteria as well.** Although from a wider perspective, the framework provided through the Baldrige Education Criteria is a valuable tool for both sizeable and large educational institutions to assess performance on specific key indicators: student learning, student and stakeholder satisfaction, education design and delivery, financial, faculty and staff development and well being.

The scope of the criteria coincide primarily with the set objectives of the project, while the core values and concepts, i.e. visionary leadership, learning-centered education, organizational and personal learning, valuing faculty, staff and partners, agility, focus on future, innovation, results, and public responsibility and alignment

via a systems perspective provide enlightenment for the development of the final product of the project, namely the Manual: “Quality Assurance System for Hospitality Education”.

**Knowledge Management** (Argyris 1985; Kolb et al 1995; Hope and Hope 1997; Kannan 2003) is the second area examined in the literature review. Managers and organizations assign nowadays a primary role in Knowledge, Learning, both Individual Learning and Organisational Learning, as well as Knowledge Management for the success of their business. Knowledge, either explicit or tacit knowledge, is the fruit of the learning process, it is an invaluable asset and as such has to be managed.

**The title of the project: “Achieving Excellence through Organisational Learning” suggests that reviewing how people learn both at the individual and the organizational level and how the outcome of learning, can be managed is imperative for the purpose of the project. Therefore, Knowledge Management is an important concern, and Knowledge is an invaluable intellectual asset for both hospitality organisations and educational settings.**

To this effect adult learning, and experiential learning have been studied, as tools that fit to organizational environment, in which adults are employed. This notion is also valid for hospitality students who are adults as well. Further more, the review of Knowledge Management helped the researcher in establishing understanding of concepts and the value of Knowledge as intellectual asset. That was very contributory in designing the research instruments for all three groups of customers. i.e. students, employers, and faculty, and analysing the data collected.

The third area of study in the literature review covers **Learning Organisations (Senge 1994)**. Why Studying Learning Organisations? Both hospitality schools and hospitality enterprises provide the framework for developing into learning organizations. These organizations can capitalize on the concepts developed around the “Learning Organisation” since they are human intensive and human centred organisations. Therefore, such concepts, i.e. knowledge management, Knowledge Sharing, Systemic Thinking, People Focus, Personal Mastery, Self Awareness, Team Learning and Shared Vision, have been utilized in the design and implementation of

the research for all three groups involved, namely Faculty, Students, and Employers. These concepts proved also very helpful in analysing the data collected and developing the Quality Manual.

**Action Learning (Revans 1998)** is the last section of literature review. The perspective to capitalize on the symbiotic relationship between Learning and Action towards achieving excellence constitutes the rationale for reviewing this area of literature. The project aims at a learning model for quality in hospitality education. This model has to continuously seek improvement, anticipate present and future problems and bring change on a longitudinal basis. Improving quality means to bring change, and change can be brought if people can question the reasons and motives behind facts, which means questioning one's own assumptions and behaviour. Therefore, prevailing values can change, through Action Learning since people learn not only about the issue at hand but about the process of learning as such.

**All four areas of literature review, Quality Movement in Education, Knowledge Management, Learning Organisations and Action Learning, provide together a framework for both quality assurance and learning reinforcement via knowledge production in parallel to knowledge sharing and teaching in the educational context.**

#### **7.2.2.2. The Qualitative – Quantitative Difference**

The issue of qualitative – quantitative difference has been argued in many places.

*(Anderson 1986, Borman et al. 1986, Brown and Sime 1982, Bryman 1984, Cronbach 1975, Deshpande 1983, Harre 1981, Morgan and Smirchich 1980, Ratcliffe 1983, Smith and Heshusius 1986).*

*Mc Cracken (1988)* defines the way each tradition treats its analytic categories as the most striking difference between the two paradigms. In quantitative paradigms categories are defined before the study is undertaken and the relationship between categories is determined with as great precision as possible. On the other hand in qualitative paradigms categories are defined during the research process.

Since the qualitative paradigm is followed for this project, most of the questions and/or issues rose up in the Focus Groups discussions and the long interviews are open ended questions, which are appropriate for qualitative techniques.

It is clear for this project that qualitative and quantitative approaches are not a substitute for one another. There is no such an intention to draw quantitative conclusions from the qualitative work done for the project and the research will not quantify responses and data or ideas obtained through focus groups or interviews. The ultimate task was to obtain ideas and proposals from people who are heavily involved in the process of hospitality education as a provider of well educated human resource to the hospitality industry, and utilize all these ideas and proposals in developing a quality framework in a specific educational environment. Most probably, such a quality framework can be used as an input for quality improvements not only in the specific environment for which it was created, but in other educational settings as well. This is due to the wide applicability of dimensions of quality, and not necessarily to the generalizability of the data obtained through the qualitative approach used for this project.

Therefore, the final product of the project, namely the Quality Manual can be used as a quality guide for educational institutions other than the one it refers to.

#### **7.2.2.3. The Rationale for the Overarching Research Approach**

The issues associated with the methodology relative to the defined objectives as they are presented in paragraph 7.1 are summarised below:

- (a) There is an issue of identification of what changes are needed, if any, towards improving quality
- (b) The degree to which any proposals made or ideas expressed are attributed to the perception of quality or to any individual demands
- (c) The assumption of this study that participants can conceptualise Total Quality concepts
- (d) What is perceived as an aggregate level of abstraction can be best recalled by reflective methodology



The above issues raise the question whether the quantitative paradigm or the qualitative one should be followed for the project. The aim of the project is directly related with organisational change and the change cannot take place in one short measure. Improvement should be based on a continuous effort and quality assurance should serve a longitudinal perspective. To this effect an effort has been made to identify as many parameters as possible affecting the quality of educational services, starting with the very first step of strategic selection of candidate hospitality students and aiming at a quality of excellence at the moment of truth between the hospitality service provider and the receiver. Therefore, the qualitative paradigm has been followed for the project.

**The various types of research methodologies typically utilized in social sciences along with the pros and cons associate with each, i.e. Surveys, Case Research, Action Research (AR) and Modelling and Simulation are discussed in detail in a special issue on research methodology in operations management of the International Journal of Operations & Production Management (Forza, Voss et al, Coughlan and Coughlan, and Bertrand and Fransoo 2002).**

For the purpose of this study the AR method had been selected as appropriate for the following reasons: It is a research in action, rather than research about action; it is participative and concurrent with action and follows a sequence of events and an approach to problem solving. (*Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002*).

**However, only the first two stages of AR were adopted, namely the problem definition and design intervention stages (Coughland and Coughlan 2002). This was mainly due to the fact that the capacity of the researcher as the Director of the Institute would create ethical dilemmas for both the researcher and the participants in the Action Research.**

Although the final product of the research is definitely for the benefit of the Institute and the hospitality education and hospitality industry in general, the fact that the same product will be used in pursuance of a Doctorate qualification by the researcher may create doubts and even negative feelings and/or attitudes among the participants about the legitimacy of the methodology.

Another limitation inherent in Action Research is the fact that the researcher, already being a part of the system under research, has to be engaged in all stages of the AR. This two-fold capacity of the researcher creates a major threat for impartiality and the validity of AR (*Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002*). The same happens with other key persons of the organisation, who play an important role in the overall system.

**As such, the data gathering process adopted a survey approach, following the steps discussed in Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991). Overall, however, the methodology adopted in this study remained in the qualitative sphere of research. This was made in full awareness of limitations of the Survey approach i.e. sampling error, measurement error, statistical conclusion error and internal validity error. (Forza 2002).**

### **7.3 Data Collection Methods**

Two types of methods have been used for collecting the information needed to study the factors affecting the quality in hospitality education and identify the parameters which can be used as the guidelines for developing a quality assurance system.

The first instrument used is Focus Groups (FG) and the second one Long Interviews. Focus Groups were employed to collect data from Faculty and Students, whereas Long Interviews have been conducted with hospitality employers and/or hospitality professionals.

The rationale for using these methods comprises the following factors:

- The access provided to the researcher to critical groups of people, i.e. faculty, students and hospitality employers, due to its capacity as the Director of a primary hospitality educational institution. This provided efficiency in data collection.
- The heavy involvement of the above groups in the process of hospitality education and hospitality industry. This served validity.
- Participants in Focus Groups and Interviews have been selected in such a way, so that they can represent a wide spectrum of people in the field. This served validity as well.

- The wide applicability of dimensions of quality helped in both designing the research instruments and applying the derived lessons from all three groups involved in the research process in producing a quality assurance model.
- The qualitative data collected can be represented by perceptual and attitudinal dimensions and real life events.
- Pilot studies have been made, to serve reliability.
- The interaction developed in Focus Groups and the narration provided through Long Interviews produced vast amounts of data.
- The analysis of data has been made under the critical spectrum, of the literature review which includes established instruments like TedQual and Baldrige Education Criteria.

A detailed analysis of the research instruments employed for the research i.e. Focus Groups and Long Interviews is presented in Paragraphs 7.3.1 and 7.3.2, respectively.

### **7.3.1 Focus Groups**

Focus groups provide a rich and detailed set of data about perceptions, thoughts, feelings and impressions of group members in the members' own words. Focus groups are a flexible research tool: discussions can vary from very general to very specific; from highly structured to quite unstructured; they can also be adapted to obtain information about almost any topic in a wide array of setting and from different types of individuals.

A critical issue in qualitative paradigms is whether the researcher affects the final product, namely the data collected through qualitative techniques. *Krippendorff (1980)* distinguished between "emic" and "etic" data. *Stewar and Shamdasani (1988)* define "emic" and "etic" data as follows:

*"Emic data are data that arise in a natural of indigenous form. They are only minimally imposed by the researcher or the research setting. Etic data, on the other hand, represent the researcher's imposed view of the situation. Little of the research that is actually carried out can be described as completely etic or completely emic. Even the most structured type of research will be influenced to some extent by the idiosyncratic nature of the respondent*

*and his or her environment. On the other hand, even the most natural of situations may not yield data that are completely emic, because the researcher must make decisions about what to attend to and what to ignore. Thus it is perhaps more useful to think of a continuum of research, with some methods lying closer to the emic side of the continuum and some techniques lying closer to the etic side."*

The decision to use Focus Groups was based on the fact that the spontaneous and collective interaction of group members often produces insights that cannot be obtained in individual surveys, structured interviews, and/or experiments. Surveys and experiments tend to provide feedback about the world or specific phenomena as conceptualised by the researcher. This etic approach is quite useful, but such conceptualisation may be at variance with the way individual respondents conceptualise the world. On the other hand, focus groups are designed to help understand how individuals conceptualise and categorise phenomena. As such, the data generated by focus groups are more emic than etic. Much of the power of the focus group as a method of inquiry grows from the spontaneity and synergy of the group dynamic. The discussion in focus groups depends on both the individuals that make up the groups and the dynamics of the group as a whole, a characteristic that no other research method portrays.

Whatever the reasons behind the decision of other researchers to opt for adopting stereotypical research methods, it is the belief of the researcher that focus groups constitute an effective means for exploring the way faculty and students think and talk about quality in hospitality education, for generating ideas, and diagnostic information.

Focus groups are used widely because they provide useful information and offer the researcher a number of advantages. This information and the advantages of the technique come at a price, however. (*Stewart and Shamdasani 1990*). The relative advantages and disadvantages of focus groups are summarized below:

### 7.3.1.1 Advantages of Focus Groups

Focus groups provide a number of advantages to the study, relative to other types of research:

- (a) Data from a group of people can be provided much more quickly and at a less cost than would be the case if the data were collected through individual interviews.
- (b) A direct interaction between the researcher and respondents is allowed, so that opportunities for clarification of responses, for follow-up questions, and for probing of responses are provided. In addition the researcher can capitalize on non verbal responses and overall body language.
- (c) The open response format of focus groups provides the opportunity to obtain large and rich amounts of data in the respondent's own words. Beyond that, the researcher can obtain deeper levels of meaning, make important connections, and identify subtle nuances in expression and meaning.
- (d) A synergistic effect of the group setting is resulted throughout reacting and building upon the response of each other group members. This effect can help the researcher in gathering data and or ideas which cannot be collected through individual interviews.
- (e) Focus groups are flexible and they can be used to examine a wide range of topics with a variety of individuals and in a variety of settings.
- (f) The results of focus groups are easy to understand because researchers can easily understand the verbal responses of most respondents, whereas this is not always the case with more sophisticated survey research that employs complex statistical analysis.

### **7.3.1.2 Limitations of Focus Groups**

Having their limitations, Focus Groups are not a panacea for all research needs. Many of their limitations are simply the negative sides of the advantages listed above.

- (a) The small number of respondents that participate even in several different focus groups and the convenience nature of most focus group recruiting practices, significantly limit generalization to a larger population.
- (b) The interaction of respondents with one another and with the researcher has two undesirable effects. First, the responses from members of the group are not independent of one another, which restrict the generalizability of results. Second, the results obtained in a focus group may be biased by a very dominant or opinionated member. More reserved group members may be hesitant to talk.
- (c) The “live” and immediate nature of the interaction may lead a researcher or decision maker to place greater faith in the findings that is actually warranted. There is certain credibility attached to the opinion of a live respondent that is often not present in statistical summaries.
- (d) The open-ended nature of responses obtained in focus groups often makes summarization and interpretation of results difficult.
- (e) The moderator may bias results by knowingly or unknowingly providing cues about what type of responses and answers are desirable.

Bearing in mind the advantages and disadvantages of focus groups as they have been presented above, this research aims to gather data from groups of people who are directly involved in the field of hospitality education, namely students and faculty.

### **7.3.1.3 Data Collection Technique through Focus Groups**

A critical issue for a qualitative survey is that of sampling, which requires a much more different mindset than for quantitative studies. It is a difficult issue, since very often the term is associated with logic derived from the general laws of statistics and

probability. Qualitative data, on the other hand, can be represented by perceptual and attitudinal dimensions and real life events not readily converted to numerical values.

For the purpose of this study, the following aspects in implementing the collection of data through Focus Groups have to be considered.

#### **7.3.1.4 Size of FG, selection of Participants and duration of Discussion**

The composition of FG was set at an optimum number of 7. Participants for Faculty FG were selected from all subject areas of HHIC Faculty. Two participants came from hospitality departments of private colleges. Participants of student FG came from the main educational programmes of HHIC, namely Hotel & Catering Management and Culinary Arts.

The duration of the group discussion was set at a minimum of 60 minutes to a maximum of 100 minutes, however, up to two hours were allowed to accommodate disruptions of the group dynamics.

#### **7.3.1.5 Venue and Language**

A small meeting room at HHIC was selected as the location for conducting F.G. discussions. The prerequisite was to get small, comfortable, quiet and cosy rooms. Facilities for audio-taping were also utilized and all discussion groups were recorded on audiotapes.

All discussions were conducted in the native language (Greek). The audiotapes with the discussions were then transcribed and on the context of the transcript the analysis has been made.

#### **7.3.1.6 Moderating the Group/Managing the Discussion**

The following guidelines were set to facilitate the management of the discussion:

- (a) The moderator introduced the topic in a fairly general manner so as participants might not be able to follow the researchers own thinking on the topic. The moderator admitted that as a researcher wanted to learn from the participants.
- (b) The moderator made all efforts to avoid side conversations, dominating the discussion, and secure participation of everyone.
- (c) The moderator called participants to give a brief self-introduction, and help to deter “group think”, i.e., the tendency for dissenters to suppress their disagreement in favour of maintaining consensus in the group.
- (d) The moderator used examples to facilitate discussion.
- (e) First names were used by and for all participants and the moderator to reinforce convenience and positive climate.
- (f) The moderator explained why discussions were audio taped.

The moderators discussion guide ([Appendix I](#)) gives a guideline on the procedure followed during the discussions.

#### **7.3.1.7 Themed Areas covered during the Group Discussion**

It can be seen from Chapters 2 and 3 that key requirements have to be met to provide educational services of high quality. On that basis the discussion guide has been constructed. The following themes constitute the content of the discussions conducted through FG, with special reference to the educational setting of the Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus:

- (a) Quality in general
- (b) Quality in education
- (c) Society and Industry
- (d) The Student
- (e) The Curriculum
- (f) The Faculty



(g) The Infrastructure

(h) The Management

(i) Learning

### **7.3.2 Interviews (Long Interview)**

The long interview is one of the most powerful methods for qualitative research. (*Mc Cracken 1988*). It's a revealing instrument. It gives the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves. It helps in obtaining the "Whys" of actions, behaviours, attitudes, understandings, and existing situations.

It is a tool for qualitative understanding of human action and provides opportunities for situating human behaviours in their fuller social and cultural context.

Qualitative methods are effective tools for study in modern societies, nevertheless they are straight forward. Two factors stand as important impediments to the qualitative study of nowadays life.

These are time scarcity and concern for privacy. Hectic, deeply segmented and privacy – centred lives do not allow respondents to devote the time required and be disclosed enough to complete the portrait. Precisely these two impediments make long interviews as valuable as a tool of inquiry. Long interviews create opportunities for access to individuals without violating their privacy, since observation of participant is not a part of the inquiry process. Furthermore, the patience of participant is not affected, since participation is on a voluntary basis and prolonged contact is not created.

#### **7.3.2.1 The Questionnaire as an Indispensable Guide for the Long Interview**

Several functions of the questionnaire make it an indispensable guide for the demanding objectives of a long interview: (*Brenner, 1985*)

(a) it ensures that all the terrain is covered in the same order for each respondent.

- (b) It provides a schedule of the prompts necessary to manufacture distance. This is very helpful for the interviewer, who is not expected to formulate, or recall them in the demanding circumstances of the interview.
- (c) It establishes channels for the direction and scope of discourse. Without the guide of questionnaire the generative power of language create potentialities for chaotic effects.
- (d) It allows the investigator to devote his or her attention, to the informant's testimony, and attend to immediate tasks at hand. Thus, the larger structure and objectives of the interview are protected.

The use of questionnaire does not pre-empt the "open-ended" nature of the qualitative interview. Within each of the questions there is a certain room for exploratory, explanatory and unstructured responses. The interviewer is free to take full advantage of the contingency of the interview and exploit any opportunity to obtain additional information and ideas and code the context in which these ideas occur.

For the scope of this project the long interview method has been employed to capture perceptions and ideas from hospitality employers and professionals.

**Appendix II** contains the guide comprising the questionnaire used for the interviews conducted with 15 hospitality employers and/or professionals representing 17 four and five star hotels in Paphos and Limassol. This sample represents a percentage of almost 50% of all four and five star hotels in the Limassol and Paphos areas and 23% of four and five star hotels island wide. Paphos and Limassol have been selected for their own characteristics as tourist destinations in terms of quality; they give emphasis on quality and their managerial structure provides for quality managers or staff members assigned duties for quality assurance. They are open all over the year and they suffer less seasonality, compared with other destinations in Cyprus, since they rely on high incomers' clientele, who are willing to pay premium prise for high quality service.

**Appendix III** contains the list of interviewees.

Perhaps it is worthwhile mentioning at this point that a certain part of the interview (the last part) focused on employee selection and development as a means to add value to the business performance. Furthermore, an effort was made to capitalize on experience about selection and development for the purpose of capturing perceptions and ideas on education quality issues with special reference to HHIC. To this effect the model of Service-Profit Chain has been used.

The Service – Profit Chain is a model developed by *Heskett, et al, (1997)* members of the Harvard Business School faculty, which can help managers target new investments to upgrade service and satisfaction, and achieve competitive edge.

The Service – Profit Chain establishes relationships between profitability, customer loyalty, and employee satisfaction, loyalty and productivity.

According to Heskett the following links are important in maximizing profitability in a service business:

- (a) Customer loyalty drives profitability and growth.
- (b) Customer satisfaction drives customer loyalty.
- (c) External Service value drives customer satisfaction.
- (d) Employee productivity drives value.
- (e) Employee loyalty drives productivity.
- (f) Employee satisfaction drives loyalty.
- (g) Internal quality drives employee satisfaction.

Along with workplace and job design, employee rewards and recognition and tools for serving customers, *employee selection and development* play a vital role in determining the ability of human resource employed in services to achieve results for customers.

Internal quality is crucial for service management and it is measured by the feelings that employees have toward their jobs, colleagues and companies, and the way they

behave one another and serve both each other and the customer. All these attributes are heavily affected by employee selection and development.

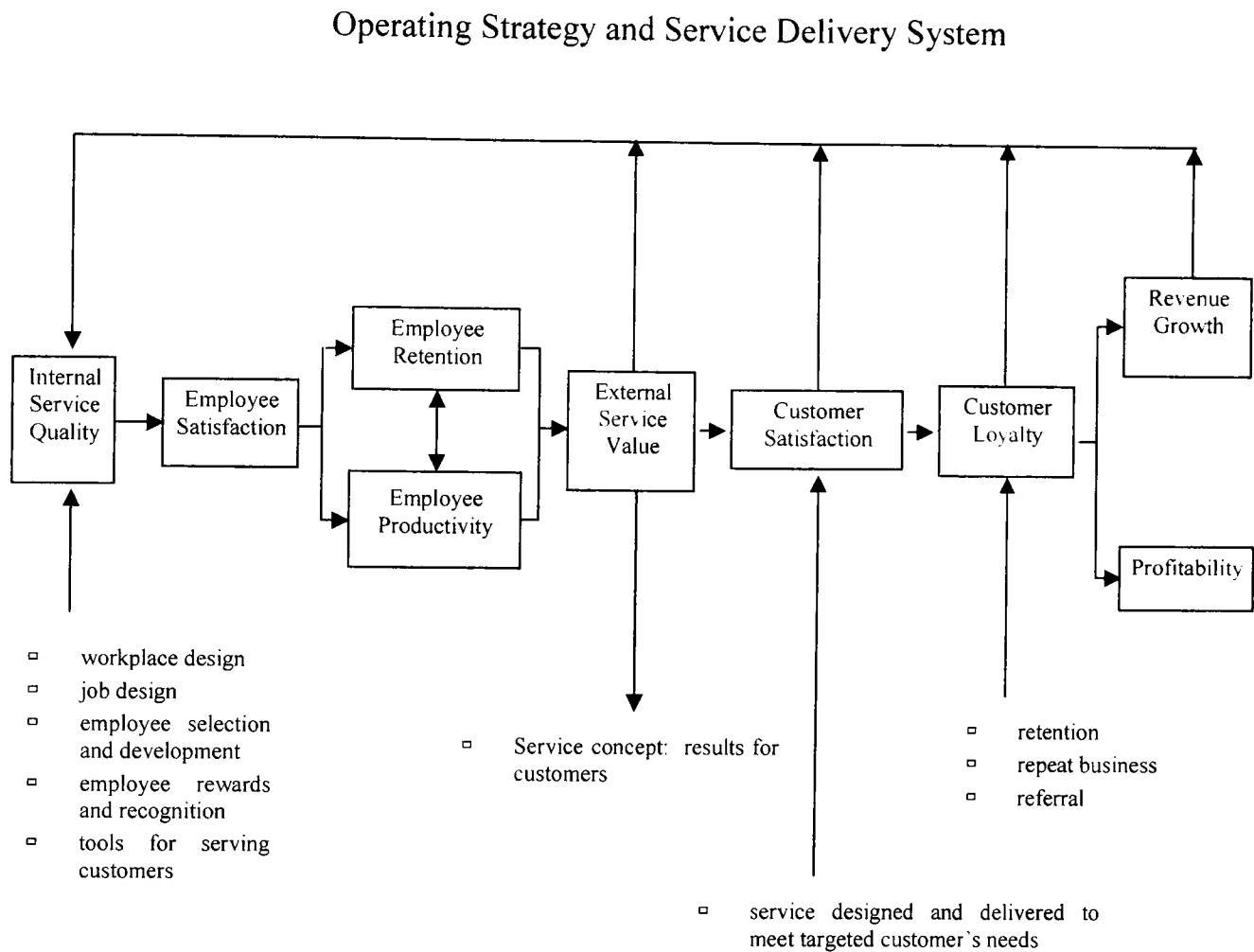
In this connection it is worth to examine to what extent selection and development is a contributor in the profitability of Hospitality Industry. The scope of research is to reveal the ties between employee selection and development and internal quality, and consequently with Profitability.

Furthermore the overall research with hospitality managers aims at addressing critical issues to the Human Resource – Business Performance relationship, such as:

- 1) Do selection and development practices make a difference in business results?
- 2) In what ways selection and development add value to business performance?
- 3) What are the most appropriate practices in selection and development that drive business performance?

Figure 7.1 represents the links in the Service Profit Chain (*Heskett, J.L., Jones T.O., Loveman G.W., Sasser W.E., and L.A. Schlesinger 1994*).

**Figure 7-1: The Links in the Service Profit Chain**



*Source: Heskett et al. (1994).*

Precisely, due to the contingency character of the interview, respondents gave, in some cases, their own narratives as a response to specific questions. As a result a narrative analysis was required to extract the essence of each narrative and interpose the information and ideas obtained within the domain context of each question.

#### **7.4 Narrative Analysis**

**During the interviews and or focus group discussions participants made sense of their experiences by narration, telling short stories and linking their narration to the issue raised.**

Scholars from various disciplines are turning to narrative as the organizing principle for human action (*Bruner 1986, 1990; Cronon, 1992; Rosaldo, 1989; Sarbin, 1986b; Schafer, 1980, 1992*). “Narrative analysis” is introduced in European theory by *Bakhtin, 1981; Barthes, 1974, Ricoeur, 1981, 1984*. Todorov coined the term narratology in 1969 to give to narrative analysis the status of a “new science” (quoted in *Godzich, 1989, p.ix*). (cited in *Riessman 1993*).

Narrative analysis is about story telling, to put it simply, is how we use our research material and what informants do with us. From story telling we create order and construct texts in particular context. Narrative analysis has to do with the “*Whys*” (i.e. why the story was told that way?)

**Open ended questions were introduced in the discussion guide or the interview to encourage narrativization.** Such questions open up topics and allow respondents to construct answers, in collaboration with listeners, in the way they find meaningful (*Mishler, 1986a*). Even closed questions that can be answered by yes or no can generate extended narratives if the overall discussion climate and atmosphere is fostering creative dialogue. Such climate has been created during the Focus Groups (FG) discussions and the Long Interviews.

The underlying theory of narrative analysis, as it is briefly described below, proved very useful in analysing data collected through FG and Long Interviews.

#### **7.4.1 Use Personal Narratives as Data**

Narratives are ubiquitous in everyday life. When someone tells his/her story tries to describe very nuance of a moment that had special meaning for him/her. Although in an interviewing process question-and-answer exchanges create arguments and other forms of discourse, very often respondents organize their replies into long stories. Traditional approaches to qualitative analysis often fracture texts of narratives and take bits and pieces in the service of interpretation and generalization (*Riessman 1993, p.3*).

### 7.4.2 Representation of Experience

Riessman (1993, pp. 8-15) suggests that there are at a minimum five levels of representation in the research process through narrative analysis and presents its limits as well. (See Figure 7.2) Boundaries of five levels are more semantic than real.

Figure 7-2: Levels of Representation in Research Process	
Reading	(5)
Analyzing	(4)
Transcribing	(3)
Telling	(2)
Attending	(1)
<b>PRIMARY EXPERIENCE</b>	

(a) **Attending**: By attending you assign specific meaning to certain phenomena. You choose from what you note. By thinking you actively construct reality in new ways.

#### (b) **Telling about Experience**

Telling is a performance of personal narrative. Language is the tool for this narrative. Without the constituents of language, namely words, experience cannot be communicated and cease to exist. As Marleau Ponty (1962/1989) suggested –

*“Our linguistic ability enables us to descend into the realm of our primary perceptual and emotional experience, to find there a reality susceptible to verbal understanding, and to bring forth a meaningful interpretation of this primary level of our existence ... By finding meaning in experience and then expressing this meaning in words, the speaker enables the community to think about experience and not just live it” (cited in Polkinghorne, 1988, pp. 29-30 and in Riessman, 1993, p.11)*

To a certain extent narrative is a self representation. Participants in focus groups and interviews have been selected in such a way, so that they can represent a wide spectrum of people in the field. Students come from the main educational programmes offered by the Institute, Faculty come from both the Institute and main private colleges offering hospitality programmes, whereas hospitality professionals represent a quite good number of four and five star hotels all over Cyprus. All of them tried to tell their stories in a way which imprints their own experience. In this sense validity of the research is served by the selection of participants and composition of the groups.

### **(c) Transcribing Experience**

A tape recording was used to capture the conversation which was conducted in Greek (native language). This tool helped to the fixation of action, in other words, to transfer oral into written speech. Tape recording helps in transforming spoken to linear-language. This task although seeming to be an easy job, it entails detailed analysis of voices, silences, false starts, emphases, non-lexicans, overlapping speech, and other listener participation in the narrative.

*Mishler (1991b)* suggests that transcribing spoken language is like photography, which “pictures reality” however the form of representation reflects the photographer’s views and perceptions or values about what is important. In other words transcribing is an interpretive process. Consequently, different transcriptions can lead to different products from the same talk.

### **(d) Analysing Experience**

According to *Riessman (1993)* the challenge at this stage

*“...is to identify similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation. An investigator sits with pages of tape-recorded stories, snips away at the flow of talk to make it fit between the covers of a book, and tries to create sense and dramatic tension. There are decisions about form, ordering, style of presentation, and how the fragments of lives that have been given in interviews will be housed ...*



*In the end, the analyst creates a meta-story about what happened by telling what the interview narratives signify, editing and reshaping what was told, and turning it into a hybrid story ...” (p.13)*

**(e) Reading Experience**

According to Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979/1987 every text is “*plurivocal, open to several readings and to several constructions*”. The meaning assigned to certain text, even by the same reader, depends on the specific historical or contingency context.

**7.4.3 Limits of Representation**

Given the fact that the final text is the product of interpretation which results from interaction between people, meaning of the text becomes ambiguous fluid and contextual. People involved in the process of interpretation are: teller, listener and recorder, analyst, and reader.

Tellers narrate on the basis of their selection from the “whole” and their own interpretation. A similar behaviour and action have other people involved i.e. listeners, transcribers, analysts, and readers.

The nature of representation as such suggests that relativism is inherent in social scientific work. This is already a constraint in the effort to reveal the “truth”. In this connection the views of Said (1979) can help in being conscious reflecting and cautious about what we claim as findings:

*“[The] real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representor. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is eo ipso implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the “truth”, which is itself a representation” (pp. 272-273).*

## **7.5 A Seven Stage Method for the Analysis of Data Collected Through Long Interviews**

*Clark, Riley, Wilkie and Wood (1998)* suggest that extended interviews, a tool commonly used in hospitality research constitute an “interventionist” instrument that helps in building any type of social theory, which they define as “Grounded Theory”.

*Easterby-Smith et al (1991: 108-11)* provide a method with seven main steps for the analysis of data collected through interviews.

**This method has been followed for the purpose of analysing the data collected through the interviews conducted with hospitality professionals. The seven steps for the analysis are described below:**

1. Familiarization: This stage entails first reading, re-reading data and looking for first thoughts, new thoughts, associations, contradictions, interesting, strange connections, correlations, and anything helpful to begin to formulate ideas and further questions which might need answering.
2. Reflection: It is a step towards establishing relationships, if any, between data collected and previous research or academic studies – or even “common sense”, knowledge and understanding. At this stage intuitive feelings and explanations emerge, which have to be assessed, because they can bring results.
3. Conceptualization: This is the stage you need to think about the concepts or variables which seem to be important for understanding what is happening. Concepts or variables help you classify or order your information as well as suggest where explanations might come from.
4. Cataloguing concepts: This is a useful piece of self-discipline. Not only does it provide a quick reference, a glossary, it also helps you establish whether the language recorded in your data can be matched with the language you might wish to use as an academic.

5. Recoding: It is a process of refining, and redefining, during which further interpretation and analysis takes place. As you contemplate your data, new categories and sub-categories may be required. Modification of divisions or further sub-division or new combinations of categories may be required.
6. Linking: At this stage patterns are beginning to emerge, certain concepts are showing an affinity with each other, and useful generalizations can begin to be drawn out, which may be seen to relate to theories and models, and suggest relative academic literature.
7. Re-evaluation: This is an ongoing exercise that could result in a change of emphasis, in a re-allocation or re-labelling of concepts, new ideas or approach. The quality of findings depends on how you personally and uniquely perceive and interpret data. Meaning, or inferences from a conversation is quite (qualitatively) different from the meaning, or inference, you might draw from a set of statistics.

## **7.6 Objectivity in Qualitative Research**

One of the major concerns of the researcher was the objectivity of the research, given the fact that the qualitative paradigm followed for the research did not allow any quantification of the data collected.

In contrast to “quantitative” a “qualitative observation” provides a hint that a feature is missing. Whereas “quantitative” research denotes a firm basis fostered by statistical analysis i.e. percentages, means, or cardinal numbers, quality research connotes the nature of a thing or situation and the absence of counting as a tool to define that nature.

However, the main distinction of “qualitative” research is that its findings are about people. *Kirk and Miller (1986)* define this peculiarity of qualitative research as follows:

*“The accumulated wisdom of the academic tradition of qualitative research is largely a formal distillation of sophisticated techniques employed by all sort of professionals – adventurers, detectives, journalists, spies – to find out things about people. Necessarily, the formal tradition has been accompanied*

*by certain distinctive orientations. Qualitative research is socially concerned, cosmopolitan, and above all objective” (p.10)*

Objectivity is a twofold concept comprising reliability and validity. Reliability is the extent to which a measurement procedure gives the same answer however and whenever it is carried out; validity is the extent to which the process measures actually what it is assumed to measure.

In this sense objectivity is not an absolute value. It has a relative meaning and it is the simultaneous realization of as much reliability and validity as possible. Being reliable means you get rid of accidental circumstances and being valid means that findings are interpreted in a correct way.

In order to increase reliability, a pilot focus group discussion was conducted with five hospitality professionals for the purpose of finalizing the content and structure of the Questionnaire for the Long Interviews. For the purpose of finalizing the Discussion Guide for the Focus Groups the researcher had an exchange of views and ideas with faculty members.

In order to serve validity the analysis and interpretation of data collected was made on the basis of theories and/or literature review and established instruments like TedQual and Baldrige Award.

## **8 FACULTY FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS**

### **8.1 Quality**

#### **8.1.1 Introduction**

Managing for quality is one of the most important challenges schools, colleges and universities face today. Although Total Quality Management (TQM) has its origins in business, and particularly in manufacturing, much of its philosophy corresponds with the best practice of educational management.

As far as quality in hospitality education is concerned, new developments are happening at European and international level.

It seems that hospitality education in Cyprus, both in private and public sector, is a follower of new ideas and developments in countries with longer tradition in the field.

Although local trends in the hospitality industry can spur developments in education, most new trends in both the industry and education are developed in Europe and USA. Benchmarking in those countries can help Cyprus hospitality education to improve its quality.

Cyprus hospitality education provides quality, and this is a perception and general feeling. What it is missing is the application of specific tools and the existence of generally accepted benchmarks to measure quality.

Cyprus hospitality education goes with the development of hospitality industry. This development happened in the last 30 years, compared with other traditional countries with long history in hospitality education, i.e. Switzerland 120 years, UK 100 years and USA 70 years. Given this big gap in terms of tradition in hospitality education, Cyprus can capitalize on experience of other European and Western countries.

Cyprus can offer quality for both local students and international ones who prefer to study in Cyprus for their own reasons.

Nevertheless, Cypriot hospitality industry and hospitality education have their own qualities and characteristics, i.e. the spirit of hospitality, on which one can capitalize to achieve high levels of quality. Quality has also to do with communicating care and attention to customers i.e. the students of hospitality educational settings. Communication to students has to address developments and trends in the hospitality industry.

The role and mission of the Higher Hotel Institute should be communicated to all customers and the community within a framework of the function of the Institute in the society.

### **8.1.2 Customer Satisfaction in an Educational Setting**

Students' expectations focus on acquiring recognized educational qualifications. This concern has to do with the accreditation process. Whereas public schools are automatically accredited by the government, accreditation of private schools has to do with certain and rigid procedures, which make students of private schools feeling of disadvantageous position.

Customer satisfaction is the basic component of quality.

Customer satisfaction is a function of the relative levels of expectations and perceived performance. Customers can experience "high satisfaction" if the perceived performance exceeds expectations, "satisfaction" if the perceived performance matches expectations and "dissatisfaction" if perceived performance falls short of the expectations.

In this sense quality can be defined by the type of customers Cypriot hospitality education has or can have, namely customers strategically selected.

Consequently quality can be determined on a twofold basis:

- (a) On international standards already established by countries with long tradition in hospitality education.
- (b) On strategic decision on who are the customers of hospitality education in Cyprus.

Quality can be defined from a different perspective as well: From the extent to which the graduate of hospitality educational programmes can meet the expectations of the hospitality industry and those of the hospitality client. In this sense quality in Cyprus cannot be seen as isolated from other countries. Tourists nowadays are international, more educated, more experienced and more demanding. Consequently, service providers, who are the hospitality graduates, have to be able to meet or exceed the tourist's expectations. In this sense quality can be measured in international terms.

In an educational setting all attributes of the educational experience can meet, or exceed, or fall short of the students' expectations. All data with regard to Cypriot hospitality education suggest that student's expectations are met and even exceeded by the overall educational experience. A proof for that is the increasing numbers of students and or candidate students for hospitality programmes.

It is not an easy job to define quality, which has a relative meaning defined mainly by the customer. However, some attributes of the service provide and constitute the framework for defining quality. Such attributes are reliability, responsiveness, consistency. Some characteristics are tangible or intangible. For example, in a hotel cleanliness is very important for all customers and it is an indispensable component of the quality of service. Some customers link quality with expensive and luxury tangible items, some others like to have a silent place to rest or a restaurant with good food and being free of smoke.

Some other people prefer to experience the bright smile of the service provider.

### **8.1.3 Quality Assurance for Hospitality Education**

The overall educational system should prepare people who have learnt how to learn, and be able and willing for a lifelong learning and professional and self-development.

Education has to prepare learners and graduates for continuous change, which is the only constant dimension of social and professional life in today's world. Hospitality graduates in particular have to face challenges in their professional environment,

which have to do with demanding customers demanding employers and the demanding Society.

Hospitality Customers being more experienced and more educated demand agility in service, both in terms of technical aspects and conviviality. They expect to have a value for money service and a worth to remember experience.

Hospitality employers need to have flexible Human Resource, with team spirit, able to create the right business culture for a competitive strategic development.

Society needs suggest that education/training and knowledge acquisition should meet present and future needs, and contribute to the increase of productivity.

Hospitality graduates must have a multicultural background, should be flexible, pragmatist, and adaptable to the ever changing professional environment, in order to be able to meet the needs of customers, employers and the society as a whole.

Quality in hospitality education is also directly related to the acceptance of educational programmes by the society. Acceptance means the degree to which an educational programme is attractive by candidate students and the overall image it has in the society. It is actually a perceived quality which is determined not only by the specific characteristics of the programme, but by the degree of success of marketing and promotion campaign and activities undertaken by the educational institution.

Although the boundaries between perceived and real terms quality are flimsy, actual quality is determined by the employability of graduates and their ability to provide a service of “perceived” quality.

## ***8.2 Society and Industry***

### **8.2.1 Strategic Planning in an Educational Setting**

Strategic planning is a component of quality and as such has to be utilized by educational managers. Without strategic planning you cannot achieve quality.



Strategic planning is very important, because it identifies where you stand and shows where you want to go. It can be defined as a tool to manage chaos.

In the case of hospitality education, strategic planning has to take into consideration the needs of the industry, the resources available and the type of students and their needs. Industry needs are to a certain extent a repercussion of the needs of customer who is the final receiver of the hospitality service. Resources include educational facilities, tangibles, human resources, individual and collective knowledge available, ideas, problems to be solved, conflicts, synergies, team spirit, relations with other organisations, individual relations among faculty and faculty from other educational institutions, research and publications by the faculty and even credentials and frustrations.

Strategic planning depends directly on the mission of the organisation. Mission and objectives of the organisation are the guidelines for any planning and quality standards to be set, so that every member of the organisation can work on the same direction.

Mission has also to be defined in consultation with the hospitality industry, since the labour market is going to employ hospitality graduates. For instance you cannot prepare graduates for managerial positions in massive numbers, if the needs are for crafts people. Nevertheless, strategic tasks for quality can be defined, whatever the level of education is, and i.e. craft level, supervisory or managerial.

The mission of the organisation has to be adjusted to the changes happening in the industry and the society as a whole. How often these changes happen defines the frequency for mission adjustment.

However, mission adjustment depends on the flexibility the educational institution has and the processes required, i.e. bureaucratic procedures and requirements provided by the legal framework, public or private character of the institution, etc.

### **8.2.2 Parties to Be Involved In Defining the Mission**

All parties who have interests in hospitality education, i.e., employers, students, parents, faculty, Support Staff, and the Government, must have role in defining or

adjusting the mission. To this effect a mechanism to capture perceptions and receive the input of these groups has to be established. The mission of an educational institution has to be defined in the framework of the overall policy of the State and operated in an orchestrating environment. That means not only educational institutions, but all institutions having to do with the tourism process both private and public have to aim at the same goals and objectives. Thus all factors, political, social, economic, ethnological, demographic, environmental, technological, can be taken into consideration.

Defining the mission is a challenging process, given the conflicting interests of several groups and parties involved. The challenge for the educational institution is to find the optimum balance among several interests, needs, and demands. A second challenge in defining the mission is to educate hospitality employers as well.

While educational institutions have to take into consideration employers' needs in defining their mission, there is enough room for educationalists to persuade employers in changing attitudes, and policies for certain issues, like long term profitability, investing in training and human resource as a vehicle for improving quality, knowledge management etc. At the same time educationalists can capitalize on the know how of hospitality employers on new trends. In conclusion, is for the benefit of educationalists and employers to work in alliance. Both of them have the duty to work for quality.

### **8.3 The Student**

Student is the centre of education. Students are the direct receivers of educational service, and as such are the ones who can have a valuable perception on the quality of education provided by educational institutions.

On the basis of this assumption, the issue at stake is how educational institutions can measure their success in fulfilling students' expectations. To this effect a mechanism to capture students' perceptions is required. Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and the role of external assessors can be used.

In analyzing the results and data collected through such instruments, an issue which has to do with validity is “who is involved in collecting and in analyzing the data”.

If the research is quantitative you can use the technical terms for analysis. thus, you can avoid subjectivity. However, if you have qualitative data to analyze, you have to use specific qualitative methods, i.e. participative observation to avoid subjectivity.

In evaluating the quality of educational services provided to students, all relevant factors involved in the process have to be taken into account, namely, to give their input.

Faculty, Support Staff and Management of the educational institution can play a vital role in a self evaluation process.

A self evaluation process can serve quality assurance better than external accreditation. External accreditation is a process that serves external criteria set by external bodies, while self assessment matches meeting internal criteria set by stakeholders and actual customers of the educational service. Based on the self evaluation educational institutions can change or adjust their mission and strategic planning.

Strategy and strategic planning secure that a certain route is going to be followed, so that set goals and objectives can be achieved. In formulating the strategy all three main parties involved in the educational process, i.e., faculty, management, and students and employers as well should participate.

### **8.3.1 Attractiveness of a Hospitality Programme**

Curriculum, Faculty and Campus facilities are the three basic dimensions of what candidate students want to know about before and during the process of deciding where to study. Nevertheless, the overall image established in the society and ranking scores of educational institution are of crucial importance in deciding about the school for studies.

Economic and financial issues, i.e. tuition fees, extra costs for books and other educational means, cost of living and quality of life in the area, play a significant role for such a decision as well. Perspectives for employment after graduation and recognition of qualifications by both the private and public sector play a decisive role in choosing where, and what to study.

Today there is a massive demand for higher education and both public and private institutions provide opportunities for studies, each ones with their own clientele. Sometimes in an effort to increase the number of their students, educational institutions use advertisement and marketing in an imbalanced way, that gives the impression that social life and recreation opportunities come first compared with the content and quality of studies as such.

This attitude already prevailing in the sphere of private education in particular, suggests that an optimum balance has to be maintained in advertising quality of student life and quality of content of studies as such. Another issue that has to do with the content of marketing campaign, and the tools used to increase attractiveness of an educational programme is the type of student the educational institution aims at. That means that students have to be strategically selected. Consequently, student clientele, and student body are issues which define the attractiveness of an educational programme or institution.

The mouth to mouth advertisement seems to be the most effective tool for the image of an educational institution.

#### **8.4 *The Curriculum***

Curriculum consists of a wide range of dimensions of the educational service, which have to do with content and process.

Content is the sum of subjects and lessons included in the educational programme. In this sense course, design, syllabi, and text-books have to be subject to regular updating and adjustment to industry needs. For a hospitality programme the methodology used and educational facilities are also important. Given the fact that

hospitality studies blend conceptual skills, technical skills and human relation skills, learning activities become of vital importance in acquiring such skills.

A primary emphasis should be given on active learning. Participative methods and techniques, such as case studies, role playing and simulations, modern equipments and materials of high quality can foster active learning, because they can reinforce willingness and enthusiasm of learners. External resources, such as visiting lecturers, field trips, placements are of input in active learning.

Having in mind that students have their own learning styles and rates, educational management should maintain a constant search for alternative ways to enhance learning, and develop actionable information on individual students that bears upon their learning.

The role of the Management of the educational Institute is of strategic importance in terms of assessment. In this connection educational management plays a catalytic role in formative assessment of learning early in the learning process and in tailoring learning experiences to individual needs and learning styles. Holistic assessment to measure progress against key, and relevant external standards and norms fall within the role of educational management as well.

Students also need to be assisted in using self assessment to chart their progress, to clarify goals and identify gaps in order to design their career plans. There are moments at which students need support, particularly on key transitions such as school to school and school to work. Schemes (i.e. induction courses when starting a new educational programme or industrial placement) can be proved useful for transitional periods.

Not only educational managers but students should have saying to a certain extent for the educational process. The challenge for educational managers is to find the optimum balance for students' input in the educational process, versus other educational stakeholders i.e., faculty, employers, society, government, if the educational institution is public, or share owners in case of private educational institutions.

Educational management can use focus groups, questionnaires, interviews, day-to-day interpersonal contact and students' affairs handling to capture students expectations for the curriculum and the educational process.

Alumni can provide significant feedback on the quality of learning and educational process. A good mechanism to this effect is to keep records on students who continue their studies abroad in other educational institutions. These students can have a comparative discussion for their educational experience abroad compared with their educational experience they had had in Cyprus. Such an input, timely differed from the period of study, can provide a more objective assessment of the educational service they have received. A similar input can be provided by alumni after they have been employed. In this case alumni can provide their assessment under a more pragmatic and realistic spectrum, since they can form opinion whether the curriculum and the educational service they had been experienced has some value added for their employment and professional advancement.

A quality curriculum has to be served by quality faculty. The role of faculty members is crucial in both designing the curriculum and delivering the overall educational service. Faculty should capitalize on the experience and know how of industry experts in designing the curriculum.

Textbooks, bibliography and other resources have also a significant impact on the quality of curriculum.

Two schools of thought are prevailing as far as learning resources is concerned: In USA the educational culture suggests that a dedicated course text-book can serve the educational objectives. On the other hand at most universities in UK students rely on a wider bibliography through a list of references provided by professors. Both systems have advantages and disadvantages. While text books provide a clearly defined route for students to achieve specific objectives set through curriculum design, they do not encourage wider self exploring in the relevant body of knowledge.

Relevant bibliography opens the pace for students to explore a wider spectrum in the body of knowledge, to work critically in identifying the "right knowledge", and create a learning spirit, although sometimes creating an ambiguous feeling which

deviates from learners specific learning objectives. Whatever the school of thought prevailing in the learning environment, professors should play a role of facilitator in bringing students into contact with as many sources of learning as possible.

A wide used learning tool for hospitality studies is project. Projects can flourish in educational settings, where students have good educational resource, i.e. modern library facilities, computer labs, internet facilities and access to data bases.

Learning through projects is a very delicate process, and sometimes students give more emphasis on the final product of a certain procedure rather than learning as such.

Innovation and professional development must be encouraged through projects, particularly in fields like tourism and hospitality, where tangible findings and proposals for service improvement are much more preferable rather than theory analysis and literature reviews.

Learning is served not only through writing the project but through the field research as well. Field research gives the opportunity for hands on experience and identification of room for improvement in the industry. The ultimate task of a final diploma project should not be a tangible booklet to be added in the list of the university / college library, but to have a value added for both learning and improvement of hospitality services.

The role of professor in assigning and tutoring projects is decisive for the student to find the optimum balance between freedom in action and following specific procedural guidelines to produce a project with value added.

#### **8.4.1 Assessing the Curriculum**

Receivers of the educational service should have a role in evaluating the curriculum, although the final decision for curriculum modifications or improvements does not belong to students. However, their input contributes in decision making. The challenge for decision makers, i.e. educational managers, is to identify whether

students' views are genuine and contribute in curriculum's improvement, and not a vehicle for them to get rid of demanding curriculum aspects.

### **8.5 The Faculty**

Faculty competence and quality play a decisive role in providing educational services of high quality by educational institutions.

Selection of Faculty is the very first and very important step for having faculty with competence and high quality.

Educational Institutions of public sector have certain rigid procedures for selecting their staff including faculty selection.

Selection procedures are based on the overall system for staff selection in the public sector by the Public Service Commission. Selections are made on the basis of particular Schemes of Service, through which required qualifications and experience as well as responsibilities and duties are comprehensively defined.

Such schemes and procedures guarantee objectivity in selection, but at the same time impose severe constraints in selecting people with teaching abilities and "*charisma*" i.e. gift.

Teaching abilities is as much imperative as possessing the main body of knowledge in the field of competence. Teaching ability is to a certain extent a type of natural charisma, however, teaching skills and or presentation techniques can be acquired through certain training and effort.

Demonstration lectures and or presentations can prove helpful in selecting the right faculty members.

Faculty should keep abreast with developments in their discipline and the tourism and hospitality sector in general.

Teaching methodology followed by faculty members is an imperative supplement to teaching competence and ability.



Tangibles of faculty including net appearance and handouts distributed to students are constituents of quality of educational service provided by faculty.

The quality and competence of faculty is directly related to the organisation climate and the overall philosophy of educational management and leadership.

### **8.6 Educational Management**

Quality and competence of faculty is fostered by learning. The more the philosophy for learning is directed towards being more responsive, adaptive and flexible to the needs of students, stakeholders and the market, the more the faculty can be competent to response to the needs of students for educational services of high quality.

Faculty should also contribute to the organisation's policy. They have to develop their team spirit through their participation in teams which undertake the design and execution of programmes and curricula. The more focus they have on students' needs the more effective they are in pursuing their roles.

Members of faculty should have the freedom to organize their own time schedule within the existing coordination process.

An internal structure of the institution is a prerequisite for coordination of educational programmes, and subject areas. Such needs are much more evident in an educational setting for hospitality studies, where subject areas or divisions, i.e. Food & Beverage, Rooms Division, Marketing, Law & Accounting, Tourism, Maintenance & Facilities, Human Resources, need to have their own expertise in order to serve the integrity of a hospitality programme of study. Although in tertiary educational institutes faculty members prefer to work in an environment of empowerment and self-management, educational management has a vital role in coordinating faculty members and their roles in an orchestrating learning environment.

Educational management has to evaluate faculty members on the basis of faculty participation in pursuing the organisation's policy, their knowledge in the relevant discipline, and of students learning styles, their skills in teaching and organizing learning activities, their innovative creativity and motivation.

At the same time, educational management has to provide the right working environment and promote faculty development through a learning culture.

In a tertiary educational setting there is no place for any formal control on educational activities of faculty. Self evaluation, students' evaluation and peers' evaluation can prove helpful in faculty development, whereas formal control is a constraint in providing educational services of quality.

A reviewing process for the period from appointment to tenure can guarantee that commitment and loyalty is not an artificial situation but the result of right selection of faculty members and their own devotion to the educational and academic performance of their organisation.

Whatever the prevailing system is, in a range from reviewing and formal control to definitely self-management arrangement, a unified system aiming at the same direction, organized around the same ultimate task, namely the meeting of customers' needs in this case students' needs, has a value added towards learning. The role of management in this sense is to provide the required system.

In designing the system, educational managers should take into consideration captured expectations and perceptions of students through a clearly defined and operated mechanism.

Furthermore, alumni perceptions can help management in designing the orchestrating system that can serve the needs of present and future students.

In designing a system for an orchestrating and holistic approach educational managers can be helped by quality standards set by other educational organisations and or quality institutions. Quality standards and quality assurance systems can prove helpful not only in providing educational services of quality, but in optimum managing of resources, including human resources, infrastructure and other tangibles.

Business culture is a component of the management process. In an educational institution business culture is directly related with the learning culture.

The role of educational management is to reinforce learning through the right organisational culture. Learning can be reinforced at several levels, i.e. individual learning, students learning, group learning and organisational learning.

Business culture incorporates values and attitudes prevailing in the organisation. Professional attitudes and agility in learning create driving forces for faster and more flexible response to the needs of students and stakeholders. Response time in needs and queries of students and other stakeholders defines to a certain extent customers' perceptions on service quality. Beyond that, time improvements lead to improvements in organisation quality and cost.

Agility and response time in a learning organisation i.e. in an educational institute is of a two-fold dimension. Not only educational management, faculty and staff have to improve their response to students' needs, but students' have to respond on due time to assignments and other requirements of their educational programme, i.e. to meet deadlines in handing in assignments and fulfilling requirements of the educational programme.

Business culture deems to be a component of educational management. Educational managers can promote organisation's mission through the business culture, which is the driving force for each one of the members of the organisation to achieve the set levels of quality service. In this sense the overall organisational culture can constitute the control mechanism to evaluate the performance of each one of the faculty and other staff members. Mission statement and organisational culture can function as the yardsticks for the involvement of each one of the members of the organisation in the learning process and assurance of quality for the educational services provided. Mission and organisational culture contributes in organizing chaos and transforming it into a creative community with imaginative fantasy.

Educational management cannot produce stereotypes that strangle creativity. What is useful for faculty members is benchmarks and creative environment. Individualized attention is useful not only for students, but for faculty as well. Each one needs support, encouragement, and motivation. Motivation in an educational environment is not necessarily related to rewards and other incentives.

The main driving force for educationalists is their actual involvement in the mission and strategic planning of the organisation, as well as a direct link of their schedule of work with their own genuine personal and development interests. In pursuing their roles faculty members need to feel empowered enough to organize their schedule of work in terms of priority and time in such a way so that the strategy and the priorities of the organisation can be served. Having that in mind educational managers can foster each one of the faculty members to develop their capacity at an utmost level.

### **8.7 Measuring Quality**

A big challenge for educational managers is to find ways to measure the quality of their organisation. Is it quality a measurable concept or not?

Quality has several dimensions which are defined by set standards and or benchmarks or perceptual feelings determined by the gap between expectations and perceptions of service receivers, i.e. students.

Educational managers have to define some indicators on the basis of which they can measure quality. Numbers of students graduated versus numbers of registered students, numbers of graduates employed within certain period after graduation, number and type of projects undertaken by faculty, investments in human and other resources i.e. library facilities, books, journals, access to databases, workshops, physical facilities and other tangibles. Defining indicators is the very first step. Beyond that, designing and managing for specific mechanisms to capture perceptions of students and other customers of the hospitality educational system, i.e. employers. in services, including educational services, require that several dimensions have to be assessed in terms of customers' perceptions for the quality of services. The five dimensions defined in the ServQual tool for service quality can be used as dimensions for measuring quality in hospitality education as well.

These dimensions are:

1. Reliability
2. Responsiveness

3. Assurance
4. Empathy
5. Tangibles

**Reliability**: Is the ability to perform a service as it has been promised. Performing service consistently, every time accomplished on time, the same way and without errors i.e. receiving mail approximately the same time every day, serving lunch for hotel guests within the announced time period or providing promised choices. Accuracy in billing or in students record keeping, refer also to reliability, although not related to the front-desk contact with customer.

**Responsiveness**: Is the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service or solutions to arising problems. Keeping customers waiting, particularly for no apparent reason, or not replying to students queries, creates negative perceptions of quality. Focus on customer and responsiveness help in turning customer frustrations or poor experience into more favourable perceptions, i.e. serving complimentary drinks on a delayed fly.

**Assurance**: Is the ability of employees and their knowledge and courtesy to convey trust and confidence. Competence to perform the service, politeness and respect for the customer, effective communication with the customer, and the general attitude that the provider of the service has the customer's best interest at heart, are the primary features of Assurance as one of the five dimensions of service quality.

**Empathy**: Approachability, sense of security, and the effort to understand the customer's needs are the main features included in Empathy. Empathy is proved through caring and individualized attention.

**Tangibles**: The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, staff, and communication materials are the constituents of the tangibles dimension. The condition of physical surrounding provides a tangible evidence of the care exhibited by the provider to the service as such.

Tangibles include educational and building infrastructure i.e., classrooms, workshops, computer labs, cafeterias and rooms for social activities, sport and athletic facilities, parking places, location and physical environment and vicinity.

Although educational and building infrastructure play a significant role for candidate students in making their decisions as where to study, developments in information technology and new trends in training and education through computer and other facilities of advanced technology deem to change perceptions and attitudes against other tangibles of educational services, thus mitigating their importance.

Educational managers having in mind the above dimensions of service quality can better predict future needs during the design period, and can be more efficient in providing educational services of quality during the performance period.

Addressing consciously the above dimensions can help educational managers in focusing on the future, understanding short-term and long-term factors for their educational design.

Beyond that, commitment to the above five dimensions of service quality can enhance long-term commitment to students, key stakeholders, community, employers, faculty and staff.

Focus the future means creating opportunities for innovation, faculty and staff development, and anticipating public responsibilities.

Consequently, such dimensions can function as yardsticks in measuring the mission oriented system, which has to focus on learning and quality through learning.

## **8.8 Learning**

Learning faster than competitors is a driving force to achieve competitive advantage. Learning faster means you are a leader, since you can capture changes and trends in education and industry.

Learning faster in an educational institution does not mean that your students learn faster than other students, but the collective knowledge of the organisation can be

used as a tool for faster response to changes and the needs of customers and other stakeholders.

The body of knowledge which is at the disposal of the organisation is the primary tool to create internal and external partnerships that allow the organisation to achieve its long-term objectives. Internal partnerships require flexibility and involvement in decision making, responsiveness, and knowledge sharing. External partnerships include co-operation with other schools and educational institutions, suppliers, organisations, business associations, professional associations, community and social services associations.

A critical question for a learning organisation is: which knowledge can help the organisation in achieving competitive advantage and fulfilling its objectives?

The answer to this question seems not to be so easy, since it has to do with the mission and strategy of the organisation, its short-term and long-term objectives, and overall philosophy and understanding about learning in an educational institute.

Learning is not only the assimilation of existing knowledge but the production of new knowledge as well. New knowledge can be produced either through research and experiment or through problem solving.

Through problem solving you can produce knowledge which is required for the achievement of the organisation's objectives. The sooner you find solutions for organisation's problems the faster you learn how to achieve your goals and objectives. That means that you create opportunities to be a step ahead of your competitors.

Solving problems in an organisation is not enough. What is necessary for the organisation to acquire competitive advantage is to establish mechanisms for communicating knowledge. Produced knowledge has to be communicated to all people of the organisation, so that they can have it at their disposal when they need it. Beyond that, they can capitalize and build on existing knowledge already produced to solve new problems in their own area of expertise and authority, and to produce new knowledge for the whole organisation.

Knowledge production for a learning organisation i.e. a learning school cannot be a panacea. Traditional school was for learning, and transmission of knowledge, through seminars, workshops, new books, new journals, new editions, assignments, cannot be neglected. However, knowledge whether existing and stored in books and journals, data bases other electronic forms, or produced through methods of enquiry, i.e. problem solving, focus groups, teamwork etc., is an asset which has to be managed.

Knowledge management is a constituent of quality assurance. Emphasis should be given on learning as an enquiry process for both faculty and students. In their teaching approach faculty should encourage students to learn how to learn and not just acquiring a body of specific knowledge once and for all. Students and faculty can feel happier and more productive if they see each other as partners who have common roles beyond their own roles. Structure and procedural arrangements can be used as tools to foster successful learning.

To this effect priority should be given on the self-concept rather than on performance. Inter-experience of both faculty and students can be used as a context for learning.

Concern for the learning environment and atmosphere and personal welfare for both students and educators is a proof for leadership, guidance and support towards effective change and development.

Managing knowledge is not a magic recipe, but a component of a holistic managerial process in a learning community. If learning is a top priority, quality is of top priority as well.



## **9 STUDENTS FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS**

### ***9.1 Introduction***

Students have their own expectations for educational services of high quality. Quality of educational services is a two way process that requires participation of both faculty and students in the learning process.

Faculty have to deliver what the Institute promised to the students through the course descriptions and break-down analysis for the several subjects of educational programmes, whereas students have to prove prompt response to the requirements of the programme, i.e. getting passing marks, meeting date requirements in terms of handing in assignments, showing the right attitudes, acquiring technical skills etc. It depends on each student to what extent he/she can participate in the learning process. The innate power of each student is the driving force for proceeding with and finishing his/her studies. To this effect incentives can prove helpful in reinforcing students in their study journey.

There is enough room for improvement in the delivery of educational programmes of the Institute. It is evident that the small size of HHIC constitutes an inherent weakness: Students' expectations in terms of benefits provided by the student community are missing to a certain extent. The Institute has to take into account critical mass requirements for its long-term strategic plans. Furthermore, there is a need to support and reinforce students' activities and interaction, like extra curricular activities, to enhance interrelationships among students of different educational programmes and external relationships with students of other colleges/universities, and enlarge students' exchange through relevant programmes, like Leonardo and Socrates.

Having in mind recent developments in terms of educational policy in Cyprus, hospitality studies need to operate under a wider educational umbrella, i.e. the newly established Technical University.

Meeting educational standards prevailing in established hospitality educational settings and state of the art curricula has to be of high priority if HHIC is to provide educational services of high quality. To this effect synergies among students and support by their faculty are required.

Organisation in general at HHIC is better than colleges of respective level in Greece. For instance there is a supportive structure and culture, such as structured timetable and defined tutoring system, compulsory attendance, and guarantee of a very good standard of students through clearly defined entry requirements, both general and English language requirements.

Introducing interview as a selecting tool can help in recruiting the best ones and those who are actually interested in studying at HHIC, having in mind the nature and peculiarities of the hospitality industry.

As far as the Culinary Arts programme at HHIC is concerned organisation of running the technical operation of the programme, i.e. workshops, requisitions needs to improve and a clearly defined mechanism has to be established.

## **9.2 *Quality in Hospitality Education***

Quality is defined primarily by customers. Meeting their expectations is a proof for providing quality services. Students are the main body of customers of HHIC and as such they expect to receive educational services in context and methodology the way they have been promised by the Institute. In this sense reliability is of primary importance in meeting students' expectations.

Furthermore, students need to feel happy and in good hands during their studies. This is the assurance dimension of quality. To this effect recognition of their diploma by the State and the private sector, good name and prestige of their Institute and meeting international standards give and maintain value to their studies.

There is always room for improvement and meeting high standards. High standards to be met require:

- State of the art curriculum
- Continuous improvement of methodology
- Continuous upgrading of instructors
- Balanced schedule i.e. time table and class conduct hours and workshops
- Organised tutoring
- Individualised attention through student services and empathy culture
- Improved facilities, building and educational facilities
- Established mechanism to capture students' perceptions on quality.

### **9.2.1 Whether Quality is Measurable – How to Measure Quality**

Quality is a subjective concept. Each person has their own definition of quality and criteria to measure quality. It depends on their understanding and perception of quality.

To measure quality the Management of HHIC must find an optimum balance of set standards and customers' perceptions through:

- (a) Questionnaires addressed to students, employers, professionals, parents, other social stakeholders.
- (b) Evaluating meeting of set standards and objectives.
- (c) Benchmarking (comparing own standards with set standards of other organisations and adjusting to own needs)

## **9.3 Society and Industry**

### **9.3.1 Mission Statement**

Candidate students want to know the declared role and mission of the Institute. It is very important to know the framework of their studies and the room for their expectations.

To what extent the Institute can fulfil their expectations?

- A mechanism has to be established, as an indispensable supplement of planning, to evaluate the results achieved through the educational process.
- The mission of the Institute should be evaluated and reviewed on the basis of the needs of students and industry.
- All parties involved in the educational process should participate in formulating the mission statement: Management, Faculty, Students, Graduates, the Ministry and Professionals and Employers who are knowledgeable in terms of what they can expect from the graduates of the Institute.

### **9.3.2 Internal Analysis**

To define the mission and design the process to pursue the mission an internal analysis is required.

For internal analysis the following tools can be utilized:

- Students' questionnaires on educational programmes
- Employers' questionnaires on industrial placement
- Group discussions with students
- Focus groups with faculty

Analysis of data should be a participative process, and Management, Faculty and the Students Union should have their own input.

### **9.3.3 Strategy**

What is a strategy: Strategy is a set of clearly defined process to achieve clearly defined goals and tasks. However, students should not be enforced to follow the rules articulated by a specific strategy. They are willing to do something if they want to do it. Their participation in formulating strategies, rules, programmes and educational requirements, and overall supportive climate can help students to participate in pursuing the strategy of the Institute.

Strategy is a route. This route should be drawn on the basis of the needs of all parties involved including students.

### **9.3.4 Characteristics of a Good Strategy**

A good strategy should serve an optimum balance of interests of all parties involved. Furthermore, it should be based on time structure, namely time benchmarks and time tables, so that students can plan their studies and work towards a defined end.

A third characteristic of good strategy is the participative process for defining it. Management and Faculty should have the primary role but students should not be neglected. They have to be given the opportunity to be involved to the extent they have the “Know How”.

### **9.3.5 Assessing Quality**

Quality is a perceptual concept that is measured on the basis of Students’ satisfaction.

Assessment of students’ performance is also a tool to measure quality. To what extent students have acquired knowledge and a skill defined in the curriculum is a measure of delivered quality.

Another indicator for educational quality is employers’ perceptions, given the fact that students are placed in the hospitality industry for their industrial training as a prerequisite for their diploma. However, employers’ perceptions must be considered under a critical spectrum, since they see students not always as trainees, but as means to cover their labour shortage, and even worse as cheap labour. One has to distinguish industry needs from employers’ demands.

## **9.4 Student**

### **9.4.1 Attractiveness of Educational Programmes**

Candidate students would like to know whether the educational institution where they are going to study enjoys a reputable name. Reputable name implies good fame in the public opinion, employability of graduates and their acceptance in the industry.

and recognition of the diploma awarded by state authorities and other educational institutions and authorities, both locally and internationally.

The institute's culture and organisational climate prevailing is also of great importance for the attractiveness of educational programmes. Whether students have a voice for issues concerning their studies, students' affairs and welfare has an effect on the prevailing opinion among the student body. Quality and channels of communication play a vital role in creating a positive and attractive atmosphere for students. Showing care and individualized attention creates a feeling of assurance and convenience.

Candidate students would like also to know the programmes' content and methods of study i.e. pedagogic methods in brief, and whether educational and training standards meet the needs and standards required by the industry.

HHIC has to improve communication channels with candidate students, i.e. lyceum graduates and pupils. To this effect communication with lyceum counsellors has to be reinforced and informational material has to be upgraded.

The students of HHIC are its best ambassadors and as such they have to be positive and enthusiastic about the educational institution where they study. People in charge for marketing and promotion programmes should never forget that in small societies mouth to mouth is the most powerful tool to promote the good fame of the Institute.

#### **9.4.2 Students' Voice**

Students need to have voice on issues that affect their studies. Such issues are related to:

- Course content
- Methods of delivery (Instruction Methods)
- Time tables
- Exams schedules

- Lead time for studying
- Evaluation of Instructors (A system is needed that guarantees anonymity and free expression of perceptions)

### **9.5 Curriculum**

The curriculum of the Institute is the code of educational delivery and a mirror of the educational level. However, the curriculum remains an abstract letter if it is not given the vivid form of the educational/training process in which both instructors and students participate.

Instructors should keep abreast with developments in the industry and the body of knowledge for hospitality studies. Text-books and recommended books have to be updated.

Foreign languages should be reinforced due to the nature of studies.

Students have the right to study with the appropriate volume of content on the basis of their intellectual capabilities and the level of their personal development. The Management of the Institute has to work for an optimum balance of the student workload. A logical progression in the acquisition of knowledge is also required. In this connection the following areas have to be improved.

- (i) Computer studies (Power point classes have to be offered early enough, so that students can capitalize on their skills for their presentations).
- (ii) Costing, Menu Planning and Food and Beverage controls have to be offered early in the Culinary Arts Programme to prepare students for their practical projects for training restaurant.
- (iii) A data basis has to be created with students' course-work, i.e. presentations, projects, assignments, that can be used as a source of knowledge for new students.

- (iv) Instruction methods need to be more creative, participative, inquiry oriented and provides students lead time to develop specific skills. New members of faculty brought a new spirit in the Institute, particularly in methodology. This is a hint for updating teaching methodology. Mere lecturing is not enough and appropriate methods should be selected on the basis of the type of subject. Theoretical lessons can become more interesting and challenging, more interactive and of higher quality.
- (v) Final project procedures have to be adjusted to students' needs and become more flexible in terms of tutoring and deadlines.
- (vi) Coordinators of subject areas and/or educational programmes should play their role so that a balanced work-load can be achieved in terms of exams, assignments, projects and practical projects. Such arrangements can help students to manage their time and achieve even distribution of their workload.

### **9.5.1 Student Assessment**

Students' needs suggest that a better planning from the part of instructors can provide students enough opportunities for assessment through different tools, i.e. quizzes, mid-term exams, assignments, practical and theoretical projects. Exams and other assessment tools have to develop and assess critical thinking. The right weight has to be assigned to each component of the final grade so that failures due to "force majeure" can be avoided through a balanced weighted mixture. Individual attention and support is needed to be given in such cases.

### **9.5.2 Input of Industry in Curriculum Design**

Educational programmes reflect industry needs if curriculum designers keep abreast with industry developments. The best way to incorporate industry needs in educational programmes is to have the input of industry in curriculum design. Industry representatives can define skills and knowledge required for each division and/or department and verifies whether these elements are included in the curriculum.



Furthermore, hoteliers can provide additional training for trainee students placed at their establishments or to young graduates of HHIC. However, they have to provide actual opportunities for training, following the training scheme provided by the Institute. The Institute has to stick on it. To this effect communication between the Institute and hoteliers needs to improve, so that the latter can easily accept the requirements of the Industrial Training Scheme.

Industrial Training Scheme needs to improve in terms of evaluation visits, i.e.

- Increase number of visits
- Spend more time on visit
- Organize the visit in a structured manner and show more interest
- Follow up in case of problems

For this improvement the cooperation of hoteliers is required. How to get their input in ideas, actions, measures and synergies? The answer is: invite them to visit the Institute more frequently. People from the Institute have to visit hoteliers as well. Organise committees and meetings and convey the policy of the Institute.

## **9.6 Faculty**

### **9.6.1 Characteristics of Quality Faculty**

Quality educational programmes and quality educational services can be achieved if they are delivered by Faculty of high quality. The following attributes seem to be indispensable for the Faculty if the Institute aims at providing services of high quality and enjoy good fame.

- High qualifications
- Pedagogic skills and aptitude for approachability
- Commitment to the job
- Zeal for their duties and organisational success
- Accountability / Responsibility

- Organisational skills
- Time management skills
- Knowledgeable and keeping abreast with developments in the field so that they can bring students into contact with as many sources of knowledge as possible.
- Experienced in teaching and in tourism and hospitality operations
- Communication skills.

### **9.6.2 The Role of Management - Whether A System in Place Should Supervise and Check the Faculty's Knowledge and Methodology**

The answer to this question is definitely YES. Faculty should prove that they fulfil certain criteria and quality standards. A system to visit classes by directors and/or heads can be useful. The Management of the Institute has to capitalize on good communication with students and a mechanism to capture collective perception of students on the quality and performance of instructors, since students know from first hand the qualities, strengths and weaknesses of their instructors. This information can be collected through questionnaires, focus groups discussions and meetings with the Management.

Although there is an impression that Faculty must be self managed in universities and colleges, management has a specific role: It is assumed that members of the faculty can cope with the challenge of continuous reviewing in an overall effort to meet the needs of their students, improve their approach and achieve higher levels of performance. In some cases the role of Management is crucial in helping those members of the faculty who are not willing to consider students expectations and needs towards improving methodology and pedagogic approach.

The role of Management to this effect is to act as a facilitator for:

- Upgrading seminars addressed to faculty in pedagogic, teaching methods, and students assessment.

- Cooperation of instructors who teach the same subject, or subjects within the same subject area, so that they can coordinate in terms of course content, course work, students assessment, methodology, reviewing courses etc.
- Standardization of courses (The role of subject area coordinators is crucial).
- Arranging time tables so that meeting of instructors of the same subject area can be facilitated.
- Upgrading communication with faculty in terms of students' concerns.

During meetings with Faculty the Management of the Institute can express any students concerns, thoughts on the course and the students' involvement in the learning process. The Management can convey to the Faculty any students' perceptions captured through questionnaires and any other tools, i.e. through meetings with the students, and focus groups.

### **9.6.3 The Role of Organisational Culture in Educational Management**

Having in mind that the culture is there, it is not a given asset but an attribute of the organisation depended on attitudes and perceptions of people, the issue at stake is not to change the culture – there is not such an issue as improving culture – but to capitalize on the existing culture for the benefit of the students, Faculty and Staff and the Institute as an organisation.

There is no good and bad culture but there is positive and negative organisational climate. The role of several parties within the institute is very crucial in creating a positive climate and culture for the benefit of the student. Each stake-holder – should play their role in the chain. It's a series of customers and providers of service within the organisation.

The role of Management is to give the right motivation to each one of the role players, so that they can improve their performance and aim at higher levels. The several role-players constitute a chain in the organisation. If one of the rings is weak, the whole chain is jeopardized. Total Quality depends on the quality of constituents.

Having in mind that quality performance is driven by quality of behaviours the Management of the Institute has a crucial role in promoting positive behaviours.

## **9.7 Infrastructure**

### **9.7.1 What Is Infrastructure In An Educational Institution?**

It is the overall physical environment, the design and facilities of the campus. Infrastructure comprises class-rooms, workshops, kitchens, restaurants, libraries, equipment, offices, computing laboratory, cafeterias, campus parking, residential and extra curricular facilities, accessibility, space, and environment.

### **9.7.2 Whether Infrastructure Plays a Role in Choosing to Study at a Specific Institute**

The answer is absolutely YES. Consequently, planning and designing educational infrastructure is very important for educational attractiveness and delivery. Educational needs can be met, if the following factors are taken into consideration when planning and designing for educational infrastructure.

- Students' needs
- Needs of the labour market
- Aims and objectives of educational programmes
- The type of education/training to be offered
- Number of students.

## **9.8 Learning**

### **9.8.1 Learning Faster than Competitors Is the Key for Success**

For students' learning this is not always valid. That which is important is to proceed in respect with your previous position and improve your position towards your ultimate task. Not only speed is important but commitment, consistency, insistence,

and patience are prerequisites for students learning. For students' learning important is the differential between previous position and new position in terms of knowledge.

### **9.8.2 Organisational Learning**

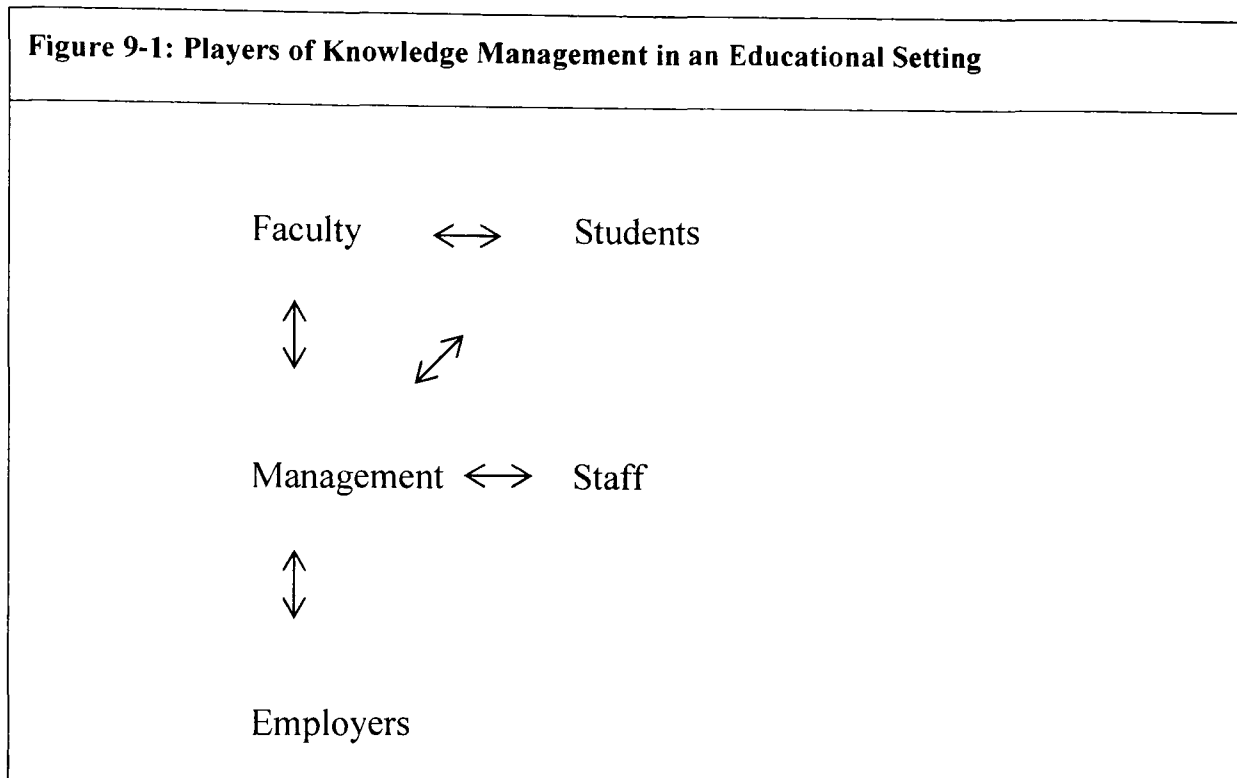
Learning fast is a valid statement for organisations. However, it is not a panacea. Some organisations learn faster than others but they make mistakes. Some other organisations learn slower than others, but they learn from the mistakes of others.

In an educational setting Learning comprises the following

- Students' learning
- students - teachers interaction
- teachers – teachers interaction
- interaction of management with teachers, staff, students and employers
- research and
- students' industrial training

(See figure 9.1.)

Learning in an organisation depends on knowledge management as well. Knowledge is an asset which needs to be managed: like any other asset. Knowledge Management means usage of knowledge and communication of knowledge to other people within the organisation; Continuous communication of knowledge from those who know to those ones who do not know; to everybody; to the customers of the organisation as well.



Knowledge Management and quality assurance go together: The more knowledgeable you are the better the services you can provide to your customers. Knowledge is power for both the individual and the organisation. Being knowledgeable someone does not necessary means that he/she can communicate knowledge to other people. This is a challenge for the Management of the organisation which has to play a catalytic role towards this effect: To promote knowledge communication from and to all role players.

## **10 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH HOSPITALITY EMPLOYERS/PROFESSIONALS**

### ***10.1 Overall Assessment of Hospitality Education in Cyprus and the Education Offered By the Higher Hotel Institute In Particular***

The common perception of respondents is that the level of hospitality education in Cyprus is fairly adequate. Nonetheless, all participants in the interviews stressed the fact that there is still room for improvement in these levels. Based on their experience, young people who have earned hospitality related qualifications and who now work in the hospitality industry can be categorised as follows:

- a) Graduates of Technical Schools (Secondary Level of Education) of the Ministry of Education
- b) Graduates of Private Colleges (Tertiary / Higher Level of Education)
- c) Graduates of the HHIC (Public Tertiary / Higher Level of Education)

Regarding the graduates of Technical Schools, the vast majority of respondents pinpoint that regardless of the fact that they possess good technical skills, these graduates severely lack behind in those broader educational components which are vital for them to respond to those needs of the hospitality industry relative to the provision of services to the guests.

As with regards to the graduates of Private Colleges, respondents detected the need to amalgamate the theoretical components of the programmes of study offered with practical experience/training in industry. The absence of practical experience diminishes the employability of these graduates in industry. Respondents stressed out the fact that there is definitely room for improvement to this respect.

On the other hand, the majority of respondents (80%) have a vast experience in working with Higher Hotel Institute graduates. Hospitality professionals differentiated these graduates as being of a higher calibre relative to graduates from other schools. The great majority of those professionals who have hired HHIC graduates strongly believe that these graduates enjoy a higher potential of achievement in the industry. They strongly believe that the HHIC enjoys the strongest and firmest, among educational institutions on the island, reputation in supplying the Cyprus Hospitality industry with well educated and trained professionals. It is evident from the discussions with participants in the study that the HHIC graduates can quickly adapt their knowledge and experience to respond to the needs of the specific business and the hospitality industry at large. What is needed however is broadening the spectrum of the existing programmes of study offered by the HHIC to cover the emerging needs of the industry especially in the areas of 'product differentiation' and 'service quality'.

There is indeed a need for a broader spectrum of education which will integrate general education and training, so that both the technical and conviviality aspects of service are promoted through the overall hospitality culture. For this reason, there is an emergent need to consider the future role of the HHIC in retraining and providing continuous education programmes to the employees in the hospitality industry as well as in decentralising its activities so as to better service the needs of the industries all over the island. The fact that quite a few for-profit organisations have started to offer educational services to professionals in industry is alarming and has to be seriously taken into consideration. The HHIC, as the only non-profit public educational institution on the island specialising in Hospitality education should capitalise on its competitive advantage and adapt to the needs of the industry. This can be achieved through the development of in house training/consultation programmes which will mainly run during the 'low season' periods.

A special effort is also needed in promoting as well as generating public awareness regarding the educational role and contribution the Institute has in the Cyprus Hospitality Industry. Despite the fact that today the HHIC offers educational programmes which cover all three levels which traditionally make up the hospitality operations spectrum (technical, supervisory and managerial), there are cases of a few



hoteliers who are not yet familiar with the fact that the Institute has upgraded its programmes nearly 12 years ago, in contrast to the 'technical skills' level programmes which were the only programmes on offer prior to 1993.

A new challenge the institute has to deal with today is the development and offering of programmes which not only satisfy the needs of the industry but are at the same time appealing to prospective students. This is augmented by the fact that for many posts in industry, especially for those at the lower level, employers are forced to hire unskilled staff, primarily due to the scarcity of trained labour.

The HHIC acknowledges the difficulties involved in offering programmes which meet the needs of the industry as well as satisfy the needs of society at large, and reaffirms its commitment towards this end.

### ***10.2 The Concept of Quality in a Hospitality Educational Setting within the Context of Quality in the Hospitality Industry***

All interviewees strongly believe that Quality and Customer Satisfaction are interrelated. They trait 'service quality' to 'total customer satisfaction' thus attributing primary importance to the role that education is called in to play towards this respect. The essence of 'Quality' is also closely attributed to the genuine hospitality/philoxenia offering as well as to 'day-to-day service'. Quality in education inevitably leads to quality in industry, thus education has a role to play in filling in the gaps of 'quality' in the chain. Achieving Quality in hospitality education is crucial from the outset, i.e., the selection of the right candidate students. These have to be young individuals who acknowledge the uniqueness and demanding forces of the industry and wish to pursue a career in it.

Additionally to the technical skills that students are expected to develop during their studies they should also develop their social and conceptual skills, their zeal towards service quality and their willingness to work in a team as well as under stressful conditions. Students should also conceptualise the diverse concepts of the hospitality industry such as the role of front-line staff, their direct relationship towards service quality, customer satisfaction, value for money, as well as experience value.

The shortage of adequately trained/qualified staff forces hotel and catering units to hire unskilled staff which in their turn, attempt to train. It is evident that this methodology has serious pitfalls which in turn reflect negatively on the quality of services customers enjoy.

### ***10.3 Channels of Communication between Hospitality Industry and Hospitality Education***

It is evident from the interviews conducted that all participants acknowledge the fact that communication channels between the hospitality industry and the hospitality education sector are imperative. They further stressed out that productive communication channels should be set between the two sectors so as information can be mutually exchanged at all times.

Participants further suggest that these communication channels could entail: frequent meetings between key people from both sectors; more frequent visits of faculty members to industry; enhanced communication during the student's industrial placement period; organisation of seminars and panel discussions involving hoteliers and other hospitality professionals; organisation of events which will aid in bringing people from education and industry together; running of surveys; and the organisation of field trips to industry for faculty members.

In their immense majority (80%), Industry professionals identified the following issues that the hospitality education sector should consider:

- Hotel units are forced, due to skilled staff shortages, to hire unskilled staff for which they will then have to train on the job. This method alone is however unproductive taking into consideration that those new recruits have not undergone any kind of training prior to their employment. This is in direct conflict to the growing needs and demands of the industry for the provision of quality services to clients.
- An absolute need for staff who has studied in hospitality related educational programmes has emerged.

- The technical skills acquired during training alone might be sufficient at the operational level but are not adequate enough to respond to the needs at management level, especially when it comes to decision making. For this reason, subject areas such as: cost-benefit analysis; costing; financial and managerial accounting; inventories; foreign languages; and knowledge of industry computer software packages should be incorporated in the Institute's curriculum.

The examples provided in the aforementioned paragraph surfaced the need to inform the hospitality industry about the curriculum of the HHIC.

#### ***10.4 Training of Human Resources Is a Primary Factor for the Success of a Hospitality Enterprise***

All interviewees attribute a decisive role to education and training. It is worth mentioning here that all interviewees consider investment in education as the alpha and omega towards achieving management quality. In their vast majority, participants raised the issue of cultivating hospitality culture as an indispensable supplement to professional education. Some of them went a step further in linking the hospitality culture to the conviviality aspect of hospitality service.

It is generally acknowledged that training is considered to be the means to anticipate problems as well as in devising improvement strategies to alleviate problems. It is worth mentioning here a comment brought forward by one of the interviewees who stated that: *'in times of crisis the mere solution is to improve the tourism product. To this effect, the starting and finishing point is the Human Resource. Hiring managers with a proven record in quality by several hospitality enterprises is already a hint towards this quality movement. Quality managers in collaboration with Training managers try to improve quality through the training of Human Resource. Quality and Training managers strive for quality culture. Their tools are: training – training – training'*.

A substantial majority of participants in the study consider that further to the acquiring of basic technical skills for the job, students should acquire a broader education as a vital tool which complements their studies and provides hospitality graduates with the right gear to manage the challenges of the human-centred hospitality industry.

One of the interviewees suggested that: *'general education should prepare professionals to work with team spirit, in a cross-cultural environment, understand and be able to orchestrate learning with competitiveness. Furthermore, they should consider life-long learning as the means to survive in the profoundly competitive environment of the hospitality industry'*.

Some respondents admitted that certain hotel units in their attempt to reduce costs, cut down on training and further education budgets for their staff. This has profound negative effects, especially in the long-term, on the overall quality of the tourism product the island offers to its guests as well as to its competitive base.

### ***10.5 Learning In a Hotel Enterprise in Conjunction with Learning in a Hospitality Educational Setting***

All interviewees consider learning as the means to achieve competitive advantage. Furthermore, they acknowledge the necessity for commitment towards life-long learning, especially in a sector where developments are continuous and rapid. The emergence of new tourist destinations coupled with the ever changing 'tastes' and preferences of customers, which are now built on greater experiences, as well as on better education and more information on the destinations, bring forward demands for greater expectations. Customers have particular needs, such as the need for the provision of business facilities, child care and 'kids-club' facilities, etc. Parallel to these, promotional campaigns have become more intense in an attempt for destinations to capture a share of the business. All of the aforesaid developments take place in an environment which is already characterised by intense competition.

It is for these reasons that the hotel business should be at the forefront of the industry and abreast of all developments which affect the sector. All interviewees

acknowledge that knowledge for the running of the hotel business is a requirement not only at an individual level but also at the organisation's management level.

It is generally accepted that learning faster than competitors is the driving force to achieving a competitive edge. Hoteliers must certainly keep abreast of developments and closely follow industry trends especially with regards to customer preferences and requirements as well as with the requirements of tour operators. One has to be alert, study international industry trends through various publications, and keep in touch with international organisations so as to be able to plan ahead. To this effect, hoteliers can capitalise on information technology and the internet. Taking advantage of the avalanche of information available through the various communication media will help hoteliers to best position themselves relative to their competitors, especially in those aspects that will help them differentiate themselves, such as, in clientele profile and characteristics, customer needs, strategy and policy planning etc.

In respect, educational institutions should prepare and educate their students to be able to deal with the abovementioned challenges. The programme curricula of the various institutions which educate students to work in the hospitality industry should conform to the needs of the industry. What it is imperative however is that students, through the various learning activities they are involved in, should develop the ability to adapt and meet the ever changing needs of the industry.

Moreover, the educational system should decamp from the narrow borders of the typical traditional training schemes to allow for the exploitation of modern/current methodologies, such as, supervision, consultancy, mentoring, project management etc., in line with the programmes offered nowadays by contemporary organisations.

## **10.6 Knowledge Management and Quality**

All interviewees agree upon the fact that knowledge is an asset which needs to be administered. In this respect, many have expressed their narrative story which emanates from their experience in their working environment.

From the analysis of the information derived from the interviews, participants seem to attribute a higher value to the following:

- Searching the customer's database in order to build up the customer's profile for their unit, especially in terms of customer's nationality, spending patterns, requests, facilities and services used, etc. This valuable information is gathered through various media, such as reservation and registration records, in-house questionnaires, tour-operator databases, and in some cases, through surveys, benchmarking, visits at trade fairs etc.

Data is usually analysed at the beginning as well as at the end of the high season and information drawn together is utilised to modulate and further develop the tourism product on offer.

- For managing knowledge within the organisation, hoteliers devise written policies which are usually portrayed in 'Manuals' and 'Codes of Practice' which entail most of the operation's procedures. It is customary for these 'Manuals' and 'Codes' to be refreshed from time to time, taking into consideration the suggestions of all the groups of people involved in the running of the business. It is also customary for major changes to take place when new staff, especially in key positions, is hired.
- As with regards to the dissemination of knowledge from the personal level, to that of the organisation, hoteliers seems to exploit the following media:
  - Employees in key positions with special knowledge, train other staff
  - Supervisors train their staff

- External expertise is utilised to provide in-house training services, for example, a renowned and highly acclaimed chef is hired for a specific period of time to work in a hotel. During his employment with the hotel, he is not simply required to perform his day-to day-duties but he is also committed to train the hotel's existing team of chefs, thus conveying a certain amount of his expertise to the organisation
- Mentoring is used in cases of new recruits
- Succession plans are enforced in most cases to safeguard that knowledge becomes an asset of the organisation and not just of an individual who might walk out one day
- Establishment of 'knowledge networks' among people from Head Office with people from the individual units. In those cases where hotels come under the same group company the knowledge produced in a single unit becomes a common asset and is shared with the other units in the group company. To this effect, meetings, circulars, e-learning, e-communication, exchange of staff, and in-house training for the staff of all hotel units are utilised.

Most of the hotel units which participated in the survey have developed systems to help them manage the information they gather on their customers. They acknowledge the fact that quality is defined by the customer. Thus, their management information systems are utilised to draw upon customer's expectations so as to adjust their service to meet these expectations. Standardisation of procedures and services as such, is the next step which aids hoteliers in meeting customer expectations.

All of them try through knowledge management to achieve quality. More than 80% of the interviewees have a thorough understanding of what knowledge management is, and the role it plays in the provision of high quality services. One of the interviewees defined the following aspects as the key parameters to knowledge management: *'Selecting and recruiting the right persons, offering generous*

*incentives, developing loyalty, reducing turnover at an optimum level, identifying the right knowledge to convey to all employees at the individual and organisational level, developing the right succession plans and disseminating the right knowledge in terms of existing customers and/or prospective customers to all the staff members'.*

Another interviewee gave two examples of knowledge Management which stem from his experience at his own business: *'these are ISO (International Standards Organisation) and HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points). Although both instruments seem to create a vast bureaucracy, they constitute specific tools for writing down and coding immense amounts of knowledge. These codes aid in providing services of high quality, which in turn aid a business to achieve better results and eventually turn losses into profits. What is most important with these two instruments, is that they are not static, but they provide the framework for reviewing, adjusting and improving procedures in a continuous and longitudinal effort towards quality'.*

A different aspect of knowledge management as a tool for quality was identified by another one of the interviewees: *'Self-Awareness. This is the vision of our organisation. We try to make our people feel happy and proud of being with our company. Our policy is to assist our people in conceptualising what they know, to invest and believe in themselves. This self-awareness is the first step in creating an environment of learning and quality'.*

Along the same line, another one of the interviewees defined recognition and respect as two very effective tools for internal customer satisfaction which inflict a positive effect in sharing knowledge and consequently in service quality.

It is common understanding among all interviewees that knowledge is a common property for their organisation. Knowledge in every aspect of the hotel operation, i.e., technical dimension of service, technology, systems, accounting, marketing, and maintenance has to be managed. Good knowledge management has a spill-over effect in the upgrading of service quality.

During the interviews, quite a few participants described in a rather vivid way, using short narrations, the tools they employ in their effort to manage knowledge. It is



worth quoting here an extract from a narration as this was described by a professional of a 5 star hotel: *'At the end of each year we review our objectives on the basis of a thorough analysis of our results. We have financial and economic objectives, we have objectives relative to guest profiles, and we also have long-term objectives concerning the vision of our hotel in terms of segmentation, i.e., the family sector, the VIP sector etc. To this effect, we create 'knowledge forums' in which all persons involved in setting and/or achieving the goals participate in. In our effort to analyse, conceptualise and review our objectives, we capitalise on the individual knowledge of each and every person involved as well as on the collective knowledge which is generated through the sharing of individual knowledge.*

*For instance, if we want to impress a VIP arriving guest, everybody has to express their own ideas. All ideas are then evaluated and a detailed screening process is enforced to narrow down these ideas to the best one to better suit the occasion.*

*Another example is the ISO procedures, for example, in purchasing, which cannot be altered unless a thorough analysis is conducted with the input of all the people involved in all the facets of the purchasing cycle, i.e., description, activity, business planning, identification of needs, budget preparation, issuing of tender documents and their subsequent evaluation, product ordering, receiving, storage, issuing etc. This is knowledge management, and as such, knowledge management serves quality'.*

### **10.7 The Service Profit Chain**

The service profit chain, developed by *James L. Heskett et al (1997)* establishes relationships between 'profitability', 'customer loyalty', and 'employee satisfaction, loyalty and productivity' (see paragraph 7.3.2.1 under Chapter 7, Methodology).

This model has been used by the researcher in the last part of the Questionnaire to examine the role of staff selection and development as a contributor in the profitability of the hospitality industry.

Selection and development of staff is a field in which the role of both the industry and education is important and as such it was examined in the present study with hospitality professionals.

All interviewees admitted that the Service Profit Chain can serve the interests of their business as a model that leads from internal quality through service value and external customer satisfaction to revenue growth and profitability. Participants can very easily understand the components of each chain and can incorporate them within the framework of their business. They define selection and development of their staff as the starting point in producing a quality product, providing quality service and achieving profitability.

After the researcher described the components of the Chain and their role in profitability to participants, they claimed that Service Profit Chain is a 'common sense' approach towards profitability that each hotel unit is destined to follow. At the same time, none of the participants in the survey could prove any conscious effort by their own company to follow the Service Profit Chain in a structured way.

Although all professionals who participated in the research stated that their companies have structured mechanisms for staff selection and development, none of them admitted any effort to evaluate the input of this parameter to that of Internal Service Quality. On the contrary, most of them accepted employee satisfaction as a contributor to service quality, but at the same time, they claimed cost constraints in not being able to invest in employee satisfaction.

Only a handful of participants claimed that they invest in all parameters of Internal Quality, as these are defined in the Service Profit Chain and that a policy towards this effect has a high cost, especially in the short term. Even so, these participants acknowledge that there are positive long-term rewards in the adoption of these parameters, as these serve employee satisfaction and employee loyalty.

The majority of participants identified that the shortage in properly trained staff is a major drawback in their attempt to select the best among those interested to pursue a career in the hospitality industry, and for whom the organisation will eventually invest heavily in their training and education.

On one occasion in which particular emphasis was given in the overall employee satisfaction, a remarkable increase in the number of candidates interested to work for

the specific company, was detected. In this case, the candidate's 'personality' factor was attributed a much higher value in the selection process.

The majority of the hotel units that were represented in the study, do employ dedicated staff who specialise in Human Resource Management as well as specialist Trainers whose responsibilities include primarily the hiring and training of staff. This alone, testifies the commitment and importance these units attribute to their investment in the human element, and subsequently to the components of Quality.

Conclusively, it is evident from the study that all participants acknowledge that the Service Profit Chain concept is a powerful tool in the attainment of quality standards and profitability in the business. To date however, none of the businesses questioned seem to have wittingly employed this tool in order to attain the goals of employee satisfaction, loyalty and productivity which will in turn lead to customer loyalty and business profitability.

On the evidence presented, the issues that have been brought forward in this study indicate that the Service Profit Chain model can be exploited further by businesses and researchers alike so as to turn its concepts into tangible benefits for their businesses and the Island's tourism industry at large.

## 11 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *11.1 Introduction*

In today's competitive environment, educational institutions, such as schools, colleges, and universities face a major challenge, that of managing for quality.

Taking a tertiary educational Institution as a reference base, the researcher worked to achieve a specific aim: **to develop a learning model for quality in hospitality education.** The Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus (HHIC) has been used as a reference base, whereas the ultimate task of the project is to help HHIC to develop the capabilities of a learning organization and provide quality educational services through organizational learning and continuous evaluation of educational activities. The specific objectives of the project have been formulated as follows:

- (a) Provide a model that is able to continuously seek improvement
- (b) Encourage systemic thinking within an amalgamated external and internal environment.
- (c) Encourage knowledge sharing within the organization and between the organization and the hospitality industry.
- (d) Tackle present problems and anticipate future ones.
- (e) Approach problem solving through conceptual analysis on an organization-wide basis.

A two-fold effort has been made for the purpose of pursuing the project and developing the quality model.

First, a review of appropriate literature has been conducted. The focus of the literature review was on four broad areas as follows: (i) Quality movement in Education, with specific reference to hospitality education, (ii) Knowledge Management, (iii) Learning Organisations and (iv) Action Learning.

As far as quality movement in education is concerned, much attention has been given to improvement of quality in the educational setting during the last two decades. However, no formal approach exists on how to actually apply the TQM principles and concepts to improve the quality of services of educational institutions. The researcher identified two instruments which he considered appropriate for providing essential guidelines in applying TQM concepts and principles in a hospitality educational setting. The first one is the TedQual Quality Assurance System, which has been developed by the World Tourism Organisation and the second one is the Education Criteria of the Baldrige National Quality Program.

The TedQual system defines six processes as the principal driving forces for creating added value for the customer and greater efficiency in the management of education as follows:

- The Employers (Society and Industry)
- The Student
- The Curriculum
- The Faculty
- The Infrastructure
- The Management.

The Baldrige National Quality Program defines seven categories of requirements that constitute critical success factors which affect each other and need to be studied in relation to each other. The seven categories of requirements are: Leadership, Strategic Planning, Student, Stakeholder and Market Focus, Information and Analysis, Faculty and Staff Focus, Process Management and Organisational Performance Results.

Both instruments have provided a sound basis for the development of the research tools for the purpose of the project, namely the Moderator's Discussion Guide which has been used for the discussion in the Focus Groups with Faculty and Students, and the Questionnaire which has been used as a guide for the Long Interviews with hospitality employers and professionals. At the same time, the two instruments

proved helpful in the process of analysing the data collected through the Focus Groups discussions and the Long Interviews.

Knowledge Management, Learning Organisations and Action Learning have been reviewed as relevant sources for information which proved appropriate for organizational learning. Organisational learning has been defined by the researcher as the means for achieving excellence on a longitudinal basis. It is the belief of the researcher that educational institutions have to upgrade their efforts towards organizational learning which can add value to the traditional focus on teaching and research.

Action Learning, though not used as a research instrument, due to ethical issues related to the capacity of the researcher as the supervisor of prospective participants, is proposed as the appropriate process for learning whilst doing.

The primary research constitutes the second fold of the project. Three main categories of customers have been involved in the research process: (a) Students, (b) Faculty and (c) Employers (hospitality professionals). Two types of instruments have been used for collecting the information needed to study the factors affecting the quality in hospitality education and identify the parameters which can be used as the guidelines for developing a quality assurance system. The first instrument used is Focus Groups and the second one is Long Interviews. Focus Groups were employed to collect data from Faculty and Students, whereas Long Interviews have been conducted with hospitality employers and/or hospitality professionals.

## ***11.2 Conclusions and Recommendations***

### **11.2.1 Quality in Hospitality Education and Quality Assurance**

Hospitality education in Cyprus goes with the development of hospitality industry. At the same time, quality in hospitality education constitutes the driving force for the provision of quality hospitality services. Quality of both hospitality education and hospitality services enjoys much attention in Cyprus. However, specific tools to measure quality are missing.

Quality is directly related by both hospitality professionals and education players to customer satisfaction. Thus, communicating care and attention to customers enjoys attention as well.

Hospitality educational institutions have to develop and establish their own instruments to measure quality. To this effect, quality tools have to capture students' expectations and perceptions, the direct receivers of educational service, and the needs of hospitality employers.

Quality in hospitality education can be determined on a twofold basis:

- (a) On international standards already established by countries with long tradition in hospitality education and
- (b) On strategic decision on who the customers of hospitality education in Cyprus are.

Established international standards to be met require:

- State of the art curriculum
- Continuous improvement of methodology
- Continuous upgrading of instructors
- Balanced schedule of educational activities
- Organised tutoring
- Individualised attention through student services and empathy culture
- Facilities attention
- Established mechanism to capture students' perceptions on quality and the needs of hospitality industry.

Customers must be strategically selected and, therefore, a clearly defined mission of the educational institution has to be in existence and be revised, from time to time, on the basis of social and industrial needs. All parties involved in the educational process, i.e. Faculty, students, employers and other stake-holders should participate in the formulation of the mission. Student focus and industry needs constitute the driving forces to formulate the mission of the hospitality educational Institution.

The findings of the research and the outcomes of the project suggest a Total Quality approach to serve the interests of the primary customers of hospitality education, namely the Students and the Hospitality Industry. Therefore, effective mechanisms have to be permanently in force to identify the gaps between expectations and perceptions.

**In this sense, one of the primary objectives of the project is served: to seek improvement on a longitudinal basis.**

Improvement means change; thus, management of change has to be given much attention. Hospitality educational institutions have to establish mechanisms to identify areas for change and bring change as a means for quality improvement. Change has to be introduced in a structured way so that people can understand the type and rationale for change, participate in, and work for the change.

### **11.2.2 The Relationship of Hospitality Education with Society and Industry**

A hospitality educational institution, whether public or private, has to maintain and improve its competitive position in order to survive and thrive in pursuing its educational and wider role within the society.

To this effect, the mission of the Institution has to be formulated on the basis of the needs and expectations of the primary customers i.e. the students, employers, and the society as a whole. In order to serve its mission, the Institution has to study both the micro-and the macro-environment. On that basis, the strategy of the Institution has to be developed and communicated to all parties involved in the educational process. All parties have to be provided with supportive environment so that they will be able to work for the strategic planning of the Institution and implementation of strategy.

Channels of communication between education and Industry have to be developed so that information and critical thinking can be mutually exchanged at all times. Education should take the needs of the Industry into consideration and, at the same time, educate the industry on what adds value to the hospitality service, so that actual needs can be distinguished from mere demands.



**In the light of the above approach, the role of education is embodied within an amalgamated external and internal environment, and systemic thinking is encouraged. This is also one of the primary objectives of the project.**

The Human Factor is the core element for the success in Hospitality Industry. Educational institutions have to prepare professionals to work with team spirit, in a cross-cultural environment, and be able to orchestrate learning with competitiveness.

All parties involved in the process of hospitality education, i.e. faculty, students, and hospitality professionals, identified in the research the necessity **to encourage knowledge sharing between education and the hospitality industry. This is one of the objectives of the project as well.**

### **11.2.3 Student Focus**

Student should be the centre of education. This is a primary conclusion of the project. Although this is a self evident position, educational institutions have to orchestrate their activities towards the ultimate task of meeting students' expectations. They have to develop a mechanism to capture their expectations and perceptions. In this sense, they can evaluate the level of quality of their educational services since students are the direct receivers of the educational service.

Students' expectations turn to the content of their educational programmes, methods of delivery, faculty quality, timetables, exams schedules, lead time for studying, industrial training, empathy, responsiveness, communication and tangibles. They want to have voice on these issues, and educational institutions have to capitalize on the same to improve the quality of their educational service.

At the same time, hospitality educational institutions have to prepare consummate professionals who can be employable both locally and world-wide. To this effect, they have to offer their students an optimum balance of technical skills as well as general and professional education. A core issue in this connection is the conviviality aspect of hospitality service which helps in cultivating hospitality culture, an indispensable component of quality for the tourism product.

As far as the curriculum and methodology are concerned, educational institutions have to take into consideration the trends in the hospitality industry, the input of hospitality professionals and the learning styles of students.

#### **11.2.4 Organisational Learning**

The researcher has assigned organizational learning a core role in achieving excellence in hospitality education. This position is reflected in the title of the project, the literature review, the methodology used, the findings of the research and the quality manual that has been developed which is the final product of the overall project.

In the literature review, Knowledge Management, Learning Organisations, and Action Learning have been examined inter alia with the scope of identifying concepts and relevant information that can help in designing and pursuing research. Furthermore, the researcher has capitalized on relevant concepts and information to make the most of the importance of organizational learning in achieving excellence. This necessity has been served through the research tools i.e. focus groups with faculty and students and long interviews with hospitality professionals. Organisational learning constituted a part of the research.

All parties involved, i.e. faculty, students and hospitality professionals proved to be conscious about organizational learning, which enjoys a supplementary role in educational settings where learning is defined in traditional teaching and general study outcomes.

Based on the findings of the research, Learning in an educational setting comprises: (i) students' learning, (ii) students-teachers interaction, (iii) teachers-teachers interaction, (iv) interaction of management with teachers, staff, students and employers, (v) research and (vi) students' industrial training.

Knowledge Management is a means in the hands of both educational and hospitality managers to promote quality. Hospitality managers try, through Knowledge Management, to achieve quality. They establish "knowledge networks", and e-

learning communication systems, they develop succession plans, manuals and codes of practice, they apply internationally accepted standards and procedures i.e. ISO, they capitalize on group-work to solve problems, and they try through brain storming and problem solving to reveal tacit knowledge.

Hospitality educators can capitalize on the experience of hospitality professionals to improve quality in education. They can transplant both the knowledge being created in the industry and the ideas and concepts followed to improve their methodology and produce additional knowledge.

**Problem solving and learning through action are also among the primary objectives of the Project.**

Action Learning has been proposed as a useful tool to encourage participants to learn more about the issue at hand and the process of learning. It is a “hands on” approach to put dialogue into praxis. The fact that individuals inquire on behalf of the organization leads to organizational learning.

### **11.2.5 The Service Profit Chain**

The Service Profit Chain establishes relationships between “profitability”, “customer loyalty”, and “employee satisfaction, loyalty and productivity”. This model has been used by the researcher to examine the role of staff selection and development as a contributor to the profitability of hospitality industry.

Based on the findings of the research, hospitality industry applies structured mechanisms for staff selection and development. However, hospitality managers do not admit any effort to evaluate the input of this parameter to Internal Service Quality.

Given the fact that hospitality professionals acknowledge that the Service Profit Chain concept is a powerful tool in the attainment of quality standards and profitability in the business, there is enough room to employ this tool in order to attain the goals of employee satisfaction, loyalty and productivity which will in turn lead to customer loyalty and business profitability.

The Service Profit Chain model can be exploited further by businesses and researchers alike so as to turn its concepts into tangible benefits for their business and the Island's tourism industry at large. Furthermore, the Service Profit chain can bring together Education and Industry. It can function as a tool to evaluate the success of education since the employment of qualified staff and its development constitute key factors for quality services and profitability. To this effect, hospitality schools and hospitality businesses have to develop long-term synergies.

### **11.2.6 The Quality Manual as the Final Product of the Project**

On the basis of the literature review, the research done, and the analysis of findings, a manual has been developed which provides a quality assurance system for hospitality education. The manual provides a framework to strive for quality in a hospitality educational setting. It refers specifically to the Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus, but it is applicable to other similar educational institutions.

It is a detailed proposal to achieve excellence through organizational learning based on a Total Quality approach that aims at:

- improving organizational performance practices, capabilities, and results;
- facilitating communication and sharing of best practices from both within the Organisation and outside resources;
- exploiting opportunities for learning;
- driving learning to a competitive edge.

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# **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX I - MODERATOR'S DISCUSSION GUIDE

APPENDIX II - INTERVIEWS WITH HOSPITALITY  
EMPLOYERS/PROFESSIONALS

APPENDIX III - LIST OF INTERVIEWEES FROM THE HOSPITALITY  
INDUSTRY



# APPENDIX I - MODERATOR'S DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Qualitative Research on Quality in Hospitality Education in Cyprus

### Moderator's Discussion Guide

Welcome Respondents ... Ask each one to be introduced by giving their first Name.

- Explain that you will discuss various issues on quality in hospitality education and their attitudes towards them.
- They should feel at ease and be disclosed expressing their own opinions in the discussion that will follow.
- There is no right and wrong opinion and everyone should share their views with the group, even if they disagree with others.

### Introduction / Warm-Up

- Let's discuss hospitality education in general in Cyprus.  
How do you generally appraise hospitality education in Cyprus?
- How satisfied, in your opinion, is the (respective) student/faculty/staff/employer with the quality of hospitality education in Cyprus?  
What are the main concerns?
- How would you appraise hospitality education .....
- What are you satisfied about?
- What are you dissatisfied about?

## **Quality**

- What come to your mind when you hear the term quality being mentioned?
- What are the good things about quality?
- What are the dimensions of quality?

### **Quality in Education**

- How do you understand quality in education
- Try to define the dimensions which should be addressed by a Quality System in a hospitality School i.e. the Higher Hotel Institute, Cyprus.

## **1. Society and Industry**

1.1. Do you think that a corporate mission is important for the Institute?

1.1.2. What about reviewing the mission? (How often you review it?)

1.1.3. Who should participate in formulating the mission?

## **External Analysis**

1.2. What information from the external environment you think is of importance for the formulation of the strategy of the Institute?

## **Internal Analysis**

1.3. How can the Institute evaluate the success of its educational programmes?

1.3.1. Who should be involved in the analysis of data?

1.3.2. What do you understand by strategy?

1.3.2.1. What are the characteristics of a good strategy?

1.3.2.2. Who should participate in formulating the strategy?

1.4. How can the Institute measure quality?

## **2. Student (Focus on Student)**

### **2.1. Attractiveness**

- (a) What would you like to know about the educational institution at which you intend to study?

(For Non Students: What a candidate student would like to know .....)

- (b) Through which channels/ways would you like to be informed?

### **2.2. Relationship with the Student**

Which criteria should be met by an educational programme, so that this programme can be defined as a programme of quality?

### **2.3. Assessment by Student**

- (a) Through what data/surveys can the Institute capture the level of satisfaction of its students?

- (b) Do you think students should have saying in the educational process – if yes, in which aspects?

## **3. The Curriculum**

### **3.1.** What are in your opinion the main characteristics of a quality curriculum?

IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED SPONTANEOUSLY BY THE RESPONDENTS

ASK:

- Who should participate in designing the curriculum?
- What about recommend bibliography for different subjects?
- What about the projects required for each subject?
- What about practical material to be delivered?
- What about evaluations and results of previous years experience?
- What about the teaching method used?
- What about the input of the Industry?
- What about students' assessment?

## **4. The Faculty**

### **4.1.** What are the main characteristics of a quality Faculty?

IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED, ASK:

- What about their selection?
- What about their working framework?
- What about continuous training?

- What about Research Development?
- What about contact with the industry?

4.2. Do you think that a system in place should supervise and check the Faculty's knowledge and methodology with regard to the subject taught?

4.3. Do you think student should have input in assessing the Faculty?

## **5. The Infrastructure**

5.1. What do you understand by the term "infrastructure" in a hospitality educational setting?

5.2. Do you think that infrastructure plays a role in choosing to study at a specific Institute?

5.3. What should be taken into consideration when planning for infrastructure?

## **6. The Management**

6.1. It is argued that in an educational setting, and in tertiary education in particular, the role of management is of minimum value. What do you think about it?

Do you agree with this statement?

6.2. How do you interpretate the role of Management in case you don't agree with the above statement?

6.3. The business culture is a component of the management Process. Comment on that.

6.4. In a quality system all people at all levels of the organization should be involved.

6.5. Quality in education is a measurable concept. I would like to have your comments on that.

6.5.1. If you agree with the above statement what indicators/instruments can provide useful information?

## **7. LEARNING**

7.1. Learning faster than competitors is the driving force in achieving competitive edge.

I would like to have your comments on that.

7.2. How do you understand learning in a hospitality educational setting?

7.3. Knowledge is an asset that needs to be managed. If you agree with that suggest ways of knowledge management.

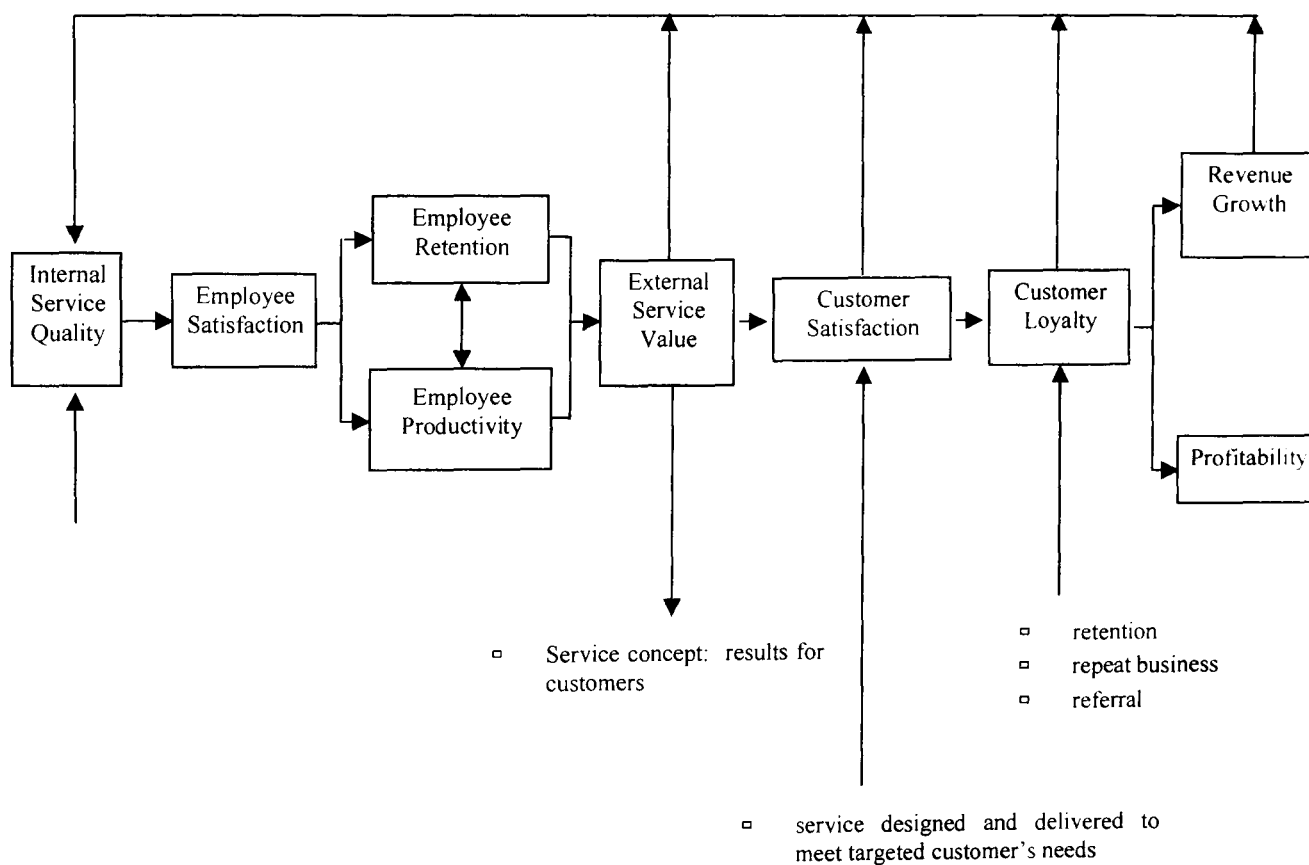
7.4. Knowledge management and quality assurance go together.  
I would like to have your comments on that.

## APPENDIX II - INTERVIEWS WITH HOSPITALITY EMPLOYERS/PROFESSIONALS

1. How do you assess hospitality education in Cyprus in general, and the education offered by the Higher Hotel Institute (HHIC), in particular?  
Do you think that any improvements are required, so that hospitality education can meet the needs of the Industry?
2. How do you understand quality in a hospitality educational setting?
3. Have you employed any graduates from HHIC? How do you assess their education/training? Did you need to offer any upgrading training to them? In which areas you offer the training?
4. Through what channels or tools hospitality educational institutions can get the messages of the Industry?
5. Very often it is argued that “Training of Human Resource is a very important factor for the success of a hospitality enterprise”.  
I would like to have your comments on that.
6. Learning faster than competitors is the driving force in achieving competitive edge.  
I would like to have your comments on that.
7. How do you understand learning in a hotel enterprise first, and in a hospitality educational setting, secondly?
8. Knowledge is an asset that needs to be managed. If you agree with that, please suggest ways of knowledge management.
9. Knowledge management and quality assurance go together.  
I would like to have your comments on that.
10. I am going to give you a model developed by James L. Heskett, a Harvard Professor, (see attachment).
  - Focusing on Selection and Development of employees, do you think that this dimension of internal quality makes a difference in your business results.
  - In what ways selection and development add value to your business performance?
  - Based on your experience in selection and development please give your suggestions on which areas the HHIC has to give emphasis, so that industry needs can be met.

## The Links in the Service Profit Chain

### Operating Strategy and Service Delivery System



Source: Heskett et al. (1994).

## **APPENDIX III - LIST OF INTERVIEWEES FROM THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

### **A' Five Star Hotels**

1. Kyriakos Thalassinos, Food and Beverage Manager, Venus Beach Hotel, Paphos.
2. Andreas Gregoriou, General Manager, Azia Hotel, Paphos.
3. Andreas Georghiou, Quality and Training Manager, Elysseum Hotel, Paphos.
4. Pambos Michael, General Manager, Coral Beach Hotel and Resort, Paphos.
5. Christos Zenios, General Manager, Louis Apolonia Beach, Limassol.
6. George Kassianos, Food & Beverage Manager, Annabelle, Paphos.
7. Demetris Demetriou, Manager, Paphos Amathus Beach, Paphos.
8. Andreas Loizou, Human Resource Manager, Fours Seasons Limassol.

### **B' Four Star Hotels**

9. Costas Zervos, General Manager, Saint George Hotel, Paphos.
10. Kyriakos Pirilos, Manager Mediterranean Beach, Limassol.
11. Onoufrios Onoufriou, General Manager, Alexander the Great, Paphos.
12. Renos Vasiliades, General Manager, Crown Resorts Horizon, Paphos.
13. Antonis Sivitanides, General Manager, Mayfair Hotels, Paphos.
14. Photis Georghiou, General Manager, Agapinor Hotel, Paphos.
15. Christos Spyrou, General Manager, Curium Palace, Limassol.
16. Christos Zenios, General Manager, Louis Imperial Beach, Paphos.
17. Christos Zenios, General Manager, Louis Phaethon Beach, Paphos.