

The Impact of Design Thinking in Hospitality Education

RESEARCH GROUP DESIGN-BASED HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

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Introduction:

To respond to unprecedented, global, complex and continuous changes, hospitality professionals need higher order skills such as tolerance for change, openness to new ideas and experimentation, adaptability, flexibility, initiative, analytical skills, effective communication, the ability to interact with superiors, peers and guests, problem solving, creativity, being able to construct meaningful ideas, and critical thinking (Bhusan 2019; Suh et al., 2012; Wagner, 2014).

Existing **solution-oriented models** seem less appropriate for the current challenges. **Meaning-oriented models** instead, such as **Design Thinking (DT) models**, may be more applicable for addressing such challenges (Bhusan, 2019).

The Hotel Management School (HMS) of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences adopted Design-Based Education (DBE) as an approach to teaching and learning. DBE offers students the opportunity to develop higher-order design thinking skills by designing solutions for complex, multi-disciplinary, real-life issues (so-called design challenges) derived from the hospitality industry through dialogue with others (students, educators and hospitality professionals).

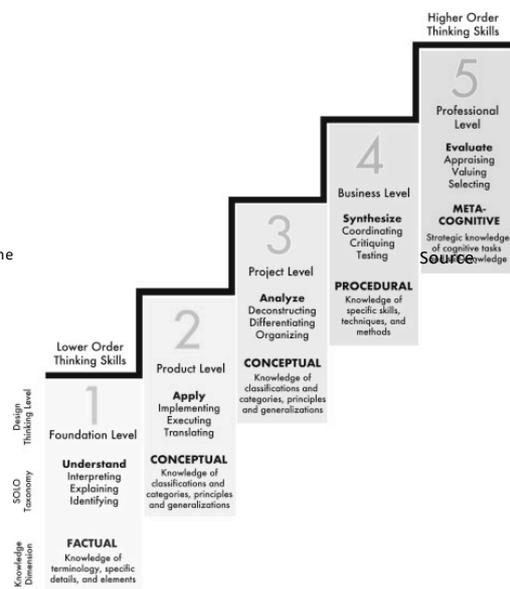
Problem Statement:

To explore to what extent Design Thinking supports students to develop high-order skills

Method

The Educational Ladder (Wrigley & Straker, 2017) consists of the following steps:

1. Foundation Level: focus on factual knowledge comprehension, knowledge terminology, specific details and elements and interpreting, explaining and identifying.
2. Product Level: focus on conceptual applications, knowledge of classifications and categories and principles and implementing, executing and translating.
3. Project Level: focus on conceptual analysis and de-constructing, differentiating, organizing
4. Business Level: focus on procedural synthesis, knowledge of specific skills, techniques and methods and coordinating, critical thinking, testing.
5. Professional Level: focus on meta-cognitive evaluation, strategic knowledge of cognitive and personal development and appraising, valuing and selecting.



Participants

- Three students per group; 8 groups; a total of 24 level 3 HMS students.
- 6 Regular Bachelor, 1 Fast track and 1 Short track students.
- Using Design Thinking these students were challenged to design solutions for complex, multi-disciplinary, real-life issues (design challenges)
- Portfolios and design challenge reports from these students were analysed.

Preliminary findings

Overall, the design thinking skills of most third-year regular track students could be considered between level 2 and level 4 on the Education Ladder.

- The design thinking skills of most regular bachelor students could be considered as level 3 (project level)
- The design thinking skills of most fast and short track students could be considered as level 4 (procedural level) or 5 (meta-cognitive level)
- Regular bachelor students seemed to have more difficulties with meaning-oriented reflection skills than the fast and short track students.
- The majority of students easily described what they did (action-oriented), some students described what they learned (learning-oriented), however only a few students described how they made sense of/gave meaning to what they learned (meaning-oriented).
- The nature of the design challenges (profit/non profit, culture, distance, structure of challenges) influenced the level of design thinking
- It seems that students closely mirror the experts' and facilitators' knowledge

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