

Practical Training and Industry Partnerships as Predictors of TVET Graduate Job Competency: Evidence from 3–5-Star Hotels in Accra, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry in Ghana has experienced important growth leading to an increased demand for a skilled work. There is a growing concern about the mismatch between TVET graduates' skills and the industry's demands, as previous research has focused on graduate employability and skill gaps. However, little is known about the role of industry linkage and industry attachment in the job competency of TVET graduates from the employer's perspective in hospitality. The study was aimed at assessing the influence of workplace experience and quality of industry partnership on job competency of TVET graduates in the hospitality industry within selected 3-star to 5-star hotels in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. A convergent mixed-methods of quantitative and qualitative approach was employed. The sample size for the quantitative phase was 264 hotel managers, heads of departments and hospitality industry stakeholders and 12 key informants for qualitative phase. Descriptive statistics, thematic analysis and multiple linear regression were used to analyse the data. Results showed that practical training ($\beta = 0.312, p < .001$) and the quality of partnerships with industries and organizations ($\beta = 0.148, p = .021$) were both statistically important predictors of job competence. These predictors explain 51.5% of the variance of graduate job competency ($R^2 = 0.515$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.505$; $F = 17.03, p.001$). Improving experiential learning and strategic TVET-industry relations via mentoring, curriculum development, workplace assessment, and continuous feedback are essential for improving graduates' employability and readiness in Ghana's fast-changing hospitality and tourism industry.

Keywords: TVET, Practical Training, Industry Linkages, Competence-Oriented Jobs



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INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has undergone a major shift in terms of technology, customer expectations, competition and service process complexity. This has led to an increase in the dynamism of hospitality work and business operations; thus, an increasing need for employees to possess the technical knowledge, occupational skills, digital skills and soft skills as well as professional judgement. Consequently, modern hospitality companies require employees who can offer not only operational skills but also a range of competencies such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork, customer fronting skills, and the ability to adapt to fast-changing service environments (Amrollahi *et al.*, 2025), placing additional pressure on hospitality education and training providers to produce graduates with relevant skills (Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2024).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been identified as an important modality for developing occupational skills, improving employability, and meeting workforce development needs. Unlike academic learning, TVET stresses competency-based training through practical learning, on-the-job training, and skills development (Bakar *et al.*, 2020). TVET in Ghana has become associated with tackling unemployment, skills shortages, and improving productivity. Despite the continued promotion of more competency-based training in TVET programs, concerns exist over whether TVET graduates have developed the competencies sought by employers, particularly in the service sectors such as hospitality and tourism industries. However, the long-standing problem of a mismatch between the content of the education system and the needs of the market remains. TVET graduates may have completed the requisite course of studies to obtain a formal educational qualification, but this is not necessarily an indicator of effective performance. Recent research conducted in Ghana suggests that the effectiveness of technical education depends on the correspondence between institutional training, the availability of employment opportunities, the expectations of occupational roles, and the requirements of the labor market (Dzidzornu *et al.*, 2026). This means that technical education must balance classroom learning with practice experiences and connections with industry to develop workplace competencies in graduates.

Workplace-based training is a primary means through which TVET graduates develop and apply the skills of their occupation by interacting directly with the occupational environment, industry processes, technologies, clients and workplace practices of their field of work. Through internships, industrial attachment, simulations and other workplace learning activities, students apply knowledge, acquire technical and

communication skills, and develop confidence and capacity to solve problems creatively. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a model for the relationship between experience and learning. It proposes that learning occurs through a process that includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation (Machingambi & Iwu, 2025; Kolb, 1984). From this perspective, workplace activity can be learning oriented, having a focus on real-world tasks with opportunities to reflect and to integrate new knowledge into future situations. Thus, workplace learning is much more than simple exposure to the workplace; rather, it is meant to be a process that helps students develop occupational competence.

This is particularly so in hospitality, where a human workforce delivers the service, the service interaction environment is dynamic and guest centric, and graduates must be able to interact with guests, operate specialised equipment, follow specifications and service routines, respond to service failures, and behave professionally. These skills are difficult to develop through classroom teaching. A study found that experiential learning activities improved hospitality students' employability skills, teamwork, communication ability, work self-confidence, and workplace adaptability (Boonkaew *et al.*, 2025; Ghani *et al.*, 2025). Workplace learning can also provide TVET learners in Ghana with opportunities to be exposed to practice in industry, and to improve their understanding of industry expectations (Folson & Awuah, 2026).

Even practical experience does not guarantee workers will engage in learning that leads to skill development. These experiences need to provide appropriate supervision, mentoring, feedback, relevance to actual tasks, and opportunities for independent work. Poorly designed workplace placements can expose students to routine workplace activities with minimal depth, reflection, or responsibility. Thus, the contribution of workplace experience to graduate capabilities depends upon the authenticity, intent, and support associated with the workplace experiences the student is exposed to. Joint participation of industry and TVET institutions in training is critical to ensuring that graduates' competencies meet the needs of the workplace. Collaboration with industry also provides opportunities for the review of curriculum, employer feedback, workplace learning, and access to technology, and helps align training with occupations. Service and operational standards in the hospitality sector change constantly, so there is always a need for close cooperation between training institutions and employers to produce graduates that meet these standards. The importance of TVET-industry cooperation

can be explained by Social Exchange Theory.

According to Emerson (1976), relationships are maintained through reciprocal exchange, mutual benefits, and continuing commitment to the exchange. The partnership concept in TVET is both TVET institutions and industry organisations contributing resources, knowledge and expertise for mutual benefit. TVET institutions gain information on industry and workplace needs and industries gain graduates with skills relevant for the workforce. Partnerships in which the curriculum is co-created, mentoring is provided, competencies are assessed and feedback is continuous are more likely to have positive impact for graduates. Similarly, the importance of graduate competency to hospitality organisations can be explained from the RBV viewpoint as the sustainability of competitive advantage arising from an organisation having resources that are valuable, rare and imperfectly imitable so that they cannot be easily duplicated (Barney, 1991). In the hospitality industry, human capabilities (as technical skills, professional behaviour and problem solving skills) are scarce organisational resources. This proposition is valid for the hospitality industry as service quality is based on employee performance and customer contacts. Competent employees improve service delivery, operations and organisational competitive advantage. While RBV explains why competency is important to organizations, experiential learning and industry collaboration, which help shape and develop competencies, explain how competency is developed. Despite the recent growth of interest in TVET, employability of graduates and hospitality education, studies have not examined the topic in depth. Studies have only considered employability from students' or graduates' perspectives, based on self-assessment of their skills and labor market readiness. These stance notwithstanding, employers are best placed to determine the skill of graduates to perform well at the workplace. Second, much of the existing literature on hospitality competency development is situated in a non-African context, and thus, findings from these contexts may not accurately reflect the Ghanaian TVET context where the institutional, industry, environment, and labour market differ. Third, few studies have examined the perceptions of hotel managers and departmental heads who supervise and assess the industry work performance of TVET graduates, on how this practical training and industry partnership impacts TVET graduates' competency.

To fill this gap, the study systematically looks at the effect of workplace learning experiences in combination with industry partnerships on the development of graduate competencies in TVET graduates employed in the 3-5 star hotel establishments of Accra, Ghana. The study is based on an employer's perspective of graduate competencies as influenced by workplace learning

experiences and industry partnership. This paper therefore contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the Ghana hospitality industry by linking the Experiential Learning Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Resource Based View with skills and competence development and providing useful recommendations for improving TVET-industry collaboration and graduate employability in the hospitality industry. Against this background, this study examines the effect of practical training and industry partnership on the job competency of TVET graduates who are employed in 3-5 star hotels in Accra, Ghana. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of practical training and industry partnership and the joint effect of practical training and industry partnership on job competency of TVET graduates. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are set. H1. Practical training has a significant positive effect on the job competency of TVET graduates. H2. Industry partnership has a significant positive effect on the job competency of TVET graduates. H3. Practical training and industry partnership jointly have a significant positive effect on graduate job competency.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a convergent mixed-methods research design to investigate the influence of practical training and industry partnership on the job competency of TVET graduates working in 3-5 star hotels in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. A convergent design was used as it allowed for the collection and integration of quantitative and qualitative data to gain a greater understanding of the factors that influence the development of graduates' competencies. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2023), mixed-methods research is the combination of quantitative evidence and qualitative understandings to improve understanding of complex social and organisational phenomena. The quantitative phase involved collecting data from hospitality practitioners using a structured survey instrument. This was done to gauge the magnitude of practical training delivery, industry and TVET collaboration, and the job competency of TVET graduates. The data were statistically analysed to determine the relationships among these study variables and test the conceptual model. The qualitative strand involved semi-structured interviews with hospitality sector stakeholders on their experiences, expectations, and perceptions of the effectiveness of TVET graduates' training, as well as the role of industry partnerships in developing competencies. The use of mixed methods has the benefits of triangulation and provides a holistic view of how work-based experience, exposure to industry and organisational practices contribute to graduate competence, which the constraints of using only

quantitative or qualitative approaches would impose. The study also allowed for a better understanding of the relationship between variables, and the contextual dimensions to competence in the hospitality context.

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Greater Accra Region which is the most important region in the country, being the most urbanised, commercially viable and hospitality intensive region and the administrative, economic and tourism hub of the country. It has the greatest concentration of hotels, restaurants, conference centres and hospitality services, catering to the needs of both local and foreign visitors and providing a context for studying hospitality workforce competency factors. The registered 3-5-star hotels were also selected because the service environment and physical service encounters in such establishments are more formalised in terms of standard operating procedures, human resource processes, and employee training and performance management. Registered 3 to 5-star hotels are also more involved in TVET institutions through internships and industrial attachments and subsequent employment. Hence, they are more suited for establishing the training-industry linkages and graduate performances. In Greater Accra, there are more TVET graduates in search of jobs, particularly in the hospitality sector, where tourism and the service industry are expanding. To determine whether TVET training for hospitality-related occupations is commensurate with industry expectations and standards, and to discern the practical skills, professional behaviours and workplace competencies expected by employers, it is necessary to conduct this study from the perspectives of hotel managers and heads of departments.

Measurement of Variables

Practicals was an independent variable in the study. The operationalisation of practicals refers to the measurement of the variable that consisted of six (6) indicators: hands-on skills competency training, knowledge of hotel equipment and facilities, standard operating procedures, troubleshooting procedures, knowledge of workplace safety, and the ability to execute hotel tasks with little or no supervision. Industry partnerships were assessed using indicators such as hotel cooperation with TVET institutions, internship placements, industry involvement with training activities, workplace mentoring of trainees, and employer feedback on the training institution. As a dependent variable, job competency was measured in terms of: (i) technical task performance, (ii) service quality performance, (iii) performance on handling guest requests, (iv) communication skills, (v) coping with workplace changes, and (vi) usage of hospitality systems

and technologies. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was employed to measure internal consistency reliability of the measurement scales, with values of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) were used to test the construct validity and appropriateness of factor analysis for the scale.

Target Population

The study drew on the perspectives of managers and relevant stakeholders of the 3-5-star hotel industry in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana in both its quantitative and qualitative phases (Table 1)

Table 1: Target Population

Category	Description
3-Star Hotels	12 registered hotels in Accra
4-Star Hotels	6 registered hotels in Accra
5-Star Hotels	4 registered hotels in Accra
Total Hotels	22

The quantitative study surveyed hotel managers, human resource managers, department heads and operational supervisors that were responsible for hiring, competency assessing and workplace training and development. Participants were sampled based on their direct engagement with employees and their role in deciding whether or not TVET graduates have the competencies needed to provide hospitality services. For the qualitative part of the study, the key informants were selected hospitality managers and industry stakeholders with considerable experience related to staff development, coordinating apprenticeships/internships, and liaising with TVET institutions. Their views were considered important to obtain an in-depth perspective on the advantages, limitations, and challenges of industry-education partnerships. There is a rationale for concentrating on more structured service environments operating at 3-5 star standard, which have more structured management, higher standards of quality and human resource management processes. These types of hotels provide a context for staff to show technical skills, customer service, adaptability and professional behaviour. Moreover, upscale hospitality firms usually partner with TVET institutions to provide internships, industrial attachment and apprenticeship programmes, thereby making them ideal sites to research practical training and workplace attachment for graduate workplace readiness.

Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used to select the hotels and respondents, possessing knowledge and experience on

practical training, industry partnership, and development of TVET graduates. The 3-5 star hotels were chosen based on their location in the Greater Accra Region and having institutionalised operational systems, human resource practices, and training partnerships with TVET institutions. These features made them suitable settings to consider industry engagement and workplace training in graduate competency outcomes. At the level of the respondent, purposive sampling was used to identify those who were involved in recruitment, performance management, on-the-job training, and liaison with educational institutions such as universities, including the human resource managers, departmental managers, training managers, and senior operations managers. This is justified because these people have first-hand knowledge of the required competencies of employees and because they are directly involved in assessing the employability of TVET graduates in the hospitality industry. In this qualitative aspect, key informants were purposefully selected from the hospitality and tourism sectors' representatives with experience in hospitality workforce development as well as TVET-industry partnership to provide detailed responses concerning the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities of the partnership approaches adopted by various institutions involved in TVET. Before data collection, the research instruments were pilot tested with five employees of the hotel, who were from different departments but not involved in the study sample. A pilot test was conducted to assess the clarity, precision, and comprehensibility of the study's questionnaire and interview guide. Minor adjustments were made based on the pilot test to improve the reliability and applicability of the tools prior to their implementation.

Sample Size Determination

A total of 22 3-5-star hotels were located in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The population was relatively small and easy to reach, so Yamane's (1967) formula was used to calculate the minimum sample size using a 5% margin of error (Table 2). The formula is as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where; n = desired sample size, e = error margin 0.05, N = population of 3-5-star rated hotels. The sample size for quantitative data was large enough to be representative and statistically powerful, while that for qualitative data was determined by theoretical saturation, appropriateness of participants, and depth of information rather than statistical representativeness. Substituting the values:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 22 / [1 + 22(0.05)^2] \\ n &= 22 / [1 + 22(0.0025)] \\ n &= 22 / 1.055 \\ n &= 20.85. \end{aligned}$$

The sample size calculation suggested about 21 hotels. However, because the total population of eligible hotels was small and accessible, the study adopted a near-census approach by including all 22 registered 3–5-star hotels in the Greater Accra Region. Following the selection of the hotels, respondents were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in staff recruitment, employee supervision, workplace training, and competency assessment. Twelve (12) managers and relevant hospitality practitioners were selected from each participating hotel, resulting in a total sample of 264 respondents. The distribution of respondents across the different hotel categories is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample Size by Hotel Rating

Hotel Rating	Number of Registered Hotels	Hotel Managers
3-Star	12	144
4-Star	6	72
5-Star	4	48
Total	22	264

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, with structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. These questionnaires collected quantitative information from a variety of hotel managers, departmental heads and hospitality professionals involved in recruitment, training, performance evaluation and industry collaboration within the field of TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training). The interview guide was used to obtain qualitative data from key informants on practical training, industry partnership, competence expectation and the challenges of supplying TVET graduates for employment in the hospitality industry. The questionnaire was developed using both close-ended and open-ended questions, with the close-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale. On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), questions asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with statements about their practical training, the partnership with industry, and whether the jobs of their graduates are capable. Open-ended questions were then included to allow respondents to express their views on workplace training and competency development. A questionnaire was developed for use with hotel managers and representatives of industry and another for use with TVET graduates/alumni. The purpose of using two surveys was to assess graduate competency from both employers' and graduates' perspectives.

This combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection helped to strengthen the validity of the findings. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to draw out patterns and explanations.

Pre-testing of Instruments

Prior to data collection, the questionnaires and interview guides were pre-tested to ascertain their clarity, relevance, validity and reliability on selected three-star, four-star and five-star (3-star, 4-star, and 5-star) hotels of the different categories to be used in the research within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The above was to ensure the research instruments would be appropriate across different organisational settings and capture the diversity of managerial practices, training frameworks, and competency expectations across the entire hospitality industry. The study pretested certain hotel managers, departmental staff and TVET graduates who had similar characteristics to the study participants, but these individuals were excluded from the final sample, as they could have affected the outcomes of the study. By administering the pre-tests in each of the three categories of hotels, the researcher was also able to determine their comprehensibility, suitability, and applicability to different levels of hotel operations. The instruments were modified based on the responses obtained from the exercise of pre-testing. The items that were not understood clearly by the respondents were re-worded, item sequencing was rearranged, item redundancy and item objectionableness were eliminated, and the mean time to complete the questionnaire and the interview was calculated. This exercise enabled reduction of fatigue and maximisation of response rate in the main data collection exercise.

Validity of Instruments

The content validity of the study is established by using constructs and indicators from previous literature and empirical studies on hospitality employee competencies, hands-on skills training, and TVET-industry linkages in formulating a questionnaire and interview schedule. Furthermore, the previous empirical items used for the questionnaire and interview strengthen its construct and item alignment with this study. The instruments were then appraised by hospitality management experts, TVET education experts and quantitative research methodology experts for content validity, clarity and exhaustiveness. Their suggestions were applied to modify the structure, wording and appropriateness of the content of the measurement items. The chosen three-, four-, and five-star hotels in the Greater Accra Region were pre-tested to corroborate the validity of the measures, clarify

ambiguous items, and refine the instruments more accurately to reflect phenomena in the hospitality industry. Prior to factor analyses in testing the construct validity of the quantitative instrument, KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were performed (Table 3). The results indicated that the KMO values for practical training and for quality of partnerships were 0.721 and 0.751 respectively. These were greater than 0.70, the cut-off point for adequacy, so the data was suitable for factor analysis.

Table 3: Validity of Research Instrument

Study Variable	KMO and Bartlett's Test Statistics		
Practical Training	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.721	
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	297.905
	df	91	
	Sig.	< 0.0001	
Quality of Partnerships	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.751	
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	342.428
	df	91	
	Sig.	< 0.0001	

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also important for both constructs ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the variables were highly correlated, thus showing that items were appropriate representations of the constructs. To improve validity further, the interview questions were developed in accordance with the research aim. Probing was employed to gather rich descriptions from the interviewees of their experiences of practical training and cooperation with industry partners.

Reliability of Instruments

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the quantitative instrument. This coefficient assesses the internal consistency of the measurement items through the degree of agreement in responses of items measuring the same construct. Hair *et al.* (2019) suggested that reliability can generally be assumed if the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.70 or above. Table 4 shows that the constructs' reliability coefficients were above the recommended threshold.

Table 4: Reliability of Research Instrument.

Study Variable	No. of Items	Alpha Score (α)
Practical Training	14	0.706
Quality of Partnerships	14	0.772
Overall Instrument Reliability	72	0.725

Source: Survey Data (2025)

In this study, practical training with 14 items had a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha of 0.706. The scale reliability of quality of partnerships was 0.772 based on 14 items. Based on all 72 items in the scale, the reliability coefficient of a full measure was 0.725. Both the measures of practical training, quality of industry partnerships and related constructs had acceptable

internal reliability and showed that the items chosen for measurement were adequate for statistical usage. The reliability results indicate that the items used to measure the study variables; practical training, industry linkages and TVET graduate job competency were consistent in measuring the underlying variables. The research instrument was therefore reliable and appropriate for studying the relationship between the variables in the hospitality industry.

Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected after obtaining permission from the management of registered 3 to 5-star hotels in the Greater Accra Region. Letters detailing the purpose of the study, data to be collected, and ethical considerations were sent to the selected hotels. The questionnaires were then distributed to human resource managers, departmental heads, and other managers who fit the criteria. The respondents were directly involved in employee selection, employee training and employee appraisal, and competency requirement in the hospitality sector. Based on their respective job responsibilities, the respondents were qualified to give relevant information on the job readiness and workplace performance of TVET graduates: their job responsibilities also made it easier to select the sample. Interview questions for the qualitative phase were developed and used in semi-structured interviews to gain information from the sampled managers and other stakeholders about the effect of practical training, the characteristics of industry partnership, and factors influencing the development of graduate competencies. The survey and interview data were used in combination, allowing methodological triangulation and greater reliability.

Data Analysis

The data analyses were based on the goal of the study, the nature of its convergent mixed-methods design, as well as the types of data that were collected. Quantitative data from structured questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used to describe respondents' demographics and responses to questions regarding practical training, partnerships between TVET institutions and industry, and job competency of TVET graduates. The relationship between the independent variables (practical training and industry partnerships) and dependent variable (TVET graduate job competency) was assessed using inferential statistics. Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the study variables and multiple linear

regression analysis was used to estimate the contribution of practical training and industry partnerships to job competency of TVET graduates. The main aspects of the regression results were interpreted in terms of regression coefficients, their statistical importance and explained variance. Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, where the transcripts were grouped according to themes reflecting the respondents' experiences in different aspects, such as practical training, collaboration with industry, workplace expectations, and graduate competencies. The qualitative findings were then merged with the quantitative findings in the interpretation phase to provide a fuller description of the role and impact of practical training and industry partnerships on the TVET graduates' job competency within the hospitality sector.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical values and principles that govern respect for the rights, dignity, privacy and welfare of research participants were upheld throughout the entire research process. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Kenyatta University Graduate School Ethical Board before the collection of research data. Standard requirements of human research studies were satisfied, including voluntary informed consent, confidentiality, and handling of research information in a responsible manner. The researchers informed the respondents about the aim of the study, the procedures involved, and the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. The respondents provided written informed consent before being asked to fill out questionnaires and/or be involved in the interview study. Once permission was granted from the relevant hotel management authorities, data were collected within the selected hotels. To protect confidentiality and anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected. Responses are reported in aggregate. All data were stored securely and were only accessible by the researchers. The data were used for academic purposes. Responsibility was also taken to ensure that data were correctly handled in analysis, interpretation and reporting in line with approved research ethics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of respondent

Table 5 provides the demographic profile for the study and acts as a background prior to the interpretation of the results of the study in terms of practical training, industry linkages and employability. A total of 264 respondents were employed in 3-, 4- and 5-star hotels.

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	n = 264	Percent
Hotel Star-Rating		
3-star	144	54.5
4-star	72	27.3
5-star	48	18.2
Gender		
Male	76	28.8
Female	188	71.2
Age of Respondent		
25-30	105	39.8
31-35	35	13.3
36-40	106	40.2
Above 40	18	6.8
Department		
Front Office	31	11.7
Food and Beverage	42	15.9
Housekeeping	61	23.1
Events & Conference	91	34.5
Management	39	14.8
Duration the Hotel Has Been Eco-rated		
Less than 1 year	11	4.2
1-3 years	115	43.6
4-6 years	97	36.7
7-10 years	32	12.1
Above 10 years	9	3.4
Number of Rooms		
Fewer than 151	70	26.5
151 - 300	140	53.0
301 - 500	24	9.1
Over 500	30	11.4
Occupancy Rates		
Below 60%	52	19.7
61% - 75%	118	44.7
76% - 85%	63	23.9
Above 85%	31	11.7

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Of these, 54.5% were employed in 3-star hotels, 27.3% in 4-star hotels, and 18.2% in 5-star hotels. This means the findings are more likely to reflect the experience of 3-star hotels and this is particularly the case in the qualitative findings, which suggested that TVET graduates were generally capable of basic operational work, but required supervision, mentoring and practice to become fully productive employees. Differences in the category of hotel may be a partial reason for this, owing to different expectations about service skills, the complexity of service delivery, and customer expectations. The majority of the study's sample were women (71.2%) and males made up 28.8%. Gender was not considered as a predictor of competency in this study. Nevertheless, research suggests that gender and job characteristics are salient dimensions of the hotel workforce. This is in line with Ng & Liu (2025) who found that gender and occupational characteristics were related to employees' workplace experiences in a study of 583 hotel employees in Accra. Consequently, while we had a greater percentage of females in our sample, this does not translate to a gender effect as we did not conduct a gender comparison on competency. Eighty percent of the participants in the survey were aged 25 to 40 years.

In other words, most of the participants in the survey were relatively young and middle-ranking officers, and they were likely to have enough experience to assess TVET graduates' performance. The departments represented in the sample varied widely, with Events and Conference (34.5%) and Housekeeping (23.1%) accounting for the majority of the sample; this variance is meaningful as competency needs vary by department. Moreover, the recent literature shows that adaptability, self and social competencies, service, and communication are the most important dimensions of hotel employee competency (Promnila *et al.*, 2024). For the general characteristics of hotels, 80.3% of respondents have been eco-rated for between 1 and 6 years, 53.0% of respondents have a number of rooms between 151 and 300, and 44.7% of the respondents' hotel occupancy rate is between 61% and 75%, so most of the hotel survey samples are in a relatively busy service environment. The results were echoed in the study by Ng and Liu (2025), which highlighted career competency, employability skills, adaptability, and communication as closely related in the hotel employment context, supporting the need to study practical preparation in actual hotel settings. Overall, the demographics on the sampling frame fit the study well, and the distribution of hotels' categories, departments, organisational sizes, and occupancy rates supports the contextual externality of these findings; however, the predominance of 3-star hotels must be considered for the generalizability of the findings.

Practical Training

Respondents' views on how much practical training contributed to the job competency of TVET graduates working in 3 to 5 star hotels, (Table 6). Overall the score on practical training is positive; however there are variations in the scores on the different indicators (Table 6). The highest mean scores were skills in the use and maintenance of department equipment ($M = 4.39$, $CV = 22.6$) and ability to follow health and safety and hygiene procedures without being reminded ($M = 4.40$, $CV = 23.8$). Good professionalism, work ethic and service orientation were noted in graduates ($M = 4.20$, $CV = 28.1$). Relatively high means, along with low coefficients of variations, indicate a relatively high degree of consensus among respondents on the practical training contribution to the technical and behavioural competencies of the graduates. Second, respondents agreed that graduates can perform operations tasks without assistance to varying degrees, such as executing core technical tasks independently ($M = 3.92$, $CV = 32.8$), sustaining operations flow during peak load periods ($M = 3.80$, $CV = 39.4$), and attempting troubleshooting before elevating an issue ($M = 3.77$, $CV = 35.9$).

Table 6: Practical Training

Descriptor	Mean	CV
Graduates exhibit relevant proficiency in core, hands-on operational skills	3.78	35.1
Graduates require minimal training to operate modern hospitality-specific technology and equipment	3.76	33.5
Graduates demonstrate an ability to navigate and utilize integrated digital hospitality platforms	3.70	38.7
The practical "learning-by-doing" component in their education is visibly reflected in their initial job readiness	3.66	36.0
The academic curriculum is highly aligned with the current and emerging skill demands of the hospitality industry.	3.88	36.5
Graduates consistently display a strong sense of professionalism, work ethic, and service orientation	4.20	28.1
Practical experience prepared graduates to meet the service standards of 3–5-star hotels.	3.65	41.3
Graduates independently execute the core technical tasks of this department to standard.	3.92	32.8
Graduates require minimal rework after task completion.	3.63	33.7
Graduates correctly set up, operate, and care for equipment commonly used here.	4.39	22.6
Graduates consistently follow SOPs, including checklists and HACCP/safety steps.	3.77	33.2
Graduates maintain expected speed/throughput during peak periods.	3.80	39.4
When issues arise, graduates apply practical troubleshooting before escalating.	3.77	35.9
Graduates adhere to safety and hygiene protocols without reminders.	4.40	23.8

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Rework after completion of a task ($M = 3.63$, $CV = 33.7$), readiness to meet 3-5 star hotel performance levels ($M = 3.65$, $CV = 41.3$), and the learning-by-doing effect on first job preparedness ($M = 3.66$, $CV = 36.0$) were all rated lower. The CV of the service-standard preparedness rating (41.3%) is interesting. This implies that managers' experiences of graduates in this area were greater than in any other area. The implication is that the practical training, while providing a satisfactory technical foundation, is not yet consistently producing graduates who can meet the higher standards required in the top sector of the hotel industry.

Moreover, Folson and Awuah (2026) investigated learning workplace experiences among Ghanaian TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) learners and found that it provides TVET learners exposure to real workplace practices and experience to interpret and adapt to prevailing industry expectations. Similarly, Karimova (2026) argues that practical work experience, internships, simulations and real-life experience improves hospitality students' professional competence, confidence and employability. The present findings, however, give a more negative picture because the poorer ratings in measures of employability and service standards indicate that just exposing candidates to practical experience does not guarantee a positive outcome. Quality, intensity and authenticity matter. Barro (2026) confirmed this view in a different sample. Hospitality students gained practical skills, communication skills, teamwork skills and employment self-efficacy from work-integrated learning. Supervision, relevance of tasks and opportunities for reflection were important challenges. The implication of these findings for TVET institutions and hotel employers is that the practical training they offer should be more than giving students work to repeat. The training should include exposure to equipment used in the industry, computerised hospitality systems, peak periods, problem-solving, health and safety and customer service as well as structured supervision and feedback. This was necessary because the lowest-rated indicators were not

technical operations, but more about the ability to work independently and cope with peak hotel conditions. Although the results suggest that workplace learning contributes to graduate readiness for work and to job performance, especially in technical operations, safety, professionalism and service orientation, the variability in results indicates that TVET institutions need to improve the quality and authenticity of the workplace learning experience, so that graduates move from operational competence to independence and consistently high performance. This supports the wider 2026 TVET body of literature, which suggests that structured engagement with industry, as well as improved employer and training provider engagement improves employability (Bagumisiriza *et al.*, 2026).

Qualitative Responses on Practical Training

Qualitative data also gave additional details on how practical training affects the job competency of TVET graduates in star-rated hotels. A general perception was that the majority of TVET graduates have basic knowledge of the industry and are able to work at the level of simple operational duties. Examples of highlighted duties included welcoming visitors, answering simple questions, and performing simple tasks within their respective departments. This general feeling was repeated by several respondents, as quoted below. As put by one housekeeping manager,

"... I would describe the competency level of staff trained by TVET institutions as basic but useful. Most of the TVET graduates who come to our hotel have some idea of housekeeping work." Similarly, a hotel manager said, "I would say that TVET graduates generally come with a reasonable level of basic competence. Most of them understand the fundamentals of front office work, such as greeting guests, answering basic questions, and following daily instructions." Another hotel manager also added that, "... I would describe the competency level of staff trained by TVET institutions as moderate at the entry stage."

Despite the graduates' basic knowledge, managers noted that under supervision and guidance, they become reliable staff. This argument was well stated by a technician manager, who noted that,

"... with supervision, mentoring, and repeated practice, many of them become dependable staff."

All these sentiments are proof of the key roles TVET institutions play in enhancing the job competency of TVET graduates placed in the star-rated hotels. That is, there is a direct link between the kind of training that these graduates undergo and the resulting respective job competency level. This, as has been seen in inferential analysis, is a confirmation that there is a clear connection between the practical training these graduates undergo in TVET institutions and job competency level. Another aspect of practical training and its significance in enhancing job competency was the importance of soft skills in the hotel industry. From the responses, it was noted that skills such as clear communication, teamwork, confidence and problem-solving are essential in running the industry. This was observed across all departments and hotels. In fact, one manager identified clear communication as the most essential skill in the hotel industry. He stated,

"...In a 4-star hotel like ours, communication is very important. Staff must be able to speak clearly and confidently with guests, explain hotel services and respond politely to complaints."

Similarly, this was the case where a manager in a 5-star hotel said that,

"In my department, communication is the most critical skill. I expect front office staff to communicate clearly, confidently, and professionally at all times. This includes how they greet guests, respond to inquiries, handle complaints, and provide information. In a 5-star hotel, even small communication mistakes can negatively affect guest satisfaction."

However, some managers noted that some graduates not only struggle with confidence, but are also not able to manage customers' complaints effectively. On this issue, one respondent stated,

"...The main gaps I notice are in confidence, multitasking, and problem-solving." Another respondent had the same sentiment and stated, *"... some lack confidence when dealing with guests who are unhappy or asking detailed questions."*

One respondent gave a clear picture of this issue of self-confidence and explained that,

"...I have observed that some of them lack confidence

when speaking to guests, especially international guests or VIP clients. They sometimes hesitate, stammer, or become nervous when asked simple questions, which affects the guest experience."

The qualitative data suggest that practical training normally exposes TVET graduates to simple skills such as receiving and greeting guests, making enquiry and adhering to departmental regulations. TVET graduates appear to be more dependable if they are properly supervised, mentored, and have had more opportunities to practice the skills acquired in training. This suggests that some knowledge and skills are learned through experience, but more detailed knowledge requires extended work experience. The gap in technical and soft skills ("communication, confidence, multitasking and complaint handling") points to the high value of such people skills among star-rated hotels where guest communication is important, as supported by Thapa (2018), who indicated communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and confidence as important work-based learning outcomes. Suyitno *et al.* (2025) found that work-based learning does not directly create employability skills, but with self-efficacy and vocational identity, its effect on employability skills is strengthened. Thus, the present results suggest that a practical training can be more effective when guided, accompanied by mentoring and followed by repeated and deliberate practice of soft skills.

Quality of industry Partnerships

Table 7 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the industry partnership quality between TVET institutions and hospitality industry enterprises. The partnership quality is generally positive but only moderate as the means of all 14 items exceed the midpoint of the five-point Likert scale. The item with the highest mean is that graduates received adequate real-hotels exposure before employment (Mean = 4.09, CV = 28.9), indicating that workplace exposure was the most structured aspect of TVET-industry partnership. They also agreed that there were industry practitioners who came to the colleges to give talks and seminars (Mean = 3.95, CV = 37.7), and that there was curriculum planning and development (Mean = 3.94, CV = 40.8). Together, these findings highlighted that partnerships were leading to knowledge transfer, as well as industry awareness and skills readiness among TVET graduates. However, the results also highlighted certain unmet collaboration indicators. For example, the indicators with the lowest mean scores were having formal MoUs or continued partnerships with TVET providers (M=3.39, CV=38.7) and hotels that regularly communicated to institutions about the progress

Table 7: Response Summary for Quality of industry Partnerships

Descriptors	Mean	CV
Our organization is involved in collaborative program planning and curriculum development with partner institutions.	3.94	40.8
The level of engagement and communication from our academic partners is consistent, proactive, and mutually beneficial.	3.61	27.6
Industry professionals visited my school to give lectures or seminars.	3.95	37.7
Hotel partners contributed to curriculum content or program planning.	3.63	37.9
We are engaged in joint program planning or curriculum review with TVET partners	3.74	37.8
Hotels maintained communication with TVET Institutions about student progress	3.42	46.1
Internships and experiential learning programs are structured with clear learning outcomes.	3.71	42.0
We have a formal MoU/ongoing collaboration with at least one TVET provider.	3.39	38.7
Our hotel provides regular feedback to TVET institutions on graduate performance	3.81	36.4
TVET instructors undertake industry attachments at our hotel to keep their skills current.	3.88	34.6
The partnership facilitates successful recruitment and placement of graduates.	3.78	32.3
Graduates had sufficient real-hotel exposure before employment (e.g., industry hours).	4.09	28.9
Partnerships facilitate recruitment/placement for suitable roles.	3.61	45.3
TVET trainers do industry attachments/refreshers, keeping content up to date.	3.83	36.9

Source: Survey Data (2025)

of student work ($M=3.42$, $CV=46.1$). The coefficients of variation for these indicators are relatively high, meaning that there is a big difference in the experiences of the respondents. While some hotels have strong institutional relationships, the majority of them have little contact with these institutions, aside from providing internship placements. TVET-industry partnerships are evolving but remain more operational than strategic in nature. These findings support more recent evidence that structured partnerships, institutional coordination, and continuous engagement between training institutions and industry are key to workplace learning. Folson and Awuah (2026) found that workplace learning in Ghana improves learning outcomes and professional skills development, but found weak coordination mechanisms, mentorship, and weak industry-school partnerships as constraints. Research has highlighted the gap between the needs of industry and TVET, and the need for stronger partnerships between TVET institutions and industry in Ghana (UNICEF, 2025).

Qualitative Insights on Quality of Industry Partnerships

Qualitative data further explained the quantitative findings specific to the quality of industry partnerships. Participants generally agreed that the partnership between the TVET institutions and hospitality organizations provides many opportunities for workplace exposure and graduate preparedness. However, the data suggest that the partnerships focus mainly on placing students. Some participants said that while hotels actively recruit students for industrial attachment, partnerships do not have sustained interaction to discuss curriculum and competency requirements.

One participant explained: *“The relationship is there, but it is mostly when students need attachment. After the attachment period, there is little communication between the hotel and the school.”* Another participant highlighted

the need to improve industry engagement: *“Hotels should not only take students for training; they should also help institutions understand the skills they need from graduates.”*

Data collected supported the concept that partnerships would be strengthened through better communication between hotels and TVET institutions, more industry participation in curriculum discussions, more feedback on graduates' performance, and more collaboration on competency development. This would again suggest why, in the quantitative study, formal partnership structures and channels of communication had lower average scores.

Qualitative data supported the importance of mentoring during workplace training, and respondents thought students would benefit more if workplace supervisors displayed how to work, performed the work, and provided feedback (Folson & Awuah, 2026). The findings also reinforced recent Ghanaian research into TVET which has identified ineffective collaboration between industry and TVET institutions, ineffective mentoring and apprenticeship systems, and weak industry-school linkage as challenges/constraints to the successful implementation of workplace learning practices. National TVET reviews have also identified poor collaboration between industry and TVET institutions, as a constraint (UNICEF, 2025). Overall, qualitative results suggest some industry relationships and engagement for training and work placements may be useful for TVET graduates, but most engagement is transactional rather than strategic. More formal engagement and collaboration on curriculum and training, together with a structured approach to industry engagement feedback, would likely improve training relevance and graduate competency outcomes.

Preliminary Regression Diagnostics and Model Assessment

Preliminary diagnostic tests were performed to determine

Table 8: Linearity Test Results for Practical Training, Quality of Industry Partnerships and Job Competency

Predictor Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Practical Training and Job Competency	Between Groups	5.070	15	0.338	3.681	< .001
	Linearity	3.757	1	3.757	40.917	< .001
	Deviation from Linearity	1.313	14	0.094	1.021	.067
	Within Groups	22.771	248	0.090	—	—
	Total	26.441	263	—	—	—
Quality of Industry Partnerships and Job Competency	Between Groups	6.335	18	0.352	7.488	< .001
	Linearity	5.226	1	5.226	111.191	< .001
	Deviation from Linearity	1.109	17	0.065	1.388	.055
	Within Groups	20.106	245	0.082	—	—
	Total	26.441	263	—	—	—

Source: Survey Data (2025)

whether the assumptions of linearity and multicollinearity were not violated, indicating that estimating the multiple regression model to analyse the relationship between practical training, quality of industry partnerships and TVET graduate job competency was appropriate. The next section describes the nature of the preliminary diagnostic tests performed. As shown in Table 8, the relationship between job competency of TVET graduates and practical training and quality of industry partnerships was both meaningful and linear. The effect of practical training was important and linear as $F = 40.917$, $p < .0$. Similarly, the linear relationship between quality of industry partnerships and job competency of TVET graduates was meaningful as $F = 111.191$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the p-values of the deviation from linearity statistics in the practical training ($F = 1.021$, $p = .067$) and in the quality of industry partnerships ($F = 1.388$, $p.055$) were non-meaningful. This means that the predictor variables have a linear effect on the dependent variable. Therefore, the assumption that the multiple linear regression was used is supported by the existence of a linear relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. This finding aligns with the principles of Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), in which work experiences are viewed as opportunities for learning and knowledge transformation, and work-integrated learning literature suggesting that workplace exposure allows learners to apply theories, develop technical skills, and cultivate work readiness (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023). In the hotel context, such relationships are valuable as service skills, such as customer relations, interpersonal communication, teamwork, and operating decision-making are best acquired through practical experience (Amrollahi *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, the important linear relationship between practical training and job competency reinforces the assumption from previous literature that practical exposure to the hotel industry develops graduate employability.

This is similar to the strong linear relationship between the students' perceived quality of industry partnerships and the competencies related to it. This indicates that for sustainable collaboration between industry and education institutions, under the terms of Social Exchange Theory

(Emerson, 1976), there must be a mutually helpful exchange between the parties. Other recent TVET studies indicate that well-established institution-industry linkages are positively related to better relevance of programs/curricula, workplace learning opportunities, employer engagement, and graduate employment (Folson & Awuah, 2026) with a moderate relationship between institution-industry linkages and graduates' employability. This may partly be due to many TVET-industry partnerships being limited to work placement, as opposed to joint curriculum development, assessment, and continuing competency upgrading (UNICEF, 2025). The multicollinearity test in Table 9 also proved that the predictor variables were suitable for entering the regression analysis because the practical training's tolerance is 0.381 and VIF is 2.623.

Table 9: Multicollinearity Analysis

Collinearity statistics			
	Tolerance	VIF	Comment
(Constant)			
Practical Training	0.381	2.623	No multicollinearity
Quality of Partnerships	0.453	2.208	No multicollinearity
Dependent Variable: Job Competence			

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Consequently, the quality of industry partnerships had a tolerance of 0.453 and VIF of 2.208. As all the VIF values were below 5.0, multicollinearity was not a problem. While the concepts of practical exposure and industry partnerships are fundamentally similar, they are quite distinct in terms of what drives growth in graduate skillsets. Practical exposure reflects the direct institutional process of acquiring skills for the labor market, whereas partnerships reflect institutional arrangements that provide and advance learning opportunities. This finding lends support to the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) of human capability as a strategic organisational resource with the potential to yield competitive advantage. Within hospitality organisations the human resources with requisite knowledge, technical and interpersonal skills are strategic resources as service quality is dependent on employee

Table 12: Regression Coefficients for Direct Relationship Model

Predictor	B (Unstandardized Regression coefficients)		β (standardized Regression coefficients)		
	Beta	SE	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	3.465	0.177		19.561	.000
Practical Training	0.154	0.029	0.312	5.318	.000
Quality of Partnerships	0.068	0.029	0.148	2.326	.021

Dependent variable: Job Competency of TVET Graduates

Predictors: (Constant), Practical Training, Quality of Partnerships

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Table 10: Model Summary for Direct Effect Model

Model summary					
R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F Change	Sig.
0.640	0.515	0.505	0.29994	11.304	< .0001

Dependent variable: Job Competency of TVET Graduates

Predictors: (Constant), Practical Training, Quality of Partnerships

Source: Survey Data (2025)

performance. Thus, considering these two training components separately allows the regression model to determine the contribution of each respective learning experience and industry partnership to the development of competencies. The findings in Table 10 show that practical training and the quality of the industry partnership are strong predictors of job competency in TVET graduates, as shown by their high R² of 51.5% (R² = 0.515; Adjusted R² = 0.505). The strong relationship suggests that work-related learning and the quality of industry partnership are key to developing job competency in TVET graduates. Building on previous findings, the results also support the view that the nature of institutional training, workplace exposure and employer engagement are critical for vocational graduates' employability outcomes (Dzidzornu *et al.*, 2026). Similarly, Boonkaew *et al.* (2025) found work-integrated learning generates the necessary skills and knowledge among hospitality students by closing the gap between academic training and workplace expectations. However, 48.5% of graduate competency has not been accounted for. Most probably, this was due to individual motivation and experiences, organisational culture, leadership support, workplace mentoring, and continued professional development. This finding corresponds with views from the hospitality workforce literature that have highlighted the multidimensional nature of competency development, which should involve the individual, education, and the organization (Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2024).

Table 11: ANOVA Results for Direct Relationship Model

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.051	2	1.526	17.03	< .001
Residual	23.390	261	0.090		
Total	26.441	263			

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The ANOVA result of Table 11 showed that the overall

regression function ($F = 17.03$, $p < .001$) indicated that the combination of factors relating to practical training and quality of industry partnerships was statistically important in predicting the job competency of TVET graduates, hence confirming the assertion that graduates' competency cannot be attributed to institutional training but to the interaction of training and interaction with industry.

Table 12 presents the full results of the regression analysis. Practical training ($B = 0.154$, $\beta = 0.312$, $p < .001$), and the quality of partnerships with the industry ($B = 0.068$, $\beta = 0.148$, $p = .021$) were important and had a positive effect on graduates' overall competence. The effect of practical training was stronger than quality of partnerships with the industry, because direct learning experiences in the workplace were the most immediate means through which graduates could develop their work skills. This confirms Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and other studies in hospitality education which stress authentic experiential learning in the workplace to build employability skills (Boonkaew *et al.*, 2025; Amrollahi *et al.*, 2025). Overall, regression diagnostics indicate that the model is statistically adequate and that practical training and partnerships with industry are important for predicting the work performance of TVET graduates. TVET institutions and the hospitality industry should therefore avoid offering interns basic placements only, and rather include a more formal integrated workplace learning approach, which includes mentoring, co-designing the curriculum, assessing competencies, and giving feedback.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of practical training and the role of industry participation in the employability of the TVET graduates working in the 3-5-star hotels in Accra, Ghana. The study concludes that capable hospitality workforce is not so much produced by the formal qualification systems, but by the quality of the experiential learning and TVET-industry interaction. The study concluded that work-integrated learning is a critical pathway for hospitality graduate competency development, and that TVET graduates gained essential competencies in technical skills, workplace confidence, problem-solving, service orientation and professional behaviours required to operate successfully in the

hospitality sector. The study further concluded that industry partnerships improved graduate competency, but were only effective where there was a structured, long-term partnership approach and where mentoring, curriculum design, workplace assessment or feedback processes were involved. This research advances the literature on TVET and hospitality workforce development. The study is unique in providing empirical evidence from the Ghanaian hospitality industry, where investigation of competency development from the perspective of industry practitioners who measure the performance of graduates is scant. Most studies have relied on self-reported graduate ratings of initial employability and assessments by interviewers. This study presents a more realistic assessment of workplace competency from the perspectives of hotel managers and department heads. Complementing existing research, this study also adds evidence that contextualised training and industry interaction are two tools for transferring vocational knowledge to workplace capability. The results have implications for TVET institutions offering hospitality courses, for hospitality employers, and for policymakers. To support competency-based training, TVET providers should offer real workplace experience, industry-responsive curricula, and defined experiential learning pathways for students and staff. Hospitality employers should engage with TVET providers in mentoring, curriculum development, competency assessment and the evaluation of work-based learning. Policymakers should develop frameworks for sustainable TVET-industry collaboration and continuing professional development. Stronger links between hospitality training institutions and the industry are ultimately required to develop a flexible, digitally-savvy and service-first workforce that meets the needs of a rapidly changing labour market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the results of this study, three recommendations were made: TVET institutes should improve structured workplace learning, industry-based mentoring and competency tests. This was due to the discovery that practical training had the strongest impact on TVET graduates' required competency for employment ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < .001$). Nonetheless, it was found that TVET graduates still fell short in working independently to manage peak operational situations and keeping to the 3-star to 5-star hotel standards of service. Second, hospitality organisations and TVET institutions should develop more formalised and sustainable partnerships beyond the arrangement of student internship placements. There were weaknesses in formal agreements, communications and feedback between hotels and training institutions. Nevertheless,

partnerships with the industry made a positive contribution to graduate competency ($\beta = 0.148$, $p = .021$). Planned involvement in curriculum reviews, work-based mentoring, and competency assessments would strengthen the relevance of TVET training. Third, policymakers and TVET regulatory authorities should recommend industry engagement schemes. Also, appropriate policies should be shaped to promote the establishment of dynamic partnerships between training institutions and hospitality firms since practical training and industry partnerships contributed 51.5% ($R^2 = 0.515$) to the job competency of their graduate. This confirms what has emerged in this paper, that the relationship of education and hospitality firms is a prerequisite for training a skilled hospitality workforce.

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