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ALIGNING CURRICULUM WITH INDUSTRY NEEDS: A CASE STUDY OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SCHOOLS IN DAVAO CITY

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the alignment between academic curricula and industry requirements within tourism and hospitality schools in Davao City, Philippines. The rapid expansion of the tourism sector has placed pressure on educational institutions to produce graduates with competencies that match employer needs. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with program administrators, faculty, industry partners, and recent graduates, as well as through document analysis of curricular materials and industry competency frameworks. Findings reveal notable gaps in technical skills – such as revenue management and digital marketing – and soft skills – including customer service etiquette and intercultural communication – relative to industry expectations. Additionally, discrepancies emerged in pedagogical approaches, with syllabi insufficiently emphasizing experiential learning and work-integrated learning. The study concludes with recommendations for strengthening industry–academic linkages, revising course content to incorporate contemporary industry practices, and fostering collaborative forums for curriculum co-development. By addressing these recommendations, tourism and hospitality schools in Davao City can enhance graduate employability, contribute to local economic development, and support the sustainable growth of the regional tourism ecosystem.
KEYWORDS: *Curriculum alignment; industry needs; tourism education; hospitality schools; Davao City*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism and hospitality constitute one of the fastest-growing sectors in the Philippine economy, contributing approximately 12.7% to the national GDP in 2019 and employing over 5 million individuals (Republic of the Philippines Department of Tourism [DOT], 2020). In Mindanao, and specifically in Davao City, the tourism industry has experienced sustained growth, driven by eco-tourism, cultural festivals, and increased domestic travel (Davao City Tourism Operations Office [DCTOO], 2019). This growth underscores the imperative for educational institutions to produce graduates equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by employers in hotels, resorts, travel agencies, and other hospitality establishments (Baum & Szivas, 2008). Failure to achieve curriculum–industry alignment may result in an insufficiently prepared workforce, thereby constraining organizational productivity and customer satisfaction.

Previous research indicates a global trend of mismatch between tourism and hospitality curricula and evolving industry demands (Henderson, 2007; Ross & Huang, 2010). For instance, Henderson (2007) emphasized that contemporary tourism curricula must balance theoretical knowledge with practical competencies, such as revenue management, technological literacy, and sustainable practices. Similarly, Tehseen, Ramayah, and Sajilan (2016) found in Malaysian institutions that students often perceive a disconnect between academic training and real-world job requirements, particularly in digital marketing, service quality management, and cross-cultural communication. In the Philippine context, Rivera (2014) noted emerging skill gaps, especially in remote destination management and agro-tourism, which remain underrepresented in many programs.

Despite this broader literature, limited empirical attention has been directed toward regional contexts, such as Davao City, where tourism's unique cultural and ecological assets demand specialized competencies (DCTOO, 2019; DOT, 2020). Curriculum frameworks in local institutions tend to replicate national guidelines—such as those outlined in Republic Act 9593 (The Tourism Act of 2009)—without fully contextualizing pedagogical approaches to match industry dynamics in Mindanao (Republic Act 9593, 2009). Moreover, although several studies have explored

curriculum-industry partnerships in Metro Manila and Cebu (Henderson, 2007; Ross & Huang, 2010), a gap remains concerning the lived experiences of stakeholders in Davao City, where businesses frequently report turnover and underprepared hires.

This study aims to fill this void by conducting an in-depth case analysis of tourism and hospitality schools in Davao City, focusing on how curricula align with industry competencies. The research questions guiding this investigation are: (1) What competencies do local employers prioritize for incoming tourism and hospitality graduates? (2) To what extent do existing curricula address these competencies? (3) What mechanisms facilitate or hinder curriculum alignment? By answering these questions, the study seeks to inform curriculum reform initiatives and foster stronger industry–academic collaboration. The following literature review synthesizes current knowledge on industry needs, curriculum alignment models, tourism education in Southeast Asia and the Philippines, skills gaps and employability, and best practices in curriculum–industry partnerships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism and Hospitality Industry Needs

The dynamic nature of the tourism and hospitality industry requires a workforce that possesses not only technical expertise but also adaptability to changing market trends (Baum & Szivas, 2008). Baum and Szivas (2008) argue that human resource management in tourism must respond to rapid technological advancements, such as revenue management systems and online distribution channels. Industry reports, including those by the Philippine DOT (2020), emphasize emerging competency areas such as sustainable tourism practices, digital marketing, and data analytics to remain competitive. Consequently, academic institutions are urged to update course offerings to encompass these skill sets.

Recent studies illustrate that employers prioritize a blend of hard and soft skills in graduates. Ross and Huang (2010) identified that technical proficiencies—such as point-of-sale operations, front-office management, and event planning—rank high among industry stakeholders in Southeast Asia. Simultaneously, soft skills—customer service excellence, cross-cultural communication, and problem-solving—are repeatedly cited as differentiators for successful hires (Henderson, 2007). In the Philippine context, Rivera (2014) documented a mismatch between graduate competencies and job expectations, noting that local hotels in Cebu expressed dissatisfaction with new employees' interpersonal skills and digital literacy.

Moreover, Davao City's unique positioning as a gateway to ecotourism and cultural festivals, such as the Kadayawan Festival, requires specialized knowledge of heritage interpretation and sustainable destination management (DCTOO, 2019). Employers have reported difficulty finding graduates who can integrate local culture into product development or manage community-based tourism initiatives (DOT, 2020). This underscores the need for curricula to embed localized content while maintaining global best practices, thereby fostering graduates who are both culturally sensitive and technologically adept.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has further reshaped industry needs, as highlighted by the World Tourism Organization (2021), necessitating competencies in health and safety protocols, crisis management, and digital service delivery. Although pandemic-related changes extend beyond the scope of this paper, they accentuate the urgency for continuous curriculum realignment to meet unprecedented challenges (UNESCO, 2015). Collectively, these insights establish a framework for identifying core competency domains that should inform curriculum development in tourism and hospitality schools in Davao City.

Curriculum Alignment Theory and Models

Curriculum alignment refers to the degree of coherence among learning objectives, instructional strategies, assessment methods, and industry needs (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Biggs and Tang's (2011) constructive alignment model advocates designing curricula backward from desired learning outcomes, ensuring that each course component directly contributes to competency attainment. In tourism and hospitality education, this means establishing clear learning objectives—such as proficiency in revenue management software—and then aligning course content, pedagogical approaches (e.g., simulations or internships), and assessment tasks to those objectives (Henderson, 2007).

Another influential framework is Tyler's (1949) rationale, which emphasizes identifying educational purposes based on societal needs, selecting learning experiences to achieve these purposes, organizing experiences effectively, and evaluating curriculum efficacy. Although Tyler's (1949) model arose from general education, its systematic approach has been adapted for vocational and technical disciplines, including hospitality management (Patrick et al., 2008). In the Philippine setting, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) encourages program outcomes that reflect industry standards, yet implementation varies across institutions (CHED, 2017).

Critics of purely outcomes-based models warn that overemphasis on industry requirements may compromise theoretical foundations essential for long-term adaptability (Henderson, 2007). Nevertheless, a balanced curriculum that integrates theoretical underpinnings with applied skills is posited as optimal (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In practice, alignment models recommend active collaboration between academic faculties and industry stakeholders through advisory boards, joint curriculum development workshops, and periodic program reviews (Ross & Huang, 2010; Patrick et al., 2008). Such collaborative mechanisms ensure curricula remain responsive to evolving market demands and technological innovations.

Furthermore, program accreditation processes—for example, those by the Accreditation Commission of Tourism and Hospitality Education (ACTHE)—mandate periodic curriculum reviews and stakeholder consultations to maintain quality and relevance (ACTHE, 2019). While accreditation requirements provide a regulatory impetus for alignment, actual curricular revisions depend on institutional capacity, faculty engagement, and the strength of university–industry partnerships (Biggs & Tang, 2011). For Davao City schools, understanding how these theoretical alignment models translate into practice is crucial to bridging curriculum and industry spheres.

Tourism Education in Southeast Asia and the Philippines

Across Southeast Asia, tourism education has expanded rapidly to address the sector's significant economic role (Tehseen et al., 2016). In Malaysia, Tehseen, Ramayah, and Sajilan (2016) found that students perceive a disconnect between classroom instruction and industry requirements, particularly in digital competencies. Indonesia's efforts to integrate vocational training with industry apprenticeships illustrate successful models of work-integrated learning (Walsh, Teichman, & Janjarasjitt, 2011). These regional examples underscore the importance of localized curricula that address both national policies (e.g., ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework) and industry dynamics.

In the Philippines, tourism education is governed by CHED's policies, which require institutions to offer core courses in tourism management, hotel operations, and tour guiding, complemented by electives in specialized areas such as eco-tourism or event management (CHED, 2017). However, Torres (2015) highlights that many schools, especially outside Metro Manila, lack resources for simulation labs, industry partnerships, and faculty development, resulting in theoretical curricula that inadequately prepare graduates for practical challenges. Furthermore, the Philippine National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2016–2022 emphasized the urgency of aligning training programs with priority destinations, including Mindanao, yet implementation has been uneven (DOT, 2020).

Studies focused on Metro Manila and Cebu generally report stronger industry collaboration and higher graduate employability rates compared to Mindanao (Henderson, 2007; Ross & Huang, 2010). In contrast, Davao City's tourism schools face challenges such as limited internship placements, outdated syllabi, and insufficient faculty exposure to current industry practices (DCTOO, 2019). Lejia (2018) observed that graduates from Davao often require additional on-the-job training, particularly in digital literacy and customer relationship management, further highlighting the need for curriculum reform.

Despite these challenges, some positive initiatives have emerged. For instance, Ateneo de Davao University partnered with local hotels to co-develop modules on sustainable tourism and event management, while University of Mindanao established an industry advisory board to review program outcomes annually (Lejia, 2018; DCTOO, 2019). These cases suggest that fostering stronger school–industry linkages can enhance curriculum relevance and graduate readiness. However, systematic evaluations of such partnerships in Davao remain scarce, underscoring the necessity of this study.

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Skills Gap and Employability in Tourism and Hospitality

Employability refers to the set of achievements—skills, knowledge, and attributes—that make graduates more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen occupations (Yorke, 2006). In tourism and hospitality, employers increasingly prioritize skills in revenue management, digital platforms, foreign language proficiency, and sustainability practices (Baum & Szivas, 2008; Ross & Huang, 2010). Yorke (2006) emphasizes that employability extends beyond technical skills to include adaptability, communication, teamwork, and cultural intelligence.

Empirical research in Southeast Asia highlights persistent skills gaps. Tehseen et al. (2016) reported that Malaysian graduates lacked competence in digital marketing and event coordination, leading to extended probationary periods. Similarly, Yahaya and Kasim (2016) identified a mismatch between Indonesian hotel training and operational realities, with new hires lacking soft skills required to interact with increasingly diverse clienteles. Rivera (2014) documented analogous findings in Cebu, where employers cited deficiencies in English communication, customer service orientation, and revenue management—competencies not sufficiently covered in curricula.

Davao City's tourism labor market displays comparable trends. DCTOO (2019) issued a report indicating that 38% of local hotels experienced difficulty filling mid-level supervisory positions due to an insufficient pool of candidates with managerial and technological skills. Anecdotal evidence from interviews with human resource managers in Davao hotels reveals that graduates often require supplementary on-site training for basic front-office operations, food and beverage service standards, and property management systems (DCTOO, 2019; DOT, 2020).

Several factors contribute to this skills gap. First, limited access to modern training facilities—such as mock hotel rooms or computerized labs—constrains students' hands-on experience (Lejia, 2018). Second, faculty members often lack industry exposure, inhibiting their ability to incorporate current best practices into teaching (Henderson, 2007). Third, insufficient industry engagement in curriculum design leads to a curriculum that is reactive rather than proactive to market trends (Ross & Huang, 2010). These factors collectively reduce graduate employability and impede the region's capacity to leverage tourism for sustainable development.

Case Studies of Curriculum–Industry Partnerships

Internationally, curriculum–industry partnerships have emerged as effective strategies for aligning academic programs with employer needs. In Australia, Patrick et al. (2008) documented how "work-integrated learning" (WIL) frameworks enable students to gain supervised practical experience in industry settings, improving both technical competencies and workplace readiness. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the "Strategic Industry Partnership" model has facilitated co-creation of course content between universities and hospitality businesses, resulting in higher graduate placement rates (Jenkins & Dredge, 2011).

Within Southeast Asia, Tehseen et al. (2016) noted that Malaysian institutions adopting strong ties with industry—through advisory boards, guest lectures, and joint research projects—exhibited improved curriculum relevance and student employability. In the Philippines, Ross and Huang (2010) evaluated a partnership between De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde and Manila hotels, demonstrating that collaborative capstone projects and internships reduced the onboarding time for new hires. However, the success of these partnerships often hinges on institutional commitment, funding, and mutual trust between academia and industry (Ross & Huang, 2010; Jenkins & Dredge, 2011).

Davao City offers nascent examples of such collaborations. Lejia (2018) described the Ateneo de Davao University's engagement with the Davao Pearl Farm Resort to co-teach sustainable tourism modules and offer joint fieldwork opportunities. The University of Mindanao's industry advisory board has conducted annual curriculum reviews involving local hotel executives, resulting in incremental updates to course syllabi (DCTOO, 2019). Nonetheless, these initiatives remain ad hoc, lacking a formalized framework for continuous engagement and evaluation. Consequently, replicability and scalability across other schools are limited.

Barriers to effective partnerships include insufficient funding for joint projects, mismatched institutional priorities, and divergent timelines between academic semesters and industry operational cycles (Baum & Szivas, 2008). Faculty may resist curricular changes due to entrenched academic traditions, while industry partners may lack clarity on how to contribute to academic processes (Baum & Szivas, 2008; Patrick et al., 2008). Overcoming these barriers requires

deliberate policy support—such as incentives for faculty exchanges, accreditation criteria emphasizing partnership outcomes, and mechanisms for shared governance (ACTHE, 2019; CHED, 2017). Addressing these challenges is essential for establishing sustainable models of curriculum alignment in Davao City's tourism and hospitality schools.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the alignment between curricula and industry needs in Davao City's tourism and hospitality schools (Yin, 2014). The case study approach was chosen due to its capacity for in-depth investigation of contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2017). By focusing on multiple institutions and stakeholder perspectives, the research aimed to generate comprehensive insights into curricular strengths, gaps, and alignment processes.

Sampling and Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select three prominent tourism and hospitality schools in Davao City: Ateneo de Davao University (School of Business and Governance), University of Mindanao (College of Business Administration), and Holy Cross of Davao College (College of Tourism and Hospitality Management). Within each institution, key informants included: (a) program administrators and curriculum developers (n = 6), (b) faculty members teaching core tourism/hospitality courses (n = 10), (c) industry partners such as hotel general managers and human resource officers (n = 8), and (d) recent graduates (within three years) employed in local tourism or hospitality enterprises (n = 12). Total participants numbered 36. Additional data were gathered through document analysis of curriculum guides, course syllabi, and institutional accreditation reports.

Data Collection

Data collection methods comprised semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document review.

- **Interviews**: Individual interviews (45–60 minutes) were conducted with program administrators and faculty to understand curriculum development processes, perceived alignment with industry, and challenges faced (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Industry partners were interviewed to elicit competency requirements, satisfaction with graduates' performance, and suggestions for curriculum improvement.
- **Focus Groups**: Two focus group discussions (six to eight participants each) were organized with recent graduates to capture perceptions of curricular relevance, preparedness for employment, and areas requiring enhancement (Krueger & Casey, 2015).
- **Document Analysis**: Institutional curriculum guides (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management and Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management), course syllabi, and CHED program accreditation documents were reviewed to map learning outcomes, course content, teaching methodologies, and assessment strategies (Patton, 2015).

All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. Document analysis focused on identifying stated program outcomes and comparing them against industry competency frameworks, such as the DOT's Philippine Tourism Competency Standards (PTCS) (DOT, 2020).

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was adopted, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Transcripts and documents were coded using NVivo 12 software to facilitate organization and triangulation (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Themes were categorized under competency domains (e.g., technical skills, soft skills, pedagogical alignment) and alignment processes (e.g., industry advisory boards, curriculum review cycles). Document analysis involved mapping curricular components against PTCS competency clusters to identify congruencies and discrepancies (DOT, 2020; CHED, 2017).

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of data sources (interviews, focus groups, documents), member checking (participants reviewed preliminary findings), and peer debriefing with two independent academic colleagues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Ateneo de Davao University. All participants provided written informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing

institutional and personal identifiers. Data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Industry-Defined Competency Requirements

Technical Skills: Interviews with hotel general managers and HR officers revealed that proficiency in revenue management systems (e.g., Opera PMS, YieldStar), digital marketing tools (e.g., Google Analytics, social media analytics), and food safety standards (e.g., HACCP) are top priorities for new hires. One HR manager from a five-star hotel stated:

"Graduates need to hit the ground running with proficiency in our property management software. We spend weeks training them on systems they should have mastered in school." (Industry Partner 3, personal communication, March 15, 2025)

This finding aligns with Ross and Huang's (2010) assertion that technical competencies are often inadequately addressed in curricula. Document analysis of PTCS frameworks corroborated these industry priorities (DOT, 2020).

Soft Skills: Customer service etiquette, intercultural communication, and conflict resolution emerged as critical. An outdated curricular emphasis on lecture-based instruction was identified as insufficient for developing these interpersonal skills. Faculty members admitted that role-playing exercises and guest lectures—while beneficial—were sporadic and not systematically integrated. This confirms Tehseen et al.'s (2016) observation that soft skills development is often underemphasized in Southeast Asian tourism curricula.

Sustainable and Cultural Competencies: Davao's emphasis on eco-tourism and cultural heritage necessitates graduates who can incorporate local cultural knowledge into service delivery. However, curricula lacked courses on cultural resource management or heritage interpretation. A faculty member noted:

"We talk about Davao's culture in general education courses but seldom integrate it into core tourism modules." (Faculty 5, personal communication, March 10, 2025)

This gap resonates with DCTOO's (2019) report, which highlighted insufficient training on community-based tourism.

2. Curriculum Audit: Alignment and Discrepancies

Mapping Learning Outcomes to Industry Competencies: Document analysis indicated that while program outcomes referenced generic competencies—such as "demonstrate understanding of tourism management theories" (University of Mindanao, 2024)—they lacked specificity concerning industry tools (e.g., property management software) and localized content. Only one program (Ateneo de Davao) listed "apply financial management tools for hospitality operations," but did not specify software applications, suggesting partial alignment (Ateneo de Davao University, 2024).

Pedagogical Approaches: Curricula predominantly employed traditional lecture-examination formats, with limited integration of experiential learning. Only two courses across all programs mandated student internships: a six-week practicum at mid-curriculum and a capstone internship. However, industry partners noted that the six-week duration was insufficient for meaningful skill development. This mirrors Patrick et al.'s (2008) recommendation that longer, more immersive WIL experiences yield stronger competency gains.

Assessment Methods: Most courses relied on written exams and case study analyses. Practical assessments—such as mock front-office simulations or event planning projects—were limited to elective modules. As one program administrator explained:

"We lack simulation labs due to budget constraints, so we rely on theoretical case studies." (Program Administrator 2, personal communication, March 12, 2025)

Ross and Huang (2010) emphasized that reliance on theoretical assessments fails to capture students' practical readiness.

3. Mechanisms Facilitating or Inhibiting Alignment

Industry Advisory Boards: All three institutions purportedly maintained advisory boards composed of local tourism and hospitality professionals. However, minutes from advisory meetings showed scant evidence of substantive curriculum revisions; discussions often centered on student placements rather than curricular content. Faculty cited

irregular meeting schedules and low attendance from industry representatives as barriers. This finding corroborates Jenkins and Dredge's (2011) observation that advisory boards often function perfunctorily without clear mandates.

Faculty Industry Exposure: Only 20% of faculty had recent (within five years) industry experience; the remainder had primarily academic backgrounds. Limited faculty exposure to contemporary industry practices hindered their capacity to incorporate current trends into course design (Henderson, 2007). Several professors expressed interest in sabbaticals or short-term internships in local hotels, but institutional policies lacked mechanisms to support such engagement.

Resource Constraints: Financial limitations emerged as a significant inhibitor. Procuring simulation software licenses or establishing mock hotel rooms requires substantial investment, which smaller institutions—such as Holy Cross of Davao College—struggled to secure. This aligns with Torres's (2015) findings on resource disparities between Metro Manila and regional schools.

Collaborative Initiatives: Notwithstanding these challenges, two noteworthy initiatives were identified: (1) the Ateneo de Davao University–Davao Pearl Farm Resort partnership, which co-taught sustainable tourism modules and facilitated student fieldwork, and (2) the University of Mindanao's annual "Industry Day," wherein employers conducted workshops on soft skills and emerging technologies. These examples demonstrate that targeted collaborations can partially mitigate alignment challenges, echoing findings by Patrick et al. (2008).

4. Graduate Perspectives on Preparedness

Perceived Gaps in Technical Preparation: Graduates consistently reported that on-the-job training at workplaces often reintroduced basic front-office functions, food and beverage operations, and property management software—tasks they believed should have been covered comprehensively within their degree programs. One graduate recounted: "During my internship, I had to learn Opera PMS from scratch because our school only taught us generic management theories." (Graduate Participant 4, focus group, March 18, 2025)
This sentiment reflects global observations by Tehseen et al. (2016) regarding curriculum–industry mismatches.

Soft Skills Confidence: While graduates felt relatively confident in interpersonal skills—attributed to role-playing exercises and team projects—they acknowledged insufficient exposure to real customer interactions. They suggested incorporating more community engagement projects to simulate diverse client contexts, particularly with international tourists. These recommendations align with Henderson's (2007) advocacy for experiential learning to foster intercultural competencies.

Recommendations for Curriculum Enhancement: Graduates proposed including modules on revenue management, digital marketing, and entrepreneurship, citing the high demand for such competencies in local resorts and agri-tourism ventures. They also advocated for extended internship durations (e.g., 12 weeks) and more structured mentorship from host organizations. Such recommendations correspond with PTCS emphases on work-integrated learning (DOT, 2020).

5. Integrating Findings with Literature

The results confirm that, consistent with Baum and Szivas (2008) and Ross and Huang (2010), there is a persistent gap between industry needs and curricular content, particularly in technical competencies and experiential learning. The scarcity of faculty with recent industry exposure corroborates Henderson's (2007) assertion that faculty development is critical for curriculum relevance. Furthermore, the limited impact of advisory boards aligns with Jenkins and Dredge's (2011) findings on the superficial functioning of such bodies. Conversely, successful collaborative initiatives—like the Ateneo–Davao Pearl Farm partnership—echo Patrick et al.'s (2008) model of WIL as an effective alignment mechanism.

Collectively, these findings emphasize the need for a multi-pronged approach—encompassing curriculum revision, faculty development, resource allocation, and strengthened industry partnerships—to achieve meaningful curriculum alignment. The specific context of Davao City, with its unique eco-cultural tourism offerings, underscores the importance of localized content, a factor under-addressed in existing literature. This supports the research gap

identified in the Introduction: while global and national studies highlight alignment challenges, there is scarce empirical evidence on how regional contexts like Davao City navigate these processes.

CONCLUSION

This case study elucidates critical gaps between academic curricula and industry requirements within tourism and hospitality schools in Davao City. The investigation revealed that graduates lack proficiency in essential technical skills—such as property management systems, digital marketing analytics, and sustainable tourism practices—as well as comprehensive experiential learning opportunities. Despite the presence of industry advisory boards and internship components, the curricular alignment remains suboptimal due to limited faculty industry engagement, resource constraints, and insufficient integration of localized content. Notably, Davao City's unique position as a center for eco-cultural tourism necessitates curricula that embed cultural heritage management, community engagement, and sustainability principles, areas currently underrepresented.

To address these gaps, the study recommends the following:

1. **Curriculum Revision**: Incorporate specific modules on revenue management software, digital marketing tools, and sustainability practices, referencing PTCS competency frameworks (DOT, 2020). Embed localized content—such as Davao's cultural festivals and eco-tourism sites—into core courses.
2. **Enhanced Experiential Learning**: Extend internship durations to at least 12 weeks, establish structured mentorship programs, and invest in simulation labs for front-office, food and beverage, and event management training (Patrick et al., 2008). Introduce community-based projects to develop intercultural competencies.
3. **Faculty Development**: Facilitate short-term industry placements, sabbaticals, and continuing professional development workshops for faculty to gain exposure to current industry practices (Henderson, 2007). Encourage joint research projects with industry partners.
4. **Strengthening Industry Partnerships**: Formalize advisory board functions with clear mandates for curriculum co-development, establish periodic joint curriculum review workshops, and promote collaborative initiatives—similar to the Ateneo–Davao Pearl Farm model—to ensure ongoing alignment (Ross & Huang, 2010).
5. **Resource Mobilization**: Seek funding from CHED, DOT grants, and private sector investments to upgrade facilities, procure software licenses, and sponsor faculty exchange programs (CHED, 2017; ACTHE, 2019).

Implementing these recommendations can enhance graduate employability, bolster Davao City's tourism workforce, and contribute to the region's socio-economic development. Future research may employ longitudinal designs to assess the impact of curriculum reforms and expanded partnerships on graduate outcomes. Additionally, comparative studies across other Mindanao regions could elucidate broader patterns and inform national policy.

In conclusion, aligning curricula with industry needs is imperative to sustain the vitality of Davao City's tourism and hospitality sector. By fostering robust academia–industry synergies and investing in curriculum innovations, institutions can produce graduates equipped to navigate an increasingly competitive and dynamic global tourism landscape.

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