



A DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT: VALIDATING HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT EDUCATION REFORM IN GHANA.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To assess the relevance and comprehensiveness of the proposed curriculum, examine stakeholder perspectives on curriculum effectiveness, and validate it using a developmental model framework.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A qualitative research design was employed to explore the perspectives of stakeholders in Ghana's hospitality sector. A focus group discussion with 30 participants, including faculty, industry experts, and students, was conducted to analyse the data. Thematic analysis identified key patterns and insights, guiding amendments through member checking to ensure validation and accuracy.

Research Limitation: The focus group format had limited participants' ability to share sensitive or critical feedback about existing curriculum structures, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness of validation insights.

Findings: Stakeholder perspectives highlight the curriculum's effectiveness in integrating technology, sustainability, and experiential learning, while striking a balance between theory and practice. These validate the curriculum using a developmental model framework, demonstrating its potential to enhance career readiness and industry adaptability while identifying areas for further improvement.

Practical Implication: These insights guide educators and industry stakeholders in enhancing hospitality education, fostering a skilled workforce, and sustaining Ghana's hospitality sector as a key economic driver.

Social Implication: This creates a generation of hospitality professionals committed to environmental stewardship, cultural sensitivity, and social impact, contributing to Ghana's broader sustainable development goals.

Originality/Value: This study employs a developmental model framework to validate the curriculum, emphasising comprehensive skill development, instructor proficiency, and hands-on learning experiences.

Keywords: *Attributes. curriculum. graduate. hospitality. industry. technology*



INTRODUCTION

Curriculum validation ensures that educational programmes align with industry standards, evolving trends, and essential professional skills.

In hospitality management, where industry demands are dynamic, bridging gaps between academic training and industry expectations is crucial. A structured developmental model offers a systematic approach to designing and refining curricula, integrating stakeholder inputs from educators, industry experts, and students to enhance relevance, foster career readiness, and address contemporary trends such as digital proficiency and sustainability. A curriculum model abstracts complex educational systems through structured planning (Oduro-Okyireh et al., 2024; Astari et al., 2023), guiding development through stages such as design, implementation, and evaluation.

Overview of tourism and hospitality education in Ghana

Tourism and hospitality are vital to Ghana's economy, contributing over 6% of GDP and creating significant employment opportunities (Mensah-Ansah, 2014). However, COVID-19 disrupted the industry, thus affecting global employment (WTTC, 2019). To sustain growth, the Ghanaian government, UNDP, and WTO implemented a development plan focusing on workplace standards and service delivery. Despite increasing demand, Ghana's hospitality sector requires a workforce to meet industry and customer expectations (Sarkodie & Adom, 2015). Modern curricula must integrate leadership, emotional intelligence, and professional competencies (Kopp et al., 2021).

Higher education emphasises internships and industry alignment, advocating for the blending of vocational and academic training. A well-structured curriculum thus must address evolving employer needs, as globalisation and multinational hotel chains reshape the sector (Stein et al., 2017; Rashidi & Jingura, 2024).

Hospitality education struggles with standardisation due to institutional placement and expanding industry scope (Tsalikova & Pakhotina, 2019). Managerial training and competency development are essential amid globalisation and technological advancements (Sommerstein et al., 2020; Dorta-Afonso & Cantero-Garcia, 2020) as sustainable practices and cultural diversity remain key industry drivers (Ge et al., 2015). Addressing these trends ensures Ghana's hospitality graduates possess the necessary skills for a dynamic global market (Sarkodie & Adom, 2015).

Tourism and Hospitality Curriculum Development

Curriculum development plays a crucial role in shaping education, evolving to address ideological challenges, regulatory requirements, and the need for customised learning experiences (Boucher et al., 2020; Ochoma, 2020; Wang & Abukhalifeh, 2021). In higher education, curriculum design guides students in acquiring knowledge across diverse settings (Kazmina et al., 2020; Malania & Chechelashvili, 2023).



Within Tourism and Hospitality education, scholars emphasise the importance of balancing vocational training with liberal education to cultivate well-rounded graduates equipped for decision-making and professional careers (Kunwar, 2018; Ojha et al., 2023). The allocation of time or credit hours plays a crucial role in designing an effective hospitality curriculum, which impacts student learning outcomes, as noted in some studies (McMillan & Barber, 2020).

Several studies (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019; Brady et al., 2019; Mensah, 2021; Cabezas-García & Reimerink, 2022) have emphasised the importance of a holistic, inclusive, and technologically updated curriculum in hospitality education that aligns with industry standards, thereby enhancing student preparedness and competitiveness.

A growing body of research advocates for a curriculum that blends applied, skills-based training with liberal-humanistic approaches to enhance students' self-awareness and creativity qualities essential for effective hospitality management (Gong & Tung, 2017; Siow et al., 2021). Additionally, scholars argue for a shift from traditional hospitality concepts to a more innovative and adaptable curriculum that aligns with the evolving demands of the industry (Bas Collins et al., 2021; Gossling, 2017).

Diverse instructional techniques, including experiential learning and technology integration, improve student engagement and learning outcomes (Dorgu, 2015; Ahmad et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2023). Studies (Reich et al., 2019; Sebby & Brown, 2020) suggest that a well-structured curriculum aligns learning outcomes with industry demands, equipping students with theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and critical thinking for career success (Abdien, 2017; Mbagga et al., 2021)

The hospitality industry faces technological advancements, evolving customer expectations, and increasing global competition, necessitating a curriculum that remains relevant to industry needs. However, designing and validating such a curriculum is a challenging task. Many hospitality management programs struggle to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical applications, resulting in graduates lacking necessary competencies (Mensah, 2021; Cabezas-García & Reimerink, 2022).

Curriculum frameworks often fail to incorporate trends like digitalisation, sustainability, and innovative service management strategies. The absence of a structured validation process exacerbates these challenges, leading to inconsistencies in course content, learning outcomes, and skill development. This study employs a developmental model to validate a proposed hospitality management curriculum, ensuring it aligns with industry expectations, enhances career readiness, and integrates modern pedagogical strategies for effective learning.

This study assesses the relevance and comprehensiveness of the proposed curriculum, examines stakeholder perspectives on its effectiveness, and validates it using a developmental model framework to ensure alignment with industry standards and evolving sector demands. By proposing and providing a structured approach to curriculum validation, the study contributes to educational policy and curriculum development, helping designers, policymakers, and educators refine course content and assessment methods.



THEORY UNDERPINNING STUDY

Curriculum Theory (CT)

CT provides a structured framework for understanding how knowledge, competencies, and attitudes are integrated into educational programs (Kunwar, 2018). It serves as an analytical tool for designing, implementing, and evaluating curricula, evolving through problem-solving and refinement to address societal and professional needs (El-Astal, 2023). The dynamic nature of curriculum development hinges on a cyclical process that aligns education with industry demands, cultural diversity, and competencies to shape students' future careers (Voyant et al., 2018).

Theoretical Perspectives on Curriculum Development

A curriculum model can be viewed as an abstract representation of complex educational systems and events, utilising graphics, narratives, materials, and symbols to convey this structure (Astari et al., 2023). It depicts a designed representation of reality, created to address specific conditions and requirements. It also outlines a structured learning planning process tailored to meet diverse educational needs and standards, guiding the development of practical educational experiences.

Curriculum development involves stages like design, implementation, and evaluation, with models guiding the process. This proposed curriculum was developed by situating its framework within Taba's model of curriculum development, emphasising a systematic, facilitator-driven approach to building educational content, while integrating the adapted Triple Helix model to foster collaboration among academia, industry, and students, ensuring the curriculum's holistic relevance to the hospitality industry.

Taba's model of curriculum development

Taba's model, known also as the “Grass-Roots Approach”, emphasises the role of academia in curriculum development (Bhuttah et al., 2019). It starts from the bottom, involving teachers directly in the process. The model follows a step-by-step plan based on the behavioural approach to building a curriculum according to aims and objectives.

For a curriculum to be both relevant and responsive to the needs of learners, it must be ensured by emphasising active academia involvement in curriculum design and concentrating on sequential stages such as needs diagnosis, objective formulation, content selection, learning experience organisation, and evaluation (Suasti & Ernawati, 2021). Studies (Bhuttah et al., 2019; Fatoni et al., 2024) show that a proposed curriculum must depict some seven (7) essential steps.

Taba's seven steps of curriculum development

Taba proposed a structured process for curriculum development consisting of seven sequential steps as shown in Figure 1.

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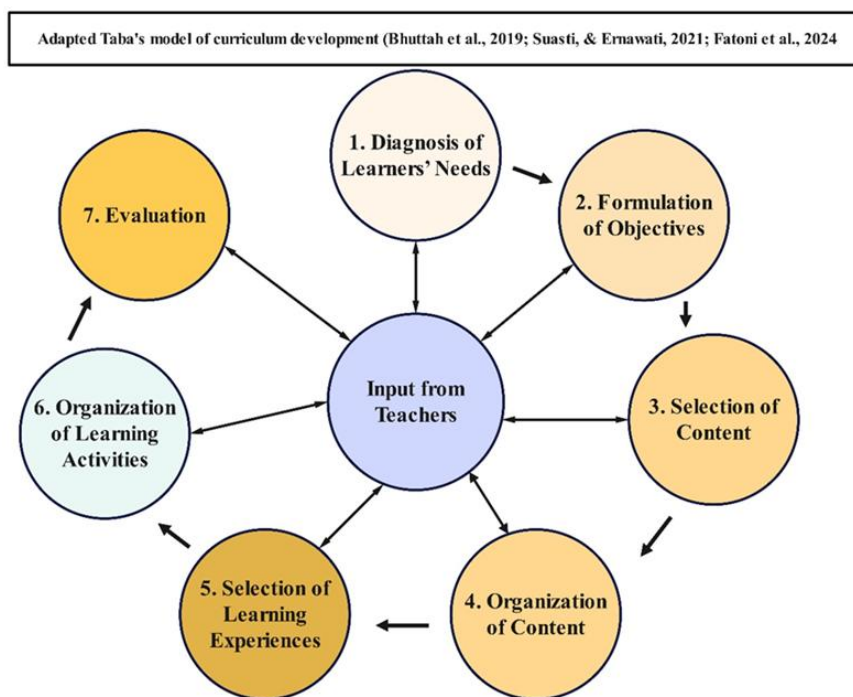


Figure 1: An adapted model of Taba's curriculum development

Note: This is a creation of the authors based on a review of the literature

The proposed hospitality curriculum is aligned with Taba's model of Curriculum Development, based on seven principles, with steps taken to develop and validate the curriculum. The first step in curriculum development involved diagnosing *learners' needs* by assessing their prior knowledge, skills, and industry-required competencies (Suasti & Ernawati, 2021).

Effective hospitality curriculum design incorporates industry feedback to ensure that graduates possess the relevant skills necessary for employment. After identifying needs, a precise definition and *formulation of objectives* that reflect industry demands, including digital proficiency and sustainability (Fatoni et al., 2024), is key. Aligning curriculum objectives with industry expectations enhances student preparedness by integrating practical skills such as customer service and culinary techniques.

The next important step involves selecting and organising *content* that aligns with curriculum objectives, ensuring both local and international hospitality competencies (Bhuttah et al., 2019). This ensured the inclusion of theoretical knowledge and practical applications, including sustainability practices, into the curriculum. The next step is the *selection and organisation of learning experiences*. This ensured that learning experiences align with objectives, incorporating hands-on training, case studies, and internships to enhance practical readiness

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(Bhuttah et al., 2019; Fatoni et al., 2024). The curriculum was sequentially organised from foundational to advanced topics, allowing flexibility for educators to adapt based on student feedback and learning outcomes.

Engaging learning experiences are crucial for developing industry-relevant skills in hospitality education (Abdusattorovna & Ajikulloevna, 2023). The next step proposes that the proposed curriculum incorporate hands-on training, internships, simulations, and project-based learning to enhance student satisfaction through the careful selection of learning experiences that foster experiential learning. Sequentially, *organisation of learning activities* allows learners to build on prior knowledge while fostering collaboration and critical thinking (Bhuttah et al., 2019).

Taba's model emphasises inclusivity, encouraging active student participation through group projects and decision-making in hospitality education. Lastly, Taba's model incorporates an iterative *evaluation and modification* process involving faculty and students to assess learning outcomes and refine the curriculum (Bhuttah et al., 2019). This approach ensures responsiveness to both learner and societal needs, enhancing curriculum effectiveness.

The triple helix model

To explain the dynamics of *university-industry-government* relations, the Triple Helix Model was created in 1997. It asserts that for a successful innovation system, the relationships among these three must be advantageous to foster economic and social development, as described in concepts such as the knowledge economy and knowledge society (Cai & Etzkowitz, 2020).

Every actor has a specific role to play; *academia* advances knowledge through research, *industry* contributes resources and expertise, and the *government* provides funding. They work together to ensure effective use of resources and promote quicker innovation (Galvao et al, 2019). Figure 2 shows a graphical representation of the triple helix model as proposed by Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff (1997).

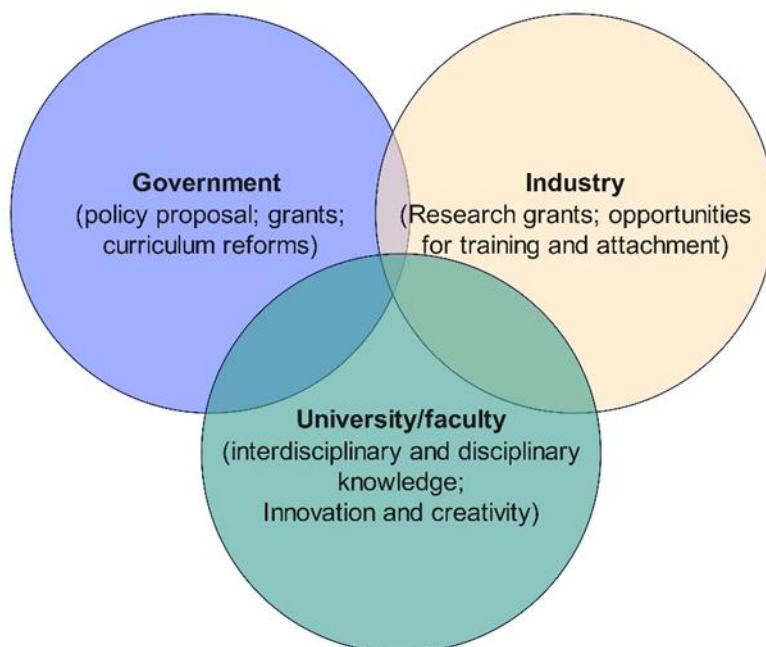


Figure 2: A graphical image of the triple helix model

Note: This is a creation of the authors based on literature review on the contribution of stakeholders to the Triple Helix model

Components of the Triple Helix Model

Faculty/academia plays a crucial role in knowledge production and innovation by conducting research, educating future professionals, and engaging in entrepreneurial activities that drive economic and social development. Academia collaborates with industries to commercialise research and solve technical challenges, fostering innovation through partnerships with both industry and government (Fidanoski et al., 2022).

Industries, in turn, apply and commercialise university-generated knowledge, leveraging new technologies to enhance their competitive advantage while providing funding and insights that shape academic research and curricula (Galvao et al., 2019; Fidanoski et al., 2022).

Governments facilitate research and innovation by creating policies, providing financial support, and promoting collaboration between universities and industries to drive economic growth and address societal challenges. Acting as mediators, governments ensure productive academia-industry partnerships that align with national or regional development goals (Galvao et al., 2019).

The study, however, adapts the model by replacing the slot for government with students in terms of curriculum validation. This ensured a critical role assigned to the students in the



development and validation of the proposed hospitality curriculum. Figure 3 illustrates a graphical representation of the adapted Triple Helix model applied to the study.

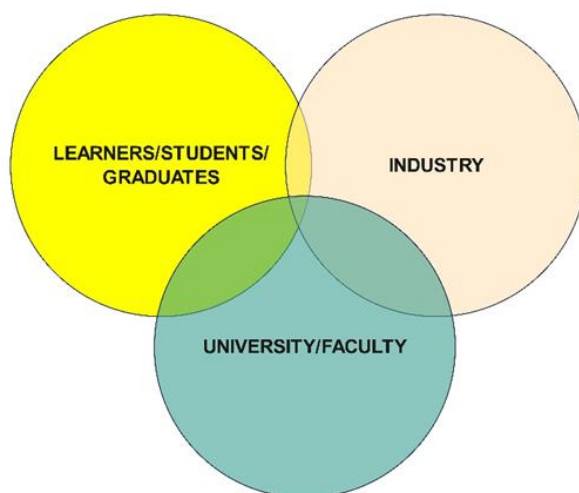


Figure 3: A graphical representation of the Adapted triple helix model with the inclusion of student stakeholders.

Note: This figure is based on the author's creation from an adapted triple helix model

Students' inclusion in the adapted Triple Helix Model

The adapted Triple Helix Model incorporates students as key stakeholders in curriculum development, ensuring alignment with their needs and career goals (Hirvonen, 2020). By actively involving students as co-designers, the curriculum becomes more relevant, engaging, and motivating, equipping them with critical skills such as digital proficiency, communication, and adaptability (Chance-Dominguez, 2020), as their input strengthens industry alignment.

RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative research design was employed to explore stakeholder perspectives within the chosen framework of the hospitality sector. Focus group discussions with 30 participants, comprising faculty, industry experts, and students, facilitated the examination of the proposed curriculum and its validation. Thematic analysis identified key patterns and insights, guiding amendments through member checking to ensure validation and accuracy.

All participants provided informed consent before participating and were informed about the research purpose, objectives and outcomes. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, unique identifiers were assigned to participants and data was stored securely without personal information. Participants were informed that the data would be used for research purposes and

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stored in a password-protected database, accessible only to researchers. Additionally, participants were informed about any potential risks associated with participation, which were described as minimal and primarily related to the time commitment required for interviews or surveys. Ethical approval for this study was obtained (provided as supplementary material), ensuring compliance with established research ethics guidelines.

RESULTS

Curriculum validation ensures educational quality, relevance, and alignment with industry demands and academic standards (Morales & Pacia, 2024). Through focus group interviews, diverse stakeholder perspectives and enhanced curriculum evaluation were gathered through interactive discussions (Nyumba et al., 2018). Faculty, students, and industry players were engaged using open-ended questions to assess curriculum content, identify strengths, and suggest improvements before finalising the curriculum.

Demographics of stakeholders

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Variable	Category	Graduates (n=10)	Faculty (n=10)	Industry (n=10)
Gender	Male	4 (40.0%)	2 (20.0%)	3 (30.0%)
	Female	6 (60.0%)	8 (80.0%)	7 (70.0%)
Age Group	20–29	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)
	30–39	5 (50.0%)	2 (20.0%)	3 (30.0%)
	40–49	3 (30.0%)	5 (50.0%)	3 (30.0%)
	Above 50	0 (0.0%)	3 (30.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Qualification	Diploma	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (30.0%)
	Bachelor’s Degree	6 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (40.0%)
	Master’s Degree	2 (20.0%)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)
	Doctorate	0 (0.0%)	6 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Experience (Years)	1 - 6	5 (50.0%)	5 (50.0%)	4 (40.0%)
	7–10	3 (30.0%)	3 (30.0%)	4 (40.0%)
	>10	2 (20.0%)	2 (20.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Region	Accra	2 (20.0%)	3 (30.0%)	4 (40.0%)
	Kumasi	4 (40.0%)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)
	Cape Coast	2 (20.0%)	2 (20.0%)	2 (20.0%)
	Takoradi	2 (20.0%)	1 (10.0%)	1 (10.0%)

Source: Field Data (2025)

The focus groups consisted of faculty, students, and industry professionals, each offering unique perspectives on the curriculum’s educational and industry relevance as indicated in Table 1. Due to scheduling conflicts and distance, interviews were conducted online via “Google Meet”, with proceedings audio-recorded and transcribed for accuracy. Member checking ensured data reliability before thematic analysis was conducted to identify strengths



and areas for improvement in the curriculum. The resulting themes and codes provided insights into necessary adjustments for aligning the curriculum with industry and academic needs (see Figure 4). The themes and codes reflected the general viewpoints of stakeholders in the validation process.

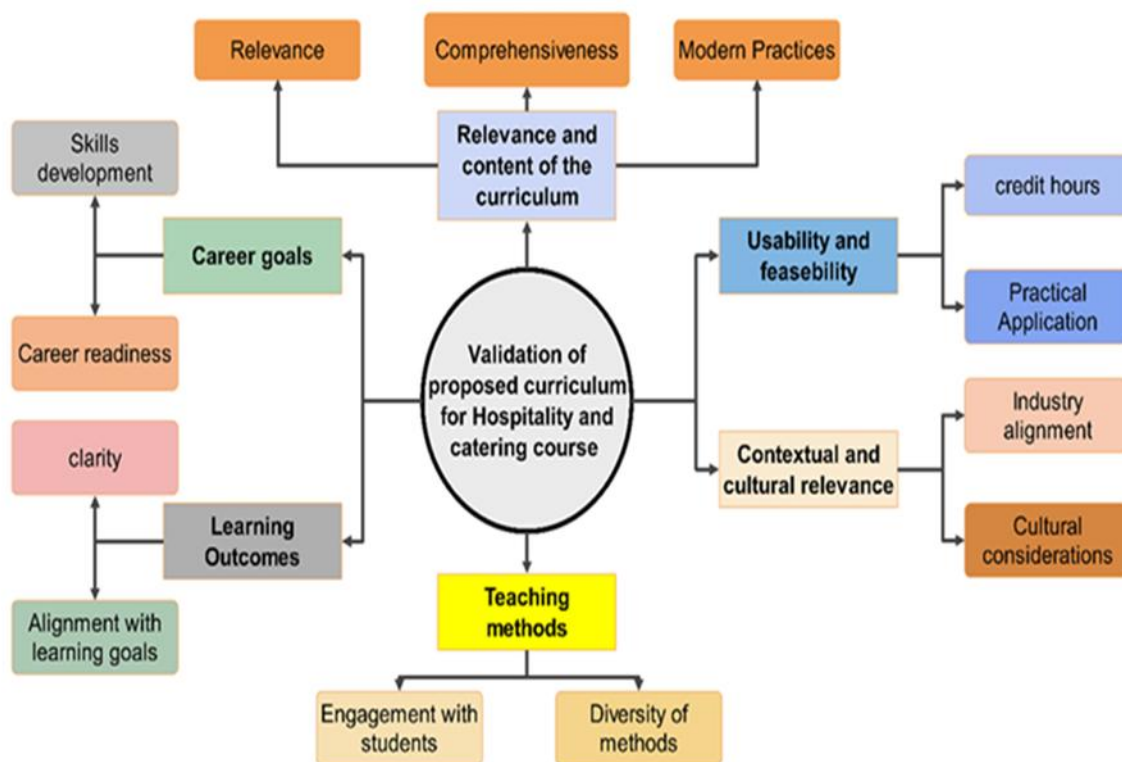


Figure 4: Themes and codes developed through the validation of the curriculum by stakeholders

Note: This is a creation of the authors

Theme: Relevance and content of the curriculum

The content of a curriculum is described by Saylor and Alexander (1966) as cited in Ochoma (2020) as facts, observations, data, discernments, sensibilities, designs and solutions drawn from experiences and minds that recognise or rearrange these into laws, ideas, concepts, generalisations, principles, plans and solutions. Participants assessed how the curriculum incorporates pertinent subjects, critical skills, and aligns with contemporary hospitality practices, while preparing students for diverse career paths, under the codes of relevance, comprehensiveness, and modern practices.



Relevance

Most participants agreed that the curriculum is suitable in preparing students for a diverse working setting as it complies with both domestic and international industry standards. Students recognised the curriculum's significant contribution to career development both domestically and internationally, highlighting its inclusivity and alignment with global hospitality standards. Industry professionals underscored its pertinence to culinary education, advocating for a flexible approach that incorporates industry trends, eco-friendly practices, confidence-building, and communication skills. Faculty emphasised the necessity of integrating technology, sustainability, and industry-aligned content to ensure graduates are adequately prepared for the evolving hospitality sector. Some of the supporting quotes were:

Student: *“Speaker 4: Madam. Yes, Madam. Please. I think it is relevant because it is not all of us who end up being in Ghana”*

Faculty: *“Speaker 4: I believe the proposed curriculum is well-adapted to the current situations, and if all of these are to be taught in our universities or institutions, then I believe it will help students to adapt to these current situations, and then that will help a lot.”*

Comprehensiveness

The all-inclusive nature of any curriculum is vital for equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in diverse roles (Wang & Abukhalifeh, 2021). Stakeholders collectively emphasised the importance of a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum that aligns with industry standards and effectively prepares students for a range of career paths. Students valued the integration of professional and business components, acknowledging its potential to endow graduates with entrepreneurial skills applicable across multiple sectors. Industry representatives appreciated the curriculum's alignment with industry requirements, highlighting its role in imparting essential skills and practical training. Faculty emphasised its functional inclusivity, particularly its incorporation of contemporary trends such as digital proficiency and sustainability.

One industry participant remarked,

- *“We thank you for this kind of curriculum that you have introduced to come and help our industry, and we are confident it will help very much.”*

A faculty member stated,

- *“I'm so happy with the proposed curriculum done by Madam X. You have holistically captured almost everything of the hospitality industry.”*

Modern trends

In a dynamic hospitality industry, recognising the fast-paced evolution of the sector is key, as modern or global ways of doing things are being incorporated more rapidly (Kazmina et al., 2020; Malania & Chechelashvili, 2023). The curriculum component was evaluated for its



capacity to maintain student competitiveness within a technology-driven and innovative industry. Faculty emphasised the significance of digital proficiency, sustainability, and excellence in customer service as essential for preparing students to meet contemporary hospitality demands. Industry representatives acknowledged the curriculum's alignment with current culinary practices, technological advancements, and eco-friendly approaches. Similarly, students recognised the importance of integrating global hospitality trends to enhance both local competencies and international opportunities. Additional supporting quotes are provided in the Supplementary Material. Some of the supporting quotes are:

- *“Speaker 6: It is good looking on the digital proficiency and everything, where hospitality is more technology. So, encapsulating this into the curriculum is a perfect one where the students will be able to be well-versed in the practical aspect and also in the theoretical aspect as well.” - Faculty*
- *“With the culinary trends, it is trends that talk about the current things that is happening on the grounds in the field of cooking arts.” - Industry*

Theme: Usability and Time Frame/Feasibility

Any proposed curriculum needs to address practicality and real-world application. The developed theme explored whether the proposed curriculum design effectively integrates applied learning opportunities and whether the allocated credit hours were realistic for achieving learning outcomes. Ensuring usability and feasibility within a curriculum is essential for aligning objectives with industry standards (Ojha et al., 2023) and preparing students to transition from academic to professional environments.

Internship/Practicum Opportunities

The proposed curriculum highlights the critical role of internships, attachments, and practicums in bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical industry experience. Students recognised the significance of incorporating multiple internships throughout their academic programs to enhance skill development, despite initial resistance. Industry representatives underscored the necessity for extensive practical sessions, particularly in the culinary arts, to ensure hands-on expertise. Faculty members advocated for semesterly internships to provide continuous industry exposure. Some of the selected supporting quotes are:

- *“The attachments can be made maybe three times before you complete the course, and it has to be stressed...we need both” (Speaker 6). - Students*
- *“Some courses, especially culinary arts, might need many practicals, but some do not need all that time” (Speaker 2). - Industry*

These perspectives underscore the importance of incorporating structured internships and practicum opportunities into the curriculum to enhance students' readiness for the hospitality industry.



Real-World Projects

The integration of real-world projects into the proposed hospitality curriculum was seen as essential for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Students emphasised the need for diverse practical experiences, advocating for compulsory scenario-based projects to enhance learning. Industry representatives emphasised the crucial role of hands-on experiences, particularly in the culinary arts, in preparing students adequately. Faculty members endorsed the curriculum, emphasising its integration of practical skills with theoretical knowledge to ensure success in the industry. To support these perspectives, selected quotations are presented below:

- *“So, I think we need both and think, and then the attachments can be made maybe three times before you can complete the course, and it has to be stressed...And I think we need both.” - Students*
- *“And then looking at the course, some of the courses, and I think some might need many practicals, especially the culinary trend or the culinary arts.” – Industry*

These viewpoints stress the critical role of projects in hospitality education, advocating for multiple practical experiences and industry-aligned learning opportunities.

Time Allocation/credit hours

The allocation of credit hours in a hospitality curriculum is critical in designing an effective program that impacts student learning outcomes (McMillan & Barber, 2020). Establishing realistic and manageable timeframes is crucial for students to engage effectively with both theoretical concepts and practical applications. Students have strongly advocated for an increase in practical session time, expressing concerns that the current allocation of three credit hours for practical training may be inadequate. This concern is echoed by industry representatives, who urge a reassessment of credit hours to better align with practical requirements. Faculty members have highlighted the challenge of balancing theoretical and practical time in Ghana, where logistical constraints often result in a reduction of practical hours. They suggest that separating the two components within courses could ensure proper time allocation.

- *“I think it will be the best thing for us. For the practical aspect, we need ink in it. We need more credit hours.” - Student*
- *“You mentioned that as it is stated three, that means it is two practical hours, so let us increase it to at least four or, let us say five like you mentioned so that they can get about three credit hours because most of the technical universities like Kumasi Technical for instance they used three hours for practical.” - Industry*

Collectively, these insights emphasised the necessity of reevaluating time allocation in the hospitality curriculum to ensure students receive adequate hands-on training while maintaining theoretical depth.



Theme: Context of Use/contextual and cultural relevance

Locally relevant knowledge, skills, and cultural competencies in the hospitality curriculum equip students to meet the unique demands of the sector within their context (Mensah, 2021), thereby enhancing adaptability and effectiveness in real-world settings. The context of use encompasses the physical, social, and temporal environments that shape educational experiences, as exemplified in hospitality education, which necessitates a curriculum attentive to cultural norms and practices (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019; Brady et al., 2019). Incorporating cultural relevance in education can enhance students' engagement and comprehension of global hospitality practices by integrating culturally pertinent examples and case studies (Cabezas-García & Reimerink, 2022). The codes identified within this theme include industrial alignment and cultural considerations.

Industrial alignment

The proposed hospitality curriculum aligns with industry standards by incorporating modern trends, such as digital proficiency and sustainability, as well as practical experiences like internships, to ensure students acquire relevant skills for the job market (Nhleko & Van der Westhuizen, 2021; Karyanto et al., 2023). Students expressed appreciation for the enhanced focus on practical training, noting that previous curricula had been deficient in providing adequate hands-on experiences. Industry professionals commended the curriculum for its alignment with sustainability practices and the integration of technology. Faculty members emphasised the holistic approach, which combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills to fulfil industry expectations. Some of the supporting quotes were:

- *“The problem we had with University AD was we did not enjoy many practicals... but seeing this in the new proposed curriculum, I am happy that if it is accepted, it will help the students” (Speaker 7). – Students*
- *“You have integrated modern trends such as digital proficiency, sustainability, and customer service excellence... each course outcome is aligned with practical skills and theoretical knowledge necessary for students to succeed in the industry” (Speaker 3). - Faculty*

These perspectives affirm that the proposed curriculum not only prepares students for industry demands but also ensures their adaptability to the evolving trends in the hospitality industry.

Cultural Considerations

In an increasingly globalised world, a hospitality curriculum must be adaptable to diverse cultural contexts to prepare students for the industry's complexities (Brady et al., 2019). Engagement with stakeholders revealed a collective emphasis on integrating local and global perspectives. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of cultural adaptability, underscoring the role of cultural diversity in service delivery and the need for a critical examination of cultural beliefs. Additionally, some stakeholders emphasised the necessity for localisation within the culinary trends section, advocating for a structured approach that harmonises indigenous and global culinary practices. Some of the quotes included:

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- *"it's not all of us who end up being in Ghana... if this curriculum is introduced, it will help because most of our people, when they travel, they have to go now and learn about some of these things" (Speaker 4). - Students*
- *"If we can tune it towards our local content, the culinary trend, then we look at how our local or our indigenous dishes are expanded when you go elsewhere" (Speaker 9). - Faculty*

These views highlighted the need to balance cultural heritage with international standards, equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in a multicultural hospitality industry.

Theme: Teaching Methods

Teaching strategies have a direct impact on student engagement and learning outcomes (Ahmad et al., 2018). Innovative approaches, such as experiential learning, technology integration, and student-centred strategies, are essential for preparing students for the dynamic hospitality industry (Ma et al., 2023). Diverse instructional techniques cater to various learning styles and emphasise practical application, ensuring the curriculum imparts theoretical knowledge and equips students with skills for real-world success in a multicultural environment. This theme incorporates codes of how teaching methods "engage" students and the diversity of methods in the proposed curriculum.

Engagement of teaching and learning methods

The teaching methods for the hospitality curriculum are designed to actively engage students, fostering a dynamic learning environment (Dorgu, 2015). Varying strategies provide hands-on experiences, encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills by emphasising student engagement. As the proposed curriculum aims to enhance motivation and retention, it ultimately prepares students for success in the hospitality industry.

Students stressed the need for increased practicality and multimedia resources to improve their understanding and build confidence. Industry representatives advocated for active learning strategies, including project-based learning, industry visits, and adaptable content to develop real-world skills. Faculty reinforced the value of interactive methods such as role-playing, group projects, and guest speakers, aligning with industry expectations and modern trends. A few of the quotes from stakeholders included:

- *".....and when it comes to the teaching method, they should have more supporting learning educational, let us say, videos. We should conduct more practical exercises so that students can build their confidence and gain a deeper understanding of what they are learning. (speaker 6)" - Student*
- *"The teaching methods are also going to be done, which include role-playing, group projects and case studies. It is good. I pray that it will be accepted and it will be materialised." - Faculty*



The feedback emphasises the importance of adopting an inclusive teaching approach to equip students for success in the hospitality sector.

Diversity of teaching and learning methods

An inclusive curriculum incorporates a range of teaching strategies to cater to diverse learning styles, thereby ensuring inclusivity. Instructional approaches such as interactive simulations, group discussions, and culturally diverse content allow for personalised learning experiences that resonate with all students (Ma et al., 2023). This diversity in teaching methods not only addresses individual preferences but also promotes a deeper understanding of hospitality concepts and practices across various contexts.

Stakeholders unanimously emphasised the importance of incorporating diverse and practical learning methods to better prepare students for careers in the hospitality sector. Students suggested utilising videos, demonstrations, internships, and real-world applications to create well-rounded educational experiences. Faculty supported this view, emphasising the necessity of balancing theoretical teaching with ample practical involvement. Likewise, industry stakeholders emphasised the importance of experiential learning, including field visits, software training, and hands-on sessions, to equip students with adaptable skills. Some of the stakeholders shared these views:

- *“The teaching methods are also going to be done, which include role-playing, group projects and case studies. It is good. I pray that it will be accepted and it will be materialised.” - Faculty*
- *“From the content itself and the mode of its delivery...when a student goes out...through the mode of delivery, that discussion method and role-playing and other things...can also organise a workshop and then train them on the trending issues...to update themselves.” - Industry*

Collectively, feedback underscores the importance of incorporating diverse teaching methods within the hospitality curriculum to create an inclusive, engaging, and industry-relevant educational experience.

Theme: Learning outcomes

Well-defined learning outcomes are crucial for academic and professional success. The proposed curriculum integrates practical skills, theoretical knowledge, and critical thinking to meet industry demands (Reich et al., 2019). By aligning outcomes with real-world applications, it enhances student engagement and equips graduates with essential competencies for a competitive job market (Sebby & Brown, 2020). The codes developed were characterised by clarity and alignment with learning goals.

Clarity

Clear and measurable learning goals are essential in a hospitality curriculum to ensure that students, instructors, and industry stakeholders understand the expected competencies graduates should attain (Reich et al., 2019). Faculty emphasised that the curriculum should

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define competencies that align with real-world problem-solving skills, making learning outcomes practical and industry relevant. Speaker 5 stated,

- *“Of what curriculum? So that we can use it to transmit the necessary competencies to our young... children in which we are trying to train, so that they will be able to solve our current... problems.”*

Industry stakeholders emphasised that well-defined learning outcomes enable students to align their skills with industry expectations and career goals, as noted by Speaker 6.

- *“...we have another topic that says that reasons why children undertake career tech or career pathways... after teaching... some of them still does not even know why they are doing that course... maybe when we add that, it will bring a certain picture to the student that OK, this is the trend that I want to take to let so me better my skills.”*

Similarly, students acknowledged that clarity in learning outcomes helps them track their progress and align their education with their career aspirations, with Speaker 11 remarking,

- *“So with the career outcome, it is important we know what we want at the end of the study or even within the study, or even let the lectures and other institutions observe what you can do, and then you follow that path.”*

From this, a well-articulated learning outcomes guide students’ educational journeys and prepares them for success in the hospitality industry.

Alignment with learning goals

For any proposed curriculum, aligning course learning goals serves as a foundational principle, ensuring that all content, activities, and assessments directly contribute to student learning outcomes (Reich et al., 2019). This alignment enhances engagement and prepares graduates for the dynamic demands of the hospitality industry by fostering skill development and industry readiness.

Students acknowledged the importance of a curriculum that effectively combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience, primarily through internships that help them discover their strengths and match their skills to specific career paths. Likewise, industry stakeholders highlighted the need to balance theoretical education with practical training to ensure students are well-prepared for real-world applications. Faculty members echoed this view, emphasising the necessity of having clearly defined learning objectives that align with measurable skills and industry standards.

In various perspectives, some stakeholders shared these views:

- *“I think this is very educational and when we implement this in our schools, it will help us not only to know the theory aspect, but the practical aspect too...we also know the physical aspect and what is happening in the industry.” – Industry*



From the faculty, Speaker 7 pointed out,

- *“Those are measurable skills, and I am very sure an industry person will tell you that yes, this is what we need...you to be able to demonstrate that you will be able to cut these five types of vegetables.”*

These perspectives collectively reinforce the importance of a curriculum that not only equips students with broad foundational skills but also provides specialisation opportunities, aligns with industry needs, and ensures graduates possess the competencies required for successful careers in hospitality.

Theme: Career Goals

In hospitality, clear career goals are vital for success and fulfilment. A well-structured curriculum combines theoretical knowledge with hands-on experiences, equipping students with practical skills and fostering a goal-oriented mindset (Mbagga et al., 2021). This preparation enables graduates to navigate diverse career paths and excel in the industry. Codes identified: career readiness and skills development.

Career readiness

The proposed curriculum aimed to equip students with essential skills and knowledge for career readiness in the global markets by aligning course content with industry standards and incorporating hands-on learning experiences (Abdien, 2017). Students acknowledged the curriculum’s potential to enhance their employability, particularly for those seeking opportunities in the global job market. Industry professionals emphasised the need for a balanced approach that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical applications to ensure comprehensive skill development. Faculty reinforced this perspective, highlighting the importance of aligning the curriculum with evolving industry trends, particularly by incorporating digital skills and crisis management to equip students for modern professional challenges. Some views from stakeholders are presented below:

- Speaker 4: *“On these new things, it is fascinating. I mean, the fact that it is international, so for me, if we can do this particular course, it will help those who are travelling when you travel, and you are looking for a job.”* – Students
- Speaker 6: *“I think this is very educational, and when we implement this in our schools, it will help us not only to know the theory aspect, but the practical aspect too.”* – Industry

Generally, the curriculum’s design integrates theoretical foundations with practical applications, technology, and industry adaptability, ensuring students are well-prepared for diverse career opportunities in hospitality.



Skills development

Effective skills development is crucial in hospitality education, encompassing both hard skills, such as operational management, and soft skills, including communication and empathy. Curricula that incorporate hands-on training and real-world applications enhance student confidence and competence. Students emphasised the significance of developing skills to prepare for the hospitality sector, calling for a curriculum that reflects current trends and industry needs.

Industry representatives echoed this sentiment, with one speaker confirming the proposed curriculum's effectiveness in providing students with vital practical skills. Faculty feedback further emphasised the importance of a comprehensive educational approach that integrates cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning to foster well-rounded competence. One speaker emphasised the importance of imparting essential industry-specific competencies to ensure graduates are well-equipped for professional challenges. Some of the views expressed were:

- *“I think it is a perfect proposal... any student that takes this course seriously will not only know their theory, but the practical aspect....” - Industry*
- *“...so that we can use it to transmit the necessary competencies to our young... so that they will be able to solve our current problems....” (speaker 5) -Faculty*

The study's findings elucidated key strengths and stakeholder perspectives regarding the proposed hospitality curriculum. These insights demonstrate the curriculum's relevance, alignment with industry requirements, and opportunities for further enhancement to meet both academic and professional standards. Summary of key strengths identified by stakeholders:

- *Comprehensive Curriculum Design* – The proposed curriculum integrates both foundational and specialised hospitality areas, incorporating business components to support diverse career paths and entrepreneurship.
- *Technology and Sustainability Integration* – The curriculum emphasises digital proficiency and sustainability, preparing students for eco-friendly practices and tech-driven roles in the hospitality industry.
- *Balanced Learning Approach* – A combination of theoretical knowledge, hands-on training, and experiential learning enhances student confidence, adaptability, and real-world preparedness.
- *Industry Alignment and Career Readiness* – The curriculum addresses industry demands by incorporating modern trends, relevant skills, and specialised career pathways, ensuring graduates are well-equipped for employment and entrepreneurship.
- *Practical Exposure and Skill Development* – Internship opportunities, practicums, case studies, and interactive teaching methods provide students with hands-on experience, networking opportunities, and enhanced employability.



Discussion

The objective of the study was to develop and validate a standardised curriculum that aligns with the specific needs of the hospitality industry in Ghana. By bridging the knowledge gap between academic and industry expectations, this curriculum ensures that graduates are well-prepared for industry-ready roles. The curriculum was adapted for both local and international standards by integrating feedback from stakeholders, thereby equipping students for a wide range of professional options. This discussion is presented through the lens of the framework guiding the study.

The proposed hospitality curriculum, developed using an adapted Taba's Model and Triple Helix Model, emphasises systematic design and collaboration among academia, industry, and students. It aligns with industry demands by integrating theoretical knowledge with practical skills to meet local and international standards. Following Taba's inductive approach, the curriculum progresses from foundational to advanced concepts, addressing student learning needs while adapting to industry requirements (Ochoma, 2020; Fatoni et al., 2024). It focuses on essential practical skills, including communication, customer service, and sustainability. It incorporates digital proficiency and sustainability to prepare students for a technology-driven industry, as stakeholders acknowledged its role in career development and competence enhancement. Its comprehensiveness and alignment with global hospitality standards ensure relevance in the dynamic hospitality sector.

The proposed curriculum also bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience through stakeholder perspectives. They emphasised the importance of internships, real-world projects, and balanced module structures for skill development and industry engagement. While faculty supported semester-long internships (Narvios et al., 2023), concerns were raised about the limited theoretical credit hours offered by industry and students, who advocated for increased practical training, as suggested by some studies (McMillan & Barber, 2020; Ojha et al., 2023). The curriculum ensures alignment with industry needs, striking a balance between theory and practice, and incorporates stakeholder input (Jennings et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2017).

The curriculum equips students with global competencies (Mensah, 2021), emphasising practical learning, sustainability, and digital proficiency to bridge academic theory and industry expectations. Taba's inductive approach ensures real-world relevance, while industry stakeholders highlight the importance of cultural diversity in service delivery and global culinary trends (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019; Brady et al., 2019). Faculty stress the need for local and international perspectives to prepare graduates for the evolving hospitality industry. Aligning with the Triple Helix Model, the curriculum promotes adaptability and industry readiness (Karyanto et al., 2023), thereby ensuring cultural awareness and delivering high-quality service in diverse hospitality settings.

The curriculum incorporates diverse teaching methods aligned with Taba's Model, emphasising learner-centred instruction, and the Triple Helix Model, fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and students. It integrates practical activities, multimedia resources, and



interactive strategies, such as role-playing, industry visits, and project-based learning, to enhance engagement and promote real-world application (Ahmad et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2023). Faculty and industry stakeholders support a balanced approach that blends theoretical and practical components, addressing both digital proficiency and sustainability trends. This ensures adaptability to evolving industry demands and diverse student learning styles (Dorgu, 2015; Ma et al., 2023).

This curriculum emphasises well-defined learning outcomes, ensuring alignment with industry expectations and student career goals through Taba's Model and the Triple Helix Model. It balances theoretical knowledge with practical skills, fostering critical thinking and real-world competencies (Reich et al., 2019).

Faculty and industry stakeholders emphasised the importance of clear, measurable objectives, with internships playing a crucial role in bridging the gap between academic learning and workplace demands. While some stakeholders affirm the curriculum's relevance, others recommend refining units to enhance clarity and strengthen its connection to professional requirements (Sebby & Brown, 2020). The findings underscore the importance of a structured curriculum in enhancing career readiness and skills development in hospitality education. Grounded in Taba's Model and the Triple Helix Model, the curriculum systematically integrates stakeholder input to balance theory with practical experiences (Abdien, 2017).

Students valued its role in building confidence and adaptability, while industry representatives praised its alignment with global and local standards, emphasising leadership, sustainability, and digital proficiency. Faculty highlighted the inclusion of contemporary skills to address technological advancements, ensuring that graduates are equipped to meet evolving industry challenges (Mbagga et al., 2021).

Suggestions of stakeholders to enhance the proposed curriculum of the hospitality industry

The integration of stakeholder perspectives in the proposed hospitality curriculum ensured an inclusive curriculum. Some key recommendations included:

1. Separation of Complex Topics – Distinguishing broad concepts like sustainability from green practices to improve clarity.
2. Increased Instruction Time – Adjusting theoretical and practical session durations to allow for in-depth learning and hands-on skill acquisition.
3. Refinement of Learning Outcomes – Making outcomes more specific to ensure instructors can effectively align teaching strategies with industry expectations.
4. Internship Opportunities – Expanding hands-on training to enhance students' readiness for real-world applications.
5. Project-Based Learning – Encouraging interactive methods like role-playing and case studies for skill development.

These inputs strengthened the curriculum's relevance, ensuring it bridges academic knowledge with practical industry demands while preparing students for global hospitality careers.



Policy and Educational Implications for Curriculum Development

Enhancing faculty competencies and teaching strategies is crucial for shaping graduate attributes, requiring continuous professional development. Improved teaching strategies yield skilled graduates, thereby elevating service standards in the hospitality industry. The proposed curriculum emphasises communication, psychometric, and global exposure skills that boost employability and support Ghana's hospitality sector. Aligning curricula with industry needs equips graduates with relevant skills, strengthening academia-industry links. Faculty expertise and innovative pedagogical approaches are vital for delivering quality education. These insights guide policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders in enhancing hospitality education, fostering a skilled workforce, and sustaining Ghana's hospitality sector as a key economic driver.

CONCLUSION

The study assesses the relevance and comprehensiveness of the proposed hospitality curriculum, confirming its alignment with industry needs and academic standards. Stakeholder perspectives highlight its effectiveness in integrating technology, sustainability, and experiential learning, while balancing theory and practice. These findings validate the curriculum using a developmental model framework, demonstrating its potential to enhance career readiness and industry adaptability, and identifying areas for further improvement.

This research presents a novel approach by incorporating feedback from stakeholders, particularly students, to assess the viability of a proposed hospitality curriculum, ensuring it aligns with industry needs and global standards. In contrast to earlier research, this study employs a developmental model framework to validate the curriculum, emphasising comprehensive skill development, instructor proficiency, and hands-on learning experiences. The results contribute to both scholarly and industry discussions, offering practical suggestions for improving curricula, enhancing faculty training, and shaping policies to bolster Ghana's hospitality workforce.

Future Research Directions

Future research could investigate the long-term impact of the proposed curriculum on graduates' career trajectories in the hospitality industry, evaluating employability, entrepreneurial success, and professional development. Subsequent studies could examine the efficacy of incorporating international exposure, facility tours, and multimedia methodologies in enhancing student learning outcomes and industry preparedness. Additionally, further research may assess faculty readiness and training requirements for implementing innovative pedagogical strategies, ensuring congruence between hospitality education and the evolving demands of the industry.



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