



Evolution and Challenges of Hospitality and Tourism Education Policies in Uganda: A Policy Review and Implications

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Abstract

The quality, relevance and competitiveness of Uganda's hospitality workforce are largely determined by education policy, which is central to sustaining the tourism-driven economy. This study systematically reviews the evolution and challenges of Hospitality and Tourism Education (HTE) policies in Uganda, spanning from its colonial-era vocational roots to contemporary competency-based frameworks. The study was guided by the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Framework. Utilizing a systematic policy review methodology based on document analysis, the study investigated 18 authoritative policy and legislative texts, including the TVET Policy (2019) and Vision 2040, to assess the policy framework's structural coherence. The analysis was guided by a Policy Coherence Framework to evaluate temporal evolution, horizontal alignment across education, tourism, and labor sectors, and vertical coherence between national mandates and institutional capacity. The findings confirm a progressive policy shift toward professionalization and industry-led standards, evidenced by the institutionalization of quality assurance and increased regulatory oversight. However, the review identifies significant structural challenges that hinder effective implementation. These include a pervasive vertical coherence gap where ambitious national goals are undermined by resource constraints and insufficient institutional capacity. Furthermore, a lack of horizontal coherence manifests as sectoral fragmentation and minimal employer participation, limiting the real-world



relevance of training. Policies remain largely aspirational rather than operational, leading to skill mismatches, dependence on foreign expertise, and a failure to fully integrate cultural and indigenous hospitality values. The study concludes that strengthening policy alignment, embedding cultural competencies, enhancing curriculum relevance, and fostering sustainable industry partnerships are critical for advancing hospitality education and training. These insights carry important implications for academics, policymakers, and practitioners, offering a foundation for future curriculum design, workforce development, and evidence-informed reforms in Uganda's hospitality sector. This study contributes by providing the first systematic review of Uganda's hospitality education policies through the lens of policy coherence, tracing their historical evolution, exposing gaps in alignment and implementation, and offering actionable recommendations to strengthen curriculum design, workforce development, and industry linkages.

Keywords: Policy, Policy Coherence, Hospitality Education, Document Review, Uganda

Introduction

Background Information

Hospitality and tourism are globally recognized as engines of economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange, with education forming the foundation for developing a competent and competitive workforce. In Uganda, the sector is of particular national significance. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA, 2024), hospitality and tourism contributed approximately UGX 6.06 trillion, equivalent to 3.2% of Gross domestic product directly, and supported over 800,000 jobs, representing 7.2% of national employment. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2023) further emphasises tourism's consistent role as a leading foreign exchange earner, demonstrating its importance for national development and livelihoods. These figures highlight the growing need for a skilled workforce capable of sustaining service quality and global competitiveness.

Hospitality education, therefore, emerges as a strategic priority, equipping Ugandans with technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial skills critical for the sector's sustainability. Institutions such as the Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (UHTTI) and other vocational centers play a central role in this endeavor. However, the effectiveness of hospitality education is largely shaped by the policy environment in which it operates. While Uganda has made progress in developing sector-specific education policies, significant gaps remain (Kaddu, Mesa, & Carson, 2023). The policies



have evolved through distinct historical phases, including colonial-era vocational reforms, post-independence initiatives, and contemporary training frameworks, and each reform addresses different priorities such as vocational training, gender inclusion, and internationalization. The shortcomings in existing policies hinder the effective translation of policy ambitions into tangible workforce outcomes. This underscores the need for a systematic analysis of Uganda's hospitality education and training policy landscape to understand how they can better respond to labor market demands and drive sustainable sectoral growth

Statement of the problem

Uganda's hospitality and tourism sector has grown rapidly, yet the availability of skilled human resources remains uneven (National Planning Authority, 2020; The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (hereafter CBI, 2020). Numerous policies and frameworks for training and education have been introduced in the past century, yet their implementation remains inconsistent, resulting in a continued reliance on imported labor for essential supervisory and managerial roles (Monitor, 2021). This dependence on imported labor highlights ongoing skill gaps in the local workforce, which might be due to insufficient training opportunities, weak enforcement of standards, and a mismatch between educational outcomes and industry requirements. (Atwine et al., 2025). Consequently, many Ugandans are confined to low-paying, low-cadre roles, while expatriates dominate high-value positions, thereby limiting career advancement for local workers and creating a dual labour structure within the sector (Monitor, 2021). Beyond undermining workforce motivation, this trend generates economic leakages, as remittances and benefits accrue outside local communities, while weak regulation of work permits exacerbates displacement of local talent (Monitor, 2021). When Ugandans are not in key managerial positions, the authenticity of local hospitality services diminishes, leading visitors to experience a more foreign hospitality instead. Existing literature lacks thorough historical analysis of hospitality education policy dynamics, resulting in a gap for policymakers and stakeholders regarding the influence of initiatives on training outcomes. A review of national hospitality education policies is essential to trace their evolution, identify key turning points, and synthesize themes for evidence-based reforms aimed at enhancing workforce readiness and supporting national development.

Research Objectives

1. To review and analyze existing hospitality education and training policies in Uganda



2. To analyse the historical evolution and key shifts in the selected hospitality education and training policies in Uganda policies over time.
3. To determine the challenges within the current policy framework.
4. To draw policy recommendations for strengthening tourism and hospitality education in Uganda

Literature Review

Historical Evolution of Hospitality Education Policies

Globally, hospitality and tourism education has shifted from traditional classroom-based teaching to competency-driven frameworks that prioritize practical skills, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy (Baum, 2015; Airey & Tribe, 2005). This global movement provides a useful background for understanding Uganda's own reforms. Across Africa, formal hospitality training expanded through technical institutes in the late twentieth century, gradually adopting international benchmarks and industry partnerships (Makuyana, Ndhlovu, & Dube, 2024; Makuyana & Saayman, 2018). Uganda's early policy focus on structured curricula and certification mirrored these patterns before progressively shifting toward digital competencies and entrepreneurship to align with international practices (Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020). Uganda's policy trajectory has also been shaped by regional frameworks that encourage standardization and cross-border mobility. Initiatives such as the African Continental Qualifications Framework (African Union, 2020) and the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF, 2022) have supported this evolution. The broader trend across African countries toward competency-based education The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through its agencies, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the International Fund for Educational Development supports educational policy development and capacity building worldwide (UNESCO, IIEP, & IFEF, 2020) and this has reinforced Uganda's modernization of vocational training policies, with an emphasis on employability, industry relevance, and experiential learning.

International scholarship highlights the increasing integration of business, technology, and cultural studies into hospitality education to enhance cross-cultural competence and global labor market readiness (ILO, 2020). Uganda's policies increasingly echo this orientation by embedding transferable skills such as customer service, financial management, sustainability, and digital proficiency. Moreover, contemporary global debates emphasize the importance of soft skills, entrepreneurial capacity, and digital



literacy, with Sharma (2024) advocating for a paradigm shift from research-oriented models toward learning-focused approaches that cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and workplace readiness. Uganda's reforms resonate strongly with these global insights, positioning the country's hospitality education within wider international transformations.

The Role of Policy in Shaping Human Capital

The structure and effectiveness of hospitality education are deeply shaped by policy decisions. Bell (2020) views policy as a purposeful and structured course of action designed to achieve specific institutional or societal goals. Similarly, Prøitz, Aasen, and Wermke (2023) interpret policy as a guiding framework that informs decisions and expresses institutional intent or commitment through formal laws and strategic plans. These perspectives collectively highlight the strategic, normative, and procedural dimensions of policy, showing that it functions both as a decision-making guide and as an instrument for achieving coherence and accountability within organizations. Within the context of hospitality education, Dredge, Airey, and Gross (2015) broaden this understanding by presenting policy as an outcome of multiple interacting forces, both internal and external that shape curriculum structures, pedagogical choices, accreditation standards, and the balance between practical and theoretical learning. Their perspective also situates policy within broader global and local influences, stakeholder values, and professional expectations. These conceptualizations illustrate that hospitality education policy is inherently multidimensional, combining strategic intent, institutional regulation, and contextual responsiveness to align educational goals with the evolving needs of the hospitality sector. MBIE (2023) echoes this, stressing the value of workplace-based learning that complements formal qualifications, ensuring graduates are job-ready and able to respond to real-world challenges.

In Uganda, the "Skilling Uganda" initiative exemplifies how policy can directly enhance workforce readiness. Kabanda, Akampurira, and Kobusingye (2024) report significantly improved employment outcomes and self-efficacy among youth participants, attributing success to curricula that prioritize labor market alignment and practical application. Similarly, Achiro and Mwesigwa (2022) advocate for bottom-up, youth-led training approaches that embed cultural relevance and local knowledge into national frameworks. These participatory models enhance program ownership, responsiveness, and relevance, especially in diverse socio-economic contexts. TVET policies are enhancing human capital development by incorporating digital learning, entrepreneurial thinking, and sustainability, recognizing hospitality education's role in employment, innovation, and resilience. Well-designed



policies foster equitable economic participation, particularly for marginalized groups, by creating inclusive pathways.

Policy–Practice Interface

Implementation of progressive policies in Uganda and similar African contexts faces significant challenges stemming from systemic issues such as inadequate funding, fragmented institutional coordination, and infrastructure deficits (Kaddu, Mesa, & Carson, 2023; Kalanzi, 2017). Although blended learning models, hold promise for increasing accessibility and enhancing skill development, rely heavily on the competency of the instructors, technological infrastructure, and ongoing learner support (Kaazara, Ariyo, & Avance, 2025). When certain conditions are not met, the digital divide widens and policy goals become harder to achieve, with implementation made even more difficult by varying institutional capacities. Similarly, Makuyana and Saayman (2018) note that while technical institutions benefit from trainers with practical experience, traditional universities often lag in aligning pedagogy with industry demands. As digital tools become more central to teaching, variability in educator readiness and student access introduces inequality in learning outcomes as digital technologies increasingly become influential in teaching, the varying levels of teacher preparedness and student access lead to disparities in learning outcomes. (Makuyana, Ndhlovu, & Dube, 2024). Moreover, Policy in the hospitality sector must evolve to incorporate innovation, entrepreneurial skills, and digital fluency. Therefore, policies should be tailored to local socio-economic realities and the dynamic needs of the labor market (Singizi, 2021). Greater industry engagement through structured partnerships can enhance curriculum relevance, expand practical training opportunities, and ensure graduates acquire competencies aligned with both national and regional standards. Harmonizing national policies with regional frameworks is equally important for promoting cross-border recognition of qualifications and facilitating labor mobility and skills development within the East African tourism sector (International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021); Singizi, 2021). The literature emphasizes the significance of competency-driven, digitally integrated hospitality education, noting a worldwide trend towards such policy frameworks. In contrast, Uganda faces a disjointed policy landscape characterized by resource constraints, misaligned stakeholders, digital access disparities, and insufficient trainer preparedness. This indicates that clear accountability processes and coordinated implementation are required.

While several studies examine discrete components of hospitality policy/ hospitality education, few offer a historical and holistic synthesis that connects Uganda’s evolving policy frameworks with broader global shifts and



local implementation challenges. This gap leaves policymakers and educators without a comprehensive understanding of how past reforms shape current outcomes or how current strategies might be better aligned for future impact. This study addresses that gap by critically reviewing Uganda's hospitality education and training policies, analyzing historical evolution, challenges, and policy recommendations for strengthening tourism and hospitality education. The analysis provides a contextualized and integrative framework for policy design and educational practice, paving the way for a more equitable and industry-relevant hospitality Education and training system.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) Framework (OECD, 2019), which provides a lens for analyzing how policies across sectors can be aligned, integrated, and adapted to achieve sustainable outcomes. The Coherence Policy Framework aims to align policies across various sectors and timeframes to achieve shared goals. It includes horizontal coherence, which integrates sectors like education and labor; vertical coherence, which involves stakeholders at all levels for inclusive policy design; and temporal coherence, which ensures policies remain consistent while adapting to changing needs, and transboundary coherence which ensures that national policies are consistent with regional and international policy frameworks. by accounting for cross-border tourism, labor mobility, and global standards to promote cooperation, competitiveness, and sustainable development. These components create a coordinated, inclusive, and responsive policy environment. In assessing existing hospitality education and training policies, the framework's dimensions of horizontal and temporal coherence reveal the alignment and historical evolution of policies across education, labor, and tourism. It highlights gaps in stakeholder engagement and adaptability to standards through vertical and transboundary coherence. Policy recommendations are formulated based on these dimensions, promoting cross-sectoral alignment, inclusive participation, and competitiveness in regional and global contexts, making the PCSD framework relevant and practically aligned with the study's objectives. By applying the PCSD framework, this study identifies recurring themes, policy gaps, and opportunities for improving coherence in hospitality education, ultimately contributing to the development of a skilled workforce aligned with the country's tourism and hospitality objectives.



Methodology

This study utilized a rigorous Systematic Policy Review methodology, grounded in Document Analysis [Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Bowen, 2009], to critically investigate the evolution, content, and implementation challenges of Hospitality and Tourism Education (HTE) policies in Uganda. This approach was adopted because policies, strategic plans, and institutional reports represent authoritative accounts of government priorities, offering a systematic way to trace their evolution, coherence, and impact over time. The review focused on three primary objectives: tracing the historical evolution and key shifts in HTE policies; identifying current challenges, including implementation gaps and misalignment with labor market demands; and providing evidence-based policy recommendations to strengthen the sector.

Scope, Timeframe and Data Sources

The research focused geographically on Uganda and covered a broad historical period to capture foundational context, though its main analytical scope concentrated on the period of 2000–2024, selected to capture the evolution during significant national reform and sectoral transformation. This timeframe aligns with major national strategies like Vision 2040 and the Tourism Development Master Plan (TDMP, 2014–2024), which prioritized HTE as a key driver of economic growth. While the analysis emphasized the contemporary period, earlier milestones such as the Phelps–Stokes Commission Report (1924), the Policy on Vocational Studies (1926), Idi Amin’s initiatives of the 1970s, and the Integrated TDMP (1992) were acknowledged as critical historical precedents that laid the foundation for later reforms. The study investigated 18 pertinent policy and literature texts, including strategic plans, policy frameworks, and relevant academic studies. Documents were selected using purposive sampling, based on inclusion criteria such as direct relevance to tourism and hospitality education and national-level scope. Sources were systematically retrieved from official government repositories, legal databases, academic institutions, and online portals. Each document was rigorously cataloged with metadata (title, publication year, issuing authority, and thematic relevance) to facilitate efficient retrieval and traceable analysis. The reviewed policies fell into three categories as shown in Table 1.



Table 1: Reviewed Hospitality and Tourism education and training related policies of Uganda

Specific Education Policies	Hospitality Higher Policies Impacting Education HTE	Tourism Policies with Emphasis	Industry with HRD
UHTT ACT (2015) [Parliament, 2015]	The Phelps-Stokes Commission (1924) [Bazilio, 2020]	Integrated TDPM (1992)	
Progressive presidential ideas of Idi Amin (1971-1979)	Policy on Vocational Studies (1926)	Development strategies	
Language policy	Policy of Liberalization of Educations Sector	National Development Plan III (2020–2025)	
Hospitality language policy	Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA, 2001)	Uganda Vision 2040	
TVET (2010); TVET (2019)	National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) Act	The Apprenticeship Policy (MoTWA, 2025)	
	Higher Education Students' Financing Board (HESFB) Policy (2022)	National Development Plan (NDP III & IV) (2020–2025)	

Analytical Framework and Data Analysis

The document review approach acknowledged that policies reflect historical developments, political agendas, and institutional dynamics. To provide a rigorous structural critique, the study utilized a Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) framework. This conceptual tool guided the analysis by mapping findings against three dimensions: Temporal Coherence (historical evolution), Horizontal Coherence (institutional roles across education, tourism, and labor sectors), and Vertical Coherence (alignment between national policy ambitions and institutional capacity). Regional and international frameworks (e.g., African Union, SADC, UNESCO guidelines) were drawn upon selectively to contextualize how global trends shaped Uganda's national policies.

The policy documents were analyzed using a Thematic Coding Approach following the systematic framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). The documents were read multiple times for familiarity, followed by open coding where preliminary labels were assigned to text segments reflecting key



concepts (e.g., vocational focus, gender inclusion, industry linkages, policy enforcement). These initial codes were then grouped into broader thematic patterns through an iterative process of reviewing and refining, resulting in a structured codebook combining deductive (objective-based) and inductive (data-driven) codes. Coding was performed manually, accompanied by reflective notes and peer discussions to enhance reliability and reduce researcher bias, thus strengthening the credibility of the thematic insights. Crucially, the final analysis involved converting policy excerpts into synthesized findings, which were then interpreted to highlight persistent weaknesses such as limited funding, curriculum misalignment, and weak implementation against PCSD dimensions.

Limitations and Rigor

Trustworthiness was maintained by relying solely on authoritative sources (official policies and legislative texts) and using the formal PCSD framework to ensure analytical rigor and transparency. However, the analysis is subject to certain limitations. As a purely document review methodology, the analysis is constrained to the content and framing of the 18 selected texts and the insights derived from secondary literature. This method provided a comprehensive historical perspective, capturing both the intent of policy designers and the recorded outcomes of implementation, but it did not extend to field-level implementation or direct stakeholder interviews. Consequently, the study's conclusions reflect the "gap between policy design and policy implementation" as evidenced in the documents, but do not capture the operational constraints, institutional politics, or experiences of educators and industry actors on the ground. Broader education policies outside the HTE domain were excluded unless directly relevant, limiting the scope of systemic analysis in those areas.

Results

Policy Evolution and Strategic Alignment

The analysis confirms that Uganda's Hospitality and Tourism Education (HTE) policies have undergone a significant and progressive transformation, shifting from a colonial-era vocational model focused on manual skills, stemming from the Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924, toward modern, competency-based, and employer-led frameworks. This evolution is driven by the national goal of building a skilled workforce aligned with Vision 2040. The review highlights a clear move toward professionalization and standards enforcement, institutionalized by the introduction of the TVET Policy (2019), the TVET Act (2025), and the UHTTI Act (2015) [Ministry of



Education and Sports, 2020; Government of Uganda, 2025; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014]. This policy direction reflects a clear commitment to sustainable human capital development.

The government's growing emphasis on regulation and institutional oversight is a key finding. Agencies such as the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (UHTTI) now play crucial roles in curriculum evaluation and certification, signifying a formalized quality assurance mechanism. Concurrently, there is evidence of an increased focus on alignment between education and industry needs through specific policy mechanisms like internships, apprenticeships, and competency-based curricula. Efforts to improve access and inclusivity are also gaining traction, evidenced by the 2022 expansion of the Higher Education Students' Financing Board (HESFB) Policy and the 2025 Apprenticeship Policy [HESFB Policy, 2022; MoTWA, 2025], designed to enhance affordability and practical learning opportunities.

Historical Trajectory and Key Policy Shifts

The historical trajectory demonstrates a progressive evolution characterized by adaptation to societal needs, globalization, and strategic national planning, thereby establishing strong temporal coherence. The foundational shift occurred in the 1920s, when the purely literary education offered by missionaries was deemed insufficient, leading directly to the Policy on Vocational Studies in 1926. This policy formally incorporated vocational education alongside academic subjects, ensuring graduates acquired both practical and theoretical skills. Further shifts included a focus on gender inclusion during the former President Idi Amin's regime, which supported the training of women in the sector based on assumed domestic skill advantages, and the emphasis on tourism-industry integration via the Integrated TDMP (1992), which mandated the establishment of dedicated training facilities and a tourism ministry.

The liberalization of the higher education sector marked another major shift, allowing for the chartering of private universities and training schools. This expansion necessitated the regulatory oversight provided by the NCHE, ensuring that the tourism and hospitality academic discipline is not exempted from quality assurance and program standardization. The most recent shift involves the TVET policy adaptation, which reflects a multilateral, employer-led, competency-based model involving the demand side (employers), government, and the supply side (training providers) [Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020; Government of Uganda, 2025; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014]. This evolution is summarized in the following table, detailing key policy milestones and their thematic focus.



Table 2: Hospitality Education policies and frameworks evolution

Code / Theme	Supporting Excerpt
Missionary era to vocational policy	"Education offered by the missionaries ... was too literary. This led to the Policy on Vocational Studies in 1926."
Vocational focus	"The Phelps - Stokes Commission (1924)...led to the Policy on Vocational Studies in 1926 ... Provision of vocational education in addition to academic subjects for Ugandans was incorporated into the education system."
Gender inclusion	"The progressive ideas of former President Idi Amin ... women being trained in the sector as compared to men."
Tourism-industry integration	"...establishing training facilities on wildlife, hotel and tourism ... ensuring a ministry with capacity to serve the sector."
Higher education liberalization	"Policy of Liberalization of Education Sector ... chartering of a number of universities ... private tourism and hospitality training tutoring schools."
Regulatory oversight	"National Council for Higher Education ... Tourism and hospitality academic discipline is not exempted in any way."
Strategic planning & national vision	"Vision 2040 ... commits to policy reforms that emphasize increased competitiveness and apt human capital development in the tourism sector."
TVET policy adaptation	"Technical and Vocational Educational Training Policy (2010) ... TVET Policy 2019 ... employer-led ... tripartite ... demand side, government, supply side. TVET Act 2025 "... strengthen coordination among training providers, standardize curricula, and ensure quality of instruction." (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020; Government of Uganda, 2025; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014) UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014)
Higher Education Students' Financing Board (HESFB) Policy, 2022	"The loan scheme ... extend to students pursuing hospitality and tourism-related programs to promote equity and access."
Apprenticeship Program (MoTWA, 2025)	".....shall undergo a 10-month structured on-the-job training program under industry supervision."

Gaps within the Current Policy Framework

A critical finding reveals a recurring pattern: a pervasive gap between policy ambition and institutional capacity, indicative of weak vertical coherence. Policies such as the UOTIA Act, TVET frameworks, and the Job Training/CPD Policy mandate essential enforcement mechanisms including



quality assurance, internships, and continuing professional development but these provisions are found to be largely aspirational rather than operational, primarily due to the absence of effective oversight, especially within the private and emerging institutional landscape.

Resource constraints represent a fundamental barrier. Although strategic frameworks like Vision 2040 and the TVET (2019) policy articulate progressive visions, the success of initiatives like the rebranding of UHTTI is undermined by limited infrastructure, inadequate teaching resources, and weak benchmarking against international standards. This shortfall results in immediate skill mismatches and underqualified graduates, which, in the long term, perpetuates a costly dependence on donor support and foreign expertise, eroding national self-reliance and slowing sectoral growth.

A key structural issue lies in the promotion of industry engagement without sufficient policy support mechanisms, leading to weak horizontal coherence. Despite the TVET policy's promotion of a tripartite model, employer participation remains minimal. The review found that the apprenticeship model is weakened by the absence of clear career progression pathways and limited employer investment in training, which severely limits the real-practical relevance of training and exacerbates graduate underemployment.

Curriculum reform emerges as another critical structural issue. While early attempts were made to reorient education toward vocational skills, current curricula are often found to be overly academic, outdated, and poorly aligned to industry needs. This systemic disconnect directly results in graduates who are underprepared for competitive service environments, contributing to the importation of foreign labor and the erosion of national human capital development.

The issue of policy sustainability reinforces the challenge of vertical coherence. Uganda's history of innovative initiatives, from early women-focused training programs to modern strategies, indicates many lacked continuity. Current strategies often remain aspirational, with little continuity beyond initial rollout, contributing to policy fatigue and undermining institutional trust and long-term investment. Moreover, social perceptions and stigma cannot be ignored; vocational training and hospitality careers are still widely viewed as low-status and less desirable than professional degrees, hindering the uptake of crucial programs like apprenticeships and undercutting the inclusive development agenda.

Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Hospitality Education

Policies demonstrate strong horizontal integration across tourism, labor, and education, yet this synergy is weakened by inconsistent



implementation mechanisms and limited stakeholder incentives. A persistent vertical gap remains between national policy ambitions and the institutional capacity to operationalize them. Furthermore, in terms of transboundary coherence, alignment with regional frameworks is weak due to uneven adoption and insufficient benchmarking. Based on these findings, the following table presents key policy recommendations necessary to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of HTE in Uganda.

Table 3: Policy Recommendations

Theme	Supporting Excerpt
Strengthen industry linkages	"Employer-led ... ensuring linkages with the world of work ..."
Enhance local capacity	"Inadequacy of desired indigenous human resource capacity."
Improve policy enforcement & QA	"NCHE ... receive and investigate complaints ... take appropriate action."
Integrate global standards & cultural relevance	"International accreditation of instructional programs ... incorporating foreign languages ..."
Promote lifelong learning	"Job Training / Continuing Professional Development Policy provides for further, continuing career development."

Discussion

The analysis of policy evolution and implementation reveals that Uganda's hospitality and tourism education (HTE) sector has undergone a fundamental transformation, shifting from the colonial-era vocational models of manual skills, such as those influenced by the Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924, toward modern, competency-based, and employer-led frameworks. This temporal shift demonstrates an adaptive response to national workforce needs and global trends. Key legislative reforms, including the UHTTI Act (2015), TVET Policy (2019), and TVET Act (2025), have successfully institutionalized quality assurance, professional standards, and curriculum oversight by agencies like NCHE and UHTTI. Furthermore, policy efforts to enhance access, such as the expansion of the Higher Education Students' Financing Board (HESFB) and the Apprenticeship Policy, reflect a commendable push for greater affordability and inclusivity, strengthening the essential link between education and industry through practical learning.



Policy Evolution and Alignment with Regional Trends

The historical trajectory shows a progressive adaptation consistent with temporal coherence. The early shift from literary missionary-driven education to vocational studies in the 1920s addressed pressing labor market needs, mirroring broader continental trends toward competency-based education [UNESCO, IIEP, & IFEF, 2020]. The subsequent liberalization of higher education in the 1990s and Makerere University's focus on international placements demonstrated early recognition of market pressures and the importance of global exposure a focus that resonates with the ongoing continental emphasis on mobility, standardization, and qualification recognition advocated by frameworks like the African Continental Qualifications Framework [African Union, 2020]. While Uganda's policy direction aligns with these regional goals of harmonizing qualifications and enhancing labor market relevance, the findings indicate that operationalizing these frameworks locally remains a critical challenge, highlighting persistent difficulties in bridging policy design and on-the-ground implementation capacity.

Gaps in Vertical Coherence and Resource Allocation

Despite the ambitious policy design, a primary factor limiting effectiveness is the severe gap between policy ambition and institutional capacity, a clear deficit in vertical coherence. National policies, including the UOTIA Act and the TVET frameworks, mandate critical enforcement mechanisms such as mandatory internships, robust quality assurance (QA), and continuing professional development (CPD) but these remain largely aspirational rather than operational due to the absence of effective oversight, especially within private and newly established institutions [Singizi, 2021]. This implementation deficit is compounded by significant resource constraints. While frameworks like Vision 2040 articulate progressive visions for vocational skills development, the review found that their execution is undermined by insufficient funding, leading to limited infrastructure, inadequate teaching resources, and weak benchmarking against international standards. The rebranding of UHTTI, intended to professionalize the sector, struggles against this underfunding, perpetuating a reliance on donor support and foreign expertise that slows sustainable sectoral development.

Contradictions in Horizontal Coherence

A major contradiction lies in the policy-mandated promotion of industry engagement without sufficient structural incentives, leading to poor horizontal coherence between education providers and the industry. Although the TVET Policy (2019) mandates an employer-led, tripartite training



model, actual employer participation remains minimal. This inertia is attributed to the perception that apprenticeships are “inferior to formal education” and the practical absence of clear career progression pathways or limited employer investment in training. This misalignment between training objectives and labor market realities, also observed by Singizi [2021], results in graduates who lack essential, industry-relevant skills. Furthermore, curriculum relevance remains a structural challenge, as current programs are often characterized as overly academic, outdated, and poorly aligned to industry needs. This disconnect, along with poor implementation of language and soft skills policies, leaves graduates underprepared for competitive service environments and mirrors broader regional weaknesses in cross-border standardization [SADC, 2021].

Policy Sustainability and Cultural Barriers

The sustainability of policy initiatives is a concern, as Uganda has a history of launching ambitious reforms from early women-focused training programs to modern policy instruments that lack continuity. The analysis suggests that contemporary policies often remain aspirational, with little follow-up or continuity beyond initial rollout, thereby undermining institutional memory and discouraging long-term systemic investment. This is exacerbated by persistent cultural perceptions and stigma, which continue to plague the HTE sector. Technical and vocational paths are widely perceived as low-status and less desirable than professional degrees, actively hindering youth enrollment and industry uptake, even in successful apprenticeship programs supported by UHTTI, the ILO, and the Uganda Hotel Owners Association. These deeply ingrained cultural barriers undercut the inclusive agenda of the national policies.

Conclusion

The review confirms a significant and progressive evolution, characterized by a strategic move from rudimentary vocational training to modern, competency-based, and heavily regulated frameworks. While high-level legislation reflects a strong commitment to national development objectives, the analysis consistently revealed a critical deficiency in policy execution, stemming from a lack of both vertical and horizontal coherence. Specifically, ambitious national mandates are rendered aspirational rather than operational due to persistent underfunding, inadequate institutional capacity, and weak mechanisms for policy enforcement. This is affected by significant sectoral fragmentation and minimal structural engagement from the tourism industry, which undermines the practical relevance of training programs. Ultimately, these systemic gaps result in recurrent skill mismatches,



a continued reliance on foreign expertise, and a failure to sustain innovative policy initiatives, collectively challenging Uganda's progress toward building a competitive and self-reliant workforce in the hospitality sector.

Policy Recommendations

Policymakers should focus on systemic issues such as funding, enforcement, and multi-stakeholder coordination. In the short term, they should strengthen enforcement of existing policies, including continuing professional development and internship requirements, establish regular monitoring mechanisms for TVET and UHTTI programs, and allocate additional resources to underfunded institutions to improve infrastructure and faculty capacity. In the long term, policymakers should develop integrated multi-year funding plans aligned with Vision 2040 and sectoral strategies, formalize inter-ministerial coordination platforms to ensure horizontal policy coherence, and incorporate policy evaluation and iterative improvement mechanisms to maintain temporal coherence.

Educational institutions should, in the short term, update curricula to include competency-based training, digital and entrepreneurial skills, soft skills, and language proficiency, while enhancing internships and apprenticeships with local hotels and tourism operators. In the long term, they should build formal industry and international partnerships, continuously align programs with global standards and labor market demands, and invest in faculty development to guarantee sustainable quality in training delivery.

Industry stakeholders should, in the short term, collaborate with institutions to co-design relevant modules, provide structured internships and apprenticeships, and offer regular feedback on skills gaps and emerging sector needs. In the long term, they should participate in joint governance of training programs, invest in continuous professional development for staff, and support hospitality education research to maintain sectoral competitiveness. The phased actions will build a skilled, adaptable, and culturally competent workforce, supported by coherent policies, relevant curricula, and strong industry linkages, ultimately strengthening the sustainability and competitiveness of Uganda's hospitality and tourism sector.

Contributions

This paper makes several contributions to the study of hospitality and tourism education in Uganda. Historically, it provides one of the first systematic accounts of how education policies evolved from colonial-era vocational training initiatives to contemporary skills-based and internationally aligned frameworks. Analytically, it synthesizes fragmented policy instruments into a coherent narrative, demonstrating how key turning points such as



gender reforms in the 1970s, education sector liberalization in the 1990s, and the UHTTI Act have shaped pathways for hospitality training.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by extending the application of the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development framework beyond policy formulation to highlight gaps in enforcement, institutional capacity, and sectoral integration that undermine effective implementation. By focusing on these operational disjunctures, the study reveals how weak coherence at the implementation level can limit the sustainable development outcomes intended by hospitality education policies. The study also identifies recurring themes of vocationalism, human capital development, gender inclusion, regulation, and internationalization, which can inform comparative studies in other African contexts.

Practically, the review highlights how policy directions align with Uganda's broader development goals, while also exposing gaps in implementation, quality assurance, and integration of local knowledge. Collectively, these contributions enrich academic understanding and offer practical insights for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders.

Proposed framework for Policy Coherence in Hospitality Education in Uganda

The framework in Figure 1 below shows how findings from the document review translate into actionable policy and educational strategies, leading to improved outcomes for hospitality education, workforce quality and sector growth. The framework integrates the key findings and policy implications to visualize the pathway from current policies and gaps to desired outcomes for the hospitality education sector. It maps inputs → gaps → interventions → outcomes:



Figure 1: Developed Framework for Policy Coherence in Hospitality Education in Uganda



Current focus areas

Hospitality education in Uganda currently focuses on vocational training, human capital development, gender inclusion, regulation, and internationalization. Vocational training aims to deliver practical skills to address workforce shortages, while gender inclusion initiatives promote women's participation in the sector. Regulatory mechanisms, including accreditation and curriculum evaluations, ensure quality standards are maintained. Additionally, internationalization efforts, through collaborations with various frameworks, aim to enhance the competitiveness of Uganda's hospitality graduates in the global job market.

Gaps

Despite advancements, the framework identifies significant gaps, particularly the absence of cohesive policies among education, tourism, and labor sectors. Weak implementation, due to limited enforcement and fragmented oversight, further diminishes effective policy impact. Additionally, hospitality education in Uganda has not adequately incorporated indigenous knowledge and cultural competencies, resulting in curricula that fail to align with the country's diverse socio-cultural landscape, thus restricting graduates' adaptability. Strategic Interventions: To tackle challenges in Uganda's hospitality education, the framework recommends several strategic interventions. It emphasizes the need for policy coherence among education, labor, and tourism to support skills development. Strengthening ties between industry and training institutions will improve practical learning and curriculum relevance. Promoting inclusivity and embedding equity in curriculum design is crucial. Additionally, integrating cultural competencies and indigenous knowledge into training programs, expanding quality assurance mechanisms, and pursuing internationalization relevant to Uganda's context are all essential measures. Desired Outcomes: Effective implementation of the framework aims to develop a skilled, culturally competent hospitality workforce, create coherent and responsive policies and curricula, and enhance workforce employability and sector competitiveness. Its ultimate goal is to support sustainable growth in Uganda's hospitality and tourism sector, contributing to national development and reflecting the country's cultural identity and values.

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