

TOWARDS A COMPLEXITY STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF HOSPITALITY BUSINESS-RELATED COURSES ACROSS UNIVERSITIES

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CITATION: Mutumba, A., Kibirango, M. (2016). Towards a Complexity Student-centered Approach to the Teaching of Hospitality Business-related Courses across Universities. *International Journal of Arts and Entrepreneurship*. Vol. 5 (1). 70 - 96

ABSTRACT

Most universities and colleges are still failing to produce the career-focused graduates who are ready to be interactively transformed into the needed human resources for the job market. This study focused on exploring the student-centered teaching approach through the right theories that address the industry's evolving complexities.

A qualitative methodology which is founded in the interpretivist philosophy was used in order to inductively construct out the concepts hence variables that can explain the shift towards the complexity student-centered teaching approach. The resulting findings generally showed that the complexity student-centered teaching approach benefits the different hospitality business (industry) stakeholders.

The findings revealed the practical transformational learning and career-focus benefits, the pedagogical reasons for increased complexity between the internal and external learning ecosystems, and the needed improvements for the teaching approach's continuous success.

In conclusion, the views and opinions of the students, lecturers and other key stakeholders were generally positive towards the complexity student-centered teaching approach in both case studies. Their positivity was partly revealed in terms of the perceived mutually benefits that they experienced and/or observed in line with the pedagogical, career-orientation and complexity-readiness objectives under the respective hospitality business-related courses.

Key-words: *Complexity, hospitality, students, teaching: Mutumba. A & Kibirango. M*

Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry is one of the fastest growing industries that face a number of human resource development challenges around the world. For instance, it is harder for industry's entrepreneurs, business owners, investors and policy makers to locally find the career-oriented human resources to sustainably facilitate the industry's fast growth especially in developing countries (Chen, Watson, Cornachione & Azevedo, 2013; Kotler, Makens & Bowen, 2007). This is forcing the respective businesses to mainly rely on the expensive expatriates from the more developed countries and/or to settle for the local career-disoriented graduates yet the local universities could play a leading role to reverse the trend (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Wright, 2011). Unfortunately, most universities and colleges are still failing to produce the career-focused graduates who are ready to be interactively transformed into the needed human resources for the industry (Olotu & Awoseila, 2011; Wright, 2011; Hausmann & Hidalgo, 2009). Such a higher education failure seems to be complicated by the many hospitality-business students who enrol for the respective degrees and diplomas as their last resort (Kotler *et al.*, 2007). Some of the students seem to pursue such programmes as a stepping stone towards 'their' dream careers in the banks, telecom companies and other related businesses which locally drains the industry (Tumwine, 2014; Walker, 1997).

Like in Uganda's health sector, the above internal brain drain leaves the hospitality businesses with a strategic human resource challenge that limits their contribution towards the country's desired economic transformation (Tumwine, 2014; Knight & Cross, 2012; The Annual CICS Report 2011; Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). However, developing the above students into graduates who are career-interested and ready to be transformed into the right human resources for today's complexity-driven industry is yet to be realised in such countries (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Hausmann & Hidalgo, 2009). The universities' unrealised human resource

contribution seems to be resulting from the commonly used teacher-centred teaching where the respective lecturers, teachers, instructors and trainers are the only experts who tell the course knowledge to their students (Wright, 2011). In this traditional approach, the students usually record, cram and reproduce the '*our teacher told us*' knowledge in order to pass the respective examinations with high grades regardless of the pedagogical gaps and the industry's changing complexities (Tumwine, 2014; Wright, 2011; Kotler *et al.*, 2007; Tomei, 2010; Boscolo & Mason, 2001). In so doing, the knowledge telling approach reduces the student's need for personal initiative, questioning, reflection, experimentation and synthesis of the recorded or told knowledge. It also reduces their interactive readiness to network with their on-campus and off-campus peers, diversity of facilitators and other resourceful people outside their respective classrooms (Morton, 2013; Boscolo & Mason, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). The student's own knowledge construction and reconstruction, strategic learning and metacognitive abilities for solving the future complexity-driven challenges are hence reduced. Such learning limitations are challenging the respective universities and colleges to collectively change towards the student-centered teaching approach which usually considers the evolving industry complexities and community needs (Robertson, Munter & McKinley, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Wright, 2011). The complexity student-centered approach can enable the respective universities and colleges to produce the needed graduates for today's fast growing hospitality businesses as revealed by earlier studies (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011; Boscolo & Mason, 2001).

For instance, an experimental study conducted by Boscolo & Mason (2001) showed that students can be interactively transformed into resourceful people who can manage the future challenges. The study's experimental group students were engaged in assignments where they had to use writing as a knowledge transformation tool. They were required to reflectively read a diversity of history and science documents, observe and interact with their classmates and teachers in order to generate their own student-centered understanding. The results revealed in the group's written and presented feedback demonstrated that transformational learning had taken place over the sixteen (16) weekly sessions. The group was also found to be ready for learning and generating the complexity-related solutions which were needed for the next level. So, the student-centered approach to the teaching of the respective business courses can also produce the right graduates who are ready to strategically manage the industry's future complexities (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Mutumba, 2010; Boscolo & Mason, 2001). Therefore, this study

is aimed at contributing more knowledge on why and how the complexity student-centered teaching of the business courses can transform the hospitality-business students into the right human resources who are ready for the industry challenges. Since *a practical solution is better when guided by good theory*, scholars like Knight & Cross (2012), Ghoshal (2005) and McKelvey (1998) support this study's intention of exploring such a problem-solving teaching approach through the right theories that address the industry's evolving complexities.

The complexity theory posits that an industry's key players co-exist and co-evolve in order to ensure their strategic readiness and competitiveness at the various levels (Goldstein, Hazy & Lichtenstein, 2010; McMillan, 2008; Weaver, 1948). So, for the universities and colleges to strategically contribute the right hospitality-business graduates for the industry, the respective lecturers need to engage their students through a diversity of interactive approaches during the teaching and examination. This emphasizes the need to change towards the complexity student-centered (knowledge transformation and application) learning approach (Wright, 2011; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010). However, due to complexity theory's low predictability of the desired results which is caused by its multiple positive and negative feedbacks, another complementing theory is needed.

Vygotsky's (1978) social-cultural learning theories generally posit that the students' metacognitive competencies can be developed better when they are guided, facilitated and motivated by competent student-centered teachers. Specifically, Vygotsky's more knowledgeable others (KMO) theory posits that when the more competent teachers guide and motivate their students in doing the learning tasks, the students are easily transformed into more competent human resources for the higher-level challenges. Such transformation can develop the hospitality-business students into the career-oriented graduates who are ready for the industry's more complex situations since they will have expanded their zone of proximal development (ZPD) for the next challenge. Vygotsky's ZPD theory posits that learners need the social-cultural guidance of a KMO like a more competent facilitator in order to be developed into graduates who are job-ready (Knight & Cross, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). However, both the KMO and ZPD are yet to explain why the complexity student-centered teaching approach also calls for guidance, facilitation, motivation and support from a diversity of KMOs like the industry's leading managers, development partners and media players among others. Fortunately, the complexity

theory shows that when the respective students are enabled to interact with a diversity of other peers and KMOs especially during the learning engagements, they are easily transformed into the needed graduates (Morton, 2013; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010; Hausmann & Hidalgo, 2009).

To some extent, a triangulation of the explanatory strengths from the complexity theory, more knowledgeable others (KMO) and zone of proximal development (ZPD) seems to explain how universities and colleges can produce the industry's needed career-focused graduates through the complexity student-centered teaching. With such a theoretical strength-based combination, the purpose of this study is therefore to empirically explore the students, lecturers and external stakeholders' respective views and opinions towards the complexity student-centered teaching of hospitality business-related courses in East Africa. This paper begins with a brief review of the literature which is followed by the study design, discussion of the findings and ends with the respective conclusion and implications.

Literature Review

Most higher education studies have mainly focused on the teacher-centered approach hence making it the most popularly used approach around the world (Wright, 2011; Boscolo & Mason, 2001). In a study by Wright (2011) on the Student-Centered Learning in Higher Education, it was revealed that even some of the lecturers who seem to appreciate the student-centered teaching approach do not actually practice it in their teaching. Even Boscolo & Mason (2001) whose experiment demonstrated how the student-centered teaching can be implemented only showed how writing can be used in transforming the respective students' understanding.

Student-centered Teaching Approaches

Student-centeredness is increasingly being studied as one of the transformational learning ingredients which are needed in improving the higher education quality around the world (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Metzger, 2013; Wright, 2011; Boscolo & Mason, 2001). Scholars like Goldstein *et al.*, (2010) have demonstrated some transformational learning approaches like where the process facilitators use a generative leadership style to encourage more microdiversity of players from related industries to learn together, co-develop and co-present their emerging mutually-beneficial solutions in multidisciplinary teams (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Morton, 2013). In so doing, such learner-centered approaches enable the lecturers to

achieve all the 3 levels of Bloom's taxonomy of education (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) objectives irrespective of the course domain and the industry being focused on by the respective course outline (Metzger, 2013; Tomei, 2010; Boscolo & Mason, 2001). Just like in the teaching of other science and arts course units like biology, medicine, agriculture, engineering, computer science and accounting, the above 3 learning levels in the hospitality business-related courses can be achieved through the complexity student-centered teaching in readiness for the industry challenges ahead (Metzger, 2013; Wright, 2011; Tomei, 2010; Ghoshal, 2005; Mason & Boscolo, 2001).

The hospitality industry's higher educators can also synthesize the respectively used approaches, integrate and innovatively apply them into their complexity student-centered teaching which also engages the local community (Morton, 2013; Knight & Cross, 2012; Wright, 2011; Tomei, 2010; Kotler *et al.*, 2007; Ghoshal, 2005). The above synthesized coherence brings out the needed positive deviances that make it appropriate for the universities to use such approaches in producing the hospitality industry's needed graduates (Kaggwa, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Metzger, 2013; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010). This creates the ground for shifting towards the integration of a complexity of on-campus and off-campus interactions for teaching the respective course units in line with today's pedagogical best practices (Morton, 2013; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Metzger, 2013).

The Complexity Student-centered Approach

As institutions of higher education continue to appreciate that they are stakeholders in industry, community and national development efforts through a diversity of mutually-beneficial interactions, they are engaging their respective communities in their teaching, research and scholarship with less fear of the likely outcomes (Kaggwa, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Morton, 2013). Positive outcomes like the students reconstructing the existing knowledge into their own higher-level understanding and student-generated innovations are some of the mindset drivers towards the complexity thinking in today's higher education pedagogy (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Metzger, 2013; Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010). With positive media reports like the 2nd UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day-coursework fun that the respective audience is said to have enjoyed, more college and university lecturers are likely to start trying out the complexity student-centered teaching approach in both the physical and social sciences domains

(Kaggwa, 2014; Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011). The possibility of implementing the approach was demonstrated by Mason & Boscolo (2001) whose experimental results confirmed its learning effectiveness in the teaching of both history-related and biology-based subjects in Northern Italy. However, the realities of implementing the complexity student-centered teaching are yet to be empirically and adequately studied in the East African hospitality-business context (Morton, 2013; Knight & Cross, 2012; Kacou, 2011; Tomei, 2010; Mutumba, 2010).

The inadequate empirical results for encouraging the complexity approach might explain why it is still less popular in countries like Uganda (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Wright, 2011; Hausmann & Hidalgo, 2009; Kotler *et al.*, 2007). As some scholars endeavour to popularize the approach, the field-based case study is emerging as one of the complexity approaches to the teaching of the management-related courses around the world (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Knight & Cross, 2012; Wright, 2011; Mutumba, 2010; Tomei, 2010; Ghoshal, 2005). Studies by scholars like Robertson *et al.*, (2014) and Morton (2013) have demonstrated other complexity student-centered teaching approaches like the community engaged learning, university-community learning partnerships, problem-based learning, service learning and the democratic classroom where the various levels of the course unit's pedagogy are integrated through a complexity of on-campus and off-campus learning engagements. Still, the opportunities of putting such emerging approaches into practice across more colleges and universities in the East African context are yet to be empirically constructed. So, the answers to why and how the complexity student-centered teaching can be sustainably implemented in Uganda are empirically explored through the following research questions (Knight & Cross, 2012; Fairchild & MacKinnon, 2009).

1. Which benefits have you experienced in the complexity student-centered teaching approach? (Aimed at interpreting out the various stakeholder benefits from the complexity student-centered teaching approach).
2. Why do the respective facilitators encourage a diversity of on-campus and off-campus engagements? (Aimed at constructing the needed complexity of interactions for delivering the multi-level pedagogical objectives across the respective universities' course units).

3. How does the complexity student-centered teaching create the right learning ecosystem for continuously producing the industry's needed graduates? (Aimed at bringing out the learning ecosystem for producing the industry' needed graduates).

Methodology

The exploratory purpose of this study makes the qualitative methodology to be the most appropriate research style for answering the above questions. The chosen methodology is grounded in the interpretative philosophy. This is because of the need for a research design that enables the researchers to inductively construct out the themes/ concepts hence variables that can explain the shift towards the complexity student-centered teaching approach (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Metzger, 2013; Wright, 2011).

Research Design

Since there is limited empirical literature on this phenomenon's East African context, the qualitative-case study approach was the most appropriate approach (Yin, 1994). A combination of 2 case studies from University 1's (UNIVERSITY 1's) which is Uganda's leading public university business school in the teaching of hospitality-business courses and another case from University 2's which is one of the country's leading private (religious-founded) community-engaged universities provided the exploratory grounds. In both cases, the respective hospitality business-related courses are taught and examined using the case study approach through a more student-centered pedagogy that engages the community at large (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011; Mutumba, 2010; Yin, 1994). The study is embedded through the use of more than one unit of analysis in both cases (Altinay & Roper, 2005). For instance, the researchers analyzed the practices involved in the UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day which is used in teaching the case-studied course of Managing Arts and Entertainment, its course outline documentation (BLH 3223, 2013/2014), and the observed complexity of relationships that the respective lecturers keep improving under the respective Bachelor of Leisure and Hospitality (BLHM) course at UNIVERSITY 1's. The above 3 levels of analysis for both case studies increased the richness of the collected qualitative data and the number of real-life perspectives that explain the opportunity of shifting towards the complexity student-centered teaching approach (Neuman, 2007; Altinay & Roper, 2005; Yin, 1994). The bigger picture was also

strengthened by the triangulation of the face-to-face (semi-structured) interviews, participant observations and the document review of the respective courses/case under study (Metzger, 2013; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Neuman, 2007; Doherty, 2007). For instance, just like in the selected case of the UNIVERSITY 1's Course, the interview results from University 2's's Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) students and their Business Research Project II course outline (BRES 302, 2013/2014) details were triangulated with the participant-observed complexity of interactions during the students' classroom and community engagements.

Case Selection and the Informants

The above 2 case studies/courses were selected because they are taught and examined using the community-engagement approach in line with the complexity student-centered approach where the respective students are community-engaged in a complexity of interactions from the beginning of the respective semesters (BLH 3223, 2013/2014; BRES 302, 2013/2014; Metzger, 2013; Morton, 2013). Since competitive hospitality management involves business research, both course units were found to be fitting the needed interactive diversity from the 2 university contexts. So, a total of 14 key informants (Informants) were interviewed and their responses were triangulated with the respective observations and document review in both case studies for increased validity and reliability (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Neuman, 2007; Yin, 1994). Specifically, 6 continuing students from both course units were interviewed and they consisted of 2 respective course leaders and 4 presentation-group leaders (3 in each case) whose interviews lasted 60-120 minutes because they were the main focus of the study. In addition, 4 respective course (s) lecturers, other 4 (2 academic heads of departments, 1 manager of an engaged brand and a local community member) Informants were each interviewed in 45-90 minutes as described below.

Brief Description of the Case(s) Informants

Informants 1 and 2 were the respective student (course) leaders of the 2 course units from both universities. Informant 3 and 4 were BLHM student leaders who passionately-chose to respectively lead their showbiz management and entertainment franchising groups during the 2nd Hospitality Day held in April 2014. Informant 5 and 6 were University 2's students from the business research course whom their respective lecturers identified to have interest in

participating in next semester's 3rd UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day. Informants 7, 8, 9 and 10 were the respective lecturers of both courses who had consistently taught them for at least 3 years since 2010 and who had participated in the respective student-centered course review complexities during those years. Meanwhile, Informants 11 and 12 were the academic heads of departments that house the 2 course units at both universities while Informants 13 and 14 were an engaged manager of a sponsoring brand for the 2nd UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day and a formerly engaged representative of University 2's's local business community respectively.

Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis concurrently progressed through the key informants analysis whereby the transcribed interviews from the above case sample of Informants were individually interpreted to explore the emerging themes that explain the complexity student-centered teaching issues of concern (Wright, 2011; Neuman, 2007; Altinay & Roper, 2005). The respectively contextualized concepts were then compared against each other in order to construct out the similarities, differences and interconnections across the responses from both cases at the 3 different levels of exploring the approach (Knight & Cross, 2012; Doherty, 2007; Altinay & Roper, 2005). The multi-level analysed themes were corroborated with related comparisons and contrasts from the participant observations and document reviews. The aim was to find out the generalized picture that shows why and how to shift towards the complexity student-centered approach across other public and private universities around the world (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Knight & Cross, 2012; Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Wright, 2011; Doherty, 2007). In line with such triangulation(s), the following findings bring out the sophisticated and valid picture of using the complexity student-centered pedagogy in the teaching the respective courses.

Findings and Discussion

The resulting findings generally showed that the complexity student-centered teaching approach benefits the different hospitality business (industry) stakeholders. The findings revealed the practical transformational learning and career-focus benefits, the pedagogical reasons for increased complexity between the internal and external learning ecosystems, and the needed improvements for the teaching approach's continuous success which are presented and discussed below.

Stakeholder Benefits of the Complexity Student-centered Teaching

A number of mutual benefits that reflect the reciprocity, flexibility, innovativeness and pedagogical features were revealed by the practiced complexity student-centered teaching across both cases. Among such benefits, the feeling of increased peer/campus self-worth and confidence in their previously despised hospitality degree emerged as the major career-focused benefits among Informant 1, 3 and 4 who were all 3rd year students at UNIVERSITY 1's. For instance, during the 2nd UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day press conference, Informant 1 responded to a general mind-set transformation question from the NBS TV, Top TV and The Observer reporters/journalists in the interview room with a comment that: *... this challenging course unit has made me discover that my hospitality degree is even better than other 'so-called superior degrees' like the Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Bachelor of Business Computing. Look, I was able to showcase my acquired world-class hospitality and celebrity management competencies to such a big audience. We should have started studying like this from our 1st year....* However, Informant 11 (Head of Department of Leisure and Hospitality) requested the journalists to remove that comment from their prime news reporting in order to avoid the likely destructive results between their hospitality degree and the other mentioned programmes of the same university business school. Such negative feedback can instead be innovatively converted into the student's hospitality career-motivation (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010; Kotler *et al.*, 2007; Mason & Boscolo, 2001).

As long as the media-hyped feedback is looked at as a source of positive deviance and energy, even the previously less career-interested hospitality students can be transformed into the needed graduates for the industry's faster growth (Wright, 2011). When the researchers connected the above comment with the BLH 3223 course outline (document), they found that from the beginning of semester in January of the respective year, the lecturers engage and empower their students in choosing their group-preferred topics, group members and the industry/community partners to work with in delivering their 2nd coursework presentation on the UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day (BLH 3223, 2013/2014; Metzger, 2013; Wright, 2014). The respective students choose the topics and concepts on which to experiment and present their innovative projects during the moment-of-truth in April of the same semester and year. During

the preparations and actual Day, the facilitators pedagogically benefit in terms of enabling their students to practically appreciate what they taught them in the classroom hence achieving the cognitive learning objectives as previously argued by Morton (2013). The students are also enabled to compare and appreciate the value of the taught concepts through their practical experience in line with the course outline's affective objectives besides the students becoming more able to apply the concepts in solving the future societal problems hence mutually achieving the psychomotor objectives (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; BLH 3223, 2013/2014; Morton, 2013). Similar student(s) motivation was also revealed from the interviews with Informants 5 and 6. These University 2's students were more challenged and motivated by the inclusion of the business community members as part of questioning audience during their class presentations hence in awarding of the Business Research Project marks. One of them commented that '*.....at least this course unit makes me feel part of our university's neighboring business community. I only wish the local TVs would report our community engagements so that even my home people can watch me like the UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day students.*' The Bugema students were not aware that although UNIVERSITY 1's's hospitality students are allowed to work with a diversity of students from the non-hospitality programmes and their local community, such resourceful stakeholders are currently being engaged towards their 2nd coursework (the Day) which is abit late besides them not being part of the examiners. However, we observed that many innovative community-oriented projects have emerged from the complexity of interactions between the different course and non-course students, their respective lecturers and with the respective communities in both cases (Kacou, 2011; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010). The win-wins from such emerging projects provide the students with a chance to experiment their classroom knowledge on the community problems as part of their learning process and networked-resources. Meanwhile the respective communities benefit from the locally researched and developed (home-made) solutions that fit their unique local contexts, which is in line with scholars like Morton (2013) and Wright (2011).

For instance, 63.6% of the 11 approved Business Research topics were focused on the common management challenges which University 2's's neighboring business community faces. One of the topics from the respective Guidelines of 2013/2013 was a topic entitled '*Entrepreneurship Skills and its Contribution to Small Scale Business Susutainability: A Case Study of Bugema Community*'. Its languaging/phrasing and focus imply that the course's

complexity student-centered approach usually attracts the respective students into being more interactively-concerned about their community's mutually-beneficial wellbeing as part of their learning processes (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Metzger, 2013; Wright, 2011). The triangulation of respectively reviewed documents with the interviews and observations, the finally defended and submitted report has to be beneficial to the community especially in terms of areas like cost management and community competitiveness. So, the community benefits from such research projects especially when it is clearly engaged as a key member of the marks-awarding audience. However, the 15% marks are too small for any career-disinterested student not to concentrate on the classroom-based activities which contribute more than 80% of the final grade. (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; BRES 302, 2013/2014; Wright, 2011). The usual teacher-centeredness that attracts such students is in contrast with UNIVERSITY 1's BLH 3223 course unit where 90% of the marks depend on how well the respective student symbiotically interacted across a diversity of the key on-campus and off-campus partners. Among the respective partners include the engaged groupmates and peers from the business school's other related degrees in tourism and travel, international business, marketing, computing, real estate, procurement, and entrepreneurship alongside a diversity of lecturers and sponsors among others (BLH 3223, 2013/2014; Wright, 2011). The engaged lecturers (Informants 7, 8, 9 & 10) were observed to appreciate their student's demonstrated knowledge transformation from the 'hard' theory into the 'easier' guidance for practice in the respective industry, which is line with Kaggwa (2014) and Ghoshal (2005). Specifically, the UNIVERSITY 1's lecturers' appreciation was observed in terms of them being among the most 'delighted' cheerers especially during the fashion and design showcasing, culinary arts demonstration and entertainment franchising session which included the KFC and UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day adverts demonstrations.

Teaching through the student-centered service learning, field visits, live case studies and other well-monitored interactive approaches are enabling the facilitators to spot and amplify the students' emerging innovations in both the UNIVERSITY 1's and University 2's cases. Besides enjoying their pedagogically delivered examination results, the lecturers also get a chance to meet the student-invited celebrities and leading media houses which enables them to share their new research-based knowledge with the wider audience. This might also explain why Informants 11 and 12 (heads of departments) reported to have seen the peers admiring their students during the out-door UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day and In-door University 2's Business Research

Project II presentations on April 25, 2014 and March 24 to April 25 respectively (Metzger, 2013; Wright, 2011; Mason & Boscolo, 2001). Specifically, Informant 12 is quoted to have said: *...‘you see the students freely sharing their personal secrets. Some stop their bad habits and bring out their tacit knowledge... You actually see the group/students’ hidden competencies during their attention-catching project presentations and defense. The positive word-of-mouth spreads around the campus and, the well prepared and audience-ready students become the campus ‘celebs’. It is not the individual student’s intelligency but the complexity of interactions that reveals such positive differences which are admired by his/her peers’.* Meanwhile, Informant 11 was inspired by his hospitality students’ sense of psychological ownership of the Day which resulted into innovative projects like the student-produced movie which was premeired on the Day (Kaggwa, 2014; Kacou, 2011; Kotler *et al.*, 2007). When asked about the observed complexity-readiness benefits to his students, his answer was

...The students are taking it upon themselves to get sponsors like MTN Uganda, decoration partners like Real Events Ltd among others.our students have also engaged a number of national radio and TV stations, campus newsletters and the social media including the school administration. With such early engagements, our students always deliver a mindset changing Hospitality Day....They are increasingly liking their course engagements.

When such early stakeholder-engagements are integrated with media publicity, the other students from the non-hospitality study programmes are attracted to request for a chance to also join the respective groups. In so doing, the hospitality students are expanding their zone of proximal development (ZPD) beyond their classmates to include a diversity of the university’s other students, the sponsors, industry players, media and the students from other universities at the various levels (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Another related stakeholder benefit was also observed at UNIVERSITY 1’s whereby the students become the ‘lecturers’ of the topics that they chose to present and defend during the lecture time and the respective courseworks. As each group and the student prepare for the role reversal, the competent lecturers become facilitators of the learning process which is in line with Mason & Boscolo (2001). However, the reported experience was different for University 2’s’s students. There are mixed feelings regarding whether students felt comfortable to consult with the lecturers. Informant 5 did not feel comfortable, while Informant 6 only felt comfortable to

approach the course lecturers when it was deemed necessary. This finding is different from the UNIVERSITY 1's case of the hospitality students where the students are increasingly becoming confident to approach their diversity of lecturers for guidance. They mainly consult on process issues such as scheduling of the respective activities, appropriate venue set-ups, contract signing with the sponsors and performing artists, handling of the media relations and the intra-group conflict management among others. UNIVERSITY 1's's respective process consultations contribute to a complexity-enabled learning environment where the respective students are guided as they question the observed differences, experiment on their acquired knowledge and become empowered to manage the next challenges. As reported in an earlier study conducted by Wright (2011), some of University 2's's respective lecturers were instead not providing the conducive learning environment despite 'appreciating' the student-centered teaching approach.

This current study also explored the avenues through which the students socialized with other internal and external stakeholders during their respective learning assignments. In the Business Research Project II case, a variety of avenues were revealed which included engagements like the consultation meetings with a diversity of other lecturers and staff members outside classroom, within and outside the group discussions, presentations, research seminars and during the field visits that they make while collecting data. From these exploratory findings therefore, in the case of University 2's's business research course, the most common forms of interaction happened out of class but contribute less to the student's final mark which contrasts the UNIVERSITY 1's case. From last semester's academic performance report in the respective course file, the majority (80%) of the respective UNIVERSITY 1's candidates passed with 70% and above. It is important to also note that those candidates who contributed more during both the classroom discussions, presentations (internal) and the external/community engagements scored higher marks as a result of the richer blend of the approach's knowledge reconstruction/transformation and hospitality-career inspiration (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Kotler *et al.*, 2007; Mason & Boscolo, 2001). Such student-centered benefits reflect why there is need for a diversity of interactions that also result into the needed on-campus and off-campus learning ecosystem. Satisfying such a need can strengthen the feasible and viable shift towards the complexity student-centered teaching approach in the university-community engagements (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010; Mutumba, 2010).

On-Campus and Off-Campus/Community Engagements

Both case-sampled students and lecturers were positive about the teaching approach's fostering of more participation through the diversity of on-campus and off-campus/community interactions. This is because since 2010, most of the respective lecturers keep appreciating the ease and effectiveness of engaging a growing diversity of partnerships in achieving the respective pedagogical objectives from the cognitive to the psychomotor levels across the respective course units, which is line with the positing of Morton (2013) and Tomei (2010). Even the on-campus interactions have a component which takes place outside the classroom. As reported in a case study by Morton (2013), the outside interactions result into a means of Community Engaged Learning (CEL) where the university (faculty, department, lecturers, students and administration) is in symbiotic partnerships with the local and industry community throughout the teaching, learning, examination, and research project processes. From the respective interviews and observations, the interactions that take place outside class are 3-dimensional. From attending the 2 universities' respective presentations and demonstrations, we observed that the students' emerging fun, exposure and the community outreach are both knowledge transforming and career-encouraging beyond the teacher-told/lecture-time possibilities. Indeed, when the students are practically engaged, not only do they appreciate and become ready for the contemporary industry context, they are also inspired into their course-oriented career paths (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011; Kotler *et al.*, 2007). This was further evidenced by Informant 3 whose hospitality-franchising interests were satisfied when he got a chance to interact with the KFC manager whose master franchise's ownership and management was his group's sponsoring partner. One of his 1st Semester lecturers had previously aroused his career interest when he gave KFC as an international multi-brand franchise that has threatened Uganda's existing restaurant brands like Steers, Nandos (before their franchisors had withdrawn the contracts), Bon Appetit, Chillies and Chicken Tonight among others. The restaurant franchise's upper echelons seems to have been looking for a way of partnering with more universities in Kampala and Entebbe in order to increase their fast-food clientele, the way McDonalds has done it in the USA and other countries (Morton, 2013; Kotler *et al.*, 2007). So, being one of the group members who had been engaged by KFC's local managers to do the volunteer on-campus promotion before the Hospitality Day, he learnt that even such international brands which are 'assumed' to have all the expansion resources also need to engage with the

local communities which also include the campus students. Such affective learning objectives are hence better achieved through a combination of the off-campus (his team had to go to the KFC-Bugolobi Village Mall) engagements and on-campus (actual Day and campus-focused promotion) interactions which not only inspired his career-interest but also gave him the experiential learning opportunity (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Morton, 2013; Mutumba, 2010).

In addition to the above participant observed career-inspiration, Informants 4 commented that ‘... *lecturers and fellow students from other universities like Kyambogo University, International University of East Africa and Cavendish University Uganda are admiring the fun we enjoy during the Hospitality Day and the exposure it brings to us as we prepare. During a recent Church service, even our Pastor appreciated our Nakawa Market cleaning which was broadcasted on Uganda’s leading free-to-air TV channels.* Such a sense of corporate social responsibility was aligned with a number of the learning (affective and psychomotor) objectives reflected in Topics 7 & 8 of the respective course outline (BLH 3223, 2013/2014) as recommended by Robertson *et al.*, (2014) and Morton (2013). The BLHM III students were also able to practically acquire more cognitive competencies like when they recognized and confirmed their endorsement contract knowledge during the practical outsourcing of CINDY (Uganda’s leading female dancehall artist) who was a key guest performer for the Day. This guest artist who was then having an endorsement contract with Airtel Uganda, refused to perform on an MTN-branded stage or near any of its signage moreover the later was the main sponsor of the 2nd UNIVERSITY 1’s Hospitality Day. The Managing Artist and Showbiz Group recognized CINDY’s contract by just listening to her reasons for her refusing. They practically saw the value of their showbiz and contract re-negotiation/adjustment knowledge which made them troubleshoot and quickly set up an open space in the middle of the venue where she ended up delivering a crowd-pulling performance that was reported on Urban TV, NBS TV and in The Observer among other engaged media platforms (Kaggwa, 2014). Such practical experiences and learning opportunities called for the out-of-the class interactions which increased the value of what the students had previously been taught in the class. As result, they became ready to transfer such community-engaged learning to their next industry-related challenges. However, some students felt abandoned and exploited by the university staff especially those lecturers who claimed to have become ‘too busy’ during the preparations before the exhibition Day. We learnt that this is why one of the students complained about the costly movements which are not funded

by the department and/or faculty. Informant 4 complained that, *'some faculty lecturers and administrators come in late when we have already struggled and secured the small sponsorship cash on our own.....They start telling us how to allocate the money or how to spend it. That is not fair?'*. This shows that the on-campus facilitators like the heads of academic departments and the other lecturers are yet to be fairly and actively support the students in order to reduce the common stress and last minute panic (Kaggwa, 2014; Metzger, 2013; Kotler *et al.*, 2007). It was also observed that some lecturers get excited and choose to reap from the students 'sweat' by ambushing the students' event in order to show the audience (and the media) that they are in 'charge' of the UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day success. Such on-campus but outside-the-class mishaps can demoralize those students who have actually sacrificed their time, money and other resources to ensure the 'grabbed' student-delivered success. However, some students see a positive deviance which demonstrates the crowd-pulling power of their acquired showbiz management, fashion and design show, movie premeiring, entertainment franchising, airline reservation and AD design competencies among others. Delivering such an audience-pulling, real-time (showcasing and marks-awarding) exhibition which is part of the coursework and examination involves a diversity of on-campus and off-campus engagements at the respective levels as reflected in the 2 respective course outlines (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; BLH 3223, 2013/2014; BRES 302, 2013/2014; Morton, 2013).

For the University 2's case, it is through the engagements outside their class (but still on-campus) that the students select their career-driven topics from which to generate their pedagogically-aligned projects to be presented. They consult their respective lecturer(s) for extra practical guidance as they select their group/team members and leaders who are mainly their classmates. The students then present their research proposals and reports in front of a classroom audience that includes some of the community members who were also their units of inquiry. However, there are intragroup conflicts, verbal attacks and sometimes peer quarrels that characterize such team building interactions. Unlike the Business Research Project II presentations, UNIVERSITY 1's's respective coursework and student-centered event takes place at a selected out-door venue (still on campus) which is strategically organized where they can attract most of the campus community and change their mindsets towards the hospitality business-related programmes (Kaggwa, 2014; Morton, 2013; BLH 3223, 2013/2014; Kacou, 2011; Mason & Boscolo, 2001). As the 3rd Bachelor of Leisure and Hospitality Management

(BLHM III) students and their respective lecturers achieve the intended mindset change, the 2nd and 1st year BLHM followers get inspired to prepare for their turn when they enter the 3rd year. Such improved career-interest at the various stakeholder levels of the respective course pedagogy are in line with the findings of earlier scholars like Robertson *et al.*, (2014) and Morton (2013). These scholars advise that universities should align their pedagogical principles and practices with the needs of their multi-level communities as required by the respective higher education regulators in some countries.

From an interview with Informant 10 from University 2's, it was revealed that their faculties have been struggling to implement the university courses-community needs alignment since they started chasing for the University Charter (status) from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Most of the University's curricula and course outlines reflect that alignment but the actual delivery is still a struggle as revealed by an earlier study by Wright (2011). In addition, another University 2's Business Research Project lecturer (Informant 9) commented that *'Even with such a shared goal, some of our traditional lecturers who are sometimes older than some of us were initially fighting our complexity student-centered approaches in order to protect their respective comfort zones. At times, some teaching assistants and junior lecturers whom we previously engaged as part of the panel of judges have instead ended up wrongly marking the respective students'*. The lecturer's concern is in line with Mason & Boscolo (2001) whose experimented student-centered teaching approach emphasized the need to have well trained, experienced and motivated teachers/lecturers/facilitators to handle such contemporary teaching. Otherwise, the complexity student-centered teaching approach might instead become the 'complicated approach' thereby increasing the knowledge telling and career-disorientation which are common in the country's higher education practices (Kaggwa, 2014; Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Morton, 2013; Mutumba, 2010; Mason & Boscolo, 2001). In order to sustainably shift towards the complexity student-centered teaching of hospitality business-related and other 'dispised' courses, some ecosystem issues need to be addressed.

The Needed Learning Ecosystem for the Approach's Sustainability

Most today's human resources development is being delivered through some kind of co-existence and co-evolution among the respective learning partners. In view of this reality, this study also aimed at exploring the needed learning ecosystem for the universities' respective

internal and external stakeholders to sustainably shift towards the complexity approach. In general, the 2 case studies revealed the internal and external learning ecosystems for sustainably producing the career-focused and complexity-ready graduates.

Internal Learning Ecosystem

The UNIVERSITY 1's case study revealed some interactive sub-systems like the students' complementary (coursework) groups which the individual students strategically choose from the course outline topics at the beginning of the semester. Such student-decisions are made before the respective lecturer approves the proposed concepts through the respective learning processes which result into innovations which the students present in ways that bring out their inspired career-focus and complexity-readiness. Sometimes, the respective lecturers and head of department also engage the students in choosing the most appropriate course units on which to apply the complexity student-centered approach. As the mutual choices are made, issues like the internal financing of the respective outside-the-class engagements, completing of the course outline, the learning objectives, the balance between group vs individual marks awarding and the needed top management support are discussed and agreed upon. The ecosystem that comes from such early stakeholder engagements provides the students with inspiration and energy for delivering the innovative projects and/or exhibitions which are presented for examination.

For instance, Informant 1 revealed that she was energized by the lecturer(s) allowing them the chance to comment on the appropriate topics and teaching methodology to be adapted. She commented that *'our lecturer bought our course-content request to include the media relations as both a stand-alone topic and its cross-cutting issues in at least 4 other topics like managing showbiz where the role of the media is a key issue. ...you know the media can make or kill the celebrities'*. Her comment implies that before the actual conducting of the respective UNIVERSITY 1's course unit, the students are empowered to be the project experts while the lecturers engage them as the project advisors, facilitators and/or process consultants besides being the ones to award the examination marks (Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011; Mason & Boscolo, 2001). On the other side, Informant 5 from University 2's commented that *...without early involvement of the research supervisor and the target Bugema community respondents, last minute disappointments usually arise. For example, last semester, a Kenyan classmate of mine came to me crying after her pilot study was cancelled by her research supervisor for being*

inconsistent with her previously submitted proposal. Her thesis was on the capacity management practices used by the roadside restaurant operators around Bugema's trading centers. But she instead ran her pilot on produce retailers along Gayaza Road. So, early engagement of both the research supervisor and project's proposed units of inquiry helps the students to be ready for the likely differences in the internal partners' expectations. As supported by Metzger (2013) and Wright (2011) whose case studies revealed the importance of internal ecosystem ingredients like early stakeholder engagement and appreciation of the likely informational differences, both the students and the lecturers become ready for the external complexities. The mutual readiness to practically learn in partnership with the other players from the outside learning ecosystem demands for finding some means of integrating the respective contributions from both sides.

When the internal interactions are intergrated with the external learning ecosystem, the respective universities and colleges are able to produce the needed graduates on a sustainable basis for the nation, region and global industry (Kafeero, 2014; Robertson *et al.*, 2014; Morton, 2013; Wright, 2011). For instance, it is through the combination of the study tour in the 6th week, an external guest lecture in the 11th week and participation in the Abbey's Franchise Show that the respective BLHM III students are practically engaged to connect their classroom learning to external learning ecosystem of the industry players (BLH 3223, 2013/2014). Such an integrated human resource contribution increases the ecosystem's inherent symbiosis which is reflected in the mutual agreements, career networking, beneficial microdiversities, sense of common direction, and self-regulation among other student-centered benefits. The generated, amplified, and media-reported innovations that are attracting more external ecosystem partners into supporting this complexity approach in complementary student-centered ways.

External Learning Ecosystem

As stressed by Hon. Alupo Jessica, Uganda's minister of education during the recent Nkumba University graduation ceremony among other from earlier studies, the local universities and their respective communities/industry need to become complementary partners in the students learning, the lecturers' research efforts and region's developmental efforts. For instance, Informant 12 whose positive view was that University 2's's community-engaged learning reflected its symbiosis with their external learning partners. His specific comment was *As the head of department, I have seen that my senior and junior lecturers are increasingly*

appreciating the benefits of connecting our research and innovations with the local business needs..... Otherwise, our local community relevancy and ability to build even the contextually-bound theories will be questioned. The respective head of department's comment implies that both the facilitators and the students are developing a positive attitude towards participation in the local community-engaged research projects. However, unlike the case of UNIVERSITY 1's's hospitality students, University 2's's business research students were seldom engaged in the needed community-engaged course reviews for developing the integrative assignments or projects. As revealed by the studies of Morton (2013) and Wright (2011), the university's low involvement of its respective students as active participants in developing approaches that contribute to the quality of their external learning ecosystem is not student-centered enough. The students need the opportunity to ask the 'big questions' whose answers are more practically found in the external learning ecosystem where the business owners and managers are sometimes ready to partner with their local universities in co-developing their community-relevant solutions. From this current study, the lecturers of the BLHM course unit are shifting towards the increased partnerships with their community learning ecosystems hence their shift towards the complexity student-centered teaching of the hospitality courses.

For instance, Informant 3 from the movie making group was grateful for the chance that his group got to have their student-made movie '*Aftermath*' registered by the Uganda Federation of Movie Industry (UFMI) which has been facilitating the respective groups since 2013 when it was engaged by the respective students through their lecturer who is a registered UFMI member. As highlighted in the studies of Chen *et al.*, (2013), Morton (2013), Wright (2011) and Mason & Boscolo (2001), such industry-based ecosystems provide a complexity of external non-paid (docile) learning resources for the respective students. The respective resources came in form of seasoned movie producers, casting designers, costume designers, lighting engineers, directors and movie critiques whom UFMI requested to assist the movie making group. UNIVERSITY 1's's respective lecturers first teach the theory in the class and then instruct the movie making project in form of an external ecosystem-engaged assignment to the respective coursework group. With such student-driven external sourcing, the pedagogical and instructional objectives are achieved with career-motivating responses from the external partners besides the easily scored high marks in the respective demanding course unit (Robertson *et al.*, 2014; BLH 3223, 2013/2014; Morton, 2013). From the 2nd UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day media reports and

our participant observations, the engaged UFMI-based movie producers, directors and critiques enabled the respective students to produce a movie that demonstrated that the complexity approach had improved their career-focus and complexity-readiness. This is how Informant 13 put it; *....Among the actors of this movie, Doreen should just focus on her movie acting career. As a first timer, she indeed has the talent which you guys of UFMI need to tap into for Uganda's infant movie industry.* He was representing one of the event's sponsoring brands which promised to continue supporting the annual UNIVERSITY 1's Hospitality Day as long as it remained student-centered and community-engaging. Also, Informant 14 who represented Bugema business community's views expressed her appreciation of the mutual benefits from the continued university-community engagements. She asked *....., if we don't continue our community-university partnership, where shall we keep getting the low-cost researched information to guide our small businesses' decision making on professional issues like cash planning and strategic management?* It means that through such internal and external ecosystem engagements, the respective universities and colleges continue to produce the needed graduates on a sustainable basis as community partners. This implication is supported by Chen *et al.*, (2013) who reflect such engagements under their 'Flying High, Landing Soft' curriculum which emphasizes this university-community learning partnerships and students readiness for the respective industry complexities ahead of them.

Conclusion

The views and opinions of the students, lecturers and other key stakeholders were generally positive towards the complexity student-centered teaching approach in both case studies. Their positivity was partly revealed in terms of the perceived mutually benefits that they experienced and/or observed in line with the pedagogical, career-orientation and complexity-readiness objectives under the respective hospitality business-related courses. Among the benefits, peer appreciation from fellow campusers and the media audience, career-inspiration, practical learning and multiple pedagogical achievements emerged as the main student-centered benefits that are delivered by the approach especially among UNIVERSITY 1's's hospitality students. Home-made/university-researched solutions that match the community needs emerged as among the key benefits to the local business community especially the case of University 2's's Business Research Project II. Other external partners like the sponsors mainly benefit from the

on-campus promotions that attract the university clientele as the engaged students get a chance to practically experience what is taught in the classrooms.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Heads of Departments of Leisure and Hospitality, and the Business Studies at UNIVERSITY 1's and University 2's respectively for allowing us to conduct this study. In this regards, we thank Mr. Otengei Samson and Mr. Mpatasirwa Nathan for their respective support. All the 14 key informants, other engaged students from both universities and the respective faculty deans are highly appreciated.

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