

Work Immersion as a Predictor to Current Employment Performance of Senior High School Graduates: Base-Reference for Policy Reformulation

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Abstract

This study examines the performance of Senior High School (SHS) graduates in their work immersion programs and current employment, aiming to inform policy reform for enhanced workforce readiness. Guided by DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017, and aligned with Republic Act 10533, the research underscores the importance of Work Immersion in bridging academic learning and industry requirements. Using a quantitative-descriptive research design with predictive correlation, the study focused on SHS graduates from Antipolo City, specifically in Districts I–A and II–A, employing purposive sampling to select 100 respondents from two public schools. Findings reveal that the majority of respondents came from the Academic Track, particularly the ABM and STEM strands, with high General Weighted Averages (GWAs). Graduates performed very satisfactorily in work immersion, with creativity rated as outstanding. Other competencies—communication,

dependability, motivation, teamwork, flexibility, computer technology, and hard communication skills—also scored high but with room for improvement. Employment performance results showed strong reliability and professionalism, though the quality of work was rated slightly lower. Significant differences in work immersion performance were noted based on track, strand, and GWA. Furthermore, strong correlations were found between work immersion competencies and employment performance, emphasizing the impact of practical experience on job readiness. These insights led to the development of the policy titled “Policy Reformulation for Enhancing Senior High School Graduate Performance in Work Immersion and Current Employment.” The proposed policy aims to strengthen digital skills, communication, creativity, and teamwork, ensuring SHS graduates are more competitive and well-prepared for the modern workforce.

Keywords: *Creativity, Dependability, Immersion, Outcomes, Performance*

INTRODUCTION

The K to 12 Basic Education Program, as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017 or the Guidelines for Work Immersion, aims to prepare students for higher education or immediate entry into the workforce by developing their skills, work ethics, and personal attributes. One of its core components is the Work Immersion subject, which provides learners with the opportunity to gain firsthand experience in professional environments such as workshops, offices, and laboratories. This experiential exposure is

intended to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application, ensuring that graduates are equipped with relevant skills for employment or further studies (Ran Yu et al., 2023).

To support these objectives, Work Immersion is mandated as a graduation requirement for all Senior High School (SHS) students. Its implementation draws from the collective experiences of model schools, technical-vocational institutions, industry partners, and youth development advocates, allowing DepEd to foster partnerships and provide access to appropriate immersion sites (Dialde, 2023; van Zyl & Veldsman, 2023). These partnerships not only enhance students' learning experiences but also help align the program with national development goals.

The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act 10533) extends the basic education cycle by two additional years in SHS, offering two primary tracks: the Academic Track for students pursuing higher education, and the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track for those seeking direct employment after graduation. These tracks allow students to focus on their interests while developing both academic and technical skills necessary to meet the demands of higher education or the labor market (Morados, 2020; Santoso et al., 2021). This dual-track system reinforces the program's aim of producing globally competitive graduates.

In line with this mandate, RA 10533 envisions every basic education graduate as an empowered individual—capable of lifelong learning, productive engagement in society, and adaptability in a rapidly changing world. It emphasizes providing quality education aligned with international standards while remaining responsive to the diverse needs of learners. Within this framework, work immersion serves as a strategic bridge between academic learning and professional readiness, equipping students with competencies valued by employers, such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving (Insorio, Manaloto, & Larena, 2023).

The implementation of work immersion is also guided by labor regulations. DOLE Advisory No. 9 specifies allowable immersion hours, workplace safety requirements, and parental consent provisions for minors, while Republic Act 9231 and DepEd Order No. 149 protect students from hazardous work conditions. These policies ensure that work immersion experiences remain safe, ethical, and beneficial, safeguarding students' rights while maximizing their learning opportunities.

Recognizing the value of industry-ready graduates, this study seeks to evaluate the work immersion performance of SHS graduates and its predictive relationship with their current employment performance. By examining factors such as the relevance of workplace assignments to the students' chosen strands, the quality of mentorship received, and the development of workplace competencies, the study aims to identify program strengths and areas for improvement (Manayan, 2022). Findings from this assessment can provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing work immersion implementation.

This investigation is anchored on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that effective learning occurs when experience is transformed into knowledge through a cyclical process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In the Philippine context, DepEd's work immersion guidelines embody these principles by ensuring that learners participate in meaningful, relevant, and safe workplace experiences (Work-Integrated Learning, 2022; An & Jin, 2021). These collaborations between schools and industry partners foster work-integrated learning that supports both skill mastery and career readiness.

Overall, work immersion serves as both a learning tool and an evaluative measure of the SHS program's effectiveness. By assessing graduates' workplace performance and linking it to their academic preparation, this study aims to contribute to policy reformulation that will strengthen the integration of education and employment pathways. In doing so, it supports the long-term vision of the K to 12 program to produce competent, adaptable, and industry-ready Filipino graduates.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted in the present study, particularly focusing on the research design, population and sampling, respondents, research instrument, validation and reliability, data gathering procedure, statistical treatment of data, and ethical considerations. Each component is carefully described to ensure that the study is methodologically sound and aligned with its objectives. The methodology is structured to provide a clear, systematic, and replicable process for assessing the impact of work immersion programs on the professional skills and employment performance of Senior High School (SHS) graduates in Antipolo City.

The study employed a quantitative-descriptive research design utilizing predictive correlation. This design was deemed appropriate for describing the current state of professional skills among SHS graduates and for identifying relationships between their work immersion performance and current employment performance. Specifically, the study determined the profile of SHS graduate-respondents in terms of track, strand, and General Weighted Average (GWA). It also assessed performance in both work immersion and current employment across eight core skill areas: creativity, communication, dependability, motivation, teamwork, flexibility, computer technology, and hard communication skills. Statistical correlation was then used to determine whether work immersion performance could predict employment performance.

The population for this study consisted of SHS graduates from the Schools Division of Antipolo City, particularly from Districts I–A and II–A, during the school year 2023–2024. Two schools were purposively selected for data collection: Antipolo City Senior High School and San Jose National High School. Purposive sampling was employed to select 100 graduates who had completed their work immersion programs and were currently employed. The selection criteria included graduates from various tracks and strands, with varying GWAs, who were available and willing to participate. This sampling technique ensured that the participants possessed the relevant experiences and profiles necessary to provide meaningful insights for the research.

The respondents of the study were selected according to five main criteria: (1) completion of the work immersion program, (2) current employment status, (3) representation from diverse SHS tracks and strands, (4) varying academic performance based on GWA, and (5) availability and willingness to participate. These criteria ensured that the data would reflect a range of experiences and backgrounds, thus allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how educational preparation through work immersion influences real-world employment outcomes. This approach also enabled the examination of potential differences in performance across various academic and demographic profiles.

The main research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this study. It was divided into sections corresponding to the research objectives. The first section gathered demographic and academic profile information, while subsequent sections measured performance in work immersion and current employment using Likert-scale items across eight skill dimensions. The instrument also facilitated the comparison of performance levels when respondents were grouped by profile and supported the correlation analysis between work immersion and employment outcomes. The final section solicited suggestions from respondents for improving work immersion programs and employment preparation strategies.

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of literature and established theoretical frameworks. It was evaluated by a panel of three experts — one university professor from the University of the Philippines and two specialists in education and work immersion — who assessed its content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's objectives. A pilot

test was conducted with a small group of eligible graduates not included in the final sample. Revisions were made based on expert feedback and pilot results to improve clarity, accuracy, and coverage. Reliability was further confirmed through statistical testing, ensuring that the instrument would yield consistent and credible results.

The data gathering procedure began with securing permissions from school heads and the Schools Division Office of Rizal. After obtaining consent, the researcher coordinated with alumni coordinators and HR contacts to identify eligible graduates. Informed consent forms were distributed, and questionnaires were administered in-person and online, depending on respondent availability. Completed questionnaires were checked for accuracy and completeness, with follow-up clarifications requested when necessary. The collected data was then processed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean) and inferential statistics (One-Way ANOVA and Pearson correlation) to address the study's research questions and hypotheses.

Finally, ethical considerations were strictly observed. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, with clear explanations of the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures. Personal identifiers were removed to maintain anonymity, and all data was handled securely to prevent unauthorized access. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The researcher remained objective and transparent throughout the study, avoiding bias in both data collection and interpretation. Permissions from relevant school and division authorities were secured prior to implementation. These measures ensured the integrity of the research process and safeguarded the rights and dignity of all participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were graduates of the Academic Track, with the Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) strand and the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand as the most popular specializations. A substantial portion of the respondents achieved a General Weighted Average (GWA) within the highest range, indicating strong academic performance. This trend suggests that students in these strands benefit from structured academic programs that align with clear career pathways, motivating them to sustain high performance levels. The concentration in ABM and STEM also reflects current educational and industry demands, which prioritize business, technology, and science-related competencies.

In assessing work immersion performance, the results showed that SHS graduates generally performed at a Very Satisfactory level, with Creativity rated as Outstanding. Other competencies such as Communication, Dependability, Motivation, Teamwork, Flexibility, Computer Technology, and Hard Communication Skills were consistently rated as Very Satisfactory. These results suggest that work immersion programs are particularly effective in fostering creativity, possibly due to project-based tasks and problem-solving activities embedded in the training. However, the slightly lower ratings in technical and interpersonal competencies indicate areas where additional targeted training may be necessary.

When evaluating current employment performance, graduates scored highly in Reliability and Professionalism, suggesting that they are dependable and collaborative in their roles. Communication and collaboration also received favorable ratings, demonstrating that skills developed during immersion are transferable to the workplace. However, the Quality of Work dimension, while still positive, received slightly lower scores compared to other metrics. This may imply a need for closer alignment between the complexity of tasks in immersion programs and those encountered in actual employment settings to enhance work precision and accuracy.

The study further revealed significant differences in work immersion performance based on track, strand, and GWA. Creativity and Dependability, for example, showed notable variation when respondents were grouped according to strand and academic standing. This suggests that individual educational backgrounds and levels of academic achievement influence how students engage with and benefit from immersion programs. Such findings underscore the importance of tailoring immersion activities to match the strengths and developmental needs of students from different tracks and performance levels.

Regarding current employment, graduates generally performed exceptionally well in productivity, communication, and professionalism, which are critical for workplace success. However, Quality of Work remained a relative weakness, reflecting a need for more rigorous quality assurance and attention to detail in both academic and professional training contexts. The observed influence of GWA on employment outcomes—especially in Communication and Collaboration—highlights a strong link between academic achievement and the ability to effectively perform in real-world professional settings.

The correlation analysis revealed strong and statistically significant relationships between work immersion performance and employment performance. Creativity during immersion, in particular, was found to be positively associated with all employment performance metrics, underscoring its value as a transferable skill. This supports the idea that well-designed immersion programs not only develop academic and technical abilities but also enhance competencies that directly contribute to workplace success.

Based on these results, a proposed policy titled "Policy Reformulation for Enhancing Senior High School Graduate Performance in Work Immersion and Current Employment" was formulated. This policy seeks to address observed skill gaps—particularly in computer literacy, communication, collaboration, creativity, motivation, and flexibility. It recommends integrating advanced technological training, enhancing team-based activities, and strengthening creativity-focused tasks within immersion programs. The alignment between strong immersion experiences and high employment performance validates the need for structured, skill-based program enhancements.

Overall, the study demonstrates that SHS graduates in Antipolo City are academically capable and professionally competent, but that targeted improvements in certain competencies—especially Quality of Work and specific interpersonal skills—would further enhance their employability. These results have implications for school administrators, teachers, and policymakers, suggesting that strategic interventions in work immersion design can produce more competitive and adaptable graduates for the modern workforce.

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