

Implementation of Work Immersion and Challenges Encountered Among Public Senior High Schools in the City of Cabuyao

Nimcy M. Ortiz

Department of Education - SDO

nimcymaniego@gmail.com

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Corresponding Email:

nimcymaniego@gmail.com

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Abstract. This study examined the implementation of Work Immersion and the challenges encountered among public senior high schools in the City of Cabuyao. It evaluated program effectiveness in preparing learners for workforce integration by assessing curriculum implementation, delivery processes, assessment practices, supervision strategies, and administrative systems. Guided by DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017, the study employed a mixed-method research design combining quantitative data from the DepEd Work Immersion Monitoring Tool with qualitative insights gathered from semi-structured interviews with SHS Heads and Work Immersion Coordinators. The integration of numerical ratings and thematic analysis provided a comprehensive perspective on the consistency of implementation and the contextual challenges affecting the program. Findings show that curriculum guidelines are properly followed (WM = 3.75, Evident), although instances of skill mismatch between student specializations and workplace tasks persist. The work immersion delivery process earned the highest rating (WM = 3.88, Evident), reflecting structured preparation, competency-based activities, and regular feedback, though alignment with students' career goals remains an issue. Assessment practices (WM = 3.78, Evident) are consistently applied but limited real-time feedback hinders timely instructional adjustments. Supervision strategies (WM = 3.72, Evident) demonstrate monitoring and coordination among teachers and school heads, yet additional capacity-building is required to enhance supervisory practices. Administrative concerns (WM = 3.54, Evident but with gaps) highlight challenges in MOA compliance, funding, logistics, and facility accessibility. Qualitative findings further reveal issues such as limited industry partnerships, transportation difficulties, regulatory compliance, employer concerns about liability and documentation, and student challenges related to workplace adaptability and communication. Based on these results, the study proposes an action plan that strengthens industry-school partnerships, enhances logistical systems, improves pre-immersion readiness, streamlines compliance processes, and expands capacity-building for supervisors to ensure meaningful, career-aligned workplace exposure for Senior High School learners.

Introduction

The K to 12 Basic Education Program mandates the inclusion of Work Immersion in the Senior High School curriculum to enhance learners' career readiness and provide exposure to authentic workplace environments. National guidelines emphasize strong collaboration between schools, industry partners, and local government units to ensure appropriate and meaningful immersion venues. Despite these directives, schools continue to encounter challenges related to curriculum alignment, supervision processes, student preparedness, assessment practices, and administrative support.

While Work Immersion has been widely studied, limited research focuses specifically on its implementation in public senior high schools in the City of Cabuyao. This study examines the level of implementation across key areas such as curriculum

integration, teaching-learning processes, assessment of student competencies, instructional supervision, and administrative concerns. It also identifies the challenges encountered and proposes an action plan to further strengthen program delivery. The findings aim to support continuous improvement in school practices and strengthen collaboration with industry partners to ensure that Senior High School graduates develop the competencies necessary for workforce integration and lifelong learning.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically utilizing a convergent parallel approach, consistent with the provisions of DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and subsequently integrated during the interpretation phase to generate a comprehensive understanding of work immersion implementation and the challenges encountered in public senior high schools. The design was chosen to enable a systemic examination of existing practices and conditions without manipulation of variables. The mixed-methods approach facilitated the convergence of numerical data and contextual insights, thereby enhancing the validity, reliability, and overall depth of the findings. No experimental manipulation, randomization, or blinding procedures were employed, as the study focused on the natural implementation of the program within its authentic educational setting.

Participants and Sampling

The participants of the study included Senior High School Heads and Work Immersion Coordinators from public senior high schools in the City of Cabuyao. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they were directly responsible for the supervision, implementation, and administration of the work immersion program. Inclusion criteria required participants to (a) be officially designated as School Head or Work Immersion Coordinator, and (b) have direct involvement in work immersion implementation during the school year under review. Individuals without direct supervisory or coordination roles were excluded from the study to ensure data relevance and accuracy. For the qualitative component, selected participants were invited for interviews to provide in-depth perspectives on implementation processes and operational challenges.

Research Instruments

Quantitative data were gathered using the DepEd Work Immersion Monitoring Tool and Evaluation Form, an official instrument designed to measure levels of implementation, challenges encountered, and administrative concerns across key domains, including curriculum implementation, delivery processes, assessment practices, supervision strategies, and administrative systems. The use of this tool ensured alignment with national standards and enhanced the validity of quantitative findings.

Qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. The guide consisted of open-ended questions that explored participants' experiences related to program supervision, industry partnerships, regulatory compliance, logistical arrangements, and learner preparedness. This instrument allowed flexibility in probing participant responses while maintaining consistency across interviews.

Data Collection Procedure

Approval to conduct the study was secured from the Department of Education – Schools Division Office of Cabuyao City. Quantitative data were collected through the administration of the monitoring tool during scheduled monitoring activities. Qualitative interviews were conducted with selected participants, either face-to-face or through appropriate communication platforms, following informed consent. Relevant secondary data, including policy documents, DepEd reports, and related literature, were systematically reviewed to validate observed practices and ensure alignment with policy provisions under DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality provisions. Written or verbal consent was obtained prior to data collection. Personal identifiers were excluded from all datasets, and findings were reported in aggregate form to protect participant anonymity.

Data Analysis and Integration

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the computation of weighted mean scores for each indicator. Results were interpreted using the following scale: Evident (3.50–4.00), Evident but Inadequate (2.50–3.49), and Not Evident (1.00–2.49). Data processing and analysis were conducted using Microsoft Excel and SPSS Statistics (Version 27).

Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s six-phase framework: familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and interpretation. Identified themes included limited industry partnerships, logistical barriers, regulatory concerns, and learner readiness challenges. Member checking was conducted to enhance credibility by validating interpretations with selected participants.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through side-by-side comparison and narrative synthesis, enabling corroboration and explanation of results. As the study was descriptive in nature, no inferential statistics or significance testing (e.g., $p < 0.05$) were applied.

Results and Discussion

Level of Implementation of Work Immersion Among Public Senior High Schools

Domain	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Curriculum implementation and compliance	3.75	Evident
Work immersion delivery process	3.88	Evident
Assessment of students’ progress	3.78	Evident
Supervision of work immersion	3.72	Evident
Administrative concerns	3.54	Evident
Overall Mean	3.73	Evident

Table 1. Level of implementation of work immersion among public senior high schools

Table 1 presents the level of implementation of work immersion among public senior high schools in the City of Cabuyao across five key domains. The results indicate that implementation is generally evident in all areas. The highest rating was observed in the work immersion delivery process (WM = 3.88), suggesting that schools effectively prepare students prior to deployment, provide competency-based activities, and deliver regular performance feedback.

Curriculum implementation and compliance (WM = 3.75) is also evident, as schools adhere to established curriculum guidelines and align program offerings with community needs. However, some issues related to mismatches between student specializations and workplace assignments were noted. The assessment of students’ progress (WM = 3.78) shows consistent practices in orientation, monitoring, and evaluation. Despite this, the limited provision of real-time feedback constrains opportunities for immediate instructional improvement.

Similarly, supervision of work immersion implementation (WM = 3.72) is evident through regular monitoring and coordination among teachers and school heads. However, the findings suggest the need for further capacity building and more effective utilization of monitoring data. The lowest-rated domain, administrative concerns (WM = 3.54), highlight gaps in memorandum of agreement (MOA) compliance, logistical support, funding allocation, and facility accessibility. While schools meet basic requirements such as orientations, documentation, and insurance coverage, administrative systems require strengthening.

Challenges in the Implementation of Work Immersion

This section discusses the challenges encountered by public senior high schools in implementing work immersion programs. The qualitative findings support the quantitative results. Schools identified several key challenges, including limited industry partnerships, skills mismatch between student specializations and assigned tasks, and transportation and logistical constraints. Employers also reported concerns related to legal liabilities, adequacy of facilities, administrative workload, and students’ communication readiness in workplace settings. Meanwhile, students face difficulties in adapting to real work environments, particularly in communication, time management, workplace behavior, stress management, and adjustment to structured routines.

These findings indicate that both institutional and learner-related factors influence the effectiveness of work immersion implementation.

Proposed Actions to Improve Work Immersion Implementation

Based on the results of the study, several actions are proposed to enhance the implementation of work immersion programs. Key strategies include strengthening partnerships between schools and industry stakeholders, improving the alignment of student placements with their chosen career tracks, and enhancing pre-deployment preparation to better equip students with workplace competencies.

Additionally, integrating academic instruction with workplace learning experiences and considering extended immersion periods may further improve skill development and readiness. Addressing administrative concerns such as funding support, logistical coordination, and compliance monitoring is also critical.

Overall, while the implementation of work immersion in public senior high schools in the City of Cabuyao is satisfactory, continuous improvements in collaboration, administrative systems, and student preparedness are necessary to optimize learning outcomes and support the transition of learners into professional environments.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that the implementation of the work immersion program in public senior high schools in the City of Cabuyao is generally consistent with national policy frameworks and operational guidelines. Core program components—including curriculum implementation, delivery processes, assessment practices, and supervisory mechanisms—are evident and functionally embedded in school operations, indicating that schools possess the institutional capacity to operationalize industry-based learning within the Senior High School curriculum. These findings affirm that policy-mandated structures for work immersion are largely in place and operational at the school level.

Despite this overall consistency, the study identifies persistent systemic constraints that limit program effectiveness. Administrative gaps related to Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) compliance, logistical support, funding, and access to appropriate facilities continue to affect sustained and equitable implementation. In addition, limited industry partnerships and regulatory requirements place added pressure on schools and work immersion coordinators. At the learner level, challenges in workplace adaptation and communication skills underscore the need for more robust preparatory interventions. Collectively, these conditions suggest that while program frameworks exist, contextual and operational factors significantly shape the quality of implementation and learner outcomes.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings advance school-to-work transition discourse by demonstrating that effective work immersion extends beyond curriculum design alone. Program success is shaped by the dynamic interaction of instructional practices, administrative systems, and external industry conditions. The integration of quantitative monitoring data with qualitative insights further contributes to existing literature by illustrating how policy-driven initiatives are enacted within localized public-school contexts.

Practically, the findings highlight the need for targeted institutional interventions to improve program coherence, sustainability, and impact. Strengthening industry-school partnerships through clear, enforceable MOAs is essential for expanding placement opportunities and ensuring alignment between learner specializations and workplace tasks. Enhancing logistical support and adopting more structured scheduling can reduce access and transportation barriers that hinder learner participation. Moreover, implementing structured pre-immersion training focused on workplace readiness, communication, and professional behavior can better prepare learners for industry demands. Consistent monitoring strengthened regulatory compliance mechanisms, and expanded capacity-building initiatives for teachers and school leaders are likewise necessary to improve supervisory effectiveness and accountability.

While the study offers valuable insights into work immersion implementation, its scope is limited to public senior high schools within a single division and relies primarily on monitoring data and self-reported perspectives. These limitations suggest opportunities for refinement through broader sampling, longitudinal research designs, and triangulation with employer evaluations and learner performance outcomes. Future research may examine the long-term employability and post-secondary trajectories of work immersion graduates, compare implementation practices across public and private schools or industry sectors, and empirically test the effectiveness of pre-immersion training and enhanced supervisory models. Such inquiries may provide stronger evidence-based strategies to further strengthen work immersion implementation and outcomes at the national level.

Conceptual Foundations of Work Immersion and Experiential Learning

Work immersion is a core component of the Philippine Senior High School (SHS) curriculum, intended to bridge classroom learning with real-world workplace demands by providing learners with authentic industry exposure (Department of

Education [DepEd], 2017). Anchored in experiential learning theory, work immersion enables students to apply knowledge and skills in real contexts, thereby enhancing employability and readiness for either higher education or immediate work. International literature supports this approach, as workplace learning initiatives in countries such as Australia, Canada, and Singapore have been shown to strengthen learners' adaptability, practical competence, and career awareness through competency-based and industry-aligned training models (OECD, 2021).

Across global and local contexts, immersion-type programs emphasize three core principles: alignment between curriculum and industry needs, strong school–industry collaboration, and authentic assessment of workplace competencies. These principles highlight the importance of immersion programs not merely as exposure activities, but as structured learning experiences that contribute meaningfully to students' future career pathways.

Implementation Factors and Program Effectiveness

Existing studies consistently identify several interrelated factors that influence the effectiveness of work immersion implementation. Curriculum alignment remains a central concern, as immersion tasks must correspond to students' academic specializations to ensure relevant skill development. Research indicates that when alignment is weak, students often perform tasks unrelated to their chosen tracks, reducing the educational value of immersion experiences (Caro et al., 2022; Quino, 2022).

Industry partnerships also play a decisive role. Studies comparing schools with strong and weak industry linkages reveal that formal, sustained partnerships—often supported by clear Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs)—are more likely to provide meaningful work assignments and structured supervision (Burac & Habla, 2023). In contrast, schools with limited access to industry partners face difficulties securing placement sites, monitoring students effectively, and ensuring compliance with program standards.

In addition, supervision and assessment practices significantly affect learning outcomes. While many schools implement monitoring mechanisms and evaluation tools prescribed by DepEd, variations in teacher supervision capacity and feedback practices have been observed, limiting timely instructional support and learner guidance (Dagli et al., 2019).

Operational Challenges and Emerging Debates

Despite broad agreement on the value of work immersion, the literature reveals persistent operational challenges, particularly in public senior high schools. Logistical barriers such as transportation costs, facility accessibility, and scheduling constraints are frequently reported, especially in resource-constrained settings (Caro et al., 2022). Administrative demands related to compliance, documentation, and liability concerns further complicate implementation, often discouraging potential industry partners from participation.

A notable debate in literature concerns the authenticity of immersion experiences. While some researchers assert that work immersion enhances students' professional adaptability and employability (Dagli et al., 2019), others argue that immersion programs often fall short of providing genuine workplace learning, citing repetitive clerical tasks and limited skill application (Burac & Habla, 2023). Moreover, discussions have emerged on whether work immersion should prioritize traditional employment pathways or incorporate entrepreneurial training, given that some SHS graduates pursue self-employment after completion of their studies (Caro et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic further shaped this debate by introducing virtual and alternative immersion modalities. Although these approaches addressed certain logistical constraints, concerns remain regarding their ability to replicate authentic workplace environments and professional socialization (UNESCO, 2022).

Gaps and Unresolved Issues in Existing Literature

While prior studies provide valuable insights into work immersion implementation, several unresolved issues remain. First, much of the existing research focuses on private senior high schools or national-level implementation, leaving gaps in understanding the localized realities of public SHSs, where administrative capacity, industry access, and resources vary widely (Quino, 2022). Second, inconsistencies in evaluation criteria across studies limit comparability and comprehensive assessment of program effectiveness. Finally, learner perspectives and post-immersion outcomes are often underexplored, particularly in relation to employability and career alignment.

Link to the Present Study

Addressing these gaps, the present study focuses on public senior high schools in the City of Cabuyao, examining both the level of work immersion implementation and the contextual challenges encountered by schools and learners. By integrating quantitative monitoring data with qualitative insights from school heads and coordinators, the study responds to calls for localized, evidence-based analyses of policy implementation. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to the refinement of work immersion strategies by informing an action plan that strengthens curriculum alignment, industry collaboration, administrative support, and learner preparedness within the public SHS context.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.