

VOLUME 1
ISSUE 3
JULY-SEPTEMBER
2026



Print ISSN: 3116-384X



Electronic ISSN: 3116-3858

Published by
ETCOR

Publisher of the Best Homiletics Book
"Preaching with My Scars"
20th Cardinal Sin
Catholic Book Awards

IJTHSD

International Journal of
**Tourism, Hospitality, and
Sustainable Development**

A Quarterly Peer-Reviewed International Research Journal



TOURISM



HOSPITALITY



CULINARY &
FOOD STUDIES



SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT



COMMUNITY
PROGRESS

PUBLISHED BY

ETCOR
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
CENTER



GLOBAL
PERSPECTIVES



QUALITY
RESEARCH



ETHICAL
PUBLICATION



EDUCATIONAL
EXCELLENCE





International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Employability of Senior High School graduates in DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City: Basis for a competency guide

Lauren Kaye D. Navarro
Baguio City, Philippines
Corresponding Author e-mail: laurenkayenavarro@gmail.com

Received: 10 July 2026

Revised: 14 July 2026; 13 August 2026; 26 August 2026;
31 August 2026; 04 September 2026

Accepted: 11 September 2026

Available Online: 12 September 2026

Volume 1 (2026), Issue 3, P-ISSN – 3116-384X; E-ISSN - 3116-3858

<https://doi.org/10.63498/ijthsd6>

Abstract

Aim: This study examined the employability of Senior High School (SHS) graduates in Department of Tourism (DOT)-accredited hotels in Baguio City and explored the alignment between their educational preparation and the competency demands of the hospitality industry.

Method: The study utilized an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design involving an initial qualitative phase using a researcher-developed, open-ended questionnaire with hotel managers/supervisors, followed by a quantitative phase using a Likert-scale survey developed from the qualitative themes and administered to the same 17 participating supervisors/managers to assess the extent to which the identified challenges, strategies, and competency requirements were reflected in their ratings. The 17 respondents represented 17 of the 48 DOT-accredited hotels identified in Baguio City. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic coding, and quantitative data using descriptive statistics.

Results: The findings revealed persistent challenges in hiring SHS graduates, particularly limited practical experience, weak soft skills, limited workplace maturity, generational differences, and difficulty adapting to hotel standards. Although managers generally perceived graduates as possessing foundational practical competencies, findings showed that new employees often required extended supervision, retraining, and close guidance. Respondents recommended stronger industry-academe partnerships, structured training and certification programs, curriculum enhancement, practical immersion, professionalism and soft-skills development, and institutional support to improve workforce readiness.

Conclusion: The study concludes that a gap remains between SHS classroom preparation and the expectations of the hotel industry in Baguio City. Strengthening experiential learning, workplace-culture orientation, soft-skills development, industry-aligned curricula, and school-hotel collaboration may improve the employability and workplace readiness of SHS graduates and reduce the training burden on hotels.

Keywords: *employability, Senior High School graduates, hospitality industry, hotel workforce, workplace readiness*

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry remains a cornerstone of global tourism and economic growth, yet it continues to face significant workforce challenges. Post-pandemic restructuring has intensified labor shortages, with the industry reportedly short by nearly 18% of the workers it needs globally (Hotel Dive, 2025), while rising guest expectations for personalized and sustainable service further pressure employers to recruit graduates who are adaptable, customer-oriented, and technologically proficient. Employability gaps persist, particularly in practical competencies, digital literacy, and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability (Minor et al., 2024), and the rise of smart hospitality operations — including AI, IoT, and automation — has intensified the need for education systems to align more closely with industry transformation (Graham & Sasraku-Neequaye, 2026).

In the Philippines, the K to 12 reform under Republic Act No. 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, added two years of Senior High School (SHS) to basic education, allowing students to specialize in one of three tracks — Academic, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood, or Sports and Arts — and requiring a work-immersion component intended to expose them to real workplace conditions before graduation. The reform was designed to



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P – ISSN: 3116-384X; E– ISSN: 3116-3858

**PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749**

**National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312**

produce graduates equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with the practical skills and experience needed for a smooth transition into employment.

Tourism and hospitality remain major drivers of the Philippine economy, contributing significantly to employment and GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025). Yet employers frequently report that SHS graduates lack hospitality-specific technical skills, customer service competencies, and workplace adaptability, with studies noting persistent deficiencies in communication, interpersonal skills, and industry knowledge that raise concerns about graduates' readiness without extensive retraining (Galon & Garces, 2025; Cagurangan, 2025). Rogando (2025), studying tourism workers in Baguio City, similarly found that employers and employees hold markedly different perceptions of workforce readiness: while employees rated their own competencies highly, employers were more conservative, particularly regarding problem-solving, cultural adaptability, and technical proficiency — underscoring the need for closer collaboration between industry and academe.

Although the K to 12 program was designed to produce work-ready graduates, this readiness does not appear to translate consistently into DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City, where hiring challenges and gaps in practical exposure and soft skills persist. This misalignment between educational outcomes and industry expectations (Cagurangan, 2025) limits hotels' ability to draw on the local talent pool and constrains the competitiveness of the sector. Given the growing importance of tourism to Baguio City's economy, understanding how ready SHS graduates are for entry-level hospitality positions becomes imperative. This study therefore examined the employability of SHS graduates in DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City, drawing on the insights of hotel managers to identify hiring challenges, response strategies, and essential competencies, with the ultimate goal of developing a competency guide to support a smoother transition from the classroom to the hospitality workplace.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Educational preparedness refers to the degree to which education equips students with the skills and attributes needed to adapt to shifting labor market conditions, a concern that has intensified as institutions face pressure to align curricula with future-of-work demands (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022). Studying 335 university students, Chigbu and Nekhwevha (2022) found that graduates with stronger competencies cope better with job transitions, and that preparedness varies across academic faculties, highlighting the need for universities to take a more deliberate role in developing job-ready graduates.

Industry Demands

Hospitality industry demands are increasingly shaped by digital transformation and sustainability pressures. HOTREC (2026) reported that skills shortages in Europe's hospitality sector have intensified as the sector's parallel green and digital transitions require frontline workers proficient in digital booking systems, online customer service, and basic cybersecurity, alongside enduring interpersonal skills such as communication and multicultural teamwork.

Practical experience

Practical experience refers to hands-on learning opportunities, such as work immersion or internships, that build real-world competencies alongside theoretical knowledge (Fantinelli et al., 2024). In a qualitative study of Italian high school students in a School–Work Alternation program, Fantinelli et al. (2024) found that direct engagement in workplace tasks strengthened both technical proficiency and soft skills such as communication and problem-solving. Work immersion is likewise a required feature of the Philippine SHS curriculum (Department of Education [DepEd], 2017), and in hospitality this typically takes the form of internships in hotels, restaurants, or tourism agencies.

Soft Skills

Soft skills refer to interpersonal attributes that enable individuals to interact effectively in social and professional contexts. In a needs analysis of Thailand's hotel industry involving 257 employees across 34 hotels, Vongvirulh and Srinon (2025) found that while graduates demonstrated strong collaboration and adaptability, employers still expected continued improvement in cross-cultural communication, team coordination, and leadership under pressure, underscoring the growing importance of soft skills alongside technical proficiency.

Employability

According to Cambridge University Press (n.d.), this refers to the skills and abilities that allow you to be employed. It is not limited to the possession of skills and abilities for getting a job; it is a multidimensional construct involving knowledge, transferable and discipline-specific skills, personal attributes, social capital, career management, and the broader labour market context that together shape a person's ability to obtain, sustain, and progress in meaningful employment (Abelha et al., 2020).



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

DOT Accredited Hotels

DOT Accreditation is a certification issued by the DOT to a tourism enterprise (e.g. accommodation establishments) that officially recognizes it as having complied with the minimum standards for the operation of tourism facilities and services. As of March 31, 2025 there are 48 DOT Accredited Hotels in Baguio City (Department of Tourism [DOT], 2025).

The reviewed literature consistently highlights that hospitality employers value graduates who possess practical competencies, digital skills, and strong soft skills, and that work-integrated learning is widely seen as a pathway to bridging education and industry. However, there remains debate about whether current educational reforms are sufficient to meet workforce expectations, with evidence of persistent gaps in service quality, adaptability, and workplace readiness. What is still unclear is how Senior High School graduates are specifically perceived within the Philippine hospitality sector, and whether hotel employers view their preparation as adequate.

Theoretical Framework

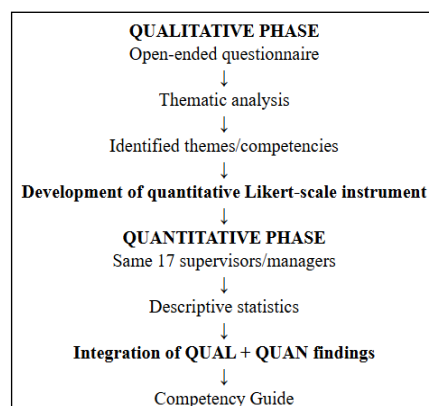
This study is anchored in three complementary perspectives — Education-to-Work Transition Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Institutional Theory — which together provide a lens for analyzing how SHS graduates' preparation, competencies, and adjustment shape their employability in DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City.

Savickas (1999) offered a developmental perspective on the school-to-work transition centered on career adaptability — the resources individuals draw upon to manage the shift from education into work — providing a bridge to the practical goal of identifying the competencies SHS graduates need to succeed in hotel employment. Complementing this, a study identified individual and contextual factors, such as training, mentorship, and industry linkages, that facilitate or hinder students' transition into work. Together, these frameworks support this study's aim of examining SHS graduates' employability and using the findings as a basis for a competency guide addressing both the adaptive resources graduates bring and the contextual factors shaping their readiness. (Blustein et al., 1997)

Human capital theory explains how education, skills, and labor market outcomes connect. Marginson (2019) affirmed that education and skill investment remain central to employability and productivity, while cautioning that credentials alone are insufficient without attention to how skills are developed and rewarded within specific institutional contexts. The OECD's (2024) Education at a Glance report similarly links educational attainment to labor market outcomes worldwide. Applied to hospitality, this theory frames how SHS education translates into competencies such as customer service and digital literacy, while reminding us that how these competencies are demonstrated in DOT-accredited hotels matters as much as the credential itself.

Finally, Institutional Theory explains how organizations adopt formal structures not purely for efficiency but to conform to institutionalized norms that grant legitimacy and stability (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Applied to hospitality, this helps explain why DOT-accredited hotels adopt standardized hiring and training practices, and offers a lens for interpreting employer concerns about workplace standards, generational differences, and graduates' alignment with hospitality service culture. Although these theories originate in education, labor-market, and organizational research, they are directly relevant to hospitality employment, explaining how SHS graduates' preparation connects to hotel operations, employer expectations, and destination workforce development.

Figure 1
Research Paradigm





International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Figure 1 illustrates the exploratory sequential mixed-methods paradigm of the study (QUAL → QUAN). In the qualitative phase, a researcher-developed, open-ended questionnaire was administered to hotel managers/supervisors and analyzed using thematic analysis, yielding qualitative themes on the challenges, strategies, and competency requirements associated with hiring SHS graduates. These themes directly informed the development of a structured, four-point Likert-scale survey, which was administered in the quantitative phase to the same 17 participating supervisors/managers and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The quantitative ratings were then interpreted alongside the qualitative themes as complementary evidence, and this integration of QUAL and QUAN findings formed the basis for the competency guide developed for educational institutions, helping align SHS preparation with the operational standards of DOT-accredited hotels.

Statement of the Problem

The implementation of the K-12 program in the Philippines was intended to prepare Senior High School (SHS) graduates with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for further education, employment, and productive participation in society. However, the transition from school to employment may remain challenging when graduates enter hospitality establishments that require practical experience, customer-service competencies, professionalism, adaptability, workplace maturity, and familiarity with hotel-specific standards and operations. In the hotel industry, these competency gaps may result in additional supervision, retraining, and adjustment requirements for newly hired SHS graduates and may affect operational efficiency and workforce readiness.

In Baguio City, where hotels form an important component of the local tourism and hospitality sector, there is a need to understand how hotel supervisors and managers assess the employability of SHS graduates and the challenges encountered in hiring and integrating them into hotel operations. There is likewise a need to identify strategies that hotels and educational institutions may adopt to address these challenges and to determine the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that should be strengthened before graduates enter the hospitality workforce.

Thus, this study examined the challenges encountered by DOT-accredited hotels in hiring SHS graduates, explored strategies for responding to these challenges and industry demands, and identified recommendations for strengthening the preparation and employability of SHS graduates. The findings served as the basis for developing a competency guide for educational institutions intended to strengthen the workforce readiness and hospitality-industry integration of SHS graduates in Baguio City.

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the employability of Senior High School graduates in DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City and develop a competency guide that may help educational institutions better align SHS preparation with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the hospitality industry.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aims:

1. To determine the challenges encountered by DOT-accredited hotels in hiring Senior High School graduates in Baguio City;
2. To explore the strategies that may be adopted by hotels and educational stakeholders to respond to the challenges and competency demands associated with hiring SHS graduates;
3. To identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that educational institutions need to strengthen to enhance the employability and workplace readiness of SHS graduates in the hospitality industry; and
4. To develop a guide for educational institutions based on the identified challenges, strategies, and competency requirements of DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What challenges are encountered by DOT-accredited hotels in hiring Senior High School graduates in Baguio City?
2. What strategies may be adopted by hotels and educational stakeholders to respond to the challenges and competency demands associated with hiring SHS graduates?
3. What knowledge, skills, and attitudes need to be strengthened to enhance the employability and workplace readiness of SHS graduates in the hospitality industry?



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P – ISSN: 3116-384X; E– ISSN: 3116-3858

**PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749**

**National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312**

4. What competency guide may be developed for educational institutions based on the identified challenges, strategies, and competency requirements of DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design (QUAL → QUAN). This design was considered appropriate because, at the time the study was conceived, the specific challenges, strategies, and competency requirements associated with hiring SHS graduates in DOT-accredited hotels had not yet been clearly identified; a qualitative phase was therefore needed first to surface these themes before they could be meaningfully measured. In the initial, qualitative phase, an open-ended questionnaire was administered to hotel managers/supervisors to explore the challenges they encountered in hiring SHS graduates, the strategies they employed or recommended in response, and the competencies they expected of graduates. The themes generated from this qualitative phase were then used to construct a structured, four-point Likert-scale survey, which was administered in the second, quantitative phase to the same 17 respondents to examine the extent to which these identified themes and competency areas were reflected in their ratings. The qualitative phase came first and carried the greater weight, since its themes directly shaped the content of the quantitative survey that followed and the quantitative results were interpreted in relation to, rather than independently of, the qualitative themes they were designed to assess.

Population and Sampling

The population comprised supervisors and managers who directly handled SHS graduates. Respondents were required to (1) hold a supervisory or management position with direct oversight of SHS graduates who underwent work immersion in the hotel, and (2) be employed by a DOT-accredited hotel. Supervisors or managers with SHS graduates who were family members, or with relationships beyond the professional context, were excluded.

Total enumeration of all qualifying supervisors and managers was used, appropriate when the population is small and feasible to survey in full, allowing a comprehensive capture of variations within the population (Neuman, 2014). Of the 48 DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City as of March 2025, 17 met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate, yielding a total of 17 supervisor/manager respondents; since only these 17 hotels had SHS graduates and therefore qualified, the study did not achieve full coverage of all DOT-accredited hotels.

Instrument

The qualitative instrument was a researcher-developed, open-ended questionnaire, not an interview guide. The questionnaire was self-administered: respondents wrote their own answers to a fixed set of open-ended questions, and no interviews, whether structured or semi-structured, were conducted, and no responses were audio-recorded. The guide questions were constructed to reflect the challenges, strategies, and competency requirements identified by hotel managers, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives and theoretical framework. Part I of the instrument focused on collecting demographic information pertaining to both the respondents and their respective hotel establishments. In the open-ended questions, the researcher adopted a flexible yet guided approach, employing a predetermined set of questions to guide the respondents while allowing them the freedom to express themselves within these established parameters. This approach works especially well for understanding how supervisors or managers perceive things, since it strikes a good balance between structure and flexibility — it lets the researcher probe specific topics while still giving participants the freedom to share their own experiences, perspectives, and observations in their own words. Part II consisted of the challenges in hiring SHS graduates; Part III, the strategies adopted by hotels to address these challenges; and Part IV, the competency requirements expected by employers. This structure allowed the researcher to capture both contextual background and nuanced perceptions of supervisors and managers. To ensure the validity of the open-ended questionnaire, the guide questions were constructed so that they comprehensively covered relevant aspects of the employability of SHS graduates, aligned with the research objectives and theoretical framework, and were clear and appropriate for participants. The instrument was validated by the Research Adviser and a statistician prior to administration. Whereas the qualitative instrument was designed to explore, in participants' own words, the challenges, strategies, and competency requirements that hotel managers/supervisors associated with hiring SHS graduates, the quantitative instrument served the complementary purpose of measuring the extent to which those same qualitative themes were shared among respondents once presented in a structured, rateable format. The quantitative



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

**PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749**

**National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312**

instrument was a structured, four-point Likert-scale survey developed by the researcher from the themes generated in the qualitative phase. The survey operationalized the challenges, strategies, and competency requirements identified by the qualitative respondents into ratable statements, allowing the researcher to assess the extent to which these themes were reflected in the ratings of the same 17 participating supervisors and managers. The survey also included a set of items asking respondents to rate the perceived effectiveness of the Related Learning Experience (RLE), specifically the work-immersion component of the Senior High School curriculum, in developing SHS graduates' employability skills; this component is referred to as RLE throughout the remainder of the manuscript. The tool was validated by the Research Adviser and a statistician. To further ensure reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested with 20 supervisors and managers from inns in Baguio City who met the inclusion criteria; these participants were excluded from the main data-gathering process. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.93, indicating excellent reliability. This reliability coefficient pertained solely to the internal consistency of the quantitative Likert-scale instrument; it does not extend to, and was not used to establish, the credibility or trustworthiness of the qualitative open-ended questionnaire, which was instead evaluated separately for content validity by the Research Adviser and a statistician, as described above.

Data Collection

A formal protocol was followed to obtain approval for the research study from Benguet State University, including the attachment of a letter signed by the Research Adviser. Upon obtaining approval, the designated data-gathering tool was administered to the respondents from November 2024 to January 2025. The study was carried out in DOT-accredited hotels within the central business district of Baguio City. Eligible respondents were identified from the official list of DOT-accredited hotels published on the Department of Tourism website. Hotels were initially contacted via email; however, even in cases where no response was received, physical questionnaires were distributed to managers on duty. Access was authorized by the hotel managers themselves, who confirmed eligibility based on the inclusion criteria (holding a supervisory or managerial position and having directly supervised SHS graduates). The questionnaires were self-administered. No interviews were conducted, and no audio recordings were made. All qualitative data were derived from the open-ended questionnaire responses. The data collected were compiled and stored in a spreadsheet format and no missing responses were recorded. Data collection was completed in 3 months.

Treatment of Data

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach was appropriate for exploring the perceptions of hotel supervisors and managers regarding the employability of SHS graduates. The process was conducted as follows: 1) All completed questionnaires were transcribed into a spreadsheet. The researcher read and re-read the responses to gain immersion in the dataset; 2) Segments of text were coded manually, highlighting ideas related to challenges, strategies, and competency requirements; 3) Codes were grouped into broader themes reflecting recurring perceptions of SHS graduate employability; 4) Themes were checked against the dataset to ensure they accurately represented the managers' perspectives; and 5) Themes were synthesized into a narrative that explained how educational preparedness, competencies, soft skills, and adaptability connect to employer expectations and employability outcomes. This process allowed the researcher to systematically identify patterns that connect educational preparedness, competencies, soft skills, workplace adaptability, and employer expectations to employability outcomes. The themes generated in the qualitative phase directly informed the development of the competency-based program framework. By grounding the output in industry-validated perceptions, the analysis ensured that recommendations for educational institutions were not theoretical but reflective of actual workplace demands in DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City. For the quantitative phase, responses to the Likert-scale survey were treated using descriptive statistics. Weighted means and standard deviations were computed for each item and interpreted using a four-point scale, and these were used to determine the extent to which the challenges, strategies, and competency requirements identified during the qualitative phase were reflected in the ratings of the 17 participating supervisors/managers. Because the quantitative instrument was constructed directly from the qualitative themes, this treatment did not independently establish or prove the qualitative findings; rather, it provided a numerical description of the degree to which the participating respondents endorsed, through structured ratings, the same themes they had already articulated in their own words during the qualitative phase. The two sets of results were therefore interpreted together as complementary evidence, with the quantitative ratings read alongside, rather than as separate proof of, the qualitative themes they were designed to assess. As the quantitative phase



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

**PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749**

**National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312**

involved the same 17 respondents from 17 of the 48 DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City, these results describe the participating respondents and are not interpreted as generalizable to all DOT-accredited hotels in Baguio City.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the conduct of this study to ensure integrity, credibility, and the protection of participants. A letter of endorsement signed by the Research Adviser was submitted as part of the approval to gather data. Permission to collect data was secured at the hotel level. The managers on duty authorized access to eligible supervisors and managers, ensuring that participation was conducted with the knowledge and consent of the establishments involved. Their participation was voluntary and they were informed that they could withdraw at any time. It was assured that their identities and responses would remain confidential. Data were anonymized to prevent disclosure of individual participants to hotel management or other parties. Pseudonymization was applied in reporting to ensure that no specific respondent or hotel could be identified. The study adhered to recognized standards of research integrity. Data were collected and reported truthfully, with no fabrication or manipulation. Transparency in procedures and accountability in reporting were maintained to uphold the credibility of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Encountered by Hotels in Hiring SHS Graduates in Baguio City

Hotel managers and supervisors consistently reported several challenges in hiring Senior High School (SHS) graduates. The most frequently mentioned issue was the lack of practical experience. While graduates were perceived to have adequate theoretical knowledge, managers observed that they struggled to apply this knowledge in real hotel operations, particularly in customer service, problem-solving, and adaptability. Respondents explained that new hires often required extended supervision and training before they could perform routine tasks independently, which placed additional burdens on supervisors and affected operational efficiency. Another recurring concern was the deficiency in soft skills. Managers highlighted communication, teamwork, professionalism, and adaptability as areas where graduates fell short. These interpersonal competencies are critical in guest-facing roles, and their absence was seen as limiting graduates' ability to integrate smoothly into hotel teams and deliver consistent service. In hospitality settings, the quality of service delivery and staff performance are likewise important considerations in shaping customers' service experiences and satisfaction (Dy Tioco & Capinpin, 2026). Rather than generalizing about the SHS system, the findings suggest that participating managers perceived a gap between academic preparation and the interpersonal skills required in hospitality operations. Concerns about maturity and workplace attitude were also raised. Several managers noted that graduates, being relatively young and inexperienced, sometimes displayed impulsiveness, struggled with decision-making, and found it difficult to handle workplace pressure. These perceptions indicate that some graduates required further development in resilience and adjustment to employment demands. A smaller number of respondents mentioned generational differences in workplace orientation. They observed that younger graduates occasionally resisted established norms or appeared less willing to adapt to existing workplace cultures. These comments reflect managers' perceptions rather than an objectively established generational trait, but they nonetheless highlight the need for orientation programs that explicitly communicate workplace expectations. Finally, adaptability to hotel standards was identified as a significant challenge. Even graduates with foundational knowledge often required substantial retraining to meet specific hotel SOPs. Managers explained that this additional training consumed time and resources, delaying graduates' integration into operations. This finding underscores the importance of aligning SHS preparation more closely with industry standards to reduce onboarding burdens.

Viewed through the Education-to-Work Transition Framework, these findings suggest that many SHS graduates have not yet developed the traits needed to navigate the realities of employment, having succeeded in a school system built around compliance, deadlines, and a clear, structured path that does not mirror the day-to-day demands of hotel work. One supervisor observed that "the current culture of the present generation is really different to the other staffs" and that some graduates appear "not willing to learn," reflecting the friction that Institutional Theory would predict when newer graduates enter with different assumptions about authority, feedback, and work-life boundaries than the norms that have long shaped hotel workplace culture. Educational institutions could help ease this transition by cultivating awareness of workplace culture as part of the SHS experience itself, rather than leaving graduates to discover these expectations only upon entry into the workplace. Similarly, on adaptability to establishment standards, one supervisor noted the "time consumed in teaching/training in full details instead of the



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

minimal details to adopt when it comes to the standard of the hotel," underscoring the significant investment of managerial time that even well-prepared graduates can require.

Consistent with Specific Objective 1 (determining the challenges encountered in hiring SHS graduates) and Specific Objective 3 (identifying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that need to be strengthened), a structured, four-point Likert-scale survey (1.00–1.74 = Strongly Disagree, 1.75–2.49 = Disagree, 2.50–3.24 = Agree, 3.25–4.00 = Strongly Agree), built from the qualitative themes, was administered to the same 17 supervisors/managers to determine the extent to which specific competency gaps were shared across respondents. Table 1 presents the level of agreement on the theoretical knowledge, and Table 2 the level of agreement on the practical skills, of SHS graduates as perceived by respondents.

Table 1

Level of Agreement on the Theoretical Knowledge of SHS Graduates in the Hospitality Industry as Perceived by Hotel Managers/Supervisors

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Understanding of hospitality management principles and theories	2.94	0.66	Agree
Knowledge of industry-specific regulations and standards (e.g., food safety, health and safety standards)	3.18	0.53	Agree
Knowledge of customer service principles and strategies	3.18	0.81	Agree
Understanding of marketing and promotional strategies in the hospitality industry	2.88	0.78	Agree
Knowledge of relevant software and technology applications (e.g., property management systems, reservation systems)	2.82	0.73	Agree
Overall	3.00	0.56	Agree

The overall mean for theoretical knowledge was 3.00 (SD = 0.56), interpreted as "Agree," indicating that respondents generally perceived SHS graduates as possessing sufficient theoretical grounding. The highest-rated indicators were knowledge of industry-specific regulations and customer service principles (M = 3.18 each), while the lowest were marketing/promotional strategies (M = 2.88) and software/technology applications (M = 2.82). This converges with the qualitative finding of "adequate theoretical knowledge," while the lower technology and marketing ratings quantitatively corroborate the theme of adaptability to hotel standards, since graduates were reported to need substantial retraining on property-specific systems and procedures.

Table 2

Level of Agreement on the Practical Skills of SHS Graduates in the Hospitality Industry as Perceived by Hotel Managers/Supervisors

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Learning Skills			
Creativity	2.88	0.78	Agree
Critical Thinking	2.94	0.75	Agree
Collaboration	3.06	0.66	Agree
Communication	3.12	0.78	Agree
Literacy Skills			
Information Literacy	2.88	0.70	Agree
Media Literacy	2.82	0.73	Agree
Technology Literacy	2.94	0.66	Agree
Life Skills			
Flexibility	3.00	0.79	Agree
Leadership	2.94	0.97	Agree
Initiative	2.82	0.73	Agree
Productivity	2.94	0.83	Agree
Social Skills	3.00	0.71	Agree
Overall	2.95	0.64	Agree

The overall mean for practical skills was 2.95 (SD = 0.64), also "Agree" but slightly lower than theoretical knowledge, supporting the qualitative theme of a gap between graduates' academic preparation and their ability to



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

apply it in actual hotel operations. Initiative and Media Literacy were the lowest-rated items ($M = 2.82$ each), and Leadership showed the widest disagreement among respondents ($SD = 0.97$). These results reinforce the qualitative themes of soft-skills deficiency and workplace-maturity concerns, since initiative and independent judgment were the very qualities managers described as lacking when explaining why new hires "required extended supervision and training before they could perform routine tasks independently." Communication ($M = 3.12$) and Collaboration ($M = 3.06$), by contrast, were the highest-rated items — a notable divergence from the open-ended responses, in which communication was explicitly named as an area where graduates "fell short." Read together, the two strands suggest that most graduates meet a baseline level of communication and teamwork competence, while a smaller number of memorable lapses may have disproportionately shaped managers' qualitative narratives, consistent with the complementary role the quantitative phase plays in this exploratory sequential mixed-methods design.

Taken together, Tables 1 and 2 provide quantitative grounding for the challenges reported qualitatively, particularly the gaps in technology/software knowledge, initiative, and workplace maturity, addressing Objectives 1 and 3. The following section turns to Specific Objective 2, presenting respondents' ratings of the perceived effectiveness of an existing strategy — the RLE or work-immersion program — in developing these same competencies.

Strategies That Can Be Adopted to Respond to the Challenges and/or the Demands of Hotels in Hiring SHS Graduates in Baguio City

Hotel managers and supervisors proposed several strategies to address the challenges they encounter when hiring SHS graduates. The most frequently mentioned recommendation was the strengthening of industry-academe partnerships, including school-hotel collaborations, structured internships, apprenticeship programs, and regular curriculum discussions between educators and industry stakeholders. While the Department of Education's work-immersion framework already provides a foundation for such collaboration, managers perceived its implementation as insufficiently deep and consistent, highlighting the shared responsibility of schools and hotels in preparing graduates for employment. Another strategy identified was the development of structured training and certification programs, such as skill-based training modules, simulation laboratories, and industry certifications like NC-II in Tourism and Hospitality, which managers believed could standardize graduate readiness. As these are managerial perceptions rather than a tested causal claim, this evidence should be read as perception rather than proof. Respondents also recommended curriculum review and streamlining, suggesting that certain academic subjects were less relevant to hotel operations and that curricula should more directly prioritize industry-applicable content.

Finally, managers emphasized the importance of professionalism and soft-skills development, recommending workshops, life-skills education, and activities that expose students to workplace realities to help graduates develop resilience, confidence, and professional identity, thereby reducing supervisory burdens on hotels.

Quantitative Findings on the Effectiveness of Related Learning Experience (Objective 2)

Addressing Specific Objective 2, which sought to explore strategies for responding to hiring challenges and competency demands, the survey also asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of an already-existing strategy — the RLE, or work-immersion component of the SHS curriculum — in developing the employability skills of SHS graduates. Table 3 presents these ratings.

Table 3

Level of Effectiveness of the Related Learning Experience (RLE) to the Employability Skills of SHS Graduates as Perceived by Hotel Managers/Supervisors

Skill Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Teamwork	3.41	0.80	Highly Effective
Communication	3.41	0.87	Highly Effective
Attendance	3.41	0.80	Highly Effective
Professionalism	3.41	0.87	Highly Effective
Initiative	3.35	0.86	Highly Effective
Punctuality	3.35	0.79	Highly Effective
Productivity	3.29	0.85	Highly Effective
Decision Making	3.24	0.83	Moderately Effective
Attitude	3.24	0.90	Moderately Effective
Overall	3.35	0.77	Highly Effective



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

**PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749**

**National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312**

The overall mean effectiveness rating was 3.35 (SD = 0.77), interpreted as "Highly Effective," indicating that respondents rated RLE as highly effective in developing graduates' employability skills. Seven of the nine dimensions — Teamwork, Communication, Attendance, Professionalism, Initiative, Punctuality, and Productivity — were rated "Highly Effective," while Decision Making and Attitude were "Moderately Effective." These descriptive results are consistent with Objective 2, in that RLE — one of the very strategies respondents recommended strengthening qualitatively — was itself perceived by the same respondents as already effective where implemented; this pattern may be read as support for considering the expansion, rather than necessarily the redesign, of existing RLE practices, though the descriptive design of this study cannot establish this as a causal effect. Notably, Initiative was rated "Highly Effective" in the RLE context (M = 3.35) despite being the lowest-rated item in the classroom-based practical skills assessment (M = 2.82, Table 2). This difference reflects a comparison of two separately perceived ratings rather than a controlled test, so it cannot demonstrate that workplace immersion causes improved initiative; it does, however, point to a pattern worth further investigation — that respondents perceived initiative as more evident in an authentic workplace setting than in classroom-based preparation alone, which may offer a basis for considering expanded practical training and immersion alongside, rather than as a replacement for, classroom instruction.

Recommendations for Educational Institutions to Better Equip SHS Graduates with the Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes Required to Enhance Their Employability and Integration into the Professional Workforce

The third research question asked specifically about recommendations for educational institutions. While some themes overlap with the strategies identified under Objective 2, these findings are distinct in that they are directed toward schools and educators specifically, rather than broader industry stakeholders. Respondents consistently emphasized curriculum enhancement and industry alignment, recommending closer collaboration between academe, government, and industry so that curricula reflect operational realities and expose students to industry-standard tools and technology. This need is echoed in the literature: Hermogenes and Escarlos (2026) found that the Philippines' former SHS curriculum was limited in its alignment with labor market demands, and labor economists have similarly noted a persistent skills mismatch between fresh graduates' qualifications and what employers are hiring for (BusinessWorld Online, 2026).

A second recommendation was the expansion of practical training opportunities — more on-the-job training hours, practicums, and workshops with industry professionals — to reduce the remedial training burden on hotels. Cagurangan (2025) similarly observed that immersion programs often fail to provide sufficient exposure to real hotel operations, reinforcing the importance of experiential learning.

Respondents also highlighted the quality of instruction and facilities, recommending qualified instructors, continuous teacher training, and industry-standard facilities. Ochoa (2022) similarly found a positive correlation between hospitality management instructors' teaching competence and students' performance, supporting managers' perceptions in this study. Finally, managers recommended the deliberate integration of soft-skills development — communication, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking — into SHS programs, consistent with Larsen's (2026) finding that resilience, adaptability, and cross-cultural communication are now operationally critical in hospitality.

Taken together, these findings carry implications across the sector: hotels may need to strengthen recruitment, onboarding, and competency-based training; tourism enterprises and destination managers in Baguio City may treat entry-level workforce readiness as a foundation for service quality and competitiveness (Damian, 2026); and policymakers, through coordinated action among DOT, DepEd, TESDA, and local schools, can help align SHS preparation with industry needs and build sustainable, locally grounded pathways from education to hospitality employment.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that participating hotel managers perceived several challenges in the employability and workplace integration of Senior High School graduates in Baguio City, particularly in practical experience, soft skills, workplace maturity, adaptability, and adjustment to hotel-specific standards. Although graduates were perceived to possess foundational knowledge and practical competencies, qualitative responses indicated that additional supervision, training, and workplace guidance were often required during their transition into hotel employment.

The findings further indicate that stronger industry-academe partnerships, structured practical training and certification, curriculum alignment, soft-skills development, and institutional support may help address the competency gaps identified by participating hotel managers. These findings highlight the importance of closer



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

coordination between educational institutions and hospitality establishments in preparing SHS graduates for entry-level hotel employment. The study therefore provides an evidence-based basis for a competency guide that educational institutions may consider in strengthening the preparation of SHS learners for hospitality employment. Such education-industry alignment may contribute to workforce readiness and support the longer-term capacity of hospitality establishments within the Baguio City tourism sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Educational institutions may strengthen experiential learning by incorporating structured internships, role-play simulations, customer-service practicums, and workplace-culture orientation into SHS preparation for hospitality-related employment.
2. Schools and hospitality establishments may strengthen industry-academe partnerships through curriculum consultations, structured internship arrangements, joint training activities, and appropriate industry-recognized certification pathways.
3. Educational institutions may review and align hospitality-related curriculum content with current hotel operational requirements, particularly practical competencies, customer service, communication, professionalism, adaptability, and the use of industry-standard tools and technologies.
4. Educational institutions may strengthen faculty development and learning facilities by providing opportunities for instructors to update their industry knowledge and by improving access to hospitality simulation equipment and facilities.
5. Hotels may participate more actively in the preparation of future hospitality workers through internships, mentoring, industry consultations, and structured workplace exposure.
6. Tourism and education stakeholders may facilitate sustained collaboration among educational institutions, hotels, government agencies, and other hospitality stakeholders to strengthen the transition of SHS graduates from education to employment.
7. The competency guide developed from the study may be considered by educational institutions in reviewing curriculum content and extracurricular activities for SHS learners enrolled in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood pathway with tourism and hospitality-related programs.

REFERENCES

- Abelha, M., Fernandes, S., Mesquita, D., Seabra, F., & Ferreira-Oliveira, A. T. (2020). Graduate employability and competence development in higher education—A systematic literature review using PRISMA. *Sustainability*, 12(15), 5900. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155900>
- Blustein, D. L., Phillips, S. D., Jobin-Davis, K., Finkelberg, S. L., & Roarke, A. E. (1997). A theory-building investigation of the school-to-work transition. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 25(3), 364–402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000097253002>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- BusinessWorld Online. (2026, August 14). Graduates' skills still misaligned with employer needs, economist says. <https://bworldonline.com/economy/2026/08/13/770156/graduates-skills-still-misaligned-with-employer-needs-economist-says/>
- Cagurangan, G. C. (2025). Hospitality management education: A systematic review of curriculum trends and industry relevance. *Aloysian Interdisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences, Education, and Allied Fields*, 1(9). <https://journals.alloysianpublications.com/index.php/articles/article/view/341>
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Employability. In *Cambridge dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/employability>
- Chigbu, B. I., & Nekhwevha, F. H. (2022). Academic-faculty environment and graduate employability: variation of



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

work-readiness perceptions. *Heliyon*, 8(3), e09117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09117>

Damian, M. (2026). Building competitive ecotourism in Bulacan: A new business model. *International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)*, 1(2), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.63498/ijthsd3>

Department of Education. (2017). DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017: Guidelines for Senior High School work immersion. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/DO_s2017_030.pdf

Department of Tourism. (2025). Online accreditations. Department of Tourism, Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.tourism.gov.ph/dot/online-accreditations/>

Dy Tioco, A. C., & Capinpin, J. M. (2026). The role of SERVQUAL in customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre: Basis for the improvement of operational plan. *International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)*, 1(2), 17-30. <https://doi.org/10.63498/ijthsd4>

Fantinelli, S., Cortini, M., Di Fiore, T., Iervese, S., & Galanti, T. (2024). Bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application: A qualitative study in the Italian educational context. *Education Sciences*, 14(2), 198. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14020198>

Galon, D. I., & Garces, H. E. B. (2025). Assessment on employability skills of hospitality industry graduating students on Negros Island Region and Iloilo Province, Philippines. *Business, Education, Social Sciences, and Technology*, 1(1), 149-158. <https://doi.org/10.69478/BEST2025v1n1a023>

Graham, L. D., & Sasraku-Neequaye, B. K. (2026). Smart hospitality operations: A systematic review of digital transformation, intelligent systems and operational excellence in contemporary hospitality. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 13(3), 1053-1060. <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1303000097>

Hermogenes, J. R., & Escarlos, G. S. (2026). Implementation of the strengthened senior high school curriculum in the Department of Education in the Philippines: Towards inclusive education for all learners. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 10(4), 6475-6479. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400463>

Hotel Dive. (2025, October 9). Hospitality industry could face 8.6M workforce shortfall by 2035: WTTC. <https://www.hoteldive.com/news/hospitality-industry-workforce-shortfall-wttc/802451/>

HOTREC. (2026). Skills and labour shortages: A roadmap for action. HOTREC AISBL. https://www.hotrec.eu/media/static/files/import/all_news_2026_2026_5/hotrec-hospitality-europe-skills-and-labour-shortages-a-roadmap-for-action-january-2026.pdf

Larsen, M. (2026, February 13). Upskilling and reskilling in the hospitality industry statistics. Gitnux. <https://gitnux.org/upskilling-and-reskilling-in-the-hospitality-industry-statistics/>

Marginson, S. (2019). Limitations of human capital theory. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(2), 287-301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1359823>

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340-363. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226550>

Minor, K., McLoughlin, E., & Carlisle, S. (2024). The digital skills gap – Is it time to rethink the needs of tourism and hospitality organizations in the UK? *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 37(3), 301-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2024.2316338>



International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sustainable Development (IJTHSD)

P - ISSN: 3116-384X; E- ISSN: 3116-3858

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board (NBDB)
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Ochoa, M. D. C. (2022). Comparative study on hospitality management instructors' teaching competence and students' performance in the hospitality industry. *IOER International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 4(1), 171–177. <https://doi.org/10.54476/iimrj21>
- OECD. (2024). *Education at a Glance 2024: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c00cad36-en>
- Republic Act No. 10533, Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (2013) (Phil.). <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/05/15/republic-act-no-10533/>
- Rogando, S. R., Jr. (2025). Perceived employability skills and training needs assessment of tourism workers in Baguio City. *Cognizance Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 5(2), 249–266. <https://doi.org/10.47760/cognizance.2025.v05i02.018>
- Savickas, M. L. (1999). The transition from school to work: A developmental perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47(4), 326–336. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.1999.tb00741.x>
- Vongvirulh, S., & Srinon, U. (2025). A needs analysis for curriculum development: Realigning business English pedagogy with 21st-century communication demands in Thailand's hospitality industry. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 15(2), 178–194. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v15n2p178>
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2025, June 23). Philippines' travel & tourism sector set to inject a record PHP 5.9TN to the economy in 2025. <https://wtcc.org/news/philippines-travel-tourism-sector-set-to-inject-a-record-php-5-point-9tn-to-the-economy-2025>