

Bridging The Curriculum Gap How Hospitality Education Aligns With Emerging Industry Skills

***Mrs. Chaudhari Pallavi Subhash, **Dr. Prakash H. Karmadkar, #Dr. Vandana Mishra Chaturvedi**

*Research Scholar, **Supervisor, #Research Co-Supervisor,

Department of Management,

Himalayan University,

Itanagar, A.P.

¹Received: 25/01/2025; Accepted: 21/02/2025; Published: 08/03/2025

Abstract

The tourist business is expected to maintain its impressive growth rate from the previous century into the next. As a result, educators in the field of travel and tourism face a multitude of new obstacles as they attempt to address these phenomena. It would seem, however, that the hospitality and tourist education community has developed in an uneven and haphazard fashion, one that does not always address the demands of the sector. This is due to the fact that developing a curriculum is fraught with several obstacles and gaps. The purpose of this research is to find out how schools that teach hospitality are adapting their courses to meet the changing needs of employers. The hospitality sector is in dire need of recent grads who can navigate the ever-shifting landscape of technology, customer tastes, and business models to provide exceptional service in an increasingly digitized, environmentally conscious, and service-intensive setting. Redesigning the curriculum, strengthening industry-academia ties, and improving mentoring and internships are all ways this research suggests the hotel sector may better train its future leaders.

Keywords: *Curriculum; Education; Hospitality; Industry and Tourism*

1. Introduction

Getting a good education is crucial to thriving as individuals and as a nation. Improving the quality of instruction and student achievement should be the primary goals of every school. On the other hand, the field of hospitality education is now seeing explosive expansion on a worldwide scale. In order to shape their course offerings, pedagogical approaches, and chances for training and placement for young professionals, hoteliers often communicate with the heads of department at well-known educational institutions. Typically, there is disconnecting between what students learn in school and what they really do in the workplace. Outdated curricula, a dearth of real-world experience, and poor communication are the primary causes of this divide. The current situation in the hotel business is fraught with uncertainty, but there are still many students enrolled in these programs. Students enrolled in hotel management programs are not only prepared to work in the hospitality business, but also for supervisory roles within it. Internships provide students practical skills while also exposing them to other departments and their processes. Customers' expectations for service quality, ways for keeping costs down, and expected levels of personal presentation are all covered in class. Customer expectations, service technology, and business models are all changing at a fast pace, making the hotel sector a very dynamic place to work. Consequently, there is growing demand on schools that provide degrees in hotel administration and hospitality management to produce workers who can compete in today's industry.

¹ How to cite the article: Subhash C.P., Karmadkar P.H., Chaturvedi V.M.; (March 2025); Bridging The Curriculum Gap How Hospitality Education Aligns With Emerging Industry Skills; *Multidisciplinary International Journal*; Vol 11; 31-37

A number of studies have shown that there is a gap between the abilities that graduates with degrees in hospitality have and what employers are looking for.

2. Literature Review

Pradip & Mukesh (2021) has relied on secondary sources to carry out the research, the primary goal of which is to pinpoint the knowledge gap between educational institutions and the hotel sector. Faculty members should be encouraged to visit relevant industries to refresh their expertise, according to the authors. Workshops and seminars should be organized by educational institutions to introduce students to up-to-date industry information and processes. According to the writers, the curriculum should be revised to reflect current trends in the workforce. In addition to not exploiting students for their labor, businesses should use internships as an opportunity to teach them valuable skills.

Khan (2019) recommends establishing a research and development center to innovate education for the benefit of both humanity and the economy. This would help both parties reach their shared objective. With the help of the hotel business, research centers may be set up at certain academic institutions. Businesspeople who are interested in collaborating with academics may be able to apply for positions at these research centers. One way in which research centers may benefit both academics and business is by providing a venue for specialized researchers to undertake more generalized studies. Industry may work together with sponsored organizations, and there will be a steady flow of funds. Academics and businesses alike stand to gain from the study's primary goal: laying the groundwork for a successful research program.

Kusumawardhana, Indra. (2019) The present concern is to get an understanding of the many stakeholders involved in the transmission of knowledge, including students, educators, educational institutions, and the hospitality sector, in order to improve educational results by means of high-quality course offerings. Afterwards, the article reveals four major challenges for higher education tourism and hospitality educators when it comes to curriculum development. These include the following: (1) the necessity of information and communication technologies (ICT); (2) the influence of human resources on graduates' competency, employment, and career goals; (3) the effort to align curriculum content with industry and business expectations for knowledge and skills; and (4) the importance of a high-quality education that results in effective teaching and learning strategies and significant research impact. Research in the social sciences reveals an interest in constructivist educational theories as a means of comprehending potential methods centred on certain domains; these domains largely acknowledge the industry's rapid expansion in the context of curriculum research and the hospitality and tourist discipline. Since it is impossible to include all available information in a single curriculum, the research emphasizes that the goal of educational curricula should be to develop the "complete learner" rather of focusing just on what the curriculum needs to provide.

Batra, Adarsh. (2016) Because of changes in the market, the ASEAN higher education system would be impacted. Thai universities will succeed if they take a proactive stance in the market, looking forward to what students would want and then making plans to provide it. Academics in the fields of tourism and hospitality have failed to recognize the multidisciplinary nature of the hospitality and tourist industry, despite the fact that it demands a unique set of skills from prospective employers. A staff that is both eager and willing is essential to the survival of Thailand's travel and tourist business. These calls on schools to design courses of study that will teach students the fundamentals of tourism and hospitality and provide them with the practical experience they need to succeed in the field. Prospective tourism workers should familiarize themselves with the "professional" responsibilities of the field. Young people's innovative thinking is going to be crucial to the hotel and tourist industry's future success. More and more, employers are looking for individuals that can bring fresh perspectives to the table while interviewing. This article sheds light on certain underappreciated viewpoints, missed connections, and policy gaps between schools that teach tourism and the tourist sector, which helps produce graduates that can find work.

Sarkodie Amoako, Noble & Kwameadom (2015) Because of its central role in the service economy, the study of the hotel and tourist business is seen to be significant. The primary objective of this research is to delve into how recent graduates in the hotel and tourism industries see the significance of certain skills in both their professional and

academic careers. A cross-sectional survey and a qualitative methodology were used in the research. One hundred and sixteen recent graduates working in the hotel and tourism sector participated in a comprehensive semi-structured interview. According to the research, the most important talents for success in this field are the ability to communicate effectively, fluency in more than one language, and proficiency with computers. Unfortunately, graduates' lack of general skills hinders their success in the sector and prevents them from delivering what is expected. The study's author said that, to ensure that student's graduate prepared for the workforce, there should be tight cooperation between schools and businesses.

3. Hospitality Education and Industry Linkages

In order to prepare students for the ever-changing needs of the hospitality sector, education in the field is crucial. Hotels, restaurants, events, tourism, and travel are all part of the vast and varied hospitality business. There is a growing need for a competent and educated workforce that can adjust to the evolving demands of the business due to its fast expansion. The necessity of educating and training employees has grown in the hospitality business as it has progressed. Because of the importance of satisfying consumers' needs, this sector is always on the lookout for talented individuals to fill open positions. Skilled workers who can provide their companies an advantage in customer service are in high demand as a result of the rising level of competition in the market. Curriculum creation, pedagogy, industry relationships, and student results are just a few of the many topics covered in the current, extensive, and varied literature on hospitality education and its relationship to the industry. Programs that teach students about the hospitality business must adapt quickly to the ever-changing field if they want their pupils to have a fighting chance of making it big. Nevertheless, there is still cause for worry over the disparity between what employers need and what graduates can really do. This might be because the hospitality sector is changing more rapidly than the curriculum and teaching techniques used in hospitality schools. This finding emphasizes the need of regularly reviewing and enhancing hospitality education programs to align with the evolving needs of the sector and the labor market.

3.1 A comparison between institutional and industry-specific hospitality education outcomes

The hospitality and tourist sector is booming over the globe, including in India. A large portion of the country's GDP comes from this sector. An increased need for qualified workers has resulted from the industry's recent surge in popularity. Opportunities for graduates of hospitality and tourism-based schools surged throughout the rapid rise of the business in the late twentieth century and early 2000s. Workers with advanced degrees, extensive expertise, and the ability to juggle several tasks effectively are in high demand for supervisory and management roles. Consequently, there is a growing need for experts who possess both the necessary training and the ability to educate others. In India, both the hotel business and the field of hospitality education are seeing remarkable growth. The proliferation of hospitality management schools providing a wide range of degree programs is directly attributable to the high need for trained workers in the industry. This means that the hospitality industry is seeing a steady growth in the number of prospective workers. The education sector is working to address the shortage of qualified individuals with the necessary educational background to work in the hospitality industry. There is no question that the hospitality education industry in India has seen tremendous development, with an accompanying increase in both the number of students enrolled and the number of graduates. The problem is that there is disconnect between what businesses need and what universities are able to provide. We need to address this disparity and consider ways to keep the hospitality sector and schools that teach hotel management on the same page. Both parties should maintain an amicable connection so that they are aware of one another and can contribute to a shared objective that will ultimately benefit both.

A number of academic fields have established hospitality management degree programs, including those dealing with hotels, tourist attractions, leisure, and athletics. One of the main goals of hospitality management programs is to train the next generation of experts in the field so that they can continue to thrive as the hospitality industry continues to evolve. In order to do this, the curriculum for hospitality management should include ways to integrate theory and practice, therefore equipping students to pursue employment in the hospitality business. Curriculum creation must, therefore, include input from experts in the field as well as teachers with backgrounds in hotel management. However, many in the hospitality management field wonder if students who graduate with the skills employers seek have the

right set of competencies, since many in the field feel that classroom instruction falls short of real-world needs. Actually, the needs of the hotel and tourism sector are dynamic and ever-evolving. As a result, there has to be collaboration between educators and experts in the field to guarantee that students majoring in hotel management graduate prepared to do their jobs well.

Since its establishment, the field of hospitality management education has seen explosive expansion. A number of public and private universities throughout the globe have offered hospitality management degree programs and certificates. There is a strong correlation between these credentials and those in the tourist and hospitality sector. There is a severe shortage of qualified workers in the hospitality sector, even though the number of degree programs and students majoring in the field has increased dramatically. The correct viewpoint for academic programs pertaining to tourism and hospitality is also a matter of contention. When it comes to the program's appropriate viewpoint, some people think it should focus on the operational needs of the tourist and hospitality sector, while others think general business administration is more appropriate. Still, the tourism and hospitality program is the focus of these studies. Many studies are examining various aspects of hotel management programs, including their curricula, the ways in which they are structured, and the employability of graduates. The limits of hospitality management have been better defined by these works, which have also highlighted the need of determining the effectiveness of efforts to build excellent human resources. The need for a standardized curriculum has been growing among industry stakeholders and educational stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents) in response to the explosion of hotel management programs during the last half-century.

4. The Ideal Hospitality Management Curriculum in Relation to Industry Competencies

One of the world's fastest-growing economic sectors is tourism, according to the World Tourism Organization (2017). The tourist industry brought approximately \$1.5 trillion in revenue for foreign countries in 2015. International visitor arrivals will reach USD \$1.8 billion by 2030, according to the World Tourism Organization. In the United States alone, there are over 200 undergraduate degree programs in hospitality and tourism management. Educators in this field are always working to enhance and develop new programs to better educate students for careers in the field. Cornell University's hospitality departments have worked closely with advisory boards for over a century to ensure their programs' continued relevance. Program curriculums have changed over the years, particularly since the 1980s, to reflect the shifts in industry-required skills. The necessity for organic curriculum reform in hotel management has been highlighted by rapid changes caused by a more competitive corporate sector and other worldwide environmental concerns. Colleges and universities are reevaluating the breadth and depth of hotel management programs in response to rising tuition costs, more international competition for students' attention, and shifting financial priorities. Informal and formal discussions with advisory boards uncovered unanticipated requirements, while studies examining the real management skills valued by companies provided complementary and useful background knowledge.

Changes and updates to programs are crucial for educational advancement that leads to student achievement because of the growing importance of services over the last 20 years in the US and throughout the world. The practicality of ensuring that hospitality program curricula reflect the management knowledge and skills currently valued by employers lies in the fact that education should be designed to prepare graduates for future managerial roles rather than just entry-level management positions. In order to keep up with the ever-changing demands of the hospitality business, schools in the field must regularly examine and revise their curricula. Even though this is probably how most hospitality schools operate, it hasn't stopped academics, industry experts, and students from focusing on the gaps between what's offered in the curriculum and what they think should be taught ever since hospitality programs began. This has influenced the continuous research into this age-old issue. Over the last two decades, this perennial problem has taken on an even greater significance. The use of mobile devices has altered operational positions like front desk and concierge, prompting educators to create, revise, and teach curriculum that attempts to meet these indisputable facts. Sharing economy organizations have disrupted the conventional hospitality and tourist business, but the good experiences and emotional ties linked with them show how important it is to investigate the recurring gap within this changing context. Academic programs must continue to bridge the gap and participate in high-impact practices to keep up with the ever-changing goals and requirements of the hospitality sector, which are driven by continual social and global developments.

The ideal curriculum for hospitality management would connect classroom learning with the ever-changing world of international hospitality. Graduates from hospitality programs need to be able to think strategically, creatively, and adaptably in order to thrive in today's competitive industry, where service standards, technology advancements, and consumer expectations are always changing. Thus, academic learning goals should be aligned with the exact skill sets and behavioral qualities expected by the business via a competency-based program. Students may be better prepared for careers in the hospitality industry, including in restaurants, hotels, resorts, and event planning with the help of a well-organized curriculum that provides them with both the technical knowledge and the practical experience they need.

The hotel industry is very dependent on human resources, hence it is critical that academic institutions and businesses work together. Communication, collaboration, leadership, intercultural understanding, and problem-solving are some of the abilities that schools and universities are including into their course outlines in response to the industry's need for individuals who are highly competent, service-oriented, and emotionally intelligent. Revenue management, data analytics, sustainability practices, and digital marketing should supplement more traditional sectors like F&B management, accounting, front desk operations, and accommodation management. The graduates will have a solid grasp of the operational foundations and strategic features of hotel management thanks to these enhancements.

Technical, managerial, and interpersonal competences are the three main types of industry expertise. Menu engineering, cost control, operating a property management system (PMS), and quality assurance are all examples of technical talents. Strategic leadership, financial literacy, decision-making, and planning are all part of a manager's competency set. Competencies in interpersonal relationships include the ability to communicate, work in a team, resolve conflicts, and manage relationships with guests. In an ideal curriculum, students would learn not only "how" to accomplish activities, but also "why" they contribute to company success. This is achieved via experiential learning techniques including case studies, simulations, live projects, and internships.

On top of that, digital revolution is happening in the hotel industry. Technologies such as data-driven customization, customer relationship management software, and artificial intelligence are revolutionizing the way services are provided. Digital hospitality, e-commerce, and social media involvement are therefore essential components of today's curricula. Graduates of hospitality programs are prepared for jobs that need digital fluency in addition to operational skills by learning about analytics and technology. An additional critical component is sustainability; courses should include topics such as ethical business practices, green operations, and waste management in response to the industry's rising focus on sustainable practices and responsible tourism.

To ensure that the curriculum remains current and applicable, it is crucial for academics and experts in the sector to work together. Modules may be better tailored to meet the demands of the hotel sector in the future with the support of advisory boards made up of educators, HR directors, and managers. Ensuring that course material remains relevant to professional realities also relies on conducting regular curriculum assessments and employer input surveys. Internships and on-the-job training should not be seen as extras, but as integral parts of degree programs that may earn credits. Participating in these activities gives students real-world experience with real-world leadership requirements, operational issues, and working settings. Developing one's soft skills is just as important as honing one's technical knowledge. Graduates in the hospitality industry are in great demand, and employers often stress the need of candidates demonstrating emotional intelligence, flexibility, cross-cultural knowledge, and empathy for customers. Therefore, it is essential to take classes in leadership development, behavioral psychology, and communication skills. Role plays, group discussions, and peer evaluations are some of the experiential learning strategies that may be used to develop these abilities. Exchange programs, online internships, and industrial projects all provide students foreign experience, which helps them become more globally prepared and gives them a better grasp of other service cultures.

An ideal curriculum would also place a heavy emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship. Boutique hotels, homestays, and tech-driven travel companies are on the increase and with them come a greater need for individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit. Courses on entrepreneurship need to include topics such as digital business models, startup management, financing methods, and company strategy. These elements motivate students to go beyond the box and start their own businesses or contribute to existing ones. The curriculum's assessment and evaluation practices

should also mirror the results based on competencies. Programs should include new forms of assessment such as portfolio reviews, industry feedback systems, and project-based evaluations to supplement traditional paper exams. This method guarantees that students will exhibit practical understanding and conduct befitting a professional. To further boost employment, consider enrolling in specialized seminars or earning certificates in areas like food safety, barista training, or event design.

5. Conclusion

We can conclude that the hospitality industry is in dire need of competent workers. Workplace competences in the hospitality industry include knowledge, skills, talents, and attitude. Teachers and employment agencies must work together to foster positive relationships. It would be beneficial for academics and industry to collaborate in order to determine the curriculum and its implementation. It is important to make an effort to cultivate the correct mindset by providing regular exposure and training in industrial settings. In order to prepare students to take charge in the dynamic service business, it is essential that hospitality programs adapt to the needs of employers. Particularly lacking were opportunities for leadership training, proficiency with digital tools, environmental initiatives, and practical experience, according to the study's authors. In order to overcome these challenges, schools should establish strong partnerships with relevant businesses, regularly review and revise their curriculum, increase opportunities for hands-on learning, and incorporate new trends into their lessons. This kind of proactive alignment is necessary if hospitality programs are to adequately train students to be leaders and satisfy the needs of the future of the industry.

References

- Batra, A. (2016). Bridging the gap between tourism education, tourism industry and graduate employability: Intricacies and emerging issues in Thailand. *ABAC Journal*, 36, 78–89.
- Han, H. J., Back, K. J., & Yoon, H. (2021). An empirical study of factors influencing hospitality students' employability. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 28, 100344.
- Hjalager, A. M. (2015). Learning and talent development in tourism: The roles of education and workplace learning. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 16, 91–100.
- Hjalager, A. M., & Dahl, T. (2013). Skills, labour and employability in Danish hospitality. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 20, 43–52.
- Horng, J. S. (2017). Industry–university partnerships in hospitality and tourism education: The case of Taiwan. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 17(3), 180–199.
- Horng, J. S., & Weber, K. (2019). Internships and work-integrated learning in hospitality education: Enhancing student employability. In D. D. Woo & A. J. Sim (Eds.), *Handbook of Hospitality Education* (pp. 165–180). Springer.
- Ismail, M. A. (2019). Graduates' employability and the gap with industry expectations: The case of hospitality graduates in Egypt. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*, 31(4), 182–192.
- Jain, N., & Sharma, A. (2020). Hospitality education curriculum development for the next decade. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 27, 100232.
- Jepsen, D. M., & Rodwell, J. (2020). The importance of industry engagement in enhancing hospitality students' employability. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 27, 100244.
- Kalargyrou, V. (2019). Hospitality management students' employability skills: Perspectives from industry professionals. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 24, 18–28.

Kalargyrou, V., & Lin, L. (2016). Enhancing hospitality students' employability skills through academic and industry collaboration. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 19, 39–48.

Khan, M. A. (2019). A systematic assessment of gaps between academic research and industry participation in hospitality management discipline. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 82, 82–90.

Kusumawardhana, I. (2019). Curriculum development in hospitality and tourism higher education: Challenges and gaps. *Proceedings of the 13th EAI International Conference on e-Learning and Games*. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.13-2-2019.2286505>

Pradip, & Mukesh. (2021). Assessment of hospitality education in terms of lacking skill development in meeting the demand of industry: An integrated review. *Journal of Tourism*, 31.

Sarkodie Amoako, N., & Kwameadom. (2015). Bridging the gap between hospitality/tourism education and hospitality/tourism industry in Ghana. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 2, 114–120.