

Workplace Skills and Competencies: An Industry Partners Appraisal on Work Immersion Program Among Senior High School Learners

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to provide learner real workplace experience in the actual work setup that build new skills, immersed in business workplace and increase employability that help discover themselves and jumpstart their professional growth by assessing their workplace skills and competencies. The data were collected from the thirty-two (32) Industry Immersion Supervisors who handles and overseeing Work Immersion Program of learners for eighty (80) hours during the Second Semester of School Year 2018-2019 chosen purposively by the researchers. The results of the study revealed that learners have high self-perceived work potency which make them feel confident in executing courses of action in managing work assignments. Likewise, learners were competent in the work assignment and learned the most in the aspects of communication and dealing with other people beyond differences. Learners who were exposed on job assignment relating to their strand performs and exhibits efficiency in completing the tasks and present lessons that will last a lifetime and virtues that can be used for the better life.

1. Introduction

Philippines develops more programs to make sure that the learners are being trained to obtain work ethic, competencies and values relevant to pursuing further education. The Department of Education (DepEd) strengthens its K-12 Basic Education Program with the issuance of the DepEd Order No. 30 s. 2017 that also describe as the Guidance of Work Immersion; this was issued last June 5, 2017 as the basis for the implementation of work immersion in all Senior High Schools. The work immersion is a required subject that provides the learners with different opportunities like become familiar with the work place, employment simulation, and apply their competencies in areas of specialization. The program aims to help develop among the learner's life and career skills, and prepare them to make decisions on employment. Through partnership building, DepEd hopes that the Partner Institutions will provide learners with work immersion opportunities.

Immersion prepares students for the real world by training them how to work in a company and eventually excel in a specific career. The school needs to ensure that its students gain various competencies that would have these future professionals ready for employment. It is the duty of parents and educators to ensure that students are equipped with the skills needed to have them serving in the 21st-century workforce. Work immersion is a key feature in the senior high school curriculum. It can be conducted in different ways depending on the purposes and needs of the learners.

The guidelines of the said work immersion which can range from 80 to 320 hours will enable students to become familiar with the workplace, experience workplace simulation and apply their skills competencies in areas of specialization. Through partnership building, DepEd hopes that partner institutions will provide learners with work immersion opportunities, workplace or hands-on experience, and additional learning resources. Specifically, the students are able to: (i) gain relevant and practical industrial skills under the guidance of industry experts and workers; (ii) appreciate the importance and application of the principles and theories taught in school; (iii) enhance their technical knowledge and skills; (iv) enrich their

skills in communications and human relations; and (v) develop good work habits, attitudes, appreciation, and respect for work. These prepare them to meet the needs and challenges of employment or higher education after graduation. (DepEd, April 2017)

Since learners will be placed out of their comfort zones and be exposed to the real meaning of our life, students were afraid of this kind of program. Consequently, it would be a greatest privilege, experience, and time for the learners to enhance their talents and skills. This activity will be done through actual skills demonstration and exposure to actual work processes that give them real meaning of life in the society where we they are living. However, in their college education they will undergo on-the-job training which give them a more intensive work exposure.

The Work Immersion Program opens a lot of great opportunities not only for the students but more for the industry as well as educational institutions. Through this research, learners have a chance to experience actual workplace situations which help widen their skills and competencies. The program also carries out motivation for the learners in facing the reality of life and to have a positive insight about it. Industry partners play a big role in contributing valuable appreciation and understanding of commitment, involvement, and respect in the workplace. In the light of the foregoing, the proponents will analyze the skills and competencies of senior high school students towards work immersion program as perceived by owner, manager, administrator and supervisor of respective industry partners.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Workplace Skills and Competencies

According to Wood & Bandura (1989) as cited in Machmud (2018) states that perception in completing a job is self-efficacy. Moreover, self-efficacy relates to someone's confidence in achieving his/her duties in uncertainty. While Bandura (1997) as cited in Domenech-Betoret et al. (2017) defined self-efficacy as "an individual's belief in his or her own ability to organize and implement action to produce the desired achievements and results". Self-efficacy is one's faith in accomplishing task successfully. Learners automatically adjust and adopt the new environment they are in for them to finish the immersion program while developing their efficiency.

Immersion experiences are a form of experiential learning which typically involve intensive educational instruction and exposure to complex social issues, often taking students outside of their "comfort zones" to critically examine their own pre-conceived notions and biases. Beyond case studies and other more qualitative work (e.g., Jones, Rowan-Kenyon, Ireland, Niehaus, &Skendall, 2012). It can be concluded that students are happy to experience learning outside the four corners of the classroom, they need exposure and learning the skills cannot be confined in classrooms where the environment is too limiting.

A published article from International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy describes a study constructed on the self-efficiency of adolescent, especially on high school teenagers, with previous work experience. The study showed that those with employment lasting for a firm duration than those with random pattern of employments has a stronger self-efficiency. In turn, the heightened self-efficiency increases the confidence level of young adults for the future anticipations of family lives, community participations, personal health and economic achievements (Cunnen, Rogers, & Mortimer, (2009).

2.2 Work Exposure

The work immersion program of the Department of Education is one of the key features of the newly established educational curriculum. This course primarily aims to expose a student to an active workplace where he can improve his communication and social skills. To be exposed in a work area is, somewhat, a very important moment a student must experience. In fact, Dr. Dagatan (2017) said that this work immersion provides learners with opportunities to learn about the workplace, as well as the authentic work environment. Work Immersion is a key feature in the Senior High School program.

2.3 Students' Safety During the Immersion Proper

The DOLE take an account of having the conditions for Work Immersion of students in workplace as it is also stipulated in Deped Order No.30 series of 2017. The following circumstances shall be observed for the protection of SHS students undergoing work immersion: (1) The work immersion shall be allowed only between 8:00 o'clock in the morning and 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon; (2) Work Immersion for the students below 15 years old and with their permission from their parent or guardian, shall not be longer than four hours in any given day; (3) SHS Students regardless considered as hazardous in accordance with the DOLE Department Order No. 149, Series of 2016 (Guidelines in Assessing and Determining Hazardous Work in the Employment of Persons Below 18 Years of Age); and (4) Work Immersion shall in no case result in the

replacement of or diminution of benefits of the workers in the partner enterprise/company (DOLE Labor Code no. 8). On the statement no. 1 of this code, which is all about the working time; this will primarily affect the students who are far from the work immersion venue. Also, for those who are only commuting just to accomplish this course it will cost them too much.

Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has emphasized the need for each institution to have their own child protection policy that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm. Madamba (2017), as a social welfare officer of DSWD, stressed that without the organization's Child Protection Policy, it would be really hard to conduct a check-and-balance as to whether there are abuse or not.

2.4 Immersion Guidelines and Learning Outcomes

The DepEd has issued the DepEd Order No. 30s. 2017 last June 5 on the same year. This order is known as the Guidelines for Work Immersion in all Senior High Schools (SHSs). By the time learners reach Senior High School, they would have already acquired almost all the competencies and skills that would prepare them for the curriculum exits (higher education, employment, middle skills development, and entrepreneurship). Work immersion provides them with a venue to test themselves and apply what they have learned in a non-school scenario. In work immersion, learners are not only able to apply their previous training but are also able to experience the social interactions a work environment. Their experiences during work immersion will develop many skills and values that would help them as they transition from high school to real life (Section 4, DepEd Order no. 8 s. 2017). This information unveils the goal of the work immersion program. On the other hand, it is not always advisable to lean on something. It is really through experience that we learned more. Moreover, the work immersion might also become a great instrument in showing the students the real meaning of "life" than in discussing inside the room.

2.5 The Success of the Work Immersion Program

The successful implementation of Work Immersion will depend on the strong collaboration, support, and commitment of the school personnel and Partner Institutions. These personnel shall always exercise due care and diligence in the performance of their duties (Section 7, DepEd Order no. 30 s. 2017). This section of the guidelines only shows that the effectiveness of this program does not depend on the students and facilitators alone. In fact, the personnel must obey and follow the instructions stated on the DepEd Order No. 40, series of 2015 or the Guidelines on K to 12 Partnerships.

3. Methodology

The data were collected from the thirty-two (32) Industry Immersion Supervisors who handles and overseeing Work Immersion Program of learners for eighty (80) hours during the Second Semester of School Year 2018-2019 chosen purposively by the researchers. Work immersion skills and competencies scale satisfaction were developed and used to assess the learners' performances in the workplace as observed by their immersion focal supervisor. The study used descriptive research design. This design was utilized to determine the workplace skills and competencies of learners on Work Immersion Program considering that it was a valid method for researching specific subjects and a precursor to more quantitative studies. While there were some valid concerns about statistical validity, limitations were understood by the researchers that this type of study was an invaluable scientific tool.

The researchers personally identified name of establishments and its corresponding owner/s as potential industry partners for learners' work immersion program. One of proponents was designated Work Immersion Coordinator who conduct ocular visit of the business site making industry immersion supervisors personally known to him. Prior to the deployment of the learners to respective partners, school-based orientation was done along with the signing of memorandum of agreement between the parties to ensure safety and security of learners while on the business premises.

Respondents were formally sent an invitation to answer the questionnaire and explain the purpose of the study. The proponents ensure the confidentiality of their responses and will use only for the intended purpose. Self-made questionnaire personally administered to respondents which was validated by the experts and implemented pilot testing to establish its reliability or internal consistency. The thrust of this study is to identify the perceived assessment of industry partners as to the skills and competencies of learners in the following areas: teamwork, communication, attendance and punctuality, productivity / resilience, initiative / proactivity, judgment / decision making, dependability / reliability, attitude, and professionalism.

Finally, questionnaires were retrieved after the respondents answered it and put through for analyzing, summarizing and interpreting in accordance with the subject enumerated in the objective of the study.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1. Occupational Potency of Learners Undergoing Work Immersion Program

Statement	Verbal Interpretation	
	WM	
1. Learners are at ease and comfortable when they around others at work - regardless of their title, position, or stature.	3.88	SA
2. Learners evaluate the quality of the decisions they make internally.	3.75	SA
3. Learners can be in whole self while at work and don't have to pretend to be someone they're not.	3.63	SA
4. Learners are given autonomy in their job.	3.84	SA
5. Learners can correct it with ease, if a process, procedure, approach is not working.	3.89	SA
6. There is a clear and well-defined objective on what drives the success of the organization.	3.78	SA
7. There are tools and platforms internally to help them collaborate and communicate more effectively.	3.63	SA
Weighted Average Mean	3.77	SA

Legend: 1:00 – 1.75 Strongly Disagree 1.76 – 2.50 Disagree 2.51 – 3.25 Agree 3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows the occupational potency of the learners undergoing work immersion program in the workplace. The respondents have an overall rating of 3.77 or strongly agree which signifies that there was high self-perceived work potency among the learners which make them feel confident in executing courses of action in managing work assignments. The learners were comfortable working with organizational personnel, can decide independently, have job autonomy, can work with ease, follow procedures, process and approaches, and creative means of communication. Hence, there was high agreement as to the work efficacy of learners in respective immersion partner work stations. The result, therefore of their performance reflects that they have accomplished the Work Immersion Program excellently.

It can be concluded that students are happy to experience learning outside the four corners of the classroom, they need exposure and learning the skills cannot be confined in classrooms where the environment is too limiting.

Table 2. Level of Satisfaction on the Skills and Competencies of Learners Undergoing Immersion Program in Industry Partners

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES	WM	Verbal Interpretation
A. TEAM WORK		
1. Consistently works with others to accomplish goals	3.84	HS
2. Treats all team members in a respectful manner.	3.69	HS
3. Actively participates in activities and assigned tasks required.	3.94	HS
4. Willing to work with team members to improve team collaboration on a continuous basis.	3.84	HS
5. Considers the feedback and views of team members when completing an assigned task.	3.81	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.82	HS

Legend: 1:00 – 1.75 Not Satisfactory 1.76 – 2.50 Less Satisfactory 2.51 – 3.25 Satisfactory 3.26 – 4.00 Highly Satisfactory

B. COMMUNICATION	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Actively listens to supervisor and/or co-workers.	3.82	HS
2. Comprehends written and oral information.	3.75	HS
3. Consistently delivers accurate information both written and oral.	3.63	HS
4. Reliably provides feedback as required, both internally and externally.	3.69	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.72	HS

A. ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Is punctual on a regular basis.	3.40	HS
2. Maintains good attendance.	3.50	HS
3. Meets deadlines and manages time well.	3.69	HS
4. Can do multitasking.	3.60	HS
5. Can work under pressure and delivers the required tasks.	3.63	HS
6. Effective and efficient in time management.	3.72	HS
7. Efficiently informs supervisor of any challenge or hindrance related to given task or assignment.	3.56	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.59	HS

A. INITIATIVE/PROACTIVITY	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Completes assignments with minimum supervision.	3.78	HS
2. Completes tasks independently and consistently.	3.72	HS
3. Seeks support as need arises.	3.84	HS
4. Recognizes and takes immediate action to effectively address problems and opportunities.	3.88	HS
5. Engages in continuous learning	3.94	HS
6. Contributes new ideas and shares skills to improve the department/organization.	3.81	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.83	HS

E. JUDGEMENT/DECISION MAKING	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Analyzes problems effectively.	3.50	HS
2. Has the ability to make creative and effective solutions to problems.	3.53	HS
3. Demonstrates good judgment in handling routine	3.60	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.54	HS

F. DEPENDABILITY/RELIABILITY	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Has the ability to follow through and meet deadlines.	3.88	HS
2. Has commitment for his/her action.	3.81	HS
3. Can adjust easily to changes in workplace.	3.63	HS
4. Displays high level of performance at all times.	3.54	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.72	HS

G. ATTITUDE	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Offers assistance willingly.	3.81	HS
2. Shows a positive work attitude.	3.88	HS
3. Shows sensitivity to and consideration for other's feelings.	3.72	HS
4. Accepts criticism positively.	3.78	HS
5. Shows pride in work.	3.76	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.79	HS

H. PROFESSIONALISM		
1. Respects persons in authority.	3.94	HS
2. Uses all tools, equipment and facilities responsibly.	3.84	HS
3. Follows all policies and procedures when issues and conflict Arises.	3.63	HS
4. Physical appearance conforms with the workplace and placement rules.	3.63	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.76	HS

Table 2. Summary of Skills and Competencies

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES	Mean	Adjectival Rating
1. Teamwork	3.82	HS
2. Communication	3.72	HS
3. Attendance, Punctuality and Productivity	3.59	HS
4. Initiative / Proactivity	3.83	HS
5. Judgment / Decision Making	3.54	HS
6. Dependability / Reliability	3.72	HS
7. Attitude	3.79	HS
8. Professionalism	3.76	HS
Weighted Average Mean	3.72	HS

Legend: 1:00 – 1.75 Not Satisfactory 1.76 – 2.50 Less Satisfactory 2.51 – 3.25 Satisfactory 3.26 – 4.00 Highly Satisfactory

Table 2 shows the respondents level of satisfaction on the skills and competencies of learners undergoing work immersion program in industry partners' workplace. The overall rating of all the skills and competencies were 3.72 or highly satisfactory on the work immersion program possessed by the learners. It can be deduced from the results of respondents rating that they've got greater satisfaction among the above enumerated skills and competencies such as teamwork, communication, attendance, punctuality, productivity, initiative, proactivity, judgment, decision making, dependability, reliability, attitude and professionalism which improved their basic level of abilities for advancement that links on their chosen career path. This entails that learners were competent in the work assignment and learned the most in the aspects of communication and dealing with other people. Thus, the work immersion program taught them how to interact with other people beyond differences.

Work immersion provides them an avenue to test themselves and apply what they have learned in a non-school scenario. They were also applied their previous trainings and able to experience the social interactions in work environment. Their experiences during work immersion will develop many skills and values that would help them as they transition from high school to real life. (Section 4, DepEd Order no. 8 s. 2017).

The study implied that the skills and competencies of learners were further enhanced when they underwent actual work immersion where they learned and acquired new experiences, lifelong skills and right attitude which can be best weapon in life. Learners who were exposed on job assignment relating to their strand performs and exhibits efficiency in completing the tasks. Through the collaboration of school with the industry partners, students' skills and competencies had been strengthened up. Finally, work immersion program present lessons that will last a lifetime and virtues that can be used for the better life.

5. Conclusions

1. The learners have high self-perceived work potency towards work which enables them to gain confidence in executing courses of action in managing work assignments.
2. The implementation of Work Immersion Program gave the students greater complacency on their respective strand which gave them opportunities to improve their learned skills from school. Thus, learners became holistically prepared and equipped with skills and competencies necessary to conduct oneself in a real work setting as perceived by industry partners.
3. The learners have gained lifelong skills and competencies along with attitudes and virtues toward work which are best weapons in pursuing a better life.
- 4.

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