

## **Evaluation of the Vocational Competence of the Cookery Students: A Study on the Students of Hotels and Vocational High Schools**

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of the vocational education and training system is to develop sufficient people with the right skills to meet labour market demands. A permanent dilemma for vocational education and training planners is that they are planning the development of people for future labour markets, on the basis of information from past labour markets (ETF, 2000, p.3). But, vocational qualifications are very useful guides for schools to determine what should be taught. Vocational qualifications define the minimum knowledge and skills to perform a profession. Standards are needed to help ensure the quality of education and the development of employees for technical level jobs.

From the other point of view, the vocational education has three components which are input, process and output. The input is the description of what should be learned, the process is a description of the way in which learning will take place (which will include the location and duration of learning, learning methods etc). And the outcome is the level of competence which the learner is expected to achieve (this may be described as learning outcomes for an educational standard or a performance outcome for an occupational standard) (ETF, 2000, p.23).

The trend of globalization effects the frame of tourism education. The rising competition conditions make the quality of tourism services more importante. One of the most important elements of the quality of tourism services is the theoretical and practical competence of labor. From the other side cookery education is an important ingredient for tourism education. But, as Robinson and Barron (2007, p.913) mentioned; the occupation of cookery has been identified as one sharing a shortage of skilled employees.

Cookery education can be defined as the process of teaching knowledge and skills of preparing, cooking and presenting a wide variety of foods according to industry standards. Cooks generally are employed in restaurants, hotels, hospitals, clubs, central food commissaries, correctional institutions, catering establishments and educational

institutions. Cooks can also be employed in the transportation industry aboard ships, trains or airplanes (CCDA, 2003, p.xviii).

Historically, the kitchen trade meant endless toil under imperious chefs who rarely shared their culinary secrets. But the institution of the culinary schools has given those individuals seeking success for the food and beverage industry a solid base of skills that would have taken years to amass. Culinary schools have not just improved the quality of the labor pool, they have made cooking a profession in the eyes of the public (Hughes, 2003, p.10). Cookery for first time in England regarded as an art and flavor and delicacy more esteemed than mere quantity (Barrows ve Shapleigh, 1915, p.20).

By the foundation of Ankara School of Hotels in the education year of 1961–1962, cookery education had been started to given in a formal education school in Turkey ([www.otmlankara.k12.tr](http://www.otmlankara.k12.tr)). The cookery education at the high school level has been given in the frame of National Cookery Vocational Qualification, since the education year of 2005–2006. And the first students were graduated in the education year of 2008-2009. The theoretical and practical competence levels of the students are wondered as the first outputs of the competence based cookery education system. To serve this purpose, the objective of this study is to find out the theoretical and practical competence levels of the cookery students within the frame of National Cookery Vocational Qualification.

## Method

As to fulfill the objective of the study, a survey questionnaire consisting of three sections were used as data collection tool. The first section included 7 questions about individual characteristics of the students. The second section contained 44 close-ended statements (theoretical competences) and the third section contained 44 close-ended statements (practical competences) developed through the competences of National Cookery Vocational Qualification. Each statement was graded via 5 point likert scale as 1=I do not agree at all, 2= I don't agree, 3= I partly agree, 4= I agree, 5=I completely agree. The questionnaires were conducted for 1014 cookery students of Hotels and Vocational High Schools in Turkey. The validity and reliability studies were implemented; following this the questionnaires were applied between March 15 and April 30 to the sample population. Data obtained was analyzed through “frequency”, “percentage”, “t-test for independent sampling”, “one-factor variance (ANOVA) analysis” and Tukey (HSD) test”.

## The Findings and Conclusion

Respondents' demographic characteristics are as followed;

- 82% of them are male,
- 91,5% of them are the stutents who have chosen clinary class by themself,
- 71,7% of respondents are the students whose school has the hotel for practice,
- 65,7% of respondents are the students who have fulfilled their apprenticeship in kitchen department,

- 74,7% of respondents are the students who want to work in tourism industry.

According to the findings of the study, the students are more competenced on; “self care, self preparation for work, cooking kinds of pasta, cooking kinds of pilafs, preparing kinds of salads, preparing vegetable garnishes, preparing milk puddings and easy to prepare desserts” subjects than the other subjects. From the other point of view, the students are less competenced on; “designating of daily portion quantities of food groups, selecting the sources of food elements, designating critical control points (HACCP), cooking special kinds of international soups, cooking offal food particular to Turkish cuisine, preparing stewed fruit particular to Turkish cuisine, preparing and cooking seafood and preparing meats” than the other subjects. The subjects which are less competenced by the cookery students must be taught in efficient methods. All subjects must be applied individually by all students.

The findings of the study shows that there is no significant difference ( $p < 0,05$ ) between, the vocational knowledge competence levels of male ( $\bar{x} = 3,98$ ) and female ( $\bar{x} = 4,08$ ) students. Furthermore, there is significant difference ( $p < 0,01$ ) between, the vocational skill competence levels of male ( $\bar{x} = 4,00$ ) and female ( $\bar{x} = 4,17$ ) students. The vocational skill competence levels of female students are higher than the vocational skill competence levels of male students. From the other point of view, the practical competence levels of the students shows significant difference whether their school has the hotel for practice or not. Practical competence levels of the students ( $\bar{x} = 4,06$ ) whose school has the hotel for practice are higher than the other students ( $\bar{x} = 3,96$ ). As seen in these figures the difference is very narrow. This result mustn't be commented as the hotels for practice aren't necessary, but it can be commented as the hotels for practice aren't operated in functional ways.

There is significant difference ( $p < 0,01$ ) between, the students who have fulfilled their apprenticeship in kitchen department and the other students (who have fulfilled their apprenticeship in service-bar and pastry departments). The students who have fulfilled their apprenticeship in kitchen department are more practice competenced than the other students. It is an expected result, but 35% of respondents are the students who have fulfilled their apprenticeship out of kitchen departments. General Management of Trade and Tourism Education should manipulate the administrations of schools to arrange the apprenticeship as pointed out in written-regulations of apprenticeship.

Cookery education is a specific education which requires high costs. So the employment rates of graduates of cookery schools should be high in tourism industry. However, as findings of the the study 25,3% of respondents are the students who doesn't want to work in tourism industry. And also these respondents are the students whose vocational competences are less than the other students. This result of the study indicates that developing the competence levels of the students can increase the rates of students who want to work in tourism industry.

National Vocational Qualifications must be renewed within the changing industry needs. And also this kind of studies should be handed periodically for all vocational education levels. So, weaknesses of student competences and educational handicaps can be find out and solutions can be suggested.