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# Competency Based Learning in Hospitality Education and Its Impact on Future Leadership Skills

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COMPETENCY BASED LEARNING IN HOSPITALITY EDUCATION AND

ITS IMPACT ON FUTURE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

by

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**PART ONE**

**Introduction**

In the past five years, hospitality educational programs have seen a distinct decline in enrollment from year to year (Oakley, 2016).  Upon reflection of this decline, there could be many reasons, which caused a consecutive downward trajectory regarding enrollment.  First, individuals are finding that a formal degree is not required for entry-level positions in the hospitality industry.  Second, people are utilizing technology and videos to substitute for formal education and are finding success in the entry-level hiring process.  Third, this generation does not see the value in formal education for entry-level employment.  True as that might be, trends have shown that these individuals forego formal education completely and immediately enter into the workforce (Hersh, 2015).  However, these individuals work for a short period of time and discover that promotion is not attainable since they lack the proper skill-set essential for leadership roles.

Brownell and Chung (2001) argued that hospitality curriculum may not be offering the right knowledge and skills to individuals seeking future work and that a change must be made in higher education to address the issue.  Perhaps the notion is that individuals need more than technical skills in order to succeed in their careers.  If this statement is true, then putting forth changes to the curriculum in order to fill gaps in education is the first step to accomplishment.

This paper examines whether competency based learning (CBL) in higher education is predictive of leadership outcomes in the hospitality industry.  Within the higher education framework, competency based learning focuses on theory supported skill development and the application of concepts in scenario-based and problem-based assessments.  More importantly, competency based learning emphasizes student advancement via demonstrated mastery of

competencies that are specific, measureable and are learning objectives that empower students. In addition, the student learning outcomes stress competencies that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions.  Finally, CBL allows students to learn skills vital to leadership success in the hospitality industry.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to present a guide to develop and implement competency based education that is predictive of leadership outcomes.

**Statement of Problem**

Students are not advancing into leadership roles at the ideal speed or proficiency of a graduate with a formal degree in Hospitality Management**.**  With industry professionals giving feedback about graduates not obtaining the types of skills they are looking for in managerial positions, academia must take a closer look at these statements and correct issues within the curriculum.  The goal of higher education for professionals is to graduate students who are properly equipped for success in the working industry.  Research shows that students are not meeting the needs of hospitality employers with regard to leadership outcomes (Brownell & Chung, 2001).  This problem must be evaluated immediately in order to meet the needs of students who are gearing up for the workforce, in hopes of successful, long-lasting careers. Industry professionals state that recent graduates lack the following skills or competencies: emotional intelligence, ability to problem solve, effective communication and understanding social dynamics (Nguyen, 2016).  It is well documented that competency based learning is becoming increasingly popular to thread into curriculum due to its clear success rates with students.  By understanding the gaps in education, it allows hospitality educators to alter current curriculum to include competency based learning with skills predictive of leadership outcomes.

Specifically, this study analyzes the research on outcomes of competency-based learning at the individual, group and organizational levels. At the individual level, this study seeks to understand outcomes such as: 1) performance and promotion rates at the individual level, 2) task performance and team cohesiveness at the group or team based level, and 3) problem solving and retention at the organizational level.

## Justifications

The Gainful Employment policy from the U.S. Department of Education was introduced in 2010 by the Obama Administration (Oakley, 2016). The purpose of this policy was to create colleges and training programs for vocational education. Public funding was given and dispersed to public education institutions and applied in many ways. The pressure exists on public education institutions, but moreso on communitiy colleges because the bulk of the funding is going toward them. In addition, during this time of Gainful Employment pressure, it so happens that for-profit schools, especially offering hospitality related programs, are being scrutinized and are being shut down quickly. It just so happens that these schools are on the downturn in the next 3-5 years, which provides hope for current community colleges that are offering these programs with the additional pressure from the Gainful Employment Policy. If schools do not meet a certain threshold of enrollment or if they do not provide the proper data of career placement, etc, they could easily lose their financial aid funding and program funding as well. Recent funding has been distributed to several community colleges that partners with the Gainful Employment policy (Oakley, 2016). Gainful Employment recognizes career and technical education degrees for students in order to prepare them to work in the industry. However, this policy only distributes financial support if the enrollment numbers consistently grow on a yearly basis. Because of the pressure to continue to grow, academic leaders find that they must work

quickly in order to meet the requirements given by the gainful employment policy.  This is an opportunity to explore how educators frame their curriculums within the prospects of Gainful Employment.  As student enrollment in hospitality programs nationwide declines, this research will provide insight as to where curriculums may be bolstered and adjusted with regard to competency-based education framework.

This research will present a review of the literature on competency-based learning in the organizational context.  It will be significant to scholars seeking to conduct empirical examinations and to practitioners interested in advancing toward a competency-based approach to training and education.  For the purpose of this study, these demonstrated competencies include: effective communication, emotional intelligence, understanding social dynamics, and problem solving.  Companies are finding that individuals obtain industry experience, but lack soft skills such as the competencies mentioned above.  Because of this, current curriculum needs to change in order to address the inadequacies these students are displaying to hiring companies.

## Constraints

There are several constraints within this study.  First, most of the leadership skills mentioned above are subjectively gathered and evaluated.   This makes it difficult to quantify for data collection purposes.  Because of this, this paper will cover literature that has evaluated the quantifiable portion of examining certain leadership skills.  In addition, because the research is specific to higher education in regards to competency-based learning, it may be difficult to find literature on CBL in the higher education context since its adoption into higher education is fairly recent.  Lastly, hospitality programs overall have seen a decline in enrollment for several years, however, this data is rarely posted as public information.  It may be difficult to find concrete data regarding declining enrollment in hospitality programs.

## PART TWO

## Introduction

The literature review focuses on the overall aspect of leadership and success with particular attention paid to leadership skills and competencies and how these competencies can be taught in a competency based learning atmosphere. The first section reviews how leadership is defined and how success plays a role in leadership. In addition, leadership is broken up into three main parts centering on the individual level, team level and organizational level. Next, the literature review explains which leadership skills previously defined are lacking in current employees or recent graduates.

The last portion of the literature review covers competency based learning assessment techniques and challenges associated with both subjects. It also reviews how competency based learning has been successful in the higher education sector. Competency based learning can be a tool to apply leadership skill competencies into a higher education classroom. By identifying which competencies graduates are deficient in, these topics can be directly addressed with a competency based learning lens.

## Leadership and Success

In the hospitality industry, individuals seek to develop their leadership skills as they seek promotions throughout their careers. The question that arises is, "What is leadership and how does it pertain to the hospitality industry?" According to Henrick, Brennan and Monturo (2016), leadership is defined as a process of influence upon others. Leadership requires the use of power to influence the thoughts and actions of other people. The word power typically sounds totalitarian in a literal sense; however, leadership does not need to be seen with such a negative tilt. Regarding leadership in the hospitality industry, most leaders begin as managers and are

unsure how to proceed in order for more growth in their said fields. The Harvard Business Review states that managers and leaders are different due to the way that they deal with problem solving, critical thinking and preventative organization (Zaleznik, 1977).

**Leadership Success**

The interesting point to emphasize is that leaders are not born; leaders are made (Henrick et al, 2016). A successful leader is someone who is able to lead a group of individuals to a goal while the followers in the group still maintain respect for the leader. Leadership styles vary from person to person, however, research has shown that Transformational Leadership is, by far, the most successful in gaining trust and maintaining longevity in employees. James McGregor Burns, defines transformational leadership as somewhat of a process where leaders and their followers elevate one another to advanced levels or morality and motivation (Bass, 1990). If leaders are created and not born, then some of their skills need to be either formally taught or influenced.

Recent research has shown that graduates, in particular, hospitality school graduates, finish their programs with the foundational knowledge that an entry-level employee should have, however, do not obtain the skills that a leader should display upon graduation by synthesizing the information and applying it to everyday situations in the workplace (Ryan, 2016).

**Leadership at the Individual Level**

Leadership can be separated into several categories pertaining to high performance. The categories are: leadership success on the individual level (entry level), on a team level and on an organizational level. As individuals perform in varying scenarios, their leadership style and skills displayed change and their performance competencies shift. A high performing leader can behave differently depending on what the current goal and situation is as well.

Wilson, Boudreaux and Edwards (2000) posit that there lie two main pillars of competency when it comes to a high performing individual. The first competency pillar is employee performance, which encompasses the competencies required for goal setting, feedback and coaching, rewards, motivating commitment, and performance assessment. The second competency pillar, employee potential, underscores the importance of providing employees with the proper knowledge, tools and environment necessary for resulting in high performance. With these two pillars holding strong, individuals can be properly equipped for highest performance regardless of what problem-solving scenario comes into play.

**Leadership at the Team Level**

When a leader has the opportunity to work with a team, the behaviors and priorities differ than trying to reach the highest potential with an individual. Team leadership require the art of social dynamics and emotional intelligence. In addition, in order to have a high performing team, the utmost amount of team cohesion needs to occur as well. The leader needs to work as the facilitator of the group in order to coach each individual to work with each other seamlessly. Relationship conflict is typically a common issue within group management and team-building exercises to encourage bonding can alleviate some of that discord. In a team scenario, each individual brings certain strengths and weaknesses. The leader must be able to utilize strengths of each person in the group to create a successful team (Buengeler, Homan, & Voelpel, 2016).

**Leadership at the Organizational Level**

When discussing leadership at the organizational level, leadership skills differ as things are much less detailed oriented, but focused on a larger picture of the company. The four main skills that a leader in an organization should have are cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, business skills and strategic outlook. The first point, cognitive skills, includes information

gathering and dissemination, monitoring, and investigating within the company. Interpersonal

skills are the second point, which include negotiating, human relations, social capacities, social

dynamics and people orientation. The third skill is to obtain business savvy, which includes

coordination, staffing competency, resource allocation, technical know-how, and functional

expertise. Lastly, a leader within this setting should have strategic outlook, which includes

planning, evaluating, problem solving, spokesperson and figurehead capacity and system

perspective skills (Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson, 2007).

**Skills Required**

In the hospitality sector, typically, management is associated with leadership positions.

Because of this, leaders typically need to obtain certain skill sets in order to create trust resulting

in a harmonious environment in the workplace (Chung, 2000). Even though there are several

skills involved with a successful leader, the most essential and differentiating skills of a leader in

the hospitality industry include emotional intelligence, effective communication, and critical

thinking (Alhelalat, 2015).

**Emotional Intelligence**

According to Petkovski (2012), a successful leader in the hospitality industry is in tune

with his or her emotional intelligence and places utmost importance while dealing with

employees and guests. Emotional intelligence can be defined as a person's own self-awareness,

self-control, management of one's own emotions, motivation, empathy, reading other people's

emotions, socializing skills, teamwork capability, listening skills, and managing relations with

other people (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). A successful leader is in tune with the

employees and their wants and needs, is able to anticipate issues that may arise and able to

contain them, and is a person who wants to invest time and effort into understanding other

people. In addition, emotional intelligence allows a leader to analyze things from the perspective

of another individual and be equipped for diffusing conflicts as they arise in the workplace. A

highly emotionally intelligent individual may play a central role in leadership based on these five

essential factors: "development of collective goals and objectives; instilling in others an

appreciation of the importance of work activities; generating and maintaining enthusiasm;

confidence, optimism, cooperation and trust; encouraging flexibility in decision making and

change; and establishing and maintaining identity for an organization" (George, 2000, p. 1027).

**Effective Communication**

Effective communication is often paired with emotional intelligence as well, as they

typically go hand in hand. Effective communication is vital to the success of a long lasting and

trusting relationship with a team of people. Leaders who obtain the skill of listening, which

leads to understand, results in one of the most valuable strategies in regards to effective

communication (Pulce, 2003). Effective communication includes open and non-biased

discussions, allow employees to have a voice in their teams and they will feel valued in the long

run. In addition, understanding that frequent positive feedback is always appreciated. Lastly, if

delivering negative feedback, utilizing the sandwich method, a phrase, which is positive, then

constructive feedback, followed by something negative, always helps to reduce the harshness of

intended criticism and can preserve a relationship in the workplace (Docheff, 1990).

**Critical Thinking**

Pertaining to leadership skills, critical thinking could be said to be one of the most vital

for growth in an individual. Rudd (2002) posits that critical thinking can be defined as

"reasoned, purposive, and reflective thinking used to make decisions, solve problems and master

concepts" (p. 14). Because critical thinking is something that is not necessarily based on factual

knowledge, but rather the application of reason, it can be said that these skills are crucial to a leader's disposition and are vital in every part o the workplace (Flores, Matkin, Burbach, Quinn, & Harding, 2012). It is no surprise that organizations seek individuals who obtain the technical skills that support their employment positions, but also, individuals who can be effective in a constantly changing environment.

Operating with an individual who obtains all of these skills allows for the leader to make sound, quality decisions, which affect the organization. For example, a leader who displays emotional intelligence is able to relate more effectively to an employee or other colleague due to the benefits that emotional intelligence brings. In addition, effective communication is important in order to be able to communicate with someone clearly and in a way that others feel is appropriate. Lastly, critical thinking paired with these two skills can highly benefit a team of individuals if their leader is someone who is going to effectively guide the organization to success.

**Leadership Skills that Workers Lack**

It has been said that workers, even if they are not recent graduates, lack the leadership skills needed for promotion in any industry. At the community college level, the schools' purposes are to equip students for the workforce. If students are graduating with only technical skills literacy and not social skill literacy, students are going to see that they are able to work in one type of level of position unless something changes, unless they pursue management and display leadership abilities. Because of this, it is clear which skills that workers lack: emotional intelligence, problem solving/critical thinking, effective communication, and understanding of social dynamics (Min, Swanger, & Fursoy, 2016).

**Emotional Intelligence**

It is well known that one of the main goals of pursuing higher education is to successfully develop individuals with skills not only pertaining to knowledge of information, but rather, knowledge of how to conduct oneself in a professional environment. According to Ruderman, Hannum, Leslie, and Steed (2001), the concept of emotional intelligence focuses mainly on four basic competencies, which are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and social skills. Flores, et al (2012) purport that recent college graduates lack leadership skills, mainly emotional intelligence, critical thinking or problem solving, social dynamics understanding and effective communication. When these individuals are put into a work environment, which involves dealing with customer complaints, problem solving or taking initiative with others, supervisors find that the individuals do not rise to the occasion. The individuals are not properly equipped to understand what to do next in difficult situations.

**Problem Solving/Critical Thinking**

In any work environment, issues arising are inevitable and need individuals to adapt to the situation and rectify any problems that may negatively affect the organization. Because of this, problem-solving skills are required and critical thinking is inherently related to problem solving because you need one thing to affect the next. The first step is to assess the issue and find adequate solutions for it that ends the situation positively for everyone. For this, one needs critical thinking skills to be able to apply previous knowledge to a workplace problem. Students who are able to think critically are able to solve a problem easily and effectively (Snyder & Snyder, 2008). These are learned skills that require practice and applicable knowledge on a frequent basis that are not often deficient in the industry's staff.

The concept of critical thinking or problem solving is rarely taught in higher education and is now resulting in graduates who lack proper skills for personal and career growth (Flores et al, 2010). In regards to the Hospitality Education sector, it is important to realize that these skills are extremely vital in everyday work life. Much of hospitality education is geared toward information-based knowledge rather than scenario based problem solving. Due to the lack of critical thinking skills in recent graduates, it is important to implement a different approach to learning so that students are properly equipped upon graduation.

**Effective Communication**

There are several factors regarding effective communication which include: identifying the desired outcome, choosing the best mode of communication, considering the tone of the room, identifying potential barriers, checking for understanding and asking for feedback ("Communication", 2009). In identifying the desired outcome, it is important to understand the purpose of the conversation in the first place. Understand that individuals come into an environment with preconceived notions and ideas about what you might have to say. Perhaps the best mode of communication is not through speaking from a lectern, but rather having a casual conversation with the group. Also, the tone of the conversation and how one speaks to another can dictate how individuals will respect and trust the presenter. Effective communication can be assessed through feedback and checking for understanding. It is essential to see if the person fully understands the information being put forth ("Communication", 2009). For these reasons, effective communication is yet another lacking asset within the employees of this industry.

**Understanding Social Dynamics**

Social dynamics pertain to behaviors between the interactions of individuals and groups. In hospitality education, it is normal for individuals to work in groups. Rarely are group projects

assessed on how the group coexists, although it can sometimes reflect in the finished project.

Group dynamics and individual dynamics are subjects that are not addressed specifically in

higher education.  Typically, educators assume that individuals understand how to conduct

themselves professionally, which includes knowing when to voice an opinion and knowing when

to stay quiet for the sake of a harmonious team (Grudin, 1994).

<div align="center">**Utilization of Competency Based Learning**</div>

The introduction of competency based learning in education today is no surprise to the

academic space.  Academia is starting to accept competency-based learning as another avenue of

forming the curriculum (Frank, Mungroo, Ahmad, Wang, De Rossi, & Horsley, 2010).  Instead

of this, CBL is a brand new type of learning that is not constricted by timelines or semesters, but

rather groups itself around the individual.  It can be said that CBL can also be called personalized

learning as well, which makes sense because the curriculum is really created around the

individual's success and progress (Patrick, 2013).

**CBL in Higher Education**

Competency based learning, or CBL, can be defined as a personalized learning

experience where students enter into a flexible atmosphere where competencies are demonstrated

based on their own understanding of the material.  It is not centered on a typical academic model,

which includes a structured schedule, but rather the priority is not placed on the schedule but on

the mastery of the competency instead (McIntyre-Hite, 2016).  This allows learners to work at

their own pace, build on existing knowledge, and master industry-related skills with confidence.

In regards to higher education, students are able to come into school at their point of

previous knowledge, learn at their own pace and graduate with the proper skills they need for the

industry.  In addition, it provides a more affordable way of learning for many students who can

build on their previous knowledge of the subject.  CBL differs from a traditional learning setting because of its focus on outcomes rather than a timed atmosphere of education.

According to Vokic (2008), properly educated employees are vital to the success of an organization.  In the hospitality education sector, competency based learning as an academic model is not currently utilized, however, based on the benefits, it could be a considerable and positive change for educators as well as students.

**Success of CBL**

The recent implementation of CBL in education, in general, has been generally successful.  First, participants noticed teacher engagement increased, student engagement soared and excitement grew for increased academic rigor.  According to Sullivan and Downey (2015), students were becoming empowered with this format of learning and were able to see themselves understanding the information and demonstrating the competency with confidence.  Many participants also saw positive changes in student behaviors, resulting in decreased discipline issues as well.  Lastly, with this CBL approach, students were able to properly articulate exactly what they were learning at that point in the curriculum, utilizing milestones and benchmarks.  In the past, students would have trouble properly indicating what the end goal is of their course or lesson.  This way, students are able to clearly see from point A to point B, and are able to properly take responsibility for their learning (Sullivan & Downey, 2015).

**Competency Based Learning Assessment Methods**

When discussing competency-based learning, assessment methods are often questioned as to how to formulate these assessments.  Assessments are created based on the detail of each competency topic.  Faculty members are required to document progress for each student and evaluate whether or not the student is able to proceed into a further part of the course or not.

**Assessment Procedures**

Regarding the higher education sector, CBL has shown itself to be successful in many cases. For example, Western Governors University serves 70,000 students and is the nation's leading competency-based learning university (Johnstone, 2005). Its population learns at each individual's own pace and is able to utilize milestones in learning as assessments. For example, assessments are broken up into types: performance assessments, objective examinations, and essay exams. Performance assessments can consist of multiple tasks such as scored assignments, projects, essays and research papers. These assessments contain detailed instructions and detailed rubrics for the completion of each assigned task. Next, objective examinations are there for the purpose of evaluating knowledge and skills in a specific subject area. These examinations are questions based on the subject and can include but are not limited to, multiple choice tests, short answer, matching, and case studies. Essay exams are utilized to measure the student's ability to apply and synthesize concepts and are scored based on rubrics established by faculty (Johnstone, 2005).

**Challenges of Assessment**

The introduction of CBL can be difficult to implement due to the challenges that can arise pertaining to assessment methods. Seeing as though competencies can be seen as skills that are measured subjectively, one can see that it can be difficult to quantify assessments in a pool of ten learners. If the learners are submitting their assessments to a professional committee, the committee needs to have discussed beforehand the specific rubric and how items are graded on the competency scale. Fitzgerald et al (2015) purport that the following issues are associated with competency based education assessments. First, assessment data needs to be collected frequently, even continuously. Next, assessments should be work-based whenever possible and

need to reflect the complexity of performance in the discipline.  After that, assessment methods and tools must meet minimum requirements for quality, but can range broadly on this dimension.  Also, both qualitative and quantitative data are useful and multiple measurement methods are essential.  In addition, the same assessment data can be used to make both formative and summative decisions.  Additionally, criteria (standards) and group decision-making procedures are necessary for judging competence.  Lastly, standardization of assessments is not compatible with the individualized philosophy of competency based education and complex performances.

Seeing as though these are some things to consider while formulating competency based assessments, it is important to note that competencies need to be specific and clear and link properly to material covered in respective assessments.  For example, when preparing the assessment for a bread class, the competency should visibly express the competency end goal.  Instead of stating that the student needs to learn how to make bread, the competency should be specific enough so that it delineates which types of breads and the proper standards of each kind of bread.  That way, when the assessment needs to be created, it is easy to utilize the original competency and connect the two together.  It is clear that there are a few roadblocks in the way of success in competency based learning assessment methods.  However, creating assessments rubrics that are objective and must be collectively decided by a committee of professionals is key to success in this situation (Fitzgerald et al, 2015).

## Summary

It has been evidenced throughout the literature that many leadership deficiencies exist within the workplace.  Although there are slightly different schools of thought on the exact bundle of deficiencies at play, the majority of the landscape suggests that the main leadership weaknesses of the workplace deal primarily with emotional intelligence, critical thinking,

application of social dynamics, and effective communication.  Additionally, scholars and

educators alike agree that CBL can act as a pillar of success in building a strong leaders to forge

these organizations forward.  The different toolkits associated within CBL can be stratified

further for analysis of effectiveness.

## PART THREE

### Introduction

Students have been graduating without the concrete skill sets needed to be successful in their careers (Nguyen, 2016). Professionals in the industry have been complaining that graduates lack certain leadership skills when they enter the workplace (Ryan, 2016). A formal education environment is the perfect place to learn those skills, and with their education, they are supposed to have those skills when they graduate, but they do not. This would cause quite a disruption in current education as it stands because of its traditional ways in timeline based and structured curriculum. CBL is a completely different way of looking at a lesson plan and it could be potentially difficult for educators to jump on board. In addition, employers are already seeing the positive effects of implementing CBL into other fields, such as the medical field. In the academic space, this change is happening already. This change would be a significant one for current curriculum standards and process in the way that curriculums are written out. In addition, certain things would need to be changed in the way that individuals are assessed and measured. If we want students to be successful long after they graduate from academic programs, we need to ensure that they are learning the competencies for the skill sets required for leadership success. It seems that the current way of doing that is not working; therefore, the implementation of CBL needs to come into play here because of its already tested success.

As stated in the literature review, there are several leadership skills, which are conducive to a successful career thereafter. It is true that obtaining said skills through formal education; a just-graduated student should be well equipped for the hospitality industry. Much research has shown in the literature review that employees lack various vital leadership skills when entering the workplace (Brownell & Chung, 2001). Part Three will demonstrate a how-to-guide to

implementing competency-based learning into hospitality higher education platforms. This guide will be useful mainly for hospitality educators and administrators, but to other disciplines who want to implement CBL into their curriculum. The process begins with looking at current curriculum flow and how various modules can be integrated with each program. The focus competencies to be addressed will be emotional intelligence, critical thinking, effective communication, and understanding social dynamics. Within these competencies, there will be detailed explanation on what a sample lesson plan would look like, examples of interactive exercises and measurable assessments.

### Guide to Competency Based Learning Implementation

Any type of change in school administration is not going to be accepted swiftly or easily. It will take time and persistence from the person developing and asking for a change in the curriculum. One needs to persuade the audience that this change is vital to student success, retention, graduation and further success (Albanese, Mejicano, Anderson, & Gruppen, 2010).

There are several benefits of competency based learning that administration should consider when adapting to this change. First, competency based programs are extremely flexible with a student's schedule. The pace of the class is based on the individual learner and there is no structured schedule, no pre-determined semesters. Instead, the students are somewhat self-guided and they are able to control where and when they complete projects and assessments. The program also allows students to enter at any level where they are able to test out of a previous part of the competency. Second, the material becomes engaging to each student because they are able to take ownership and responsibility of the material they are learning. The experience is tailored to each student and is much more relevant to their educational goals. Third, the because CBL could result in a faster learning process, students often are able to

graduate with a much more affordable tuition rate than having to go through each class semester by semester, even if they already are literate in the material (Blumenstyk, 1998). Lastly, CBL is primarily skills-based and skills-oriented. The theories and concepts taught are practiced in real work applications. In regard to the hospitality industry, these skills are practiced on a daily basis and differentiate an employee from entry level to management and higher.

In order to implement a competency based learning curriculum, the administration needs to understand that certain things must be addressed while creating the curriculum. Faculty will need to dedicate much time and energy to document and change their role in teaching as well. Assuming that faculty are excited about this change and want to create a more tailored and personalized program for each student, they will likely be successful in creating a curriculum. With any curriculum, the process of building it requires a significant focus on redesigning teaching pedagogy and instructor readiness. Once the teaching methodology is in place and student-learning objectives are established achieved, growth, retention percentage, graduation rate and positive reputation from competencies learned at school will mostly likely be realized.

There are several moving parts to execute a competency-based curriculum and each one is equally as important. First, the faculty needs to ensure that intended learning outcomes are clearly defined. Next, the group needs to analyze the required developmental trajectory within the curriculum and ensure that the courses are developed with a cohesive nature. Following that, each section of each competency needs to obtain a segment of appropriate assessment methods. Then, the faculty needs to design the program around the teaching-learning environment and learning activities with student experiences and instructional methods. Lastly, a process of evaluation and adjustment of individual courses and the curriculum as a whole as it progresses through the process of changing to CBL would need to be established.

Below is a graphical timeline to implement CBL fully into the curriculum. It is proposed that after administration approval, it should take no longer than two years to fully implement CBL into the curriculum. This proposal is to incorporate said leadership skills as competency courses into an existing hospitality curriculum.
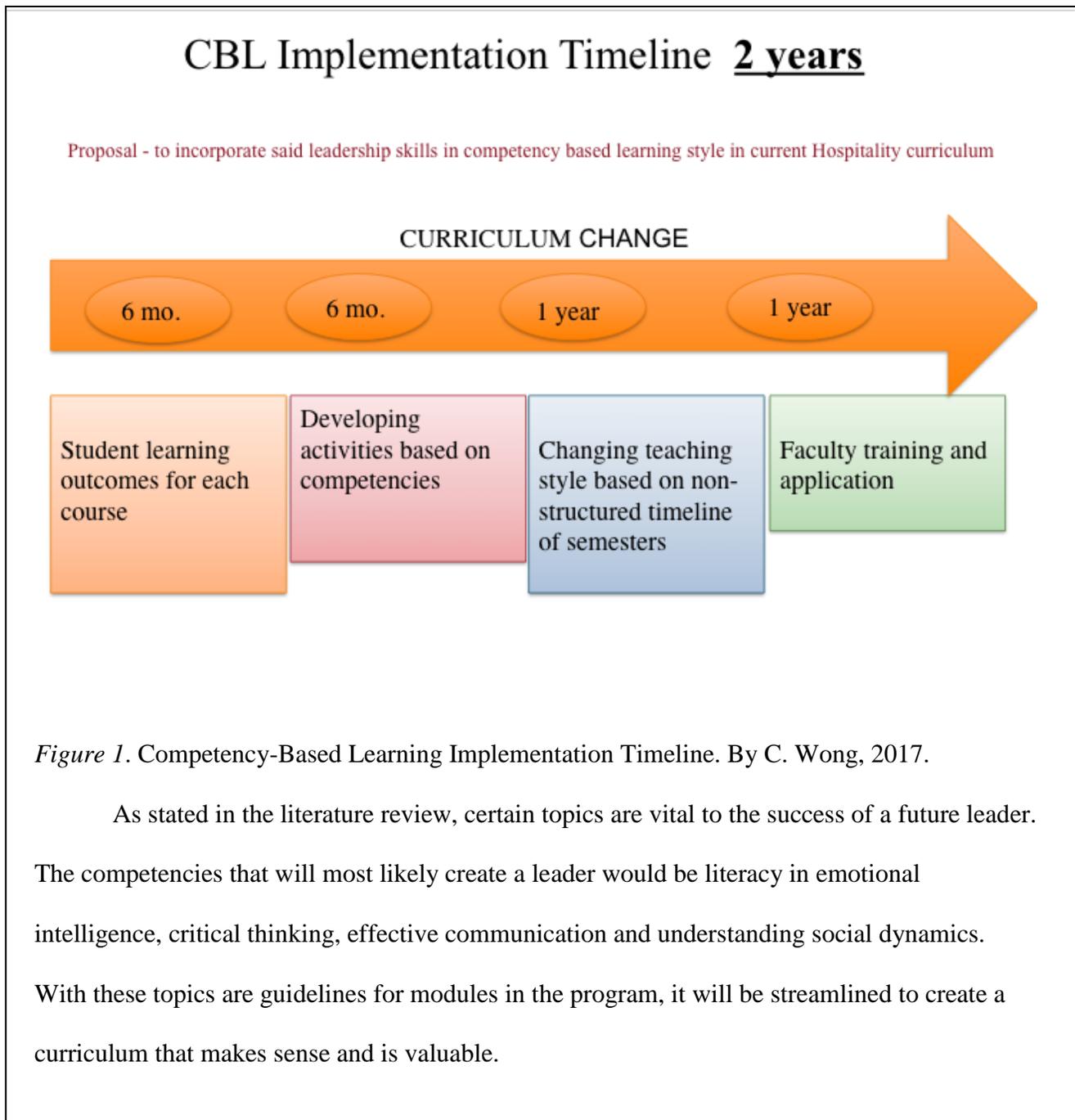
## CBL Implementation Timeline **2 years**

Proposal - to incorporate said leadership skills in competency based learning style in current Hospitality curriculum

### CURRICULUM CHANGE

| 6 mo. | 6 mo. | 1 year | 1 year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student learning outcomes for each course | Developing activities based on competencies | Changing teaching style based on non-structured timeline of semesters | Faculty training and application |

*Figure 1*. Competency-Based Learning Implementation Timeline. By C. Wong, 2017.

As stated in the literature review, certain topics are vital to the success of a future leader. The competencies that will most likely create a leader would be literacy in emotional intelligence, critical thinking, effective communication and understanding social dynamics. With these topics are guidelines for modules in the program, it will be streamlined to create a curriculum that makes sense and is valuable.
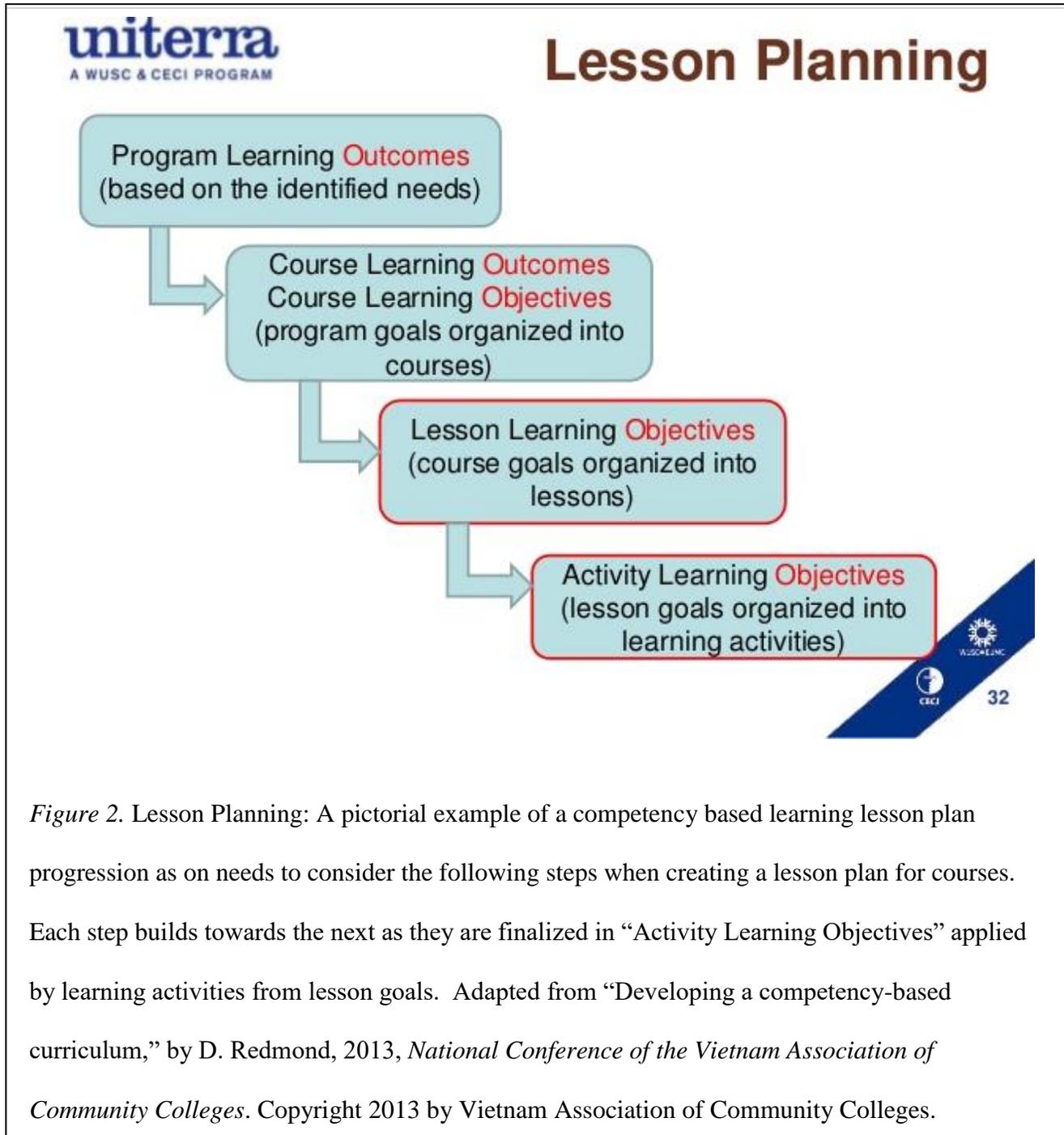
**Emotional Intelligence**

In the beginning of a course, students need to be assessed for their current status of emotional intelligence. By utilizing the MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test), instructors are able to get a gauge of where each student is in their emotional intelligence, or EQ, competency. By doing this, it allows students to be self-aware of their current emotional intelligence range.

There are times when assessment tests such as the one mentioned above only works for a certain type of person who is geared towards taking tests. Another way to assess one's emotional intelligence is to do scenario-based exercises with the individual and ask them questions regarding their perception, empathy and adaptability.

Figure 1 displays a CBL sample lesson plan for teaching the competency of emotional intelligence. This differs from a traditional lesson plan, which is oriented in a timeline fashion. In this lesson plan, the categories are grouped for the progress markers that each student obtains. For example, if Sally were in the beginning scale of emotional intelligence, she would need to learn more using CBL curriculum and be assessed in each stage, hoping that at a certain point, Sally will display the recognition for her understanding and application of emotional intelligence in the classroom. If another student assessed highly in their initial MSCEIT, they might be able to "test out" of the emotional intelligence competency and move on to the next competency. By doing so, students are able to save time and money in their education.

*Figure 2.* Lesson Planning: A pictorial example of a competency based learning lesson plan

progression as on needs to consider the following steps when creating a lesson plan for courses.

Each step builds towards the next as they are finalized in "Activity Learning Objectives" applied

by learning activities from lesson goals.  Adapted from "Developing a competency-based

curriculum," by D. Redmond, 2013, *National Conference of the Vietnam Association of*

*Community Colleges*. Copyright 2013 by Vietnam Association of Community Colleges.

An expert at teaching phase emotional intelligence, Lynn  (2002), explains her fifty

activities for developing emotional intelligence.  Most of these are group exercises, which help

individuals improve their emotional intelligence progressively.  In addition, because the

hospitality industry is so integrated with dealing with customers, high emotionally intelligent employees inherently become more successful because they will be empathetic with the customers and deal with issues accordingly. Activities with an emphasis on customer situations will effectively help students to practice and develop their EQ.

The MSCEIT is an excellent tool to use to measure a student's progression in developing emotional intelligence. It would be used again to se if a student has fully progressed through the competency and displays full comprehension and application of the subject.

**Critical Thinking**

Within the competency of critical thinking, it is important to note that critical thinking, as a whole, is deemed vital for all types of employment, not only hospitality related jobs. If an individual is able to be proficient in critical thinking skills, when a problem arises, the individual will be able to use their problem solving skills to come to a solution quickly and without any issues. In order to assess the students' critical thinking skills at the front end of the course, an instructor may give an assessment, which will dictate where the students fall in the class based on their current proficiency level. Some of the assessments available are California Critical Thinking Skills Test, or CCTST, and Business Critical Thinking Skills Test, or BCTST. In regards to the hospitality education sector, the BCTST would be most fitting for hospitality-focused students since courses in that curriculum already touch on business concepts quite a bit.

Within the realm of problem solving, a person needs to practice the motion of problem solving so that it becomes somewhat muscle memory and the brain will more easily be able to create solutions for issues with ease. For example, classes may have a myriad of problem solving exercises including individual, group and by class activities which focus on differing topics. Sometimes the problem solving will be geared toward physical items and creating

movement within the group in order to encourage equal participation. Other activities would include mental problem solving for issues that would be based on case studies. These would be presented in groups for students to be able to brainstorm on their own and together.

A CBL critical thinking lesson plan would differ from a traditional lesson plan with regard to timelines. A CBL lesson plan does not include timelines and parceled out time for activities as much as a traditional lesson plan would. A traditional lesson plan would give a subject a few class sessions to cover the basic fundamentals and then the course would continue, even though not all students would comprehend and be able to apply the principles learned on those class periods.

As a guideline, it is imperative to include measurable assessments for critical thinking outcomes. These measurable assessments would be based on issues such as problem solving and would utilize the assessment test in the beginning of the course to see how the individual has progressed. In addition, critical thinking skills can be assessed through activity tests where a student needs to solve their way through a puzzle in order to get out. These can be ways to assess critical thinking skills and literacy.

**Effective Communication**

Although there are no specific tests currently measuring effective communication skills, companies are utilizing placing questions in their company's assessment tests to see where individuals lie when it comes to effective communication. Because of this, it is important not only to be prepared for such evaluations, but to also be literate in what it means to obtain effective communication skills. Lack of communication is one of the most common issues in any business and can easily be fixed with the right applied objectives.

Most of these scenarios are group based, however, they can also be one-on-one as well. These types of scenarios can help students to practice giving feedback by using the sandwich method, they can also address a difficult issue with ease by practicing ways in order to successfully speak about the subject. In addition, then it comes to conflict and conflict resolution, effective communication is key here and not only is it what is spoken but how the person listens as well. According to Garber (2008), individuals spend approximately 70% of their time communicating with others. With this said, hospitality employees are more likely to be in the higher percentage based on their job tasks. In this time of communication, it is split up into 16% reading, 9% writing, 30% talking and 45% listening. These numbers are staggering to see how large of a percentage the listening portion of communication really seems to be. These teaching scenarios would include all of these types of communication modules in order to be well rounded in the subject.

Of course, rubrics for these assessments would be descriptive, addressing the important details of each competency. First, creating these assessments to properly align with what the goals are depends mostly on the assessment guideline. Below is an example of a competency-based education assessment tool in order to adapt to each competency.

| | Level | Code | Performance Descriptor | Elementary Level Assignment Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Competent | Exemplary | E | The student consistently and independently demonstrates the ability to analyze and synthesize essential content knowledge and skills in a new task. | 4 |
| Competent | Proficient | P | The student consistently and independently demonstrates the ability to apply and transfer essential content, knowledge and skills in a new task. | 3 |
| Not Competent | In Progress | IP | The student demonstrates the emerging ability to apply and transfer essential content, knowledge and skills. | 2 |
| Not Competent | Limited Proficiency | LP | The student is not demonstrating the application and transfer of essential content, knowledge and skills. | 1 |
| Not Competent | Override Codes | NYC | NYC: The student is not yet competent in the performance standard(s). | |
| Not Competent | Override Codes | IWS | IWS: The student has not produced a sufficient amount of evidence to determine the level for which they have met the performance standard(s). | |

Other Override Codes:
NA: The performance standard has not yet been assessed.
I: The student has not yet submitted evidence to determine the level for which they have met the performance standard(s).
X: The student is exempt from the assignment.

Apply

*Figure 3.* Competency-Based Learning Rubric: Displays a competency based learning rubric which delineates the various steps in progression to exemplary, which would be equivalent to an A in the grading scale. Students, faculty and administration will need to adapt to this style of rubric, which requires much documentation, but can ensure competency of the material once the student is finished. Adapted from "Overview of Standards and Competency Based Reporting," by Sanborn Regional School District, 2017. Copyright 2017 by the Sanborn Regional School District.

**Understanding Social Dynamics**

Teaching social dynamics can be difficult but it can also be done if the teacher is more inclusive in what he or she teaches. For example, the following items should be covered in teaching social dynamics: human behavior, fundamentals of psychology, how to deal with conflict and how to display empathy. At the beginning of this course, an introductory assessment should be given with subject matter dealing with behavioral and human psychology

questions.  In addition, the content will be asking questions regarding conflict resolution and how

to deal with people in all sorts of situations and how to deal with conflict resolution successfully.

These can be team exercises or group discussions to see where the students are in their

understanding of what it means to have a socially dynamic understanding of others.  Motivation

exercises will be put into play here as well, and the class will be introduced to how to coach

motivation or how to create a motivated environment.  Some measurable assessments regarding

social dynamics competency would be literacy in various types of personalities and how to deal

with each one, such as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas, 1974).  In

addition, various scenarios would be executed in order to evaluate the level of competency in

social dynamics understanding.

## Conclusion

It is clear that applying a competency based learning approach in teach leadership skills

such as emotional intelligence, critical thinking, effective communication and social dynamics

could result in a more well-rounded student upon graduation.  It is unclear why skills such as

these are not already taught in schools anyway, especially in the hospitality education sector as

well.  It is also interesting to consider competency-based learning being applied in high school

curriculums as well.  The earlier students are able to begin developing these competencies, the

more accomplished they will be in the long run.

## Recommendations

Seeing as though this would be an immense change for faculty and staff in any school, it

must be made very clear how changing to CBL could benefit the students and the school overall.

CBL needs to be introduced in a positive way and there needs to be a way to create positive

morale with faculty members for their full participation and support in this project.  In addition,

this implementation of new curriculum will take time and effort, but the results will be worth the

wait.  Furthermore, more specific research needs to be done regarding higher education and

competency based education, in particular, how it relates to hospitality education.

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