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‘Reexamine SHS program’s employment and entrepreneurial objectives’

MOST SENIOR HIGH school (SHS) graduates are not confident of getting a job despite their training and education because they believe firms still prefer to hire college graduates.

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) President Aniceto Orbeta Jr. shared this during a webinar where he discussed the findings of two studies he coauthored on the prospects and challenges of SHS graduates in the labor market.

The first study, *“Senior high school and the labor market: Perspectives of Grade 12 students and human resource officers”*, was conducted in 2018, just about the time when the first batch of SHS students graduated. Orbeta and his coauthors Marites Lagarto, Ma. Kristina Ortiz, Danica Aisa Ortiz, and Maropsil Potestad conducted focus group discussions to know Grade 12 students’ experiences and their assessment of their employment prospects.

In his presentation at a webinar organized by PIDS, Orbeta explained that “the students lack confidence regarding their employability. Somehow, they have this idea that the

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Editor's Notes

On September 13, classes opened for the school year 2021–2022 across the country, particularly in public schools. This is the second year that education is being delivered via distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pending official reports from concerned agencies and a systematic empirical study on the impacts of the pandemic on education, there is a plethora of anecdotes describing the challenges faced by teachers, students, and parents in adjusting to the new modes of learning. These are new issues that the education sector faces that have important ramifications for human capital development in the country. However, before the pandemic, there were already critical issues that required appropriate policy and strategic response. These and other related issues are tackled here.

The banner article discusses the woes confronting our senior high school (SHS) program found in a PIDS study. While firms are reluctant to hire SHS graduates due to a perception that their education and training are insufficient, interviewed Grade 12 students themselves are not confident that they can find a job after graduation. They also believe that pursuing a college education is their only ticket to getting a good job with a respectable wage. This belief appears close to reality since less than a quarter of companies are willing to hire SHS graduates, and most of the available jobs accept only college graduates. The results of the study are also presented in infographics on pages 18 and 19.

Meanwhile, another education-related research investigated the factors that affect students' test scores. (Page 20)

employers consider the educational qualification and ability of SHS not good enough for their employment needs.”

Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 introduced the K to 12 curriculum, which requires kindergarten, six years of elementary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of SHS. The SHS curriculum is divided into eight core learning areas and four contextualized track subjects: (1) academic, (2) technical-vocational livelihood, (3) sports, and (4) arts and design. It also aims to prepare students for three possible exits: (1) higher education, (2) middle-level skills development, and (3) employment or entrepreneurship.

Orbeta revealed that 3 in 4 interviewed Grade 12 students plan to proceed to higher education than join the labor market, as they are not confident that they will get a job after graduation from SHS. He added that most students were firm about pursuing higher education because they believe that a college degree provides better employment opportunities and salaries.

According to Orbeta, students feel that employment opportunities for SHS graduates might be limited to entry-level positions, such as clerical support, service and sales, and trade jobs. Hence, they expect to earn the minimum wage only.

The paper “*On the employability of the Senior High School Graduates: Evidence from the Labor Force Survey*”, conducted by Orbeta and Potestad in 2020, confirmed the findings of their 2018 study that looked at expectations before graduation.

Over 70 percent of SHS graduates pursued college education, while only 20 percent entered the labor force. As such, the authors called for a reexamination of the employment and entrepreneurial objectives of the SHS program.

Orbeta also called for the deepening of students' knowledge in core courses and upgrading the quality and standardization of teaching subjects in SHS to better prepare students for college.

Awareness on SHS competencies

In the 2018 study, the authors also interviewed human resource managers of firms to determine their perspectives about SHS graduates.

Results revealed that most firms are reluctant to hire SHS graduates due to a lack of in-depth knowledge of the SHS program. In addition, firms expressed that they need to know whether the skills acquired in SHS are adequate and appropriate to the current needs of the industry. Therefore, the authors highlighted the need to raise awareness and familiarity of employers on the competencies of SHS graduates.

Most firms also perceive that SHS graduates are not work-ready. While SHS students are required to render at least 80 hours of work immersion, most firms believe the duration is insufficient to expose students to skills application and hone their behavioral skills and traits. Thus, the authors recommended a longer and competency-oriented work immersions for students to gain relevant hands-on experience.

The study further revealed that while some firms are willing to hire SHS graduates, these companies give preconditions, such as requiring graduates to show competencies, specialized skills, and work immersion experience.

Additionally, many employers offer low-rank positions and elementary occupations to SHS graduates. The authors noted that this is because some firms prefer college graduates for skilled middle-level jobs. On the other hand, government agencies are restricted by the qualification standards set by the Civil Service Commission (CSC). For example, education requirements for first-level positions in the civil service have not been adjusted to consider SHS graduates. As such, the authors implored firms and government agencies to adjust their hiring policies.

Pandemic and the labor market

Philippine Business for Education Executive Director Lovelaine Basillote, a discussant in the PIDS webinar, noted that more people are being laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, it is important to determine the kind of jobs the K to 12 graduates are actually entering and whether they can compete with their level of credentials and experience.

Basillote added that it is crucial to have data on the career and educational aspirations of the youth and the expectations of employers.

“Bridging those different aspirations and expectations and making sure that we minimize the information asymmetry can improve the quality of education and the

career pathways [of students so that] we can help them transition from school to employment much better,” she said.

Labor market performance of SHS graduates

Also speaking at the webinar, Department of Education’s (DepEd) Bureau of Curriculum Development Director Jocelyn Andaya said a K to 12 curriculum review is being done. Moreover, she discussed the tracer study results conducted by the DepEd to monitor the first batch of SHS graduates. She noted that SHS graduates face several challenges related to job qualifications, noncrediting of SHS subjects, and rejection from degree programs they applied for. She added that the DepEd is looking into how these issues can be addressed.

Andaya also shared that DepEd is engaging Microsoft Corporation and the Employers Confederation of the Philippines to raise the employability of

SHS graduates and help them develop skills that the modern workplace demands.

According to the DepEd official, an order to enable students to take part in work immersion of up to 320 hours has been issued to enhance the work preparation component of the SHS curriculum.

Orbeta, Basillote, and Andaya agreed that multisectoral efforts are crucial for the SHS program to succeed, saying that government agencies, civil society, industry sectors, school institutions, and other stakeholders must work together to achieve this goal.

“The employment of our graduates is not only a problem of the school system but also of the firms, and this has implications to the society as a whole,” Orbeta said.

He stressed that SHS graduates have yet to find their niche in the labor market. Thus, he recommended the continuous monitoring and assessment of the labor market performance of SHS graduates. **WMA**



Senior high school students feel that employment opportunities for them after graduation are limited to entry-level positions. (Photo by CIIT College of Arts and Technology)

Students' test performance linked to personal, household, school factors



It is important to understand the factors affecting students' test results so that proper intervention could be given to low performers, according to the authors. (Photo by DepEd Sorsogon | Facebook)

A STUDY BY state think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) revealed what drives Filipino students' test performance after dismal ranking in an international benchmark test.

In the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Philippines ranked last among 79 high- and middle-income countries in reading proficiency and second to the last in mathematics and science. This has raised concerns about the quality of education in the country.

Thus, in the study *"Correlates of test performance of 15-year-old students in*

the Philippines: Evidence from PISA", Aniceto Orbeta Jr., Kris Ann Melad, and Maropsil Potestad looked into the factors affecting students' test performance. Using the PISA dataset, the authors measured the impact of personal, household, and school characteristics on students' test performance.

"The quality of any education system is an interplay of several factors, including individual and household factors, school inputs, such as curriculum, learning environment, and teachers, and community support," the authors noted.

Among the personal characteristics considered in the study, the authors

found that grade repetition, school starting age, and bullying have the greatest impact on students' test performance across subject areas.

Grade repetition is associated with lower test scores. Further, it wastes investments for the school year and causes possible scarring effects. Thus, the authors called for interventions to address why students lag compared to their classmates. However, they clarified that this does not mean that schools should mass promote students. Instead, the performance of those who are behind must be improved.

Likewise, starting primary school at a later age is associated with lower test scores. Therefore, early entry into primary education should be promoted.

Moreover, there is a gender disparity in reading performance, with males scoring lower than females. This calls for promoting reading among males.

The authors also implored schools to address bullying. The PISA reported that 64.9 percent of Filipino students were bullied at least a few times in a month, putting the country among those with the highest bullying incidence.

"Besides the fact that bullying is inherently unacceptable, it also has negative effects

on test scores. This result should provide an additional impetus to stop bullying in schools,” the authors explained.

In terms of family background, parental occupation and parental emotional support showed positive effects on test scores. According to the authors, parental support has a great impact on students who lag behind. Hence, parents’ greater involvement and support to their children’s education should be promoted.

On school characteristics, the study shows that only the disciplinary climate has a consistently positive effect on test scores. This highlights the role of households and society, other than schools, in instilling the value of order and discipline in learning environments.

How can low performers improve?

The Philippines joined the PISA for the first time in 2018 as a step to globalize the quality of basic education in the country. The PISA evaluated a representative sample of 15-year-old students enrolled in Grade 7 or higher. The sampling was done in two stages, with the first stage involving 187 schools from 17 regions with a proportional number of students. In the second stage, 42 PISA-eligible students for each school were selected. The dataset includes 7,233 students. The test was in English and was delivered in a two-hour computer-based assessment.

In reading, PISA reported that 80 percent of 15-year-old junior high school Filipino students are low performers with below level 2 proficiency. In addition, 81 percent

and 78 percent of students have below level 2 proficiency in mathematics and science, respectively.

In terms of mean scores, the country scored 340 in reading, 353 in mathematics, and 357 in science. These scores are significantly lower than the world average of 487 in reading and 489 in mathematics and science.

Thus, the authors stressed the importance of understanding the factors affecting students’ test results so that proper intervention could be given to low performers. Results showed that among low performers, those who intend to get a college education seemed to perform better in tests. Likewise, low performers who believe that admission requirements in college are based on academic performance also scored higher in the reading test.

Meanwhile, the correlation of school characteristics with test scores has mixed outcomes. For example, the number of computers per student and the proportion of computers connected to the internet are associated with higher scores in mathematics. On the other hand, student-teacher ratio and class size are linked with lower scores for high performers.

There is also a negative association between test scores and learning time. The authors noted that while this can be interpreted that smarter students learn fast and, hence, require less time to learn, it should also encourage close examination of how the education system uses instruction time.

Further, teacher qualifications, such as being certified and having master’s degrees, are not correlated with mathematics and science test scores. However, higher qualifications of teachers have a negative correlation with the reading test scores of low performers.

According to the authors, this means that better qualification does not always translate into better pedagogy. Thus, they recommended a review of how teachers with higher qualifications are utilized in learning, the effectiveness of teacher certifications systems, and the quality of graduate education for teachers.

Moving forward

To provide policymakers relevant insights on the education system’s effectiveness, the country should continue to participate in international benchmarking tests.

“This (2018 PISA) has served as a wake-up call for the country to take a hard look and take steps in understanding how we ended up at the bottom of participating countries and how we can improve education quality in the country,” the authors said.

They also recommended wider dissemination of national test score results to inform policy decisions. In particular, the authors suggested that public use files be produced from those test results so that supplementary analyses toward a better understanding of the state and determinants of education quality can be done. **WMA**

'Reform TVET to keep pace with changing business needs'



The government should improve skilling opportunities for marginalized youth. (Photo by Technical Education and Skills Development Authority | Facebook)

TO KEEP PACE with the changing needs of the industry, the government is advised to revisit the delivery of its technical-vocational education and training (TVET) programs to the Filipino youth.

This is according to the study *"Profile of training and skilling programs in the Philippines"* by Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) President Aniceto Orbeta Jr. and Supervising Research Specialist John Paul Corpus. They noted that reconfiguring the TVET curricula, providing financial stipends, and launching information campaign programs are crucial in addressing the challenges and issues in the TVET sector.

Based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), there are 19.99 million (19.05% of the total population) Filipinos aged 15 to 24 years as of 2018. However, 3.84 million (19.23%) are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) and are at risk of facing disadvantages and exclusion in society.

In 2019, the PIDS partnered with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Philippine Business for Education (PBE) to bridge research gaps and help improve training and skilling opportunities for the youth, especially the marginalized NEETs.

TVET program landscape

In 2019, there were 16,125 TVET programs offered by 4,387 TESDA-registered training providers. These programs are concentrated in a few occupational sectors. Tourism (hotel and restaurant) was the dominant field, accounting for more than a quarter (27%) of all registered programs. Also, in the top 10 TVET occupational sectors in terms of the number of registered programs were (1) metals and engineering; (2) electrical and electronics; (3) social, community, and other services; (4) construction; (5) agriculture, fishery, and forestry; (6) automotive and land transportation; (7) human health or healthcare; (8) language and culture; and (9) information and communications technologies.

TESDA works with industry groups to develop standards for designing and delivering programs that prepare learners for in-demand occupations. These standards are called Training Regulations (TRs). As of February 2020, TESDA has issued TRs for 296 programs, including 63 in construction, 104 in manufacturing, and 21 in tourism.

Students who complete TVET programs with Training Regulations (WTR) undergo a mandatory competency assessment. Passers gain a national certificate (NC), which indicates that the holder has reached the industry standard.

In 2018, there were 760,532 graduates of WTR programs. The five programs with the most number of graduates were Food and Pastry Production NC II, Shielded Metal Arc Welding NC II, Food and Beverage Services NC II, *Hilot* (Wellness Massage) NC II, and Cookery NC II.

The government has several programs that promote access to TVET. For example, Republic Act 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, provides free tuition in state-run training schools and tertiary education subsidy for learners in private training schools. Likewise, TESDA offers free training and assessment through the Training for Work Scholarship Program, Private Education Student Financial Assistance, and Special Training for Employment Program.

Meanwhile, YouthWorks PH, a five-year (2018–2023) project of the PBed and the

United States Agency for International Development, offers free work-based training programs for marginalized youth. Its priority areas are construction, manufacturing, and tourism and hospitality.

How responsive are TVET training programs to industry needs?

To gauge the responsiveness of TVET training programs vis-à-vis industry needs, the authors conducted roundtable discussions and key informant interviews with YouthWorks PH priority sectors.

One significant finding of the study is the unfavorable perceptions of construction jobs among young people, resulting in low demand in this sector.

Using data from PSA's *2017/2018 Integrated Survey on Labor and Employment*, the PIDS study reported that more than a quarter (27.3%) of vacancies across all

industries are hard to fill. Moreover, about 2 in 5 vacancies (41.9%) in construction establishments are hard to fill, the highest rate among YouthWorks PH priority sectors.

"The prevailing perception is that construction jobs are lowly, dirty, and dead-end jobs," the authors revealed. Hence, it is recommended that information campaigns be launched for parents and students to improve the image of construction-related jobs and address other misconceptions.

According to industry representatives interviewed by the authors, construction workers nowadays "tend to earn higher salaries and increasingly use power tools instead of hand tools".

According to the authors, these kinds of opportunities for career advancement in construction jobs, such as stories of workers who managed to lead successful careers in construction, could be highlighted through information campaigns.



Tourism-related programs dominate TVET, with over a quarter of registered programs and just under a quarter of graduates.

While several financing programs cover tuition fees, the study noted that some scholarships lacked transportation and sustenance allowances, which are critical for low-income students. The authors cautioned that the absence of such subsidies could exclude prospective trainees from availing of TVET programs.

The authors also highlighted some concerns about the quality of schools, trainers, and assessors. For example, they quoted some industry informants saying that "some schools are lagging in facilities and equipment, and that trainers and assessors

are not up to speed with industry needs, unlike industry-based experts/practitioners.”

Industry representatives interviewed by the study team also pointed out that “there are training schools whose facilities are not up to par with industry standards, resulting in differences in the quality of training or graduates lacking the required skills when they become employed.”

Another challenge is the lack of communication skills and discipline among many TVET graduates assigned to entry-level positions, as pointed out by some employers. This was confirmed by an informant, saying that although the nature of production jobs is relatively easy to learn, many firms value employees’ discipline, hard work, and willingness to follow instructions. Thus, soft and technical skills of employees are equally important to firms.

How has the pandemic affected the TVET programs?

When the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic hit the Philippines in 2020, most training schools were forced to switch to online modalities, while some firms remained open and were able to resume face-to-face classes with limited operations depending on the community quarantine levels imposed by the government. However, hands-on and practical activities, which are critical for teaching practical skills, cannot be done online and still require learning in the laboratory or workplace.

Thus, the PIDS study highlighted the need for developing flexible learning modalities in response to the mobility restrictions due to the pandemic.

For example, the authors suggested that training providers convert their instruction materials into formats for online delivery and asynchronous modalities.

However, they noted that doing so requires investing in infrastructure and in training teachers to deliver in these modalities.

Likewise, they emphasized that schools must also address access issues, such as students needing digital devices and internet connectivity to participate in remote learning.

“Although training providers have made learning materials available online, learning may still be hindered by lack of access to adequate digital devices and internet connectivity, especially among trainees that belong to poor or low-income families,” the authors explained.

Meanwhile, the study also noted new skills demanded by employers and subsectors that emerged from the pandemic. For instance, digital skills, such as proficiency in using digital devices and applications, are required by establishments like restaurants to promote their products online, primarily through social media platforms. In addition, online food selling has also emerged in response to the stay-at-home restrictions and with restaurants closing or operating at a limited capacity.

Ways forward

There is a prevailing low image for TVET, as in the case of construction. Thus, the authors suggested that industry associations and the government should pursue information campaigns targeting youth and parents to encourage their interest in TVET, particularly construction-related jobs.

The authors also recommended that TESDA revisit its training regulations to appraise the sufficiency of teaching hard and soft skills. Moreover, they suggested that industry practitioners be hired as trainers and assessors to continuously expose students to industry practices.

“With the private sector pointing out the lack of communication skills and workplace discipline among TVET graduates, TESDA needs to review the sufficiency of teaching communication skills and workplace discipline,” they explained.

Meanwhile, the authors also called for a review of TVET financing programs, especially those that only cover tuition fees. According to them, stipends for daily subsistence and transportation are critical for TVET financing programs for low-income youths. They also pointed out that many financing programs target the same clientele, thus needing review to “avoid duplications, confusion, and wastage of scarce resources”.

Finally, given the industry’s rapidly changing needs, the authors stressed the importance of conducting regular dialogues among the government, employers, and TVET providers. **MPT**

Impact evaluation expert assumes presidency of PIDS



Among the seven-point agenda of Dr. Aniceto Orbeta Jr. as PIDS president are to strengthen the link between evidence and policy and communicate policy narratives better.

THE PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE for Development Studies (PIDS) welcomed its seventh president.

Dr. Aniceto Orbeta Jr. took his oath of office before Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick Chua, director-general of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and chairperson of the PIDS Board of Trustees (BOT), in a virtual oath-taking ceremony on August 2, 2021. Orbeta succeeded Dr. Celia Reyes, who served as PIDS president from March 1, 2018 to July 31, 2021.

The oath-taking was attended by members of the PIDS BOT, namely, Atty. Raphael Lotilla, Dr. Gilberto Llanto, and Dr. Maria Cynthia Rose Bautista. The PIDS management committee consisting of Vice President Marife Ballesteros,

Director Andrea Agcaoili, Director Sheila Siar, and Director Renee Ajayi also witnessed the event.

Main thrusts, directions for PIDS

Orbeta's seven-point agenda describes his main thrusts and directions for the Institute—all supporting its vision to be the country's foremost think tank and a globally recognized policy research organization by 2025.

His agenda includes strengthening the link between evidence and policy, having more proactive engagement with stakeholders, communicating policy narratives better, continuing the collaboration with policy research

institutions with greater emphasis on domestic institutions, completing the policy narratives on emerging areas where the Institute is starting to contribute, infusing new ideas into legacy policy areas, and making further improvements in the internal processes of PIDS.

Professional portfolio, contributions to policy research

Orbeta has a PhD in Economics from the University of the Philippines (UP) School of Economics and did postdoctoral studies at Harvard University.

Before he was appointed as PIDS president, Orbeta was a senior research fellow for 29 years. Prior to joining PIDS in 1992, he served as officer-in-charge and deputy executive director for policy development and planning of the Agricultural Credit Policy Council and deputy executive director of the Policy Development Foundation Inc.

Orbeta specializes in applied economic modeling, impact evaluation, social sector issues, demographic economics, and information and communications technologies. He has published numerous papers on these areas.

He is considered one of the country's pioneers in impact evaluation research. He has an extensive experience in designing, conducting, and teaching impact evaluation of programs and policies in education,

social protection, judicial reforms, community-driven development, water services, agriculture, and agricultural finance.

Orbeta has designed rigorous impact evaluations for PIDS. His expertise in impact evaluation has also been widely sought by various international organizations, including the Asian Development Bank, Australian Agency for International Development, Innovations for Poverty Action, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), Millennium Challenge Corporation, United States

Agency for International Development, and World Bank.

Orbeta is also an expert in developing macroeconometric models and models of household decisions on fertility, schooling, labor supply, health and nutrition, and savings.

At PIDS, Orbeta led the education and labor policy research team that studied key policy recommendations and reforms, including the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program, Sustainable Livelihood Program,

Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act or the Free Tuition Law, Enhanced Basic Education Act, and Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Program, among others.

He also designed and taught a graduate course on program evaluation at the UP School of Economics and short-term training courses on impact evaluation for 3ie, NEDA, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Education, and De La Salle University.

4Ps reaps notable gains on health, education outcomes



The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program has increased access to maternal and child healthcare services among poor households. (Photo by Department of Social Welfare and Services Field Office VI)

ACCORDING TO RECENT studies by state think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), the country's flagship cash transfer program, positively impacts education and health outcomes.

Based on the third wave impact evaluation main report titled "*Reassessing the Impact of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program: Results of the Third Wave Impact Evaluation*" by PIDS researchers Aniceto Orbeta Jr., Kris Ann Melad, and Nina Victoria Araos, the 4Ps is generally achieving its primary goal of keeping children healthy and in school. Specifically, the program has increased access to key maternal and child healthcare services among beneficiary households. It has also

improved education outcomes of children, especially among older age groups that face a higher risk of dropping out of school.

Moreover, a second component study of the third wave impact evaluation titled *“Longer-term effects of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program: Evidence from a randomized control trial cohort analysis”* also found that the timely provision of program inputs during critical stages of life results in better nutrition and education outcomes of children.

In the design of the 4Ps, beneficiaries must comply with certain education, health, and family development conditionalities to receive cash grants. Households that comply with the health conditionalities and attend the monthly Family Development Sessions can receive PHP 500 per month. Meanwhile, households also receive PHP 300 and PHP 500 per month for each child (but only up to three children per household) attending elementary and high school, respectively, for ten months per year. In 2017, families complying with conditionalities also began receiving a rice subsidy of PHP 600 per month.

Child and maternal health outcomes

In terms of nutrition outcomes, the third wave evaluation found that Pantawid parents are more diligent in bringing their children to health facilities for preventive checkups and regular weight monitoring than non-Pantawid parents. Results also showed a higher intake of Vitamin A supplementation within six months among program beneficiaries than nonbeneficiaries.

Despite the program’s positive results, gaps still need to be addressed, such as the high prevalence of severe stunting among Pantawid beneficiary children.

The study found that the 4Ps has a negative impact on the prevalence of stunting in children aged 0 to 5. However, this is inconsistent with the authors’ findings in their second component study that assessed specific cohorts of children in the original randomized control trial of the first evaluation. This second study showed that the timely provision of program inputs during the first 1,000 days of life does not result in a statistically significant difference in the prevalence of stunting among program beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries. The same study also found a lower risk of being underweight among children from 4Ps households that benefitted from the program during their first 1,000 days of life.

In addition, a supplemental study done by the same authors, titled *“Deepening the narrative: Qualitative follow-up study on the third impact evaluation of Pantawid Pamilya”*, found that there appears no difference in the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) between Pantawid and non-Pantawid beneficiaries related to nutrition. Thus, the perverse program impact on stunting may have been caused by factors other than KAP.

As to maternal health, the third impact evaluation of the 4Ps observed an increase in prenatal care utilization among beneficiary mothers but not for postnatal care. Thus, the authors concluded that the goal to increase maternal health services utilization has been only partially achieved.

According to the authors, the low utilization of healthcare services among pregnant, except for prenatal checkups, could have been due to a lack of proper understanding among beneficiaries of the importance of postnatal checkups.

Education outcomes

In terms of education, the 4Ps has increased school enrollment of beneficiary children aged 12 to 17, improved age-appropriate enrollment in junior high school, and lowered dropout rates. The authors attributed these positive outcomes to the modifications made on the 4Ps in 2014, which extended the coverage of education grants to include older children aged 15 to 18 and provided higher grants for high school students.

Moreover, the study found that 4Ps does not affect child labor or the number of days spent by children 10 to 14 years old in paid and unpaid labor. Further analysis showed that 90 percent of working children also attend school, indicating that children are not dropping out of school despite financial problems. Instead, the additional income earned by working children supplements the cash grant to cover education costs. Nevertheless, the authors stressed that the persistent incidence of child labor should be addressed.

Ways forward

Considering that the 4Ps yielded positive results, the authors suggested that the program must be continued but with some enhancements.

The authors recommend intensifying education and information campaigns on

the First 1,000 Days Law, which provides for sustained proper nutrition and health interventions for women and newborns. In addition, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Health should work together and collaborate with other agencies to promote better nutrition outcomes among young children and pregnant women. Civil society organizations with similar advocacies may also be tapped in this effort.

There is also a need to conduct further studies on the impact of nutrition, according to the authors, to understand the factors affecting nutrition status of children and identify possible ways to address stunting and malnutrition issues.

Another recommendation is to monitor beneficiaries' compliance to the health conditions under 4Ps more effectively to better capture their utilization levels of available services. By monitoring the type and quality of services available for and accessed by beneficiaries, program implementers can identify gaps in services

and better understand service roles on health outcomes.

Improving staffing, facilities, and equipment of hospitals must also be prioritized, according to the authors. However, they noted that this might be a challenge, given that the 4Ps aims to address a wide scope of outcomes. Thus, they suggested that program implementers must have strong ties with the different concerned agencies for the 4Ps to be more effective.

The program should also update its list of recipients based on the changes in household composition, especially for newborns and new pregnancies. The PIDS paper noted that this is critical in understanding the program's impact on beneficiaries.

The program should also consider adopting more effective and efficient ways of using the education grant. According to the authors, one option is to refocus education intervention to older children, where benefits are larger, and to children who are more at risk of dropping out of school.

Program implementers should also look at how child labor incidence can be reduced. The authors raised the need to reassess the grant amount and examine the opportunity costs of forgoing child labor among Pantawid children.

"With the declining real value of the grants, continued employment may have been resorted to by children to support their schooling or contribute to their household income. Therefore, increasing the education grant for high school children would be an interesting intervention to pursue to know whether it will produce a desirable impact on the incidence and duration of child labor," they said.

Moreover, they suggested conducting further studies on the program's impact on labor market outcomes of adult members of Pantawid families. The authors also urged the DSWD to provide inputs on accessing and maximizing livelihood opportunities through its Family Development Session and accompany this with employment facilitation assistance through the Sustainable Livelihood Program to increase employment opportunities.

However, the authors pointed out that this is not the primary objective of the program.

Finally, "DSWD should be open to the possibility that improving labor market outcomes of adult members of Pantawid families can be done more efficiently by other agencies, such as the Department of Labor and Employment, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and the Department of Trade and Industry," they suggested. **RTT**



To reduce the incidence of child labor, the authors recommended increasing the education grant of the 4Ps.

Simplify, streamline PBB scheme, says PIDS study



Nearly 40 percent of government employees from eligible agencies claim they have become more motivated to perform their work because of the PBB.

ALTHOUGH THE PERFORMANCE-BASED Bonus (PBB) scheme increases the motivation of government employees in the workplace, its design and implementation need to be simplified and streamlined.

This is according to the study *“Evaluation of the effects of the Performance-Based Bonus incentive scheme”* by Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) researchers Jose Ramon Albert, Ronald Mendoza, Janet Cuenca, Jana Flor Vizmanos, and Mika Muñoz. The authors said that the government should enhance PBB’s guidelines, transparency, and support mechanisms, noting that improving its overall framework could facilitate PBB compliance, especially in the lagging agencies.

Since the PBB has been implemented for nine years already, “it may be an opportune time to start planning for a grand revision in its design and implementation by 2022 when a new administration is in place,” the authors emphasized.

In 2012, through Executive Order 80, series of 2012, the government established the PBB for employees in the executive branch of government. It was intended to reward exemplary performance, align individual personnel and departmental efforts with organizational targets, and improve service delivery. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Development Academy of the Philippines oversee its implementation. To evaluate the PBB’s effectiveness, the DBM commissioned PIDS to assess

its impact on government employees’ organizational motivation and work productivity.

Pros

Based on a perception-based survey conducted by PIDS in November 2020 among over 1,200 sampled government employees from eligible and ineligible agencies, about 60 percent strongly agreed that they have become more conscious about accountability requirements because of the PBB.

Around 50 percent of the respondents from eligible agencies, compared to 40 percent from ineligible agencies, affirmed that their individual performance targets are fair, objective, and up-to-date. Thus, their work motivation and performance ratings have significantly improved since the PBB’s inception. Meanwhile, only around 10 percent stated they perform just the same with no reward system.

The authors also revealed that the PBB scheme creates positive changes to the overall performance of agencies.

For example, about 50 percent of respondents from eligible agencies, compared to about 40 percent from ineligible agencies, admitted that their respective managements have been more focused and efficient in achieving target objectives.

Meanwhile, only 29 percent of respondents agreed that the PBB helps identify poor performers.

In September 2020, the authors also conducted focus group discussions (FGD) with PBB focal persons, Performance Management Team members, and other validating agencies to analyze standpoints and perspectives about the incentive scheme.

The respondents most commonly associated PBB with “performance”, “targets”, and “incentives”. They also agreed that the PBB remains relevant, as it motivates continued improvements in government services.

“The PBB has recognized and incentivized high performers within an agency, motivating employees to work better. It has also increased agencies’ compliance with statutory requirements and supported the implementation of existing laws. It serves as a mechanism for public sector agencies to be mindful of all reporting requirements and to improve their services,” the authors said.

In terms of task delineation, the PBB has provided objectively verifiable indicators of performance and productivity that agency heads could use to outline the targets and responsibilities of the employees clearly.

Cons

Despite the apparent positive effects of the PBB on government performance, the authors stressed its design and implementation process should be

improved. The FGD participants echoed this, saying that PBB guidelines should be released and disseminated earlier to agencies.

“The late release of guidelines gave agencies little time to prepare the requirements and does not allow them to focus more on certain areas relevant to the PBB,” the authors said.

Some agencies cannot comply with the requirements due to the report-intensive and hefty demands of the PBB eligibility clause. Thus, they did not qualify for the PBB.

Data showed that 35 percent of the respondents did not avail of the PBB at least once. They cited ineligibility of their agencies for not qualifying for the incentive scheme.

Issues of fairness regarding the formula of PBB payout were also raised given that incentives are computed as a percentage of the employee’s base salary. Hence, those with lower salary grades receive lower rewards even though they often do the most unpleasant tasks.

More than half of complaints from ineligible agencies cited favoritism, unfair ratings, and a flawed system as reasons why their delivery units were excluded from availing the PBB.

The authors also found dishonest behavior in the PBB rollout, with some staff reportedly gaming the incentives.

Most (85%) of the FGD participants underscored that the PBB needs refinement to address these looming issues.

Policy recommendations

Along with simplifying and streamlining the PBB scheme, the authors also suggested imposing a moratorium on changes in the agency-level PBB conditions, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. They likewise stressed that it is critical to have an agency-level redress mechanism to settle transparency issues and complaints.

Further, the authors suggested providing capacity-building support, including leadership strategy reviews and technical assistance, to agencies encountering difficulties meeting PBB conditions.

According to the PIDS study, enhancing nonfinancial incentives could also be pushed across agencies considering the hardships brought by the pandemic.

“Flexibility on assignment location and work-from-home options, to name a few, could be powerful incentives,” the study noted.

However, it emphasized that a rigorous impact evaluation framework should be carried out to gauge the effectiveness of the nonfinancial incentives.

Lastly, the PIDS paper suggested that the government experiment on a small scale the provision of incentives to agencies based on their contribution to sectoral targets, such as the *Philippine Development Plan* or the Sustainable Development Goals. **MPT**

DOH urged to boost deployment of health workers in poor, isolated areas



Although the Department of Health's deployment program of healthcare workers in rural areas is laudable, its design and implementation should be improved, according to a PIDS study. (Photo by City of San Fernando Information Office | Facebook)

THE DEPARTMENT OF Health (DOH) must further improve its program to deploy more medical workers to poor and isolated communities.

In a study titled *"Process evaluation of the Department of Health Human Resources for Health Deployment Program"*, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) researchers Michael Abrigo, Gina Opiniano, and Zhandra Tam suggested ways to refine the national government's initiative to address the lack of healthcare workers in underserved areas.

Called the Deployment of Human Resources for Health (HRH), this initiative deployed less than 500 health professionals in 2010 with budgetary

support of less than PHP 200 million. In 2020, with about PHP 10-billion budget, almost 30,000 healthcare workers composed of physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, medical technologists, nutritionist-dieticians, midwives, physical therapists, and public health associates were deployed under this program.

Through a process evaluation, the authors found "laudable" developments in the DOH-led HRH deployment program over the past years, such as the increase in the number of health workers deployed to far-flung villages and provision of additional benefits for workers. However, some gaps in its design and implementation have been observed.

Among the gaps identified in the study are the criteria changes for deployment sites, delays and uneven provision of additional benefits by local government units (LGUs), understaffing issues, inadequate access of workers to medical supplies and equipment, and insufficient predeployment orientation and training.

According to the authors, the HRH program seemed to have strayed from its initial purpose of filling the gap in areas in dire need of health workers.

The criteria have become "relatively more general" in recent years, allowing healthcare workers to be sent "practically to any LGU". This resulted in the deployment of workers even in areas with "high income, high HRH-to-population ratio, and relatively low poverty incidence".

In addition, the authors maintained that deployment sites must be chosen "in a way that discourages dependence among local governments" to sustain the delivery of healthcare services in rural areas. For example, the study suggested a system that gives higher scores to LGUs with long-term plans to develop their cadre for other benefits due from local governments, such as meal, accommodation, and transportation allowances.

In addition, the study noted that the additional benefits from LGUs vary. They also reported some delays in delivering

these benefits, which, they said, affect the experience and willingness of workers to be deployed in disadvantaged areas.

To entice and retain more workers in areas where recruitment success rates are low, the study also recommended giving greater benefits to healthcare workers.

Increasing monetary incentives and understanding the other factors to encourage medical personnel to continue working in their place of deployment even after the expiry of their contract must be looked into.

“We have identified that healthcare workers respond to monetary incentives to remain in their place of deployment beyond their DOH-HRH deployment program contract,” the authors said.

They persuaded the government to “understand the motivations” of healthcare workers, support measures to protect their welfare, and help maximize available

resources from host LGUs that can attract workers.

Sufficient orientation programs for workers are also a prerequisite for effective and continuous healthcare services, said authors. For example, they maintained that through effective predeployment orientations, program managers would be able to set and manage expectations of healthcare workers to be deployed in host LGUs.

The need to educate the public on the RPRH Law

In addition to improving the deployment of healthcare workers, the government is also advised to boost its campaign to inform and educate the public on the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health (RPRH) law.

Passed in 2012, among the goals of the RPRH law is to educate and empower Filipinos to make choices regarding their

reproductive health, improve the lives of families, and promote sustainable human development.

In a PIDS study titled “*Process evaluation of selected programs of the Department of Health: RPRH education and communication*”, authors Mary Pauline Saquing and Norliza Nordan stressed the need for a holistic approach to help the public understand the objectives of the RPRH law.

The paper looks into the government’s promotion efforts to implement the RPRH law, particularly through public awareness and education.

According to the authors, while there is a national policy on health promotion, there is no existing policy or program to implement the specific provisions in the RPRH law’s implementing rules and regulations (IRR). Thus, to implement these provisions, they suggested that a focal point person for the RPRH program be designated at the DOH-Health Promotion and Communication Services with support from the LGUs and the Philippine Information Agency.

The authors highlighted the compliance of other key agencies with some provisions of the RPRH law’s IRR. However, they pointed out a delay in the implementation of the RPRH education.

For example, the authors noted that the Department of Education (DepEd)’s primary accomplishment regarding the RPRH education was the issuance of guidelines in implementing the comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in 2018.



The government is urged to strengthen the implementation of the RPRH program to help improve the lives of Filipino families. (Photo by Commission on Population and Development)

However, these guidelines have not reached the schools, said the authors. Likewise, they noted a lack of qualified manpower, facilities, instructional materials, coordination and monitoring, and necessary training among teachers to effectively carry out the CSE.

“The teachers suggested that they should be trained [to teach CSE] and mechanisms for information dissemination should be in place,” the authors stated.

Thus, it was recommended that a specific set of guidelines on “what needs to be done at the level of instruction” vis-à-vis the actual curriculum required by the law must be in place. In addition, the authors suggested that DOH should support the DepEd by funding seminars in the community (so that the approach is holistic), training teachers to conduct seminars for others, and providing teachers with stipends. Further, the authors suggested including the RPRH and CSE in the curriculum guide and training teachers to use them.

Incorporating the RPRH and CSE in the curriculum will also ensure that the topics to be discussed by teachers have been scrutinized and are age- and development- appropriate. Thus, they recommended that supplemental guidelines on implementing RPRH education or CSE with details on the extent of integration across all subject areas be issued.

Finally, they suggested that awards and recognition guidelines for compliant schools, allotment of RPRH-specific budget, and RPRH implementation committee in schools must be created. **EGR**

RESEARCH DIGESTS

RPS 2021-07

Land Tenure, Access to Credit, and Agricultural Performance of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries, Farmer-beneficiaries, and Other Rural Workers

by *Ivory Myka Galang*

This study analyzes the borrowing incidence among Agrarian Reform Beneficiary Organization (ARBO) member households, particularly those engaged in farm production. The results show that (1) borrowing ARBO agricultural households are better off than the nonborrowing ones in terms of housing characteristics and agricultural performance; (2) farmer associations and cooperatives are among the top sources of agricultural credit in the countryside aside from microfinance institutions; (3) and Certificate of Land Ownership Award-holding ARBO agricultural households have higher borrowing incidence than the average ARBO agricultural households. The study recommends giving leadership and management capacity trainings to credit retailers to further improve their lending performance and reach in the countryside. Download the full publication at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/7424>.

DP 2021-21

Who Are the Youth NEET in the Philippines Today?

by *Aniceto Orbeta Jr., John Paul Corpus, and Nina Victoria Araos*

This study examines the educational barriers that hinder the Filipino youth who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) from pursuing further training. Given the large number of youth NEET in the country, the study finds the need to adopt a standard definition of NEET and promote the concept as an important cohort that needs attention from government and nongovernment programs. Along with conducting more in-depth studies to identify other important determinants of being NEET, the study urges the government and other key stakeholders to address the barriers and challenges of those desiring and who are currently in technical and vocational education training. This includes addressing the participants' financial constraints through reexamining existing allowance benefits,

and conducting better information dissemination on training opportunities. Download the full study at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/7419>.

PN 2021-06

Fake News, Its Dangers, and How We Can Fight It

by *Sheila Siar*

This *Policy Note* describes the phenomena of misinformation and disinformation and the dangers they pose, particularly in the context of the ongoing pandemic. It looks into the measures being implemented to curb the spread of fake news and provides some recommendations on how to fight its proliferation with more sustained and lasting results. It also notes that increasing awareness of available tools for fact-checking, engaging citizens, educating children to be analytical early on in life, making media literacy part of the basic education curriculum, and viewing the fight against fake news as a civic and moral responsibility could help greatly in combatting the proliferation of fake news. Download the full study at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/7399>.

PN 2021-05

We Need to Invest More in Learners, Learners, Learners!

by *Jose Ramon Albert, Lovelaine Basillote, and Mika Muñoz*

This *Policy Note* looks into how the Philippines has fared in education spending, considering that more investment is needed to ensure learning quality. It finds that spending patterns in education have hardly changed from more than a decade ago. The dismal performance in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), with the Philippines ranking last in reading, underscores a looming learning crisis in the country. Using a policy simulation of the PISA data, the authors find, among others, that the government needs to quadruple its education spending to reach the average global reading proficiency. They also advise the Department of Education to build effective data-driven policies to ensure that no Filipino child will be left behind in learning. Download the full study at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/7398>.

Are SHS Graduates Ready for the Job Market and Are Firms Ready to Take Them?

With the passing of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act 10533), more popularly known as K to 12 program, three years were added to basic education—kindergarten and two years of senior high school (SHS). Among its objectives is to equip learners with

the skills that will better prepare them for employment or entrepreneurship.

This infographic provides a background of the SHS program, the profile of students and schools, the willingness of firms to hire them, and the types of jobs available to them. **GGM**

K to 12 in the Philippines: Senior High School

What Are the Senior HS Tracks and Strands?



ACADEMIC



TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL-LIVELIHOOD (TVL)



SPORTS



ARTS & DESIGN

The **ACADEMIC TRACK** has five strands: (1) Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM); (2) Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMMS); (3) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); (4) General Academic (GAS); and (5) Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime.

The **TVL TRACK** also has five strands: (1) Home Economics (HE); (2) Information and Communications Technology (ICT); (3) Industrial Arts; (4) Agri-Fishery; and (5) TVL Maritime.

Senior HS Enrolment, School Year (SY) 2017-2018

There were about

2.7M

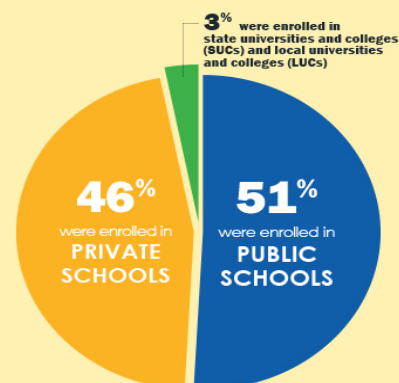
students enrolled in
SENIOR HS

1.5M

were
Grade 11
students

1.2M

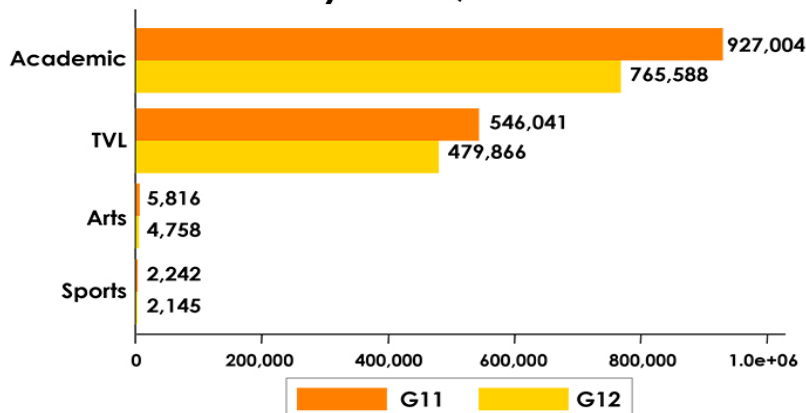
were
Grade 12
students



Number of schools with senior HS program:

11,087 > **58%** **40%** **2%**
PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRIVATE SCHOOLS SUCs/LUCs

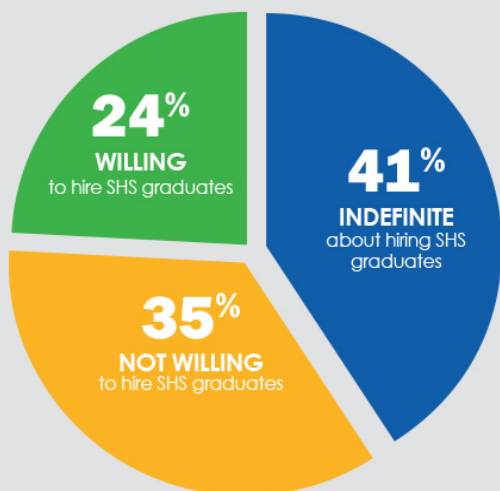
Enrollment by Track, SY 2017-2018



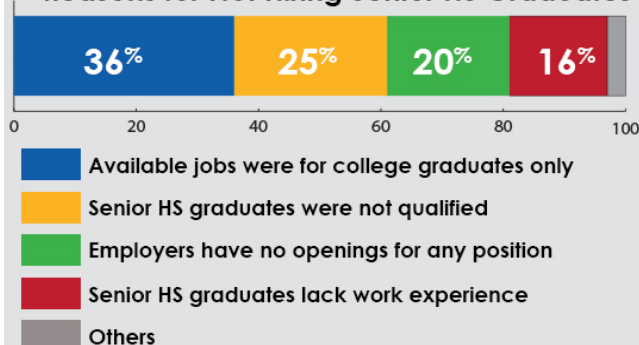
SOURCE OF BASIC DATA: Department of Education

Job Prospects of Senior HS Graduates

Willingness of Companies to Hire Senior HS Graduates



Reasons for Not Hiring Senior HS Graduates



Most firms were willing to pay Senior HS graduates **MINIMUM WAGES**, while the rest were willing to pay above minimum salary range of **PHP 12,001 - PHP 15,000 per month**.

(Based on a survey on hiring preferences conducted by JobStreet.com in February 2018)

Types of Jobs Available to Senior HS Graduates



CLERICAL SUPPORT

Clerk, bookkeeper, office assistant, receptionist, and call center agent (for manufacturing, agribusiness, real estate, hotels and restaurants/resort, shopping mall management, multiindustry, hospital, BPO, and LGU sectors)



CRAFTS AND RELATED TRADES

Small machine operator, automotive technician, electrician, welder, plumber, carpenter, and construction painter



SALES AND SERVICES

Sales clerk, call center salesperson, cashier, and sales inventory assistant (for retail industry); hotel housekeeping provider, waiter, bartender, cook, and building and grounds caretaker (for services sector)



ELEMENTARY OCCUPATIONS

Utility worker, street sweeper, laborer, warehouse helper, warehouse stacker, coconut sheller, production sorter and picker, poultry helper, kitchen steward, pool cleaner, office cleaner, messenger, theme park attendant, and leisure and entertainment center porter



ENTRY-LEVEL POSITIONS (ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL LEVEL)

Information technology (IT) technician positions, nursing assistant/technician, and operating room technician

(Based on responses from key informant interviews with 33 human resource managers/officers from 26 firms in National Capital Region, Cebu, and Calabarzon)

**POLICY
ISSUE AT
A GLANCE**

This infographic is based on PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2018-49 titled "Senior High School and the Labor Market: Perspectives of Grade 12 Students and Human Resource Officers" written by Aniceto Orbeta Jr. (president), Marites Lagarto (consultant), Ma. Kristina Ortiz (supervising research specialist), Danica Aisa Ortiz (former supervising research specialist), and Maropsil Potestad (former research analyst). The full version of this infographic can be downloaded from <https://www.pids.gov.ph/gallery/310> while the full study may be accessed at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/6762>.

Editor's Notes (continued from page 2)

Identifying these factors is crucial, given Filipino students' dismal performance in reading, mathematics, and science in international assessments, raising concerns about the quality of education in the country. Among all the factors found to be significant, it is worth emphasizing the role of parental support that is found to have a positive impact on student test performance and its implications on the current setup. The shift to distance learning has added extra pressure on parents to be more involved in their children's education while performing remote work simultaneously. The weight is heavier on mothers given their roles as homemakers and carers. Parents who are not highly educated may also find it difficult to assist their children. All of these imply that support services should also be available for parents to cope with the pressures of distance learning.

Then, an article discusses the Institute's assessment of the technical-vocational education and training programs' responsiveness to industry and trainee needs. Issues included the lack of demand for construction-related jobs and training programs among the youth due to the perceived low image of construction jobs. Concerns were also raised about the quality of the training schools, trainers, and assessors. Some also perceived the training content to be falling short on soft skills, such as communication and work discipline, or not up to date with current industry practices or technologies. Given the pandemic, the shift to online modalities has also exacerbated the digital divide that primarily affects trainees from low-income families. It has also raised concerns about the cancellation of the practical component, which is critical for teaching applied skills.

This issue also features an article that summarizes the results of the Institute's latest impact evaluation of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps). Overall, the 4Ps has remained effective in promoting the school participation of children and improving the health outcomes of children and mothers. However, a negative impact on nutrition was observed, specifically the prevalence of stunting among children aged 0 to 5 years. The study thus emphasized strengthening health interventions and compliance monitoring for pregnant mothers and young children, particularly during the first 1,000 days of life.

Meanwhile, the evaluation of the Performance-Based Bonus (PBB) scheme shows how its design and implementation can be improved. As an incentive scheme, the PBB has positively influenced the performance of public sector agencies. However, agencies that cannot comply with the PBB requirements are left behind. As the study authors suggested, capacity building and technical assistance should be extended to these agencies. With the pressures posed by the pandemic, the agencies that oversee its implementation are also advised to suspend any changes in the PBB requirements.

Another article talks about the Institute's process evaluation of the Department of Health's Human Resources for Health (HRH) Deployment Program that seeks to address the uneven distribution of health workers across the country, which particularly affects low-income populations and remote areas. This is a timely and relevant program, given the gaps in the public health system that the pandemic has magnified. While the deployment program has increased the number of health workers in far-flung areas, much is still to be improved. The study discussed how deployed health workers are sent to local governments that are high income or with a high HRH-to-population ratio. Delays in the receipt of statutory benefits and the inadequate access of workers to medical supplies and equipment were among the other issues uncovered by the study. The government must address these and other gaps without delay if it really values the contributions of our health workers.

Completing this issue is a feature on the new president of PIDS, Dr. Aniceto C. Orbeta Jr. **SVS**

About DRN

Development Research News is a quarterly publication of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). It highlights the findings and recommendations of PIDS research projects and important policy issues discussed during PIDS seminars. PIDS is a nonstock, nonprofit government research institution engaged in long-term, policy-oriented research.

This publication is part of the Institute's program to disseminate information to promote the use of research findings. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute.

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