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Workplace Competency of Tourism Management Graduates: A Qualitative Employer Feedback Study

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ABSTRACT

The travel and tourism industry are constantly evolving. It is the responsibility of higher education institution to supply the tourism sector with skilled labor. If employers give feedback on graduates, it will be simpler to match academic initiatives with industry requirements and guarantee that program offerings, such as tourism management, remain relevant over time. This qualitative study aims to explore how employers view the conduct, skills, and readiness of students pursuing tourism management. The results will be used to develop curricula and align academic preparation with industry norms. Informants for this study included employers in the sector, such as managers, supervisors, and heads of departments from the local government unit, a beach resort, a public school, sports club, airlines, and a hotel food and beverage department. Data was collected through semi-structured in-person and videoconference interviews. According to the study, universities are essential in producing tourism professionals who can perform their jobs, adapt to any kind of workplace, and are always aware of the demands of the travel and tourism industry, as well as other customer-focused sectors. The study found that graduates in the tourism sector possess strong foundational strengths, such as adaptability and a willingness to learn, which are critical for starting a professional career. The university must fill some important gaps, like those in soft skill development and applied industry knowledge, intensifying technological advancement to learning exposure, in order to keep turning out competent tourism management graduates.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs), such as universities and colleges, serve as centers for knowledge generation and dissemination through innovation while preparing students for the future workforce (Magboo-Campo, 2024). Just like any other industry, tourism continues to grow and diversify. Higher education institutions are being increasingly requested to align their curricula with corporate needs, assist local development, and promote ethical and sustainable tourism practices. Although sometimes complex, tourism courses might not always fit the fast-changing labor market for tourism. Ongoing curriculum changes and constant training courses are required to guarantee that graduates are well-prepared for the present industry needs (Abdelaziz, 2022). This is where the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) intensifies, to supply the tourism workforce with the human capital that will create a long-lasting impact both economically and socially.

The Mindoro State University (MinSU) is the first and only state university in the province of Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. MinSU's development from the Mindoro National Agricultural School (MINAS) in 1951 to Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology (MinSCAT) and then to a full-fledged university as approved by CHED in 2021 (by RA 10596 as modified by RA 11006) shows its unrelenting commitment to

academic quality and expansion. MinSU has its three campuses, strategically located in two municipalities and one city in the province. As mandated by the Republic Act No. 10931, HEIs like MinSU should provide free and accessible higher education to all, especially to poor but deserving students, as the human capital of the province. The role of higher education institutions in delivering quality education persists beyond the provision of learning materials and the engagement of faculty with the demands of contemporary learners. Post-departure, the institution retains the obligation to monitor their well-being through diverse evaluations, designed to synchronize industry requirements with the institution's program provisions.

The Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management program offered at Bongabong Campus of Mindoro State University (MinSU-Bongabong) is one of the institution's three campuses, providing specialized education tailored to Oriental Mindoro's development. According to MinSU's academic program offerings, the Tourism Management curriculum is designed to harness Oriental Mindoro's abundant tourism resources, aiming to produce graduates who are equipped to contribute to the province's local tourism industry (MinSU Academic Programs, n.d.). Especially through CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 46, s. 2012, which promotes Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) to ensure that learning outcomes

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produce skills required in the workplace, this fits the national educational changes ordered by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

Supporting courses that meet stakeholder input and labor market demands, CMO No. 30, s. 2006 emphasizes also the need for industry relevance in program design (CHED, 2006). MinSU-Bongabong's Tourism Management program improves program accreditation and ensures graduates meet the industry standards in line with these policies by including employer assessments into its evaluation process to measure graduates' workplace competency. Such consistency with CHED's guidelines and accreditation standards demonstrates the program's commitment to producing competent tourism professionals who can support the growth of Oriental Mindoro's tourism sector. This study aims to elucidate the varied competencies, areas for improvement, and workplace contributions of graduates, akin to the tourist sector and the tourism management curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Key Competencies Expected by Employer

Employers are underlining that graduates in tourism management should have a combination of technical, professional, and soft skills. Employers of NEUST Tourism Management graduates expressed great appreciation for their abilities in research, teamwork, resource management, critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable practices (Duplon, 2025). Additionally, strengths were also mentioned as time management, stress adaptation, and workplace transitions. Building on these findings, Felicen (2022) found that graduates in the tourism sector are expected to possess transferable skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, customer service, IT knowledge, research, and presentation skills in addition to industry-specific knowledge, including travel trends, marketing, and hospitality management. However, it is also important to note that in the areas of communication and flexibility, new employees lacked soft skills. Similarly, Othman *et al.* (2021) discovered that Egyptian industry professionals judged problem-solving, decision-making, client focus, and teamwork as the most important managerial abilities for tourism and hospitality graduates and suggested changes to the curriculum to include these competencies. Supporting this perspective, research including tertiary tourism graduates and employers by Kimeto (2021) found a large degree of agreement on the need for characteristics including adaptability, customer service, teamwork, and cultural awareness, showing these are widely anticipated throughout tourist positions. Several studies emphasize the mismatch between academic training and the competencies expected by employers in the tourism industry. According to Christou and Sigala (2002), hospitality and tourism graduates often lack practical, soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and adaptability—skills that are increasingly valued in service-oriented industries. The study suggests

that curriculum design must be more closely aligned with evolving industry demands. In addition, employers in the tourism and hospitality sector increasingly prioritize a blend of soft and hard skills in graduate employees. According to Jackson (2010), employers emphasize communication, teamwork, and problem-solving as core competencies, alongside industry-specific knowledge. These expectations reflect a shift toward graduate readiness and the ability to adapt to dynamic work environments.

Employer Feedback on Graduate Performance

Turning to graduate performance, the most desired job requirements were technical skills directly related to the tourism sector; businesses recommended continuous development of industry-specific knowledge and communication through seminars and training. According to Felicen (2022) of the Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas, employers are extremely pleased with their tourism graduates, particularly concerning their ability to acquire new skills, handle stress, solve problems connected to their jobs, and communicate properly. Looking at international perspectives, among the studies in South Africa, Ncube and Ndlovu (2019) developed a tourism graduate employability model identifying four key competency categories, such as professional skills, personality traits, knowledge skills, and operational skills. This strategy stresses the requirement of total development to succeed in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment.

In addition, research by Mendoza *et al.* (2022) on tourism graduates assessed employer comments on employment quality and performance. The study was formed by comments from rank-and-file employees, supervisors, and managers. Results of the study revealed that in terms of employment quality, flexibility, and professionalism, the tourism graduates frequently matched or exceeded the expectations of the employers. Nevertheless, the study also highlighted the need for continuous skills improvement, especially in terms of adaptation, customer service, and communication, for the tourism sector to maintain its great performance in the industry. Meanwhile, managers of Australian tourism noted a discrepancy between graduates' real performance and the relevance of abilities, especially in customer service and practical problem-solving. According to Zehrer (2009), they thus advised focused improvements in these areas. Taken together, feedback from employers on tourist management graduates points forth both strengths and shortcomings. Many businesses claim that graduates are ethical, team players, and adaptable, given the many changes in the tourism sector. On the other hand, studies like Baum (2009) reveal a gap between the abilities expected in the industry—particularly in customer service, leadership, and practical problem solving—and those taught by schools.

In line with employer feedback that values these traits, for example, the University of Barcelona tourism program

emphasizes the development of initiative, entrepreneurial spirit, and the ability to function in worldwide environments. Although technical knowledge is usually sufficient, companies sometimes need more focus on soft skills, including the capacity to manage difficult, practical situations and communication.

According to Moyo and Özgüt (2022) explored both employer and graduate views on employability in the tourism and hospitality field in Zimbabwe. Employers reported that while graduates were enthusiastic and well-informed, many lacked essential workplace experience and the ability to adapt to real-time challenges, competencies crucial in tourism operations.

Alignment of Education and Industry Needs

Addressing the alignment of education and industry needs, a 2022 study by Putra *et al.* revealed the need for connecting industry needs with higher education curricula. Even though the technical abilities are usually well-developed, employers have noted a constant need for enhancing the soft skills in training and exposure to the real industry world through partnerships and internships. To ensure graduates are competitive and ready for the labor market in the tourist sector, employer inputs and tracer studies are crucial to update the curricula. Emphasizing employer points of view, the study of Custodio *et al.* (2024) also focused on the employability of tourism management graduates from a state university. The study result revealed that on key factors, including professionalism, communication skills, and adaptability, all of which are highly important factors for employment in the tourism sector, employers rated graduates favorably. The study also underlined the requirement of ongoing curriculum development to match graduate traits and skills with changing market demands.

According to Othman *et al.* (2021), the training programs should be founded on recognized managerial skills, and industry trends should always be monitored. This would help service providers and educational schools work together better. In line with this, a further recommendation made by the study of Baum and Kokkranikal (2009) is that educational programs should undergo consistent revisions to incorporate not only professional and technical abilities, but also the personal and social qualities that are becoming increasingly sought after by employers. In summary, graduates in tourism management need to meet employer expectations and succeed in a field that is evolving fast by having a well-rounded skill set combining technical knowledge and soft skills. Therefore, bridging the gap through continuous curriculum development between academic readiness and workplace expectations is an essential need.

This study seeks to collect employer assessments of graduate performance, determine areas of strength and weakness, identify the precise competencies exhibited by alumni in the workplace and gather recommendations that will guide curriculum improvement, align education with industry requirements, cope with industry trends, and

aid in meeting the intention of graduating employment-ready, competent, and responsive tourism professionals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This case study aims to explore feedback on the readiness, competencies, and professional behaviors of Tourism Management graduates from Batch 2022-2024 in Mindoro State University. The results will be used for curriculum development and to align academic preparations with industry expectations.

Participants and Sampling Technique

This study's informants include select eight (8) industry employers who took part in this study. The composition of the informants provided diverse insights into the graduates' performance in the industry. These informants were purposively chosen based on their experience working with the tourism management graduates, ensuring that feedback was based on first-hand observations. Employers engaged in the aviation and cruise line industries were unable to provide their responses due to their business operations and scheduling conflicts.

Research Instrument

A self-made interview guide was utilized and developed to ensure consistency across interviews. It contained mainly four sections: (1) general feedback on the graduates' workplace performance; (2) identification of strengths and areas for improvement; and (3) specific skills and competencies demonstrated that helped the organization and; (4) recommendations for improving the university's academic and training initiatives, specifically on the tourism management program.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in person and via videoconferencing using Zoom. The interview flow was recorded, ensuring that each informant gave prior informed consent.

Data Analysis Procedure

All interviews were transcribed verbatim using an online transcribing tool. The transcribed and translated transcript was then subjected to thematic analysis to come up with the emerging patterns or major themes by the authors. The researchers ensured that the transcription and translation process did not alter the context of the responses. The categorized findings of the interview were provided to the informants for member checking.

Ethical Considerations

From a moral standpoint, the study noted all ethical guidelines linked to carrying out qualitative research. Participation was voluntary; all employers gave informed consent before the interviews. Participants were promised the confidentiality and anonymity of their replies. The data gathered was kept safely and only for academic

use. Reporting of findings through this article was done with care to guarantee that both the graduates' and the employers' names stayed private, following precisely the ethical standards stated by ethical research policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the interview conducted, below responses were acquired and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of the Interview

Informant (I)	General Feedback on Workplace Performance	Graduate's Strengths and Areas for Improvement	Specific Skills and Competencies Demonstrated	Employer's Recommendation
1: Other HEI Head/ Coordinator	<p>The graduate demonstrates a generally satisfactory performance based on student feedback.</p> <p>Students perceive her as having a good level of knowledge in her subject</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Subject Matter Knowledge ● Dependability ● Interpersonal Skills ● Overall Teaching Effectiveness <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Content Knowledge ● Communication Skills ● Student Support ● Classroom Management ● Interpersonal Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students appreciate her knowledge of the subject matter, reasonably clear explanations, and accessibility for support. ● The graduate also fosters positive relationships within the classroom and maintains a consistent presence. ● Accessibility outside of class and attendance records. ● The graduate also maintains positive relationships with her students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is recommended to explore opportunities to gain exposure to practical industry applications relevant to her teaching field.
2: Social Development Office Head	<p>Students performed at an average level.</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ability to follow instructions. ● Understanding and compliance with policies. <p>Areas for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Occasional absences when better-paying, day-rate opportunities arose. ● Schedules were not consistent (only 3 days a week due to reliever status). - Shyness and hesitation in dealing with authority figures.il 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Document processing ● Reliable driving skills. Documentation and courier/messenger tasks. ● Initial computer skills were limited. ● Functions were limited to support tasks, while core operations were handled by permanent staff. ● Communication Skills ● Horizontal communication (with peers) was acceptable. Vertical communication (with superiors) showed signs of shyness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Needed more personality development training. ● Students often seemed aloof when engaging with clients or organizing community activities. ● Stronger foundation in computer and technical skills. ● Exposure to real-world industry practices and trends. ● Enhance students' communication, interpersonal skills, and personality development ● Prepare students to adapt to different working environments and reduce culture shock.

<p>3. Tourism Officer</p>	<p>They are shy.</p>	<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can follow instructions and are willing to learn. • They are polite and easy to instruct, not intimidating to teach. • They accept instructions well and are open to being corrected. • They are computer literate: they know how to use Canva, process data, and basic computer skills. • They are willing to work and assist in office tasks such as marketing, data encoding, and product development. • They participated in basic tour guiding activities (although more training is still needed). <p>Areas for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their knowledge of local attractions is lacking; when asked for recommendations by visitors, some of them didn't know what to suggest. • Shyness and lack of confidence, especially in communication. • Poor communication etiquette — they forget to formally introduce themselves or politely request permission for tasks • Lack of awareness of local attractions and services they are supposed to promote. • Some are unaware of how to properly create itineraries (e.g, scheduling with proper ETAs and ETDs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They show competence with computers. • They can use design and documentation tools (e.g, Canva). • They can assist in arrival registration, marketing efforts, and itinerary preparation. • They participated in a preliminary stage of tour guiding and were involved in tourism-related events organized by the provincial tourism office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger training in basic professional communication — not necessarily perfect English, but proper greetings, self-introduction, and polite conversation etiquette. • Mandatory exposure to local tourism destinations (Bulalacao) before allowing them to tour other towns or cities. • Enhance practical experience programs aligned with real industry needs. • Increase collaboration between schools and employers to ensure training remains industry relevant.
<p>4. Resort Owner</p>	<p>The graduates are about 85% ready when entering the workforce. The remaining 15% develops during their first months on the job.</p>	<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are flexible, capable of working in different roles when needed, and good at managing people, even men, and they are willing to learn new skills. • Even if they initially entered through 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They efficiently handled large events (100+ guests) without issues. • They have good patience and communication skills with guests, even in stressful situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open to practical reality versus textbook knowledge. • Diversify and connect knowledge and skills to multiple potential career paths.

		<p>connections, they proved their worth through competence.</p> <p>Areas for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The graduate’s small stature (petite) sometimes affects how guests take her seriously. ● Some hesitancy when commanding a subordinate. ● They could use more training in handling people. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prepare students for flexibility and adaptation to real-world industry demands. ● More exposure to high-end hotels or establishments to broaden their standards and skills. ● Incorporating current industry trends like intercom systems, event planning, vlogging, and social media marketing into their education.
5. Food and Beverage Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The graduate is a “go-to person” trusted with tasks and responsibilities. ● Quickly adjusts to different leadership styles, especially servant leadership. <p>Commitment: Willing to work overtime without complaint, very guest-focused.</p>	<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong interpersonal and people skills (“camouflage” — able to interact at all organizational levels). ● Excellent customer service and guest relations. ● Highly disciplined, focused, and detail-oriented. ● Strong organizational skills and multi-tasking abilities. ● Highly trainable and coachable. <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Takes feedback personally; needs to develop thicker professional skin to grow into leadership roles. ● Overworking without maintaining a work-life balance potentially leads to burnout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership Potential: Shows early signs of leadership, expected to become an effective manager with more experience. ● Customer Service Excellence: Demonstrates outstanding customer service instincts and delivery. ● Organizational Skills: Handles multiple tasks efficiently and consistently completes tasks with minimal to zero errors. ● Communication Skills: Adjusts communication styles depending on the audience (peers, management, guests). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue strengthening the tourism program. ● Expand students’ exposure beyond local areas — encourage immersion experiences in major urban centers and top tourist destinations like Manila, Boracay, and Palawan. ● Invite more HR professionals and industry leaders for seminars or workshops to expose students to real-world standards. ● Emphasize the importance of digital literacy regarding online travel platforms like Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Google Maps.
6. Sports/Membership Club Head (recreation centre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The graduate is seen as a valuable and reliable employee who is transparent, positive, and willing to learn. Her supervisor rates her performance highly (8.5 out of 10). 	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transparency, positivity, leadership potential, detail-oriented, good at report writing, team player, adaptable, flexible, and punctual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● She demonstrates leadership potential and handles responsibilities effectively. ● She is skilled in sports-related tasks, dealing with people, and teamwork. ● She is seen as a team player with positive qualities and the ability to adapt to new environments and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is recommended to focus on enhancing English comprehension, providing proper exposure through practicum, and ensuring sufficient time for practicum to help students better prepare for the hospitality industry.

		<p>Areas for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English comprehension (especially pronunciation), proactiveness/anticipation, and awareness of past vs. present contexts. 		
7. Public Secondary School Head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance is commendable. • Even, his job has no relation to his bachelor's degree, yet he performed his job with quality. 	<p>Strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is good at working with others, he is also a trustworthy person. • He has dedication and commitment in working his job, he is working with a heart; making sure that all of the task's/activities given to him will be done properly with quality. <p>Areas for improvement:</p> <p>Nothing mentioned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates from MINSU's tourism and hospitality management are ready for the demand of the tourism and hospitality industry here in our municipality and in our province. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing mentioned.
8. Airlines Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated an exemplary work performance and ethics which significantly contributed to the success of our daily operations. 	<p>Strength:</p> <p>He has shown a high level of expertise and skills crucial in a customer-centric work environment like in the airport. His ability to adapt to challenges, maintain great outlook, and demonstrate positive attitude is really commendable. A few highlights of his strengths and competencies are but not limited to team collaboration, communication skills, problem-solving, commitment for excellence and quality, and strict compliance for safety and security.</p> <p>Areas for improvement:</p> <p>Knowledge on Global Distribution System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He shows a vibrant personality and dynamic attitude while in the workplace. As a ground crew for an airline, it is imperative for us to go beyond what a customer service demands which makes us an exceptional customer service provider; he is a proof that this is always possible through right mindset and attitude. He always make sure that the needs of our passenger were met and provided. Indeed, he is a dedicated and reliable customer service professional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It could have been better if the institution were able to provide reservations system training or the Global Distribution System (GDS) to better equip the students with at least basic knowledge in system handling. In airline and airport operations, the success of its staff constitute mostly of system operation may be it in passenger handling, ramp services, baggage handling, etc. As the industry continuously grow in modern pace, its stakeholders must be able to keep up on its highly specialized and modernized movement.

Table 1 shows the results of the interview responses from the key informants that were transcribed and translated from Filipino (national language) to English to enhance the readability of this paper. The commonality of the results indicated that soft skills should be enhanced

through training program from the school as indicated by Putra *et al.* (2022) This survey is confined to the employers and excludes feedback from employers of other businesses where certain graduates are hired.

Table 2: Emerging Themes from the responses

Questions	Sub-themes	Main Theme
General Feedback on Workplace Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledgeable and Trustworthy Professional ● Positive Work Attitude and Commitment ● Workplace Adaptability and Growth Potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong Workforce Readiness and Adaptability
Graduate's Strengths and Areas for Improvement	<p>Strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trainability ● Adaptability ● Strong Foundational Skills <p>Areas for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication Challenges ● Limited Local Knowledge Hindering Confidence ● Leadership 	<p>Strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promising Talent with Strong Work Ethic and Growth Potential <p>Areas for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gaps in Professional Confidence, Communication, and Specialized Local Destination and Professional Knowledge
Specific Skills and Competencies Demonstrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reliable Operational Support ● Growing Technical Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Functionality and Reliability
Employer's Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bridge Academic Learning with Real-World Industry Expectations ● Enhance Communication, Personality Development, and Client Engagement ● Expand Technical Skills and Industry Exposure for Greater Adaptability ● Reinforce English Communication Skills among students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthening Career Readiness through Enhanced Communication, Industry Skills, and Professional Development ● Highly specialized and modernized university initiatives through intensified learning exposure to Global Distribution System in tourism

Table 2 reaffirms that higher education institutions have a pivotal role in cultivating young tourism professionals who are competent in performing a job, adaptable to any work environment, and ever responsive to the demands of not just the tourism industry but also to other related customer-centric industries. The result shows that tourism management graduates possess strong foundational strengths such as adaptability and a willingness to be trained, which are necessary competencies to kick-start a professional career. However, there are still notable gaps that the university must address to keep producing competent graduates; such gaps include developing soft skills and applied industry knowledge. According to the data gathered in this study, it shows that good communication skills, having confidence, and deep familiarity with tourism are essential for sustaining employment in the industry. This is supported by the study of Kimeto (2021) who mentioned that graduates should have a strong sense of confidence and adaptability at the workplace. The insights from the employers of the tourism graduates continuously stress that bridging academic preparation with the actual industry expectations through enhanced curriculum development, strong industry collaboration, and targeted skills training will cultivate competent tourism graduates.

CONCLUSION

To strengthen the employability of the tourism graduates, the university must intensify its curriculum efforts by exposing the students to the real-world tourism industry setting and focusing on educating the students with current and emerging trends of the industry. A key recommendation is to keep the involvement of tourism industry professionals in the curriculum so they can aid the university with the best practices of the tourism industry. The development of the tourism students' soft skills should also be prioritized, and increasing their confidence must be included in their learning process. Additionally, the university can offer regular training and seminars that focus on public speaking, confidence-building, emotional intelligence, and professional conduct, technological advancement, skills that are often cited by employers as lacking among graduates. Practical knowledge of the tourism industry is a significant aspect of preparing tourism students for their careers after school. The university should widen internships and provide more opportunities for field immersions or educational tours that partner with professionals in the tourism industry and other related institutions. Such a prospect will provide students with familiarity with the industry and its operations, which is essential in building their knowledge

and understanding, and will be a significant contribution to their employment. Communication proficiency and digital literacy will always be undeniable assets that a graduate must possess to adapt to a more globalized tourism industry. Intensive English language training, which focuses on customer centricity and professional interaction, must be included in the learning process of the students. Furthermore, offering additional digital literacy resources, such as ICT tools relevant to tourism industry operations, must be deeply prioritized by the institution. Moreover, the university must be a steward in providing students a connection to the tourism industry, specifically the local tourism landscape of the province. Learning about Oriental Mindoro's cultural heritage, its natural attractions, and community-based initiatives will be a great way for place-based learning. Place-based learning will introduce students to the industry's operation through site visits and familiarization tours, allowing them to have in-depth knowledge of local tourism in the province. Finally, the university must establish a continuous feedback and evaluation system, which is crucial in measuring the relevance of the tourism curriculum of the institution. The university must have an institutionalized mechanism for gathering insights from employers, alumni, and industry partners on graduate performance and program quality; hence, the university must foster a strong relationship with its graduates. For future researchers, peers' feedback may also be explored, indicating the importance of workmates' or subordinates' evaluation in the totality of gauging one's competence in the workplace. It is also notable that graduates receiving feedback may come from diverse backgrounds and possess varying levels of potential. Therefore, collecting feedback from a broader range of employers and industries — including those not directly aligned with the tourism sector — should be considered.

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