

Work immersion experiences of Senior High School students in a national high school as basis for work immersion intervention program

Maryniel A. Guadalupe

Department Of Education-Calizo National High School

Balete, Aklan, Philippines

Email: marynielguadalupe@gmail.com

Abstract: The study examined the work immersion experiences of 43 Senior High School students from Calizo National High School. The students underwent 80-hour work immersion activities, with 31 from the TVL track and 12 from the academic track. The research used a mixed method of data collection, including a survey questionnaire and qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions. The students found the work immersion highly relevant, engaging, and overall satisfactory. They encountered problems such as the unavailability of tools and equipment and addressed them through various strategies, leading to the design of intervention plans named REAP DAY and IWIP.

Keywords: Experiences, Intervention program, Monitoring and evaluation, Work immersion, Work immersion experiences, TVL specialization

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INTRODUCTION

The K-12 Program is mandated by Republic Act 10533, which includes the implementation of the Senior High School Curriculum (SHS) or the additional two years of secondary education, known as Grades 11 and 12. Work immersion is a prominent course that K-12 SHS students must take. It entails 80 hours of practical training or job simulation for students in Grades 11 and 12. Through work immersion, students can put their skills to use, familiarize themselves with the workplace and increase their chances of finding employment.

The program under DepEd Order No. 30 S. 2017 aims to equip students with industrial skills to prepare them for employment or higher education. However, academic institutions need to align the skills they develop with those required by the industry during work immersion.

COVID-19 has disrupted teachers' and students' schedules. The Department of Education is preparing for different scenarios to ensure learning continues in SHS, despite work immersion being impacted (DepEd Memorandum No. 00085, 2020). According to DM-CI-2020-00085, work immersion is still allowed during the pandemic. It is now optional for certain tracks and suggested schemes like in-school, home-based, community-based, and school and industry tie-ups are offered to aid schools in implementation.

Calizo National High School is one of the institutions in the Division of Aklan that offers TVL Track focusing on Bread and Pastry Production NC II, Food and Beverages NC II, and Dressmaking NC II. The school selected the school-based work immersion program, in which it created a mock atmosphere using its available facilities. However, students and teachers need assistance to contain and carry out the necessary responsibilities expected of them. They were unable to complete the objectives of the work immersion due to the issue of the lack of tools and equipment required for each specialization, the student's familiarity with the tools and equipment, and even the work immersion setting.

The above circumstances compelled the researcher to investigate the students' work-related immersion experiences to develop interventions that would fill training gaps.

Statement of the problem

The study aimed to explore and analyze the work immersion experiences of Senior High School students at Calizo National High School.

Specifically, it sought to address the following questions:

- 1) What is the level of preparedness of the Senior High School students for the work immersion program?
- 2) How do the students perceive the relevance of the work immersion program to their respective tracks?
- 3) What challenges and problems did the students and teachers encounter during the work immersion activities?
- 4) What strategies did the students and teachers employ to address the problems encountered during the work immersion?
- 5) What intervention programs can be proposed based on the findings of the study to enhance the work immersion experience of future students?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study used a mixed method for the researcher to have a more in-depth understanding of the “voice” of the respondents indicated in the survey results. Data were collected from the researcher-made survey questionnaire and DepEd Memorandum CI-2018-00257 Monitoring and Evaluation of Work Immersion were analyzed using the mean. Qualitative data from the interview and focus group discussion were analyzed using thematic analysis applying the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Locale of the study and respondents

The respondents were 43 Senior High School students of Calizo National High School for the school year 2021-2022. Thirty-one (31) of them are from the TVL track and 12 are from the academic track. They were all grade 12 students who had undergone 80-hour work immersion activities.

Research instruments

The study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments to gather comprehensive data on the work immersion experiences of the Senior High School students. A researcher-made survey questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data from the students. This survey focused on assessing various aspects of their work immersion, including their level of preparedness, the relevance of the immersion program to their chosen tracks, and their overall satisfaction with the experience. Additionally, qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews, which allowed selected students to provide more personal and detailed insights into their immersion experiences. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted, enabling the researcher to engage with groups of students and teachers to explore common themes and identify challenges faced during the work immersion. These combined methods provided a well-rounded view of the participants' experiences, both numerically and narratively.

Data analyses procedure

The data analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the quantitative data derived from the survey, statistical analysis using the mean was employed to summarize the students' responses. This allowed the researcher to evaluate overall trends in

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the students' perceptions of their work immersion, such as their preparedness, the relevance of the immersion activities, and their satisfaction levels. In contrast, the qualitative data from the interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed through thematic analysis, following the process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved coding and identifying recurring themes, which highlighted the major issues and strategies students and teachers encountered during the immersion, such as problems with tools, equipment, and competencies. Thematic analysis helped to provide a deeper understanding of the qualitative aspects of the work immersion experience, complementing the quantitative findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The students were highly prepared (mean of 3.42) and found the work immersion highly relevant (weighted mean of 3.60) and engaging (mean of 3.56). Overall, their experience was highly satisfactory (mean of 3.52). The survey showed that knowledge in Bread and Pastry Production NC II, Food and Beverages Services NC II, and Dressmaking NC II were all relevant (means of 3.20, 3.23, and 3.17 respectively).

Focused group discussions were carried out to identify the problems the students and teachers encountered during work immersion and the strategies they used to cope with them. The problems identified were the competencies were not taught and not mastered, unavailability and unfamiliarity of tools and equipment, and work immersion area or the environment.

To address the problems, the strategies utilized were seeking assistance from the Work Immersion Teachers, using the Teach-Back or Return Demonstrations, peer collaboration, self-study, using alternative tools, and initiating *dagyaw*. Intervention plans were designed based on the results and were named REAP (Recall-Explain-Actualize-Provide Feedback) DAY and IWIP (Intensified Work Immersion Partnership).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the Senior High School students of Calizo National High School were highly prepared for their work immersion activities and found the program to be relevant, engaging, and satisfactory overall. Students particularly valued the relevance of the specializations in Bread and Pastry Production, Food and Beverage Services, and Dressmaking, which were closely aligned with their career aspirations. However, the immersion program also revealed several challenges, such as the unavailability and unfamiliarity of tools and equipment, as well as gaps in mastering the required competencies. Despite these obstacles, students and teachers employed various coping strategies, including seeking assistance from immersion teachers, conducting peer collaborations, self-studying, and using alternative tools. These findings highlight the need for further support and improvements in the implementation of work immersion programs to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application.

To improve the work immersion experience, the study recommends that the Department of Education updates its directives for work immersion, ensuring that they align with the needs of both students and the industry. Collaboration with professionals and local enterprises is crucial to verify that the program prepares students adequately for real-world work environments. School administrators are encouraged to involve Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) experts to enhance the skills of teachers and to involve students and parents in crafting personalized intervention strategies. Moreover, work immersion teachers should continuously develop their competencies by participating in relevant training and seminars, ensuring they provide practical and effective guidance to students. It is also

essential to foster strong partnerships with parents to support students' academic and work immersion progress. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore additional factors that may impact work immersion outcomes and to consider implementing the proposed REAP (Recall-Explain-Actualize-Provide Feedback) Day and IWIP (Intensified Work Immersion Partnership) intervention programs, which aim to enhance the teaching and learning experience during work immersion

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Work immersion experiences of Senior High School students in a national high school as basis for work immersion intervention program

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