Hospitality Graduates: An Employability Model
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ABSTRACT
The purpose of the study was to model the relationship between entry qualifications, academic performance, professional training, exit qualifications and employability for hospitality graduates. The research design involved a student data survey to examine the academic performance of 1139 students entering the School of Management Studies for the Service Sector (SMSSS), University of Surrey in UK and the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management (FHTM), University Teknologi MARA in Malaysia using database records for three years of entry.

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, ‘t’-tests, and regression analysis are used to analyse the data. Generally, at the 0.05 significance level, the results shows that entry qualification of the graduates of University of Surrey (UniS) and diplomates of University Teknologi MARA (UiTM), was not significantly related to academic performance and employability. However, a strong correlation was found for UiTM degree holders. Professional training was a poor determinant of success and employability. Exit qualification measured as class of degree enhanced graduates’ employability.

Since this was the first ever study of the relationship between academic performance and employability of hospitality graduates for UK and Malaysia, some suggestions were proposed for the institutions, educators and industry to further help nurture the employability of graduates entering the world of work. The outcomes of this study led to the development of an employability model for hospitality management graduates. The model can be applied in the ongoing evaluation of performance and employability in hospitality management education programmes.

Keywords: Hospitality graduates, employability, model, labour market

INTRODUCTION
The rapid growth of international tourism in Asia and the Pacific over the years has generated not only income for the countries involved, but also enormous employment opportunities (Goldsmith and Zahari, 1994). Employment in the tourism industry in Malaysia is quite high. It is reported in 1999 that the total direct tourism employment rose 22 percent from 113,819 to 138,943 (Tourism Malaysia, 1999). In 2000, the majority of hospitality employees are Malaysian (Tourism Malaysia, 2002). This is in contrast to the situation of two decades earlier when employers had an over-reliance on expatriate management in key jobs. It was the practice to recruit managers, senior executives and executive chefs from abroad (Goldsmith and Zahari, 1994), while locals filled only lower level positions.

Given the importance of the hospitality industry as an employer in Malaysia, research into employability in the industry has a practical relevance. The government commitment through the introduction of the hospitality apprenticeship programme under the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) in 1996 (HRDC, 1998) and the introduction of undergraduate courses at UiTM one year earlier reduced the so called lack of co-ordination (Goldsmith and Zahari, 1994) between the industry, training institutions and Government. This had led to the establishment of a trade skill standard that universally recognised hospitality criteria of excellence (HRDC, 1999; Goldsmith and Zahari, 1994)
Importance of the Study

“Better preparation in education for working life is an important way of facilitating the transitions to stable and satisfying employment. Employers and employees benefit from good job preparation in terms of obtaining, keeping and changing jobs (Van Loon, 1981 p7).”

The notion that it is desirable for graduates of universities and colleges of further and higher education to be employable at the end of their education has become a basic tenet in many areas such as in education, training, psychology and human resource management (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). As the United Kingdom (UK) Further Education Development Agency (FEDA)(2000) reported, there is little consensus on how to conceptualise, measure, or explain employability. This is not a surprise since suggestions and models for employability are still not clearly articulated, and the potential number of models that can be generated by researchers appears limitless. Researchers now are nearing a greater commonality of understanding of ‘employability’ and are extending that through contingency approaches on its conceptualisation (Hughes & Stoner, 2000).

The above debate will help answer some questions about graduate outcomes. For example, if students do well on their course, how is this related to their entry and exit qualifications? How are graduate outcomes related to their academic performance and progression? To what extent do their entry qualifications relate to their exit qualifications and subsequent job? How true are the remarks that employers still value students’ skills and personal traits more than academic grades and academic reputations? How true is the belief that having employability skills and competences increase the probability of career success?

With these matters in mind, it is important and relevant to analyse and measure the preparedness of students for employment as they enter the world of work from their educational institutions. Such an evaluation will obviously benefit future students as well as informing the providing institutions in their efforts to maintain continuous improvement in provision of courses. At the same time it should help to improve the match between the skills of graduates and the requirements of industry.

Understanding Employability

As postulated earlier, although the term employability has been the subject of various explorations, there is still little consensus on the meaning of employability (Hughes, 2000). Requoting the UK’s Confederation of British Industry’s (CBI) definition from FEDA (2000 p3), employability means “the possession by an individual of the qualities and competences required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers and thereby realise his or her aspirations and potential work”. The idea of ‘potential work’ includes the gain of initial employment capacity, the ability to stay in employment, and the ability to get new employment when it is required (Hillage & Pollard, 1999 in FEDA, 2000).

Employability can be interpreted differently by different groups of people. From the occupational psychology point of view, employability is continual “upskilling” and lifelong learning (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; OECD, 2000). It is the security of the future and the certainty that current job functions would increase the opportunities for work in the future. It promotes a new psychological contract, a collaborative relationship between employees and employers (Basile, 1997; Kluytmans & Ott, 1999) where employees seek to retain the ability to obtain work and employers will in return create opportunities to realise the employees’ ambition.
Employability

Within the working setting, Kluytmans & Ott (1999) illustrated a model (Figure 1) on the components of employability. They claimed that the know-how and skills are applicable in whatever situation, whether within or outside the organization or branch. With any changes in the structure of the organisation or any job disappearance, they said that the employee must be willing and have the opportunity to move around to enhance their skills and at the same time be adaptive to changes. The adaptation to changes is an attribute of labour market know-how, since regular exchange of information through networking and being current increases one’s employability, as one knows how to present oneself.

On the graduate labour market side, employability is viewed as work preparation, job readiness, and work know how. (Hughes, 2000; Fenton, 2000) In the area of skills and competences, employability includes transferable skills (Bailey, 1990; Hughes, 1999), basic skills, personal skills, social skills, creative skills (Hughes, 2000; Hughes and Stoner, 2000) and life skills. Looking from the education and training perspective, employability is visualised in terms of a learning partnership (e.g. sandwich programmes), which includes vocational skills, generic skills, job specific skills, foundation skills (literacy and numeracy), core skills, and key skills (Clarke, 1997; Hughes, 2000; LSDA, 2000).

To Harvey (2001, p98), employability means ‘the propensity of the individual student to get employment’. He argued that the contribution to that propensity is not clear. In answering the question ‘What is it that employable graduates have that others do not’, Harvey believed that it is not so much in term of skills, but it is the attributes, qualities and dispositions as well. Holmes (2001, p98) points out, ‘what appears to be as employability in the final year course might not translate into workplace effectiveness.’

Hughes & Stoner (2000, p14) commented in summary that employability is not only about employment preparation, but “..

- the transfer into employment from education and training
- the progression in employment
- adapting to change
- the transfer of skills from one setting to another
- development of skills at work, and
- transition from periods of unemployment to employment.”

Figure 1: Components of employability

Source: Kluytmans & Ott, 1999
As practise in the UK, employability is ascribed to higher education institutions: league tables, for example, rank institutions on the basis of the employment rates of their graduates (Taylor, 1986; Harvey, 2001; Woodley and Brennan, 2000).

Figure 2: ‘Magic bullet’ model.

Harvey (2001) discusses the attempts made to measure graduate employment rates in assessing institutional employability effectiveness through a ‘magic bullet’ model of the impact of higher education on employment. According to him, it is implicitly assumed that the higher education institution provides employability-development opportunities that enable the graduate to develop employability and get employed (see Figure 2).

Undeniably, higher education institutions provide a range of employability-development opportunities for students including development of attributes, self-presentation skills, encouraging to learn and awareness to continue learning (Harvey, 2001). It was suggested that an alternative approach in measuring the institutional employability effectiveness is by auditing the extent of employability-development opportunities made available to students within the institution that identifies the work-experience opportunities and the attribute-development opportunities explicitly embedded in the curriculum, including job-seeking and job-getting skills.

In summary, the above debates on employability encompass within three areas, (1) the preparation for work, (2) the employment progress in work, and (3) assessing institutional employability. The first view correlates with the context of this study in which employability is looked at as the outcome of the stages of education, with the main agenda being the preparation of students for employment. It is the process of transition from education and training to employment, where the students were exposed to the real world through professional training, which is the groundwork for the adaptation to changes, and a vehicle for the transferability of skills from one setting to another. The components of the employability concept are described later in the chapter.

Employability of Hospitality Graduates

The term graduate in the study refers to the ex-students who had graduated and were no longer enrolled and not to be mistaken with postgraduate students or graduates (of any institution) attending employment related short courses.

Why study hospitality graduates? Unlike other disciplines, which are more established and better developed with a long history of knowledge accumulation (Soh, 1996), hospitality has a fundamental problem which is its relative immaturity in academia as a field of study (Soh,
1996). Its shallow base of knowledge often renders it inferior added with the complex nature of the industry (Wade, 1999).

As Go (1990, cited in Soh, 1996, p65) put it, ‘the integration of the diverse groups in tourism industries (where hospitality is said to be) has been hindered because the industries do not have a common product and are linked only by the shared customer, the tourist’. So much so, there is little agreement between government, industry and academics as to what actually constitutes the hospitality disciplines (Cooper et al, 1994), therefore, the needs of training and education activities are difficult to be identified comprehensively (Soh, 1996) thus, potentially hindering the educational provision.

Some obstacles that have slowed down the educational provision in hospitality are specific to the various participants i.e. the hospitality industry itself, the employers and the students or graduates. Firstly, the general image of the hospitality industry is pervaded by low pay and wages, exploitative and degrading work conditions (NEDC, 1991; Soh, 1996; Doherty, 2002), high employee turnover, offering few opportunities for skills acquisition, promotion, training, qualifications and career advancement (Eschhaikul and Baum, 1998). Cooper et al (1994) commented that as a profession, the hotel industry is perceived as possessing narrow prospects which require a set of specific skills with low levels of substitution, and that it is mostly followed by low-achievers. A report by the Council for the Hospitality Management Education (CHME) expressed concern over the poor image in term of poor pay in some jobs and some sectors, the very long working hours, the perception of age discrimination and the immature development of equal opportunities programmes (Doherty et al. 2001). “The industry’s poor image impedes educated people from pursuing careers in the hospitality and tourism industry” (Eschhaikul and Baum, 1998 p361).

Second, there is an inevitable lack of understanding on the part of employers of the benefits of education. Soh (1996) pointed some barriers such as;
  - lack of recognition for qualifications in the positioning of graduates upon employment (also pointed out by NEDC, 1991).
  - lack of career prospects due to weak labour market.
  - lack of want to employ graduates with little practical skills.

Third, when hospitality operations acquire new managers from hospitality management institutions, these formally educated graduates come fundamentally equipped with inert knowledge (i.e. definitions, principles, and concepts) about the hospitality industry (Feinstein and Mann, 1998). Common curriculum requirements in hospitality provide students with good understanding of the formal techniques associated with the specifications of a product, costing of a menu, rules of safety and sanitation, concept of business marketing and the like (Feinstein and Mann, 1998; Knutson and Patton, 1992).

Moreover, the experience obtained through placement in the industry may be inadequate in preparing the graduates to deal effectively with many situations they will encounter in the job. The skills needed to understand the dynamic nature of hospitality operations are typically learned through brief training periods where the trainee works alongside hourly employees or shadows a manager (Woods, 1990; Feinstein and Mann, 1998).

Finally, where do hospitality graduates go? Johns and McKechnie (1995) reported that only 50 percent of graduates choose careers within the industry. What happened to the other 50 percent? Thus, a study on their academic performance, attributes, education and employment outcomes is inevitable.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Education
The early education discussed in this study refers to the stages of the education process en route to completion of secondary and/or post secondary education prior to employment or furthering higher education.

Soh (1996) stated that education by definition could be considered as, ‘a process that gives the individual a set of principles, not detailed application’. It is used to facilitate the provision of a set of tools for interpretation, evaluation and analysis of new knowledge in an unbiased manner, by developing the critical capabilities of the student (Cooper et al, 1994 in Soh, 1996). The emphasis is based upon gaining core transferable skills, which allows application into individual contexts within an overall perspective.

For example, the aim of England’s Department of Education and Skills (DfES) in providing early education is: (i) to give excellent education to children as a foundation for future learning, and (ii) to enable young people to develop and equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work (DfES, 2001).

“Education has become heavily committed to communicating existing knowledge to the new generation; it has become committed to producing the ‘knowledgeable man.’” (Raven, 1980, p32)

Entry Qualification
The word qualification can mean the simple completion of a level of schooling and perhaps, a standard of performance. The skills and knowledge acquired can be applied to parts of a wide range of occupations and so constitute a general ‘qualification’ (Oxenham, 1984, p21). The general qualification also has an important role as a prerequisite to qualifications for specific occupations. It acts as an official requirement that must be met to be eligible for a privilege, in this case entry to higher education.

Entry to higher education shall be through evidence of academic qualifications aimed at assessing academic achievement and potential. It is based primarily on test scores and high school performance. These measures should properly be used to predict students’ grades; however, their de facto use is in choosing who will most likely graduate. Murphy (1999) in her study of predicting college graduations in the US found that the best predictors of college graduation are the number of terms enrolled and the mean hours earned per term, not the grades earned, even though cumulative grades are the third best predictor. According to Murphy, if grades are not the best predictors of success in college, then the admissions process should not rely solely on test score and high school rank.

Society had made a commitment to high uniform standards in its requirement both for entering the system of higher education, as well as for the successful completion of the work towards a degree (Trow, 1981). Standards are an issue because of the belief that the quality of an institution is reflected in the quality of its students entry (Parry and Wake, 1990). It is the principle for the admission tutors to possibly attract the best students, and this perception of excellence permeates the educational system. What matters is the quality of graduate output and not that of the intake. Indeed, as institutions with comparatively low entry requirements are fond of asserting, there is more merit in achieving a high proportion of ‘good’ degree classes (1sts and Upper seconds) for a poor intake than for a highly selected one (Fulton, 1981; Fulton and Ellwood, 1989). The aim is to select students who will have the best results at the end of their course.
Academic Performance

Concern with the academic performance has increased during recent years. This is due to much publicised growth of the student population, which outstripped the expansion of facilities, thus heightening the competition for admission, especially to the better universities and colleges of higher education (Pitcher and Purcell, 1998).

The source of interest in the prediction of academic performance is the growth of course programmes designed to identify and support the training of students with outstanding talents (McKenzie and Schweitzer, 2001). Early research on this subject focused primarily on intellective ability factors (Lavin, 1965; Holder and Wankowski, 1980; Watson and Monroe, 1990) as predictors. Recently there have been important shifts in emphasis and in the conceptualisation of the problem due to the recognition that some students perform better and some students perform worst. The search for causes of these variations in academic performance led to non-intellective or personal characteristics, and social environment (Lavin, 1965; Holder and Wankowski, 1980; Hannan et al. 1996; Ineson and Kempa, 1997; Holmes, 2000 & 2001; Martinot and Monteil, 2000) besides the fore mentioned intellective ability factors. It is pertinent to explore the concept of performance before focusing on the academic performance or to be exact the prediction of academic performance.

Concept of Performance

Performance in the learning discourse was conceptualised by Holmes (2000, 2001) According to Holmes (2000), the notion of “performance” has a central place in the contemporary discourse of learning and competence, used to translate abstract ideas and ideals of lifelong learning, organizational learning, learning society, etc., into practical measures. He conferred that changes in performance provide the identifiable measures that learning has taken place, and as evidence of enhanced competency or capability.

No doubt that, different versions of the learning and competence/capability agenda may place different emphases upon the extent to which such performance changes may be predetermined or are essentially emergent, but the assumption remains that “performance provides the basis for attribution that learning has (or has not) taken place (Holmes, 2000, p256).”

Holmes argued that performance cannot be taken as transparent evidence of learning. Rather the attribution of performance is itself the outcome of situated acts of interpretation, essentially contestable and negotiated, subject to reinterpretation and renegotiation (Holmes, 2000).

Traditionally, academic performance refers to some method of expressing a student’s scholastic standing (Lavin, 1965). It is defined by the gap between the level of academic achievement and the expected educational outcome. Usually this is measure as grade of a course, an average for a group of courses in a subject area, or an average of all courses expressed on a 0-to-100 or quantitative scale. The average (some uses grade-point average) is then taken as the measure of academic performance. This is the measure practiced widely by educational institutions. Sometimes measure of performance uses a standardised achievement test or is evaluated on a verbal scale ranging from “excellent” to “poor” (Borde, 1998; Hannan et al. 1996; Henriksson and Wolming, 1998). Grades are unquestionably an index of competence in educational works, and the reliance on their applicability is not unimportant.

Evidently, a student’s grade or marks is more than something that characterises them as does their scores on a personality inventory or an intelligence test. A grade should be viewed as a function of the interaction between student and educator (Lavin, 1965). To predict a grade, one must know not only about the student (ability, personality, values), but also the educator as well (Lavin, 1965; McKenzie and Schweitzer, 2001).
The academic performance of students are greatly influenced by the intellectual ability (cognitive) as well as the non-intellectual aspects (psychosocial, demographic, and personality characteristics). Material is learned, but skills and abilities must be developed. There are evidence that previous performance and school level serve as a significant predictor of performance. Integration into university, self-efficacy, and employment responsibilities and commitment were also predictive of university grades (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001; Henriksson and Wolming, 1998; Borde, 1998).

Personality, social class, and school education all have noticeable effect on achievement at university, what is not so clear is how they have that effect. Personality is affecting students in their degree study rather than there being some “carry over” effect from personality affecting their school studies. Excellent in school does not correlate with excellent in university.

Professional Training

Over the past decade, the number of articles discussing hospitality professional training has been considerable (Kotschevar, 1993; Farley & Vorwald, 1993; Lefever & Withiam, 1998; Van Hoof, 2000). Publications have appeared on what is expected from professional training, on how industry feels about student work experience and on what students would like to get out of their attachment in industry. It is regarded as a valuable learning tool and student experience (Van Hoof, 2000) and had become an important component of hospitality education curricula. Prior job experience and professional training was mentioned as the effective way to help students make the transition from academia to industry.

The importance of professional training in hospitality curriculum was examined by Petrillose and Montgomery (1997/1998). Their study was to ascertain the ability of the hospitality and tourism management education in higher education institution to provide professional training opportunities to students. They investigated the learning objectives, requirements of participation, assessment criteria, educators and industry involvement and the circular issues and revealed that the most important professional training components were:

- Real world experience, leadership skills, initiative, and judgement.
- Exposure to industry
- Customer/employee relations
- Important recruitment tool for those successful in the professional training programme.

Exit Qualification

“The need to raise standards and levels of achievement in education and training is essential both for individual’s success and for wider national success in competing in the international economic markets.” (QCA, 2001, p1)

Degree

What are employing organisations looking for in graduates from the higher education system? What does the graduate have that the non-graduate does not have? Are employers clear about which qualities graduates are likely to have? What is the potential? Is it equal between diploma and degree? Do employers value the degree for its academic worth, as a graduate school might, or is it ‘value added’ to other non-academic qualities. Thus, this study took the effort in answering these questions.

Higher educational qualifications as a prerequisite for entry to occupations that previously recruited non-graduates may reflect the requirement of greater knowledge and skill (Pitch and Purcell, 1998). Pitch and Purcell (1998) stated that pre-entry qualifications relate closely to the intrinsic knowledge and competences of the job, whilst in others, possession of a degree is assumed by the employer to guarantee particular levels of intelligence, transferable skills and the capacity to acquire the necessary specialist competence which the job entails (Purcell and Quinn, 1996).
Degree is the alteration of the general expectation (employers’ and individuals) of the experience of higher education. Moved from one where the community trusted the university to develop the individual through creative and innovative engagement within a discipline and academic rigour was the judge of success to one where competencies for employment hold way and are the measured starting salaries (ABS, 1995).

**Graduate Labour Market**

Roizen and Jepson (1985) in their analysis of the graduate labour market relate it with several theories; (1) looking at higher education as a screening or filtering process, and (2) looking at higher education as essential to the development of human capital. They added that both seek to explain the positive correlation between educational achievement and earnings. In describing the link between educational achievement and earnings, Roizen and Jepson commented that the most sustained link between higher education institutions and employing organisations is the actual recruitment exercise. Decision taken in recruitment reflects employer expectation and employers’ values about higher education more clearly than anything else.

**Hospitality Job**

Looking at the nature of the hospitality industry which ranges from international corporations to the self-employed independent operator, thus the employment characteristic mirror the operational needs (Henley Centre, 1996). It is often considered to be an unsociable employment industry (Henley Centre, 1996) as the demands reflect the seasonal and leisure demands of the customers. The staff are often temporary, seasonal, part-time and shift workers, thus affects the image as a low paid, low status industry. However, the requirements are increasing for high professional and customer service skills. Globalisation and growing competition from foreign entrants increase the need for professionalism to facilitate growth.

Ladkin’s study in 2000, shows that hotel and catering qualification is the dominant qualification held by managers in the hospitality industry, and that college route proved its worth and can make a recognised contribution to career development. A higher level of education appears to ensure entry into the industry at the assistant manager level and a lower level of education begins at supervisor or department head grades (Ladkin, 2000). In the relatively recent history of degree provision, 20-30% of managers are graduates and 70-80% of managers are non-graduates (Lashley, 2002).

**Salary**

Pay or salary, according to Torrington and Hall (1998) is basically a transaction, as an employer pays certain amount of money for generally specified time, skills and commitment. Salary is also a label, a status symbol and a determinant of our living standard (Torrington & Hall, 1998). *Salaried posts are for what you are and for what you do.*

In the new graduate context, the distribution of the money to the graduate is based on performance. Performance normally takes into account the graduate academic records, academic output and service activities. As today’s payment trend is towards performance, it is also based on assessment. An assessment is a trend rewarding output rather than input (Torrington and Hall, 1998). Graduate view payment as purchasing power, felt-fair (whether the pay was fair for the job), rights, relativities in comparison with other individuals of the same level and rank, recognition and composition (Smith et al, 2000). In the issue of compensation, Avgoustis & Brothers (1993) reported that graduates do have realistic expectations and are aware of the industry’s reputation of underpaying its managers despite long working hours, high stress levels, and large amounts of work performed daily. They also claim high level of qualification, will earn more money.
Research Objectives
It is postulated that the nature of the education and training of students will influence their employability. Thus, the purpose of undertaking this study is to investigate the possible relationships between pre-entry qualifications, academic performance, professional training and perceived competences and ultimately, employability, or in this context the students’ level of preparedness for employment. An evaluation of these factors could be used to develop and refine the curricula in hospitality schools, and the nature of any integrated professional training / internship or ‘stage’.

In order to achieve the aims of the project as described above, the objectives of the study are to investigate the possible relationships between the nature of the curriculum, the student performance as measured at various points, and the students’ employability after graduation.

The factors to be examined include:-
- The relationship between entry qualifications and performance on the programme, final assessment and employability.
- The relationship between academic performance and progress, and students’ employability
- The relationship between practicum or professional training, and employability.

Conceptual Employability Model

Figure 3: Proposed graduate employability model (GEM)

At this juncture, the conceptual model is presented to refresh the reader on the purpose of this study. Figure 3 illustrates the proposed employability model for hospitality graduates. This performance indicator model aims to investigate the relationship between ‘input’ (entry qualification), ‘process’ (in Higher education setting – includes academic performance and professional training), ‘output’ (exit qualification), and ‘outcome’ (the employment setting - job and salary).

Prior to finalising the six variables (entry qualification, academic performance, professional training, exit qualification, job and salary) selected to be evaluated and measured in the proposed model, several other variables i.e. personal attributes, age, gender, learning styles, as well as teaching styles were also explored. However, due to the number of these variables and their behavioural nature, together with the time constraint, these variables were not taken forward.

Hypotheses
At this stage the hypotheses are presented. Figure 4 illustrates the employability path hypotheses. There were three hypotheses:
Thus, the research hypothesized that:

H1: GOOD entry qualifications (EQP) lead to HIGH academic performance (AP) – P1, resulting with HIGH degree class (EXQ) – P3, promises REPUTABLE job (JOB) – P5, with EXCELLENT salary (SAL) – P6.

H2: Professional Training (PT) enhances academic performance (AP) – P2, affects exit qualification (EXQ) – P4, and influences job (JOB) – P6.

H3: First class achievers are better than upper second and lower second class in relation to securing jobs on graduation

Research Methods
The purpose of the study was to model the relationship between entry qualifications, academic performance, professional training, exit qualifications and employability for hospitality graduates. The research design involved Student Data Survey, and the study examined the academic performance of 1139 students entering the School of Management Studies for the Service Sector (SMSSS), University of Surrey in UK and the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management (FHTM), University Teknologi MARA in Malaysia using database records for three years of entry.

The population for the data collection was the whole cohort of students graduating from year 1999 to year 2001, from two institutions that is; University of Surrey (UniS) in United Kingdom, and University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Malaysia. In UK, the cohorts were those graduated with Bachelors in Hotel and Catering Management, and Bachelors in International Hospitality and Tourism Management from SMSSS of UniS. The first cohort enrolled in 1995 and graduated in 1999, the last cohort enrolled in 1997 and graduated in 2001. Some undergo three-year and some 4-year programmes, which include a professional training year.

In Malaysia, the cohorts were those graduated with Bachelor in Hotel Management, Bachelor in Food Service Management, Diploma in Hotel Management and Diploma in Food Service Management from Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management of UiTM. The first cohort of the Diploma enrolled in 1996 and graduated in 1999 and the last cohort enrolled in 1998 and graduated in 2001. For the degree courses, the first cohort enrolled in 1997 and graduated in 1999, and the last cohort enrolled in 1999 and graduated in 2001.
Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, ‘t’-tests, and regression analysis are used to analyse the data.

Result

The operational variables were principally entry qualification point (EQP) and examination overall scores. The crucial measurement is the highest score in EQP and scores at final year. Upon testing the hypothesis, the following result emerged:

UniS Degree Students

It is suggested that the entry qualifications for UniS were simply acting as criteria for admitting candidates onto the programme, but did not predict their subsequent academic performance and achievement. On the other hand, the entry qualifications for UiTM diploma and degree were factors that determined their subsequent academic performance. Moreover, the entry qualification for UiTM degree was determined by the grades attained after completing the diploma which might be considered as having similar set of disciplines and practices to those pursued, albeit at a higher level, in the degree course. They are “the cream of the crop”; thus it was not unexpected that this entry qualification might be a determinant for their subsequent academic performance and achievement.

Academic performance at the earlier levels or semesters appeared to be determinant factors to subsequent academic achievement. Academic performance through the programme was also the determinant factor for the final degree class. Performance during the final year or level at UniS determined the degree class. Similarly, academic performance through the programme was linked to academic success at UiTM. However, which semester contributed the most towards academic performance remains elusive since UiTM practiced the cumulative grade point average format in determining the overall achievement of graduates and the class of degree or diploma.

Interestingly, there is contradictory evidence about the link between academic performance and degree class and job and salary. For UniS degree and UiTM diploma their academic achievement alone clearly did not determine their job and salary. However to the contrary, for the UiTM degree, academic achievement seems to be the determinant to their job and salary. However, it would be wise to report here that the majority of the respondents in the job and salary data of UiTM degree, almost 50 percent of them were those employed by UiTM as teaching assistants and assistant lecturers. Their salary levels were a reflection of the government pay scale and did not reflect the industry norm.

Professional Training

The study found that marks or high grade point average combined with a high degree of field based experience had a significant effect on perceptions of performance. It might be assumed that if working part-time in a related field benefit the students, then undergoing professional training would further enhance and strengthen their labour market readiness and employability skills. The objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between professional training and employability. As postulated earlier, professional training enhanced and influenced academic performance, and affected class of degree.

Evidence from the correlation models, shows that there were relationships between professional training (PT) and other variables such as Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 at UniS; Semester 1, 2, 3 4 and 6 at UiTM Diploma; and exit qualifications (Appendix 1 to 3). It was reported that professional training influenced job (employment). However, this study revealed that there was no direct correlation between professional training and job or salary. Professional training was not correlated with Job and Salary. It is safe to assume that professional training did enhance student’s academic performance especially towards the final year achievement. In the diploma programme at UiTM, professional training is part of the curricula thus the contribution toward
academic achievement was very significant. This was illustrated in Appendix 2 & 3. Again we might assumed that Professional Training was a known attribute of the graduate and this alone might impress future employers.

**Class of Degree, Job and Salary**

The study found that exit qualifications (measured by degree class attainment) were not correlated to job and salary (as seen in Appendix 1 to 3). A first class degree does not always indicate getting “first class job” or “first class salary”. Furthermore, there is a possibility that a first class achiever could choose to further their study to postgraduate level. Evidently, the class of degree was not the determinant factor for a highly paid job in the industry.

By separating between upper and lower division of Second class achiever – the lower division had an equal chance obtaining job in the operation management level as the upper second class division and first class degree holder. The study revealed that students obtaining a first class degree were more likely to get jobs in the operations management or specialist category. For those gaining an upper second they were more likely to go into an operation management job that a supervisory one. While for those with a lower second there was an equal balance between management and supervisory positions.

A cross-tabulation between class of degree and salary level shows that the majority of upper second achiever earns between GBP12,000 to GBP20,000 in UK and MYR12,000 to MYR21,000 in Malaysia. Lower second achiever also got GBP12,000 to GBP20,000 but MYR9,000 to MYR18,000 in Malaysia. First class achiever earns from GBP20,000 and below in UK and MYR24,000 and below in Malaysia. The differences between class of degree and salary level were not significant.

For UiTM Diploma, majority diplomate’s classifications were lower second division followed by upper second division. Their first job were in the supervisory and operational category taking home MYR12,000 and below. High percentage of the second class achiever (both upper and lower division) and first class achiever tend to further their study into degree programmes.

For the final hypothesis that says:

**First class achievers are better than upper second and lower second class in relations to securing job on graduation.** The study revealed that the chances of getting the appropriate job with appropriate salary were equal between first, upper second or lower second, in fact there was some evidence that third class achievers also got jobs of the same category and salary level. Thus, the above hypothesis was rejected. First class degree holders were equal in securing job with upper second and lower second class achiever.

**Employability Correlation Path Model**

Figure 5 presented the overall outcome of the statistical testing of the model. Clearly, there is no positive correlation between EQ and AP (i.e. between input and process). Statistically significant positive correlations were detected in the process, between AP and PT. Similarly positive correlations were also traced between process and output, between AP and EXQ, and between PT and EXQ. No positive correlation was revealed between output and outcome, that is between EXQ and JOB, and between JOB and SAL.
These findings supported the nature of the proposed employability model (Figure 3) which was a correlation model and not a causal model. The Input (Entry qualification) could not be said to 'cause' the Process (academic performance) but was correlated. The correlation between the two variables revealed that entry qualifications might or might not have an effect on the overall performance of student in a hospitality education programme. Academic performance (Process) influenced exit qualifications (Output). However, Output did not cause Outcome (employment -job and salary). It can be said that Output was correlated to Outcome.

As a summary, the proposed graduate employability model was partly validated as a reasonable model for hospitality graduates. Whilst there were direct influences between academic performance, professional training, and exit qualification there were no direct influences between these three variables and entry qualification, job and salary. However, this same model could be used for further research in a wider variety of hospitality education programmes as well as other discipline setting for validity and applicability.

**Implication**

1. A number of other control variables are suggested to be in the analysis of the graduate employability. These include: course characteristics (e.g. duration), and characteristics of the department in which the student studied (e.g. staff-student ratio, level of expenditure, and proportions of student gender).
2. This study should be replicated with more representative samples from the population of hospitality industry professionals. This study was limited to only industry professional listed in the Hotel and Catering Institutional Management Association (HCIMA) membership and Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) and Malaysia Food Services Industries. Corporate recruiters or directors of human resources of the largest hospitality companies could be surveyed to obtain more generalizable result.
3. It would be clearly of interest to look at the linguistic ability at all stages or levels or semesters rather than specifically at entry level only.
4. It is viewed that further study as desirable outcomes and this should be reflected in the analysis of graduate performance. Further work might usefully examine the subsequent career paths of postgraduate students.
5. Finally, it might be useful that this study be extended to determine the perceptions of the educators and industry professional about where the subject areas and general management knowledge/skills can be learned, in school, on the job during training and development, or by individuals themselves.
6. Similarly, it may be that this study be extended to include samples of hospitality students. No research has analysed the opinions of students and inputs from alumni. These
individuals may have different insights than educators and industry professionals about the importance of subject areas.

7. Critically, it might be of great importance to decision makers in education to look at the absence of any clear link between entry qualifications and performance especially in hospitality programme and re-evaluate the effectiveness of admission criteria and entry credentials. This may be particularly important in the light of current concerns around the widening participation agenda, which might encourage non-traditional students to apply for courses.

Overall, “Graduate should leave higher education better, than when they enter (Knight, 2001, p94).” Knight added further that, good quality higher education leads to good jobs, or if the labour market is difficult, to employability. This was the basis that this research study was conducted.

Appendices

Appendix 1: UniS Graduate (Overall) Correlation Model

**Significant at p<0.01   *Significant at p<0.05
Appendix 2: UiTM Degree (Overall) Correlation Model

**Significant at p<0.01    *Significant at p<0.05

Appendix 3: UiTM Diploma (Overall) Correlation Model

**Significant at p<0.01    *Significant at p<0.05
REFERENCES


