

Navigating Senior High School Students' Work Immersion Program Exposures: Input for Implementation Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

Work immersion prepares senior high school (SHS) students for future careers, making effective implementation essential. This study assessed male and female SHS students' perceptions of the program in terms of curriculum compliance, delivery process, student progress assessment, supervision, and administrative concerns. Data from 137 randomly selected students were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. Results showed that the program was well implemented, with strong curriculum compliance, support, and supervision, although budgeting, coordination, and feedback require improvement. No significant gender differences were found, indicating equitable implementation. The study recommends maintaining program strengths, improving budgeting and feedback, and streamlining logistics and student placements.

INTRODUCTION

Work immersion programs play a pivotal role in shaping the holistic development of students, equipping them with the competencies needed for higher education and the workforce. Globally, experiential learning through immersion has been recognized as a transformative educational approach. Studies highlight that immersion learning fosters self-awareness, interpersonal expertise, and technical skills, preparing students for real-world challenges (Courtney, 2021; Luciano, 2020; Robinson, 2018). Educators and institutions emphasize the importance of revisiting immersion curricula to enhance graduate employability and address evolving student needs (Bucknam & Hood, 2021; Carpenter et al., 2022; Stegall, 2021). Furthermore, immersion programs have been shown to increase student talents, encourage informed career decisions, and create immediate employment opportunities (The Asia Foundation – Philippines, 2018).

In the Philippines, the work immersion program is a cornerstone of the K-12 reforms, aimed at providing students with hands-on experience and specialized skills. Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) extended formal education to 13 years, ensuring that students are prepared for global competition (Pascual, 2014). The DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017, outlines the guidelines for work immersion, emphasizing its role in developing life and career skills, and preparing students for postsecondary education or employment (DepEd, 2017). Local studies, such as those by Alcantara, Jr. (2019) and Petil, Jr. (2018), underscore the program's impact on students' technical knowledge, workplace adaptability, and professional decision-making. Additionally, research by Acut et al. (2019) and Budomo (2020) highlights the positive outcomes of work immersion, including skill development and industry readiness.

While extensive research has explored the benefits and implementation of work immersion programs globally and locally, there remains a gap in understanding the specific assessments of students regarding the program's implementation, particularly in terms of curriculum compliance, delivery processes, supervision, and administrative concerns. The present study sought to address this gap by evaluating student perspectives and identifying areas for improvement. By doing so, it aimed to provide actionable insights to enhance the effectiveness of the work immersion program in the Philippines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Immersion for Students

Work immersion is a critical component of experiential learning, designed to provide students with firsthand workplace experience as they transition from academic settings to professional environments. Globally, immersion programs are recognized for their role in fostering self-awareness, interpersonal expertise, and technical competencies (Robinson, 2018). These programs enable students to apply classroom knowledge in real-world contexts, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Research highlights that work immersion enhances graduate employability by equipping students with industry-relevant skills (Carpenter et

al., 2022). It also encourages self-skilling, allowing students to develop competencies such as teamwork, communication, punctuality, and professionalism (Acut et al., 2019; Schedel, 2022). Additionally, immersion experiences help students refine their career decisions by exposing them to workplace dynamics, including timeliness, workplace relationships, and data confidentiality (Malang, 2018; The Asia Foundation – Philippines, 2018).

In the Philippine context, work immersion is a mandatory component of the K-12 curriculum, particularly for Senior High School (SHS) students. The program aims to familiarize learners with workplace environments, simulate employment scenarios, and apply their specialized competencies (DepEd, 2017; Mateo, 2017). Studies have shown that work immersion strengthens technical knowledge, workplace adaptability, and professional decision-making (Alcantara, Jr., 2019; Petil, Jr., 2018). Furthermore, businesses in the Philippines have demonstrated willingness to accept SHS students for immersion activities, recognizing the value of early workplace exposure (Budomo, 2020).

Work Immersion Implementation

The effective implementation of work immersion programs is essential to maximize their benefits for students. Globally, educators and policymakers emphasize the need to revisit and enhance immersion curricula to align with evolving industry demands (Bucknam & Hood, 2021). Improvements in program delivery, such as integrating diverse immersion projects and responding to student needs, have been identified as key factors in ensuring successful outcomes (Oh & Nussli, 2021; Stegall, 2021).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) outlines guidelines for work immersion under DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017, which mandates that the program should not be reduced to a mere recruitment tool but should instead focus on skill development and workplace readiness (Mateo, 2017). The program is designed to help students appreciate the application of school-learned principles, enhance technical knowledge, and develop good work habits (DepEd, 2017). Local studies have shown that proper implementation of work immersion leads to positive learning gains, including improved technical skills, workplace familiarity, and professional growth (Acut et al., 2019; Llego, 2019).

However, challenges in implementation persist, particularly in ensuring consistent supervision, curriculum compliance, and administrative support. Addressing these gaps is crucial to enhancing the program's effectiveness and ensuring that students gain the competencies needed for employment, entrepreneurship, or further education (Arayata, 2018; Pascual, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design using quantitative research methods. It first described the assessments of work immersion students regarding the implementation of the work immersion program. Then, it compared the assessments between male and female students.

Respondents

The study included 137 work immersion students out of a total population of 210, selected using simple random sampling with the Raosoft calculator. These students were from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand under the Academic Track of a public senior high school in the DepEd Schools Division Office II, Pangasinan. Out of the 137 work immersion students who served as respondents, 60 were males and 77 were females.

Instrument

To gather key information from the participants, an adopted survey questionnaire was used. This questionnaire was adapted from Appendix F, "Monitoring and Evaluation Tool," for the Work Immersion program, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017.

Data Gathering Procedure and Ethical Considerations

After obtaining schedules and consent from the participants, the survey was administered—either in person or online—based on their preferred dates and times. The respondents were briefed on the study's purpose, their role, possible risks, and how the data would be managed, used, and stored. The researchers maintained the anonymity and confidentiality of all responses and ensured the participants' safety and well-being throughout the process.

Statistical Treatment

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to evaluate the work immersion students' assessments of the program's implementation across five key areas: (i) curriculum implementation and compliance; (ii) work immersion delivery process; (iii) assessment of student's progress; (iv) supervision of work immersion implementation; and (v) administrative concerns. Subsequently, inferential statistics, specifically a t-test, were employed to compare the assessments between male and female students.

RESEARCH RESULT

Assessment of the Senior High School Students on the Implementation of the Work Immersion Program

Table 1. Assessment of the Senior High School Students on the Implementation of the Work Immersion Program

Dimensions Items	Mean	SD	Description Interpretation
A. Curriculum Implementation and Compliance	3.63	0.60	Evident
1. Curriculum Guide is being followed properly.	3.62	0.58	Evident
2. Objectives of the program are achieved at the end of the semester.	3.72	0.58	Evident
3. The offerings are appropriate to the community.	3.57	0.59	Evident

4. Specializations are aligned to the work immersion partner institution.	3.60	0.62	Evident
B. Work Immersion Delivery Process	3.60	0.67	Evident
1. Activities of the students are programmed based on the competencies.	3.65	0.52	Evident
2. Students are being prepared before the actual Work Immersion.	3.50	0.67	Evident
3. Students are being given feedback about their performance in the Work Immersion.	3.70	0.68	Evident
4. Students' personal agenda/ goals are being channeled for their knowledge, skills, and values development in the Work Immersion.	3.56	0.78	Evident
C. Assessment of Student's Progress	3.56	0.67	Evident
1. Students are oriented on how their performance will be measured.	3.53	0.70	Evident
2. Assessment results are explained to the students, leading to their realization of the areas for improvement.	3.62	0.61	Evident
3. Students can keep track of their progress in the Work Immersion.	3.53	0.71	Evident
D. Supervision of Work Immersion Implementation	3.58	0.63	Evident
1. A clear Monitoring Plan (Work Immersion Teacher, School Partnership Focal Person, and School Head) before the start of the Work Immersion is evident.	3.79	0.55	Evident
2. Monitoring Plan is properly implemented.	3.61	0.59	Evident
3. Monitoring results are discussed with the concerned personnel so as to encourage actions needed to improve Work Immersion delivery.	3.58	0.54	Evident
4. Monitoring results are utilized to improve Work Immersion delivery.	3.57	0.63	Evident
5. Proper coordination, planning, and a feedback system are being enforced.	3.39	0.75	Evident
6. Capacity building for Work Immersion is being conducted.	3.54	0.63	Evident
E. Administrative Concerns	3.64	0.62	Evident
1. Students accomplish their parental consent before the actual Work Immersion.	3.76	0.56	Evident

2. Orientation for students and their parents is conducted by both the School and Partner Institution before the start of Work Immersion.	3.74	0.53	Evident
3. An adequate budget is allotted for Work Immersion expenses.	3.26	0.63	Evident
4. Profiles of confirmed Work Immersion partners are organized and available for reference by students, parents, and teachers.	3.82	0.53	Evident
5. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is duly notarized and properly documented.	3.46	0.63	Evident
6. MOA is strictly followed by both School and Partner Institution.	3.69	0.55	Evident
7. Materials and relevant supplies are available for the students and teachers of Work Immersion.	3.50	0.67	Evident
8. The school has a Joint Working Group, which is formed before the start of Work Immersion.	3.64	0.58	Evident
9. The facilities and venues are accessible to teachers and students.	3.84	0.47	Evident
10. Students are provided with insurance during their Work Immersion.	3.51	0.73	Evident
11. Duties and responsibilities of personnel are clearly defined.	3.68	0.59	Evident
12. Correct reports are submitted.	3.74	0.57	Evident
13. Issues and concerns based on the reports are acted upon.	3.66	0.68	Evident
Composite	3.61	0.63	Evident

Scale of Means: 4 [3.26-4.00 Evident], 3 [2.51-3.25 Evident but Inadequate], 2 [1.76-2.50 Not Evident], 1 [1.00-1.75 Not Applicable]

The assessment of Senior High School students on the implementation of the Work Immersion Program, as presented in Table 1, reveals a generally positive perception across all five dimensions, with an overall composite mean score of (Mean=3.61; SD=0.63), indicating that the program's implementation is "Evident" in the eyes of the participants.

In the dimension of Curriculum Implementation and Compliance (Mean=3.63; SD=0.60), students agreed that the curriculum guide is properly followed (Mean=3.62; SD=0.58), program objectives are achieved by the end of the semester (Mean=3.72; SD=0.58), offerings are appropriate for the community (Mean=3.57; SD=0.59), and specializations align with partner institutions (Mean=3.60; SD=0.62). This suggests a strong adherence to the curriculum and its relevance to both academic and community needs.

For the Work Immersion Delivery Process (Mean=3.60; SD=0.67), students reported that activities are competency-based (Mean=3.65; SD=0.52), they are prepared before immersion (Mean=3.50; SD=0.67), receive performance feedback (Mean=3.70; SD=0.68), and their personal goals are aligned with skill development (Mean=3.56; SD=0.78). The highest mean in this dimension, related to feedback (Mean=3.70), highlights its importance, while the preparation phase (Mean=3.50) shows the most variability, indicating potential areas for improvement.

The Assessment of Student's Progress (Mean=3.56; SD=0.67) dimension reflects that students are oriented on performance measurement (Mean=3.53; SD=0.70), assessment results are explained for improvement (Mean=3.62; SD=0.61), and they can track their progress (Mean=3.53; SD=0.71). The consistency in mean scores around 3.53–3.62 suggests a moderate level of agreement, though the standard deviations indicate some variability in experiences.

In the Supervision of Work Immersion Implementation (Mean=3.58; SD=0.63), students noted a clear monitoring plan (Mean=3.79; SD=0.55), proper implementation of the plan (Mean=3.61; SD=0.59), discussion of monitoring results (Mean=3.58; SD=0.54), and utilization of results for improvement (Mean=3.57; SD=0.63). However, coordination, planning, and feedback systems (Mean=3.39; SD=0.75) received the lowest mean score in this dimension, signaling a need for enhancement in these areas.

Lastly, the Administrative Concerns (Mean=3.64; SD=0.62) dimension shows high satisfaction with parental consent (Mean=3.76; SD=0.56), orientation for students and parents (Mean=3.74; SD=0.53), organized profiles of partners (Mean=3.82; SD=0.53), and accessible facilities (Mean=3.84; SD=0.47). The highest mean score in this dimension, related to facility accessibility (Mean=3.84), reflects strong administrative support, while the budget allotment (Mean=3.26; SD=0.63) indicates a potential area of concern.

Overall, the program is perceived as well-implemented, with strong curriculum compliance, administrative support, and supervision. However, areas such as budget allotment, coordination, and feedback systems may require further attention to enhance the program's effectiveness and ensure a more consistent experience for all students.

More so, the study's findings, which highlight the effective implementation of the Work Immersion Program in terms of curriculum compliance, administrative support, and supervision, align with literature emphasizing its role in fostering holistic development and workplace readiness (DepEd, 2017; Pascual, 2014; Robinson, 2018). However, the identified gaps in budget allotment, coordination, and feedback systems reflect the need for continuous improvement, as echoed by Bucknam and Hood (2021) and Carpenter et al. (2022), to further enhance the program's efficacy in meeting student and industry needs.

Significant Difference in the Assessments of Male and Female Senior High School Students on the Implementation of the Work Immersion Program

Table 2. Significant Difference in the Assessments of Male and Female Senior High School Students on the Implementation of the Work Immersion Program

Dimensions	Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Remarks Decision
Curriculum Implementation and Compliance	Male	3.64	0.58	0.53	0.62	Not Sig.
	Female	3.62	0.61			Accept H ₀
Work Immersion Delivery Process	Male	3.61	0.65	0.16	0.88	Not Sig.
	Female	3.60	0.69			Accept H ₀
Assessment of Student's Progress	Male	3.57	0.65	0.52	0.63	Not Sig.
	Female	3.55	0.69			Accept H ₀
Supervision of Work Immersion Implementation	Male	3.58	0.62	0.13	0.90	Not Sig.
	Female	3.57	0.63			Accept H ₀
Administrative Concerns	Male	3.66	0.60	0.48	0.64	Not Sig.
	Female	3.62	0.63			Accept H ₀
Overall	Male	3.62	0.61	0.67	0.51	Not Sig.
	Female	3.60	0.64			Accept H₀

The statistical analysis presented in Table 2 examines the potential differences in how male and female SHS students assess the implementation of the Work Immersion Program. Using an independent samples t-test, the results consistently show that there are no significant differences between the assessments of male and female students across all dimensions of the program.

For Curriculum Implementation and Compliance, male students rated the dimension (Mean=3.64; SD=0.58), while female students rated it slightly lower at (Mean=3.62; SD=0.61). The t-value of 0.53 and p-value of 0.62 indicate that this difference is not statistically significant, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis (H₀). Similarly, in the Work Immersion Delivery Process, male students had a mean score of (Mean=3.61; SD=0.65), and female students had (Mean=3.60; SD=0.69), with a t-value of 0.16 and a p-value of 0.88, again showing no significant difference.

In the Assessment of Student's Progress, male students scored (Mean=3.57; SD=0.65), while female students scored (Mean=3.55; SD=0.69), with a t-value of 0.52 and a p-value of 0.63. For Supervision of Work Immersion Implementation, male students rated it (Mean=3.58; SD=0.62), and female students rated it (Mean=3.57; SD=0.63), with a t-value of 0.13 and a p-value of 0.90. Both dimensions also showed no significant differences, reinforcing the consistency in perceptions between genders.

In the Administrative Concerns dimension, male students had a mean score of (Mean=3.66; SD=0.60), while female students had (Mean=3.62; SD=0.63), with

a t-value of 0.48 and a p-value of 0.64. Finally, the overall assessment showed male students with a mean score of (Mean=3.62; SD=0.61) and female students with (Mean=3.60; SD=0.64), with a t-value of 0.67 and a p-value of 0.51.

The p-values for all dimensions are greater than 0.05, confirming that gender does not significantly influence students' assessments of the Work Immersion Program. This uniformity suggests that the program is equally effective and well-received by both male and female students. The findings highlight the equity and inclusivity of the program's design and execution, ensuring that all students, regardless of gender, have a consistent and positive experience with the Work Immersion Program.

Moreover, the study's finding that gender does not significantly influence students' assessments of the Work Immersion Program ($p > 0.05$) aligns with the equitable and inclusive design of experiential learning programs, as emphasized in literature. Robinson (2018) highlights immersion learning as a form of experiential education that fosters holistic development, while DepEd (2017) and Mateo (2017) stress that work immersion should provide equal opportunities for all students to develop life and career skills, regardless of gender. This uniformity in perception underscores the program's success in delivering a consistent and positive experience for both male and female students, as envisioned by the K-12 reforms (Pascual, 2014; The Official Gazette, n.d.).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment of the Work Immersion Program reveals that it is well-implemented, with strong curriculum compliance, administrative support, and supervision, though budget allotment, coordination, and feedback systems require improvement for greater consistency. Additionally, the lack of significant gender differences in student assessments ($p > 0.05$) underscores the program's equity and inclusivity, ensuring a uniformly positive experience for all participants.

Based on the findings, teachers and school administrators may maintain strong curriculum alignment, supervision, and administrative support while prioritizing improvements in budgeting, coordination, and feedback mechanisms to ensure consistent program quality; and work immersion partner institutions may continue equitable placement practices and collaborate closely with schools to streamline logistics, share resources, and provide regular, structured feedback so all students—regardless of gender—receive the same high-quality, supportive learning experience.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Building on the finding that experience significantly influences teachers' application of data protection and digital sustainability protocols, advanced research may be conducted further to identify training interventions that most effectively accelerate better implementation of the work immersion program, considering a multi-tiered approach.

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