

An Evaluative Study of the Experiential Learning of Immersion Students Through the Convergent Parallel Approach

Keen Jolliheart Calvez, LPT¹, Matias Mercado, Jr., MBA¹, Cornelio Mercado, CPA¹, Neilgene Jovero, LPT¹, Miral Acuram, LPT¹

¹Holy Cross of Mintal, inc. Mintal, Davao City

Publication history: Received: February 10, 2026; Revised: March 22, 2026; Accepted: March 25, 2026

Email of Corresponding Author: matiasmercado@hcmintal.edu.ph

Abstract

This study evaluated the success of the work immersion program among Grade 12 students at Holy Cross of Mintal, Inc., focusing on experiential learning as a determinant of program effectiveness. Anchored on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, the study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from all eligible students using a 23-item Likert-scale questionnaire and from 15 selected participants through open-ended questions and unstructured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. Findings revealed a high level of experiential learning, with concrete experience rated very high and other dimensions rated high. The work immersion program was generally perceived as successful, particularly in pre-deployment activities and adviser monitoring, although inconsistencies were observed in partner institution cooperation. A strong and significant relationship between experiential learning and program success was identified, with reflective, applying, and concluding experiences emerging as key predictors, explaining a substantial portion of program success. Qualitative results supported these findings, highlighting students' development of responsibility, professional identity, and workplace adaptability, while also identifying gaps in pre-deployment readiness and industry coordination. The study concludes that the effectiveness of work immersion depends on deeper cognitive engagement, particularly reflection and application, rather than mere exposure. It recommends strengthening reflective practices, improving industry collaboration, and enhancing pre-deployment preparation. The study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by promoting effective experiential learning and school-industry collaboration. It contributes to educational, institutional, and socio-economic sustainability by improving curriculum implementation, workforce readiness, and alignment between academic training and industry demands.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Mixed-Methods, Program Success, Senior High School Students, Work Immersion, Workplace Readiness

1. Introduction

The integration of experiential learning through work immersion has become a key strategy in enhancing the career readiness and holistic development of senior high school students. While such programs provide opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, their implementation presents persistent challenges affecting student adjustment, performance, and program effectiveness. In the Philippine context, despite established guidelines, issues related to communication, logistics, and evaluation remain evident. This study evaluates the success of the Work Immersion program of Grade 12 students at Holy Cross of Mintal, Inc. using a mixed-methods approach grounded in experiential learning theory. It aims to generate evidence-based insights to improve program implementation and outcomes.

1.1 Background of Work Immersion and Experiential Learning among Senior High School Students

The global shift in secondary education emphasizes developing students' full potential and career readiness through practical learning approaches such as Experiential Learning (EL). This approach responds to student demand for real-world exposure, with a majority recognizing internships and company-led projects as essential components of education. Work immersion enables learners to acquire practical skills, apply theoretical knowledge, and develop soft skills such as communication, human relations, and work ethics. However, students often experience adjustment difficulties in workplace environments, including cultural shock and challenges in meeting professional expectations, which may negatively affect their performance and learning outcomes (Davis, 2021).

1.2 Themes and Insights on Experiential Learning Factors and Work Immersion Success

Existing literature highlights both the benefits and challenges of experiential learning. Work immersion promotes skill development and practical understanding but also reveals recurring issues such as communication difficulties with supervisors, confusion in professional interactions, and time management challenges caused by schedule disruptions (Macalintal & de Chavez, 2020; Figueras & Mendoza, 2020). These insights suggest that while experiential learning is valuable, its effectiveness depends on how well students navigate concrete, reflective, concluding, and applying learning stages. The interplay of these factors influences the overall success of immersion programs, emphasizing the need for structured evaluation frameworks.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of Work Immersion Implementation

Globally, experiential learning is widely adopted to bridge academic learning and industry demands. However, challenges in student adaptation persist across contexts (Davis, 2021). Nationally, the Department of Education institutionalized work immersion through formal guidelines to strengthen school-industry partnerships and provide authentic workplace exposure (DepEd, 2017). Despite this, implementation issues remain, including attendance concerns, logistical disruptions, and communication barriers between students and supervisors (Macalintal & de Chavez, 2020; Figueras & Mendoza, 2020). At the local level, Holy Cross of Mintal, Inc. implements the program for Grade 12 students following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although students complete required outputs such as journals and time records, the program's effectiveness in achieving intended learning outcomes has not yet been evaluated.

1.4 Theoretical Basis: Experiential Learning Theory in Work Immersion Evaluation

This study is anchored on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), particularly the learning cycle consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization (concluding experience), and active experimentation (applying experience). This framework provides a systematic basis for evaluating how students learn from real-world exposure during immersion. By applying this model, the study assesses how each stage contributes to the success of the work immersion program and how learners translate experience into meaningful knowledge and skills development.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale for Evaluating Work Immersion Success

Despite numerous studies on implementation challenges, there remains a significant gap in evaluating the overall efficiency and effectiveness of work immersion programs relative to their intended learning outcomes. Existing research focuses largely on operational issues rather than comprehensive success evaluation from the learners' perspective. This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between experiential learning factors and program success, as well as exploring students' lived experiences and insights. The use of a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach ensures a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of program effectiveness beyond compliance-based assessments.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals. It supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by enhancing the effectiveness of experiential learning and improving educational outcomes through evidence-based program evaluation. It also contributes to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by preparing students with relevant skills, competencies, and workplace readiness essential for employment. Additionally, the study relates to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and partner industries to improve training environments and reduce job mismatch. These alignments reflect the role of work immersion in promoting sustainable, inclusive, and practical education systems.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

The study contributes to educational sustainability by improving curriculum implementation and ensuring that learning programs effectively develop student competencies. It supports socio-economic sustainability by equipping learners with employable skills that enhance workforce readiness and productivity. Furthermore, it promotes institutional sustainability by providing data-driven insights for policy refinement and program improvement within schools and the Department of Education. The findings also strengthen community and industry sustainability by fostering better alignment between academic preparation and workplace expectations, ultimately contributing to a more competent and adaptable workforce.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a mixed-methods research design to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach allowed statistical findings to be supported and explained through qualitative insights, enhancing the depth and validity of the results. Specifically, a Concurrent Triangulation Design, also known as the Convergent Parallel Approach, was employed. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and analyzed independently, allowing for time efficiency and immediate comparison of results. The primary purpose of this approach was triangulation, wherein findings from both data types were

compared to determine consistency or differences, thereby strengthening validity, reducing bias, and minimizing the limitations of single-method studies.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Holy Cross of Mintal, Inc. (HCM, Inc.), focusing on Grade 12 Senior High School students enrolled during the Academic Year 2024–2025. The institution served as the setting for evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the work immersion program.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents for the quantitative phase included all Grade 12 Senior High School learners at HCM, Inc. who were enrolled during the specified academic year and had completed the required 80 hours of work immersion in their respective industry placements. For the qualitative phase, a subset of these respondents participated in in-depth data collection. A total of 15 students were selected to provide detailed insights into their experiences. Prior to participation, all selected individuals were informed about the purpose of the study and voluntarily provided written consent.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A universal sampling technique, also referred to as a census, was applied in the quantitative phase to include all eligible students. This approach was chosen due to the manageable population size, ensuring maximum representativeness of the data. For the qualitative phase, simple random sampling was used to select 15 participants from the qualified respondents. This method ensured equal opportunity for selection and minimized selection bias while enabling in-depth exploration of experiential learning.

2.5 Research Instrument

The quantitative data were collected using a 23-item questionnaire adapted from Mercado and Sunaz (2019), which focused on evaluating experiential learning and the success of work immersion programs. The instrument used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) to measure students' perceptions. The interpretation of mean scores for experiential learning indicated levels from very low to very high, where higher scores reflected stronger manifestation of experiential learning. Similarly, mean scores for program success ranged from very less successful to very successful, indicating the degree to which the work immersion course contributed to students' learning processes. The validity of the instrument was ensured by aligning the questionnaire items with the research objectives and relevant literature (Myers, 2009). Internal reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a value of 0.920, indicating high internal consistency and suitability of the instrument for the local context. For the qualitative phase, data were gathered using three open-ended questions that explored students' lived experiences, application of learned theories and skills, and perceptions of the conduciveness of the work environment. These were supplemented with probing questions and followed by unstructured interviews to clarify and validate responses.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed a concurrent triangulation approach, wherein quantitative and qualitative data were gathered simultaneously. For the quantitative procedure, the adapted questionnaire was first subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha. After confirming its validity, the instrument was distributed to all eligible respondents to assess their perceptions of experiential learning and program success. At the same time, qualitative data were collected from the selected participants through open-ended questionnaires. This was followed by unstructured interviews to further explore and validate their responses. The collected qualitative data were then organized and prepared for thematic analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean was used to determine the average level of students' perceptions, while the standard deviation measured the variability of responses. Regression analysis was employed to examine the extent of influence of experiential learning factors on the success of the work immersion program. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved familiarizing with the data through repeated reading, generating initial codes, identifying recurring patterns, and grouping them into themes. The themes were then reviewed, refined, and defined to ensure they accurately represented the participants' experiences and perspectives. This process enabled a comprehensive interpretation of qualitative findings and facilitated integration with quantitative results.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Experiential Learning and Program Effectiveness

3.1.1 Assessment of Experiential Learning

The results show that learners reported a high overall level of experiential learning, with a mean score of 4.14. Among the dimensions, Concrete Experience obtained the highest mean of 4.29, followed by Reflective Experience at 4.18, Concluding Experience at 4.09, and Applying Experience at 3.98. While all categories were rated high, Applying

Experience received the lowest mean, indicating relatively less consistency in translating learned skills into workplace behavior. These findings indicate that immersion effectively facilitates learners' transition from classroom to workplace environments by strengthening hands-on engagement and reflection. The high ratings in Concrete and Reflective Experiences suggest that structured exposure and feedback promote behavioral and cognitive development. This supports the argument of Lee and Park (2023) that authentic work environments are critical in developing soft skills that traditional classrooms cannot replicate. However, the lower score in Applying Experience suggests a gap in fully internalizing professional practices, emphasizing the need to enhance opportunities for learners to consistently apply acquired competencies.

3.1.2 Level of Success of the Immersion Program

The immersion program was perceived as successful, with an overall mean score of 4.06. The highest ratings were observed in Pre-deployment and Deployment Activities and Monitoring of Adviser, both with a mean of 4.26, followed by Fulfillment of Program Objectives at 4.01. Cooperation of Partner Institution had the lowest mean of 3.64 and the highest variability, indicating inconsistent experiences across work placements. These results suggest that internal program mechanisms, particularly preparation and supervision, are effectively implemented. However, the lower rating for partner institution cooperation highlights variability in external support, indicating that program success may be dependent on the quality of industry engagement. This aligns with Smith et al. (2022), who emphasize that industry mentorship significantly influences student employability. The findings imply the need for more standardized collaboration with partner institutions to ensure consistent and equitable learning experiences.

3.1.3 Relationship between Experiential Learning and Program Success

The findings reveal a strong positive relationship between experiential learning and program success, with an overall correlation of $r = 0.720$ ($p < 0.05$). Reflective Experience ($r = 0.693$), Applying Experience ($r = 0.681$), and Concluding Experience ($r = 0.628$) showed significant relationships with program success, while Concrete Experience ($r = 0.002$, $p = 0.970$) was not significant. This indicates that deeper learning processes, particularly reflection and application, are the primary drivers of program success rather than simple exposure to work environments. The lack of significance in Concrete Experience suggests that presence alone does not ensure meaningful learning. This supports Harrison et al. (2022), who note that successful transition from student to practitioner depends on the ability to apply and synthesize experiences. Thus, immersion programs should prioritize reflective and application-based learning strategies to maximize outcomes.

3.1.4 Influence of Experiential Learning on Program Success

The regression analysis shows that experiential learning significantly influences program success, with an R value of 0.823 and R^2 of 0.678, indicating that 67.8% of program success is explained by Reflective, Applying, and Concluding Experiences. Reflective Experience was the strongest predictor ($B = 0.874$), followed by Applying Experience ($B = 0.316$) and Concluding Experience ($B = 0.217$), while Concrete Experience was not a significant predictor. These findings highlight the critical role of reflective learning in achieving successful immersion outcomes. The strong predictive power of reflection suggests that learners' ability to process experiences enhances their professional competence. This aligns with Thompson and Williams (2024), who emphasize that work-integrated learning relies on the learner's capacity to apply theory to real-world situations. The results suggest that immersion programs should adopt a "reflective-first" approach, focusing on guided reflection and application rather than mere participation.

3.2 Learners' Experiential Learning Narratives

3.2.1 Experiential Learning Cycle

The results show that learners progressed through stages of actual, contemplating, ultimate, and harnessing experiences. Initially, they engaged in hands-on activities and workplace orientations, followed by developing responsibility, teamwork, and time management. As immersion continued, learners acquired skills through observation and participation, eventually demonstrating adaptability, creativity, and confidence in applying professional values. These findings reflect Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, where learning occurs through a cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application. The observed progression indicates that immersion facilitates both skill development and identity transformation. As noted by Vansloyten et al. (2022), learners develop not only technical skills but also a professional identity, transitioning from students to practitioners through reflective engagement.

3.2.2 Realization of Immersion Goals

Learners reported personal growth, including increased self-confidence, clearer career goals, and enhanced creativity. They expressed that immersion helped them understand their professional direction and strengthened their commitment to their future careers. These results align with the Theory of Planned Behavior, suggesting that immersion influences learners' attitudes and perceived behavioral control. By increasing confidence and shaping career perspectives, the program enhances readiness for employment. This indicates that immersion experiences contribute not only to skill acquisition but also to psychological and motivational development, reinforcing learners' intention to pursue professional paths.

3.2.3 Areas for Improvement

The findings indicate that learners identified several areas for improvement, including the need for additional partner institutions, simulation-based pre-deployment training, and improved coordination between schools and industry partners to align tasks with learning strands. These results highlight gaps in program implementation, particularly in external collaboration and preparation. The identified “readiness gap” suggests that students may benefit from structured pre-deployment simulations. This supports McBeath et al. (2021), who emphasize that simulation-based preparation reduces anxiety and improves performance in workplace settings. Strengthening coordination with industry partners is also necessary to ensure consistent and meaningful task assignments.

3.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integrated findings show strong convergence between quantitative results and qualitative experiences, particularly in the stages of experiential learning. High ratings in experiential learning components were supported by learners’ narratives describing meaningful engagement, skill acquisition, and professional growth. However, divergence was observed in program logistics, particularly in partner institution cooperation, where both data sources indicated inconsistencies. This integration confirms that experiential learning is effective in transforming learners into work-ready individuals, particularly through reflection and application. However, it also highlights the need for program enhancement, particularly in strengthening industry partnerships and pre-deployment preparation. As Billett (2021) suggests, effective work-integrated learning requires intentional coordination between school and workplace environments. Addressing these gaps will ensure that experiential learning consistently leads to professional competence and successful immersion outcomes.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that the work immersion program serves as a highly effective and transformative learning experience that successfully bridges theoretical knowledge and professional readiness. Learners demonstrated high levels of experiential learning, particularly in reflection and application, which significantly influenced the overall success of the program. The findings indicate that meaningful learning occurs not merely through exposure but through deeper cognitive engagement, skill integration, and the development of professional values such as responsibility, adaptability, and self-confidence. However, while internal school mechanisms were found to be strong, inconsistencies in industry partner cooperation and a noticeable readiness gap prior to deployment limit the program’s full effectiveness.

The study recommends that learners engage more actively in reflective practices to enhance their learning and professional development during immersion. Industry partners should provide structured mentorship and ensure that assigned tasks are aligned with students’ academic backgrounds. Teachers and advisers are encouraged to facilitate reflective learning through guided discussions and portfolio-based activities, while schools should strengthen pre-deployment preparation through simulation-based training and improve coordination with partner institutions to ensure consistency in learning experiences. Future studies may further explore long-term outcomes and comparative analyses across different academic strands to strengthen the program’s implementation.

The study is limited to Grade 12 students of a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. The use of self-reported data may also introduce subjectivity in assessing experiential learning and program success. Additionally, variations in partner institution practices may have influenced the consistency of student experiences, and the study did not extend to long-term outcomes beyond the immersion period.

Compliance with ethical standards

The researchers declare no conflict of interest, and this study received no external funding as it was conducted solely for academic purposes. The researchers acknowledge the participating Grade 12 students and the support of Holy Cross of Mintal, Inc. for their cooperation and contributions to the study. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were fully informed of the study’s purpose prior to providing written consent, with data collected through non-invasive methods and handled to ensure confidentiality without disclosing identifying information.

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