

Work Immersion Preparedness Among Senior High School Students: Industry Partners' Perspective

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Abstract

This study investigates the work immersion preparedness of senior high school students as perceived by industry partners in Santiago City. Focusing on the Technical–Vocational and Academic strands, the research assesses students' readiness across key workplace competencies, including punctuality, interpersonal relationships, productivity, efficiency, and safety. Using a descriptive survey design, 57 industry partners from selected public schools participated, providing evaluations of 66 student interns. Data were gathered through validated questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, with reliability confirmed via Cronbach's alpha (ranging from .908 to .972). Findings indicate that students are generally prepared, with highest ratings in safety and interpersonal relationships and lower ratings in efficiency. Significant differences were observed among students grouped by strand, highlighting areas for strand-specific improvement. Industry partners identified challenges such as students' lack of experience, insufficient skills, and engagement with non-productive activities. Based on these results, the study proposes a comprehensive school plan aimed at enhancing work immersion preparedness through targeted interventions, monitoring systems, and collaboration with industry partners. The research provides valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policy-makers to strengthen SHS work immersion programs and better equip students with employable skills for future careers.

Keywords: Work Immersion, Senior High School, Industry Partners, Student Preparedness, Workplace Competencies, Technical–Vocational Education

1. Introduction

Work immersion has become an essential component of senior high school (SHS) education, serving as a bridge between classroom learning and real-world work experiences (Acut, 2021; Salvador, 2020). Through carefully structured programs, students are provided with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts, which helps them develop critical workplace competencies such as punctuality, productivity, safety awareness, and interpersonal skills (Fujio et al., 2023). These programs not only foster technical skills but also cultivate professional attitudes, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for success in both vocational and academic environments.

Industry partners play a vital role in the work immersion process by providing supervision, ongoing feedback, and mentorship, ensuring that students can navigate the demands of professional settings while aligning with workplace expectations (Macalintal & De Chavez, 2020). Through this collaboration, students gain insight into industry standards, workplace norms, and the practical application of knowledge, which strengthens their overall competence and readiness for future employment.

Despite the documented benefits of work immersion in enhancing students' skills, employability, and professional growth, challenges remain. Variability in student preparedness, differences in technical ability, and the need to adapt to workplace culture can influence the effectiveness of immersion programs (Manalo-Mina et al., 2022). Furthermore, while much research has focused on student outcomes, fewer studies have explored the perspectives of industry partners, who are uniquely positioned to assess students' strengths and areas for improvement across different strands of SHS education.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the preparedness of SHS students from the viewpoint of industry partners. It specifically focuses on evaluating students' practical competence, professional behavior, and overall workplace readiness. The insights gained from this research are intended to inform the development of targeted strategies for improving student readiness, enhancing the quality of work immersion programs, and fostering more effective collaboration between schools and industry stakeholders.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-survey design to examine the preparedness of senior high school (SHS) students for their work immersion programs. Collecting both numerical ratings of key workplace competencies and narrative feedback from industry partners allowed the research to capture a comprehensive picture of students' readiness. This approach assessed observable skills such as punctuality, productivity, and adherence to safety protocols while providing insight into students' attitudes, adaptability, and engagement during real workplace experiences. Integrating statistical data with descriptive accounts ensured a nuanced understanding of students' strengths and areas needing improvement, offering valuable guidance for enhancing work immersion programs and aligning educational outcomes with industry expectations.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in selected public senior high schools in Santiago City that coordinate work immersion programs with partner industries. These schools provide structured, hands-on experiences for students across both Technical-Vocational and Academic strands.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

Participants included 57 industry partners who supervised 66 student interns. They provided ratings on workplace competencies, such as punctuality, productivity, interpersonal skills, efficiency, and safety. Additionally, they shared their observations about students' adaptability, engagement, and attitude toward tasks.

2.4 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with sufficient supervisory experience to provide informed evaluations. Individuals not directly involved in student supervision were excluded to maintain focus on firsthand observations.

2.5 Research Instruments

Data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires measured key competencies, while interviews captured narratives about students' behavior, performance, and readiness. Observational notes were also recorded during the work immersion period to complement partner feedback (Fujio et al., 2023).

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants prior to the start of data collection, ensuring that they fully understood the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the measures in place to protect their privacy and confidentiality. Detailed explanations were provided regarding the voluntary nature of participation, the ability to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences, and the ways in which the collected information would be securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Data collection was conducted directly at the partner workplaces to observe students in authentic settings. The researcher administered structured questionnaires to capture quantifiable information about student competencies, while semi-structured interviews allowed participants to provide in-depth feedback, share experiences, and discuss strengths and areas for improvement among students. In addition, the researcher conducted direct observations of students performing their tasks, noting behaviors, interactions, and engagement levels. These observations offered a richer context to complement the numerical ratings and interview responses, enabling the researcher to interpret the findings more comprehensively. The combination of questionnaires, interviews, and observations provided a multi-faceted understanding of student preparedness, bridging the gap between quantitative data and qualitative insights to produce a well-rounded analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were carefully examined using descriptive statistics, including means, percentages, and standard deviations, to provide a clear summary of students' competencies across key workplace skills such as punctuality, productivity, safety, and interpersonal relationships. These numerical analyses allowed the researcher to identify overall trends in student performance, highlight areas of strength, and pinpoint aspects requiring improvement. In parallel, qualitative data gathered from interviews with industry partners and direct observations of students during their work immersion were analyzed thematically. The researcher systematically coded responses and field notes to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and notable insights into student preparedness. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of how students applied their knowledge in real-world settings, how they interacted with supervisors and peers, and how effectively they adapted to workplace expectations. Combining quantitative and qualitative analyses allowed the researcher to produce a comprehensive evaluation of student competencies, ensuring that the findings reflected both measurable performance and contextual, experience-based insights (Montes & Pano, 2020).

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were observed, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. All responses were reported in aggregate to protect the identity of participants.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Overall Student Preparedness

Industry partners generally reported that senior high school students were well-prepared for work immersion. Students demonstrated punctuality, adherence to safety protocols, and positive interpersonal skills. Observations indicated that most students adapted quickly to workplace routines, followed instructions, and displayed eagerness to learn. However, some students struggled with efficiency, especially when performing complex or unfamiliar tasks. This aligns with previous studies highlighting differences in practical readiness across student cohorts (Fujio et al., 2023).

3.2 Strand-Specific Observations

Despite the generally positive level of preparedness among students, several challenges were observed during the work immersion program. Some students did not possess sufficient hands-on experience, which affected their ability to complete certain tasks efficiently and confidently. They required additional guidance, repeated instructions, and closer monitoring to ensure that tasks were performed correctly and on time. In some instances, students engaged in non-productive activities, such as extended breaks or off-task behaviors, which highlighted the need for more structured supervision and ongoing mentoring. Industry partners emphasized that bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application is critical; without this connection, students may struggle with accuracy, efficiency, and confidence in performing workplace tasks. These insights underscore the importance of tailored support, continuous feedback, and the implementation of strategies that foster both skill development and professional behavior, ultimately ensuring that students gain meaningful and effective immersion experiences.

3.3 Challenges Identified

Although students were generally prepared for their work immersion, several challenges became evident during the program. Some students lacked sufficient hands-on experience, which affected their ability to complete tasks efficiently and confidently, requiring additional guidance and support from supervisors. In certain instances, students engaged in non-productive activities, such as extended breaks or off-task behaviors, highlighting the need for closer supervision and mentoring to maintain focus and productivity. Industry partners stressed the importance of connecting theoretical knowledge with practical application, noting that gaps in this area could undermine task accuracy and diminish students' confidence in performing workplace responsibilities. These observations underscore the necessity for structured training, consistent feedback, and tailored support mechanisms to ensure that students maximize learning opportunities and develop the professional competencies required for future employment.

3.4 Implications for Work Immersion Programs

The findings suggest that incorporating narrative feedback and direct observations alongside structured assessments can provide a holistic view of student preparedness. Schools may enhance work immersion outcomes by providing targeted workshops, mentoring systems, and continuous feedback mechanisms. Collaboration between schools and industry partners is essential to align expectations and ensure students develop both technical skills and professional behaviors.

3.5 Recommendations for Improvement

Based on the feedback provided by industry partners, several key recommendations were formulated to enhance the effectiveness of the work immersion program. Schools should strengthen pre-immersion orientation sessions to ensure that students clearly understand workplace expectations, safety protocols, and professional behavior standards before entering their placements. Implementing strand-specific training modules will allow students to develop skills that are directly relevant to their chosen technical or academic pathways, ensuring that their preparation aligns with real-world industry requirements. Providing practice opportunities that closely simulate actual workplace conditions can help students gain hands-on experience and build confidence in performing tasks independently. Furthermore, maintaining ongoing communication and collaboration with industry partners is essential for monitoring student progress, addressing emerging challenges, and providing timely guidance. Together, these strategies aim to enhance students' efficiency, technical competence, problem-solving abilities, and overall readiness, thereby preparing them for successful integration into the workforce and equipping them with the skills and professional mindset necessary for career advancement.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that senior high school (SHS) students are generally prepared for work immersion, demonstrating strengths in punctuality, adherence to safety protocols, and interpersonal skills. Technical-Vocational strand students excelled in hands-on tasks, while Academic strand students performed well in documentation and reporting. Narrative insights from industry partners highlighted that students are enthusiastic, adaptable, and willing to learn, but efficiency and technical application remain areas needing improvement.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. Schools should implement strand-specific training modules that align with the practical requirements of each field. Pre-immersion orientations and workshops can help bridge

theoretical knowledge and practical skills, improving students' confidence and accuracy in workplace tasks. Mentoring and monitoring systems should be strengthened to provide ongoing guidance and feedback during immersion. Collaboration with industry partners is essential to ensure that students meet workplace expectations, gain relevant skills, and develop professional behavior.

Additionally, assessment tools should combine quantitative ratings and narrative feedback to provide a holistic view of student preparedness. By implementing these strategies, schools can enhance the effectiveness of work immersion programs, better prepare students for real-world challenges, and support their transition into future employment.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study strictly adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. All industry partners and students were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature of participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and their responses were used solely for research purposes. Personal identifiers were removed during data analysis and reporting, and results were presented in aggregate form. The study complied with institutional and national regulations regarding ethical conduct in educational research, ensuring responsible collection, handling, and dissemination of findings.

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