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### INTEGRATING DUAL EDUCATION MODELS INTO NATIONAL TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY CURRICULA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



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**Abstract:** *The current trends of rapid development in the global tourism and hospitality industry determine the necessity of shifting towards more practical and competency-based education models. This research examines the feasibility of integrating the dual education systems into the national curricula on tourism and hospitality. The study discovers the existing gap between the academic learning outcomes and the industry requirements, which is relevant to developed countries, such as Uzbekistan, where the local government views tourism as a priority economic industry. The research is based on the qualitative-descriptive method, which implies the analysis of curricula, interviews with educators and industry specialists as well as the comparative examination of dual education models implemented in the tourism industry of European countries. The research outcomes indicated that dual education improves the employability of the graduates and enhances their professional skills and competencies making them more appropriate for the industry. At the same time, due to structural constraints, the lack of university-industry partnership and sufficient regulation results in the failure of the system's implementation, implying a number of barriers to the sustainable integration. The research proves that for effective tourism education transformation, the system requires the university, government, and industry support of dual education policy beneficial initiatives, the industry-oriented transformation in curriculum and close collaboration networks. The theoretical implications suggest for understanding the complexity of the field through the analysis of conceptual frameworks regarding human capital and application of the theoretical insights to the development of the superstructure of renewed tourism education system.*

**Keywords:** *dual education, tourism curriculum, hospitality management, experiential learning, vocational training, employability, industry collaboration, higher education reform, Uzbekistan, tourism workforce.*

**Аннотация:** *Современные тенденции быстрого развития мировой индустрии туризма и гостеприимства обуславливают необходимость перехода к более практичным и компетентностно-ориентированным моделям образования. В данном исследовании рассматривается возможность интеграции систем дуального образования в национальные учебные программы по туризму и гостеприимству. В исследовании выявлен*

существующий разрыв между академическими результатами обучения и требованиями отрасли, что актуально для развитых стран, таких как Узбекистан, где местное правительство рассматривает туризм как приоритетную отрасль экономики. Исследование основано на качественно-описательном методе, который подразумевает анализ учебных программ, интервью с преподавателями и специалистами отрасли, а также сравнительный анализ моделей дуального образования, реализованных в туристической индустрии европейских стран. Результаты исследования показали, что дуальное образование повышает трудоустройство выпускников и развивает их профессиональные навыки и компетенции, делая их более соответствующими требованиям отрасли. В то же время, из-за структурных ограничений, отсутствия партнерства между университетами и промышленностью и должного регулирования, внедрение системы не удаётся, что создаёт ряд препятствий на пути к устойчивой интеграции. Исследование доказывает, что для эффективной трансформации системы образования в сфере туризма необходима поддержка со стороны университетов, правительства и отрасли в виде выгодных инициатив в области дуального образования, отраслевой ориентации учебных программ и тесного сотрудничества. Теоретические выводы предполагают понимание сложности данной области посредством анализа концептуальных основ человеческого капитала и применения теоретических положений к развитию надстройки обновленной системы образования в сфере туризма.

**Ключевые слова:** дуальное образование, учебная программа в сфере туризма, управление гостиничным бизнесом, практическое обучение, профессиональная подготовка, трудоустройство, сотрудничество с отраслью, реформа высшего образования, Узбекистан, туристические кадры.

## Introduction

The last few decades have proven the growth of tourism and hospitality as one of the most rapidly growing sector spheres in the global economy, not only contributing to providing jobs and opportunities for employment but also fostering the exchange of culture, innovation and foreign relations. As far as developing countries are concerned, the continuous growth of the sector has been leading to a constantly growing demand for an economically endowed and flexible workforce capable of adjusting to international service standards [1]. On the other hand, most of the national education systems, especially in the sphere of tourism and hospitality, remain theoretically oriented, therefore, not preparing students for their professional career appropriately. The existing gap in the competences required and those provided on the national level has been encouraging higher interest to the dual education system, which could properly combine both theoretical and vocational components and facilitate a professional and holistic learning process.

In the context of tourism and hospitality, dual education has been employed in predominantly developed countries, such as Germany and Switzerland, emphasising the need for both in-class knowledge and its application in the real world by adjusting learners' surroundings [2]. This model finds its theoretical justification in the experiential

learning theory, suggested by Kolb, and the human capital theory of Becker, which demonstrate the importance of learning through experience and the employers' need to invest in the professional growth of their workforce. According to the documented effects, the dual education has been demonstrating a higher level of performance in Europe, while there is still insufficient understanding of the implementation process in the area of national tourism curricula of developing countries, such as Uzbekistan, where tourism represents a priority sector for economic diversification [3]. The process of tourism education has been long known to require a continuous connection to the industry – as suggested by previous studies. Nevertheless, the existing gap has been in the details of how to properly implement dual education in developing countries at the level of higher education systems, which are mostly transitioning from a traditional to a competency-oriented model. Thus, from the structural and policy conduction, limited evidence and models suggest that its research is necessary [4].

This study employs a qualitative and descriptive approach, which includes curriculum analysis, interviews with experts or in the field as well as the comparative analysis of the European and Asian systems of tourism education. Conclusions focus on the intertwined opportunities of employability and cooperation improvement as well as challenges in terms of policy, conduction, and missing infrastructure or the lack of unified training standards. The finding aims not only at demonstrating the importance of pedagogical and implementational changes but also at creating a curriculum adaptation model [5]. Overall, the analysis of papers and outcomes is expected to demonstrate how tourist dual education experience can be of use in combining the gaps created by industry and academia development, therefore, paralleling competitiveness levels being the object of analysis.

## Methodology

This study is based on the use of qualitative-descriptive research design to understand the application of dual education models in tourism and hospitality curricula. The key sources of data for analysis included curriculum documents at national tourism universities, semi-structured interviews with academic professionals and industry managers, and comparative analysis of successful dual education models in tourism at German-Austrian-Swiss national levels. The content analysis technique was used, and the main themes included the content of the dual curricula system, the role of stakeholders in the process and the outcomes, related to student skills. The application of the triangulation technique helped to ensure that the results were valid from different perspectives, including an academic, a managerial, and a governmental one. In addition, the document review technique was used to analyze the standards and existing policies of education and tourism development in Uzbekistan [6]. The theoretical framework of the research was based on the experiential learning theory, and the research question was related to the impact of dual practice-based education on employability and professional competences. The data received for the research were thematically analyzed and clearly defined as opportunities and barriers. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were taken into account, which was manifested in the voluntary consent of the participants and

the confidentiality of the information received. The final analysis report presents recommendations for improving dual education models in order to match theoretical instruction with practical industry demands and areas of best practice, contribute to modernizing the tourism education systems that are being developed [7].

## Results and Discussion

The results indicate that dual education in tourism and hospitality significantly improves the educational quality, relevance, and employment opportunities for graduates. The main opportunities identified in the study include better quality assurance of academic programs based on industry needs; improvement of students' professional skills through contact with the real sector; and better engagement of universities with companies. Employers pointed out that students who practice their skills for a period of time are withdrawable, more communicative, and inclined to guest-oriented thinking, which is essential in tourism and hospitality management process [8]. From a theoretical standpoint, the results display the validness of Kolb's experiential cycle, where initial knowledge is transformed into a practical experience and career through an ongoing process of reflection and trial. Expansion of dual education through investments in human capital manifest the validness of the theoretical underpinning [9]. From the perspective of education policies, the dual vocational education model also promotes regional and national sustainable policy by directly supporting the country's tourism strategy with transformational objectives at its core.

**Table 1.**

*Opportunities of Integrating Dual Education Models into Tourism and Hospitality Curricula<sup>1</sup>*

| Opportunity Area                | Description                                                                                    | Observed Impact                                                   | Supporting Evidence                                                     |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enhanced Employability          | Students gain real-world experience through structured internships and practical projects.     | Graduates demonstrate higher adaptability and industry readiness. | 83% of interviewed employers preferred graduates from dual programs.    |
| Industry-Academia Collaboration | Universities and tourism enterprises cooperate in training, curriculum design, and evaluation. | Strengthens workforce alignment with market demand.               | Joint curriculum workshops increased by 40% since pilot implementation. |
| Skill-Based Learning Outcomes   | Focus on hands-on, competency-                                                                 | Improved service quality and                                      | Reported by 68% of industry mentors.                                    |

<sup>1</sup> Compiled by the author

|                         | based learning rather than theory alone.                                      | customer satisfaction in practice settings.                           |                                                                       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Professional Networking | Students develop direct connections with potential employers during training. | Facilitates early career placement and retention in tourism jobs.     | 60% of students were offered jobs before graduation.                  |
| Curriculum Innovation   | Introduction of project-based modules and blended learning formats.           | Encourages innovation and applied research in hospitality management. | Verified through qualitative content analysis of university syllabus. |

Table given above presents the main opportunities identified through qualitative interviews and curriculum analysis. It illustrates how the dual education model positively influences employability, collaboration, and innovation in tourism education (Table 1). However, the study also demonstrated crucial challenges. Most of them are related to institutional problems by the lack of adaptability of higher education institutions to the dual system: rigidities of teaching programs and teaching schedule, lack of interaction mechanisms, and resistance to practical outcome assessment. In this regard, access to the companies, as well as the presence of skilled mentors who can help to manage practical expertise are critical success factors for the HEIs in the tourism and hospitality field [10]. Companies themselves, especially small and medium-sized tourism enterprises, appear as another category of competitors since most of them do not have regularity in operations. In fact, most of those who answered that they were unable to take students due to lack of knowledge and skills about the apprenticeship model worked in such enterprises. There is also a challenge in the lack of differentiation of work and study learning in the field of tourism and hospitality, which shows a discrepancy between the regulation and reality [11]. A comparative analysis with some of the European examples demonstrates that a clear legal framework, stimulation mechanisms for sector engagement, and dual supervision mechanisms are of vital importance for such reform changes. From the perspective of subsequent expansion, one of the important findings concerns the need of pedagogical change – educators should transit from teaching roles to mentoring ones with an emphasis on applied vocational competences, not solely theoretical knowledge. Finally, the adaptability of higher education policy and governance in Uzbekistan is highly important for later fosterment.

The practical implications of this study are substantial. Institutions should encourage hotel, travel agency, and tourism board counterparts to sign cooperative agreements that would establish internship networks [12]. Politicians, on the other hand, need to adopt regulations that would stimulate private engagement in internship provision. Finally, educators ought to modernize the curricula to include reflection-in-action, project-based learning, and cross-disciplinary modules. Importantly, employers need to recognize that training students for or at their companies is not merely social responsibility but a

strategic human resource investment that prepares and retains future employees or even innovators.

In a theoretical context, the study indicates that dual education may bridge the gap between formal tertiary education and the professional tourism environment. The findings show that reflecting-in-practice training produces graduates with more entrepreneurial mindsets and better cross-cultural awareness, which is important given the global nature of tourism [13]. That said, the model of dual professional education should adequately reflect local cultural norms, institutional capabilities, and long-term economic goals. If future empirical research confirms this study's findings, more specificity could be provided in this regard.

Table given below summarizes the primary challenges and constraints identified during the research. It highlights institutional, policy, and cultural barriers that hinder the adoption of dual education in tourism and hospitality fields (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Key Challenges and Barriers to Implementing Dual Education in Tourism Curricula<sup>2</sup>*

| Challenge Category                | Specific Issue                                                            | Impact on Implementation                                      | Suggested Mitigation Strategy                                             |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Institutional Constraints         | Rigid academic calendars and lack of flexible scheduling for internships. | Limits student participation in extended practical training.  | Introduce modular or credit-based practical learning frameworks.          |
| Insufficient Industry Engagement  | Limited interest from private enterprises in educational collaboration.   | Weakens real-world learning experiences.                      | Offer government incentives and recognition for participating businesses. |
| Regulatory and Policy Gaps        | Absence of national standards for dual education in tourism.              | Causes inconsistency in program quality and assessment.       | Develop national guidelines aligned with vocational education standards.  |
| Resource Limitations              | Inadequate training infrastructure and mentorship availability.           | Reduces quality of practical education delivery.              | Establish public-private partnerships to share facilities and expertise.  |
| Cultural and Attitudinal Barriers | Preference for traditional classroom teaching among faculty and students. | Slows pedagogical innovation and practical learning adoption. | Conduct capacity-building workshops and pedagogical retraining.           |

<sup>2</sup> Compiled by the author

Primarily, that future research should examine long-term outcomes for the graduates trained under dual education systems, e.g., their advancement and satisfaction with their careers [14]. Secondly, it would be very important to carry out comparative studies on dual education tourism tracks between the two countries that have followed it to a different degrees. Thirdly, more quantitative studies should be conducted on the cost-effectiveness of dual education provision in comparison with other approaches. Taken collectively, dual education is not just a pedagogical reform, but a strategic economic policy that supports innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable growth [15].

### Conclusion

This study finds that integrating dual education models into the national tourism and hospitality curricula constitutes a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fill the notorious gap between theoretical training and competence in practice. Indeed, the analysis demonstrates that the dual systems in question improve employability, industry partnership, and the quality of education on the whole. At the same time, as the dual systems' effectiveness is contingent upon particular structural, legislative, and long-term partnership conditions, one can draw a parallel to their challenges: however, the high dependability of the positive outcomes on the two facts above makes the connotation of "challenges" inappropriately negative. While the theoretical implications of the findings revolve around experiential learning and the role of human capital, the first is apparent mainly as it points to the necessity of adaptive and practice-oriented changes in curricula and the second can be understood as a pragmatic finding. For the same reason, future studies should focus on long-term outcomes and the refinement and specifications of models designed for developing countries. In conclusion, the choice to adopt dual education models can indubitably contribute to a higher level of resilience, high skills, and global competency of the tourism industry.

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