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# The importance of examining philosophical relationships between tourism and hospitality curricula

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## Abstract

In an effort to understand the base differences between tourism and hospitality academic programmes, it is important to understand their philosophical relationships. Different types of philosophies will give rise to different orientations. The differential orientations often lead to conflicts. These conflicts are not usually understood in terms of basic philosophical differences, but are seen as a perceptual distinction. This translates to the real world in that many tourism and hospitality professionals have strong feelings about each other that lead to professional misunderstandings. These differences in philosophy also have important ramifications for curricula, course structure, or the instructional philosophies. The purpose of this article is to examine the philosophical relationships between tourism and hospitality academic programmes and their implications, especially for curricular design. This type of philosophical modelling will help obtain a better perspective on the design of courses that have a general thematic structure to improve the preparations programmes in tourism and hospitality.

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## Introduction

There have been a few articles dealing with the construction and development of curricula for tourism and hospitality baccalaureate academic programmes (Breiter and Clements, 1996; Echtner, 1995; Hsu, 1996; Hundmand and Hawkins, 1989; Lawson, 1974; O'Halloran and O'Halloran, 1992). Most of these reviews, or studies, examine course work or competencies from a practitioner and/or academic perspective. One of the forgotten elements in these examinations is the philosophical relationship underlying tourism and hospitality. McIntosh *et al.* (1995) have summarized nine methods that have been used in studying tourism. These methods still focus on instructional approaches and not on philosophical relationships between tourism and hospitality. Instructional approaches may help teachers in content and style, but they do not provide the academic units with the positioning of their educational goal and the foundation for courses on offer. It is essential to examine the philosophical relationships so that the foundations of the course work and the competencies developed by the students are on a firm, long-term base. The philosophical underpinnings for curricula will not change where the courses that are offered often change, based on trends that exist within the practitioner and academic communities. A philosophical position is not the same as goal and objective development. A statement of goals and objectives expresses what you wish to do; a philosophy position is a statement on why you want to do it. Further, philosophy deals with the high-level whys – the “controlling principles” (cause and effect) – not the lesser whys which are the identification of relationship and type of outcome. For example, in tourism and hospitality programmes one might specify “learning the meaning of ‘role’” as an objective and give a philosophy for this objective such as, “Understanding ‘role’ is a prerequisite to analysing the relationships of these two

programmes. For example, in a hospitality and tourism programme which provides hospitality management and tourism management courses, then, do we need to teach hotel management in a tourism management course? Or do we need to teach casino management in a hospitality management course? Thus, a philosophical position may be useful to academic units. In a pluralistic society, it is important that the formal educational institution makes its position clear. The reason is manifest. The programme frequently suffers from attacks – from the left, from the right, from those who want more authoritarianism in the programmes, from those who favour a more permissive attitude, etc. A primary reason that these attacks may prove devastating is that the programme usually has no clear philosophical position and, therefore, the attackers can project their own understanding of the programme’s philosophical position, which may not correspond to reality.

This article discusses the philosophical position for academic units and the authors of curriculum materials instead of developing the curricula. The construction of the philosophical position may be useful to the tourism and hospitality academic units or the authors of curriculum materials by helping them to clarify their own ultimate purposes and views with respect to education and to think through more clearly the ways in which their academic direction and materials can contribute to those purposes.

One of the common philosophical positions of tourism is as a societal expression of leisure time expenditure (Murphy, 1985; Ryan, 1991). This approach is narrow and abstract and does not have boundaries and adopts a generalist approach to the content. It is sometimes difficult for the student to obtain employment because the basic course work has not been related to practitioner-based programmes. Most hospitality programmes are defined as lodging and food service management (Angelo and Vladimir,

1991). These curricula are highly practitioner-based and the course work within the curricula is job skill related. The boundaries in this type of programme are well defined. The student product from this type of curricula has a greater success in job hunting, because of the practitioner support.

Different types of philosophies give rise to different orientations. These differential orientations often lead to conflicts. These conflicts are not usually understood in terms of basic differences in philosophy but as perceptual distinctions. This translates to the real world in that many tourism and hospitality professionals have strong feelings about each other that lead to professional misunderstandings (Hudmand and Hawkins, 1989). These differences in philosophy also have important ramifications for curricula, course structure, or the instructional approach. The distinctions are very subtle.

In an effort to understand the base differences among tourism and hospitality academic programmes, it is important to understand their philosophical base. An important factor to understanding philosophy is to consider under what administrative control is the tourism and hospitality programme. Some of the types of disciplines under which these programmes are offered are education, health and human ecology, consumer and family science, business, applied economics, and hotel administration. Each of these content areas will have a different philosophical impact on tourism and hospitality programmes. This will not only affect the content *per se*, but the type of students that are attracted.

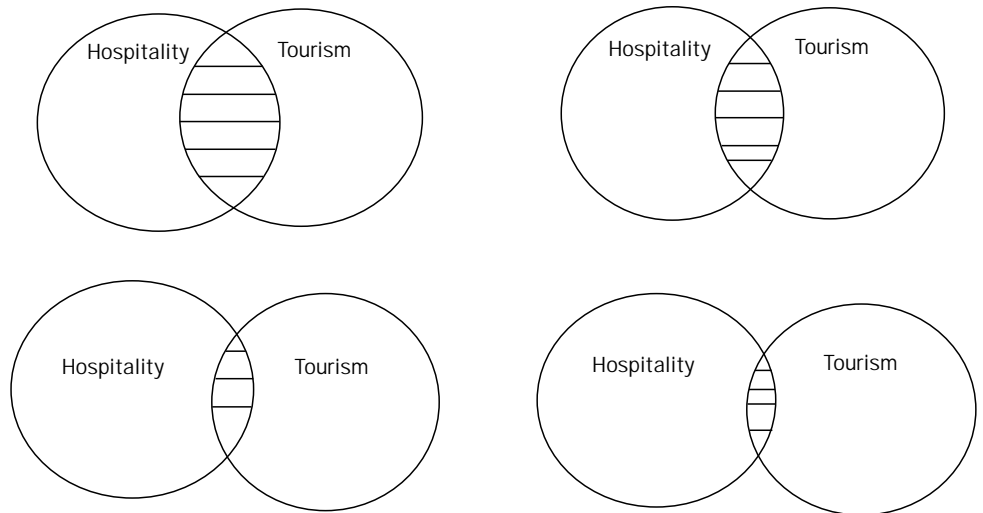
### Philosophical model types

There are three primary types of models that will help understanding of philosophical bases of tourism and hospitality academic programmes. These models are based on the types of relationships that exist between tourism and hospitality. These relationships form the basic philosophical positions that influence the development of the curriculum within academic institutions (Elfrink and Anthony, 1995; McIntosh, 1992). As a result, internal administration and faculty pressures and external pressures from the professional world, as well as needs of society, help formulate a particular institution's position (Schmidgall and Woods, 1994; Schulmen and Greenbergs, 1994). The first model type is where tourism and hospitality are mutually inclusive processes. In these types of models, tourism and hospitality achieve some type of parity in a symbiotic relationship (Guus, 1987;

Shaw and Nightengale, 1995). The second type of models are those where hospitality is in some type of superior position to tourism. In these relationships, hospitality is the primary driving force as a service component to other industries (Bosselman, 1996; Reich, 1994; Tress, 1996). The third type of relationship is where tourism is superior to hospitality (Hollowoy, 1985; McIntosh *et al.*, 1995). These relationships are industrial and economics based. In an examination of any of the model types, it is important to note that there are a number of different kinds of structures that exist within each model category. These models should be viewed as dynamic and not static processes.

In the first type of model, tourism and hospitality achieve some type of balance; there is independence but there are some areas of overlap between these two disciplines. There are different types of models based on the amount of overlap as well as the position of tourism relative to hospitality. Some of the types of models are illustrated in Figure 1. In these models, the identity of each discipline is maintained but the common areas of overlap are the processes that service both disciplines. These must be seen as processes that can be applied and transferred from one discipline to another. Areas that are different must be viewed as content-specific and the materials cannot be transferred between tourism and hospitality. The primary focus of tourism in these relationships is the impact of marketing studies. In general, the focus of tourism can be divided into economic, environmental and social impact studies. Hospitality's focus is service, marketing, and management related to travel, hotels, restaurants, commercial recreation, and leisure businesses. Some of the areas of overlap are in such course content as leisure, geography, language, general business management, information systems, marketing, management information systems, and economics. The common thread through these types of areas are processes that are common and can be utilized and transferred from one discipline to the other. It must be emphasized that the uniqueness of these types of model is that process is very important in relation to content. These basic processes are where initial socialization is achieved between tourism and hospitality and where one discipline begins to appreciate the value of the other because it is apparent that one discipline needs the other in some type of symbiotic relationship to achieve the highest level of an organization's goals and objectives. One cannot be seen to exist without the other and it is in combining their uniqueness in their disciplines that gives them the ability to achieve

**Figure 1**  
 Tourism and hospitality educational model 1

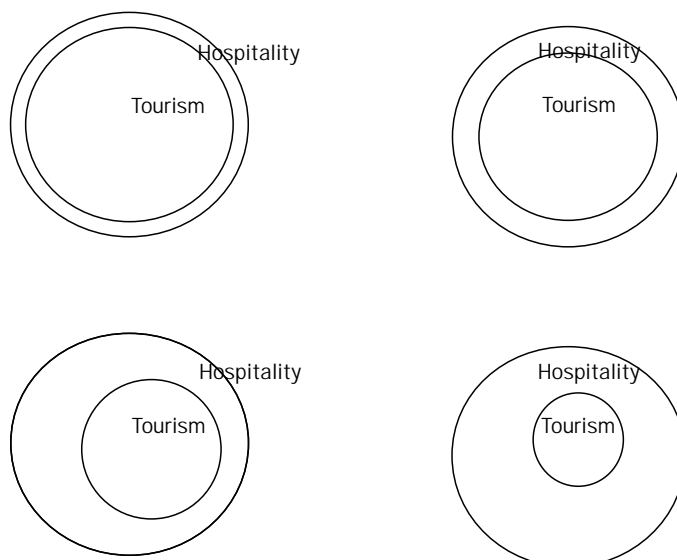


more than can be achieved separately. There are more institutional studies and research than job training in these types of programmes. The research is more esoteric. The practical aspect of the course is often taught through internships and practicums. The student product offered this type of programme has an ability to problem solve, views the big picture and knows how to fit the pieces together in a systems approach. Often these types of programmes are not tied directly to professional organizations and, if they are, professional involvement is limited.

The next series of models are those related to hospitality that encompasses tourism (see Figure 2). The different types of models are

reflected in the relationships between the size of the difference between the separate entities of hospitality and tourism. It depends on the type of role tourism plays in relation to hospitality. In each of the models, hospitality is still in a dominant position. The hospitality industry is most likely in these types of models to be service based. Tourism in these models is often viewed as the travel sector. The hospitality sector in these models usually focuses on business management and specializes in areas such as hotels, restaurants, conventions, casinos, clubs, catering, etc. The focus is on specific training such as waiter/waitress, chef, casino administrator, etc. This particular approach is related to job

**Figure 2**  
 Tourism and hospitality educational model 2



training for a profession. Usually, the institutes offer two- and/or four-year degrees. Tourism courses in this context are taught as a service as they relate to the hospitality industry such as travel agencies, resort management, tour organizations, hotel reservations, casino management, etc. Most of the approaches in these institutions are of an applied research nature as well as job and skill training.

The course work focuses on the specifics and the details. Hospitality is more business management than operations or administration, even though some exclusively focus on the operations. Business management in this context is finance, marketing, personnel, product development, etc. Tourism in each of the courses is related to hospitality management and how to improve or benefit the hospitality industry. These programmes are usually professionally based and have some type of orientation or affiliation with one or two professional hospitality associations. External influences such as practitioners in the business community often drive most of the changes that take place in the curricula. This type of approach has developed in locations that are not tourism based. They have developed where industry is the primary product and the hospitality component has developed to service a wider industrial economy.

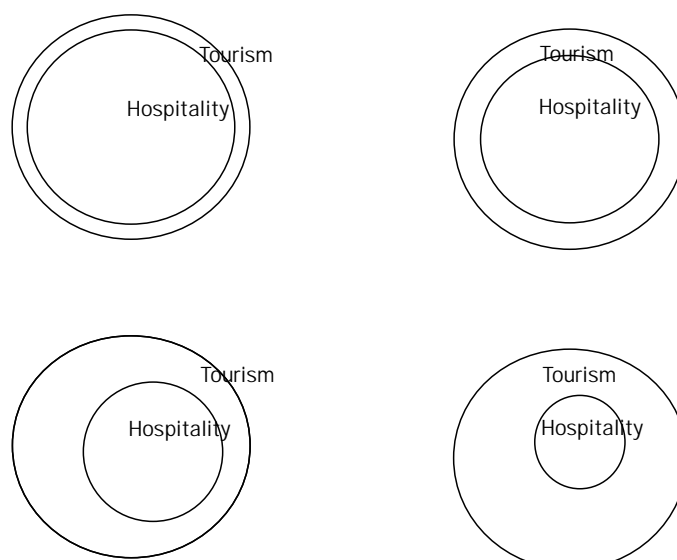
In Figure 3, the third type of model is where tourism is in a dominant position to hospitality. In these models, the basic difference is the position of tourism to hospitality. If hospitality is an important part of the sector, it is one type of model, and if it is only a component or

a segment, it is another type. Usually when this approach is utilized, tourism is an important factor to the economic sector and may be the primary or dominant industry. The other industries, including hospitality, have developed to service the tourist industry because of its economic importance. If this is not the major industry the primary question usually is "how to develop a tourism business to replace other industrial or other economic developmental segments that have been lost?" Tourism in these models of curricular development focuses on economic development with some concern about the influence of development on social, cultural, and ecological factors. Some of the important components are the travel industry, commercial recreation, hotel management, food service management, attraction planning, and international development and management. The primary focus is on development of the infrastructure to support tourism. Courses often offered in this particular approach are tourism planning, tourism economics, tourism geography, tourism impact and management. Tourism is seen as a system and it is the job of the tourism planner to integrate this into an effective economic base for a community. This system often includes different sectors such as cultural tourism, sustainable tourism, travel agency management, hospitality management, commercial recreation and leisure sectors. Often this approach to tourism focuses on the public sector as a supplier of both resources and dollars; there are usually collaborative relationships between quasi-public and public sectors and their roles in the economic

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**Figure 3**  
Tourism and hospitality educational model 3

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development of a project or a community. Hospitality, in these models, is only one segment of the tourism system. It often includes those factors that are related to hotels, food service, and guest relations. Most usually the four-year programmes in tourism are designed to focus on liberal arts and general tourism courses and the remainder will be given to students with selected interest in a specialty. The idea is that career preparation will be by infrastructure. There is a great degree of flexibility because the tourism topic is based on the developmental aspects of being an industry that has economic development benefits. Therefore, a student can select a career based on a large number of direct and support industries. Often interest is only focused on one or two organizations but there are a multiplicity of organizations that are in a direct or supportive role to the tourism industry. There are many who complain about not being able to find employment, but this may be due to a lack of understanding of the multiplicity of industries and how they relate to one another. Professional organizations are the key to employment and to sustaining balanced tourism curricula. Most of the tourism programmes are content-based depending on the location within the academic unit.

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## Conclusion

The philosophical bases of most curricula of tourism and hospitality programmes are the elements that define and identify the nature of the curricula. Most of the curricular development literature is based on identification of courses or competencies for the students. The real structure of the programme is to identify a philosophy and build courses and competencies needed for this basic philosophical position. The proposed models are meant to be a tool to help understand the philosophical basis of the curricula. This article does not suggest or recommend any particular philosophical model over another. However, the main objective has now been achieved – that of establishing a framework (model) for comparison of the philosophical base of tourism and hospitality programmes. In this respect, those involved in hospitality, tourism education and training may benefit from an improved awareness of programme orientation, course content, syllabi, careers and industrial orientation.

An academic institution must make its own selection of a model based on the type of industry, location, the academic nature of its programme, the strengths of the faculty, the type of students, and other elements when

selecting a philosophy to develop its programme. It is important not to standardize all programmes but to have a diversity of philosophies so as to have a spectrum of potential academic programmes that fits the needs of particular students and faculty. One of the key elements that has been missed by most academic preparation programmes is the strong development of a variety of linkages to professional organizations in both tourism and hospitality (Goss and Johnson, 1996). Most programmes are tied to one or two organizations but do not reflect the diversity of professional organizations that exist within the hospitality and tourism umbrella. This type of connection will help keep the curriculum balanced, especially from a practical perspective.

Curriculum development is an art at best. An examination of philosophies in relation to all the other curricular elements is needed. Curricular development must be related to outcomes of a student product. Student products are the ultimate achievement of any curricular process. Any institution must critically review its student product in relation to the processes to achieve the best student product for the institution linked to the professional needs of the community that the academic institution serves. Since tourism and hospitality is a global industry, sometimes the communities served are viewed as very narrow and must be viewed in a much broader context. Whatever the evaluation process for the curricula, it must be remembered that the philosophy is a latent variable that could help explain many differences in the student product and curricula. If a philosophical position cannot be articulated by the institution or the faculty, then a critical examination is necessary to establish on what bases they have been operating and to determine its impact on the curriculum and student products.

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