Integrating Social Inclusion into Hospitality Education: Curriculum Gaps, Policy Enforcement, and Challenges

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Abstract

Kenya has resorted to maximizing and developing its tourism and hospitality industries. While advancements and investment in tourism and hospitality are essential, a key challenge is inclusion and, most importantly, social inclusion in the industry. There are social inclusion efforts; however, more can be done in social inclusion through hospitality education. Integration of social inclusion in hospitality education. The hospitality curriculum and hospitality examination still require some improvement. The study assesses the role of education in promoting social inclusion in the hospitality sector. The study will assess and evaluate social inclusion in education in the following aspects: curriculum design, faculty preparedness, policy effectiveness, and stakeholder perceptions. The study was taken in the Lake Region across an analysis of 12 hospitality institutions using mixed-method approaches that combined stakeholder interviews alongside curriculum analysis. Initial findings revealed that out of the 12 institutions, only three of them implemented structured inclusion strategies. All 12 institutions included aspects of sustainable inclusion and environmental sustainability in their curriculum and teaching methodology, but only the three had a structure of social inclusion. The study assessed some challenges associated with social inclusion, including faculty preparedness, where many educators lack formal training in inclusive teaching methods. On top of the faculty preparedness are institutional challenges and institutional bottlenecks that would limit the effectiveness of attempts to adopt social inclusion policies. The coldest for the study were Educators, students, and employers. All three stakeholders had wide margins of their perception of social inclusion,

with students perceiving their institutions as less inclusive than the faculty, administrators, and employers prioritizing workforce diversity over curriculum reforms.

The study highlights that social inclusion has undeniable benefits. Some highlighted benefits of social inclusion include programs that support students' financial needs, well-structured student support systems, and industry collaborations. On the flip side, two strategies have depicted the need for restrategizing. These are Faculty Diversity Training and curriculum integration initiatives. The findings represent the need for curriculum reforms, targeted faculty development, policy enforcement mechanisms and stronger collaboration between hospitality education and the hospitality industry. By addressing the gaps, this research promotes a more inclusive and sustainable hospitality education framework, ensuring that future managers and graduates are fully prepared and empowered to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Social Inclusion, Hospitality Education, Sustainability, Equity, Diversity

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1. Introduction

Hospitality is a vital sector that is a key contributor to economic growth across the world, employment opportunities, and the exchange of culture. However, it continues to be plagued with age-old issues of social exclusion, particularly towards individuals with disabilities, women, and impoverished young people. The COVID-19 pandemic, which hastened existing inequalities, means that there has never been greater need for inclusive and sustainable hospitality practices. Though hospitality education can be a bridge to work, it is under-emphasized in the manner in which it supports social inclusion with institutions paying less attention to social equity compared to environmental sustainability and operational effectiveness.

Sustainability in hospitality education has been debated extensively, mostly pertaining to the environment and matters such as reducing waste and conserving energy (Jones et al., 2018). Yet, the social aspect of sustainability, such as fair salaries, workers' rights, and recruitment inclusivity, has been less prioritized in hospitality education programs (Goodwin & Phillips, 2020). The literature emphasizes that hospitality curricula do not have organized content on diversity, disability, and gender-sensitive leadership (Kim & Baker, 2021), which makes graduates ill-equipped to address matters of inclusivity in the workplace.

The convergence of inclusivity and sustainability is an emerging agenda in international development frameworks, notably the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) all stress the role of inclusive education in equipping individuals for productive involvement in the labour market. Hospitality education has, nevertheless, been sluggish in adopting inclusivity-content-based content in its sustainability agenda.

This research explores how hospitality education can be reshaped to promote social inclusion, addressing curriculum design, staff readiness, stakeholder involvement, and policy efficacy. A mixed-methods strategy was employed, blending stakeholder interviews with educators, students, employers, and regulators with curriculum content analysis of institutions in the Lake Region of Kenya.

The results reveal evident disparities in the attainment of social inclusion policies. Just 3 out of the 12 institutions researched had clear social inclusion strategies, which suggests that implementing measures for inclusivity remains patchy between institutions. Secondly, although policies are in place in some institutions to promote inclusivity, a lack of enforcement mechanisms, bureaucratic hurdles, and resistance from institutional leadership undermine their impact. Lastly, faculty preparation is low, with most instructors having no formal training in inclusive pedagogic practices. Stakeholder attitudes differ considerably, too, with students perceiving their institutions as less inclusive than faculty members and administrators and employers being more interested in workforce diversity than curriculum inclusiveness.

The research adds to the emerging discourse on inclusive hospitality education by highlighting challenges and suggesting concrete solutions. The research calls for attention to curriculum reforms aimed at inclusivity, special faculty training modules, mechanisms for policy implementation, and greater academia-industry collaborations. By surmounting such challenges, hospitality education institutions can make learning spaces more inclusive, and their graduates are then better prepared with the competencies required to foster diversity and social inclusion in the sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Inclusion in Hospitality Training

Social inclusion is a significant topic of discussion in international education, especially in professional and vocational course training. Being a labor-intensive industry, hospitality has ample employment opportunities to provide to marginalized sections of society, such as women, persons with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged young people. Yet, research suggests that hospitality education has yet to incorporate principles of inclusivity, with a tendency to concentrate on operational competencies instead of creating fair learning environments (Baum, 2019). The inclusion of social inclusion in hospitality education is essential for the development of future professionals who can create diversity in their organizations.

Robinson and Brenner (2021) highlight that inclusive hospitality education must provide access to education and guarantee sufficient support for students during their learning. These encompass economic support, mentorship programs, and customized curriculums to suit students with various learning requirements. There are, however, disparities in the systematic application of these measures in most institutions (Kim & Baker, 2021).

Social inclusion of people with disabilities, and more so intellectual disabilities and challenging behaviours, is a complicated and little-understood phenomenon. Exclusion, bullying, and inaccessibility have been described by numerous students with disabilities in schools (Koller et al., 2018; Bigby, 2012). Though hospitality education can be an inclusive social discipline, existing curricula do not make adequate provisions forstudents with sensory, cognitive, and psychosocial disabilities (Gooding et al., 2017). Contemporary social inclusion studies are mainly concentrated in the areas of intellectual and cognitive disabilities, with minimal attention given to physical and sensory impairments, thus calling for extensive policy frameworks (Wright & Stickley, 2013).

2.2 Sustainable Hospitality Education and Social Dimensions

Sustainability in hospitality education has focused on the environmental aspects, for example, waste reduction, energy conservation, and green hotel management practices (Jones et al., 2018). Although these are important, researchers contend that social sustainability—like workers' rights, fair wages, gender equality, and diversity in hiring—has not been given the same level of consideration in hospitality education curricula (UNWTO, 2022).

Goodwin and Phillips (2020) make the case that hospitality education can be fully sustainable only if it incorporates elements of social inclusion so that its graduates are sensitive to and implement equitable policies in their future workplaces. This is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), which urge inclusive and accessible educational systems. Still, the majority of hospitality programs have not included those principles in the curricula, therefore graduating hospitality students who are ill-equipped to serve in multicultural workforces (McGhee & Greene, 2019).

2.3 Hospitality Education Curricula Deficits

Hospitality courses in most institutions have been criticized for their failure to prioritize inclusivity in course development. In a curriculum review by Kim and Baker (2021), hospitality courses in most institutions covered customer service and management competence, but few spoke specifically about cultural competence, disability inclusion, or gender-sensitive leadership. This implies that graduates in hospitality could go to the workplace with less information on how to apply diversity and inclusion policies in practice.

In addition, most hospitality companies address social inclusion as corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives instead of making it part of their core business strategies (D'Angelo & Carter, 2023). This discrepancy calls for the inclusion of extensive training in equity and inclusion in hospitality study programs so that the graduates can be better prepared to drive change within the industry. Wang and Lo (2016) support that hospitality curriculum must be responsive to the evolving demographics of the workforce and the emerging expectation of the inclusiveness of hospitality settings.

2.2.1 Best Practices for Social Inclusion Integration into Hospitality Education

There are a number of studies that offer frameworks for incorporating social inclusion in the hospitality education curriculum. Lockwood and Taylor (2020) offer experiential learning frameworks that subject students to heterogeneous work settings through internships, role-playing, and case studies of marginalized groups. Marquez and Hall (2021) propose the introduction of equity-based coursework that addresses labor rights, fair hiring practices, and marginalized group leadership development.

Also, collaborations between educational institutions and hospitality companies can promote more diversified internship programs to enable students from underprivileged backgrounds to gain industry exposure within the sector too. A World Economic Forum analysis (2023) observes that diversity policies in the workforce of hospitality companies need to be supplemented by educational reforms that equip students to function in diverse setups.

2.2.2 The Role of Industry Stakeholders and Policymakers

Government regulations and industry policy significantly determine the inclusiveness environment in hospitality education. It is the view of Brookes and McGowan (2018) that in the absence of explicit policies favouring diversity and equity, institutions of learning will retain their focus on operational training at the expense of social inclusion. Policymakers will be required to collaborate with institutions of learning and stakeholders in the industry to introduce scholarship programs, selective recruitment, and training programs that favour a more inclusive workforce (Holt & Haskins, 2019).

Mixed-methods studies involving stakeholder interviews with educators, regulators, students, and employers are needed to capture the varying viewpoints on social inclusion in hospitality education. Viewpoints on social inclusion and its applicability may differ considerably between these stakeholders. Educators, for instance, might vision the need for social inclusion but lack the frameworks to incorporate such content in their pedagogy (Brookes & McGowan, 2018). On the other hand, students and employers might cite the necessity for pragmatic approaches that connect academic theories of inclusivity with everyday practice (Holt & Haskins, 2019).

Contemporary literature demands a more inclusive hospitality education model. Since sustainability programs have traditionally prioritized environmental concerns, social inclusion must be included to equip balanced hospitality graduates. The lacunas in existing curricula outlined by this study necessitate novel pedagogical solutions,

including experiential learning, policy-based reform, and industry-academic collaboration, to create a sustainable and socially inclusive hospitality industry.

By bridging these gaps, hospitality education can move beyond theoretical discourse of inclusivity and produce measurable gains that allow all students, irrespective of background, to have an equal opportunity for education and career success. Future research must examine how social inclusion content might best be embedded within mainstream hospitality curricula and assess the long-term effects of inclusivity-driven educational change.

3. Methodology

In this research, mixed-methods research is applied to examine the integration of social inclusion in hospitality education. The research design encompasses a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve an elaborate understanding of the current status of the hospitality curriculum and the perspective of the most important stakeholders from the education and hospitality sectors.

The mixed-method design provides an opportunity for data triangulation, increasing the validity and reliability of the results. By combining the quantitative and qualitative data, the research focuses on gaining insight into the complex experiences and emotions of the multiple stakeholders about social inclusion in hospitality education.

Interviews: In-depth, semi-structured interviews were held with the key stakeholders, such as hospitality educators, industry regulators, students, and employers. This qualitative aspect sought to determine their perception of social inclusion, challenges encountered, and recommendations on inclusivity in hospitality curricula. The interview questions were based on: Identification of the current state of social inclusion in hospitality education. Learning barriers to the adoption of inclusive practices in curricula. Learning about best practices and effective programs in advancing social inclusion. Sampling: Purposive sampling was employed in selecting participants with a background of experience and expertise in hospitality education and practice. A minimum of 20 interviews were carried out to obtain a variety of viewpoints.

Curriculum Analysis: A detailed analysis of hospitality curricula of institutions in the Lake region was conducted to determine the degree to which social inclusion was incorporated in sustainability content. The analysis entailed:

Gathering course syllabi, program descriptions, and learning outcomes from different hospitality programs. Creating a rubric to evaluate integrating social inclusion subjects, including cultural competence, disability inclusion, and gender-sensitive leadership, into the curricula. Surveys: An online survey of a larger student and hospitality program instructor sample was conducted to measure their attitudes regarding how vital social inclusion needed to be in the curriculum. The survey incorporated Likert scale questions to determine the following:
Awareness of issues relating to social inclusion. Satisfaction with existing curricula in terms of inclusiveness. Perceived obstacles to implementing inclusive practices.

The verbatim transcriptions were coded using thematic analysis. Coding enabled the identification of recurring themes and patterns specific to social inclusion in hospitality education. Coding was done using NVivo software to make coding more effortless and to categorize qualitative data systematically.

Curriculum analysis provided descriptive statistics on common social inclusion issues in hospitality courses. Survey responses were examined through statistical software (e.g., SPSS or R) to produce descriptive statistics and inferential tests, including chi-square tests, to investigate relationships among variables (e.g., demographics and social inclusion perceptions).

Ethical approval from the respective institutional review board was acquired before data collection began. The interviewees and participants in the survey were asked for informed consent, making them aware of the intention of the research and their ability to withdraw at any stage. The study upheld confidentiality and anonymity, and all identifying information was eliminated from the transcripts and data files.

As extensive as the mixed-methods design gave an overview of the research issue, some limitations must be recognized. The qualitative results might not be generalizable because of the purposive sampling of the participants, and quantitative analysis could be restricted by the survey response rate. The study was limited to Lake region-based institutions only, which might not be representative of a larger context for hospitality education globally.

This approach established a firm foundation for examining the integration of social inclusion in hospitality education in The Lake Region of Kenya. Through the use of a mixed-methods design, the study unearthed the existing challenges and opportunities in strengthening inclusivity in hospitality curricula, with the ultimate goal of informing more equitable and sustainable directions to the field.

4. Results

4.1 Comparative Analysis of Curriculum Content on Social Inclusion and Environmental Sustainability.

The degree to which social inclusion and environmental sustainability are incorporated into hospitality education curricula differs widely between institutions. While sustainability processes are generally highlighted, diversity topics, disability inclusion, and gender-sensitive leadership are not addressed. Table 1 illustrates findings from 12 institutions, anonymized by coding, indicating the proportion of curriculum space each has devoted to environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and associated inclusion-oriented topics.

Table 1. Coded Institutions' Curriculum Focus on Social Inclusion vs. Environmental Sustainability

Institution	Environmental Sustainability (%)	Social Inclusion (%)	Diversity Courses (%)	Disability Inclusion (%)	Gender-Sensitive Leadership (%)
Inst A	85%	30%	20%	10%	12%
Inst B	90%	25%	15%	8%	14%
Inst C	88%	28%	18%	7%	10%
Inst D	87%	32%	22%	9%	15%
Inst E	92%	35%	25%	12%	18%
Inst F	78%	22%	12%	6%	10%
Inst G	80%	27%	17%	9%	11%
Inst H	93%	38%	28%	15%	20%
Inst I	75%	20%	10%	5%	8%
Inst J	89%	33%	21%	13%	16%
Inst K	82%	26%	19%	11%	14%
Inst L	95%	39%	29%	18%	22%

Table 1 shows that all institutions strongly focus on environmental sustainability, with coverage ranging from 75% to 95%. This means that most programs are actively incorporating eco-friendly practices into their curricula. Social Inclusion Needs More Attention. On the flip side, topics related to social inclusion are not getting the same level of attention. The highest integration rate is only 39% at Institution L, while Institution I record just 20%. This indicates a significant gap in how these important issues are addressed. Diversity Courses Are Inconsistent When it comes to diversity courses, their inclusion varies widely across institutions, with only a few, like Institutions L and H, achieving a rate of 25% or more. Most institutions fall between 10% and 29%, showing that there's still a lot of room for improvement.

Disability inclusion is receiving very little attention, with coverage between 5% and 18%. This suggests that making hospitality education accessible for everyone is still a secondary concern. Training in gender-sensitive leadership is also lacking, with rates ranging from 8% to 22%. This is concerning, as such training is crucial for creating inclusive workplaces.

These findings highlight that while environmental sustainability is well-covered in hospitality education, social inclusion is still fragmented and inconsistently addressed. To better prepare graduates for diverse and inclusive work environments, it's essential to reform the curriculum to integrate social sustainability topics more effectively.

4.2 Faculty Preparedness in Teaching Social Inclusion

Social inclusion in hospitality education is highly reliant on teachers' willingness to implement inclusive pedagogies. Faculty training in diversity, disability inclusion, and gender-sensitive leadership is needed to enable students to learn and acquire knowledge and skills for inclusive hospitality practice. Empirical evidence, however, reveals considerable gaps in faculty training to teach social inclusion.

Figure 1 displays the percentage of professors who have had formal training in some of the priority fields for social inclusion, in which greater capacity-building interventions are essential.

Figure 1: Faculty preparedness for teaching social inclusion in hospitality education

However, research indicates that there are significant gaps in faculty training regarding social inclusion. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of faculty members who have received formal training in these key areas, underscoring where more support and development are needed.

4.2.1   : Perception of Social Inclusion

Figure 2 illustrates the perceptions of social inclusion in hospitality education among three key stakeholder groups: **educators, students, and employers**. The responses were categorized into five levels: *Very Inclusive (5), Inclusive (4), Neutral (3), Somewhat Inclusive (2), and Not Inclusive (1)*.
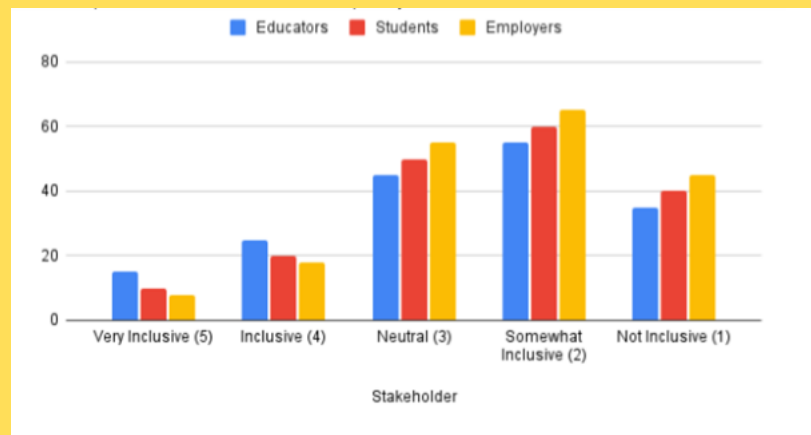
Figure 2: Perceptions of social inclusion in hospitality education

The majority of responses fall under the "Neutral," "Somewhat Inclusive," and "Not Inclusive" categories, suggesting that social inclusion in hospitality education remains inadequate.

Educators rated social inclusion more favourably than students and employers, with a higher percentage selecting *Inclusive (4) and Neutral (3)*.

Students and employers reported the highest dissatisfaction, with a significant number perceiving inclusivity as *"Somewhat Inclusive (2)" or "Not Inclusive (1)"*.

Employers showed the highest percentage of "Not Inclusive (1)" ratings, indicating a potential disconnect between hospitality education efforts and industry expectations.

4.2.2   Stakeholders Perceptions to Barriers.

Hospitality education stakeholders—teachers, students, and employers—each hold varying views of the obstacles and barriers to social inclusion. Whereas teachers cite curriculum constraints and lack of training, students highlight inadequate levels of awareness, and employers refer to industry opposition to inclusivity. Figure 3 summarises stakeholder views of the most significant barriers to achieving social inclusion in hospitality education.
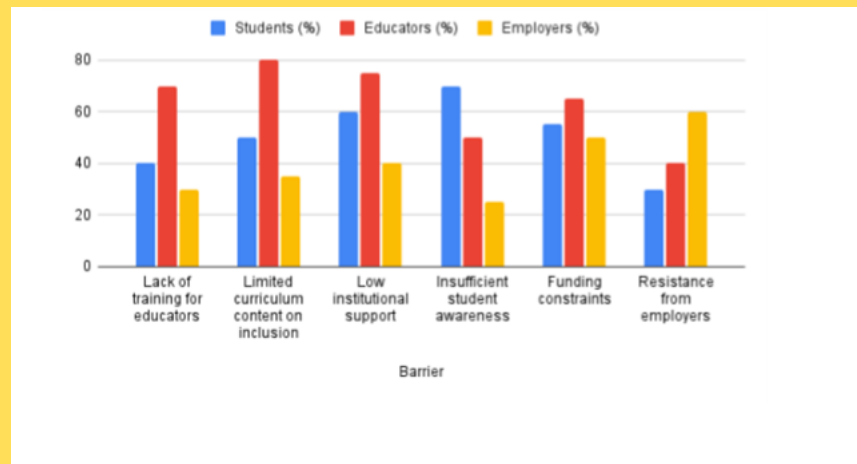
Figure 3: Comparative analysis: Stakeholder perception of barriers to social inclusion

Figure 3 data reflects apparent differences in stakeholders' perceptions of barriers to social inclusion.

Educators (80%) cited "Limited Curriculum Content on Inclusion" as the main problem, i.e., there are comprehensive reforms needed in hospitality educational programs.

Students (70%) cited "Insufficient Student Awareness" as a main obstacle, i.e., they have little exposure to inclusive policies and practices.

Employers (60%) cited "Resistance from Employers" as a main challenge, i.e., the hospitality sector, although familiar with inclusivity at a theoretical level, has still to adopt efficacious workplace policies.

The results indicate that hospitality education needs to tackle a variety of issues in parallel, ranging from curriculum change and staff development to student engagement and industry partnership. The diversity of stakeholder views confirms that targeted interventions need to be made to respond to the specific issues that each group faces in achieving a more diverse hospitality education system.

4.2.3   Strategies for Promoting Social Inclusion Strategies.

Social inclusion in hospitality education necessitates affirmative action on institutional needs, staff development, student support, and industry involvement. A good framework can bridge the gap between policy and practice, fostering an inclusive social learning environment. Appendix 1 identifies ten operationalization strategies for social inclusion in hospitality education, explaining how they can be operationalized and their predicted impact. They stretch from curriculum transformation, financial accessibility, staff development, and partnership with the industry towards developing a more inclusive education system.

Inclusive hospitality education needs to intervene at the level of institutional shortcomings, faculty training, student services, and industry partnerships. A strategic plan can close the gap between policy rhetoric and everyday practice and create an inclusive learning environment.
Appendix 1 presents ten priority strategies for promoting social inclusion in hospitality education, a brief explanation of how they might be implemented, and their probable effect. The strategies address curriculum change, financial accessibility, teacher preparation, and collaboration with industry to make the education system more inclusive.

4.2.4   Effectiveness of Social Inclusive Programs.

Although there has been heightened consciousness about the necessity of social inclusion within hospitality education, the result of this investigation indicates that only 3 of the 12 institutions addressed have formalized inclusion strategies. None of these institutions possesses formal policies, training, or specialist support services to implement inclusivity.

Among the three institutions that have taken steps toward social inclusion, their initiatives vary in effectiveness depending on implementation quality, institutional commitment, and available resources. Figure 4 presents the effectiveness scores (on a 1-10 scale) for different social inclusion policies and programs currently in place at these institutions, offering insights into which strategies yield the most impact in fostering inclusive learning environments.
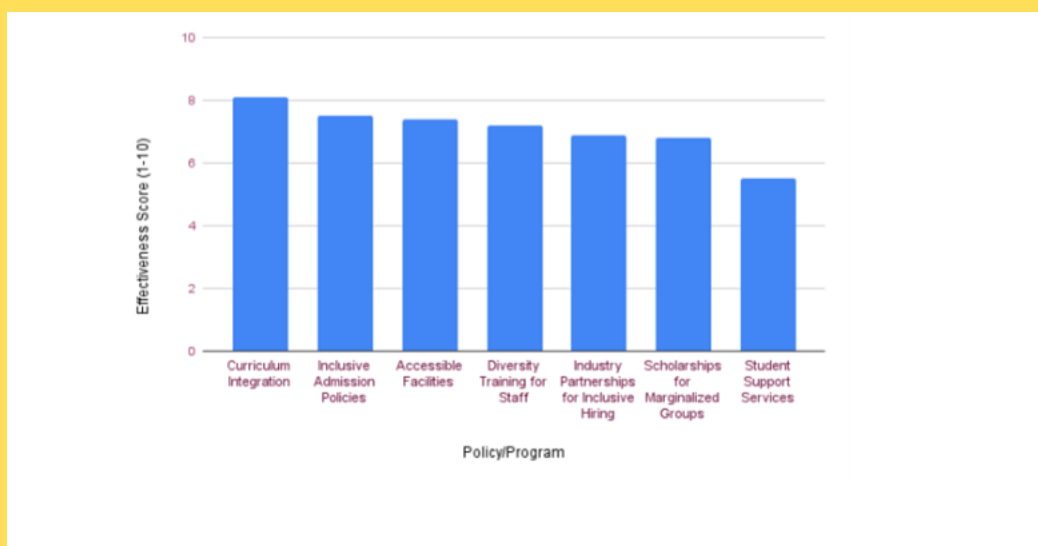
Figure 4: Effectiveness of social inclusion policies and programs among institutions with inclusion strategies

The results in **Figure 4** illustrate a **wide range of effectiveness** across the social inclusion initiatives implemented by the three institutions:

4.2.4.1 Curriculum Integration (8.1) is the most effective strategy, indicating that embedding inclusivity principles into hospitality courses has led to tangible improvements in awareness and student engagement.

4.2.4.2 Inclusive Admission Policies (7.5) and Accessible Facilities (7.4) rank high, reflecting their impact on fostering a diverse student body and ensuring physical accessibility for all students.

4.2.4.3 Diversity Training for Staff (7.2) is moderately effective, highlighting the importance of faculty and administrative training in sustaining inclusive practices.

4.2.4.4 Industry Partnerships for Inclusive Hiring (6.9) and Scholarships for Marginalized Groups (6.8) show moderate success, suggesting that while opportunities exist, barriers to access and awareness persist.

4.2.4.5 Student Support Services (5.5) received the lowest effectiveness score, indicating that institutions struggle to provide sufficient mentorship, counseling, and peer-support networks for underrepresented students.

4.2.5: Student Success Rate

One of the key objectives of promoting social inclusion policies in hospitality education is to improve student success rates, particularly among marginalized and underrepresented groups. However, the effectiveness of different policies varies, depending on institutional commitment, funding, and student engagement.

Figure 5 presents the measured impact of various inclusion policies on student success rates (expressed as a percentage), based on data from institutions that have implemented such strategies. The findings highlight which policies have the greatest effect on student performance, retention, and completion rates in hospitality education.
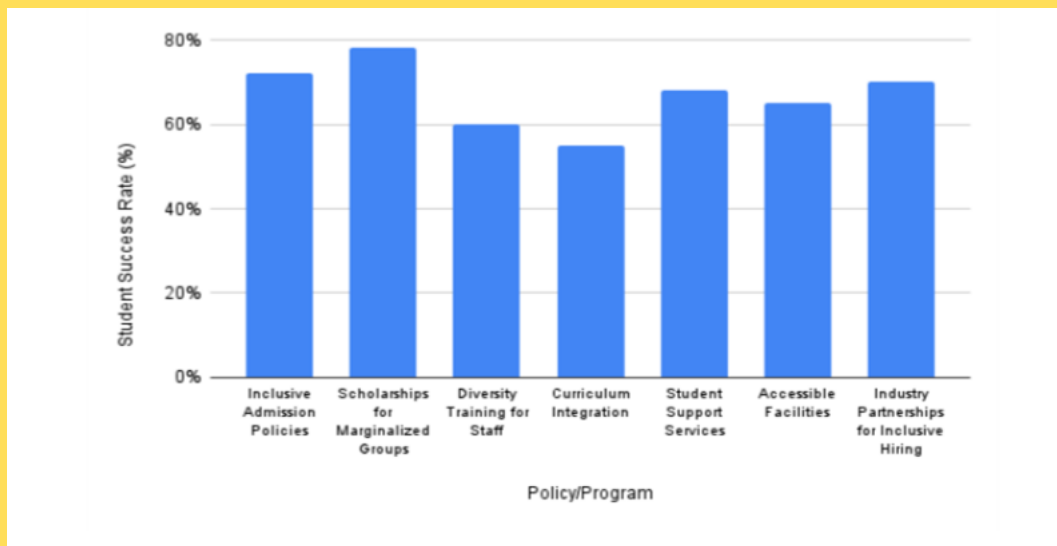

Figure 5: Impact of specific policies on student success rates

The results in Figure 5 reveal notable differences in the effectiveness of various inclusion policies in supporting student success:

4.2.4.6 Scholarships for Marginalized Groups (78%) had the highest impact, suggesting that financial support plays a crucial role in student retention and graduation rates.

4.2.4.7 Inclusive Admission Policies (72%) and Industry Partnerships for Inclusive Hiring (70%) also showed strong effectiveness, indicating that access to education and employment opportunities significantly enhance student outcomes.

4.2.4.8 Student Support Services (68%) ranked moderately, suggesting that while mentoring, peer support, and counseling services are beneficial, they may need more structured implementation to maximize impact.

4.2.4.9 Accessible Facilities (65%) were effective, but physical accessibility alone is not enough—additional academic and social support is required.

4.2.4.10 Diversity Training for Staff (60%) and Curriculum Integration (55%) had the lowest impact, likely due to inconsistencies in faculty adoption and gaps in execution across institutions.

5. Discussion

These results indicate that direct student support mechanisms (such as scholarships, mentorship programs, and job placement opportunities) have the highest measurable impact on success rates. However, policies such as curriculum integration and diversity training require stronger implementation frameworks to yield significant improvements.

Institutions seeking to enhance student success through social inclusion should prioritize financial aid programs, structured student support systems, and industry collaborations, while also strengthening the institutional execution of faculty training and curriculum reforms.

From the findings, it is clear that curriculum integration, faculty preparedness, stakeholder perceptions, policy effectiveness, and institutional resistance are divergent. Comparing the results to existing literature, it is clear that they some alignment between education equity and systematic barriers. This emphasizes the need for an all-around approach while promoting inclusivity. The discussion dissects the findings in comparison to Prior research while highlighting Observations drawn from the study

5.1 Institutional Resistance

The successful implementation of social inclusion policies in hospitality education is often hindered by systemic barriers and institutional resistance. While policies may be designed with good intentions, their execution is frequently obstructed by challenges related to leadership resistance, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inadequate funding.

Figure 6 presents the most commonly cited barriers to policy implementation, as reported by respondents from various institutions. The data highlights the structural and administrative obstacles that must be addressed to ensure the effective adoption of social inclusion policies.

5.2 Curriculum Integration: Social Inclusion as a Secondary Priority

A key finding is that social inclusion topics remain Marginalised in the hospitality curriculum, and institutions prioritise environmental sustainability. This mirrors trends in sustainability education, where ecological concerns transcend social inclusion. (Sloan et al., 2020). United Nations' sustainable development goals have done an impeccable job of promoting social inclusivity; however, the study suggests that Hospitality institutions are yet to adopt that aspect in the curriculum fully.

The syllabi review depicted that diversity and inclusion topics are often optional rather than core components of the hospitality programs. In instances where they are core components, the content is shallow and ineffective. This supports initial Studies by Gretzel et al. in 2021. The absence of a well-curated inclusivity forecast coursework suggests that graduates are not fully equipped and empowered on inclusivity challenges and best practices while graduating to the workforce it would be Paramount to have further examinations for institutions that are fully adopted successful integration of social inclusion modules with those that have not. Protensive research will be done as well to track how curriculum changes affect graduate employability in an all-inclusive Hospitality workplace

5.3 Faculty Preparedness: Training Gaps and Institutional Challenges

The study portrayed that many Educators in the hospitality industry lack formal training in diversity disability, inclusion, and gender sensitivity leadership. This aligns with Eriksen & Ahmad (2020), Who noted that faculty training is still an essential aspect of implementing social inclusion policies in education

Institutional resistance, funding shortages, and lack of awareness among faculty members are still significant barriers to impactful training. The findings are aligned with Ryan & Strachan (2021), Who demonstrated that when faculty trainings are undertaken, implementation remains low due to time constraints, lack of institutional support and incentives, and weak implementation and enforcement plans

The study also found that while a number of Institutions streamed their staff on inclusivity principles, this did not reflect in students' perception of a Feeling of a more inclusive environment. This caused the arguments made by Parker et al. (2019), Who attested that training alone is insufficient without institutional reforms.

Intervention-based studies could be beneficial in assessing different faculty training models and their impact on student experiences. Educators' attitude assessment can also provide insight into how incentive-based programs' inclusivity

5.4 Stakeholder Perceptions: Divergent Priorities and Definitions of Inclusion

The research identified a considerable difference in the understanding of social inclusion in hospitality education among students, educators, and employers. Students ranked their institutions as less inclusive than administrators and faculty, aligning with research from Dyer & Singh (2021) that students view inclusivity initiatives as performative rather than substantive. Employers focused less on curriculum change and more on inclusive hiring practices. This corroborates research by Brown et al. (2022) that although business leaders have adopted workforce diversity, they anticipate that universities will provide the training graduates need. Employer involvement with curriculum change is still low, which aligns with previous work by Cunningham & Wilson (2020), which found that industry-academia collaboration on social inclusion is limited.

Future research can contrast the various stakeholders' "effective inclusivity" definition and determine the role of student-led inclusion initiatives in contributing to institutional policy formation.

5.5 Social Inclusion Policies' Effectiveness: Varied Impact on Student Success

The study found that specific policies, such as scholarships for underrepresented students and inclusive admissions policies, significantly impacted student success more than faculty diversity training. These findings align with contemporary higher education scholarship, in which financial accessibility is consistently linked with improved retention rates (Liu et al., 2021).

However, student support services and faculty diversity training were rated as the least effective policies. This contradicts a study conducted by O'Neill & Johnson (2020), which asserted that regular mentorship programs considerably enhance feelings of inclusivity. The lower effectiveness ratings in this research could mean that student support services are in place but may not be well-organized or visible.

Further research must focus on longitudinal studies tracing the impact of scholarships and inclusion policies on graduate labour market rates. Comparative studies on institutions with high-impact support programs and those with less robust ones would also be insightful.

5.4.1   Institutional Resistance and Systemic Barriers: Policy Failure Factors

In spite of existing social inclusion policies, the research revealed that the enforcement structures were still in abeyance. Bureaucratic lag, unaccountability, and institutional leadership resistance were highlighted as key deterrents to policy execution.

These findings are consistent with Singh & Patel's (2022) study that found institutions adopting diversity policies to gain accreditation and not so much a desire for transformation. Dawson & Richards (2020) also argue that hospitality education is highly hierarchical, and thus, it is difficult to affect systemic change without regulatory pressure.

Additional research should address case studies of organizations that effectively defeated resistance to inclusivity policies and policy effect assessments to establish what regulatory interventions stimulate greater enforcement.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The research offers insights into gaps, challenges, and promising solutions for advancing social inclusion in hospitality education. Nonetheless, it also underlines the demand for more stringent enforcement instruments, enhanced industry-academia partnerships, and more significant structuring of faculty training. Whereas some policies, i.e., scholarships and diversity admissions policies, have been measurable in their effect, others, i.e., student support services and diversity training, need to be better targeted to be even more effective. These results still affirm the necessity of systemic change, stakeholder involvement, and ongoing review to make hospitality education more inclusive and equitable to all students.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are proposed to be put in place to enhance social inclusion in hospitality education:

6.2.1 Curriculum Integration

Diversity, disability inclusion, and gender-sensitive leadership should be integrated modules of hospitality education by universities.

Course accrediting bodies ought to encourage minimum standards of social inclusion curriculum content in hospitality.

6.2.2 Faculty Training and Development

Universities ought to develop mandatory training programs on inclusive teaching practices for hospitality instructors.

Institutional policies must incentivize faculty members to undergo diversity and inclusion training.

6.2.3 Strengthening Student Support Services

Institutions must reorganize student support services to be more responsive and accessible to marginalized communities.

Peer mentoring programs must be introduced to facilitate a sense of belonging for underrepresented students.

6.2.4 Enhancing Industry-Academia Collaboration

Hospitality businesses must play an active role in developing inclusive curricula and providing practical exposure to students.

Industry partners must develop formal internship programs with priority for marginalized students.

6.2.5 Strengthening Policy Implementation Mechanisms

There should be institutional mechanisms for monitoring to be established to provide regular enforcement of inclusivity policies.

Compliance measures should be established by government and accrediting agencies to hold institutions accountable for diversity initiatives.

6.2.6 Financial and Structural Accessibility

More scholarship opportunities should be made available for marginalized groups by institutions and equal access to financial support should be promoted.

Learning environments need to be made accessible for students with disabilities, including structural and assistive technologies.

6.2.7 Longitudinal Tracking and Research

More research is needed to monitor the long-term effect of inclusion policies on the achievements and labor market integration of students.

Comparative research needs to investigate best practices in schools that have been successful in adopting comprehensive social inclusion approaches.

Implementing these recommendations will create a fairer and more inclusive hospitality education system. By eliminating structural barriers and participating in collaborations between the academic and hospitality sectors, graduates will be well-equipped to pursue socially accountable careers within the ever more diverse hospitality industry.

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Appendix 1: *Strategies for Promoting Social Inclusion in Hospitality Education*

Strategy	Implementation Approach
Develop Inclusive Curriculum	Integrate social inclusion topics (diversity, disability inclusion, gender equity) into hospitality education. Ensure these are core components rather than optional courses.
Provide Diversity Training for Staff	Conduct workshops and continuous learning programs to equip educators with inclusive teaching practices. Include cultural competency and bias awareness.
Offer Financial Aid to Marginalized Groups	Establish scholarships and grants for students from underrepresented backgrounds, including women, people with disabilities, and low-income groups.
Enhance Accessibility in Learning Environments	Improve infrastructure (ramps, assistive technology, alternative learning formats) to accommodate students with disabilities and special needs.
Create Industry Partnerships for Inclusive Hiring	Collaborate with hospitality businesses to develop inclusive recruitment programs and offer work placements for marginalized students.
Strengthen Anti-Discrimination Policies	Implement clear institutional policies that prevent discrimination and harassment in educational and workplace settings. Establish reporting mechanisms.
Increase Awareness Campaigns on Inclusion	Organize social inclusion campaigns, conferences, and student-led initiatives to promote a culture of inclusivity and equal opportunity.

Establish Student Support Services	Develop mentorship programs, peer counseling, and student-led inclusion committees to support underrepresented students throughout their studies.
Integrate Gender-Sensitive Leadership Training	Introduce leadership courses that address gender biases in hospitality management, encouraging more women and underrepresented groups in leadership roles.
Encourage Inclusive Work-Based Learning	Ensure internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training programs prioritize diverse student participation by partnering with inclusive employers.