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Improving Hospitality Education in India: Insights from a Comparative Evaluation of NCHMCT Affiliated Institutes and Universities with reference to Delhi & NCR

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Abstract:

This paper examined and compared the practices of hospitality education in India, focusing on universities and institutes affiliated with the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT). It investigated curriculum content, teaching methodologies, industry exposure, and student satisfaction to identify strengths and weaknesses in each type of institution. The findings offered valuable insights for enhancing the quality of hospitality education in India and aligning it with industry requirements.

Keywords: Hospitality Education, India, Universities, NCHMCT, Comparative Study.

Introduction:

India's hotel sector has witnessed significant growth over the past few years (Chhabra et al., 2022). As tourism began shaping into a big industry, the Indian government felt the need for hospitality education. So, under the Ministry of Tourism, the government created IHMs (Institute of Hotel Management) and ITTM (Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management). According to Alok Kumar, the government set up these agencies to address the manpower demand in catering and hotels. More so, to regulate catering and hotel education, the government formed an autonomous body known as NCHMCT in 1982 under an act of parliament. It functions as the national body that coordinates the development and growth of hospitality management education via the government-sponsored Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology Society (Chhabra et al. 2022).

In other words, hospitality education, which plays a crucial role in preparing skilled professionals for the growing hospitality industry in India, is provided by universities and institutes

affiliated with the NCHMCT. This study, therefore, aimed to analyze and compare the educational practices followed by these two types of institutions. It used a mixed-methods approach to examine curriculum content, teaching methodologies, industry exposure, and student satisfaction. It also sought to identify areas for improvement and recommend strategies to enhance the overall quality of hospitality education in India.

Methodology:

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of hospitality education practices in India. The qualitative approach involved conducting semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers to gather insights and perspectives on curriculum content, teaching methodologies, and industry collaborations. This approach equally used secondary sources like newspapers, magazines, books, periodicals, and journals to have a deeper understanding of the nuances in hospitality educational practices in the country.

Also, the quantitative approach involved administering a structured questionnaire with a minimum sample size of 300 respondents from the students and lecturers of the Universities of Delhi and NCR and the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition (IHM-CTAN) Delhi and NCR. The survey collected data on student satisfaction, perceptions of industry exposure, and overall learning experiences. Statistical analysis of the survey data allowed for quantitative comparisons and identification of patterns and trends. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data improved the validity and robustness of the findings, offering an extensive understanding of the differences, similarities, strengths, and weaknesses in hospitality education practices between universities and NCHMCT-affiliated institutes in India.

Data Analysis:

- **Sample Selection:** A minimum sample size of 300 respondents was selected from the Universities of Delhi & NCR and IHM-CTAN students and lecturers (comprising 100 final year students and 200 lecturers) using a random sampling technique.
- **Survey Instrument:** A structured questionnaire was designed to collect data on various aspects of hospitality education practices, including student satisfaction, industry exposure, and learning experiences.
- **Data Collection:** The questionnaire was administered to the selected sample through electronic modes or in person, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.
- **Statistical Analysis:** A statistical technique (descriptive statistics) was employed to analyze the survey data and identify patterns and trends.

	Universities of Delhi & NCR Students (50 students)	IHM-CTAN Delhi & NCR Students (50 students)	Universities of Delhi & NCR Lecturers (100 lecturers)	IHM-CTAN Delhi & NCR Lecturers (100 Lecturers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Content and Structure 	80% of respondents believed that the University provides hospitality programs that offer a broader academic focus, which integrates subjects like business management with specialized hospitality courses.	85% of respondents said the institute offers industry-oriented programmes that focus on practical training.	80% of the respondents said they teach various subjects with specialized hospitality courses.	85% of respondents said they teach industry-oriented programmes that focus on practical training.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Methodology 	75% of respondents said the University adopts a combination of seminars, lectures, group projects, and case studies to impart knowledge and develop critical thinking skills	75% revealed that the institute employs experiential learning methods, such as industry visits, hands-on workshops, and internships, to offer them practical training.	85% said they employ seminars, group projects, and case studies to impart knowledge to the students.	80% mentioned they use experiential learning methods, like industry visits, hands-on workshops, and internships, to teach the students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry Exposure and Internships 	75% also said they often face challenges in creating extensive industry partnerships.	75% maintained they have industry connections that foster internships and opportunities to work in hotels and establishments.		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and Facilities 			<p>80% mentioned they are okay with state-of-the-art facilities and modern infrastructure, such as research centres, libraries, and computer labs.</p>	<p>70% said they use more practical facilities like restaurant setups, training kitchens, and mock hotel rooms to teach.</p>
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Overview of the Indian Hospitality Education

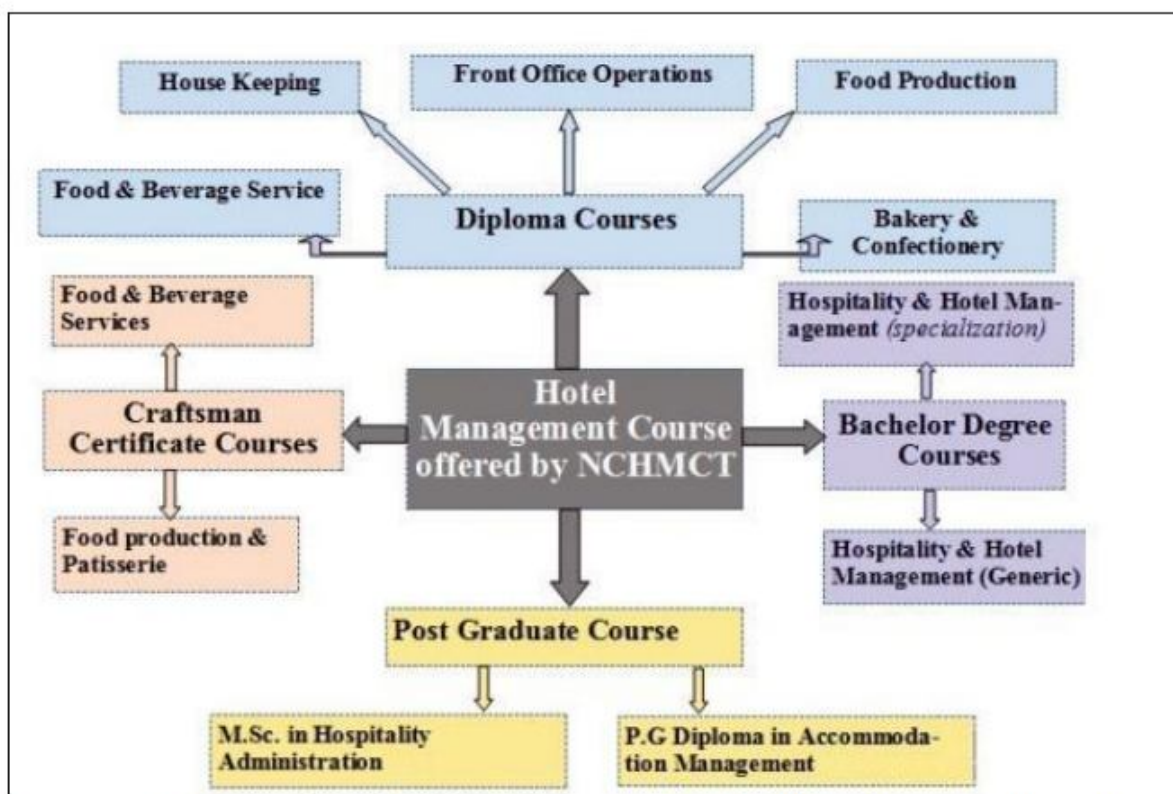


Source- Springer

In recent years, especially after the covid-19 pandemic, hospitality education has experienced great growth globally (Aksoy et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2021). The sector is one of the highest employers in India with an increasing demand for skilled professionals (Kumar, 2018). Consequently, many accredited hospitality colleges and schools now offer various programs addressing the scarcity of competent personnel. These institutions also offer industrial training in line with the recommended curriculum, enabling students to acquire hotel work before deciding on future employment.

Meanwhile, hospitality education in India comprises various institutions, including universities and institutes affiliated with the NCHMCT (Kumar, 2018). In 1982, the Indian government created the National Council for Hotel Management (NCHM) to coordinate the management of hospitality education in the country. The government transferred it to the Ministry of Tourism in 1984, renaming it National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT). The council regulates academics in Hospitality, Education, and training, which is imparted at the Institutes of Hotel Management and Food Craft (NCHMCT, 2022). In the 20/23 academic year, the number of these Institutes grew to 93, functioning in different parts of the country (NCHMCT, 2022). They include:

- 21 Central government-sponsored Institutes of Hotel Management.
- 28 State government-sponsored Institutes of Hotel Management.
- 1 PSU-owned Institute.
- 31 private Institutes.
- 12 Food Craft Institutes



An image of the Types of Hotel Management Courses provided by NCHMCT. Source- NCHMCT

More so, according to Kumar, through the council, the institutes offer 11 different professional programmes leading to the award of Certificate, Diploma, Post Graduate Diploma, Bachelor, and Master Degrees. The council also implements the courses' curriculum to ensure uniformity in the academic standards (Kumar, 2018). Generally, the most popular programs in Indian hospitality education are the Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) and Master of Hotel

Administration (MHA) (Singh et al., 2019). These programs take three and two years to complete, respectively. They also cover various topics, such as front office operations, food and beverage management, housekeeping, and human resources (Singh et al., 2019). In addition, various shorter courses are available.

The courses are taken on a full-time or part-time basis and can be tailored to specific areas of interest, like tourism, culinary arts, or event management. According to Ashish Dahiya, "So far (until 2002), the Three-Year Diploma was the biggest qualification offered by a Government Institute in Hotel Management" (Dahiya, 2017). In total, over 180 institutes, both private and government, offer Certificate, Diploma, or Degree courses in hotel management in India.

Findings and Discussion:

Comparative Analysis of Hospitality Education Practices

Indian hospitality education emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Singh et al., 2019). However, there is little difference between the two types of institutions in their ways of offering educational practices. The following, therefore, presents the comparative analysis of hospitality education practices:

1. Curriculum Content and Structure:

This is the first on the list. The curriculum is a basic component of any educational program. Based on the study's findings, universities providing hospitality programs offer a broader academic focus, integrating subjects like business management with specialized hospitality courses. Conversely, NCHMCT-affiliated institutes offer industry-oriented programmes that focus on practical training in areas such as food production, housekeeping, food and beverage service, and front office operations.

2. Teaching Methodologies:

Another area is in Teaching methodologies. This significantly influences students' learning experiences. Universities adopt a combination of seminars, lectures, group projects, and case studies to impart knowledge and develop critical thinking skills. On the other hand, NCHMCT-affiliated institutes employ experiential learning methods, such as industry visits, hands-on workshops, and internships, to offer students practical training and a deep understanding of real-world hospitality operations (Singh et al., 2019).

3. Industry Exposure and Internships:

There is also industry exposure. This is vital for bridging the gap between practical application and theoretical knowledge. NCHMCT-affiliated institutes often have stronger industry connections, fostering internships and offering student's opportunities to work in popular hotels and establishments (Singh et al., 2019). While universities equally provide internships, they often face challenges in creating extensive industry partnerships, resulting in students' limited exposure.

Improving industry collaborations and enhancing internship opportunities can benefit these kinds of institutions.

4. Infrastructure and Facilities:

Next is infrastructure. The presence of state-of-the-art facilities and modern infrastructure significantly affects the quality of hospitality education. Universities have bigger campuses and more extensive resources, like research centres, libraries, and computer labs. NCHMCT-affiliated institutes, though often more compact, prioritize practical facilities like restaurant setups, training kitchens, and mock hotel rooms, establishing an immersive learning space (Singh et al., 2019).

5. Student Satisfaction:

Finally, there is Student satisfaction. This is a major indicator of hospitality education practices' effectiveness. NCHMCT-affiliated institutes generate higher satisfaction among students because of their industry-oriented and focused approach. The practical nature of NCHMCT programmes and direct exposure to industry professionals lead to improved satisfaction levels (Dixit et al., 2019).

Universities, with their broader academic focus, might need to enhance the practical components of their programmes to ensure higher student satisfaction.

The Key Findings of the Study:

The findings suggested there are differences in the hospitality education practices of universities and NCHMCT-affiliated institutes.

- Universities tend to concentrate on theoretical knowledge, while NCHMCT-affiliated institutes focus on practical skills. Universities also have a more research-oriented strategy, while NCHMCT-affiliated institutes have a more industry-oriented method.
- In other words, the survey results showed that students at universities are more likely to report they are learning about the theoretical aspects of hospitality, like finance, marketing, and human resources. On the other hand, students at NCHMCT-affiliated institutes are more likely to report they are learning about the practical aspects of hospitality, like housekeeping, food and beverage service, and front office operations. Also, the interview results showed that faculty members at universities are more likely to have a research background while faculty members at NCHMCT-affiliated institutes may have more of an industry background.
- This means students interested in learning about the theoretical aspects of hospitality may prefer to attend a university while those interested in learning the practical aspects of hospitality might go for an NCHMCT-affiliated institute. Similarly, students interested in pursuing a research career may want to attend a university. And students interested in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry may prefer an NCHMCT-affiliated institute.
- Lastly, the study findings suggest there is no clear-cut winner in Indian hospitality education. Both universities and NCHMCT-affiliated institutes have their strengths and weaknesses.

Students should, therefore, carefully consider their needs and aims before choosing a hospitality program.

Implications for the Hospitality Industry:

The findings of this comparative study have major implications for the Indian hospitality industry. The analysis highlighted the weaknesses and strengths of both universities and NCHMCT-affiliated institutes, underscoring the need for collaboration between academia and the industry. Universities can strengthen their curriculum by incorporating more practical components, expanding industry partnerships, and integrating internships into their programs. This will offer students improved industry exposure and a better understanding of the practical aspects of the hospitality sector. In addition, universities can create closer ties with NCHMCT-affiliated institutes to exchange best practices and establish opportunities for joint initiatives and research projects.

Also, NCHMCT-affiliated institutes could further improve their academic offerings by integrating management courses that develop students' business acumen and leadership skills. This will allow graduates to excel in operational roles and thrive in managerial positions in the industry. By facilitating stronger collaborations with universities, NCHMCT-affiliated institutes can access resources for research and academic development while universities can benefit from the industry expertise and practical focus of the NCHMCT institutes.

Moreover, the industry itself can actively participate in shaping hospitality education practices by creating partnerships with educational institutions. Restaurants, hotels, and other hospitality establishments can provide mentorship programs, guest lectures, and internship opportunities to students. This industry-academia collaboration will offer students practical experience, real-world insights, and networking opportunities, making them more job-ready while aligning with industry requirements.

Summary of the Recommendations for Improvement:

1. Strengthen Industry-Academia Collaboration-

- There is a need to facilitate closer partnerships between universities, NCHMCT-affiliated institutes, and the hospitality industry to foster internships, mentorship programs, and guest lectures.
- Also, creating industry advisory boards to guide curriculum development and industry-relevant skill sets.

2. Improve Practical Components-

- Universities should integrate more practical training opportunities, like hands-on workshops and simulated industry experiences, to close the gap between theory and practice.

- NCHMCT-affiliated institutes should also incorporate management courses to develop student's leadership skills and business acumen.

3. Standardize Benchmarks and Guidelines-

- Regulatory bodies, like the NCHMCT, should work with universities and institutes to create standardized guidelines for teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and industry collaborations.
- They should also implement benchmarks to ensure consistent quality across hospitality education programmes.

4. Enhance Industry Exposure-

- Universities must actively engage in building strong industry connections to improve students' internship and practical training opportunities.
- NCHMCT-affiliated institutes should equally expand their industry network to offer students exposure to various hospitality establishments.

5. Invest in Facilities and Infrastructure-

- Finally, universities should allocate resources to develop modern facilities, such as restaurant setups, specialized training kitchens, and mock hotel rooms.
- In the same vein, NCHMCT-affiliated institutes should explore options for expanding their infrastructure to accommodate evolving industry demands and rising student populations.

Conclusion:

This research has analyzed and compared hospitality education practices in India between universities and NCHMCT-affiliated institutes. The examination of curriculum content, teaching methodologies, industry exposure, and student satisfaction has offered insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each kind of institution. The study highlights the benefit of collaboration between academia and the industry to improve the quality of hospitality education in India. By incorporating practical components, integrating management courses, and strengthening industry partnerships, universities can provide a more comprehensive and industry-relevant curriculum. Conversely, NCHMCT-affiliated institutes, while maintaining their practical focus, can further develop students' leadership skills and business acumen. In fact, collaborations between universities and NCHMCT-affiliated institutes, with active industry participation, will establish a synergy that benefits both students and the hospitality sector in the country.

It is also crucial for regulatory bodies such as the NCHMCT to operate together with educational institutions to create standardized guidelines and benchmarks for curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and industry collaborations. As stated, this will ensure quality and consistency across hospitality education programs in India. Finally, the recommendations and

implications discussed here provide pathways for enhancing the relevance, quality, and industry-readiness of hospitality education in India. By addressing the identified gaps and facilitating closer collaboration between academia and the industry, India can foster a skilled workforce that meets the sector's dynamic hospitality demands.

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