

Assessment of Tourism and Hospitality Curriculum in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The government of Pakistan upgraded tourism sector to the status of an industry in 1990, however, tourism education in the country is still at its infancy stages of development. This study analysed undergraduate tourism and hospitality curricula (scheme of studies) in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) province, Pakistan. The investigations were only carried out at university level with a major focus on: general layout of curricula; thematic grouping and subsequent classification of courses into six broader categories of: tourism management; tourism theory; business management; accounting/finance/economics; marketing and others. The general lay out of the curricula delineated that the number of courses within each university were in general agreement with the standardised format of Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan. However, variations were noticed in different universities in naming the courses as either: major, foundation or general. Overall, the curricula encompassed a diversified list of 56 courses, which are variably taught within different universities of the province. However, maximum number of courses are offered in tourism management (36.9%), followed by others/university specific (23%), tourism theory (21%) and business management (13.7%) categories respectively. The core areas of accounting/finance/economics and marketing were represented by only 2% and 2.8% respectively. Comparison with such other case studies depicted that the core areas of tourism management, tourism theory and business management were reasonably considered in the curricula. However, least attention to the core areas of accounting/finance/economic and marketing and inclusion of overwhelming number of university specific courses were identified as major issues of concern in the curricula.

KEY WORDS: Tourism, Hospitality, Curriculum, Pakistan.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism education formally began at the end of 19th century. Initially it was focused on training courses in specific sectors, such as hotel management. These courses then led to the foundation of technical and vocational schools, which in turn, have evolved into undergraduate and graduate programs (Ring, et al 2009; Salgado and Costa, 2011).

Relevant literature show that several research studies have been conducted to rationalize the tourism and hospitality curricula with respect to the diverse nature of tourism industry (for example, Wang, 2010; Airey, 2005; Tribe 2002a; Raybould and Wilkins, 2005; Ring et al., 2009; Inui et al., 2006; Acolla, 2006; Pearce, 2005; Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Craig-Smith & Peiyi, 2007; Jordan, 2008). Efforts have also been made to balance the vocational and liberal aspects in the curricula, in particular at university level (Sheldon et al., 2008; Tribe, 2002; Morrison and O'Mahony, 2003; Inui et al., 2006; Busby, 2001).

In order to fill the university- industry gap, the researchers have primarily concentrated on the issues of: subjects' standardisation and diversification (Airey, 2005; Airey & Johnson, 1999; Amoah & Baum, 1997; Cooper, Shepherd, & Westlake, 1996; Fayos-Solá, 1997; King, McKercher, & Waryszak, 2003; Koh, 1995; McKercher, 2002); including more specialised subjects in the curriculum (e.g. Perdue et al., 2000; Kay and Russette, 2000; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Donina & Luka, 2014; Riley, Ladkin, & Szivas, 2002 and Tan & Morgan, 2002) and tackling the contemporary issues in the relevant discipline (Sigala, 2002; Jordan, 2008; Wang, 2008; Busby, 2003; Jurowski, 2002; O'Halloran & Deale, 2004; Raybould and Wilkins, 2006; Casada, 2003; Yuan, 2006; Deale, Nichols and Jacquez, 2009; López, 2005; Horng et al., 2009).

In Pakistan, formal education in tourism and hospitality sector is comparatively a more recent phenomenon. With respect to the Cabinet decision in 1960, the country's first cookery school was established at Karachi. At present more than 16 institutes in both public and private sectors are offering tourism and hospitality education in the country.

In KP, Pakistan Austrian Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (PAITHOM) was established in March 2001. The Institute offers six months diploma in Hotel Management and three months short courses in: front office management, housekeeping, food & beverages, porter trainings and tour guide trainings. In 2006, for the first time, degree programs i.e. BS (8 Semesters/4 Years) and MA (4 semesters/2 Years) were initiated in tourism and hospitality by the Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Hazara University (HU). In 2011, similar programs have also been introduced by the Department of Tourism & Hospitality, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) and Department of Tourism & Hotel Management, Malakand University (MU). In 2012, the Swat University (SU) also started BS program in the relevant discipline within the Institute of Cultural Heritage Tourism & Hospitality Management. At each university there are specific Board of Studies (BoS) for the development and evaluation of the concerned courses. Although, differences are not exceptional in the relevant curricula in terms of: courses diversity, contents, standards and practical work requirements.

According to Wolf *et al.* (2006) curriculum assessment as an essential exercise which helps to: identify aspects of a curriculum that are actually working and those that needs to be changed. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of the current program and ensures professional accreditations. Keeping in view international good practices, the present investigations were carried out with the intention to provide baseline information and recommendations to Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan¹ to formula tea uniform and comparatively standardised curriculum for undergraduate program in tourism and hospitality in the country.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The undergraduate (BS- 4 years/8 semesters) scheme of studies in tourism and hospitality program was collected from the concerned institutes of four universities in KP i.e. Hazara University (HU), Malakand University (MU), Abdul Wali Khan University (AWKUM) and Swat University (SU). The general layouts of the schemes were thoroughly examined and comparison was made with the standardised format of HEC-BS program in social sciences (Table 1).

Table 1: HEC- Standardized format for BS 4-years/8 semesters integrated curriculum for Bachelor Degree in Social Sciences

Sr.	Categories	Number of Courses	Credit Hours
		Min-Max	Min-Max
1	Compulsory requirement (no choice)	9-9	25-25
2	General courses to be chosen from other departments	7-8	21-24
3	Discipline specific foundation courses	9-10	30-33
4	Major courses including research project/internship	11-13	36-42
5	Elective courses within the major	4-4	12-12
Total		40-44	124-136

The courses within each institute were then thematically grouped on the basis of course titles and contents. After the thematic grouping the courses were classified into six broader categories (Table 2). The six broader categories were adopted from Wang *et al.* (2010).

Table 2: Details of Six broader Categories of Subjects (adopted from: Wang *et al.*, 2010)

No	Category	Details
1	Tourism Management	Subjects showing application of management concepts in the context of tourism.
2	Tourism Theory	Subjects discussing the concepts and contemporary issues in tourism research and development.
3	Business Management	Subjects discussing the acts, manners and practice of managing, monitoring, supervising and controlling business aspects of tourism.
4	Accounting/Finance/Economics	Major subjects in commerce degree program.
5	Marketing	Subjects enhancing the understanding of the sales & marketing process in tourism.
6	Others	Subjects that do not easily fit in any category from 1 to 5.

¹HEC, Pakistan is responsible for professional accreditation of courses in the country.

The overall focus of tourism and hospitality curricula in the province and, priorities of individual institutes were then investigated in terms of six categories of courses (Table 2). Results are supplemented by relevant discussion² and wherever possible comparison was made with other such curricula followed in other regional countries.

1.3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

1.3.1 General Layout of Curricula:

The numbers of courses within the four investigated curricula were in general agreement with the standardised format of HEC. However, variations were noticed in categorising the courses as either: major, foundation or general. For example, tourism geography, travel & tour operation and tourism management were regarded as foundation courses by HU and MU, while, the same courses were placed in the major category by AWKUM and SU. Similarly, human resource management was categorised as general course by MU and SU, while, it was placed in major and foundation categories by HU and AWKUM respectively.

Although, such variations may less likely influence the overall composition of courses in a particular curriculum, however, it is still important that there should be a consensus on the general categorisation of courses and it should be more carefully carried out by relevant academics. It would further help in more logical and sequential arrangements of courses in different semesters, for example, foundation courses should be ideally placed in the initial semesters for better understanding the basic concept and principles of the program.

1.3.2 Thematic Grouping of Courses:

On the basis of thematic grouping a total of 56 courses were identified (Appendix). The identified courses were variably taught within the four universities. Fifteen courses were found common within all four universities; 11 courses were present within three universities, while, 06 courses were found common only within two universities. However, a list of 24 courses was identified which were taught individually (Appendix). Five courses (Front office Operation; Travel & Tour Operation; Accommodation operation; Food & Beverages Production and Food & Beverages service) were regarded as skilled oriented courses with 3 Credit Hours³ lab work in case of HU and SU. In MU, practical work of the same duration was also considered as a prerequisite for two additional courses i.e. tourism concepts & principles and cultural resource management. Lab work has not been mentioned for any courses in case of AWKUM. Students' internship (3 Credit Hours) within the relevant industry has been considered an essential component by all the universities for successful accomplishment of the degree.

In a similar study, Wang et al (2010) reported approximately 34 and 23 subject areas (here referred to as courses) for Australian and Chinese tourism management curricula respectively. The diversified number of courses recorded in KP can only be explained by the presence of 24 individual courses (Appendix) offered in isolation by each university. The individual courses are mostly selected on the availability of the relevant faculty in the concerned university.

It is well documented that the hospitality and tourism management curriculum should deliver the skills and competencies needed in the workplace (Barrows et al. 2008; Korpi & Mertens, 2004). Although, this fact is realised in the investigated curricula, however, scarcity of resources and relevant expertise for transferring the workplace essential skills to the students was identified as a common problem within all the universities.

The industrial attachment or internship has been recognised as an integral part of tourism and hospitality curricula (Heaton et al., 2008; Archer et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2010). This activity can provide graduates with comprehensive skills desired by the potential employers (Archer et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2010). The industrial attachment can also help in integrating the knowledge and skills provide both by the academics and industry supervisors (Martin et al., 2010). The immense value of internship has been duly recognised by the investigated curricula. It is considered essential for undergraduate students to carry out two months internship (approximately 96 Credit Hours) in the relevant industry at the end of the course work. The students then present a written report of the work and appear for viva voce exams.

In tourism industry, the university-industry linkages is unavoidable in terms of curricula development (Beeton & Graetz, 2001; Horng, Teng, & Baum, 2009; Jennings, 2000; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004; Moshin & Christie, 2000; Munar & Montaña, 2009), however, in case of KP this vital need has not yet realised. The curricula

²Author of this paper is official member of Board of Studies of the investigated institutes, so, the discussion made is solely based on his personal observation and informal communication with the resource persons of the investigated institutes.

³One Credit Hour in a laboratory or experimental work would require a contact of at least two hour per week throughout the semester for minimum of 16 weeks

were mostly developed without considering the knowledge and skills required by the industry. This lack of linkages also negatively impacting the internee's placement and their future job prospects in the relevant industry.

1.3.3 Courses Categorisation:

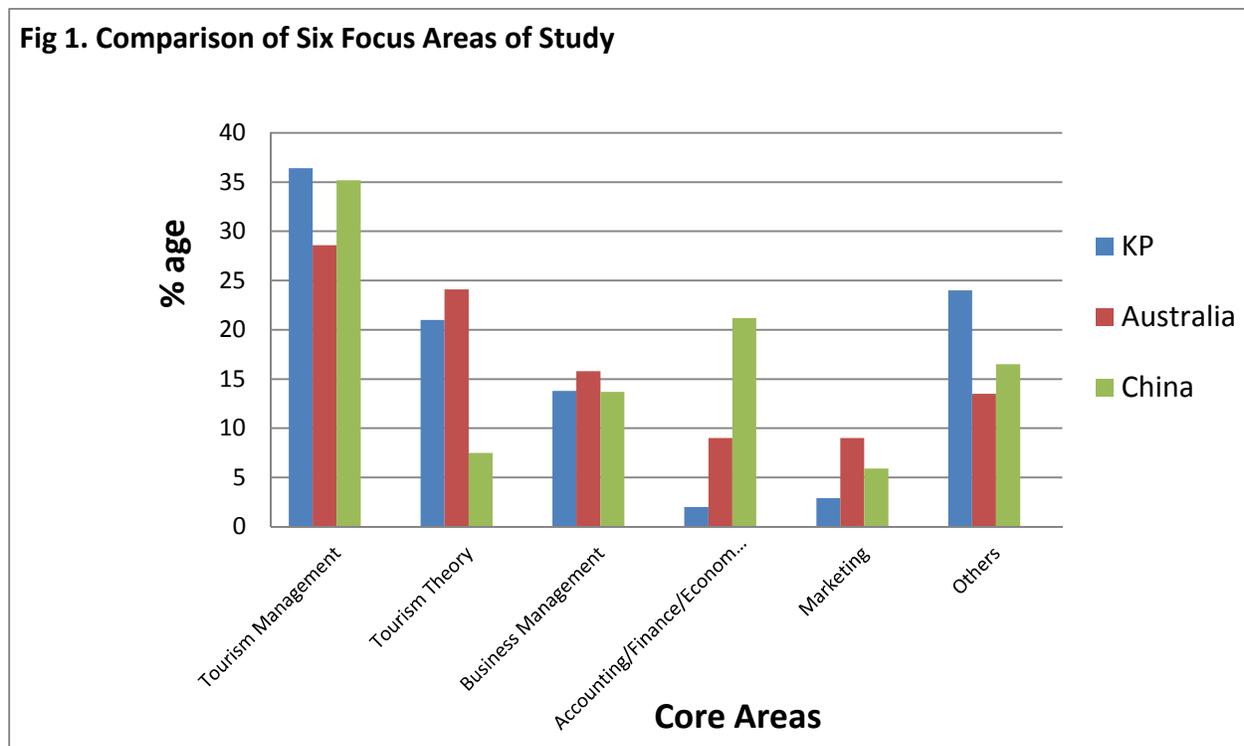
The investigated curricula offered maximum number of courses in tourism management category (36%), followed by individual/other (24%), tourism theory (21%) and business management (13.7%) respectively. The core areas of accounting/finance/economics and marketing were represented by only 2% and 2.9% of courses respectively. Almost similar trend of courses categorisation was noticed in the curricula of all the investigated universities (Table 3).

Table 3: Courses categorisation in KP

No	Core Areas of Studies	Number of Courses				% Age
		HU	MU	AWKUM	SU	
1	Tourism Management	11	14	14	11	36.4
2	Tourism Theory	08	06	06	09	21
3	Business Management	05	05	06	03	13.8
4	Accounting/Finance/Economics	01	01	01	-	2
5	Marketing	01	01	01	01	2.9
6	Others	09	04	08	11	24

Like Chinese and Australian curricula (Wang *et al.*, 2010), the core areas of tourism management, tourism theory and business management were reasonably tackled by the investigated curricula, however, the courses of accounting/finance/economic and marketing were of least concern. Likewise, remarkable differences were noticed in case of 'Other' category courses. These courses constitute major proportion i.e. 24 % as compared to 13.5% and 16.5% in case of Australian and Chinese curricula respectively (Figure 1). This different scenario can only be explained either on the basis of the availability of specialised teaching faculty for these courses or integration of tourism and hospitality courses with other institutes/ faculties of the parent university. For example, In SU, tourism and hospitality program is a part of Institute of Culture Heritage Tourism & Hospitality Management (ICHTHM) and therefore the courses are dominated by culture, heritage, and archaeology in the 'other' category (Appendix 1).

Fig 1. Comparison of Six Focus Areas of Study



1.5 Conclusion:

The courses in the tourism and hospitality curricula in KP are mostly adopted from developed countries without taking sufficient account of the local environment. The major issues of concern identified are: lack of uniformity in standards and contents of courses; scarcity of relevant academics; poorly developed university-industry linkages; scarcity of resources and lack of expertise for delivering skilled oriented courses. In order to overcome these issues and also to formulate a more acceptable form of curriculum in the country, the HEC-Pakistan should take a leading role. Furthermore, collaboration between relevant academics, practitioners and policy makers can also assist in introducing a comparatively more balanced form of tourism and hospitality curriculum in the country.

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Appendix 1: Similarity Index of Courses

No	Course Name	Name of Institute			
		HU	MU	AWKUM	SU
1	Tourism (Concepts and Principles)	√	√	√	√
2	Introduction to Hospitality	√	√	√	√
3	Tourism Geography	√	√	√	√
4	Front Office Operation	√	√	√	√
5	Food & Beverages Services	√	√	√	√
6	Tourism Management	√	√	√	√
7	Travel & Tour Operation	√	√	√	√
8	Event Management	√	√	√	√
9	Human Resource Management	√	√	√	√
10	Accommodation Operation	√	√	√	√
11	Tourism Marketing & Sales	√	√	√	√
12	Food & Beverages Production	√	√	√	√
13	Cultural Tourism	√	√	√	√
14	Tourism Policy & Planning	√	√	√	√
15	Research Methodology	√	√	√	√
16	Introduction to Archaeology	√	×	√	√
17	Cultural Resource Management	√	√	×	√
18	Small & Medium Enterprises (SME)	√	√	√	×
19	Project Planning & Management	√	√	√	×
20	Tourism and Hospitality Law	√	√	√	×
21	Tourism Resources in Pakistan	√	√	×	√
22	Managerial Accounting	√	√	√	×
23	Customer Care	√	×	√	√
24	Service Quality in Travel & Tourism	√	√	×	√
25	Ecotourism	×	√	√	√
26	Organizational Behavior	×	√	√	√
27	History of Indo-Pak	√	×	√	×
28	Adventure Tourism	√	×	×	√
29	Ancient Civilizations	√	×	×	√

30	Cultural Heritage of Pakistan	×	√	√	×
31	Sustainable Tourism	×	√	×	√
32	Business Finance	√	√	×	×
33	Introduction to Conservation	√	×	×	×
34	World Heritage Sites	√	×	×	×
35	Psychology/Sociology of Tourism	√	×	×	×
36	Tourism & Environment	√	×	×	×
37	Public Relations	×	√	×	×
38	Hotel Operations	×	√	×	×
39	Strategic Management for T & H	×	√	×	×
40	Museology	×	×	√	×
41	Religious tourism in Pakistan	×	×	√	×
42	Leisure, Recreation and Sports	×	×	√	×
43	Principle of Management	×	×	√	×
44	Practical Tourism	×	×	√	×
45	Destinations & Attractions	×	×	√	×
46	Travel Agency Management	×	×	√	×
47	Hotel Consultancy	×	×	√	×
48	Ancient History of South Asia	×	×	×	√
49	Muslim History of South Asia	×	×	×	√
50	International Languages	×	×	×	√
51	Applications of GPS/GIS in tourism	×	×	×	√
52	Field Archaeology	×	×	×	√
53	Introduction to Anthropology	×	×	×	√
54	Archaeological Heritage to Pakistan	×	×	×	√
55	Tourism development	×	×	×	√
56	Today Tourism and Hospitality Industry	×	×	×	√

Key: √ Present × Absent