

Integration of Transferable Life Skills into Modern Tourism Curricula: Post-Pandemic Insights

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Abstract

The current study is about the incorporation of transferable life skills into the contemporary tourism curriculum in the realm of the post-pandemic environment, where it is critical to note that the trade-off between technical proficiency and human-centered skills ought to be established to ensure the workers are more resilient. The paper examines the weaknesses of the curricula and the labor preparation, which takes into consideration the synthesis of the secondary information, the national skill gap assessment and international policy reports by means of a descriptive conceptual approach. Not only do the findings demonstrate the topicality of the skills of communication, adaptability, empathy, problem-solving, resilience and digital human interface in relation to graduate employability and career mobility, but they also reveal that there are still gaps in the system since the curriculum is still fragmented and the transferable skills are not implemented but rather prioritized. As it was stated by the European Travel Commission (2023) as well as the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (2024), there are not many discrepancies between the expectations of the employers and the skills that one can possibly gain at the workplace; the activities of tourism are compatible in a certain way. However, it is also observed that at the same time, in the absence of formal systems to reflectively inculcate such competences in learning. The report proposes a balance model in curriculum, which incorporates, in the support of industry-

academia collaboration, both the life and technical skills, flexible certification and the further professional development of the instructors. The paper has offered pertinent information to the making of the curriculum and policy development through the redefinition of tourism education as an strategic platform for skill development rather than a highly vocational career path. Lastly, the transferable life skills should also be incorporated in the tutoring program of tourism to have graduates who are future-ready, adaptable and able to work in every one of the service economies.

Keywords: Transferable Life Skills, Tourism Education, Post-Pandemic Curriculum, Employability, Industry-Academia Collaboration, Workforce Resilience.

1 INTRODUCTION

Post-COVID-19 Disruptions and the Shift toward a Human-Centric in a Digital Era

The world tourist and hospitality market was severely disrupted / profoundly affected with the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic that demonstrated the hidden flaws in service delivery, staff readiness and training approaches. The technology of digitalization and virtual learning, along with contactless service technologies demanded to survive, appeared but showed the weaknesses of technological-based methods of operation in the experience industry. Human contact, participation in emotions and service empathy are not something that can be somewhat automated and processed in the digital world as they are required in tourism. In order to regain the lost confidence, effectiveness in quality of services and value of experience in tourism education and practice, post-pandemic researchers state that the focus should be on the balance between technical and human-oriented competences (Tiwari, Áraphin and Chowdhary, 2021).

New suggestions of pedagogical change in tourist education are also present to some degree because there has been a growing number of proposals of digital competency and, on the other hand, of soft skills, flexibility and emotional intelligence. The graduate capacity to cope with human relations in the context of complicated and unpredictable services is the most important to long-term recovery, despite the possibility of digital technologies to enhance the resilience of operations (Xu, Tavitiyaman, Kim and Lo, 2022). The human touch is changed into a strategic difference whereby tourism occupies a larger share of them as part of a hybrid service product between technologies and personalized experiences. The tourism curriculum should be humanized to enable the graduates to adapt to the life skills needed in the post-pandemic servicing demands of the industry, including humanized skills like empathetic, communicative and responsive human skills, which they will be required to maintain in the industry.

Importance of Transferable Life Skills for Career Longevity and Workforce Mobility

The transferable life skills have now been deemed as more significant in the post-pandemic tourist labor market, which is now defined by volatility, professional mobility and transfers across sectors. The employees in the tourism industry are normally confronted with a wide scope of work, multicultural

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workplaces and evolving work environments. As it has been researched, the skills most often developed within the tourist setup, including communication, collaboration, problem-solving, flexibility and customer orientation, can be transferred and are highly appreciable in various sectors (Stangl et al., 2024). The skills contribute to long-run career resilience, as they allow the individuals to remain in employment despite having the technical skills in the respective area become irrelevant and redundant.

It can work with the employment sector studies showing empirical data that education in tourism is a key platform of employability where there is a design with a view of instilling transferable skills in life. The graduates will be more mobile and adaptable, e.g., skill-mapping education would also fit well in the Indian tourist environment. It may be observed that the soft skills obtained by the tourist industry are in tandem with the service and general management needs (Maheshkumar, 2026). Protective career assets in the next-generation economy that is characterized by rapid technological change and unguaranteed employment are transferable life skills. The contribution of tourism education in workforce development as sustainability conferred, considering a rigorously determined route to occupation, in cases when these competencies are methodically integrated into the tourism curriculum, also leads to reduced outcomes for graduates.

2 RESEARCH GAP AND AIM

The skills requirements still have a very deep gap in spite of the growing concern on the transferable life skills since product design of tourist curricula and industry. The present-day tourism programs have soft skills taken care of in an informal way but not in organized and measurable learning objectives. In order to overcome the post-pandemic labor shortages and changes in the perceptions of the workers, the cross-global studies of the sector reveal the lack of a similar outline that could straightforwardly correlate the educational aspect of the tourism with the transferable employability skills (European Travel Commission, 2023). This loophole disrupts the fact that the industry can progress tourist education as an industry development career and a career that cuts across other industries.

The demand-supply measures on the national level represent the same ordeals. In particular, the skills gap study conducted by the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council revealed the gaps in the communication, cultural sensitivity, problem-solving and flexibility areas, in which the needs of the institutional curriculum and the new industry do not align (Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council, 2024). In such cases where the certification structures are in place, it is the minimal attention that they attach to integrating and applying life skills. The research gap suggested is addressed by the research under consideration, which attempts to seal it with the help of a comprehensive curricular framework, systematically teaching the transferable life skills to the modern tourist training. The project aims at supporting graduate job market improvement and aligning tourism curriculum with the post-pandemic workforce reality with an integration of the findings of the analysis of the THSC (2024) skills gaps and ETC (2023) transferable skill frameworks.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the recent research, the change in tourism education curriculum has been forced to drastically change in the example of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pre-pandemic operational and technical skill orientation was substituted with the post-pandemic resiliency-based and employability-aimed learning models. Edelheim, Joppe and Flaherty (2022) also think that the traditional tourism curricula were vocationally oriented, content-based and provided little prospect of introspection or an opportunity to learn about maintenance life. The traditional pedagogical approaches and post-pandemic pedagogical discourse are now oriented more towards values-based education, experience-based learning and strategic acquisition of soft skills, including empathy, flexible and moral consciousness, as important in coping with uncertainty and complex human relationships. On the same note, Werner, Junek and Wang (2022) observe that the post-COVID labor force decision within the tourism industry is increasingly reliant on a mechanism of hybrid competencies and this can be attributed to the accelerated pace at which the industry undergoes digital transformation alongside the perennial low service expectations. Digital literacy, interpersonal skills and problem-solving skills are the combination of these competencies. Their cross-national comparison analysis says that there is an increased significance of transferable skills that keep the quality of services preserved even with the rise in technology. In his critical assessment of the outputs of tourism graduates in the wider frames of employability, McKercher et al. (2024) determine that there is still an unsurpassed gap between the offerings of education and those that industry requires, specifically in the contents of life skills application, flexibility and practical preparation. Literature of the world understands that digital competency and transferable skills are required, but it also acknowledges the absence of structured curricula that are systematically and methodically incorporating the skills within the tourism programs. Furthermore, the current literature is inclined to concentrate on localized competency requirements or educational changes all over the globe independently and does not attempt to draw any parallels between the best practices worldwide and the labor reality at the local choices. This is the area of weakness, which portrays the need for the globally conscious, internationally sensitive framework at the same time in the context-sensitive manner that has the capability of transferring the life skills worldwide to tourism courses in a systematic and quantifiable way. This will form the focus of the aims of this present research; that is, to bring the transferable skills of life to any new industry in the contemporary tourism education and to match curriculum with future post-pandemic industry needs to advance graduate employability and workforce resilience to the evolving industry.

Table 1: Key Transferable Life Skills Identified in the Tourism Sector

Skill Category	Specific Skills (ETC 2023)	Industry Importance (THSC 2024)
Communication	Verbal, written and active listening	Cited by 56% of youth as most essential ¹³ .
Cognitive	Problem-solving, critical thinking	50% of employers seek complex problem-solving ¹⁴ .

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Interpersonal	Empathy, teamwork, intercultural awareness	Critical for handling diverse guest interactions ¹⁵ .
Self-Management	Resilience, adaptability, time management	Essential for "human touch" in high-pressure roles ¹⁶ .

Source: European Travel Commission. (2023) & Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council. (2024)

4 METHODOLOGY

Instead of using experimental tests, the research uses the conceptual research approach of descriptive research, which is suitable for compiling sectoral and policy information in constructing a highly integrative framework creation. The theory research of the incorporation of transferable life skills in the contemporary tourism curriculum according to the post- post-pandemic workforce demands is geared towards methodical analysis of the authoritative secondary literature. The principal sources of data that will be used in the study include the European Travel Commission (ETC) report on transferable skills in tourism and hospitality and the study of the skill gap in tourism and hospitality, which was carried out by the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) in 2024. The samples that have been chosen were specifically chosen due to the fact that the samples would provide a wide range of coverage on the local (Indian) and global (European) labor requirements, skill requirements and curriculum-explicit knowledge. The prism of the analytical tool used in this paper is the preparedness of the workforce and the fusion of curriculum, although with specific focus on the articulation, prioritization and operationalization of transferable life skills: skills in communication, adaptability, resilience and digital-human interface skills, in both texts. The research indicates that there are similarities and differences in the national and international concept of skill formation founded on the comparative and thematic analyses. The results are subsequently combined so as to give a systematic way of integrating derivable things in life into the learning of tourists that would allow the preparation of the curriculum and the industry readiness to converge in case of a post-pandemic.

5 FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Insights from ETC (2023)

The European Travel Commission (ETC, 2023) gives valid reasons to think that the acquired skills in the tourism and hospitality industry can be transferred to other service-intensive industries like the ones in the retail sector, healthcare sector, logistics and offered services to customers. Tourism as a skill incubator, as the paper describes, is an educative space in which the workers are continually learning ways of behaving interpersonally and intercognitively, as well as how to solve problems, recover service situations and live in human contact. The latter, the skills that play the crucial role in the provision of tourist services within healthcare environments, empathy, communication, collaboration and emotional regulation skills, turn out to be as substantial (ETC, 2023).

The ETC also concentrates on how the adaptability, resiliency and cross-cultural competency of the tourist workforce grow due to its flexible and multicultural nature, which is now becoming a significant issue in retail management, the social services and the digital type of occupation involving people. Development in skills via tourism also promotes complete industry preparedness, implying that the individuals may cross-industrialize without engaging in major re-skilling due to a highly defined technical training. The survey found such transferable talents by the business not to be associated with the reliability, service-orientedness and learning industry but rather with the tourist industry. His results support the idea that the theory of tourist education must be rebranded as an broad-based platform of broadly applicable and professionally deployable information in a post-pandemic service economy, which does not necessarily require a job-related education (ETC, 2023).

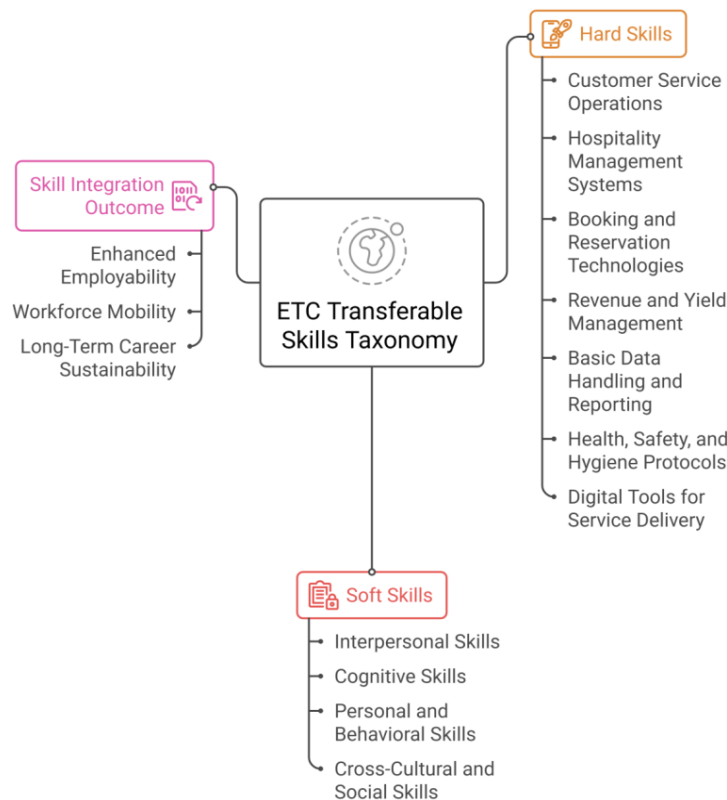


Figure 1: ETC Transferable Skills Model (Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills Taxonomy)

Insights from THSC (2024)

According to the report prepared by the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC, 2024), the high structural challenge within the Indian tourism and hospitality industry is that only one percent of the population is trained formally and therefore, there is a consequent widespread skill gaps in the sub-sectors. The study has asserted that the industry is highly reliant on informal and on-the-job training that

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not only is good to obtain experiences but also lacks reliability to provide consistency and fit in to the new market needs. This lack of formal training has grossly exposed critical gaps in their technical and transferable capabilities in life, especially those relating to customer service, communication, problem-solving, cultural sensitivity and digital preparedness.

According to THSC (2024), the rapid post-pandemic innovation contributed to this difference, the new types of working, the rise of traditional technology-based services and the changes in consumer needs. The graduates lack professional readiness in terms of the work nature because the learning and training facilities cannot change the curriculum to align with the reality in the industries. According to the paper, there is also a lack of qualified teachers and the lack of sufficient attention to the ongoing development of trainers that negatively affects the delivery of skills is also pointed at. It has led to the companies not seeking individuals willing to work in the labor market and minimal mobility and movement in careers among workers. These results allow seeing how timely reorganization of the curriculum is needed to allow the formal learning process to be combined with the development of the transferable life skills and provide the sustainability of the workforce and self-sufficiency of the tourist industry after the pandemic.

Table 2: Identified Skill Gaps and Proficiency Deficits (THSC 2024)

Identified Skill Gap	Percentage of Employers Reporting Lack	Impact on Curricula
Verbal/Written Communication	53%	Need for language and literacy modules ²² .
Complex Problem Solving	50%	Integration of scenario-based training ²³ .
Digital/ICT Skills	43%	Urgent need for digital literacy inclusion ²⁴ .
Language Skills	46%	Focus on regional and international languages ²⁵ .

Comparative Analysis

The importance of integrating curriculum, as was felt by skills accrued by the tourist employment and skills being required by the employer, points to the fact that there is a high degree of equivalence of skills acquired through education with that required by the labor markets. The transferable skills in the case of European tourism involve human-related skills like skills in communication, empathy, adaptability, teamwork and problem-solving. These are those capabilities, which are gained through constant usage of the service and being exposed to various operating environments (European Travel Commission, 2023).

They are rudimentary employability advantages that render workers mobile; hence, long-term careers can be attained; they are not industry specific. In fact, interpersonal effectiveness, professional behavior, flexibility and digital preparedness are all elements of employees discovered in the industry requirement evaluation conducted by their employers in both the Indian tourist and hospitality industries (Tourist and Hospitality Skill Council, 2024). The employers are increasingly laying greater stress on transferable skills in life, which makes it possible to engage the customers, recover services and remain consistent in performance in the unstable post-pandemic circumstances despite the transferability of the technical skills in the role. The correspondence of acquired and required skills will signify that the main difficulty will be to integrate the competences into formal classes in an organic way rather than redefine the sets of skills. Nevertheless, the gaps are never completely tutored despite this correspondence because of the disintegration of the curriculum, lack of integration of the experience learning and the instruments that are supposed to be employed to determine the development of the life skills. Therefore, comparison of the research revealed a very crucial gap in explicitly learning skills through the instruction in the institution and implicitly through exposure in the job. They need to have curriculum frameworks that strategically inculcate transferable life skills with technical training to address this gap and consistency between global standards of skills in terms of quality and the local demands of employers. Such a relationship contributes to the openness of tourist education to the post-pandemic labor environment and to graduate opportunities and reduces the employee training burden on employers.

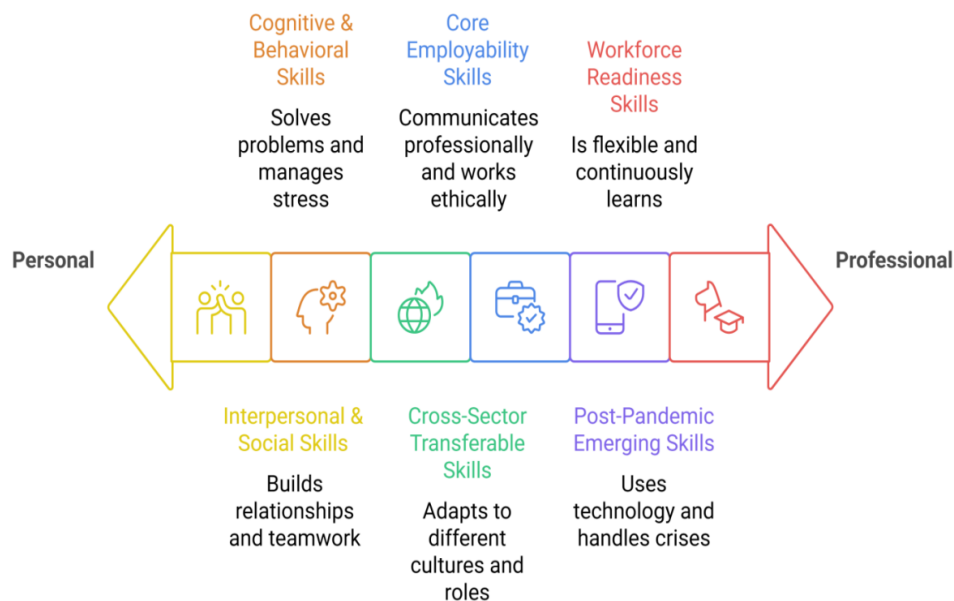


Figure 2: Comparative Mapping: Skills Gained (ETC) vs. Skills Required by Employers (THSC)

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Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework suggested will result in a balance card of the curricular balance that is expected to ensure a systemic incorporation of the technical competence and the transfer of life skills that could be introduced in the modern tourist education. The post-pandemic paradigm of the workforce reality satisfies the needs to service individuals and offer the effectiveness of the digital services. The structure of the matrix is two dimensions of intersection, which are the application of learning (theoretical knowledge to real practice) and the orientation of skills (technical-digital to human-behavioral). The architecture helps in ensuring that the development of curriculum is never anchored on some isolated modules of knowledge but rather progressively leads to the development of holistic competency.

The main concept that has been deposited in the framework is balanced skills development whereby the students concurrently develop transferable skills in life, like communication, flexibility, resilience, ethical awareness and problem-solving and operational skills. Learning processes entail working in a team, interacting with the customers, or making instant decisions that require technical and digital expertise like data handling, operating systems and the technologies used in delivering services. Under this strategy, students have opportunities to put technical knowledge into human-oriented service in a hospitality/service environment.

The compatibility of workforce readiness is also a high priority of the scheme because it clearly connects the learning outcomes to the needs of the industry. The individual quadrants of the matrix are linked to particular skills of the workforce and to which the respective learning outcomes, instructional strategies and evaluation strategies are corroborated. As an example, based on projected learning, internships and simulations, experiential learning strategies are established as a critical method of gaining skills in life, whereas quantitative acquisition of skills is guaranteed by assessment based on the performance and reflective analysis.

What is more important is that the scalability and flexibility of the matrix can enable the institution to adapt the implementation to the local industry demands as well and retain the international requirements of employability. It is implied that the general result of the proposed paradigm will be the guarantee of graduate employability, job-finding mobility and long-term sustainability since the transferable life skills will be included in the curriculum and are not the unnecessary features. This paradigm of thought will eventually have a systematic process of re-equilibrating tourist curriculum to address the changed demands of the post-pandemic, service-based economy.

Table 3: Proposed Curriculum Integration Matrix: Technical vs. Transferable Skills

Curricular Element	Technical Component	Transferable Life Skill Integration
Core Modules	Culinary Arts / Front Office	Customer empathy and intercultural communication ²⁹ .

Technology	PMS / Booking Systems	Digital literacy and data-driven problem-solving ³⁰ .
Practicum	Mandatory Internships	Resilience, teamwork and workplace adaptability ³¹³¹ .
Assessment	Technical Proficiency	Role-play and behavioral-based assessments ³²³² .

Source: Author

6. Policy and Curriculum Implications

Curriculum Reform

A balanced model of skills architecture, with life-transferable skills as the learning outcome issue, should form the basis of the strategy to educate tourists post-pandemic and is the substitution of the curricula in which technical and operational skills are prioritized. The overemphasis on technical skills, especially in the service and volatile employment market, is limiting the ability of graduates to be flexible and remain employable in the long run, as a number of studies have demonstrated (Baum, Kralj, Robinson and Solnet, 2016). Instead, the curriculum split in terms of a 60/40 ratio, according to which 40 percent of the curriculum material is dedicated to transferable life skills and the remaining 60 percent to technological and digital competences, can provide a feasible paradigm of accomplishing both the industrial and the human-centered service objectives. Graduates can overcome service recovery, negotiated uncertainty and sector transfer using life skills, including communication skills, emotional intelligence skills, collaboration skills, ethical reasoning and resilience (Suarte, Suwintana, Sudhana and Hariyanti, 2017). Besides, the research on the curriculum reform proves that teaching life skills as a distinct item is less successful compared to the offered approaches that establish life skills training along with other disciplines (Jackson, 2014). By using a coordinated balance in the competencies, the institutions will be able to match learning outcomes to the post-pandemic employability needs, as well as to maintain sector-specific relevance simultaneously. The existence of transferable life competency should be accorded formally as curriculum-based competence through the awarding of institutions and accreditation agencies. A transformation like this one guarantees a service that has come out of tourism education as one that creates graduates who are ready to lend their hands to the workforce and, at the same time, flexible professionals capable of surviving the outcome of the changing service economies.

Industry–Academia Linkages

Industry-academia connection needs to be improved in order to match the education of tourists to the current labor requirements. Recruit–Train–Deploy (RTD) paradigm is a scaled paradigm. In order to uphold the demand-driven and result-oriented nature of the courses, the RTD approach favors the employer feedback on the workforce development at all levels (UNWTO, 2019). The students in this paradigm will be employed based on their talent, they will have a curriculum that is aligned with the industry basics and they will get assigned jobs by offering minimal disparity in terms of talents. The empirical research revealed that RTD frameworks are closely linked to high graduate employability, low

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costs to absorb new personnel, batch and skills relevancy in the service sector (Cedefop, 2020). Scheduled learning in the industry promotes both technical and non-technical transferable skills like professionalism, teamwork and dealing with customers in the tourist industry, where experiential learning and exposure to the service are essential (OECD, 2021). Therefore, in designing the programs of the common curriculum and training, as well as in apprenticeship programs, the policy frameworks should facilitate the relations between tourist firms and the training institutions, along with the agencies of sector skills. The combination of the principles of RTD and tourism education enables flexible pipelines of talent, which could progress to meet the post-pandemic shocks in addition to the absence of the education-employment rift. It is through these connections that the change of the curriculum is entailed with the realities of the labor market, unlike the obstinate academic assumptions.

Professional Development

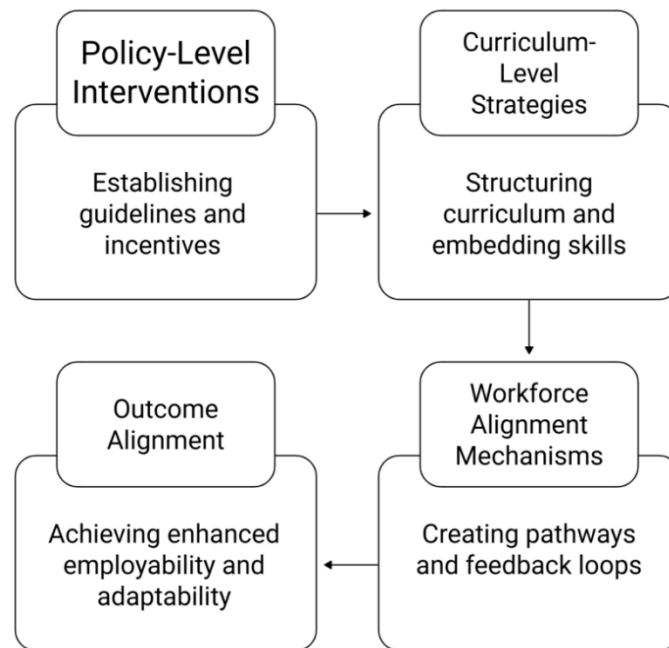


Figure 3: Policy–Curriculum Alignment Framework for Modern Tourism Education

Continuing professional development (CPD) of instructors and trainers is part of the reforms that can easily be overlooked by tourism education. The alteration of service technology, online platforms, customer demands and labor shapes requires the trainers to continually alter their teaching methods and knowledge of materials due to the varying pace of the four aforementioned elements. The issues of competence of trainers have been identified in the vocational education literature as largely affecting the results and the success of the curriculum that the students follow (ILO, 2020). Quarterly training events

are an orderly way of ensuring that the trainers are informed on the new trends in the industry, new skills required and latest training methods. It has also been determined that trainers, who undergo continuous exposure to the industry, are better placed to inculcate transferable life skills of flexibility, collaboration and troubleshooting into the technical education (Wheelahan and Moodie, 2016). The upskilling of trainers will make certain that the training in classrooms will be based on the actual realities in the tourist industry, where experiential learning is paramount. Therefore it is significant that the policy assists the industry to offer the immersion programs, mandatory CPD and renewal of the certifications. Other than boosting the relevancy of the curriculum, regular training of the trainer makes the graduates more employable and the institutions legitimate. The training cycle can be formalized at the quarterly level in order to make the component of education systems in tourism flexible, progressive and open to workforce change even after the pandemic.

Policy Recommendations

The remedies to address the lack of preparedness of fellow workers in the tourist industry during the post-pandemic phase are specific and flexible policy interventions. In the short run, the skill councils and the corresponding ministries in the sector will be forced to sponsor the three- or six-month online certificate programs where key transferable skills will be brought into the limelight and that will include digital service tools, customer service skills, communication skills and basic data analysis skills. Such modular programs do not take a long time in academic enrollment; hence, they can skill the current and displaced employees within a short time, making them more employable, which in turn reduces skills deficiencies. Moreover, the tourist organizations and other regulatory bodies, such as the food safety organizations, ought to engage in a joint task with a sideline view of the advancement of collaborative certification efforts. Combined food safety, cleanliness and service quality would improve uniformity, increase compliance and augment credibility within the employees in all the subsectors of hospitality. In addition, the training systems should have regional integration mechanisms to employ the high number of tourists working in India. It can be enhanced that the existing workplace communication could be enhanced, the obstacle to the service delivery may be decreased and the migration of migrant workers to other states could be promoted by introducing simple courses in regional languages and cultural orientation trainings. All these recommendations, when combined, will allow quick skills acquisition, cross-sector movement and social inclusion, thus ensuring that the education and training methods of the tourist facilities will become more adaptable to the fluctuating labor and service demands.

6 CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the increased significance of the need to ensure the incorporation of transferable life skills in contemporary tourism curriculum to address such upheavals and human resource transformation due to the post-pandemic changes. The analysis shows that due to the modern service environment requirements of being able to respond to elasticity, communication, stamina and digital-human interaction, the only technical and operational training can no longer guarantee the tourist

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education. This paper demonstrates that formal training and curriculum development and close association between the skills acquired as a result of the tourist tourism types of employment and those of interest to the employer can still be identified in the analysis of the national and international skill systems. The proposed conceptual framework and policy implications provide a methodical manner of restoring the tourism curriculum towards improving employability, mobility of the workforce and the sustainability of long-term careers. More to the point, the research backs the concept of tourism education as a platform for heightened involvement in the service industry and not a well-defined career path. Some of the priorities that the education systems and governments are confronted with include upgrading curricular imbalance, building industry-academia relationships and investing in the development of trainers. Overall, the research can be added to the body of literature on tourism education since it can be described as a thought-provoking and skills-based approach, which would never be inappropriate even in the face of the post-pandemic reality and would contribute to creating a tourism workforce that would be resilient, flexible, humanistic, etc.

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