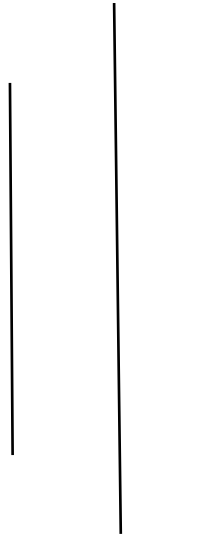


**A PROJECT WORK REPORT ON
THE TRANSITION FROM CLASSROOM LEARNING TO
HOTEL INDUSTRY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
BHM STUDENTS IN POKHARA**



BY

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A Project Work Report submitted to Pokhara University in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor in Hotel Management

At the
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Pokhara-14, Chhinedanda

July 2026

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project work report entitled “**The Transition from classroom Learning to Hotel Industry: A Phenomenological study of BHM Student in Pokhara**” submitted for the BHM is my original work and the Project Work Report has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or other similar titles.

Saurav Khadka

July 2026

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Work titled “**The Transition from classroom Learning to Hotel Industry: A Phenomenological study of BHM Student in Pokhara**” submitted by Saurav Khadka, (23150264) for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of BHM embodies the Bonafide work done by him under my supervision.

.....

Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari

Supervisor, Project Work

July 2026

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Thank You,

Saurav Khadka,

BHM VI

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Education plays a fundamental role in preparing individuals for professional careers by providing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies required in the workplace. In professional disciplines such as hospitality management, education is expected not only to provide theoretical understanding but also to equip students with practical skills that can be applied in real working environments. The hospitality industry is highly service-oriented and demands employees who possess technical expertise, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, teamwork competencies, and professional attitudes. Consequently, hospitality education has increasingly focused on bridging the gap between academic learning and industry practice to ensure graduates can meet workplace expectations (Airey & Tribe, 2005).

The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally and contributes significantly to economic development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. According to the UNWTO (2024), tourism remains a major driver of global economic growth, creating millions of jobs directly and indirectly across accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation, travel operations, and destination management sectors. The increasing complexity and competitiveness of the hospitality industry have intensified the need for professionally trained human resources capable of delivering high-quality services and adapting to changing customer expectations.

In response to the growing demand for skilled hospitality professionals, hospitality education institutions around the world have developed specialized academic programs that combine classroom instruction with practical training. Bachelor in Hotel Management (BHM) programs are designed to prepare students for managerial and operational roles within hotels, resorts, restaurants, tourism enterprises, and related service industries. These programs typically include courses related to front office operations, food production, food and beverage service, housekeeping management, tourism management, hospitality marketing, human resource management, accounting, and organizational behavior. Through these

academic components, students acquire foundational knowledge intended to support their future professional careers (Lashley, 2018).

Despite the comprehensive nature of hospitality education, many researchers have argued that a significant gap often exists between classroom learning and workplace realities. While academic institutions provide theoretical frameworks and simulated practical experiences, the actual work environment presents unique challenges that cannot always be fully replicated within educational settings. Students frequently encounter differences between what they learn in classrooms and what they experience during internships, industrial training, and professional employment. These differences may involve organizational culture, customer interactions, workplace pressures, communication requirements, operational procedures, and professional expectations (Barron, 2008).

The transition from educational environments to professional workplaces represents a critical stage in students' academic and career development. Transition refers to the process through which individuals move from one environment, role, or stage of life to another while adapting to new responsibilities, expectations, and social contexts (Schlossberg, 1981). For hospitality students, this transition often involves moving from a structured academic environment characterized by lectures, assignments, examinations, and supervised practical sessions to a dynamic hotel environment where performance standards, customer satisfaction, teamwork, and operational efficiency become primary concerns.

The transition process is particularly significant in hospitality education because the industry operates differently from many other professional sectors. Hotels function twenty-four hours a day and require employees to work in demanding environments involving shift duties, long working hours, customer service responsibilities, and rapid decision-making. Students entering the industry often encounter situations that require them to apply classroom knowledge in real-time while simultaneously learning new operational procedures and adapting to workplace cultures. These experiences can be both rewarding and challenging, influencing students' professional identity development and career aspirations (Baum, 2015).

Experience learning theory suggests that meaningful learning occurs when individuals actively engage in experiences and reflect upon them to develop

knowledge and skills. Kolb (1984) argued that learning is a continuous process involving concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within hospitality education, internships and industrial placements provide opportunities for students to transform theoretical knowledge into practical competencies through direct workplace experiences. Such experiences enable students to understand organizational operations, customer service practices, and professional standards while developing confidence and employability skills.

Internships have become a central component of hospitality education programs worldwide. Research indicates that internships help students gain industry exposure, improve technical competencies, develop interpersonal skills, and establish professional networks (Zopiatis, 2007). Through workplace participation, students acquire practical knowledge that complements classroom instruction and prepares them for future employment. However, internship experiences also reveal various challenges including skill mismatches, communication difficulties, workplace stress, and adjustment problems. Understanding these experiences is important for improving hospitality education and supporting student success.

In the Nepalese context, tourism and hospitality have emerged as important contributors to national economic development. Nepal's unique natural landscapes, cultural heritage, adventure tourism opportunities, and religious attractions attract domestic and international visitors throughout the year. According to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA, 2024), tourism contributes significantly to employment generation and foreign exchange earnings while supporting the growth of related industries such as accommodation, transportation, food services, and recreation. The continued expansion of tourism activities has increased the demand for qualified hospitality professionals capable of maintaining service quality and supporting sustainable tourism development.

To meet this demand, several higher education institutions in Nepal offer Bachelor in Hotel Management programs aimed at developing skilled hospitality professionals. These programs emphasize both theoretical knowledge and practical training to ensure students acquire competencies relevant to industry needs. However, concerns remain regarding the extent to which classroom learning adequately prepares students for actual workplace experiences. Differences between academic

expectations and workplace realities may influence students' confidence, performance, satisfaction, and career decisions.

Pokhara serves as one of Nepal's most important tourism destinations and provides a particularly relevant context for examining the transition experiences of hospitality students. The city attracts thousands of domestic and international visitors annually and hosts a wide range of hospitality establishments including luxury hotels, resorts, restaurants, cafés, travel agencies, and tourism service providers. As tourism continues to expand in Pokhara, hospitality organizations increasingly rely on BHM graduates and trainees to support operational and managerial functions. Consequently, understanding how students experience their transition into the hospitality industry is essential for strengthening hospitality education and workforce development within the region.

Existing research has primarily focused on hospitality internships, employability skills, job satisfaction, and career intentions. While these studies provide valuable insights into hospitality education outcomes, relatively limited attention has been given to understanding the lived experiences of students during their transition from classroom learning to professional hotel environments. A phenomenological approach offers an opportunity to explore how students personally experience, interpret, and make meaning of this transition process. By focusing on students' perceptions, feelings, challenges, and learning experiences, phenomenological research can provide deeper insights into factors influencing successful adaptation to the hospitality industry.

The present study therefore seeks to explore the transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice among BHM students in Pokhara. Through a phenomenological investigation of students' lived experiences, the study aims to understand how academic preparation, practical exposure, workplace challenges, and professional learning interact during the transition process. The findings are expected to contribute to the improvement of hospitality education, strengthen industry-academia collaboration, and support the development of future hospitality professionals capable of meeting industry expectations effectively.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Hospitality education is designed to prepare students for professional careers by providing both theoretical knowledge and practical skills required in the hotel industry. Bachelor in Hotel Management (BHM) programs aim to develop competent graduates who can effectively perform managerial and operational responsibilities in hotels, resorts, restaurants, and tourism organizations. Despite these educational efforts, many hospitality graduates continue to experience difficulties when transitioning from classroom learning environments to professional hotel workplaces.

The transition from academic settings to the hospitality industry represents a significant challenge for many students. While classroom instruction provides conceptual understanding of hospitality operations, students frequently encounter situations in hotels that require practical decision-making, customer interaction, teamwork, and adaptability under real working conditions. The hotel industry is characterized by long working hours, shift duties, service pressures, customer expectations, and rapidly changing operational demands. As a result, students often find that the realities of hotel work differ considerably from their academic experiences.

Previous studies have suggested that a gap exists between hospitality education and industry requirements. Students may possess theoretical knowledge but struggle to apply this knowledge effectively in practical situations. Similarly, hotel employers sometimes report concerns regarding graduates' readiness for workplace responsibilities, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and professional attitudes (Baum, 2015). Such discrepancies can negatively affect students' confidence, job satisfaction, career commitment, and professional development.

In Pokhara, where tourism and hospitality industries play a significant role in economic development, BHM students regularly engage in internships and industrial placements within hotels and tourism establishments. Although these experiences provide valuable opportunities for learning and skill development, little research has explored how students personally experience the transition from classroom learning to actual hotel work environments. Most existing studies focus on internship outcomes, employability skills, or employer perspectives rather than students' lived experiences during the transition process.

Furthermore, students may face multiple challenges including adapting to organizational culture, managing workplace stress, communicating with guests and colleagues, applying theoretical knowledge in practical contexts, and balancing professional expectations with personal development. Understanding these experiences is essential for identifying strengths and weaknesses within hospitality education systems and developing strategies that facilitate smoother transitions into professional practice.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the lived experiences of BHM students in Pokhara regarding their transition from classroom learning to the hotel industry. By examining students' perceptions, challenges, learning experiences, and adaptation processes, the research aims to provide insights that can contribute to curriculum improvement, enhanced industry collaboration, and better preparation of future hospitality professionals.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. How do BHM students experience the transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice in Pokhara?
2. What challenges do BHM students face during their transition into the hotel industry?
3. What strategies can improve the transition process from hospitality education to industry practice?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To examine the lived experiences of BHM students during their transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice.
- To identify challenges encountered by students during their transition into hotel workplaces.
- To recommend strategies for improving hospitality education and facilitating successful industry transition.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds considerable significance for hospitality education institutions, students, hotel industries, policymakers, and future researchers.

Understanding students' transition experiences can contribute to improving educational quality and strengthening connections between academic institutions and industry organizations.

Significance for BHM Students

The findings will help students understand common challenges and opportunities encountered during the transition from education to professional practice. Awareness of these experiences may enhance students' preparedness, confidence, and adaptability when entering the hospitality industry.

Significance for Hospitality Colleges

The study will provide valuable insights regarding the effectiveness of existing curricula and practical training programs. Educational institutions can utilize the findings to improve teaching methods, internship structures, and industry engagement activities.

Significance for Hotel Industry

Hotels and hospitality organizations can gain a better understanding of students' expectations, learning needs, and workplace challenges. This knowledge can assist employers in designing supportive training programs and creating positive learning environments.

Significance for Policymakers

The findings can support policy development related to hospitality education, workforce development, internship management, and industry-academia collaboration. Policymakers can utilize the results to strengthen hospitality education standards and graduate employability.

Significance for Future Researchers

The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge concerning hospitality education, experiential learning, and professional development. It may serve as a reference for future studies examining student experiences, employability, and workforce transition in hospitality and tourism sectors.

1.6 Literature Review

The literature review provides a theoretical and conceptual foundation for understanding the transition of hospitality students from classroom learning to the hotel industry. It also highlights previous studies related to hospitality education, experiential learning, skill development, and the theory–practice gap in vocational education. Hospitality education is widely recognized as a practice-oriented field that requires both theoretical knowledge and practical exposure. According to Dewey (1938), learning is most effective when students engage in “learning by doing,” which is highly relevant in hospitality and hotel management education. This principle supports the idea that classroom learning alone is insufficient without real-world application in hotel environments.

Similarly, Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (1984) emphasizes that learning occurs through a continuous cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. In the context of BHM students, this theory explains how students develop professional competencies when they are exposed to real hotel operations such as front office handling, housekeeping services, food and beverage operations, and guest interaction. Several studies in hospitality education have identified a significant gap between classroom learning and industry expectations. Raybould and Wilkins (2005) found that hospitality graduates often lack practical skills, communication abilities, and workplace readiness despite having strong theoretical knowledge. This gap creates challenges during the transition from academic institutions to professional hotel environments.

In the context of Nepal, hospitality education has grown rapidly due to the expansion of tourism and hotel industries, especially in cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara. However, studies conducted by Shrestha (2018) and Gurung (2020) indicate that BHM students often face difficulties in adapting to real hotel environments due to limited practical exposure during their academic studies. These challenges include communication barriers, lack of confidence, unfamiliarity with workplace culture, and difficulty in handling guests.

Furthermore, Baum (2006) highlights that the hospitality industry requires not only technical skills but also soft skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and customer service orientation. These skills are often developed more effectively through internships and on-the-job training rather than classroom lectures

alone. Internship programs play a crucial role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. According to Zopiatis (2007), internships provide students with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real workplace settings, develop professional attitudes, and gain industry exposure. However, the effectiveness of internships depends on proper supervision, structured training, and collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners. In addition, Harkison et al. (2011) argue that hospitality education must continuously evolve to meet industry demands. They suggest that curriculum design should integrate more practical components, industry visits, simulations, and guest lectures from professionals to enhance student readiness.

From a phenomenological perspective, the transition experience of students is not only about skill development but also about emotional and psychological adaptation. Students often experience stress, anxiety, excitement, and confidence-building during their first exposure to hotel environments. This aligns with Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991), which explains how individuals change their perspectives through critical reflection on real-life experiences.

1.6.1 Hospitality Education and Professional Development

Hospitality education has evolved significantly over the past few decades in response to increasing industry demands and globalization. The primary purpose of hospitality education is to prepare students with the knowledge, technical competencies, and professional attitudes required for successful careers in hospitality organizations (Airey & Tribe, 2005).

Professional development within hospitality education involves the acquisition of technical skills, interpersonal competencies, leadership capabilities, and industry-specific knowledge. Baum (2015) argues that hospitality education must balance theoretical instruction with practical experience to ensure graduates can effectively meet workplace expectations. The hospitality industry requires employees who possess strong customer service skills, cultural awareness, communication abilities, and problem-solving competencies. Consequently, educational institutions increasingly emphasize experiential learning opportunities that facilitate professional growth and workplace readiness.

1.6.2 Classroom Learning in Hospitality Education

Classroom learning serves as the foundation of hospitality education by providing students with theoretical knowledge related to hotel operations, management principles, tourism systems, marketing, finance, and human resource management. Through lectures, discussions, case studies, simulations, and practical laboratory activities, students develop an understanding of hospitality concepts and operational procedures (Barron, 2008). Effective classroom learning contributes to cognitive development and enhances students' ability to analyze complex situations. However, researchers have noted that theoretical learning alone cannot fully prepare students for real workplace challenges. Practical application remains essential for transforming knowledge into professional competence (Lashley, 2018).

Students often perceive classroom learning as beneficial for developing conceptual understanding but may struggle when applying theoretical principles in dynamic workplace environments. Therefore, integration of practical training within academic programs has become increasingly important.

1.6.3 Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential Learning Theory developed by Kolb (1984) provides a useful framework for understanding hospitality education. According to the theory, learning occurs through a continuous cycle involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Hospitality internships provide opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning by participating directly in workplace activities. Through these experiences, students develop practical skills, professional judgment, and confidence while reflecting on their learning experiences. The theory suggests that meaningful learning occurs when individuals actively engage with real situations and subsequently reflect upon those experiences. Consequently, experiential learning plays a critical role in facilitating students' transition from academic learning to professional practice.

1.6.4 Transition from Education to Workplace

The transition from educational institutions to professional workplaces represents a major developmental stage in students' lives. Schlossberg (1981) defines

transition as a process involving adaptation to new roles, responsibilities, relationships, and environments. For hospitality students, this transition often involves adapting to workplace cultures characterized by customer service expectations, operational efficiency requirements, teamwork, and performance evaluation systems. Students must learn to navigate unfamiliar situations while applying knowledge acquired during their academic studies. Research indicates that successful transitions are influenced by individual characteristics, educational preparation, organizational support, and workplace experiences. Students who receive adequate preparation and mentoring are more likely to adapt successfully to professional environments.

1.6.5 Internship and Industry Exposure

Internships represent one of the most important components of hospitality education. They provide opportunities for students to observe industry operations, develop professional skills, and gain practical experience in real workplace settings (Zopiatis, 2007). Research suggests that internship experiences contribute positively to students' confidence, employability, and career development. Students gain exposure to industry standards, organizational cultures, customer service practices, and professional networks.

However, internships may also present challenges including excessive workloads, communication barriers, inadequate supervision, and mismatches between expectations and realities. Understanding these experiences is essential for improving internship effectiveness and supporting student development.

1.6.6 Research Gap

Hospitality education has been widely studied in relation to internship experiences, employability skills, workplace readiness, career development, and student satisfaction. Numerous researchers have examined the effectiveness of hospitality programmes in preparing students for professional careers within the hotel industry. These studies have contributed significantly to understanding the relationship between academic learning and industry requirements. However, despite the growing body of literature, several important gaps remain. Most existing studies have focused on quantitative measures such as internship satisfaction, job performance, and employability outcomes. While these studies provide valuable statistical information, they often overlook the personal experiences, emotions,

perceptions, and challenges encountered by students during their transition from classroom learning to professional hotel environments. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how students personally interpret and experience this transition process.

Furthermore, much of the available research has been conducted in developed countries where educational systems and hospitality industries differ considerably from the Nepalese context. The hospitality industry in Nepal has unique characteristics influenced by local culture, tourism patterns, and workplace practices. Despite the importance of tourism and hospitality to Nepal's economy, limited studies have explored the transition experiences of BHM students within the country.

Another important gap exists in relation to methodology. Previous studies have largely employed quantitative research approaches that focus on measurable outcomes. Few studies have utilized phenomenological approaches to explore students lived experiences and understand the meanings they attach to their transition from education to professional practice.

Similarly, limited research has been conducted specifically in Pokhara, one of Nepal's leading tourism destinations. Pokhara's rapidly growing hospitality industry creates numerous opportunities for BHM students, yet little is known about how these students adapt to workplace realities and apply classroom learning within hotel settings. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps by exploring the lived experiences of mixed BHM students in Pokhara through a phenomenological perspective.

1.7 Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic process through which a researcher collects, analyses, and interprets information to address research questions and achieve research objectives. It provides a structured framework that guides the entire research process and ensures the credibility and validity of findings. The selection of an appropriate methodology is crucial because it determines how data are collected, interpreted, and presented.

The present study adopts a qualitative methodology because the primary purpose is to explore and understand the experiences of BHM students during their transition from classroom learning to the hotel industry. Qualitative research is

particularly suitable for investigating human experiences, perceptions, behaviours, and social interactions in their natural settings. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical measurement and statistical analysis, qualitative research emphasizes depth, meaning, and interpretation.

The study seeks to understand how students perceive their transition experiences, the challenges they encounter, the knowledge and skills they develop, and the ways they adapt to professional hotel environments. Through qualitative inquiry, participants are provided opportunities to express their experiences freely, enabling the researcher to obtain rich and detailed information regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The qualitative methodology therefore provides an effective means of achieving the objectives of the study and generating meaningful insights into hospitality education and industry practice.

1.8.1 Research Design

The study employs phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research design that focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals regarding a particular phenomenon. The purpose of phenomenological research is to explore how people perceive, interpret, and make sense of their experiences and to identify the essential meanings associated with those experiences.

The phenomenon examined in this study is the transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice among BHM students in Pokhara. This transition represents an important stage in students' educational and professional development because it involves moving from a structured academic environment into a dynamic and demanding workplace. During this process, students encounter new responsibilities, workplace cultures, customer service expectations, and operational challenges that shape their professional identities and learning experiences.

The phenomenological design is considered appropriate because it allows participants to describe their experiences in their own words and provides opportunities to explore the emotions, perceptions, challenges, and learning outcomes associated with the transition process. By focusing on students' lived experiences, the study aims to generate a comprehensive understanding of how classroom learning influences workplace adaptation and professional development within the hospitality industry.

1.8.2 Data Collection Methods

Data collection refers to the process of gathering information necessary for answering research questions and achieving research objectives. In this study, primary data are collected through semi-structured interviews, while secondary data are obtained from books, journal articles, research reports, theses, dissertations, and hospitality-related publications.

Semi-structured interviews are selected as the primary data collection method because they provide flexibility and encourage participants to share their experiences openly. The interview process involves a series of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' perceptions, feelings, challenges, and learning experiences during their transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice. This method allows the researcher to probe further into participants' responses and obtain detailed descriptions of their experiences.

The use of interviews is particularly appropriate for phenomenological research because it enables participants to express their personal perspectives and allows the researcher to gain deeper insights into the meanings attached to their experiences. In addition, secondary sources are reviewed to establish a theoretical foundation for the study and support the interpretation of findings.

1.8.3 Sampling Strategy

Sampling refers to the process of selecting participants from a larger population for inclusion in a study. Since the present research focuses on individuals who have directly experienced the transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice, purposive sampling has been adopted.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The researcher intentionally selects individuals who possess firsthand knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation. This sampling strategy is widely used in qualitative and phenomenological research because it enables the researcher to obtain rich and meaningful information from participants who can provide detailed accounts of their experiences.

The participants for this study include mixed BHM students in Pokhara, such as final-year students, internship students, industrial trainees, and recent graduates

who have completed hotel industry placements or employment. Approximately 10 to 15 participants are selected to ensure depth of information and achieve data saturation, where no significant new themes emerge from additional interviews.

1.8.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of organizing, interpreting, and making sense of collected information to answer research questions. In this study, thematic analysis is employed to analyse the qualitative data obtained from interviews.

Thematic analysis is a systematic method of identifying, examining, and reporting recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data. After conducting interviews, the researcher transcribes participants' responses and carefully reviews the transcripts several times to gain familiarity with the data. Important statements and meaningful expressions are then identified and assigned initial codes.

The coded information is subsequently grouped into broader categories based on similarities and relationships. These categories are further refined into themes that represent common experiences, perceptions, and challenges shared by participants. The themes are interpreted in relation to research objectives and existing literature to generate meaningful findings.

Thematic analysis is considered suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to explore the complexity of students' experiences and identify key factors influencing their transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice.

1.8.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration is an essential component of research involving human participants. It ensures that the study is conducted responsibly and that participants' rights, dignity, and well-being are protected throughout the research process. In the present study, several ethical principles are followed to maintain research integrity and protect participants.

Before data collection, participants are provided with clear information regarding the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study. Their informed consent is obtained voluntarily, ensuring that participation is based on free choice rather than coercion. Participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any negative consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained throughout the research process. Participants' names and personal information are not disclosed, and pseudonyms or identification codes are used to protect their identities. All information collected during interviews is used solely for academic purposes and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

The researcher also ensures that participants are treated with respect and that no physical, emotional, or psychological harm results from their involvement in the study. Questions are asked in a professional and respectful manner, allowing participants to share their experiences comfortably. In addition, all sources of information used in the study are properly acknowledged through appropriate citation and referencing practices to maintain academic honesty and avoid plagiarism.

By adhering to these ethical principles, the study ensures the credibility, trustworthiness, and integrity of the research process while safeguarding the rights and interests of all participants.

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings obtained from interviews conducted with BHM students, internship trainees, and recent graduates in Pokhara. The purpose of the study was to explore their lived experiences regarding the transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice. Through thematic analysis of the interview data, three major themes emerged: (1) Experiences of Transition from Classroom to Industry, (2) Challenges Encountered During Industry Exposure, and (3) Learning Outcomes and Professional Development. These themes represent the common experiences shared by participants during their transition into professional hotel environments.

2.1 Experiences of Transition from Classroom Learning to Hotel Industry

The first major theme focused on how participants experienced their initial transition from academic settings to hotel workplaces. Most participants reported that entering the hotel industry was both exciting and challenging. While classroom learning provided a foundation of theoretical knowledge, many students felt unprepared for the realities of hotel operations.

Several participants explained that they entered internships with high expectations regarding professional learning and career development. However, upon joining hotels, they discovered that workplace realities differed considerably from classroom simulations. Students reported that hotel operations required rapid decision-making, multitasking, teamwork, and customer interaction skills that were difficult to fully understand within classroom environments.

Participants commonly stated that theoretical concepts learned in subjects such as Front Office Operations, Housekeeping Management, Food and Beverage Service, and Hospitality Management helped them understand workplace procedures. Nevertheless, practical implementation often proved more demanding than expected. Students needed time to adapt to workplace cultures, operational standards, and organizational expectations.

Many respondents described their first weeks in hotels as a period of adjustment characterized by nervousness, uncertainty, and continuous learning.

Despite initial difficulties, participants generally viewed the transition as an important stage in their professional development. I can suggest that classroom education provides essential theoretical foundations but cannot completely replicate real workplace conditions. The transition process therefore serves as a critical learning period during which students transform academic knowledge into practical competence.

2.2 Challenges Encountered During Industry Exposure

The second major theme concerned challenges faced by students during their transition into hotel environments. Almost all participants reported experiencing various forms of difficulty while adapting to professional hospitality workplaces.

One of the most frequently mentioned challenges was the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Participants explained that although they understood operational procedures theoretically, performing tasks efficiently in real workplace situations required additional learning and experience.

Communication emerged as another significant challenge. Many students initially struggled to communicate confidently with guests, supervisors, and colleagues. Participants noted that interacting with international tourists, handling guest complaints, and maintaining professional communication standards were more difficult than anticipated.

Workload and time management were also identified as common concerns. Students reported that hotel operations involved long working hours, shift duties, and physically demanding tasks. Several participants indicated that adjusting to irregular schedules and maintaining energy throughout shifts required considerable adaptation.

Workplace pressure represented another important challenge. Students frequently encountered situations involving demanding guests, operational errors, and performance expectations. Such experiences sometimes caused stress and anxiety, particularly during the early stages of internship and employment.

Participants also discussed challenges related to organizational culture. Understanding workplace rules, professional behaviour, teamwork expectations, and hierarchical structures required significant adjustment. Some students initially felt uncomfortable expressing opinions or asking questions due to concerns about workplace perceptions. It demonstrates that transition challenges extend beyond

technical skills and involve emotional, social, and professional adaptation. These experiences indicate the importance of providing students with greater exposure to workplace realities before entering industry placements.

2.3 Learning Outcomes and Professional Development

The third major theme focused on learning experiences and professional development resulting from industry exposure. Despite the challenges encountered, participants overwhelmingly described their transition experiences as valuable and transformative. Students reported significant improvements in communication skills, customer service abilities, teamwork competencies, and problem-solving skills. Many participants explained that direct interaction with guests increased their confidence and improved their ability to handle diverse situations professionally.

Practical exposure enabled participants to better understand hotel operations and appreciate the importance of service quality. Students learned how departments collaborate to achieve organizational objectives and gained insights into industry expectations that could not be fully acquired through classroom learning alone.

Several participants highlighted improvements in professional discipline, punctuality, responsibility, and time management. Exposure to workplace standards encouraged students to develop positive professional attitudes and stronger work ethics. The findings also revealed that industry experiences influenced career aspirations. Many participants reported increased motivation to pursue hospitality careers after gaining practical exposure, while others developed clearer understandings of specific departments in which they wished to specialize.

Participants emphasized the importance of internships and practical training in preparing students for future employment. Most respondents recommended expanding industry exposure opportunities and strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and hospitality organizations.

2.4 Summary of Findings

The study identified three major findings. First, students experienced a noticeable difference between classroom learning and workplace realities, requiring substantial adaptation during their transition into the hotel industry. Second, participants encountered challenges related to communication, workload, workplace culture, professional expectations, and practical skill application. Third, despite these

challenges, industry exposure contributed significantly to professional growth by enhancing communication abilities, technical competencies, confidence, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and career readiness. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice represents a complex but valuable learning process that plays an essential role in the development of future hospitality professionals.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of BHM students regarding their transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice in Pokhara. Using a phenomenological approach, the study examined students' perceptions, challenges, learning experiences, and professional development during their exposure to the hospitality industry.

The findings reveal that classroom learning provides important theoretical foundations that support students' understanding of hospitality operations. However, the transition into professional hotel environments requires students to apply theoretical knowledge within dynamic and demanding workplace contexts. During this process, students encounter various challenges including communication difficulties, workplace pressure, workload management issues, adaptation to organizational culture, and practical skill development requirements.

Despite these challenges, the study concludes that industry exposure plays a critical role in enhancing students' professional competence and career readiness. Practical experiences contribute to the development of communication skills, teamwork abilities, customer service competencies, problem-solving skills, confidence, and professional attitudes. Furthermore, industry exposure helps students gain realistic understanding of hospitality careers and strengthens their preparedness for future employment.

Overall, the study concludes that the transition from classroom learning to hotel industry practice is an essential component of hospitality education. Although the transition process may be challenging, it serves as a valuable learning experience that contributes significantly to students' personal and professional development.

3.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Recommendations for Educational Institutions

Hospitality colleges should strengthen practical learning components within BHM programmes by increasing laboratory activities, simulations, industry visits, and practical demonstrations. Greater emphasis should be placed on developing communication skills, customer service competencies, and workplace problem-solving abilities.

Recommendations for Internship Programmes

Colleges and hotels should collaborate more closely to design structured internship programmes that provide meaningful learning experiences. Clear learning objectives, mentorship arrangements, and performance feedback systems should be established to support student development.

Recommendations for Hotel Industry

Hotels should provide supportive learning environments for trainees and interns. Supervisors should encourage open communication, provide constructive feedback, and assist students in adapting to workplace cultures and expectations.

Recommendations for Students

Students should actively engage in practical learning opportunities, develop communication skills, improve professional attitudes, and seek continuous learning experiences. Greater initiative and self-confidence can facilitate smoother transitions into professional environments.

Recommendations for Policymakers

Educational authorities and tourism stakeholders should strengthen partnerships between hospitality institutions and industry organizations. Policies supporting experiential learning, internship quality assurance, and workforce development should be promoted.

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APPENDICES

Interview Questionnaire

The following interview guide was used to talk with BHM students in Pokhara who had completed internship or on-the-job training in a hotel establishment. These questions served as a guide, and additional follow-up questions were asked where relevant to explore participants' experiences more fully.

Before each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and verbal consent was obtained to proceed.

Section A: Background Information

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself — your BHM programme, current semester, and the hotel where you completed your internship or on-the-job training?
2. How long was your internship or on-the-job training placement, and which department(s) did you work in?
3. Before starting your internship, what did you expect hotel work to be like, based on your classroom learning?

Section B: Classroom Learning Experience

4. What kinds of things did you learn in your BHM classes and lab practicals before going for your internship?
5. How confident did you feel about applying this classroom knowledge before you started working in the hotel?
6. Were there any subjects or skills you felt particularly well-prepared in, based on your classroom learning?

Section C: Initial Experience Entering the Hotel Industry

7. Can you describe your first few days or weeks working in the hotel? What was that experience like for you?
8. Were there any moments where you felt surprised, unprepared, or overwhelmed? Can you describe one?
9. How did the pace and environment of the hotel compare to what you experienced in classroom practicals?

Section D: Challenges in the Transition

10. What were the biggest challenges you faced in applying your classroom knowledge to real hotel work?
11. Did you face any physical, emotional, or time-management challenges during your placement? Can you describe them?
12. In what ways, if any, did you feel your BHM classes did not fully prepare you for hotel work?

Section E: Coping Strategies and Support

13. What helped you cope with the challenges you faced during your transition into hotel work?
14. Did any supervisors, senior staff, or colleagues support you during this period? How?
15. How did your confidence or comfort level change over the course of your internship or training?

Section F: Closing Question

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of transitioning from classroom learning to working in the hotel industry