

**SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL WORK IMMERSION PIONEERS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

JESON A. BUSTAMANTE, M.A.Ed*

*Department of Languages and Literature, Cebu Normal University, Philippines

Abstract

The “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013” offer subjects that are new to the education curriculum. One of the subjects of Senior High School is the implementation of Work Immersion which is a pre-requisite for graduation as strengthened by the DepEd Order No.30, s.2017 in order to achieve greater congruence between basic education and the nation’s development targets. Through work immersion, the pioneer SHS students are expected to be exposed with work- related environment related to their field of specialization to enhance their competence. This phenomenological study finds out the lived experiences of the first batch of SHS students on the first implementation of Work Immersion. The study looks into the challenges faced by the students based on their actual experiences as wells as their feedback after the work immersion. The methodology involves survey questionnaires and interview to gather data among 43 Grade 12 students under General Academic Strand (GAS) in a public school. Evidently, students perceived Work Immersion as worthwhile, meaningful yet challenging experience which provided them realistic perspective on what to expect after graduation. It gave them opportunities to participate in employment simulation and apply the competencies obtained in the classroom in authentic work environments.

Keywords: work immersion, K-12, senior high school, education, experiential learning

Introduction

The Philippines is the last country in Asia and one of the only 3 countries along with Angola and Djibouti worldwide, with a 10-year pre- university cycle years ago (Geronimo, 2013). During the presidency of Aquino III, Philippines is out of the old school and has now become one of the countries which has more years of education. The implementation of K to 12 program covers Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School and two years of Senior High School [SHS]) to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners and prepare the graduates for tertiary education, middle- level skills development, employment and entrepreneurship (officialgazette.gov.ph). In connection, as part of the new curriculum, Senior High School offers advanced and different subjects that are indeed new to the eyes of being a high school student. One of the subjects is the work immersion which is a pre-

requisite for graduation. Based on the curriculum guide for work immersion, it is one of the course requirements for graduation. These prepare them to meet the needs and challenges of employment or higher education after graduation. As a whole, a new and big opportunity for students to enhance their knowledge and skills based on the actual experience and to develop the right attitude which a globally competitive world needs.

The preparation of the high school students has become more demanding in this unstoppable moving world in which most of the traditional practices have been redefined by contemporary ways and views. In order to sustain with these changes, there is a need for students have exposure of the real world setting and be prepared for real work in order to survive. A better way to realize this is to expose the students to work immersion that serves as a platform towards a successful and productive life.

This research study finds out the lived experiences of the Grade 12 students in the first implementation of work immersion for the first batch of Senior High School students in Jugan National High School, Jugan, Consolacion, Cebu. It also explores the challenges experienced and impression of the students in the work immersion program.

The realization of this study is vital for senior high school students to achieve full awareness of the significance of work immersion and to the parents as major stakeholders for them to understand deeply the important contribution of the subject corresponding the two years additional in high school. And lastly, to the senior high school teachers and administrators in order to have a glimpse of the progression of the students and the lapses and challenges along the way that serves as basis for guidance and improving the implementation of work immersion for the upcoming batches.

Objectives of the Study

This research looks into the lived experiences of senior high school pioneers on the first implementation of Work Immersion. Specifically it aims to: (1) look into the profile of the respondents; (2) identify the legal bases of the implementation of Work Immersion; (3) determine the lived experiences of the senior high school students in the work immersion program.

METHODOLOGY

This research study utilized a phenomenological study in an effort to determine the lived experiences of the Grade 12 students under the General Academic Strand as Work Immersion pioneers. Thematic analysis was used as means to determine insights and knowledge of the students in their participation of the Work Immersion program. The Senior High School Department of Jujan National High School in Consolacion, Cebu had forty-two (42) Grade 12 students good for one section only with one Work Immersion Adviser and the researcher who is happened to be the Work Immersion Focal Person of the school. The school was the research environment for it is one of the big schools in the District of Consolacion and this is where the researcher was previously assigned and taught Senior High School applied and core subjects to both Grade 11 and Grade 12 students. The data gathering with the use of survey questionnaire and interview took place when the students reported back to school after completing the 80-hour work immersion. The Work Immersion duties took place in the last quarter of the School Year 2017-2018. The researcher also analyzed different documents to identify the legal basis issued by government agencies to have an assurance that program will be able to ensure the welfare and protect the interest of the students prior to work immersion duties. The data gathered from the responses of the students during focused group discussions were then analyzed, interpreted and presented in thorough explanations. Other sources such as articles, research papers, and other online related readings for further references were considered to support this study.

There are ethical challenges that have implications in doing qualitative study (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy, 2010). To ensure ethical issues are considered, the study went through some processes. To address ethical concerns, the researcher made the participants sign an informed consent form to establish privacy and confidentiality and trustworthiness of the data.

Informed Consent. The researcher provided the students with the relevant information that included the benefits and risks of their participation in the study. It was emphasized that since their participation is voluntary, they can withdraw their participation at any time of the study. The consent further elaborated that there is no known risks involved and that their participation is a big help in contributing better understanding of the phenomenon investigated.

Confidentiality. The researcher made it certain that the privacy of the participants and the confidentiality of the information shared will be protected. Neither the participants' names

nor other personal information will be kept confidential. All information related to the personal aspect of every informant was handled with utmost care and confidentiality.

Trustworthiness. In the aspect of trustworthiness, the researcher maintained objectivity throughout the participants' interview and kept the notes in a safe place. The researcher also asked the participants to review the notes taken by the researcher after the interview for them to see and validate.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The following explanations present the data gathered during the focused group discussions and interview with the participants about their work immersion experiences.

Profile of the Respondents

Jugan National High School is one of the high schools in the District of Consolacion under the Division of Cebu Province. The school only offers General Academic Strand. Its first batch of Senior High School consisted of forty-two students for the year 2017-2108 where twenty were male students and twenty-two were female.

With reference to the Work Immersion Guidelines, the Workplace Immersion Venue is defined as the place where work immersion takes place which conform the law and the rules and regulations for safety, appropriateness for learning, and availability of facilities and equipment. Examples of these include offices, factories, shops, LGU offices and other private establishments. The DepEd Order No.40, series of 2015 emphasized the importance of carrying out the Partnership-building Responsibilities through applying agreements such as Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and other related documents.

There were three different workplace immersion venues chosen by the school namely Jugan Barangay Hall, Jugan Elementary School and McDonalds Mandaue. There were five students who intentionally expressed their intention to choose McDonalds as their workplace immersion venue since they are currently employed as part-time crew at that time. The other venues which are Local Government Unit (LGU) offices where chosen by the School Head in order for the students not to spend money for transportation and most of all to ensure the safety since the venues are just within the barangay.

Legal Basis of Work Immersion Program

This study presented the governing laws and policies that actualize the Work Immersion among senior high school students. These laws and policies were utilized by the researcher as theoretical basis of this study. The Republic Act No.10533 *AN ACT ENHANCING THE PHILIPPINE BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM BY STRENGTHENING ITS CURRICULUM AND INCREASING THE NUMBER OF YEARS FOR BASIC EDUCATION, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES* is commonly known as the “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013” was approved by Pres. Aquino last May 15, 2013. It stipulates that there will be additional two (2) more years in high school; hence it leads to the creation of senior high school [2]. The act is geared to further improve the knowledge and skills of the senior high school students in order for them to face the challenges being fully-equipped in any field they want to pursue be it in college education or entering the highly-competitive world of employment. Consequently, Work Immersion is part of the pre-requisites of before the commencement of the students. It was conceptualized in order to expose the students to workplace that will develop their skills in their chosen area or interest and to prepare them to the harsh realities they might encounter in the workplace. It also aims to enhance the work ethics of these students and to be more responsible being young adults.

The Department of Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones issued the DepEd Order No. 30, s.2017 “Guidelines for Work Immersion” on June 5, 2017 which is the basis for the implementation of the of work immersion to all senior high schools [13]. This order emphasized that Work Immersion is a key feature in the senior high school curriculum and it mentioned that the program can be conducted in different ways depending on the needs and purposes of the learners. This order also enclosed the pertinent documents vital for its implementation. Developing to the learners the values, work ethic and competencies relevant in pursuing college education or joining the world of employment is one of the goals of the K-12 Education program. The *Section 1. Rationale* enumerated that the Work Immersion will provide the learners with opportunities to have (1) familiarity of the work place, (2) employment simulation and (3) application of the attained competencies in school to areas of specialization in authentic work environments. In addition, *Section 4. Objectives* specified the aims of the Work Immersion particularly to make the learners (1) *appreciate the importance and application of the theories and principles learned in school;* (2) *enhance their technical*

knowledge and skills; (3) enrich their skills in communications and human relations, and (4) develop good work habits, attitudes, appreciation and respect for work.

Furthermore, other essential legal bases for the implementation of the Work Immersion Program were REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9231 “*An Act Providing For The Elimination Of The Worst Forms Of Child Labor And Affording Stronger Protection For The Working Child, Amending For This Purpose Republic Act No. 7610, As Amended, Otherwise Known as the "Special Protection Of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation And Discrimination Act"*”, DepEd Order No.40, s.2015 *Guidelines on K to 12 Partnerships* together with DepEd Order No.41, s.2015 *Senior High School Career Guidance Program and Early Registration*.

The Department of Labor and Employment also released important legal bases for Work Immersion Program such as DOLE Department Order No.149, s. 2016 *Guidelines in Assessing And Determining Hazardous Work In The Employment of Persons Below 18 Years Of Age*, DOLE Labor Advisory No.8, s.2016 *Protection for Senior High School Students on K to 12 Work Immersion Program* and DOLE Labor Advisory No.9, s.2017 *Guidance to Host Establishments in Ensuring Safe Workplaces for Senior High School Students Under Work Immersion Program*.

The laws and policies presented above comprised the considerations held by the Department of Education in order to achieve the implementation of the Work Immersion program. The government agencies concerned contributed to come up with this legal framework for the concerned stakeholders responsible for the Work Immersion program.

During the interview and focused group discussion, the senior high school students expressed their ideas about work immersion. The following presents the themes based from the lived experiences of the Senior High School students in the Work Immersion Program. Verbatim quotations of the participants’ utterances taken from the interview and focused group discussion were also presented.

The Mixed Emotions

The students underwent an orientation about the Work Immersion program together with their respective guardians and parents. During the Focused Group Discussion, the students expressed their impressions on the program. Excitement is their utmost feeling upon knowing that they will engage in the job simulation. They even associate Work Immersion as the same with On The Job (OJT) Training experienced by some of their friends in college, but this time they will experience in high school level. They felt happy on the idea that a new

learning environment is about to take place which is different from the classroom environment.

The students admitted of having the feeling of nervousness since it is not only the place which is new to them but as well as the people they will be working with. It made them curious on how they will be treated by their superiors in the workplace since they were used to the treatment of their teachers in the classroom. The following utterances would support the idea.

“..as part of the first batch of Grade 12 students, I feel so nervous because every subject is new to me, most especially Work Immersion..”

“...I was very excited because I did not learn Work Immersion in a classroom, it was a different place..”

“..I thought work immersion as the same with OJT just like my brother’s experience in college, I was happy to experience what it is like..”

Adapt to Immerse

The students did some adjustments during their work immersion. The work schedule given to most of them is far different from the schedule they used to have in school. Senior High School students start their classes after lunch and ends at 6:00 in the evening, however since they are immersed in a government office, they followed the regular schedule. Adjusting their waking-up time took them few days to adjust since they need to be in the office before 8:00 in the morning. Most of them considered the act of waking up early in the morning as one of the challenges they encountered. Thus, the situation pushed them to improve their time management ability. They got to practice mindful awareness of time in which they do not usually mind when they were in school.

In addition, the students shared during the interview that they found it hard to deal with different clients or people visiting in the office carrying different concerns. It gave them a realization for their routine in school is to face with the same classmates and teachers but in the workplace they were overwhelmed with the varied types of people they get acquainted with. Admittedly, the students acknowledged that they have improved their patience in handling different situations and most of all their communication skills when attending different concerns from people. Their work immersion experiences gave them the opportunity to further improve their interpersonal skills in terms of human relations and customer satisfaction.

“..it was hard to adjust my body clock, I had several lates during the first week”

“...dealing with people you are not acquainted with all the time is just so difficult because some were impolite and rude when they approach me..”

“...I did some adjustments because I was used to face the same people in the classroom but in the work immersion I was able to adapt to the situation”

Post-Work Immersion

Worthwhile. The 80-hour Work Immersion Program experienced by the students gave them the perspective of attaining a worthwhile experience. There were a lot of realizations they have such as the rigors of working in the industry, gaining a different kind of learning opportunity and the confidence boost they achieved after the program.

“...my Work Immersion experience was not as easy as I thought before, but it was worth it..”

“..I felt like I am not as shy as before because the workplace taught me to be confident in dealing with clients in the barangay hall..”

Purposeful. They perceive the program as a useful training for them most especially when employment becomes the chosen path after senior high school graduation. They were able to imbibe the culture and practices in the workplace and the discipline towards themselves. It made the students realize that workplace is not the same as the classroom where some things can be taken for granted.

“..I believe the my work immersion experience is very useful to me, I have decided now to apply for a summer job after graduation..”

“..It is amazing to see clearly the difference between being a student and a worker..”

Memorable. The students found the total experience unforgettable. As the work immersion pioneers, they felt proud they were able to manifest professionalism and achieved the required tasks and responsibilities obliged to them. The program gave them a positive impact to their life as senior high school students.

“...work immersion is unforgettable to me since I learn in a different way without the presence of home works and projects in school..”

The positive perceptions of the Grade 12 students on their work immersion experiences is relative to the feedback of the students as reported by The Business Mirror website as cited in the previous studies[5]. The participants were General Academic Strand

(GAS) students while in the literature cited the students were in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strand, but despite this difference in strands the students share the same positive perceptions which strengthen the positive impact of the Work Immersion Program to the students. In addition, this clarifies that these schools implementing the program were successful in deploying the students to different working environments.

In reference to these findings, it shows that despite the challenges faced by the students in the Work Immersion program, the implementation was successful to immerse the students and be exposed to real work environments with the help of Local Government Units and some private institution. The forty-three students as work immersion pioneers perceived the program positively and treated it as meaningful learning experience and useful opportunity for authentic learning. The findings relatively affirmed to the projected goals and objectives of the Department of Education in terms of uplifting K-12 curriculum of the country's educational system.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, the new age of Enhanced Basic Education of the Philippines has brought Work Immersion to senior high school students that are governed by laws and policies. It enabled the learners to reinforce significant application of the theories or concepts in the classroom to real life situations in the workplace and nurtured the characters and values of the students significantly. It paved way in promoting the thrust of DepEd in producing competent senior high school graduates ready for college, employment or entrepreneurship. In addition, based on their lived experiences the students found the program beneficial and worthwhile experience. The study further recommends looking into the Work Immersion experiences of students from other strands and tracks of senior high school.

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