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Exploring Critical Conceptual Space in Hospitality Higher Education

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Title: Exploring Critical Conceptual Space in Hospitality Higher Education

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Abstract:

Within higher education, the notion of criticality (Barnett, 1997), if manifested as transformative critique, is a powerful concept that cultivates students towards becoming critical beings, capable of critiquing disciplinary knowledge, engaging with critical self-reflection, and externalising such criticality as a worldmaking (Hollinshead, 2007) lens towards the reinterpretation of society at large. With such an educational aim, the relationship between the educator and the student, as well as the perception of teaching and learning, are problematised by the educational philosophy of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), which rejects the view that education is the neutral and apolitical transmission of knowledge, and instead encourages the inclusion of an ethico-political perspective in teaching and learning. In terms of hospitality higher education (HHE), despite the emergence of critical management education more than two decades ago, as well as the broader presence of the ‘critical turn’ in social sciences, HHE appears to have insulated itself from such external influences and continues to operate predominantly under experiential vocationalism and the emphasis of relevance to industrial demands.

Informed by the field theory of Bourdieu (1988), the theory of pedagogic device (Bernstein, 2000), and the knowledge force-field theorised by Tribe (2006), this paper presents an ongoing doctoral research project¹, which attempts to utilise criticality as a research vehicle, to explore how its conceptualisations by hospitality academics are shaped and formed by their intellectual habitus, and the self-reflexive understanding of their roles as educators and researchers of hospitality. By evaluating the conceptual nature and form of criticality, this research study aims to provide a greater understanding of how criticality is manifested within the intellectual community of hospitality. From such an understanding, it aims to evaluate the possibility of a potential conceptual space, in which an ethico-political dimension of criticality (Barnett, 1997) can be developed, and a critical approach informed by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) can be incorporated in the teaching and learning of hospitality knowledge.

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¹Data collection completed (55 interviews with hospitality academics in the UK). Currently data under analysis; findings will be presented at Critical Tourism Studies Conference 2017.