

Shift from Industry to Academe: Lived Experiences of Hospitality and Tourism Industry Practitioners Turned Educators

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600949>

Received: 20 June 2026; Accepted: 25 June 2026; Published: 09 July 2026

ABSTRACT

The hospitality and tourism industry is characterised by demanding schedules, high turnover, and complex work-life balance challenges that motivate experienced practitioners to transition into academic careers. This phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of ten former hospitality and tourism industry practitioners who are now educators at higher education institutions in the Philippines. Using in-depth interviews and thematic analysis guided by Creswell's (2007) phenomenological framework, six themes emerged: (1) the dynamic and multicultural nature of industry work; (2) family obligations and work-life imbalance as primary drivers of career transition; (3) industry experience as a pedagogical asset; (4) challenges in engaging millennial learners; (5) recommendations for industry-aligned curriculum reform; and (6) fulfilment and professional identity in academe. Findings confirm that industry-experienced educators enrich hospitality education by converting classrooms into experiential learning environments reflective of real-world industry practice. The study calls for structured faculty immersion programs, competency-based curriculum reform, and sustained industry-academe partnerships to close the persistent gap between hospitality education and workforce expectations.

Keywords: Hospitality Education, Industry Practitioners, Phenomenological Inquiry, Career Transition, Academe, Experiential Learning, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the most dynamic and demanding sectors in the global economy. It operates around the clock, requires constant adaptation to multicultural guest expectations, and places significant physical and emotional burdens on its workforce. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's Economic Impact Report (2023), the industry recovered 11 million jobs in 2021 and created 21.6 million new jobs in 2022, bringing total global employment to over 295 million — approximately one in every 11 jobs worldwide. Despite this scale, the sector continues to struggle with chronic workforce instability, characterised by annual turnover rates of 70 to 80 percent in many markets (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024).

In the Philippines, hospitality and tourism management has been one of the most popular undergraduate programs for more than two decades, producing a steady pipeline of graduates who staff the nation's growing hotel, resort, and tourism sectors (Aguilar, 2021). However, the quality of graduates remains uneven, and industry stakeholders consistently identify a gap between what schools teach and what the workplace actually demands. This gap is particularly pronounced in practical skills, communication competencies, and professional readiness — areas that are difficult to develop through textbook instruction alone.

One underexplored solution to this educational gap lies in the expertise of former industry practitioners who have transitioned into the academe. These individuals bring hands-on, contextual knowledge that complements formal pedagogical training. They understand the rhythms of a busy hotel lobby, the pressure of peak-season service, and the interpersonal demands of multicultural teams — and they can transmit that knowledge in ways that transform a classroom into a rehearsal space for real industry environments.

This study investigated the lived experiences of ten former hospitality and tourism employees who shifted careers from the industry to full-time academic teaching at higher education institutions across the Philippines. The research explored: (1) the nature of their industry work and why they transitioned to teaching; (2) how their industry experience shapes their pedagogy; (3) the challenges they face as educators of millennial learners; and (4) their recommendations for improving hospitality and tourism education. A phenomenological inquiry was employed to capture the depth, nuance, and meaning embedded in their personal narratives. The findings contribute empirical evidence to the literature on industry-academe partnerships and the pedagogical value of practitioner-educators in vocationally oriented disciplines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Hospitality Industry as a Demanding Workplace

The hospitality and tourism industry is characterised by long working hours, shift schedules that conflict with social and family life, emotionally intensive guest interactions, and a multicultural work environment that demands high adaptability. Dogru et al. (2023) note that the sector's structural characteristics — including high seasonality, labour intensity, and dependence on face-to-face service delivery — have long contributed to persistent workforce challenges. These include low pay relative to the broader economy, poor working conditions in some segments, and limited opportunities for career advancement, all of which have disrupted hospitality and tourism labour markets for decades.

The emotional and physical toll of hospitality work is well-documented. Liu et al. (2022) found that hospitality professionals, unlike workers in many other industries, are typically unable to work remotely, which reduces the time they can spend with family and elevates role stress. With the rise of dual-earner households, work-family conflict has become an increasingly significant predictor of employee dissatisfaction and exit intention in the sector. Mooney, Harris, and Ryan (2016) further argued that improving induction and socialisation processes is critical for retaining employees and strengthening their professional identity in a multicultural workplace environment.

Despite these challenges, the industry continues to attract young entrants drawn to its dynamism and international exposure. However, studies consistently show that over 30 percent of early-career hospitality employees leave the sector within their first five to six years (Brown et al., 2014, as cited in Liu et al., 2022). The result is a revolving-door workforce that places enormous strain on human resource management and undermines institutional knowledge retention.

Career Transition: From Industry to Academe

Career transitions in the hospitality sector are widely studied. The motivations that prompt experienced professionals to exit the industry are multiple and often intersecting — including family obligations, burnout, desire for stability, and a sense that the demands of the industry are incompatible with personal growth and fulfilment as individuals age and mature.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding these transitions. As hospitality workers progress through their careers, their priorities often shift from the physiological and safety needs that an industry salary addresses, toward higher-order needs for belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation (D'Souza&Gurin, 2016). Winston (2016) extended this framework into an existential-humanistic model of motivation, arguing that self-actualising individuals actively seek contexts in which their skills and values are aligned with their work environment. For many experienced hospitality professionals, academia offers precisely this alignment — a stable, intellectually stimulating environment where they can share accumulated knowledge and mentor the next generation of industry leaders.

The desire to spend more time with family is among the most frequently cited reasons for leaving the hospitality industry. Liu et al. (2022) documented that shift work, public holiday obligations, and inflexible scheduling significantly reduce family time for hospitality employees, increasing turnover intention, particularly among

those with young children. Ferreira et al. (2017) similarly found that daily family stress predicted decisional regret among hospitality workers, driving career change decisions.

Beyond family considerations, Garcia-Martinez (2016) identified discrepancies between employee expectations of career development and the actual opportunities available within hospitality organisations as a key driver of voluntary turnover. When career growth is perceived as stagnant, motivated employees seek alternative environments where their expertise is more visibly valued. For many, higher education provides that alternative.

Industry Practitioners as Hospitality Educators

A growing body of research supports the pedagogical value of educators who bring direct industry experience to the classroom. Boon, Sulaiman, and Razali (2024) conducted a systematic review confirming that experiential learning — the pedagogical mode most naturally available to industry-experienced educators — is widely regarded as the most effective approach in hospitality and tourism management education. Their review showed that internships led to permanent job offers in many cases, and that experiential activities substantially improved student preparedness for the workforce.

The specific advantage of industry-experienced educators lies in their ability to bridge abstract theory and lived practice. Hospitality professionals transitioning into teaching bring contextual knowledge that enables them to present realistic scenarios, anticipate common industry problems, and model professional behaviours for their students (Schmitt, as cited in EHL Hospitality Insights, 2024). Lipinski and Kosicek (2016) found that faculty with industry experience positively influence students' ability to apply theoretical frameworks to practical situations — a competency that textbook-only instruction struggles to develop.

Lin (2006) demonstrated that the combination of research affiliation, academic positioning, and prior industry experience creates a distinctive form of scientific and technical human capital that enhances both teaching quality and institutional productivity. Similarly, Borbon and Apritado (2022) found in a phenomenological study of Philippine hospitality institutions that the most effective educators are those who integrate industry competencies with formal pedagogical frameworks, producing graduates who are both theoretically grounded and practically prepared.

Despite this evidence, Lipinski and Kosicek (2016) cautioned that insufficient systematic attention has been paid to supporting industry practitioners who enter academia. Many transition without formal pedagogical training, relying on professional intuition rather than evidence-based teaching strategies. This suggests an institutional responsibility to provide structured induction, mentoring, and ongoing professional development for practitioner-educators.

Industry-Academe Collaboration and Curriculum Alignment

The relationship between industry and academia in hospitality education has been the subject of ongoing debate. Apritado and Borbon (2022) identified curriculum alignment as a critical concern in Philippine hospitality education, emphasising that learning outcomes must be measurable, competency-based, and directly relevant to industry needs. Del Callar (2024) reinforced this, arguing that educators must be skilled at designing curricula that reflect current industry standards rather than historical textbook content.

Betts and Santoro (2003) were among the early scholars to articulate the mutual benefits of industry-academe collaboration, arguing that such partnerships can generate innovation, improve workforce readiness, and advance the educational quality of hospitality programs. More recently, the EHL Hospitality Industry Outlook (2023) noted that the global shortage of qualified hospitality trainers — exacerbated by pandemic-related workforce disruption — makes the integration of industry practitioners into academic faculties not merely beneficial but urgent.

The pandemic fundamentally disrupted the hospitality education landscape. Borbon and Apritado (2022) documented the dual challenge of sustaining experiential learning in an online environment while simultaneously

managing the psychological and professional disruptions faced by both educators and students. Institutions that had established strong industry linkages before the pandemic were better positioned to adapt, highlighting the structural importance of sustained industry-academe partnerships.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using phenomenological inquiry to explore the lived experiences of former hospitality and tourism industry practitioners who transitioned to academic teaching. Phenomenology was selected as the most appropriate methodology because it enables the researcher to capture the subjective, first-person experience of participants and to identify the essence of a shared phenomenon — in this case, the experience of shifting careers from industry practice to academic education (Creswell, 2007).

The methodological steps outlined by Creswell (2007) were followed: (1) clearly identifying and defining the phenomenon under study; (2) acknowledging the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology, including intentionality and the bracketing of researcher bias; (3) collecting rich data through in-depth interviews about actual industry and teaching experiences; (4) formulating clusters of meaning and conducting thematic analysis; and (5) developing textural and structural descriptions that articulate the essence of the shared experience.

Participants and Sampling

Ten research participants were selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria required that participants: (a) had worked for a minimum of two years in a hotel, resort, or tourism establishment in a defined functional role; (b) had subsequently transitioned to full-time or substantial part-time teaching in a higher education institution offering a Hospitality and Tourism Management program in the Philippines; and (c) were willing to participate in recorded or documented interviews. Participants represented a range of industry functions — including front office operations, food and beverage service, housekeeping, marketing, airport ground operations, and tour guiding — and were affiliated with institutions across Eastern Visayas and adjacent regions.

Table 1. Profile of Research Participants

Participant	Industry Background	Current Academic Position	Institution
Miss J	Front Office Clerk; Marketing Assistant; Executive Secretary	Full-Time Instructor, Hotel Management	SUC 1
Ms. B	Hotel Cashier; Executive Secretary to Hotel Manager	Department Head; Associate Professor 1, Hotel/Tourism Management	SUC 1
Mr. M	Marketing Assistant; Executive Secretary to Hotel President	Full-Time Instructor	PC 1
Ms. C	Front Office Cashier; Hotel Cost Controller	Dean, College of Technical Education; Professor 2	SUC 2
Ms. A	Linen Attendant	Senior HRM/Tourism Faculty; Associate Professor 4	SUC 1
Mr. S	Airport Ground Staff; Accredited Tour Guide (DOT)	HRM/Tourism Full-Time Instructor	SUC 1
Mr. J	Captain Waiter; Bartender	HRM/Tourism Faculty Instructor 1	SUC 3
Ms. E	Front Office Clerk; Group of Resorts Marketing Executive	HRM/Tourism Faculty; Practicum Coordinator; Assistant Professor 1	SUC 1
Mr. A	Front Office Agent; Captain Waiter; Senior Reservation Officer	HRM Faculty Instructor 1	SUC 4
Mr. B	Pastry Chef; Food and Beverage Supervisor	Department Head; Assistant Professor 3	PC 2

Data Collection

In-depth semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection instrument. An interview guide was

developed in consultation with two subject-matter experts — one from the hospitality industry and one from higher education — to ensure the questions were both professionally relevant and pedagogically grounded. The guide addressed four key domains: the nature and experience of industry work; the motivations for career transition; teaching experiences, strategies, and challenges; and recommendations for curriculum improvement.

Participants based in Tacloban City were interviewed face-to-face at locations of their choosing, ensuring comfort and confidentiality. Participants located in more distant institutions were interviewed via video call. Interviews were conducted in English, with translation to Filipino or Waray-waray provided on request to ensure clarity of expression and minimize language-related response constraints. Prior informed consent was secured from all participants, and audio recording was conducted only with explicit permission. Where participants declined recording, detailed field notes were taken. All data were handled with strict confidentiality, and participants are identified only by pseudonyms or initials in this report.

Data Analysis

All interview data were transcribed, collated, and subjected to thematic analysis. The analytical process involved immersive reading of transcripts to develop familiarity with the data, followed by systematic coding of significant statements and experiential units. Codes were grouped into clusters of meaning, from which the six themes presented in the Results section were derived. Member checking was conducted with selected participants to verify interpretive accuracy. Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the analytic process to minimise the imposition of prior assumptions on emergent findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis of the ten in-depth interviews yielded six overarching themes. These themes are presented below alongside supporting participant statements and integration with relevant literature.

Table 2. Summary of Themes and Representative Statements

#	Theme	Representative Participant Statement
1	Nature of Work in the Industry	"Working in the industry was enjoyable. Also have a complete grasp of what is hospitality industry and hotel operation from housekeeping, to front office to marketing." — Mr. M.
2	Reasons for Shifting to Academe	"I decided to shift to academe for personal reasons. I have seen married women working in the industry having difficulty juggling work and family. I also wanted to have a slower pace in life." — Ms. E.
3	Industry Practitioners as Educators	"I teach based from my experience. I could give situations for my students which are realistic." — Mr. M.
4	Challenges in Teaching Millennial Learners	"I have to deal with the millennials, I have to adopt with that sort of teaching-learning process. We are in the 21st century — the techniques used should also conform with what is ideal and suitable in this age of technology." — Mr. A.
5	Recommendations to Improve HRM Education	"The curriculum of the hospitality and tourism education should be filled with practical activities, rather than be confined with theories. And there should be a continuous dialogue with the industry." — Ms. B.
6	Regrets of Leaving the Industry	"Being in the teaching field makes me more satisfied and fulfilled — being able to see somebody learned and succeed is more satisfying than anything else." — Mr. A.

Theme 1: Nature of Work in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

All ten participants described the hospitality industry as simultaneously enjoyable and demanding. The most frequently cited source of positive experience was the opportunity to engage with guests and colleagues from

diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Mr. M. summarised this sentiment by reflecting that working in the industry gave him a comprehensive understanding of hotel operations across multiple departments. Mr. A. extended this view, noting that industry employment had enabled him to travel internationally and acquire knowledge of different cultural values and professional practices — experiences that would later prove invaluable in the classroom.

At the same time, participants consistently acknowledged the physical and emotional exhaustion inherent in hospitality work. Ms. C. described the experience

as enjoyable but tiring, while Mr. B. offered the telling phrase — tiring but exciting — that captured the paradox experienced by many industry workers. These accounts align with the broader literature characterising hospitality as a high-demand service environment. Dogru et al. (2023) noted that the structural characteristics of the sector — including round-the-clock operations, emotional labour requirements, and the physical demands of service delivery — have long been identified as drivers of workforce attrition. Mooney et al. (2016) argued that the industry's failure to adequately support employees through these demands, particularly through effective induction and professional identity development, contributes to its historically high turnover rates.

Theme 2: Reasons for Shifting Careers from Industry to Academe

The most consistently cited motivation for leaving the hospitality industry was the desire to spend more time with family. Among the female participants in particular, marriage and childbearing created an incompatibility between the demands of hospitality work — including night shifts, weekend duty, and holiday service obligations — and the responsibilities of family life. Ms. C. articulated this tension directly:

"I decided to do fulltime teaching when I got married. Since my husband was also working in the hotel, it was not proper to be leaving our baby specially during night time since my work as a cost controller I have to be back in the hotel to check."

This finding resonates strongly with Liu et al. (2022), who documented that shift schedules and public holiday obligations in hospitality significantly reduce available family time, increasing role stress and turnover intention — particularly for employees with young children. Similarly, Ferreira et al. (2017) found that daily family stress was a significant predictor of decisional regret and eventual career change among hospitality workers.

A secondary cluster of motivations centred on personal growth and the desire for stability. Mr. S. described his transition as motivated by a desire to return to learning: he felt that there was knowledge he had missed during his student years and that the academic environment offered a two-way learning process — one in which he could both contribute his industry knowledge and continue to learn from his students. Mr. J. articulated a pragmatic dimension of this choice, noting that while the hotel industry offered higher short-term salaries, it lacked the long-term job security available in academic employment.

These narratives are consistent with Maslow's motivational framework as applied by D'Souza and Gurin (2016) and Winston (2016), who argued that mature professionals increasingly prioritise higher-order needs — including belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation — over purely economic incentives. For the participants in this study, the transition to teaching represented a movement toward a professional environment that offered stability, relational depth, and meaningful social contribution.

Theme 3: Industry Practitioners as Educators

Every participant identified their industry experience as their primary pedagogical asset. Rather than teaching from textbooks, all ten described a practice-based approach to instruction in which they drew extensively from personal professional experience to contextualise learning for students. Mr. M. described this approach succinctly:

"I teach based from my experience. I could give situations for my students which are realistic. At first I found it hard to teach, I have to read my lessons at night. But now I know. And what is important is you know your lessons"

— *it is more than just a degree in education.* "

Ms. J. reinforced this by noting that although she did not hold a formal education degree, she compensated through experiential authority — teaching what she had lived, and asking questions when she encountered uncertainty. Mr. A. reflected on the distinctive value of this approach: armed with first-hand experience, he was able to offer his students realistic solutions grounded in actual hotel settings, and to articulate what it means to be globally competitive in the industry.

This finding strongly supports the experiential learning literature. Boon, Sulaiman, and Razali (2024) confirmed in their systematic review that experiential learning is perceived by both educators and industry professionals as substantially more effective than traditional classroom instruction in hospitality and tourism education. Their review noted that industry-experienced educators are particularly effective at connecting classroom activities to real-world performance expectations. EHL Hospitality Insights (2024) similarly observed that professional teachers who have worked in the industry can present a realistic picture of career pathways that inspires students and prepares them psychologically for the demands of the sector.

Borbon and Apritado (2022) found, in a parallel Philippine study, that the most valued hospitality educators are those who integrate industry competencies with educational design — a combination that produces graduates who are simultaneously theoretically literate and professionally agile. This study confirms that pattern: the participants who demonstrated the greatest apparent effectiveness were those who had both deep industry knowledge and had invested in developing their pedagogical skills over time.

Theme 4: Challenges in Teaching Millennial and Gen-Z Learners

Participants identified a consistent cluster of challenges associated with teaching the current generation of hospitality and tourism students. The dominant concern was the perceived passivity and technology dependence of millennial learners. Multiple participants noted that students frequently use mobile devices in lieu of note-taking, download and copy-paste research materials rather than engaging with them critically, and approach their studies with an attitude of entitlement that the educators linked to socioeconomic privilege.

Ms. B. described students as laser-focused on technology and unmotivated to study independently. Ms. E. identified attitude — particularly regarding punctuality — as the single largest barrier to student success in a hospitality career, noting that the industry's non-negotiable service standards require a level of personal discipline that many students had not yet developed. Mr. A. acknowledged the structural dimension of this challenge, recognising that effective pedagogy in the twenty-first century requires teaching strategies that engage rather than resist the technological orientations of digital-native learners:

"I have to deal with the millennials, I have to adopt with that sort of teaching learning process. We are in the 21st century — the techniques used should also conform with what is ideal and suitable in this age of technology."

These challenges are widely documented in the hospitality education literature. The EHL Hospitality Industry Outlook (2023) noted that the sector suffers from a reputational deficit among younger workers, with a significant proportion of school-leavers viewing hospitality jobs as temporary rather than as viable long-term careers. Badoni et al. (2025) highlighted the growing importance of integrating e-learning and hybrid pedagogical models into hospitality education — not as replacements for experiential learning but as complementary tools that meet students on familiar technological ground.

Participants also identified a structural barrier to effective teaching: the absence of industry-standard technology in their institutions. Ms. E. specifically noted the absence of reservation management systems such as Fidelio, observing that students cannot develop genuine operational competency without access to the tools they will use in the workplace. This gap between institutional resources and industry standards represents a systemic challenge for Philippine hospitality education that extends beyond individual teaching practice.

Theme 5: Recommendations for Improving Hospitality and Tourism Education

When asked how hospitality and tourism education could be improved, participants converged on several consistent recommendations. The most prominent was the need to shift curricular emphasis from theoretical instruction toward practical, skills-based learning. Ms. B. recommended that curricula be redesigned around practical activities and supplemented by continuous dialogue with the industry. Mr. M. called for greater curricular specificity, arguing that lessons should be targeted at discrete, workplace-relevant competencies rather than broad conceptual frameworks.

Several participants emphasised that faculty development is as important as student development. Ms. E. recommended extended faculty immersion programs — not one-week visits but substantive six-month to one-year immersions at the supervisory level — to ensure that educators' industry knowledge remains current. This recommendation is particularly significant given the rapidly evolving technology landscape in hospitality operations, where digital reservation systems, revenue management platforms, and guest experience technologies are continuously updated.

Mr. A. advocated for expanded laboratory time in major subjects, arguing that skills are only genuinely developed through repeated practice in conditions that approximate real workplace environments. Mr. B. identified communication skills development as a priority, particularly for students who aspire to work in international hospitality settings. These recommendations are consistent with Apritado and Borbon (2022), who argued that Philippine hospitality education must integrate competency-based education principles that make learning outcomes measurable, industry-relevant, and explicitly linked to employment outcomes.

At a systemic level, Betts and Santoro (2003) established the foundational argument for continuous industry-academe dialogue as a mechanism for maintaining educational relevance. The 2024 report by the Business-Higher Education Forum reinforced this, demonstrating that institutions with robust employer partnership frameworks produce graduates who are significantly better prepared for employment. The participants' recommendations in this study provide a practitioner-level confirmation of these structural arguments from within the Philippine educational context.

Theme 6: Regrets of Leaving the Industry — and the Fulfilment of Teaching

A majority of participants reported no regret about their transition from the industry to academic teaching. Across the cohort, a consistent narrative of professional fulfilment emerged — one grounded in the relational dimensions of teaching and the satisfaction of seeing former students succeed in their careers. Ms. C. expressed this with particular clarity:

"I do not have regrets of leaving the industry because when I meet my friends who are still working in the industry now, they are still having a fast-pace kind of life — and I am not for that. And now teaching gives me a different kind of satisfaction, most especially when I see my former students who have improved their lives after graduation because they work abroad."

Mr. A. described his transition as initially distressing, but ultimately transformative. He characterised teaching as a form of serendipity — a discovery of a vocation that proved more satisfying than the career he had deliberately built. Ms. E., reflecting on ten years in academic practice, described her shift as a beautiful accident, and expressed conviction that she could achieve more social impact as a teacher than as an industry employee.

Only one participant, Mr. J., reported ambivalence — he acknowledged continuing to miss the industry environment but had channeled that passion into community tourism development and plans for his own hospitality enterprise. This finding suggests that for industry practitioners who transition to teaching, the academic environment tends to offer sufficient professional reward to sustain commitment over the long term — even when the transition is initially involuntary or reluctant.

Barrows (1993) found that hospitality educators reported high satisfaction with work achievement, even when dissatisfied with compensation and support systems. The current findings confirm and extend this observation, suggesting that the intrinsic rewards of teaching — mentorship, intellectual engagement, and the visible impact

on student careers — are sufficient to retain experienced practitioners in the academic environment. This dynamic parallels Maslow's progression from physiological and safety needs (addressed by industry employment) to esteem and self-actualisation needs (addressed more fully by academic vocation) as articulated by D'Souza and Gurin (2016).

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study of ten former hospitality and tourism industry practitioners who transitioned to academic teaching yields a coherent and evidence-rich account of an underexplored dimension of hospitality education. The findings confirm that industry-experienced educators bring distinctive pedagogical value to the classroom — value that cannot be replicated by textbook instruction alone and that is directly linked to the development of industry-ready graduates.

The transition from industry to academe is driven primarily by work-life balance imperatives, particularly family obligations, and by a natural developmental shift in professional priorities as practitioners mature. Far from representing a flight from the industry, this transition constitutes a form of knowledge transfer — one in which accumulated industry expertise is redeployed in a pedagogical context that benefits students, institutions, and ultimately the industry itself.

However, the study also highlights structural deficiencies in Philippine hospitality education that limit the effectiveness even of experienced practitioner-educators. These include the absence of industry-standard technology in teaching laboratories, the passive learning dispositions of some millennial students, and the absence of extended, structured faculty immersion programs. Addressing these deficiencies requires coordinated action from higher education institutions, the Department of Education, and industry partners.

The study makes four key recommendations for institutional and policy action. First, higher education institutions should establish formal competency-based curriculum frameworks that are co-developed with industry partners and regularly updated to reflect current operational standards. Second, extended faculty immersion programs — of a minimum of six months at a supervisory level — should be instituted as a standard component of professional development for hospitality educators. Third, laboratory facilities in hospitality management programs should be equipped with current industry-standard systems, including property management, revenue management, and guest experience platforms. Fourth, sustained, formalised industry-academe dialogue structures should be established to ensure continuous alignment between educational outcomes and workforce expectations.

Future research should extend this inquiry to a broader national sample, incorporate the perspectives of hospitality students and industry employers, and examine the long-term career trajectories and student outcome data associated with courses taught by industry-experienced educators versus those without industry backgrounds. Quantitative comparative studies would complement the rich qualitative foundation provided by the present phenomenological approach.

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